



MEDIA COVERAGE OF

**NEPALI LABOR
MIGRANTS**

DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Media Coverage of Nepali Labor Migrants During Covid-19 Pandemic

A Study of
Media Coverage of Issues of Labor Migration
in Nepali Media During First Six Months
of Covid-19 Pandemic

Center for Media Research – Nepal
for
The Asia Foundation, Nepal

Media Coverage of Nepali Labor Migrants During Covid-19 Pandemic

A Study Report

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CMR-Nepal dedicates this study to all Nepali migrant workers whose hard work in foreign lands has contributed greatly to the country's economy.

Center for Media Research – Nepal

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Introduction

Covid-19 pandemic affected every aspect of life around the globe. Since its initial outbreak in Wuhan, China in December 2019, the world has at various points come to a standstill with lockdowns being used as a major strategy to fight the spread of the deadly virus. Nepal also witnessed an unprecedented public health crisis. Nepal imposed a strict lockdown initially restricting people's movement and sealing international borders. The lockdown affected all sectors including economy, education, health, agriculture, and livelihood. The lockdown also had a devastating effects on formal and informal economic sector resulting in loss of employments and livelihood for many Nepali citizens including Nepali migrant workers abroad.

In Nepal, the issues related to labor migration and labor migrants returning home remained a major topic of media coverage as international travel came to a halt with border restriction initiated by the government to combat the spread of the virus. Some preliminary assessments by experts showed that the media narratives remained negative about the migrant labor in both the receiving and sending countries during the pandemic.

In June 2020, in a virtual discussion¹ on 'Media Narratives on Migrant during Covid 19', experts pointed out that media narratives in the UK revealed 'radicalized media portrayals of migrants... an imminent threat to the nation-state and its citizen nationals... Covid has been used as a trope to create fear among the citizens and

¹ The international e-seminar was organized on June 23, 2020 by the Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism, New Delhi, India.

as an excuse to push borders keeping the migrants away.' While in migrant labor sending countries, such as in Sri Lanka, media narratives focused on 'Covid bombs to generate fear among the citizens.'²

Even before the pandemic, in most countries the story [on issue of labor migration] has been dominated by two themes – numbers and emotions... either politically led with media often following an agenda dominated by loose language and talk of invasion and swarms... [or] the story has been laced with humanity, empathy and a focus on the suffering of those involved.³

The media narrative on the issues of the migrant labor is generally associated with the bad news even before the pandemic in the migrant receiving countries.⁴

Migrants are frequently represented as group rather than as individuals. They are often attributed characteristics of threat, or associated with problems, in particular crime and conflicts and even individual responsibility about specific actions is culturalised, attributed to the cultural features of the specific migrant group. By contrast similar issues reporting on 'native' individuals focus on individual responsibility, behavior, or ideas rather than cultural attributes. Indeed, migrants are more negatively represented than non-migrants in similar news contexts.⁵

Migration and media are interdisciplinary fields of study where the media may intervene in the migration process and in the individual and collective experience of migration. The media-mediated image of destination areas helps labor migrants decide on migration whereas the labor migrants' lifestyle also influence residents' attitudes toward their new neighbors.⁶

The issue of immigration bears much importance in the globalized context because it has become a major public policy issue in the world:

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- 2 Bhattacharjee, S. (2020). Media Narratives on Migrants During Covid-19. Available from <https://indiaeducationdiary.in/media-narratives-on-migrants-during-Covid-19/> Accessed on September 10, 2020.
 - 3 Cooke, K. & White, A. (2015). Introduction, in *Moving Stories – International Review of How Media Cover Migration*. Ethical Journalism Network: London. Accessed on September 10, 2020. Available from <https://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/resources/publications/moving-stories/introduction-by-aidan-white-and-kieran-cooke>
 - 4 Philo, F., Briant, E. and Donald, P. (2013). *Band news for refugees*. London. Pluto Press.
 - 5 Triandafyllidou, A. (2017). Media Coverage on Migration: Promoting a Balanced Reporting. *International Organization for Migration*. p. 4. Accessed on September 10, 2020. Available from https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/media_coverage_on_migration.pdf
 - 6 King, R., and N. Wood. (2001). *Media and Migration: Construction of Mobility and Difference*. London and New York: Routledge.

Media coverage on the issue receives more prominence as the media can influence and can be influenced by political agenda and public opinion that can have affect in shaping the attitude towards the issue. Media also mediates social acceptance and general perception towards labor migrants at the destination and sending countries; and influence labor migrants' decision to consider moving to the destination country.⁷

Migration in Nepal touches millions of families, but media coverage fails to give it any special focus or attention.⁸ And when it gives space, the focus is on numbers and suffering of the labor migrants that creates more negative perceptions on migration. The findings of a study suggest that the Nepali media lack a critical perspective and hence have been limited in highlighting the problems faced by Nepali migrant workers.⁹ This seems to be common across South Asia. A study conducted on the Bangladeshi labor migrants found that media commented on opportunities abroad for Bangladeshi workers, where media reports showed concerns about 'exploitation and mistreatment, especially affecting female workers.'¹⁰

During the pandemic, the general observation is that media in Nepal gave ample coverage to the issues of the labor migrants. Within this context, this study on the media coverage of labor migrants provides an understanding on how media reported labor migrants' issues amid the Covid-19 pandemic in Nepal.

With broad objective of assessing the media coverage of migrant labor to bring an understanding on how labor migrants' issues are portrayed by domestic media to contribute to the improvement in policies and practices regarding labor migration, the study was conducted with the following objectives:

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- 7 McAuliffe, M., Weeks, W. and Koser, K. (2015). Media and migration: Comparative analysis of print and online media reporting on migrants and migration in selected countries (Phase II). Occasional Paper Series, Belconnen, ACT: Department of Immigration and Border Protection. Accessed online September 10, 2020. Available from <https://www.border.gov.au/ReportsandPublications/Documents/research/mcauliffe-weeks-koser.pdf>
 - 8 Rai, O. A. (2015). Information gaps fail to keep track of a country on the move, in Moving Stories – International Review of How Media Cover Migration. Ethical Journalism Network: London. Accessed on September 10, 2020. Available from <https://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/resources/publications/moving-stories/nepal>
 - 9 Center for Social Change. (2018). Coverage of Foreign Labor Migration in Nepali Mainstream Media. Accessed on September 15, 2020. Available at <http://socialchange.org.np/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Nepali-Media-Monitoring-Report-on-Foreign-Labour-Migration-2018.pdf>
 - 10 McAuliffe, M. and Weeks, W. (2015). Media and migration: Comparative analysis and online media reporting on migrants and migration in selected origin and destination countries. Occasional Paper Series, Belconnen, ACT: Department of Immigration and Border Protection. Accessed online September 10, 2020. Available from <https://www.border.gov.au/ReportsandPublications/Documents/research/media-migration.pdf>

1. To identify the trends in coverage of issues of the labor migrant in Nepali media,
2. To gain deeper understanding of Nepali media perspectives on labor migration,
3. To formulate a set of recommendations for media and concerned stakeholders for improved and better media coverage of labor migrant issues.

Research Methods

This study examined the coverage of labor migration in Nepali media during Covid-19 pandemic through mixed methods applying quantitative and qualitative tools. It analyzed contents in 6 media outlets to ascertain how issues on migrant labor have been reported during period of six months - from March to August, 2020. It also investigated how news coverage trend changed over time.

Content Analysis

The quantitative content analysis was used to measure the volume and types of news items published in six media outlets:

- a. Gorkhapatra national daily newspaper,
- b. Kantipur national daily newspaper,
- c. Prateek provincial daily newspaper,
- d. Butwal Today provincial daily newspaper,
- e. Onlinekhabar.com, and
- f. Setopati.com

Two national dailies were selected because of their reach and ownership. Gorkhapatra is the largest state-owned newspaper whereas Kantipur is privately owned newspaper with the largest daily circulation.¹¹ Prateek is published from Birgunj in Province 2 and Butwal Today¹² is published from Butwal from Lumbini province and they were chosen as both provinces border with India. Among the seven provinces of Nepal, the top three provinces that send the highest numbers of Nepali migrant workers in third countries are Province 1, Province 2 (both contributing 24 per cent migrant laborers to third countries) and Lumbini province (approximately 17 percent).¹³ Since both province 1 and 2 are in eastern region, Province 2 was selected to represent eastern Nepal, and Lumbini province to represent western Nepal.

11 Kantipur stopped publication from March 28 to April 3 for 7 days.

12 Butwal Today ceased publication from March 25 to April 24, 2020.

13 Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security (2020). Nepal Labor Migration Report 2020.

As the online news media is making a mark in Nepal's mediascape, two online news media were selected to represent online media. Onlinekhabar.com is the most popular online news website of the country (as ranked by Alexa.com) and Setopati.com is the online media that according to the researchers' evaluations is influential among policymakers. Both news portals also have extensively covered migration.

The quantitative content analysis analyzed all news related to migration issues published from March 1, 2020 to August 31, 2020. The starting period marked the time when the Covid-19 pandemic started to show its effect internationally and lockdowns as well as international travel restrictions were imposed in many nations affecting labor migration. The lockdown measures in Nepal were announced in the fourth week of March that affected internal migrant workers and Nepali migrant workers in India.

The study considers every story, including news items, news analysis, editorials, and opinion pieces, on the relevant issues published during the time period. To ensure all the media content were selected, researchers manually filtered them using a broad definition of labor migrants and any issues related to them. For the study, labor migrants were defined¹⁴ as: a) those who have migrated from their place of residence or origin to other cities within the country in search for employment (internal migrant workers); b) Nepali labor migrants who work in different cities of India (migrant workers in India); and c) labor migrants who are in any other labor destination countries than India (cross-border migrant workers other than India).

During the selection, any confusion was sorted out by the lead researcher. For example, there was a confusion on whether to use government budget's yearly plan which had little mention on migrant labor issue and after a discussion with the researchers, those news items were not considered for the study. But if the budgetary plans discussed specific with the migrant policy as a separate news event, the news was used for the analysis.

Five assistant researchers, who attended an orientation and training session for inter-coder reliability (Appendix B has the explanations for major questions on the code sheet explained to the assistant researchers), selected and filled up the online form (Appendix A) for each news item. For the mock test of the form and the

14 This is generally accepted categorization among Nepal's stakeholders including the International Labor Organization. For example, see: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-kathmandu/documents/briefingnote/wcms_748917.pdf

analysis, 100 news items were tested on the form developed using Microsoft Office Forms. At the end, the assistant researchers skimmed through at least 70,000 news items in the selected news media and coded 1,106 news items.

The researchers analyzed each coded news item for validity and confusions were sorted out going back to the original news items – a copy of which were stored by the assistant researchers. After the verification process, 1,098 news items were found valid for analysis.

Coding

The code sheet (Appendix A) had following sub-sections:

- a. Fundamental characteristics of news items such as media, date, dateline, page published on, placement, size, name, and gender of journalist/author,
- b. Type of news,
- c. Type labor migrants on focus,
- d. Type, number, and gender of cited news sources,
- e. Major thematic issue and specific issues,
- f. Overall tone of the story towards labor migrants and government, and
- g. Researcher's subjective observation on the news item.

Qualitative Content Analysis

The researchers carried out qualitative content analysis for understanding news angles and other qualitative observations on the coverage of the issue. Thematic issues, how they were angled, and the trend of coverage were analyzed in the news items while the thematic issues and narratives used in opinion articles and editorials were observed to further understand the gravity of the issue and importance provided by the news media.

To achieve the objectives of the qualitative content analysis, the researchers reviewed all news items relevant to labor migration published during the duration. The news items were then put into theme and trend media-wise in monthly format. The summarized version was included as comparative thematic analysis in the findings whereas the detailed analysis where media coverage was thematically analyzed for each month is available on request, major observations from the analysis are integrated throughout the findings.

This approach was adopted to add credibility to the findings which are cross-referenced between qualitative analysis and quantitative data. For example, the placement of the news – the page and space given to it, generally talks about the priority given to that news whereas sources used in news generally tell whose narratives are being presented in the media content.

Interviews

Interview is a tool to get a perspective and this study used interviews with semi-structured questions to understand how migrant labor issues have been taken by the news media. This gave an important understanding on how content production was affected by the media and how labor migration experts view media coverage.

