

Motivations Behind Bhutanese Emigration to Australia

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Abstract

Bhutan, a small country with an even smaller population, is currently grappling with the growing challenge of emigration. While one school of thought argues that migration will eventually peak and decline, others warn that, if the current trend continues, Bhutan may soon face a severe shortage of workforce—even for basic desk jobs.

This study aims to examine the driving factors behind emigration from Bhutan and to propose strategies to address the issue.

Employing a mixed-methods approach that combines both quantitative and qualitative data, this descriptive research draws on cross-sectional data collected from Bhutanese currently residing in various cities across Australia. Participants were recruited using convenience and snowball sampling techniques.

The study applies Lee's migration theory as its conceptual framework, and the data were analysed using SPSS and Excel.

Findings reveal that among the four broad categories of push and pull factors—economic, social, administrative, and political—social factors emerged as the most influential, followed by economic, administrative, and political factors.

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Personal motivations also played a significant role, while intervening obstacles were considered the least important by respondents.

Based on these findings, the study recommends several measures to mitigate emigration, including improving current working conditions, strengthening the private sector, instituting part-time job opportunities, enhancing income levels, and decongesting urban areas to lower the cost of living

Keywords: emigration, push and pull factors, Bhutan.

Introduction

Migration has become a global phenomenon driven by the forces of globalization, and for Bhutan, out-migration has emerged as a pressing issue. The earliest wave of Bhutanese migrants began in the 1970s, when the first group of students, supported by the Commonwealth, travelled to Australia for higher studies. By 2002, over 652 Bhutanese (including spouses and children) were residing in Australia, with 326 students actively pursuing education. This number increased significantly, with approximately 15,453 Bhutanese studying in Australia by 2021, largely supported by their families (Wangdi, 2021). According to the Australian Department of Home Affairs, a total of 20,522 Australian visas were issued to Bhutanese nationals between fiscal years 2005–06 and 2021–22 (Lamsang, 2022).

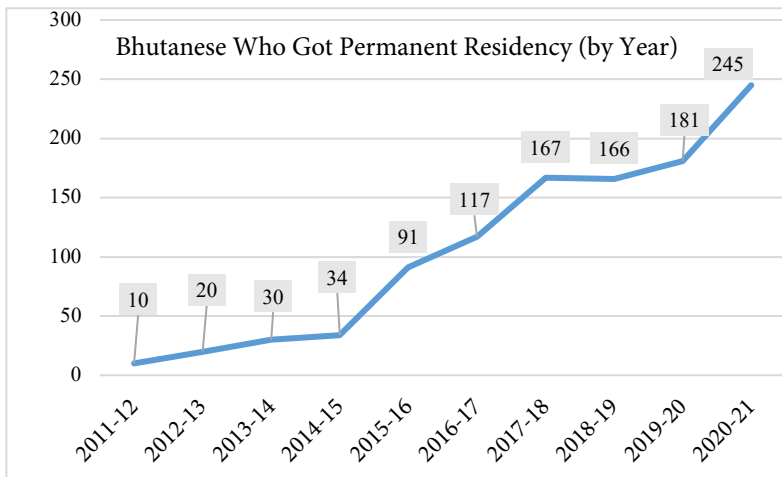
The growing mobility of Bhutanese citizens has led to several positive outcomes. It facilitates the exchange of skills and knowledge, enhances personal and professional development, and contributes significantly to the national economy through foreign remittances—particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Migration also provides employment opportunities for those unable to secure jobs within Bhutan's limited labor market, thereby improving their quality of life.

However, migration also presents challenges. Migrants often face difficulties adjusting to new cultures and environments. More critically, the departure of skilled and educated citizens has long-term implications for Bhutan’s development. As the former Prime Minister warned in *The Bhutanese*, “You don’t want to have Bhutan without Bhutanese, and we don’t want the very few Bhutanese working overseas” (Lamsang, 2022).

Bhutan’s attrition rate stood at 14.3% between January and November 2023. A growing number of educated Bhutanese, including civil servants, have resigned to migrate to Australia with long-term settlement plans, raising national concerns about brain drain.

