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Gender-Based Differences in Priorities and Willingness to Pursue Agriculture Among Labour Migrant's Families: A Case of Parbat, Nepal

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ABSTRACT

Feminization in agriculture due to increased labour migration has directed the national plan toward gender-inclusive youth involvement in commercial agriculture in Nepal. To understand the willingness to pursue agriculture among such youth and gender-based differences in their opinion, a convergent parallel mixed method survey among remittance receivers from 231 households, was conducted using a semi-structured questionnaire in the Parbat district of Nepal. The willingness to pursue agriculture and factors affecting the willingness were studied using t-tests, chi-square test, and spearman's correlation. A 5-point Likert-type scale was used to measure the difference in opinion and reasons behind the willingness to pursue agriculture among the gender. The majority of women responded unwilling to pursue agriculture and factors like gender, income and education level had a significant impact on the decision. The prioritized reason for pursuing agriculture and the primary choice of the enterprise were similar but preferences in government facilities and services were found different among the gender.

Keywords: Gender, Labor migrant, Willingness, Agriculture

INTRODUCTION

Nepalese agriculture which contributes 28 percent of national GDP has been predominantly led by female labor (Tiwari and Shingh, 2020), but the increasing labour migration has caused a decrease in agricultural activities in rural Nepal. Traditionally, Nepalese women have been performing multidimensional roles in agriculture. They work more hours for economically inactive works like sowing, transplanting, weeding, irrigation, fertilizer application plant protection,

harvesting, winnowing, storage, cattle management, fodder collection, milking and domestic activities. Female wage is twenty-five per cent less than male wage in the field (Tiwari and Shingh, 2020; Janelid, 1975; Khurana and Lal, 2011). Despite their contribution, the anticipation of women at decision-making and policy-making levels has been minimal in the past. Due to increased male labour migration and forced feminization of agriculture, this gender role has changed in past few years (Spangler and Christie, 2020).

Repeated international migration is becoming an increasing trend and permanent livelihood measure in a larger population in Nepal for the last two decades and is predicted to continue in the recent future. The rural migration rate which is about half a million people per year is largely contributed by the agriculture sector and therefore affects the planning process (Abramsky *et al.,* 2018; FAO, 2018; Maharjan *et al.*, 2013; Tuladhar *et al.,* 2014).

Youth involvement in agriculture and gender-inclusive development of commercial agriculture to restrain the loss of agricultural labour has been encouraged by the national plan of Nepal as economically active youth (age 26 to 29) tend to be more "enterprise able" than beside that age group (World Bank Group, 2013). Despite the high priority to the agriculture sector, its performance has been dismal due to the minimum targets met. One of the major reasons behind this tendency is the lack of proper study of the site before planning.

Like many developing countries, the youth in Nepal have decreasing interest in pursuing agriculture. Due to a popular mindset of the Nepali community that farming is a job of the poor, illiterate, rusty, dusty people and a good mind should better invest in more so-called prosperous jobs and intellectual studies. This perception has decreased the number of people willing to pursue agriculture (Barau, 2016; Sapkota, 2014; Akintayo and Lawal, 2016). Families with farming occupation are not readily sending their children for agro-entrepreneurship in Nepal, as shown by the huge annual brain drain and labour migration rate. Moreover, productive investments in agriculture are not the first priority of income from labour migration as well (Maharjan *et al.,* 2013). There is an increased unwillingness of youth towards pursuing agriculture and their movement in search of better options is increasing which ultimately affects agricultural production and productivity (Sapkota, 2018; Tuladhar *et al.,* 2014).