Journalists who reported on the issue, opinion writers who continuously wrote on the issues, and experts and scholars in the area were interviewed. 13 people (Appendix C) were interviewed through Zoom and Facebook Messenger for the study. The findings from the interviews are integrated in the report in the findings section.

Nepali labor migrants and Covid-19

At least four million labor permits were issued in the last decade by the Department of Foreign Employment with the total remittance reaching NRs. 8.79 billion in the fiscal year 2018/ 2019, which accounts for 28 per cent of the annual GDP.¹⁵ There is no official records on the migrant workers in India but the number is estimated to be 587,646 according to National Labor Force Survey 2017/18.¹⁶ Among the estimated 2.6 million internal migrants where 700,000 migrate for work. There are estimated 1.7 million daily wage earners in Nepal.

The migrant workers who in 2018 contributed to 25 percent to the country's GDP¹⁷ were in a dilapidated situation - jobless, unable to feed themselves and unable to return home as the pandemic struck. It was projected that the inflow of remittance would be affected as Covid-19 slowed the world economy and halted the international flow of labor. Asian Development Bank has estimated remittance loss of 28.7 per cent under the worst-case scenario in Nepal.¹⁸ The statistics from the

15 Ministry of Labor Employment and Social Security. (2020). Nepal Labour Migration Report 2020. Accessed online September 15, 2020. Available from <https://moless.gov.np/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Migration-Report-2020-English.pdf>

16 Central Bureau of Statistics. (2018). Report on the Nepal Labour Force Survey 2017/18. Accessed on September 15, 2020. Available at https://cbs.gov.np/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/NLFS-III_Final-Report.pdf

17 Ojha, K. (2019). Remittance Status and Contribution to GDP of Nepal. NCC Journal, 4(1), 101-112. <https://doi.org/10.3126/nccj.v4i1.24743>

18 Asian Development Bank. (2020). Covid-19 Impact on International Migration, Remittances and Recipient Households in Developing Asia. ADB Brief. August. Accessed online September 16, 2020. Available from <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/622796/Covid-19-impact-migration-remittances-asia.pdf>.

central bank, Nepal Rastra Bank, stated that Nepal received remittances of Rs. 34.5 billion from mid-March to mid-April in 2020 compared to Rs. 71 billion in the same period in 2019. But since mid-April, there has been constant increase in the flow of remittances and by mid-June, it reached Rs. 62 billion.¹⁹

According to Nepal Rastra Bank, the first month (mid- July to mid- August) of the current fiscal year saw a rise of 23 per cent in remittance despite forecasts of affects in flow of remittance. Nepal received Rs. 92.71 billion in remittance earnings in three months ending in mid-August.²⁰ But the infection rate has continued to rise in Nepal and among Nepali migrants. At the end of October 2020, the Ministry of Health and Population recorded more than 160,000 cases of coronavirus infection and more than 700 deaths in Nepal.²¹ The Non-Nepali Residents Association (NRNA) has reported that 59,411 Nepalis living in 38 countries were infected as of August 16, 2020, with 293 deaths.²²

Despite the infection among the Nepali migrant laborers, no significant effect in the flow of remittance was observed. The earlier estimation of return of tens of thousands did not happen as many of the manufacturing activities in destination countries resumed. The Covid-19 Crisis Management Center said 76,000 Nepalis were brought back home as of September 25.²³

As the spread of Covid-19 continued, Nepal initially stepped-up to contain the contagion with restrictive measures from lockdown to prohibitory orders but on second week of June, the lockdown was eased with businesses allowed to open. International flights which were suspended in March 2020, resumed in October. The government had stopped issuing labor permits to labor migration during the lockdown, which was also selectively lifted.

19 Prasain, S. (2020). Nepal may see 28.7 per cent contraction in remittance in 2020, highest in the developing Asia, ADB say. The Kathmandu Post. (August 4). Accessed on September 16, 2020. Available from <https://kathmandupost.com/money/2020/08/04/nepal-may-see-28-7-percent-contraction-in-remittance-in-2020-highest-in-the-developing-asia-adb-says>.

20 The Kathmandu Post (2020) Nepal sees robust growth in remittance inflow despite Covid-19 pandemic. Accessed on September 28, 2020. Available from <https://kathmandupost.com/money/2020/09/26/nepal-sees-robust-growth-in-remittance-inflow-despite-pandemic>.

21 For latest data, please see MoHP's Covid-19 dashboard at <https://Covid19.mohp.gov.np/>

22 New Spotlight. (2020). Over 59411 NRN's Infected By Covid-19 All Over the World. Accessed Online September 15, 2020. Available from <https://www.spotlightnepal.com/2020/08/16/over-59411-nrns-infected-Covid-19-all-over-world/>

23 The Kathmandu Post. (2020). Nepal sees robust growth in remittance inflow despite Covid-19 pandemic. Accessed on September 28, 2020. Available from <https://kathmandupost.com/money/2020/09/26/nepal-sees-robust-growth-in-remittance-inflow-despite-pandemic>.

The initial step affected Nepali labor migrants' movement. Due to the restriction of movement in the destination countries, the ILO said Nepali labor migrants abroad faced issues such as loss of jobs, financial hardships, abuse, harassment, mistreatment and forced deportation and were not provided access to tests and treatments.²⁴

As the nation-wide lockdown continued, the issues of internal labor migrant became a major agenda for news media, calls for safe passage to the migrant workers, as Nepal witnessed caravans of internal migrants moving out of the Kathmandu Valley and other cities after losing their jobs and livelihood options became headline news. The labor migrants from India were for a period stranded on the Nepal- India border, the issue of allowing them to enter the homeland was widely raised.

Recent reports on Nepali labor migrants have shown that the pandemic has significantly affected socio-economic conditions as migrants have lost jobs and been forced to unpaid leave or return home. Some 20 per cent of the Nepalis abroad were at risk of being unemployed and many workers had not received their wages and other benefits, and were deprived of access to basic services.²⁵ The report also highlighted the issue of repatriation and return as key challenges whereas Foreign Employment Board estimated the need to immediately repatriate 127,000 labor migrants and a further 407,000 estimated returnees from 37 countries to Nepal.²⁶ 'The Covid-19 and Nepali Labor Migrant: Impacts and Responses' report also identified the need for compensation and legal remedy:

Nepali migrant workers have also been subjected to various forms of exploitation, forced termination of contracts, expulsion from employment, deprivation of basic services, arbitrary detention, ill-treatment, stigmatization, and discrimination.²⁷

The pandemic has seriously affected the working-class people in the marginal economic situations and migrants who are not protected by the social security have been further marginalized by the crisis.²⁸

24 ILO. (2020). Protecting Migrant Workers During the Covid-19 Pandemic: Recommendations for Policymakers and Constituents. Accessed on September 15, 2020. Available from https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---migrant/documents/publication/wcms_743268.pdf

25 Baniya, J., Bhattarai, S., Thapa, B.J., and Pradhan, V. (2020). Covid-19 and Nepali Labor Migrant: Impacts and Responses. Research Paper. Center for the Study of Labor and Mobility. Accessed on September 15, 2020. Available from <https://www.ceslam.org/uploads/backup/research-paper-x-Covid-19.pdf>

26 ibid

27 ibid

28 Shneiderman, S, J. Baniya and P.L. Billion. (2020). Learning from disasters: Nepal copes with coronavirus pandemic years after earthquake. Accessed online September 24, 2020, available

Nepali Media and Labor Migration

Reporting news items on migrant labor is not a new phenomenon, but the researches in understanding how media have represented the migrant workers are relatively few.

A study stated that media plays an important role in shaping the migration policies. Media 'played an important role, intentionally or unintentionally, in (re) producing the discourse relating to female migration.'²⁹ It also outlined that media was engaged in 'overrepresentation' of women in line with the dominant discourse that women going abroad will not return pure.³⁰

The media monitoring by the Centre for Social Change in 2017 and 2018 found that news media reports on issues related to migration policies received the most coverage. The role of media to provide coverage on positive message on government contribution to ensure safety and security of migrant labor demonstrate media keeping up with government accountability.³¹ Nepali media lacked critical perspectives and have been limited in 'highlighting the problems faced by Nepali migrant workers.'³²

Critical perspectives and comprehensive reporting on issues of labor migration is important to improve the overall situation and public perception. The social impact of mass migration is also rarely reported... in the absence of proper in-depth, comprehensive, and compelling reporting, there is little pressure on the government to act on some of the serious questions surrounding the export of labor.³³

from <https://theconversation.com/learning-from-disasters-nepal-cope-with-coronavirus-pandemic-5-years-after-earthquake-134009>.

29 Kharel, A. (2016). Female Labor Migration and the Restructuring of Migration Discourse: A Study of Female Workers from Chitwan, Nepal. PhD Dissertation. Kansas State University. Accessed on September 8, 2020. Available from <https://krex.k-state.edu/dspace/handle/2097/32662>.

30 ibid

31 Center for Social Change. (2018). Coverage of Foreign Labor Migration in Nepali Mainstream Media. Accessed on September 15, 2020. Available at <http://socialchange.org.np/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Nepali-Media-Monitoring-Report-on-Foreign-Labour-Migration-2018.pdf>

32 ibid

33 Rai, O. A. (2015). Information gaps fail to keep track of a country on the move, in Moving Stories – International Review of How Media Cover Migration. Ethical Journalism Network: London. Accessed on September 10, 2020. Available from <https://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/resources/publications/moving-stories/nepal>

Findings of the study

This section discusses the findings of the study. Generally, each of the sub-section begins with the quantitative data followed by the understanding from the qualitative analysis and the interviews. Some sub-sections only have quantitative data.

Distribution of media coverage

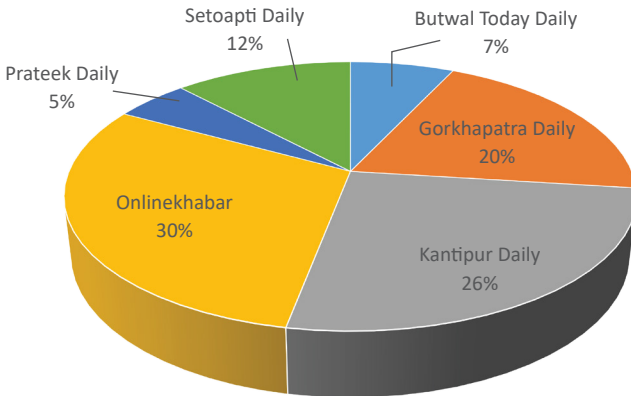
This sub-section provides an insight on analysis of the quantitative data that aims to explain priority provided to the issues, pattern of the coverage, types of news items and space provided. The quantitative analysis in this section is based on 1,098 media content published in six month period from March 1 to August 31, 2020 on issues relevant to labor migration and migrant laborers.

National dailies on top of issues

Figure 1 shows the distribution of the contents among studied media outlets. On average, six media outlets published six news items in a day during the study period.

Around 58 per cent of those news items were published by selected four newspapers and remaining 42 per cent by the online media. The national dailies published more items, nearly 46 per cent, whereas provincial newspapers published 13 per cent of those content.

Figure 1. Coverage by News Media



Onlinekhabar.com published the highest number of news items, 331 in total. A reason for this is the online portal reported all major developments throughout the day. During the daily newsroom meetings in Onlinekhabar.com, the issue was considered important as Nepali migrant workers were in high numbers and the newsroom believed that many Nepalis would lose jobs and would look to return home.³⁴ It was followed by Kantipur daily which published 280 news items.

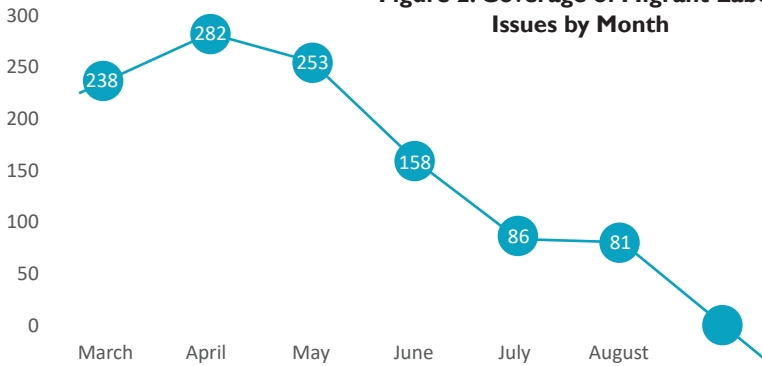
Provincial newspapers have least numbers of news items with Prateek daily publishing 60 and Butwal Today publishing 78 news items. Given their total available pages, the number nevertheless indicated that they continuously covered the issues of the labor migration.