Figure 1

Bhutanese Residents Who Got PR Year-Wise



Source: Department of Home Affairs of Australia (Lamsang, 2022)

The number of Bhutanese living abroad has increased notably, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade, 42,829 Bhutanese

citizens were living in 112 countries as of 2023. The majority reside in Australia, followed by India and Kuwait (Lhamo, 2023). Furthermore, Australian government data shows a steady rise in the number of Bhutanese seeking permanent residency (PR) status—from just 10 in 2011–12 to 245 in 2020–21 (Lamsang, 2022). [See Figure 1]

If current trends persist, Bhutan risks transitioning into an economy characterized by jobless growth. One contributing factor is the rise in remittances, which fuels inflated land prices as recipients invest in real estate. This trend drives up property values, exacerbating income inequality. Similar patterns have been observed in other remittance-dependent countries such as the Philippines, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal, where economic disparity is pronounced.

With a projected population of 777,224 in 2024 (National Statistics Bureau, 2024), Bhutan is increasingly grappling with emigration—a growing concern also expressed by His Majesty the King. In his address on the 114th National Day, His Majesty spoke about the outflow of youth seeking better prospects in wealthier nations (The Bhutanese, 2021). On that very day, two chartered flights carrying 251 Bhutanese arrived in Australia, underscoring the scale of the issue. Views on this trend vary: some predict that migration will eventually stabilize and decline, while others warn that if civil servants continue to leave, Bhutan could face a shortage of personnel even for basic administrative roles (Business Bhutan, 2022).

Previously, internal migration—from rural to urban areas—was the dominant concern, driven by the pursuit of better living conditions. Today, both rural and urban populations are migrating abroad, amplifying the issue on a national scale. Unlike the phenomenon of *gungtong* (abandoned villages) seen in rural areas, Bhutan cannot afford nationwide depopulation. The departure of educated and skilled individuals—commonly referred to as “brain drain”—raises particular alarm. Although not all emigrants fall

into this category, qualifying for migration, especially through IELTS and other language proficiency tests, often requires higher education. While not yet a full-blown crisis, this trend poses serious long-term implications. Projections suggest that by 2037, Bhutan's working-age population will shrink while the number of elderly dependents (aged 60 and above) will rise, potentially leading to a severe labour shortage.

Paradoxically, even as many Bhutanese leave due to limited employment opportunities, the national unemployment rate stood at just 3.1% in 2024 (National Statistics Bureau, 2024). Emigration compounds the problem by creating domestic labour gaps, forcing Bhutan to rely on foreign workers, which entails significant costs. Retaining skilled human capital is essential for realizing His Majesty's vision of transforming Bhutan into a regional economic hub—an aspiration that could position the country among Asia's most prosperous. Achieving this would attract international expertise and allow Bhutan to outsource low-skilled jobs, much like its citizens currently do abroad.

Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche observed that Bhutanese migrants in Perth attempt to recreate a sense of Bhutan, reflecting their deep-rooted attachment to their homeland. This emotional bond highlights the urgency of creating conditions that make Bhutan more attractive to its own citizens.

Despite Bhutan's commitment to the philosophy of Gross National Happiness, the rising tide of emigration is troubling and demands prompt policy responses. A coordinated effort by all stakeholders is essential to identify sustainable solutions that encourage Bhutanese to remain or return. Understanding the underlying causes of emigration is a critical first step. This study seeks to examine these root causes and offer evidence-based policy recommendations.

Literature Review

According to Foerster (1908), *emigrants* are individuals who leave their country of origin to reside in another country, either permanently or temporarily (for at least one month). This definition excludes those traveling for purposes such as tourism, healthcare, or business. Large-scale emigration is a persistent issue in many developing countries and must be addressed by policymakers. Carrington and Detragiache (1998), using U.S. Census and OECD migration data, found that migration rates are significantly higher among individuals with tertiary education. This group tends to be more mobile compared to those with lower levels of education. Uprety (2018) observed similar trends in migration patterns.

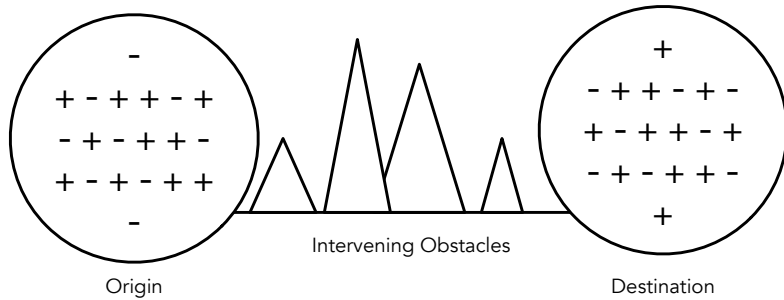
McAuliffe and Triandafyllidou (2021) reported that international migration has increased significantly over the past five decades—from 84.5 million in 1970 to over 280.6 million in 2020, marking a 69.89% rise. Among global regions, Oceania has the highest proportion of international migrants relative to its population, followed by North America and Europe.