There has not been an adequate study about how willingness to pursue agriculture and the reason behind it differs among male and female remittance receivers which is not allowing proper design of an agricultural program and budget allocation at the local level. Under the changing scenario of the role of women in agriculture, it is necessary to understand the difference between the priorities of the two genders prevalent in farming families before implication of any agricultural plan at local level. Hence, this study was conducted to understand the differences in response among male and female remittance receivers regarding willingness to pursue agriculture; and analysis of the factors affecting their decision.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A cross section study (Chilisa and Kawulich, 2012) was designed to study the impact of relevant factors such as available resources (Kahan, 2013) on Willingness to pursue agriculture. Labor migrant's families of Parbat district was taken as research domain purposefully because of century long history of migration and loss of agriculture labor from rural regions of western hills Nepal (Adhikari, 2008; Poudel *et al.,* 2018; Sapkota, 2018). Parbat covers 0.36% of Nepal and lies in hilly region from 270 28' N to 280 39' N latitude and 830 34' E to 830 59' E longitude. It consists of 16.8% land under cultivation (Acharya and Paudel, 2016). Bihadi rural municipality was randomly selected among the six rural municipalities of Parbat and Quantitative data was collected through household based interview schedule using semi-structured question list as explained by Kabir (2016). Sample size of 231 was calculated using formula of finite population as reported by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2006) and Vaus (2002) on the basis of total population reported by Subedi (2016). Focus group discussion was conducted to triangulate the information obtained. Alpha level and error margin of respondents were considered up to 5% and t- value was taken 1.96. With the help of voter's list, and key person of every ward, identification of labor migrant's household was done to prepare master list of labor migrant households from which Simple random sampling was done for the interview schedule. The map of survey site is given in Figure 1.

Research Instruments and Scale

Modified 5 point- Likert type scale as used by Rajpar *et al.* (2019) and Chern *et al.* (2002) was used to study the perception of gender about reasons behind willingness to pursue agriculture whereas type of enterprise preference, the relationship between undermentioned socio-economic characteristics and willingness were explored by the help of chi square test and spearman's rho correlation.

Scale Reliability and Validity

Multiple constructs were formed and face validation of constructs was done through inter-rater reliability test among agriculture experts and key person of Parbat as explained by McHugh (2012) and Taherdoost (2016) taking the percentage of acceptance at 60% for the constructs. The statements were re-constructed after result of inter-rater reliability test and Subjected to Q-sorting as explained by Moree (2017). Therefore finalized semi- structured question list with sorted constructs were subjected to content validation among subject matter specialists for the use in interview schedule. Primary data was manually compiled in MS-Excel and Stata 13 was used to analyse it for further inferences. Both quantitative and