As time passed, coverage declined

In April, issues of labor migrants received the highest coverage with 282 news, an average of nine items a day. Figure 2 shows that while the coverage was high during the initial months of March, April and May, it declined steadily in the last three months - June (158 news), July (86 news) and August (81 news).

³⁴ Rabindra Ghimire, personal interview, September 19, 2020

Figure 2. Coverage of Migrant Labor Issues by Month



Journalists took the decline as a normal proceeding. They pointed out that in the initial phase as the lockdown affected the labors in the destination countries, the stories from the destination countries received more importance. Onlinekhabar.com's Rabindra Ghimire shared:

As the lockdown resulted in loss of jobs and high number of people walking long distance to get back home, the issue of hunger was prevalent rather than the disease. The state was in no position to rescue those migrant laborers. Even the international travel was affected due to lockdown and Nepalis who had planned to get home were stranded.³⁵

Another journalist, Hom Karki, was of the view that the companies in the labor destination countries started halting their work, leading journalists to look into the government policies, effect of Covid-19 infection among the laborers, security concerns of laborers in the destination countries, and the future of labor market as dominant concerns.³⁶ As things started settling down, and labor migrants either reached home or adapted to the situation, those issues become largely irrelevant and of less interest among journalists.

Origin of News

Among all news, 63 news items – such as editorials and opinions - did not carry dateline while others have the place of origin. Majority of news items, 64 per cent of them, were datelined Kathmandu. A reason behind majority of news being written

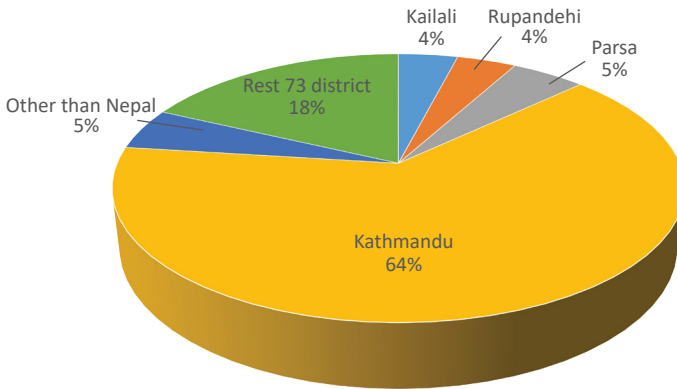
³⁵ ibid

³⁶ Hom Karki, personal interview, September 20, 2020

from Kathmandu is obvious – four of the studied media are based in Kathmandu, all policy level decisions were made in the capital and compared to Kathmandu, the media have minor presence outside Kathmandu.

A journalist from Gorkhapatra pointed out that reporters in labor destination countries are few in numbers, so even those news items that should have been reported from foreign countries were reported from Kathmandu.³⁷ Such news produced from Kathmandu covered issues that happened abroad and journalists from Kathmandu used social media and sources from embassies to report on the issues.

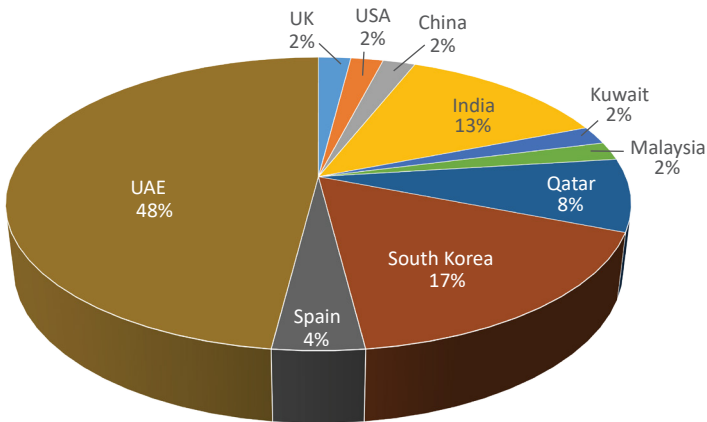
Figure 3. News Dateline



However, five per cent of the news, or a total of 47 items, were datelined outside Nepal. Onlinekhabar.com and Kantipur have the most number of news filed from abroad - 10 countries. Almost half of those news, 47 per cent, were filed from the UAE followed by South Korea (17 per cent), India (13 per cent) and Qatar (8 per cent). These countries are destination countries for Nepali labor migrants. There were also some news citing migrant labor issues filed from the USA, the UK, China, and Spain. The news items from these countries focused on immigrants, people of Nepali origins losing jobs, stranded passengers, and fraud.

37 Hom Karki, personal interview, September 20, 2020

Figure 4. News Dateline from Other Countries



Within Nepal, behind Kathmandu, three districts – Kailali, Rupendehi and Parsa accounted for 14 per cent of the news. There are two reasons behind high coverage in those districts – first, Butwal Today and Prateek are based in Rupendehi and Parsa respectively and second, Kailali as well as other two districts have borders with India and were in the limelight due to the stranded migrant workers because of the closed border.

Labor migration expert pointed out crisis within the media themselves due to the pandemic and concentration of the labor related activities and discussions within Kathmandu.³⁸

The news filed from destination countries such as the UAE was written by local correspondent. Among all those published from abroad, only 11 news were published in newspapers and the remaining 36 were published in Onlinekhabar.com. The news portal published stories from the UAE written by their locally based correspondent. It indicated that the presence of at least one correspondent outside Nepal can lead to the possibility of more coverage of issues.

Journalists opined that the dominant coverage was because the UAE had more Nepalis engaged in the service sector – the most affected sector by the Covid-19, and the biggest number of Nepali women labor migrants there.

38 Jeevan Baniya, personal interview, September 18, 2020

As the service sectors were closed, labor migrants' did not receive payments, and were forced to seek livelihood, which prompted more coverage from the UAE.³⁹ More labor migrants in the UAE were stranded because many of them were on job after entering the country on a 'visit visa.'⁴⁰

More coverage was given to the problems of labor migrants in the UAE because they were able to communicate their situation and problems using social media. Migration expert Jeevan Baniya stated that the use of social media in the UAE is comparatively free compared to other labor destination countries, which must have prompted the labor migrants to speak to the news media.⁴¹

Labor Employment Journalist Group, an association of Nepali journalists covering labor migration, pointed out three reasons that journalists used to prioritize of the issues from the destination countries. Chairman Sunil Neupane pointed out at a) the gravity of the problem faced by Nepali workers, b) the freedom to access the use of social media and flow of information thereof, and c) the activeness of Nepali community in the country.⁴²

Authors of News

The author of the news items and opinions bears importance – not only for the general understanding of the ways the media covers the issue, but also to have gendered perspectives. Majority of news items were produced by staff reporter and correspondent of the media, which accounts to 1,001 stories. Only 54 news items were produced by Rastriya Samachar Samiti (RSS), the national news agency of Nepal. Online media used 44 of those news items. The rest, 43 of them, were written by external authors, which were the opinion articles.

Majority of news items, 596 of them, carried no byline or the name of the author and were attributed generally to the staff reporter. Among the rest, 461 were written by a single author whereas 41 were written by more than an author.

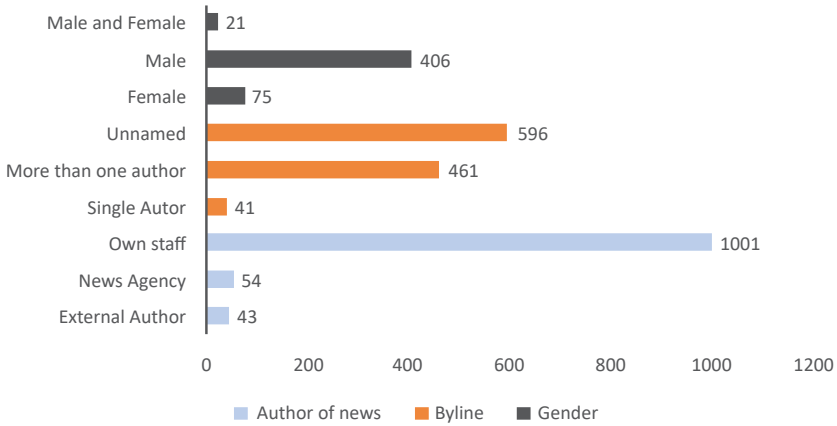
39 Hom Karki, personal interview, September 20, 2020

40 Rabindra Ghimire, personal interview, September 19, 2020

41 Jeevan Baniya, personal interview, September 18, 2020

42 Sunil Neupane, personal interview, September 20, 2020

Figure 5. Author of News Article

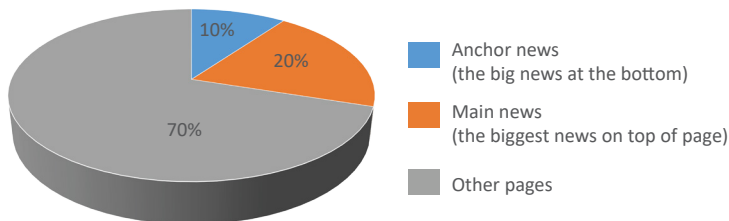


Among stories with named byline, 80 per cent were male and 15 per cent were female authors. The remaining five per cent has authors of both genders sharing the byline. The print media seems more gender-friendly compared to online media as they used female bylines six times more than the online media.

News priority

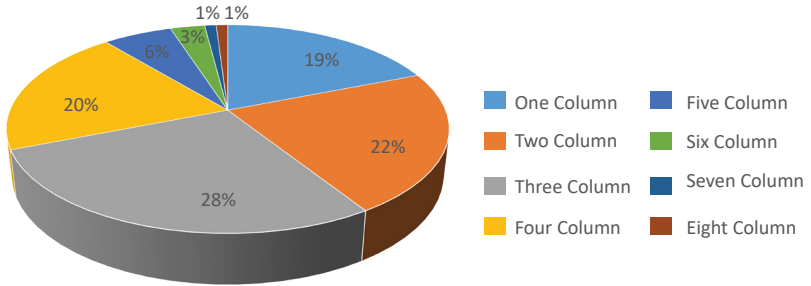
The placement and size of the news items reflect the priority given to the news items by the media. Nearly 30 per cent of news items in the newspapers were published on the frontpage with 20 per cent of them placed as the main news story of the page and 10 per cent placed as 'anchor' news story – on the bottom of the page which has a prominence value in newspapers. To put it in context, among the four newspapers, on an average, at least one newspaper's most important story of the day was related to labor migration. This indicates that news on labor migration is considered important by the media.

Figure 6. Print Media- News Placement



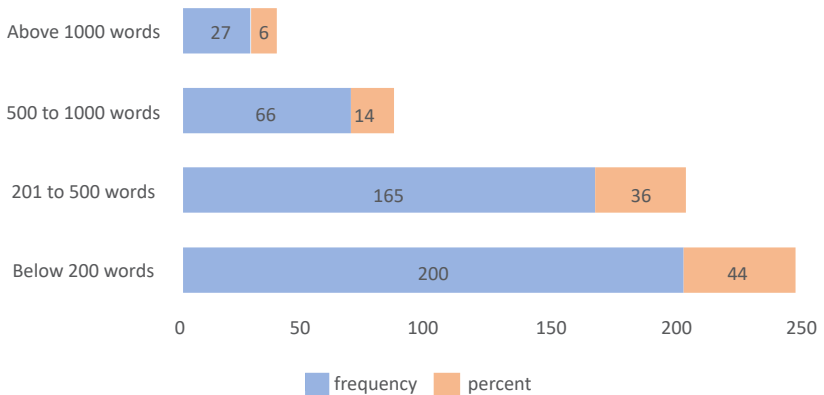
The remaining 70 per cent news items appeared in other pages in the newspapers. The prominence of news story in the newspapers can also be observed by the space given to it, normally calculated by the number of columns assigned to the news items.

Figure 7. Space Provided in Print Media



Nearly one-third, 31 per cent of news items, were given four or more columns. Four news items were given the highest, and rare, priority with eight columns and seven news items were placed in seven columns.