Lee's Migration Model

Developed by Everett Spurgeon Lee, a sociology professor at the University of Georgia, Lee's Migration Model identifies four key variables that influence migration: factors associated with the area of origin, the area of destination, intervening obstacles, and individual personal characteristics (Rabten, 2019).

Figure 2

Lee's Migration Theory



Source: Based on Everett Lees's Theory of Migration, 1966 (See Pathshala, 2013)

Lee categorizes migration drivers into *push* factors, which motivate individuals to leave their place of origin, and *pull* factors, which attract them to the destination. Migration occurs when the push from the origin is resolved by the pull of the destination. These factors may be economic, social, administrative, political, or personal.

Push and Pull Factors

Economic Factors

Economic push factors include low wages, unemployment, and limited economic returns (Adhikari, 2012; Sajja, 2011). Inflation is also a key driver of emigration. For example, Argentina's high inflation, burdensome corporate taxes, and rigid labour regulations have pushed skilled workers to seek freelance work paid in foreign currency (Gillespie, 2022). Employers offering competitive salaries often attract talent from countries with stagnant wages (Goswami & Jha, 2012). In Lithuania, financially constrained individuals—especially divorced women with children—migrate for better living standards (Klüsener et al.,

2015). Thet (2014) observed that limited industrial employment in agrarian societies contributes to outmigration.

Social Factors

Social push factors include poor quality of life and outdated infrastructure, which drive skilled individuals to seek opportunities abroad (Adhikari, 2012). Abdelbaki (2009) found that 48% of emigrants left due to a lack of development and research opportunities, while 23% sought improved living standards. Similarly, returning Indian migrants from the U.S. cited poor infrastructure and bureaucratic inefficiencies as key concerns (Chacko, 2007). Other social drivers include poor working conditions, exploitation, and a lack of dignity at work (Zawadzki, 2018), along with limited access to healthcare, family separation, and conflict (Zanabazar et al., 2021).

Administrative Factors

Administrative push factors include job dissatisfaction, lack of motivation, and poor human resource planning (Sajjad, 2011). Inadequate opportunities for career progression and lack of effective feedback mechanisms contribute to attrition among civil servants (Wangdi, 2021). Conversely, transparent feedback systems, opportunities for advancement, and a supportive work culture can reduce turnover (Ramadevi & Sangeetha, 2019). Corruption also plays a significant role in driving emigration, as highly corrupt nations struggle to retain skilled professionals (Cooray & Schneider, 2015). Ivlevs (2015) identified a U-shaped relationship between life satisfaction and migration intentions, while Ariu and Squicciarini (2013) noted that corruption drives talented individuals to seek better environments. In Nigeria, corruption prompted the mass exodus of professors and researchers (Ukozor et al., 2022). Administrative resistance, such as executives' unwillingness to evaluate peers during Bhutan's

second RCSC Commission, also highlights systemic issues (Naskar, 2022).

Political Factors

Political instability, inconsistent policies, governance failures, conflict, war, and racial persecution are major political push factors (Adhikari, 2012; Abdelbaki, 2009; Waterworth et al., 2022). Docquier et al. (2009) found that rigid regulations and political volatility significantly influence international migration.

Personal Factors

Personal characteristics—such as age, marital status, education level, and job satisfaction—play a crucial role in migration decisions. Interestingly, gender does not appear to significantly affect emigration likelihood (Bartolini et al., 2017). Migration is often influenced more by individuals' perceptions than by actual conditions at the origin or destination. Exposure to international opportunities and aspirations for self-improvement also contribute to higher attrition rates (Wangdi, 2021).