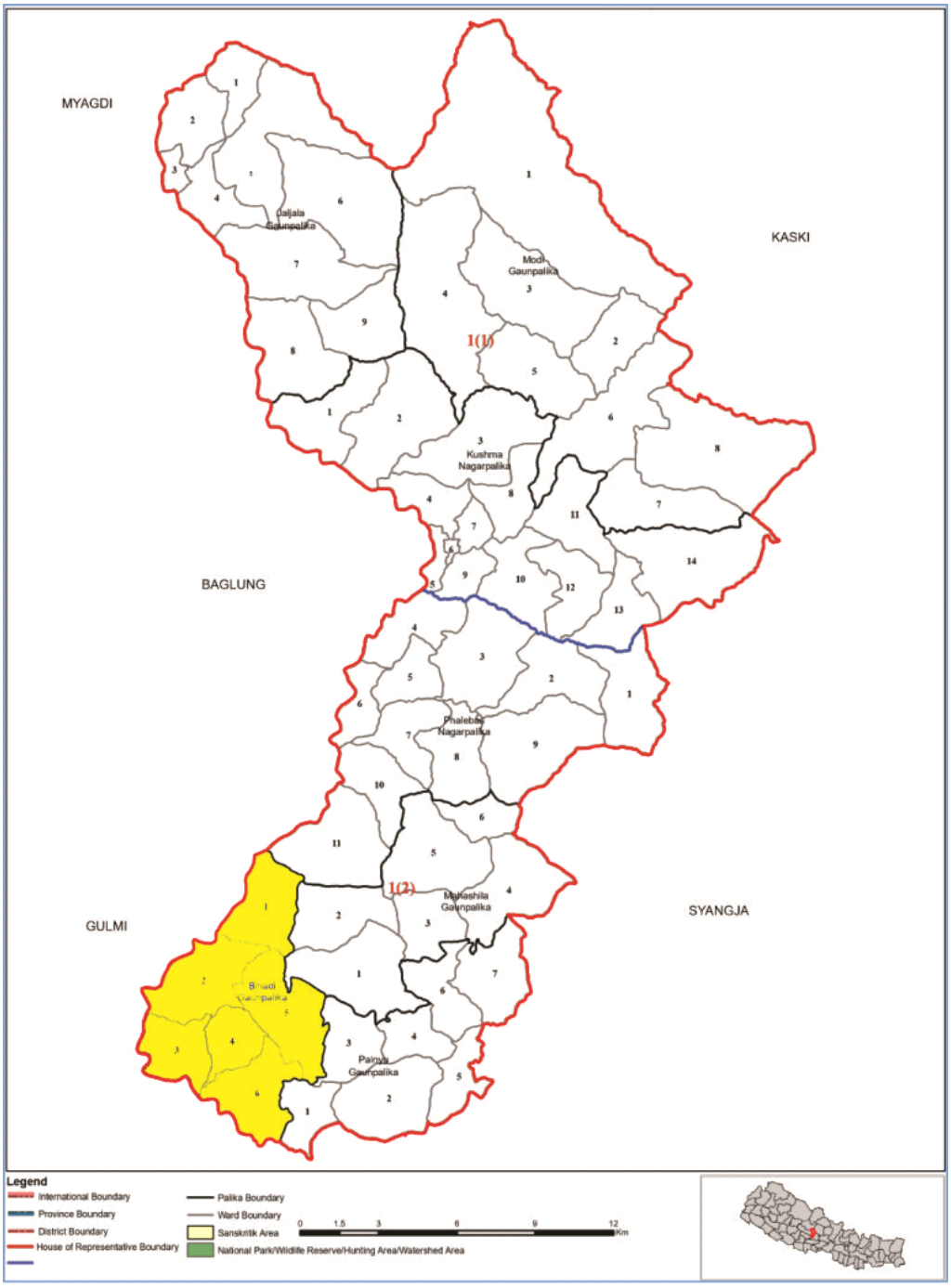

Figure 1: Map of Parbat, showing study site, Nepal
Source: Electoral Constituency Delineation Commission (ECDC), 2074

qualitative variables were on use. The operational definitions of variables used are enlisted in Table 1.

Table 1: Operational definitions of the variables under use

Variable	Definition
Willingness to pursue agriculture	Decision on whether or not to pursue agriculture as means of income generating activity (Ojebiyi *et al.,* 2015).
Credit received	as regardless of source or kind of credit received, whether or not the family has taken any credit pre-migration
Membership in social organization	Whether or not the farming family has engaged in any kind of social organization (Ojebiyi *et al.,* 2015).
Expected job in Nepal	What intervention did the pro-migrant youth searched for in Nepal before moving out of the country.
Gender of respondent	Role played by the person in family, i.e. binary in response Male or Female Adesoji *et al.* (2019). Men being termed as male and female as women.
Relation of respondent Occupation followed by parents of migrant	What is the relation of respondent to that with migrant family member. source of income of the migrant member's parents or job they pursue for living Ojebiyi *et al.* (2015)
Government facility preference	Which facility from government side would the respondent consider to be most favorable in case of pursuing agriculture at the time of survey.
Agriculture enterprise preference	Which agro-enterprise would the respondent consider to be most favorable in case of pursuing agriculture at the time of survey.
Marital status of migrant on first migration	whether or not the migrant member was married before s/he migrated out of country as followed by Ojebiyi *et al.* (2015) and Adesoji *et al.* (2019).
Monthly income of the family (NRs)	total amount of money accumulated through various sources per month in household of migrant member
Expected income	respondent's estimated amount of money in NRs. Which, if earned per month would stop the migrant member from leaving home to be a labor migrant
Education level	how many years did the migrant member and respondent have attended school
Household size	number of family members sharing a common kitchen in the house in last six months

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2 showed that majority of remittance receivers are female (61.47%). More females answered unwilling to pursue agriculture as compared to males, whereas the number of females unwilling to pursue agriculture was more than the number of females willing to pursue agriculture. Table 3 showed mean age of female remittance receivers was significantly lower than that of males.

Table 2: Gender based difference in willingness to pursue agriculture among remittance receivers of labor migrant's families of Bihadi, Parbat, 2019

	Willingness to Pursue agriculture		
Gender	**No**	**Yes**	**Total**
Female	85.00	57	142
Row %	59.86	40.14	100.00
Column %	68.55	53.27	61.47
Male	39.00	50.00	89.00
Row %	43.82	56.18	100.00
Column %	31.45	46.73	38.53
Total	124.00	107.00	231.00
	53.68	46.32	100.00
	100.00	100.00	100.00

Note: Source of the data is Household Survey, Parbat, 2019.