Figure 7. Online News Portal-Use of Words



On online media, pages or columns are not relevant. But the priority can be observed through the space provided in terms of the word count of the news items. More than two-third (80 per cent) of the news items on labor migration published in online media were below 500 words each. Six per cent news items published were above 1,000 words, and 20 per cent of the news items being written in more than 500 words.

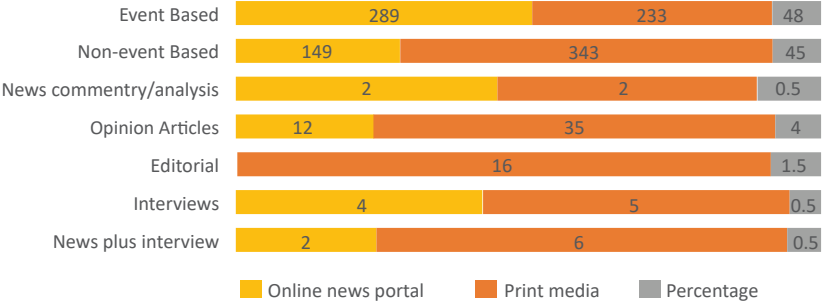
This shows that news items on the issue of labor migration received priority in the media coverage. The newspapers usually print news items on the issues of labor migration on the Economy pages. Online media also have a tab or a section for economy. Using the continuity of bylines, the study found that the media have beat reporters specializing on labor issues.

A journalist pointed out that reporting on labor issues in the past was not easy because of inadequate availability of information but the access to information has increased in recent times as Nepali labor migrants use social media, Nepal's embassies in destination countries provide information, and in some countries like the UAE and Qatar, there are journalist consortium through which local journalists also provide information.⁴³ This indicated proactive role that the journalists have taken to remain on top of the issues and build networks.

Focus on Events

The news items on labor migration were mainly focused on event-based reporting. Nearly half of the news items published, 48 per cent, were event-based news items followed by 45 per cent of non-event-based reporting.

Figure 9. Type of News Article



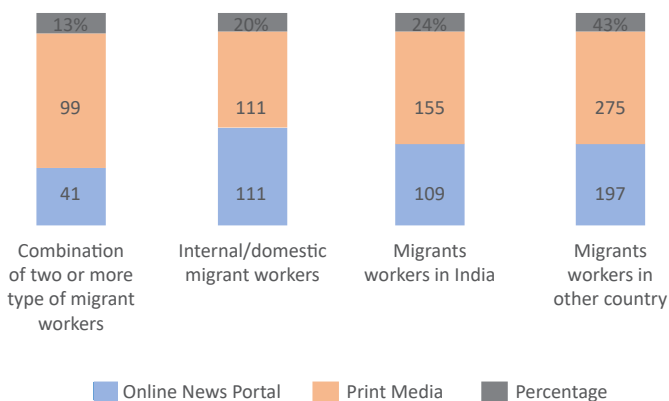
43 Sita Sharma, personal interview, September 21, 2020

Online media covered more event-based stories compared to newspapers. Newspapers have more non-event-based news items. Only newspapers have editorials published and 16 editorials in total means the newspapers averages an editorial every six weeks. The editorials were published in March (3), April (6), May (2), June (3) and July (2). The initial months March and April has 9 editorials published as the coverage of migrant labor issues were highly covered during these time frame.

Labor migrants covered differently

The issue of cross-border migrant workers (other than India) received the highest coverage in the media. It was followed by the coverage of migrant workers in India and internal migrant workers. The issue of migrant workers in the Gulf and other destination countries received top priority than the laborers within the country and migrant workers in India. About 43 per cent of media coverage focused on cross-border migrant workers (other than India), these workers are also covered in those 13 per cent news items of issues concerning all types of migrant workers.

Figure 10. Coverage of Primary Migrant Workers



However, media's priority changed slightly during the duration on the monthly basis. The crosstab data of the month and concerning primary migrant workers showed that although cross-border migrant workers (other than India) received highest priority in March, June, July and August, in April, internal migrant workers received the highest coverage and in May, migrant workers in India received the highest coverage. The changes point out that media attention changed based on the context, in April as the lockdown prolonged, jobless internal migrant workers started walking back to their places of origins. Likewise, in May, the issue on the

rights of the labor migrants' right to enter their country was prominent when they were not allowed to enter Nepal crossing the closed borders.

Labor migration expert Baniya agreed that migrant labor in India do not get much attention from journalists, researchers, and donors as they focus more on cross-border migrant works (other than India). Baniya stated:

“Media people, researchers and even funding agencies have least concern on Nepali migrant workers in India. The coverage largely depends on a) the number of correspondents of a particular media house in the districts which share border with India; b) the capacity or resources of the media house; and c) the feasibility for reporters to go on the field to collect information.”

Dr. Anuj Tiwari, co-founder of the Center for Migration and International Relations echoed similar views. He opined that migration to India for work is hardly considered as foreign employment issue, which is why the Foreign Employment Act 2007 has provisions focused on labor migration to countries beyond India.⁴⁴ Similarly, Dr. Kharel opined that although many Nepali workers are in India, due to open border and historical ties between two countries, they are always taken for granted.⁴⁵

Journalists blamed the government for discriminatory policy to workers — it managed well facilitated quarantine for the students coming in from China, whereas it let workers coming in from India go home directly. Editor Krishna Malla stated that probably journalists are not exploring the issues proactively and relying on approaches to them. Moreover, Nepali migrant workers in India have poor access to Nepali media.

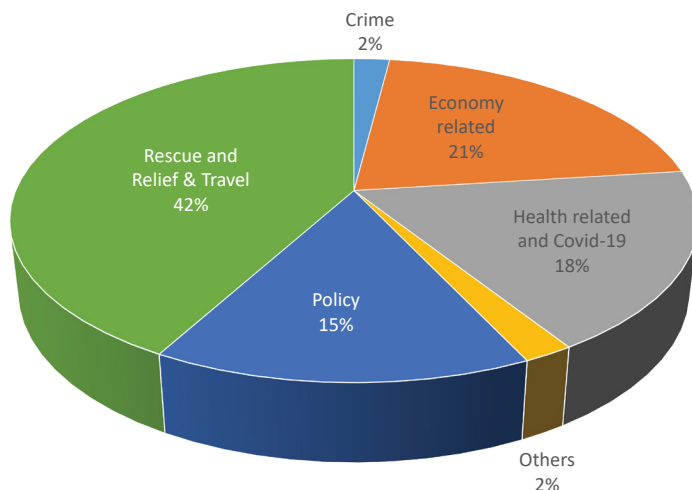
Themes of Media Coverage

The major thematic issue given priority during Covid-19 pandemic was the need for rescue and relief, and travel-related. About 42 per cent of news items dealt with the issue, which called for the need to rescue, provide reliefs and problems of travel back to the home country.

44 Dr. Anuj Tiwari, personal interview, September 20, 2020

45 Dr. Arjun Kharel, personal interview, September 18, 2020

Figure 11. Coverage by Thematic Issue



Labor migration experts Dr. Kharel and Baniya took this as natural as those issues were prominent even in public discussions during those times. Baniya said: “Especially in the beginning of a crisis, these are the issues of human concern and had thematic gravity too.”⁴⁶ Journalists opined that the issue was the focus due to empathy as the journalists saw that ‘stranded Nepalis were on the verge of dying abroad, but the government had failed to address their problems.’⁴⁷

Other prioritized issues were economy with 21 per cent coverage, and health with 18 per cent coverage. It was also evident in the editorials published in the media as 30 per cent editorials were on rescue and relief. The government policy received 15 per cent coverage.

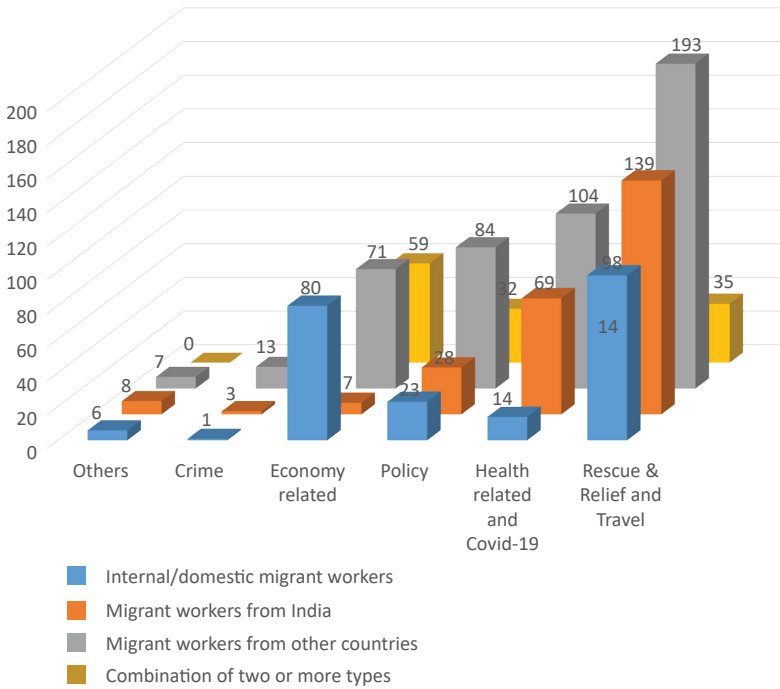
The crosstab analysis of primary migrant workers and major thematic issue coverage on migrant workers revealed that cross-border migrant workers (other than India) received much more prominence in coverage. Experts opined that the government had given least priority to the issues of the internal migrant workers and that reflected in the media coverage. Dr. Kharel stated that ‘pains of struggles of the tea plantation workers and construction workers got media coverage’ however the ‘due to our tradition of giving little value to nearly places or goods... the coverage is low.’⁴⁸

46 Jeevan Baniya, personal interview, September 18, 2020

47 Rabindra Ghimire, personal interview, September 19, 2020

48 Dr. Arjun Kharel, personal interview, September 18, 2020

Figure 12. Thematic Issues and Coverage by Migrant Workers



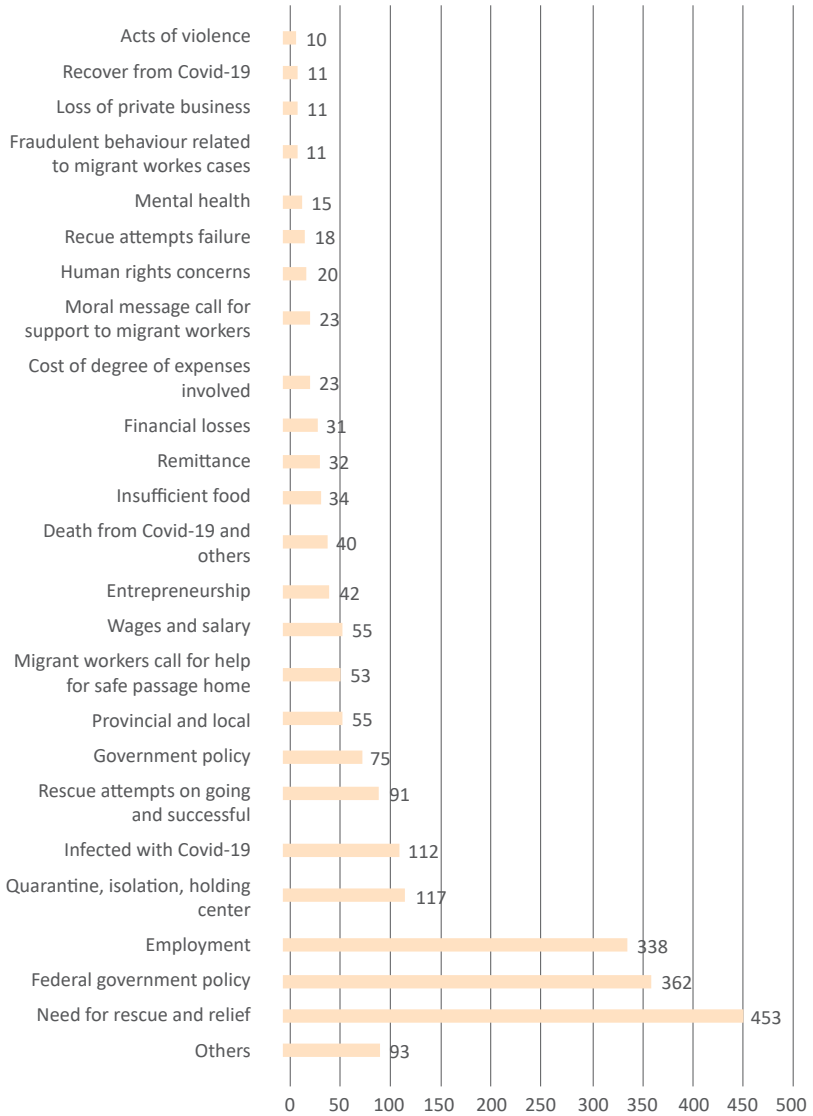
Topics of News

Based on the thematic coverage, major topics of the story were also identified through a multiple-choice question. The need for rescue and relief was widely covered. The topic was prominent in 453 or nearly 42 per cent news items with titles like ‘migrant workers walking home’ or ‘reached home’ or ‘rescue migrant workers’ and ‘workers stranded’.