Intervening Factors

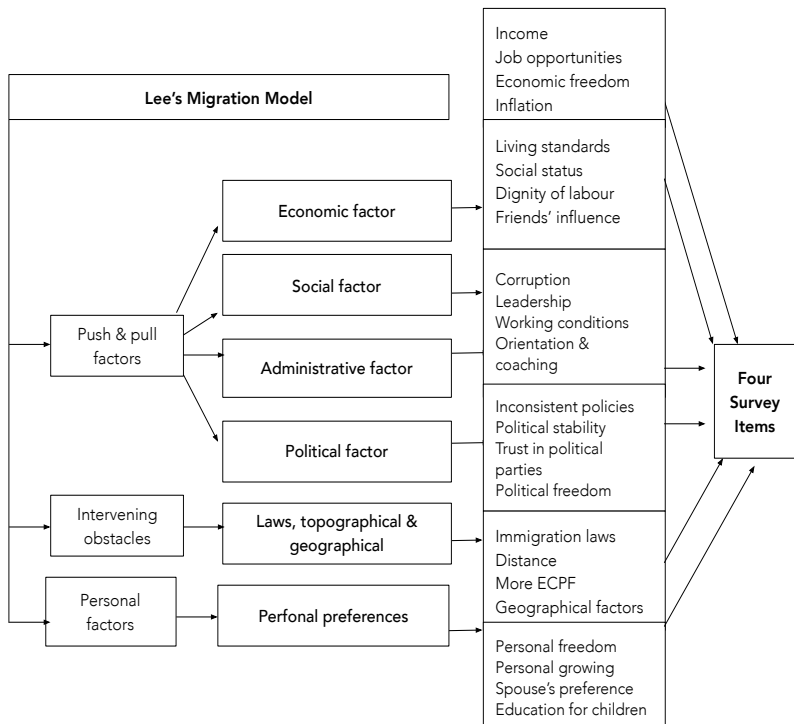
Migration is not solely influenced by conditions at the origin or destination; it is also affected by *intervening obstacles*. These include physical distance, geographical barriers (such as mountainous terrain), and restrictive immigration policies. Natural disasters may act as deterrents but can also prompt migration to neighbouring or former colonial nations among middle-income populations. Additionally, modern communication technologies, improved transportation, television, urban-focused education, and shifting societal values contribute to rising emigration (Thet, 2014).

Conceptual Framework

This study's conceptual framework is grounded in Lee's Migration Theory and is informed by a broad review of related literature. The framework includes four main components: push factors, pull factors, personal factors, and intervening obstacles. Push and pull factors are further categorized into economic, social, administrative, and political dimensions. Each category comprises multiple sub-factors, measured using four survey items each.

Figure 3

Conceptual Framework



Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive research design to investigate the factors influencing emigration. Descriptive research aims to develop an accurate representation of events, individuals, or phenomena (Saunders et al., 2019), and systematically identifies and characterizes attributes, trends, and relationships among variables (Formplus, 2020). A deductive approach guided the research, whereby data were analysed to test existing theories. To ensure the validity of findings through triangulation, the study employed a mixed-methods strategy, incorporating both surveys and interviews (Bamberger, 2012).

Conducted as a cross-sectional study, primary data were collected from Bhutanese migrants in Australia, aged 15 to 65, using structured survey questionnaires administered between September and November 2022. The sampling approach combined convenience and snowball techniques, which, although time- and cost-effective (Lal, 2002), introduce the risk of sample bias. Convenience sampling may have led to the overrepresentation of individuals from easily accessible networks. However, given the study's targeted focus on specific groups of Bhutanese immigrants in Australia, this approach aligned with its objectives. In fact, convenience sampling often meets purposive criteria suited to research goals (Saunders et al., 2019).

Snowball sampling was also utilized, where initial participants referred others to the study (Lal, 2002). This method may have reinforced bias, particularly if initial respondents shared similar backgrounds or experiences. For example, most of the early participants were from western Bhutan, which likely excluded those from underrepresented regions or with diverse migration histories. Moreover, by focusing exclusively on Bhutanese migrants aged 15–65, the study excluded individuals outside this range, which may have influenced the overall findings. Nevertheless, the sampling strategy remained appropriate for

exploring the push and pull factors shaping Bhutanese emigration to Australia.

Survey distribution was carried out through mail and social media platforms, yielding responses from 83 Bhutanese individuals across different Australian states. To deepen the analysis, purposive sampling was employed in selecting interview participants, ensuring the inclusion of well-informed individuals whose perspectives enriched the study. In total, 12 Bhutanese emigrants in Australia were interviewed. The survey component focused on collecting quantitative data related to emigration drivers, with questionnaire items adapted from Adhikari (2012) and literature reviews. The instrument was organized into sections on demographic characteristics and emigration factors, with responses rated on a Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.”

Secondary data were also drawn from news reports, academic journals, books, official publications, and websites. To assess the reliability and accuracy of the research instruments, a pilot survey was conducted with 12 individuals, including acquaintances in Kuwait and Perth, as well as friends at the Royal Institute of Management. The reliability of survey items was tested using Cronbach’s alpha, with all factors scoring above 0.7, indicating acceptable to good internal consistency (Yockey, 2016).