Table 3: Difference in average age of male and female remittance receivers of Parbat, 2019

Age of respondent	**Obs**	**Mean**	**Standard error**	**Standard deviation**	**95% confidence interval**		**t**	**df**
Female	142	38.39	1.05	12.55	36.31	40.48	-13.0	224.97
Male	89	56.91	0.95	8.98	55.02	58.80		
Combined	231	45.56	0.95	14.46	43.65	47.40		
Difference in mean (x)		-18.51		1.41	-21.31	-15.71		
Ha: x < 0			Ha : x = 0		Ha : x>0			
P (x<0) = 0.00			P (x=0) = 0.00		P (x>0) = 1.00			

Note: Source of the data is Household Survey, Parbat, 2019.

The condition in Parbat showed Century long tradition of migrating for studies to Benaras in the region (Adhikari, 2008), and local teaching institutions that were run by Pundits are also to be accredited for the level of study among people in Bihadi. Table 4 showed the average number of years of schooling of female is significantly higher to that of male. This is attributed

Table 4: Gender based difference in education level in terms of numbers of years of schooling remittance receivers in Parbat, 2019

No of Years of schooling	Obs	Mean	Standard error	Standard deviation	95% confidence interval		t	df
Female	142	7	0.43	5.13	6.14	7.85	5.04	207.93
Male	89	3.79	0.46	4.39	2.87	4.72		
Combined	231	5.76	0.33	5.09	5.10	6.42		
Difference in mean (x)		3.20	0.63					
Ha: x < 0			Ha : x = 0		Ha : x>0			
P (x<0) = 1.00			P (x=0) = 0.00		P (x>0) = 0.00			

Note: Source of the data is Household Survey, Parbat, 2019.

to awareness towards studies generated among people by institutions like the oldest school of Bihadi. The school has been recently upgraded to community college offering education up to graduation level in village. Male members, being traditionally considered breadwinners of the household, migrate for labor purpose and the female who reside in the village continue their study.

The results in Table 5 and 6 showed a high correlation of sex of respondent, presence of a child in the family, membership in a social organization, number of male members in the family, education level of respondent, occupation of parents, preferred government facility and relation

Table 5: Categorical socio-economic variables affecting the willingness to pursue agriculture among labor migrant's families of Parbat, 2019

Variables	Chi square	P value	df	Decision
Presence of child in family	21.2	0.000	1	HS
Credit received	2.33	0.127	1	NS
Membership in social organization	17.23	0.000	1	HS
Expected job in Nepal	3.09	0.542	4	NS
Gender of respondent	12.21	0.000	1	HS
Relation of respondent with the migrant member	30.29	0.000	7	HS
Occupation followed by parents of Migrant	21.10	0.012	9	HS
Government facility preference	26.40	0.000	7	HS
Agriculture enterprise preference	0.90	0.970	5	NS
Marital status of migrant on first migration	2.89	0.089	1	S

Note: HS = Significant at 1%, S = Significant at 10%, NS= Non- Significant at 10% alpha value.
Source: Household Survey, Parbat, 2019.

Table 6: Socio-economic variables affecting the willingness to pursue agriculture among labor migrant's families of Bihadi, Parbat, 2019

Variables	Rho coefficient	P value	N	Decision
Age of migrant member (years)	0.061	0.354	231	NS
No. of female members in family	-0.022	0.736	231	NS
No. of male members in family	0.225	0.000	231	HS
Monthly income of the family (NRs.)	0.109	0.098	231	S
Expected income needed to live in village	-0.123	0.061	231	S
Education years migrant member	0.025	0.709	231	NS
Education level of respondent family member	-0.288	0.000	231	HS

Note: HS = Significant at 1%, S = Significant at 10%, NS= Non-significant at 10% alpha value.
Source: Household Survey, Parbat, 2019.

with the migrant member to have a highly significant correlation with the willingness to pursue agriculture (at an alpha level of 0.01) and, marital status on first migration, amount of income per month at present, expected amount of monthly income required to live happily in the village have a significant correlation with the willingness to Pursue agriculture.