The second prioritized topic was the federal government policy, which dealt with the state’s policies such as rescue and safe passage to the return, restrictions at the border, and travel ban, and flight management. A total of 362 or 33 per cent news items discussed the topic.

Employment as a topic which dealt with the issue of ‘loss of job’ and ‘no payment’ received nearly equal attention and was discussed in 338 or 31 per cent of the news items.

**Figure 13. Topic of Coverage
(Multiple choice question)**



Distantly following the top three were topics on quarantine, isolation and holding centers; coronavirus infection and rescue attempts which were discussed in 8 to 11 per cent news items. These topics were followed by provincial and local level policies (Figure 13).

The news items on deportation, bilateral cooperation, behavior with migrant workers, and unauthorized border crossing were included in the 'others' category. Some other topics that were discussed include migrant workers escaping quarantine, suicide, travel permits, illegal migration, living condition of migrant laborers, death penalty, treatment, and visa.

Use of News Sources

Use of the news sources helps understand whose voices dominate the media coverage and the diversity of opinions in the news items. Most of the news items were written using a single source, meaning media using information from a source to tell the story. The news items that used single sources summed up to 43 per cent or 469 news items.

Journalist Karki stated that media had poor access to sources especially in the destination countries.⁴⁹ Journalist Ghimire opined that the high number of such news items are because of the lockdown and unavailability of concerned authorities:

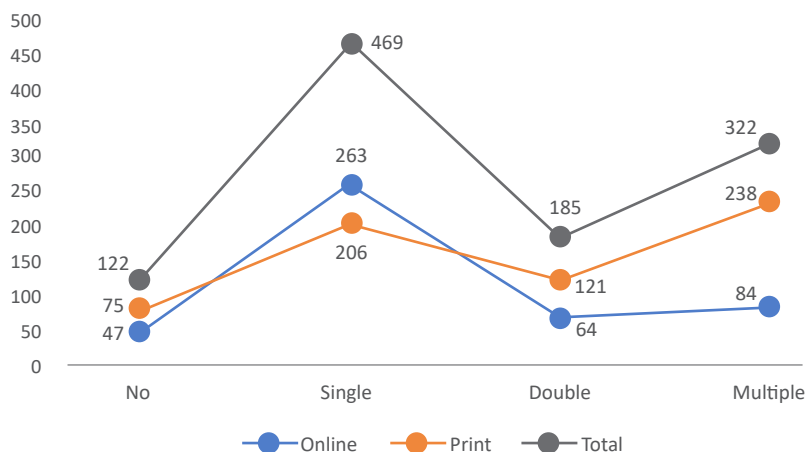
We could not go out to talk to anyone in person. The internet was unstable during lockdown. The sources of information, especially the concerned authorities switched off their phone while staying home. They had no sense of responsibility about the problem of migrant workers. We were bound to depend on a limited source.⁵⁰

The use of single source in news item is more prevalent in online media than in newspapers.

49 Hom Karki, personal interview, September 20, 2020

50 Rabindra Ghimire, personal interview, September 19, 2020

Figure 14. Use of News Sources: Online vs Print



Journalists were in common view that it was difficult to use multiple sources in news items. For this, some attributed lack of news sources while others, such as Ghimire,⁵¹ blamed the weakness from the government for denying access to information.

Media generally use multiple sources as a tool to verify the information to make the news items credible and provide varying opinions on the reporting. 96 news items used anonymous sources that have no named attribution, but the information was attributed to 'high level' sources. Online media used more anonymous sources than newspapers. Online media based 11 per cent of their news items on anonymous sources while newspapers relied on anonymous sources for nearly seven per cent news items.

The code of ethics for journalists states that the sources of information should be identified and attributed to with their name and position. It is necessary to put into consideration by the media to identify the specific criteria that is used to decide a source to be regarded as confidential.⁵²

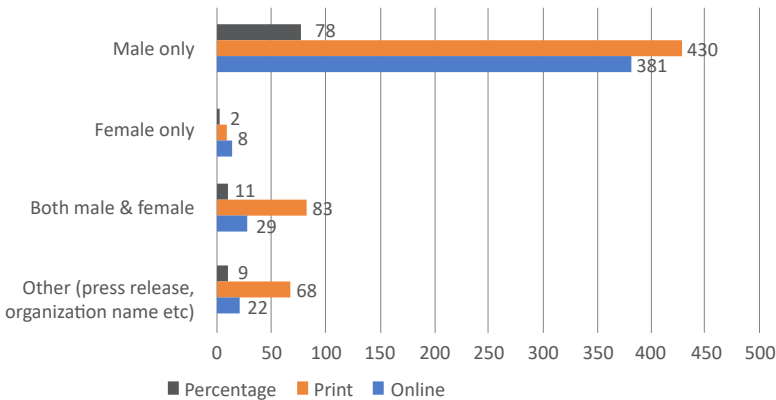
⁵¹ *ibid.*

⁵² Wulfemeyer, K.T. (1983). Use of Anonymous Sources in Journalism. *Newspaper Research Journal*. Volume: 4 Issue: 2, pages: 43-50. Accessed online September 20, 2020. Available from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/073953298300400205?journalCode=nrja>

Gender in news sources

The study found that male voices dominated the issues of the labor migration as a high majority of news items where sources are identified, 86 per cent of them, used only male news sources whereas in another 12 per cent, both male and female news sources were used. Those news items that only used female news sources were less than two per cent.

Figure 16. Male Dominated News Sources



Journalist Sharma believed that as most of the journalists reporting the issue were male, they might have felt easier to access male sources.⁵³ Neupane stated:

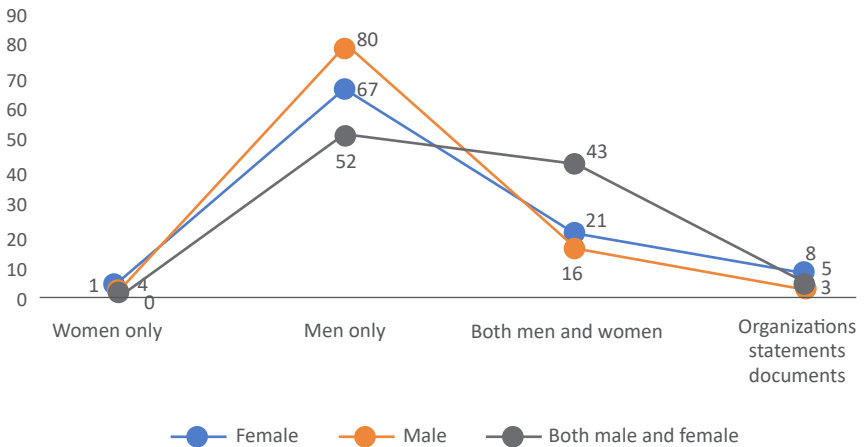
Our tendency is to quote female sources mostly for the news related with women issues. Most of the reporters reporting either from Nepal or abroad are male and they might have quoted more male sources because of comfort to talk.⁵⁴

To understand whether gender of journalist affected the choice of sources while reporting of labor migration, the study analyzed use of sources according to the gender of the author and found that female journalists are more likely to use female sources compared to male journalists. Among bylined news items, 15 per cent were written by female journalists and four per cent of them quoted female sources whereas in only one per cent of news written by male journalists only female sources were quoted.

53 Sita Sharma, personal interview, September 21, 2020

54 Sunil Neupane, personal interview, September 20, 2020

Figure 17. Female Journalists Use More Women Source Compared to Male



Also, 21 per cent of the stories written by female journalists, quoted sources of both gender while in those written by male journalists, it was only 16 per cent. It re-affirms the findings that 'female journalists might attach greater credibility to female sources than do male reporters and thus use proportionately more of them in their stories.'⁵⁵

Journalists accepted that female sources are rarely used in the reporting and claimed that there was no access to female sources. They also outlined other issues such as lack of equal opportunities, social stigma for woman migrant workers, and 'their reluctance to speak up.' Karki stated that journalists have no access to female migrant workers and 'there is almost no presence of women as experts in the subject matter.'⁵⁶ Ghimire added:

The presence of women in policy or decision making is very low...As far as the female migrant workers are concerned, our social structure held them back from expressing openly. As a result, women workers hesitate to speak to news media without hiding their identity.⁵⁷

55 Zoch, L. M., & Turk, J. V. (1998). Women Making News: Gender as a Variable in Source Selection and Use. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 75(4), 762–775. doi:10.1177/107769909807500410

56 Hom Karki, personal interview, September 20, 2020

57 Rabindra Ghimire, personal interview, September 19, 2020

The gender of the journalist is also relevant in the gender of the sources. For example, 'in far-west province, there are more male journalists and a journalist's relationship with sources is also based on gender which should have contributed to high number of male sources.'

However, journalist Khanal said she had made concise efforts to make more women heard but it was difficult to find women as sources of news:

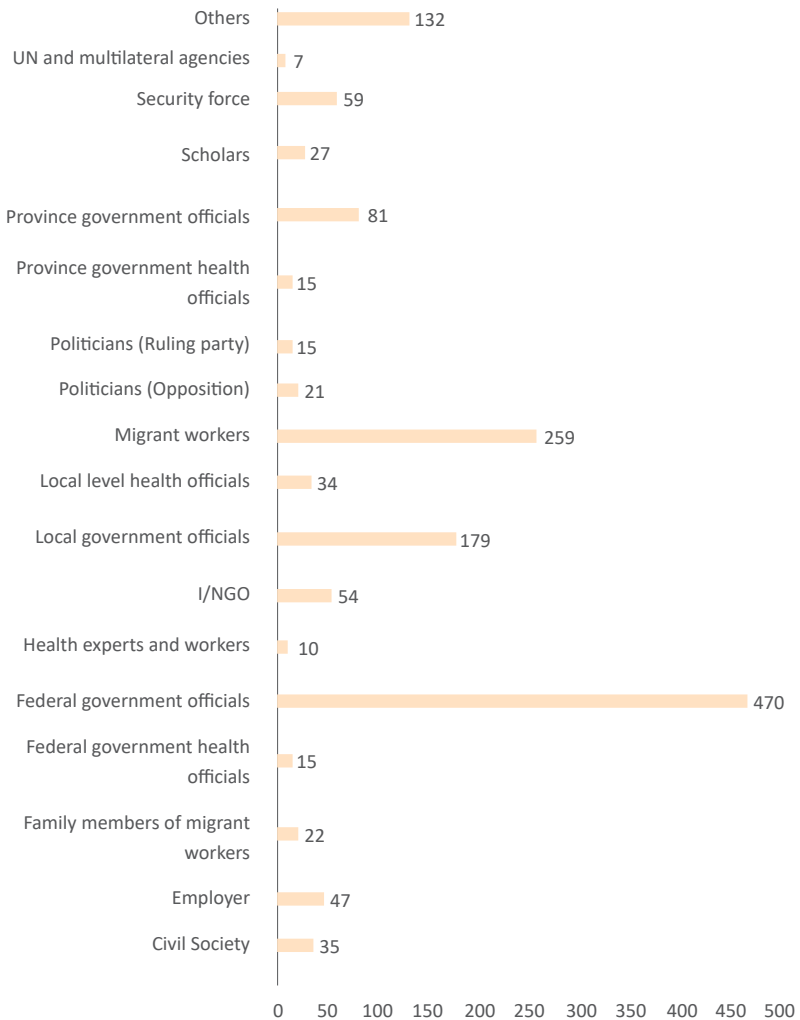
Nowadays, I consciously look for women as sources in my reports. I turn to man if I do not find any woman to quote. However, it is not easy to find women as sources. There are hardly any woman in government offices who hold a high position and who we can quote. And many women who have achieved high position do not wish to speak to media.⁵⁸

This showed that male sources are considered authoritative in reporting the issue of labor migration in Nepal. Becker's model suggests that higher up in society are more likely to be asked to present their knowledge than are subordinate groups because of their access to the inner workings of society's bureaucratic organizations: "any tale told by those at the top intrinsically deserves to be regarded as the most credible account...thus, credibility and the right to be heard are differentially distributed through the ranks of the system."⁵⁹

58 Bhanu Bhakta Acharya, personal interview, September 19, 2020.

59 Atton, C. and Wickenden, E. (2005). Sourcing Routines and Representation in Alternative Journalism: A case study approach. *Journalism Studies*, 6(3), pp. 347-359. (Cites this document) Becker, H.S., 1967. Whose Side Are We On? *Social Problems*, 14(2) Fall, pp.239-47.