Table 1

Reliability Test

Factors	Cronbach’s Alpha	N of Items	Remarks
Social	0.754	4	Acceptable
Economic	0.7	4	Acceptable
Administrative	0.814	6	Good
Personal	0.745	4	Acceptable
Political	0.832	4	Good
Intervening	0.743	5	Acceptable

Data Analysis

SPSS version 24 processed the data, with Microsoft Excel generating tables and charts. Descriptive statistics and correlations were used to analyse the factors leading to emigration. NVIVO software analysed qualitative data, with responses coded and themes identified.

Result and Discussions

Respondents' Profile

Table 2 presents the summary of the respondent's profile. Data shows that most of the migrants are in the age range of 25 to 29 (28.9%). The respondents' mean age is 30.81 (SD=7.067). There is good gender representation, with almost an equal number of males and females: 48.2% female (n=40) and 51.8% male (n=43). This aligns with the concept of dualism that Hanson (2010) subscribes to. Males have more mobility compared to women. However, with globalization, women are also equally mobile, as greater mobility is beneficial, especially for women, since it gives them more power (Hanson, 2010).

Table 2

Demographic Characteristics

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percent
A.1. Age Group	15 to 19	2	2.4
	20 to 24	14	16.9
	25 to 29	24	28.9
	30 to 34	12	14.5
	35 to 39	21	25.3
	40 to 44	9	10.8
A.2. Gender	Female	40	48.2
	Male	43	51.8
A.3. Marital Status	Single	15	18.1
	In relationship	4	4.8

	Married	64	77.1
A.5. Education qualification	Till class 10	1	1.2
	Till class 12	11	13.3
	Degree	51	61.4
	Masters	18	21.7
	PhD	2	2.4
A.6. I entered Australia	As a student	51	61.4
	As dependent	28	33.7
	As a tourist	2	2.4
	As a PR	2	2.4

Data from the survey shows that 64 respondents (77.1%) are married, which indicates that most of the Bhutanese emigrate to Australia as couples to work. 61.4 percent of the respondents who went to Australia had at least a degree. This indicates that all the ones who left for Australia had a good educational background. These educated people who emigrate mostly engage in low-skilled work in the destination countries, and according to Klüsener et al. (2015), this suggests “brain waste,” a phenomenon that requires action from policymakers to integrate cohesive migration policies with policy fields.

There were two people who joined as permanent residents (PR). 51 (61.4%) joined as students, either through government scholarships or private funding, and by taking extra-ordinary leave (EOL) from their jobs. The result of one-sample t-test as shown in Table 3 indicates that those people who went to Australia as tourists and students intend to return while those who emigrated as dependents and PR wants to permanently settle in Australia.

Motivations Behind Bhutanese Emigration to Australia

Table 3

One Sample t-Test

One-Sample Statistics						
	n	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean		
Intentions	9	3.125	1.266	0.152		
Entry mode	2	2.378	0.558	0.061		
One-Sample Test						
	T	f	Sig. (2tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
Intentions	20.437	68	0.000	3.11594	2.8117	3.4202
Entry mode	38.546	81	0.000	2.37805	2.2553	2.5008

Table 4

Respondents' Place of Residence in Australia

	Frequency	Percent
Adelaide	4	4.8
Armidale	4	4.8
Brisbane	7	8.4
Canberra	14	16.9
Melbourne	4	4.8
Perth	50	60.3
Total	83	100.0

According to the survey, 60.3 percent of the respondents were currently living in Perth ($n=50$), followed by 16.9 percent in Canberra. This represents the population well, as these are the two cities where most of the Bhutanese are found.

Table 5

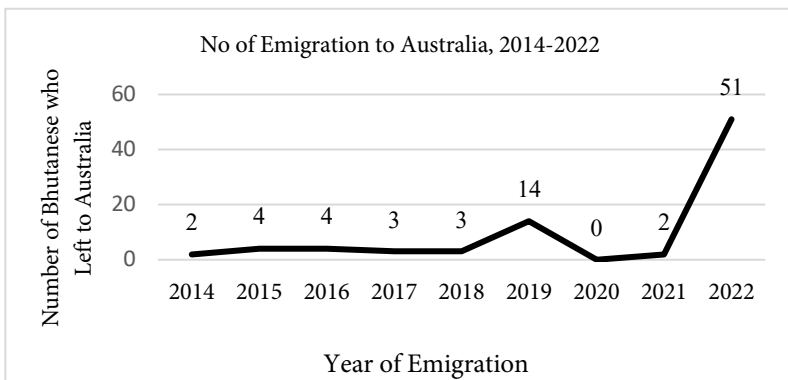
Do you have any relatives living in Australia?