Paudel *et al.* (2014) quoted the recent tradition of SEE graduate individuals leaving the place saying "more educated a person is less intended he/she is towards agriculture". Which might be the reason why female are more unwilling to pursue agriculture having greater education level and responsibilities of a child.

Income and membership in social organizations are reported to have caused a significant positive correlation with the willingness of youth participation in Nigeria (Nsikak- Abasi *et al.,* 2018). Sex and parental occupation have been reported to have a significant effect on youth to pursue agriculture as a career by Barau *et al.* (2016) in Nigeria. In a study done by Gulseven (2014) and Aydogdu (2017) in Turkey, Landholding and education among farmers cause them to have a positive effect on willingness to invest in agriculture insurance. If a person has greater landholding and has a family as a married person (Aydogdu 2017), more sense of investment for payback and assurance of higher-income becomes the need which might be the reason behind a positive correlation towards a willingness to invest on agriculture.

Table 7 and 8 showed that females received significantly less amount of average income per month than male, however, their expected amount of money per month that would keep them from migrating out of village was also significantly less than that of male.

Table 7: Difference in average expected amount of income in NRs. among male and female remittance receivers required not to leave village for labor migration in Parbat, 2019

Amount expected	Obs	Mean	Standard error	Standard deviation	95% confidence interval		t	df
Female	142	42605.63	569.069	6781.24	41480.62	43730.64	-1.86	160.06
Male	89	44550.56	876.578	8269.62	42808.55	46292.58		
Combined	231	43354.98	489.0845	7433.441	42391.32	44318.64		
Difference in mean (x)		-1944.928	1045.097		-4008.886	119.0303		
Ha: x < 0			Ha : x = 0		Ha : x>0			
P (x<0) = 0.0323			P (x=0) = 0.0646		P (x>0) = 0.9677			

Note: Source of the data is Household Survey, Parbat, 2019.

Table 8: Difference in average monthly income in NRs. among male and female remittance receivers in Parbat, 2019

Amount expected	Obs	Mean	Standard error	Standard deviation	95% confidence interval		t	df
Female	142	47690.14	742.9073	8852.762	46221.46	49158.82	-4.30	130.112
Male	89	54988.76	1525.699	14393.41	51956.76	58020.77		
Combined	231	50502.16	778.4476	11831.38	48968.36	44318.64		
Difference in mean (x)		-7298.623	1696.958		-10655.83	-3941.421		
Ha: x < 0			Ha : x = 0		Ha : x>0			
P (x<0) = 0.00			P (x=0) = 0.00		P (x>0) = 1.0			

Note: Source of the data is Household Survey, Parbat, 2019.

Table 9 suggested prioritized reasons behind pursuing agriculture was similar among both genders. However, male prioritized control of wild animals and subsidized input facilities

Table 9: Gender based differences in prioritized reasons for pursuing agriculture among remittance receivers Parbat, 2019

Rank	Male	WMS	Rank	Female	WMS
1	There is no other employment opportunities in the village	4.07	1	There is no other employment opportunities in the village	4.17
2	Not to leave traditional land fallow	3.71	2	I do not have any additional qualifications	3.93
2	I do not have any additional qualifications	3.71	3	Not to leave traditional land fallow	3.89
3	I have enough skills, attitude and knowledge	3.28	4	I am interested in doing agriculture for living	3.34
4	I am interested in doing agriculture for living	3.22	5	I have enough skills, attitude and knowledge	3.06

Note: WMS= Weighted mean sum from use of modified 5-point likert scale
Source: Household Survey, Parbat, 2019.

whereas female preferred ensured farm gate price and need based skill enhancement as government facilities. Female youth are more indulged in household activities and their primary focus roams around finding a stable schooling measure for their child in an easily accessible place. Very less of the female are involved in a local vocational job. The training is mainly focused among the members of women's groups in more accessible places and hence not applicable for individual households.

Table 10 and 11 suggested the prioritized agricultural enterprises and government facilities by the remittance receivers. Primary choice of agricultural enterprise were similar among both gender.

Table 10: Gender based difference in frequencies of prioritized agricultural enterprises among remittance receivers Parbat, 2019

Priority rank of enterprises	Male	Frequency	Female	Frequency
1	Vegetables	30	Vegetables	65
2	Fruits	26	Fruits	33
3	Cattle farming	14	Goat farming	16
4	Goat farming	12	Cattle farming	13
5	Poultry farming	5	Small animals farming	8
6	Small animals farming	2	Poultry farming	7
Total		89		142

Note: Source of the data is Household Survey, Parbat, 2019.