Figure 18. Government Sources Highly Cited



This study reaffirms the belief as the federal government officials were among the highly cited sources. Out of 1,482 sources cited in all news items, if we add the government sources of local, provincial, and federal level, it made up 53 per cent of total cited sources. The second most cited sources are migrant workers which made up 17 per cent of news sources. Other significant sources were employer, civil society members, politicians, security forces, experts, and I/NGOs.

This showed news items on labor migration were mostly dependent upon government sources during the time of Covid-19 crisis followed by migrant workers and their families. Becker has pointed out the primary sources are elite groups and institutions who are both easily found and considered credible through their structural positioning and representative status: "journalists [are] very likely to take the frameworks for understanding events offered by such institutions as a starting point for their reports".⁶⁰

Tone of the Media Content

The study also analyzed the tone of the news items. Although analysis of the tone can be subjective, it was done based on the use of words in the headline and the lead (first paragraph) of the news items. The researchers identified tone either as 'positive,' or as 'neutral' or 'negative.' The study looked at a news item's overall tone along with the tone towards a) government, and b) labor migrants.

For this study, the definition of 'negativity', and therefore 'positivity' was borrowed from psychology. Roy F. Baumister, Ellen Bratslavsky, Kathleen Vohs and Catrin Finkenauer (2001)⁶¹ defined positive as 'something that we understand desirable, beneficial, or pleasant outcomes including states or consequences while negative is the opposite: undesirable, harmful or unpleasant'. Although, good and bad are among the first concepts learned by children and most people can readily characterize almost any experience, emotion, or outcome as good or bad⁶², the strict implementation of the theoretical assumptions in the study was not easy.

In the study, all those news that used words used in headline and lead paragraph provoking negative feelings such as fear, rejection, disapproval, pessimism, dehumanization, insecurity, mockery, restriction, violation and regression and negative traits such as unsuccessful, not agreed, incomplete, unavailable, failed, bad, violence, death, accident, injury, war, clash, conflict, crime and disaster were considered to be that of negative tone.

The 'positive tone' is defined on the basis of words used in headline and lead paragraph that provoked positive traits such as success, agreement, completed,

60 Atton, C. and Wickenden, E. (2005). Sourcing Routines and Representation in Alternative Journalism: A case study approach. *Journalism Studies*, 6(3), pp. 347-359.

61 Baumeister R F, Bratslavsky E, Finkenauer C and Vohs K D. (2001). Bad is stronger than good. *Review of General Psychology*, 54, 323-370. The Educational Publishing Foundation.

62 *ibid*

available, planned, awarded, rehabilitation and improvement. Sometimes, those pre-defined words were used in a way that give with the literal meaning, when two or more words of different connotation were used or words that may provoke different feelings among different groups of people, especially due to their political views, they were considered to be of undistinguishable tone. Those news items that neither provoked positive nor negative emotions and/or showed no positive or negative trait were classified as that of 'neutral tone'

Overall tone of the media content

The study finds that more than half of the news items carried overall negative tone compared to 40 per cent carrying overall positive tone. 7 per cent were neutral and rest 2 per cent were indistinguishable.

Table 1: Overall Tone of News Items on Labor Migration

Media	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Indistinguishable
Butwal Today	40%	1%	55%	4%
Gorkhapatra	56%	17%	26%	1%
Kantipur	23%	11%	66%	> 1%
Onlinekhabar	43%	7%	50%	> 1%
Prateek	28%	5%	63%	4%
Setopati	47%	2%	47%	4%

Source: CMR-Nepal, 2020

Those news that carried negative tones were about closure of flights, difficulties faced by labor migrants, closure of borders by destination countries, denial of entry to labor migrants by destination countries, infection to labor migrants, non-payment of salary and difficulties in livelihood. Similarly, news items on labor migrants being stranded, decrease in number of demands for migrant workers, unavailability of health treatment, death, hunger, and problems faced were also classified as having overall negative tone.

Examples of the news items that had overall positive tone covered issues like local level collecting information about returnees, safety situation of labor migrants, rescue flights and rescue efforts, plans for settlement, opening of the border for returning workers, local level government managing transports for returning

workers, quarantine management, relief distribution, and charities helping jobless internal migrant workers.

Tone towards labor migrants

The study found that media portrayed labor migrants in more positive tone than in negative tone. Overall, 42 per cent news items had positive tone towards labor migrants compared to 30 per cent with negative tone. Those news items with positive tone portrayed labor migrants positively and lobbied for their welfare.

Table 2: Portrayal of Labor Migrants in Nepali Media During Covid-19 Pandemic

Media	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Butwal Today	46%	9%	45%
Gorkhapatra	26%	60%	14%
Kantipur	15%	40%	45%
Onlinekhabar	62%	32%	6%
Prateek	18%	20%	62%
Setopati	85%	6%	9%

Source: CMR-Nepal, 2020

The news items referring to, for example, government's reluctance to rescue labor migrants, delays in rescue, irresponsible statements or actions, corruption accusations on government, impracticality of rescue guidelines, and cancellation of rescue flights due to government's lack of coordination were classified as having negative tone towards government.

The news items referring to, for example, government's urge to labor migrants to remain safe, awareness through diplomatic missions, plans and policies of rescue, diplomatic efforts to bring back labor migrants, relief, rescue, support to provide loans to returnees, budget allocated for rescue or relief or skill development were classified as having positive tone towards government.

Nepali media generally portrayed cross-border migrant workers (other than India) as those needing support, rescue and relief from government citing the role they had

played to help the country's economy. For migrant workers in India, Nepali media's general narrative was to advocate for their return to homeland and quarantine.

Those news items portraying them negatively were about the need to close border, fear among residents due to return of labor migrants, and labor migrants using illegal routes to enter Nepal.

Online media were more positive in portrayal of labor migrants than newspapers. Overall, online media's tone towards them was positive in 58 per cent news items whereas newspapers were positive in 42 per cent of news items. The study also found that online media are more likely to provoke emotions either negative or positive than newspapers. 83 per cent news items on newspapers carried neutral tone towards labor migrants compared to 17 per cent news items in online media.

Tone towards government

Among the analyzed news items, 36 per cent portrayed government's roles negatively compared to 28 per cent of positive tone. The remaining 36 per cent news items reported basic information about the government's policies and works or carried varying views without provoking any negative or positive feelings towards government, and thus were classified as that of neutral tone towards government.

Table 3: Portrayal of Labor Migrants in Nepali Media During Covid-19 Pandemic

Media	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Butwal Today	24%	45%	31%
Gorkhapatra	52%	25%	23%
Kantipur	20%	38%	42%
Onlinekhabar	30%	30%	40%
Prateek	3%	55%	42%
Setopati	40%	21%	39%

Source: CMR-Nepal, 2020

The news items referring to, for example, government's reluctance to rescue labor migrants, delays in rescue, irresponsible statements or actions, corruption

accusations on government, impracticality of rescue guidelines, and cancelation of rescue flights due to government's lack of coordination were classified as having negative tone towards government.

The news items referring to, for example, government's urge to labor migrants to remain safe, awareness through diplomatic missions, plans and policies of rescue, diplomatic efforts to bring back labor migrants, relief, rescue, support to provide loans to returnees, budget allocated for rescue or relief or skill development were classified as having positive tone towards government.

Comparative Thematic and Trend Analysis

This section is the summarized qualitative analysis of the news items on labor migration during the study period. The media coverage on three categories of the labor migration is analyzed based on what and how three types of media - national newspapers, provincial newspapers, and online media – reported.

The general trend across all media was: a) high coverage from March to April and decline in coverage from May to August, and b) focus on risks of virus transmission from migrant workers and border control shifted to plights and pains of workers and their rights to return to the homeland.

Migrant Workers in India

National newspapers

The issues of migrant workers in India received prominence in media, especially from the third week of March. Kantipur reported that thousands of Nepali labor migrants were likely to lose jobs. It also reported about labor migrants returning home due to coronavirus, and that locals feared virus transmission from them. Kantipur also published news item about the risky movement of people across the Nepal-India border and the absence of screening at checkpoints.

Gorkhapatra reported on the increasing numbers of labor migrants returning from India and negligence for health check-ups at the border. Gorkhapatra focused on labor migrants returning home while referring to lack of health check-up or ineffectiveness of border screening or workers being stranded.

From the very beginning of April, Kantipur covered the migrant workers in India writing about the dangers of virus transmission and stranded workers at the border. Supreme Court's order to allow labor migrants to return to the homeland, difficulty in managing quarantine for huge number of returnees were top stories in the private daily. After the Nepal-India border was sealed in April, Gorkhapatra covered labor migrants who could not enter the country, initiatives to monitor returnees in home districts, and cases of infection.

Kantipur continued to raise the issues of migrant workers in India in May as well reporting about government's unawareness of workers willing to return home, people at border checkpoints, and labor migrants reaching home. Kantipur prioritized issue of denial of entry to Nepal, state-run Gorkhapatra focused more on those who were allowed in and reached home.

In June, while Kantipur wrote about huge number of returnees and deaths, pains, and sufferings of the migrant workers on their way home, Gorkhapatra largely ignored them. Thereafter, there were hardly any significant coverage of migrant workers in India.

Online media

Online media also showed similar trends. For the first three months (March - May), the issues of migrant workers in India received high attention, which declined later (June - August). Both Onlinekhabar.com and Setopati.com did not publish any news about migrant workers in India in July and August.

Both online media focused on border management, number of returnees, quarantine plans, and plights of labor migrants at the border areas in March and April. Setopati.com also covered woman migrant workers in India.

Onlinekhabar.com in April focused on the PM's statement about migrant workers in India where he was quoted as saying 'bringing Nepalese from India can bring coronavirus'. It also published follow-up news item on the statement.

In May, both online media focused on people at the borders and rescue-related news items. In June, they published news items about the tension on the arrival of laborers from India. Onlinekhabar.com published news items like 'tension in Dailekh: People who returned from India ran away from quarantine', and 'gang rape of woman in quarantine'. Setopati.com published four news, three of which were related to death of migrant workers.

Provincial newspapers

Prateek and Butwal Today dailies provided more coverage to migrant workers in India than internal migrant workers or cross-border migrant workers (other than India). These newspapers published a lot of news items on migrant workers in India in March, April and May, however, the number declined dramatically after June.

In March, the prominent issues in provincial dailies were cross-border mobility ban, arrival of labor migrants at checkpoints, and the quarantine. In April, Prateek seemed to have given more emphasis on the workers' mobility across Nepal-India border.

From June to August, Butwal Today published three news items about migrant workers in India while Prateek published six. In June, Prateek published news items on workers returning to the homeland as well as news items on migrant workers returning to India in search of jobs.

Prateek and Butwal Today also reported about Indian migrant workers in Nepal. In March, Prateek published two news items on Indian workers willing to return to their homeland, and in April, it published two similar news items. It followed up with one news item in May, and there was no further coverage. Butwal Today also published two news items on Indian migrant workers in Nepal in April.

Cross-Border Migrant Workers (other than India)

National newspapers

Kantipur and Gorkhapatra, from the beginning of March, published news related to cross-border migrant workers (other than India). At that time, coronavirus infection was on the rise in the Gulf and Nepal's diplomatic missions issued notices urging them not to travel. Nepal had stopped sending workers abroad leading to South Korea's dissatisfaction. The national dailies prioritized those issues.

Kantipur also reported coronavirus infection among Nepali migrant workers, restrictions on movement, and labor migrants' wish to return to the homeland. Issues of Nepalis living in Europe and China were covered. Gorkhapatra reported on Qatar's ban on foreigners, suspension of work permits, awareness programs against virus through diplomatic missions, and repatriation of workers from the UAE. Gorkhapatra also highlighted government's concern about migrant workers.

In April, Kantipur focused on corona infection, insecurity, death, job loss, food scarcity, and the government's concern for the safety of Nepalis in the Gulf. Gorkhapatra gave continuity to their coverage. The newspaper also published news about the Prime Minister's diplomatic initiatives to ensure safety of Nepali migrant workers.

In May, Kantipur prioritized the issue and started with an interview with the Nepali Ambassador to Malaysia. It seemed to have focused on coronavirus infection among Nepalis and rescue of stranded labor migrants. Kantipur published news items about the need to rescue 600,000 labor migrants while also giving priority to government's plans and statements. Gorkhapatra published a news item on preparations to bring Nepalis home, government's policy to encourage those who have lost their jobs abroad, and relief support through Nepal's diplomatic missions.

In June, Kantipur's focus was on rescue – need, plans and efforts as well as controversies surrounding it such as flight costs and delay. Gorkhapatra's focus was on government's preparations for the repatriation, the initiation to rescue stranded workers at state expense, and return of migrant workers.

July and August were continuity of June in terms of covered issues however the number of news items declined in both newspapers. Additional issue covered by both in those months were about the employment concerns of returnees and their management in the home districts.

Online media

Both Onlinekhabar.com and Setopati.com in March published news items on embassy's appeal for caution, hospitalization of returnees, coronavirus infection to migrant workers, closing of airports, and cancelation of labor migration permits. In April, Onlinekhabar.com focused on labor migrants' attempts to return and irresponsibility of government to rescue whereas Setopati.com reported on Non-Resident Nepali Association initiatives to solve problems of labor migrants.

Onlinekhabar.com, in May, focused on government initiatives giving priority to government's assessment about number of labor migrants needing rescue, appointment of provincial focal point to manage returnees, budget allocation for rescue and announcement of providing skills to returnees. Setopati.com covered them as well along with frequent follow-up on the number of coronavirus infection and death of Nepalis abroad. Onlinekhabar.com in June emphasized on the need of rescue of labor migrants at the state's expense. It criticized the government for setting high prices for rescue flights tickets, reported labor migrants' dissatisfaction over it and the Embassy in Oman's initiative to provide cheaper tickets. Setopati.com published less news than earlier months, focusing on rescue of migrant workers.

In July, both online media focused on information regarding rescue and number of returnees, resumption of work permits. Onlinekhabar.com also covered the demonstration in Nepal to open labor migration to South Korea. Onlinekhabar.com and Setopati.com both published very few news items in August and majority of them were on rescue.

Provincial newspapers

Butwal Today and Prateek gave little coverage to the issue of cross-border migrant workers (other than India) during the pandemic. Butwal Today published only one news item in March, and Prateek published a few news items. Butwal Today published no news item on them in April and May, published a few news items in June and August, and one in July. Similarly, Prateek published no news item on the issue in April, May, and August, but published a news item each in June and July. The focus

was on information regarding work permits, flights, and government's rescue efforts. Interestingly, during the period, Butwal Today published four and Prateek 10 opinion articles, all of them either critical to the government or emphasizing the changes that returnees could bring to Nepal's economy by reviving agriculture.

Internal Migrant Workers

National newspapers

Kantipur largely ignored internal migrant workers in March, publishing only one news about hotels forcing workers to take leave while Gorkhapatra published a several news items focusing on their return and the impact of coronavirus on the working class.

In April, Kantipur prioritized issues of the internal migrant workers featuring humanized cases ranging from the plight of those walking back home to workers suffering from starvation. It also published about rescues and charitable acts of people in providing them food. Gorkhapatra covered the impact of the lockdown: workers reaching home on foot and being stranded. However, its focus was more on positive side such as the government saying workers' lives were a top priority, rescue of stranded workers at the local level, local level collecting data of daily wage earners, relief, and continuity of construction work in big projects.

In May, Kantipur gave priority to employment and payment of salary. It also published news items on the loss of income for people with disabilities; and the efforts of workers and employers to find solution. Gorkhapatra meanwhile published news items on the government's announcement of relief packages, employment to youth, and feeding of the starving workers. Kantipur also published a news item titled 'agriculture is easy when relatives return' stating that people who returned home due to the fear of coronavirus engaging in agricultural works.

In June, the coverage was much lower than in previous months. Kantipur published news items on the negative impacts of lockdown on internal migrant workers. Gorkhapatra did not cover internal migrant works in June.

Kantipur did not publish anything on internal migrant workers in July, while Gorkhapatra published a news item stating the Chief Minister's Employment Program provided temporary employment to 400 workers in Bheri Municipality. In August, Kantipur raised glum outlook for internal migrant workers due to the closure of industries, covered problems of tea plant workers, and the difficulties of destitute workers in making ends meet. Gorkhapatra did not cover internal migrant workers in August.

Online media

Although, issues of internal migrant workers' grief were raised in March, bigger coverage was done in April and May. That went down after May as Onlinekhabar.com published one news item in June and none in July and August. Setopati.com also did not publish many news items on internal migrant workers in June, July, and August.

Onlinekhabar.com raised concerns over the possible impact on internal migrant workers before the lockdown announcement. It covered issues like forced leave for hotel employees, effect of coronavirus on worker-employer relation, relief packages, and stranded workers. After lockdown, both online media covered the plights of workers returning home on foot and need for rescue and relief.

In April, Onlinekhabar.com gave priority to job loss and unpaid salary while continuing coverage of plights of people walking back home. Many of such stories were characterized such as one about Govinda Chaudhary and his family who walked five days to reach Kailali from Kathmandu, and Sanjeev, a handicapped laborer, who traveled from Gorkha to Bardiya. Setopati.com also published similar news items focusing on problems of internal migrant workers under titles such as "no ration to eat, no pass to travel", 'laborers' lockdown: neither food to eat nor place to go'. Onlinekhabar.com also published different angles in April. The news about alternative strategy by laborers to make a living and enterprises not affected by lockdown were highlighted.

In May, Onlinekhabar.com emphasized the issues of unemployed laborers and creation of employment opportunity. News items about employment opportunity

in agriculture sector, increased unemployment, and salary payment were published. Setopati.com continued with struggle of internal laborers during travel, payment, and employment problem.

In June, Setopati.com published a few news items but all with positive messages. In August, Setopati.com published two news items related to internal migrant workers while Onlinekhabar.com did not publish any news items in June, July, and August.

Provincial newspapers

Butwal Today and Prateek did not give priority to internal migrant workers. Each of these dailies published one news item on internal migrant workers in March. In April, both newspapers upped their coverage on internal migrant workers. In May, Butwal Today continued the coverage and published very few news items about internal migrant workers in June and July, and almost none in August. Those news were largely local decisions or policies impacting locals or local border. Prateek did not publish any news item in May, June, July, and August.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Covid-19 pandemic was an unprecedented, extraordinary time which impacted lives of all across the world including the labor migrants. This study analyzed contents relevant to issues of labor migration and migrant workers published in Nepal's six media - two national newspapers, two provincial newspapers and two online media - from March to August 2020- by using quantitative as well as qualitative methods.

The findings of the study suggest that Nepali media extensively covered issues of the labor migrants during the pandemic. Nepali media prioritized coverage of issues of labor migrants giving them frequent front-page and prominent spaces. The coverage declined as the problems were either solved or adjusted as 71 per cent of total news items were published in the first three months (March to May) compared to 29 per cent published in the last three months (June to August). Nepali media reporting on labor migrants was high when there were issues, however, they lacked follow-up reporting in many of the issues that they had raised.

The published news items were equal on hard event-based and soft non-event-based news categories. Most of the hard news were informational, based on information from single source and aimed at informing people, and at many times, especially those published in online media, did not have enough context or background information. The number of news commentary or analysis, interviews and editorials were very low compared to the total number of news items. This was interesting as media generally publish more additional items on the topics that they prioritize.

In initial days of the pandemic, Nepali media had portrayed labor migrants negatively and to an extent portrayed them as potential carriers of the coronavirus supporting closing doors to them to safeguard those citizens inside the country. However, this narrative changed once they became aware of the pains and plights of the migrant workers, and the hardships they faced in foreign lands, at borders and inside the country, owing to the role they had played to boost Nepal's economy and their rights as citizens of Nepal, the media later largely supported their cause and advocated for their rights to return home, and receive reliefs from the state.

Most of the coverage came from Kathmandu which was understandable as four of the media were based in the capital and many of the decisions were made in Kathmandu. More than the top four districts accounted for 77 per cent of coverage leaving too little space for reporting from other 73 districts and other countries.

While the media coverage was largely positive towards labor migrants and supported their cause with that tone, Nepali media seemed to have missed the thrust for positive change as they only published a few editorials and opinions. More editorials and opinions from activists and experts would have greatly increased their position as the voice of the voiceless.

Compared to cross-border migrant workers (other than India), the migrant workers in India received less focus. This was probably due to the lack of official figures of them, and the fact that their points of transit were border checkpoints where media did not have enough correspondents. However, it left a void as many migrant workers and their families would have probably felt othered by the media in coverage.

The main topic of the coverage was rescue and relief followed by health-related and Covid-19, which were timely topics, but less priority to other topics such as policy and economic aspects meant that as those timely topics were settled, there were lack of reporting. This would continue post-pandemic where media would struggle to find topics for the coverage of issues of labor migrants, thereby ignoring the issues of labor migration.

The low use of labor migrants or experts or stakeholders in labor migration in the news was evident as the media quoted traditional sources - government officials, many of whom in a post-pandemic situation would not be able to comment on labor migration issues. The stakeholders and experts seemed to have largely missed an opportunity to network with journalists and raise their voices and opinions.

Sources also lacked diversity in gender as most of the quoted sources were male. Only a few females were quoted and when they were quoted, it was more likely that the news item was reported by a female journalist.

Media were largely positive - which might be a good approach during pandemic - but it also raised a question whether they were able to critically analyze the issues and actions. Some examples of major news pointed out some of the media were able to critically analyze government policies, plans and actions.

Overall, the Nepali media during the first six months of Covid-19 pandemic proactively reported on labor migration and issues of labor migrants, correcting their shortcoming as they went, and to a large extent played a responsible role. However, there are areas where their journalism could have been better, wide reaching and more credible.

Recommendations

The findings and analysis of this study led to the formulation of the following sets of recommendations for stakeholders, especially media, for better, credible and impactful coverage of the labor migration.

1. Nepali media should consider appointing or sending correspondents in the destination countries with high number of Nepali labor migrants. The data showed that better coverage of issue of the labor migrants from the UAE, where a media had its correspondent.
2. Another important reason behind better and more coverage of labor migrants of the UAE and South Korea was the effective use of social media to reach out to journalists and others by the labor migrants. Therefore, an orientation to labor migrants about effective use of social media to reach out and highlight their issues would increase coverage of their issues.
3. When labor migrants' community in destination countries are networked and active, they were effective in raising their issues and therefore getting coverage in Nepali media. Improving information flow mechanism of such communities of labor migrants would help journalists to identify issues and get more accurate information.
4. Media should consider assigning labor migration beat to female journalists at the time when the number of female labor migrants is increasing and their voices as well as issues might have been left uncovered.
5. The data showed that Nepali media prioritized issues of labor migration during the pandemic giving frontpage coverage frequently. Nepali media should consider continuing such coverage of the issues of labor migration even after the pandemic.

6. The stakeholders and experts of labor migration should consider raising their voices and opinions, if not through mainstream media, then through social media platforms, to set agenda for reporting for the journalists and media; and to make themselves available for quotes and commentary.
7. Majority of news items in online media were short in length. The reporting of labor migration in online media could improve in quality if they look to increase the size of the news adding in-depth information and backgrounds.
8. Compared to news items, the number of opinion articles are less in numbers. Therefore, media should consider giving priority to experts' opinion articles which could be instrumental for policy-level changes.
9. Nepali media could play instrumental role for policy level changes by increasing the number of editorials.
10. Compared to cross-border migrant workers (other than India), the migrant workers in India and internal migrant workers received less coverage. Nepali media should consider reporting more on migrant workers and their issues.
11. As the Covid-19 pandemic's initial crisis subsided, media's reporting on labor migration decreased. However, given the number of migrant workers and relevance of many of their issues, media should consider follow-up news items.
12. Majority of news items relied on single source information. Media should consider implementing cross-verification and using multiple sources to remain accurate and credible to the audience; as well as give voices to varying opinions.
13. Labor migration journalists need skill training to network with sources, access information and use available data to put reporting more in context.