Table 11: Gender based differences in frequencies of prioritized government facilities among remittance receivers Parbat, 2019

Priority	Male	Frequency	Female	Frequency
1	Control of pest outbreak	36	Crop insurance and minimum farmgate price	32
2	Subsidized inputs	17	Need based training and skill enhancement	32
3	Market mangaement	14	Market mangaement	29
4	Regular monitoring and regulation against disease and pest	8	Control of pest outbreak	21
5	loan and credit facilities	6	Subsidized inputs	13
6	labor management	5	loan and credit facilities	9
7	need based training and skill enhancement	3	Regular monitoring and regulation against disease and pest	4
8			Labor management	2
	Total	89		142

Note: Source of the data is Household Survey, Parbat, 2019.

Vegetable farming is considered most potential in the area as the vegetable collection and selling system does not prevail in door-to-door of Bihadi. As an influence of urban areas, the motels fetch their vegetables from the nearby market: Waling, Butwal, Pokhara, etc., and therefore is considered expensive and profitable (Rai *et al.,* 2019). Farming families residing there are however interested in Coffee, Mandarin, Citrus, Guava, Mango and Jackfruit cultivation because of climatic suitability, an influence seen from neighboring districts Gulmi and Kaski since decades. Local popularity and easy management of these fruits is also another major reason behind choosing them. Mainly youth are interested in fruit farming as it provides long term returns with comparatively less time investment. Goat farming is preferred for decades as a "ready to cash" over chicken, pigeon, and rabbit farming due to more Brahmin families prevailing and small landholding of people. Cattle farming is decreasing in most of the hilly regions in Nepal as explained by Gautam (2005) and similar is the case of Bihadi, Parbat due to various reasons like incapability of old people to take care of excess cattle, and drudgery it requires, the number of farmers interested in cattle farming in Bihadi is less. Most of the farmers are interested in "ready to cash" farming of small animals. This was not the trend as stated by the locals.

The major priority being control of wild animals outbreak (especially monkeys) followed by market management, skill enhancement, and minimum price support.

Insurance of the investment on agriculture and the minimum price is not prevalent and there has been an increased infestation of wildlife these days which in descending order of priorities are: Monkeys, Porcupine, Deer, rabbit, *kali kukhura* (wild chicken) and *Phurkemusa* (wild squirrel). All kinds of Maize, Beans, and Pumpkins were destroyed right from *Aati* of the house by Monkeys. Recently, due to increased area of wild vegetation, there is an increased appearance of tiger and attacks to the animal sheds in the village causing animal rearing to be difficult. Almost one case of a tiger attack in a month has been a common thing these days which was not common a couple of decades ago. This has discouraged farmers from animal husbandry in the area.

Results from Table 11 concluded that major reasons for both male and female remittance receivers to pursue agriculture is a lack of other employment opportunity. In cases of Nigeria, guidance, and counseling in schools about the importance of agriculture, government incentives to increase the income of youth through agriculture by aiming it at poorest of the poor, compulsory agriculture education and awareness-raising programs through private sector media were suggested by Adesoji *et al.* (2019) and Nsikak-Abasi *et al.* (2018) to improve the willingness among the youth to pursue agriculture. Some ideas include service modeled agriculture: daily wage provision and conversion of traditional agriculture into a service-based job, linking youth farmers through social networks, providing them services, exposure, training and scientific management of farms in such network group and promoting motivation through

achievement-based reward system (Kanduri and Sathyagopal, 2018; Queiroz *et al.,* 2014; Rajpar *et al.,* 2019 and Elbersen *et al.,* 2014) recommend young farmers willing to pursue should be incentivized through rewards.

CONCLUSION

Since majority of the working labor in agriculture sector are women, taking into account the gender-based differences in needs and priorities of the remittance receivers can be helpful in conducting successful agricultural programs as per plan. Tailoring the local level agriculture development plans by addressing common priorities and different needs of two genders on government facilities and services will be helpful for increased willingness to pursue agriculture and by extension, success of such programs among labour migrants families in rural Nepal.

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