Appendix A

Code sheet

1. Date of published news
 - a. March
 - b. April
 - c. May
 - d. June
 - e. July
 - f. August

2. News Media
 - a. Online media
 - b. Print News Media

3. Name of News Media
 - a. Kantipur Daily
 - b. Gorkhapatra Daily
 - c. Setopati.com
 - d. Onlinekhabar.com
 - e. Prateek Daily (Province-2)
 - f. Butwal Today (Province-5)

4. Title of the news.....

5. Page Number (Only for newspapers)

- a. Front Page
 - b. Opinion Page
 - c. Economy Page
 - d. Supplementary Page
 - e. Other pages
6. Placement of News (Only for newspapers)
- a. Main News
 - b. Anchor News
 - c. Other News
7. Number of column (Only for newspapers)
- a. One
 - b. Two
 - c. Three
 - d. Four
 - e. Five
 - f. Six
 - g. Seven
 - h. Eight
8. Total number of words in the news (Only for online news)
- a. Below 200 words
 - b. 200 to 500 words
 - c. 500 to 1000 words
 - d. Above 1000 words
9. Name of the district where the news was filed
- 1- 77 districts + 10 other international countries
10. Link of the source of news story (for online news story only.)
.....
11. Writer of the news:
- a. Own staff/ reporter / correspondent
 - b. News agency
 - c. External authors
 - d. Staff writer and support from news agency

12. Byline
 - a. Named – single author
 - b. Named – more than one author
 - c. Unnamed

13. If named what is name of the author -----

14. Gender of author
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. Combined byline (male and female)
 - d. Indistinguishable

News Story

15. Type of Content
 - a. Event based news (scheduled meeting/ press conference/ press release)
 - b. Non event based news (proactive coverage by the news item)
 - c. News commentary / analysis
 - d. Opinion articles
 - e. Editorial
 - f. Interview
 - g. News + Interview
 - h. Others

16. Primary migrant workers discussed in the news:
 - a. Internal Migrant workers (Domestic)
 - b. Migrant workers from India
 - c. Migrant workers from third country other than India
 - d. Combination of two or more type of migrant workers

17. Major thematic issue discussed
 - a. Economy related
 - b. Health related and Covid-19
 - c. Rescue and Relief & Travel
 - d. Policy

- e. Crime
- f. Others

18. What are the specific topics discussed in the news story? (Multiple Choice)

S.N.	Specific topic
1.	Cost of degree of expenses involved
2.	Financial Losses
3.	Remittance
4.	Employment
5.	Wages and Salary
6.	No payment
7.	Jobless
8.	Loss of private business
9.	Economic consequences of pursuing or not pursuing a course of action
10.	Entrepreneurship
11.	Infected with Covid-19
12.	Recover from Covid-19
13.	Death from Covid-19 and others
14.	Quarantine/ Isolation/ Holding Center (establishment of health desk and issues of test kits)
15.	Social Stigma
16.	Mental Health
17.	Insufficient food
18.	Migrant workers get home (Travel, home walking or enter Nepal by any means)
19.	Need for rescue & relief
20.	Rescue attempts failure
21.	Rescue attempts on going and successful
22.	Rescue the migrant workers in Nepal and abroad (Bring them home)
23.	Migrant workers call for help for safe passage home
24.	Support by Provincial government (Province)
25.	Support by Local Government (Local)

26.	Government policy to rescue the migrant workers
27.	Government policy to manage flights
28.	Government policy of restriction (border / travel ban)
29.	Government policy on safe passage home
30.	Federal government policy
31.	Provincial Government policy
32.	Local Government policy
33.	Fraudulent behavior related to migrant workers cases
34.	Acts of violence
35.	Police and government resolve the crime
36.	Need of security forces
37.	Violence against women and minorities
38.	Corruption Charges
39.	Moral message call for support to migrant workers
40.	The way one should behave with those migrant workers
41.	Reference to god and religion
42.	Discrimination among migrant workers treatment
43.	Human rights concerns
44.	Deportation
45.	Bi-lateral cooperation
46.	Unauthorized border pass
47.	Conflict
48.	Others

News Sources

19. Use of News Sources: (Multiple where 'anonymous' sources could also be used while citing single or other sources)
- NO
 - Single
 - Double
 - Multiple

20. Are there anonymous sources?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

21. Sources used in the news story (Multiple)
 - a. Federal Government Officials, agencies those holding public offices (The President, P.M, Ministers and officials, District Administration Office etc.)
 - b. Federal line ministry and department (Labor Ministry / Department of Labor/ Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
 - c. Province Government Officials (Chief Minister and other ministers and government officials)
 - d. Provincial line Ministry and department (Social Welfare Ministry)
 - e. Local Government Officials (Mayor, other ward chairperson and local body officials)
 - f. Scholars (migrant experts, universities, research institution or individual researchers)
 - g. Migrant Workers
 - h. Employer
 - i. I/NGO (local and international non-government organization rights-based group)
 - j. UN and Multilateral agencies
 - k. Family members of migrant workers
 - l. Lawyers
 - m. Manpower Agency
 - n. Health experts and workers
 - o. Politician (Opposition)
 - p. Politicians (Ruling Party)
 - q. Federal Government Health Official (Ministry of Health and other health related government agencies such as Sukraraj Tropical Center etc.)
 - r. Province Government Health Official
 - s. Local Level Health Officials
 - t. Security forces (Nepal police, Armed Police Force and Nepal Army)
 - u. Civil Society
 - v. Others

Content Tone

22. What is the overall tone of the story? (Factual answer on negative or positive words used in the headline and first line of intro)
 - a. Positive
 - b. Neutral
 - c. Negative
 - d. Indistinguishable

23. Tone of the story towards migrant labors.
 - a. Positive
 - b. Neutral
 - c. Negative

24. Tone of the story towards government.
 - a. Positive (Praise government or suggests that what government does is helpful to migrant workers)
 - b. Neutral (When its opinion toward Nepal government cannot be determined or when it shows no demonstrate attitude towards government)
 - c. Negative (Criticizes or blames the government and individual government officials when they provide no effective measure to protect migrant workers or even threaten people's rights.)

25. Final qualitative assessment of the news story or the news item. (Qualitative observation) write a paragraph a summary or line)

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Appendix B

Explanatory Notes on Code Sheet

1. Place of origin: Where was news itemed from? Dateline of the news item. The news items that have the dateline of Nepal, districts have been attributed and with respect to the news from outside Nepal, country has been identified.
2. Page number: It refers to news published in different pages for newspapers only. For this study it has been categorized as front page, op-ed page, economy page and other pages. Publication of news in front page normally reflect priority in terms of ranking and how a given medium have prioritized the issue.
3. Placement of news: It refers to priority given to the issue as main news, anchor news and other news. Main news biggest news in the top page, anchor news is biggest news at the bottom of the newspapers.
4. Number of column and total number of words used in the news: Number of columns in the news is used for identifying the space provided by the news media for newspapers, whereas total number of words have been used for online media.
5. Writer of the news and reference to author: This section deals with whether the news is written by media staff writer, reporter or correspondent or news agency, external author. External author are basically op-ed writers. This is followed by reference to author whether the news name has been indicated, if the byline of the author is mentioned, it also delves on whether it was written by single or more than one author and then the name of author is also written. The reference to author is further used to get the gender of the author. In case of more than one author in the byline, the name of first byline is used. Sometimes when the gender of author cannot be identified as some Nepali

- names are used for both male and female, we put them as indistinguishable.
6. Type of news: It is divided into seven categories, event-based news refers to schedule meeting, press conference, press release which is anticipated. Non-event stories are proactive coverage by the news item of the media house. News commentary and analysis is basically providing news item or senior reporter commenting and analyzing on the issue. Opinion articles are published in the opinion page of the newspapers, but due to pandemic some newspapers in the province had reduced the number of pages which resulted in the placement of opinion piece in the news page. Editorial refers to opinion of the news media on the concern issue. Interview and news plus interview are other categories where question answer format has been used.
 7. News on migrant workers: This variable is categorized as internal (domestic) Indian migrant workers, migrant workers from India, migrant workers in other than Indian and combination of two or more type of migrant workers.
 8. News Source refers information in a news story which has been attributed to identifiable source. It has been divided as no sources, single, double and multiple news sources, where single source deals with only one source used per news story, whereas, double refers to use of two news sources and multiple source deals with attribution to more than two sources. The study has tried to identify whether anonymous news source have been used for the study.
 9. Types of news source refer to attribution to the source. They are Federal government sources such as President, Prime Minister, Minister, government officials, Provincial government sources such as Chief Minister, other government officials, Local Government such Mayor, ward chairperson and local body official. Likewise, Federal government health official refers to Ministry of Health and other health related government agencies such as Sukraj Tropical Center, Province government health officials and local level health officials. Also, sources such as Politicians (opposition) and ruling party are also put under sources. Scholars refers to migrant experts, university, research institution or individual researchers. Migrant workers refer to the above mentioned migrant labor, family members of migrant workers, employer refers to those who employ the migrant workers, I/NGOs, UN and multilateral agencies, lawyers, manpower agency, health experts and workers, security forces civil society and other sources have been categorized. Other source refers to sources cited other than the above-mentioned sources. The study has also tried to analyze the source used based on gender, as men only, women only, both men and women and organization and name only as sources. To understand the media use of women as source would be important aspect for analyzing through gender lens.

10. Major thematic issue and specific issues: For the study five thematic issues were identified. The thematic issue was determined based on reading the news content, they are story related to economy, health and Covid-19, Policy concerns, Rescue and Relief and Crime related. If the issues do not fall under the given theme, it is mentioned under Others option is written. Based on the thematic issue, specific topic discussed on the story needed to be identified. At least 48 different topics were identified. It is multiple choice questions, where a news story could discuss on multiple topics.
11. Tone of the story: This refers to balance of the story. It can be positive, negative, or neutral. The tone of story has been determined in three different ways. First, the study has tried to look at the tonality of the news story independently not linking it with the migrant workers and the government. It has tried to see whether the news media portrayal of the story falls under negative, positive, or neutral based on the use of words in their headlines and lead of the news story. Secondly, the study has identified the tone towards the migrant workers. Positive tone towards migrant workers refers to the story that exhibit support to the workers and need for improvement of their conditions. Negative tone towards migrant workers means showing critical tendencies or assigning blame for a problems due to the migrant workers. For e.g. stories that say migrant workers have increased the number of Covid-19 cases could fall in these criteria. A story is of neutral tone if its stance towards the migrant workers cannot be ascertained or when it shows no demonstrable attitude towards migrant workers. Finally, positive tone towards government refers to the news items that holds positive attitude towards federal, province and local government in handling the crisis. It praises the government efforts and action taken by the government. The story is of negative tone if it criticizes or blames the government and officials that its actions were not supportive to the migrant workers in the times of crisis. Neutral tone means article that cannot determined.

Appendix C

List of People Interviewed for the Study

S. N.	Name	Position	Organization	Date of Interview
1	Jeeven Baniya	Assistant Director	Social Science Baha	September 18
2	Dr.Arjun Kharel	Research Coordinator	Center for Study of Labor and Mobility	September 18
3	Dr.Anuj Tiwari	Co-founder	Center for Migration and International Relation	September 20
4	Rabindra Ghimire	Sub-editor	Onlinekhabar.com	September 19
5	Hom Karki	Reporter	Kantipur Daily	September 20
6	Umakant Khanal	Jhapa-Correspondent	Deshsanchar.com	September 19
7	Sunil Neupane	Chairperson	Labor Employment Journalist Group	September 20
8	Bhanu Bhakta Acharya	Kanchanpur Correspondent	Onlinekhabar.com	September 20
9	Sita Sharma	Correspondent	Gorkhapatra Daily	September 21
10	Som Prasad Pandey	Member of Parliament	House of Representative	September 21
11	Keshab Prasad Dahal	Director General	Foreign Employment Department	September 22
12	Sanju Poudel	Butwal Correspondent	Kantipur Daily	September 17
13	Krishna Malla	Editor	Butwal Today	September 20