	Frequency	Percent
No	30	36
Yes	53	64
Total	83	100

64 percent of the respondents in Australia had their relatives (also friends) living in Australia. This indicates that either they have been influenced by their relatives already residing in Australia, or they have influenced others to migrate to Australia. This is in line with the Social Capital Theory of migration. Furthermore, the other 36 percent of the respondents (n=30) who do not have any relatives in Australia might influence their friends and relatives to follow their path as well. This theory proposes that as a result of large inflows of international migrants, a migration network is developed which in turn may help potential migrants of the same ethnic origin to migrate.

Figure 3

Year of Entry



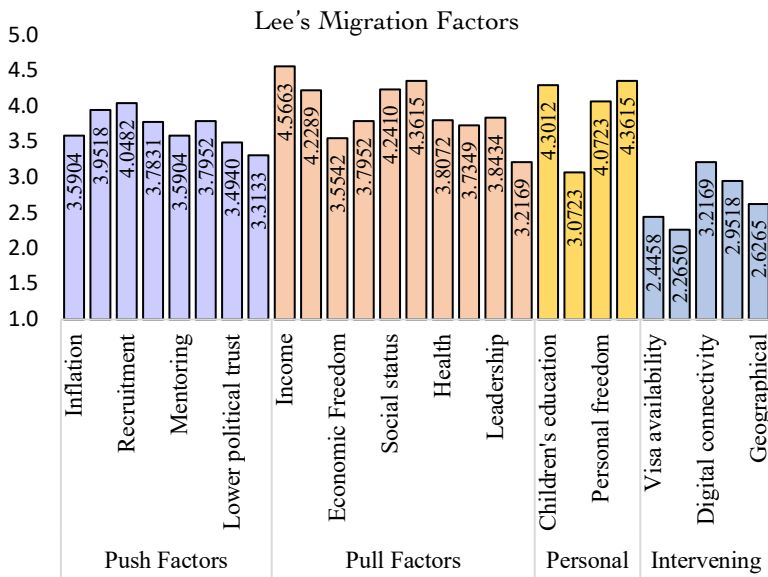
According to the survey, 73.3 percent (n=65) of the respondents emigrated to Australia in the years 2019–2022, which indicates that the migration towards Australia is a recent phenomenon.

Factors of Emigration

Figure 4, shows the push, pull, personal, and intervening factors derived from Lee’s migration theory and contextualized in the case of Bhutan.

Figure 4

Lee’s Migration Factor



The pull factors in Australia, such as the better income ($M=4.57$, $SD=0.84$), higher dignity of labour ($M=4.36$, $SD=1.00$), job opportunities ($M=4.23$, $SD=1.05$), and better social status ($M=4.24$, $SD=0.93$), attract Bhutanese people. The most significant push factors in Bhutan include poor recruitment systems ($M=4.05$, $SD=1.01$), lesser upward mobility in jobs ($M=3.95$, $SD=1.09$),

inconsistent policies ($M=3.79$, $SD=1.04$), and poor working conditions ($M=3.78$, $SD=1.17$). Personal factors like personal growth ($M=4.36$, $SD=0.85$) and better children's education ($M=4.30$, $SD=1.02$), also greatly attract our Bhutanese, and the intervening factors contribute the least to emigration from Bhutan to Australia.

Table 6

Cumulative Mean of All the Broad Factors

Factors	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Median	Mode
Social	83	4.0512	0.8262	4	4
Economic	83	3.9849	0.7753	4	4
Personal	83	3.9518	0.8558	4	4
Administrative	83	3.8253	0.8036	3.83	3
Political	83	3.4548	0.9533	3.25	3
Intervening	83	2.8102	0.8665	2.75	3

According to the survey, the social factors had the highest mean ($M=4.05$, $SD=0.82$), followed by the economic factors ($M=3.98$, $SD=0.77$), and then personal factors ($M=3.95$, $SD=0.85$). The intervening factors ($M=2.81$, $SD=0.86$) contribute the least to emigration.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics of Social Factors

Social Factors	N	Mean	SD
More physical facilities in Australia	83	3.80	1.237
Better Social status	83	4.24	0.932
Higher dignity of labour	83	4.36	1.007
Better health facilities	83	3.81	1.152

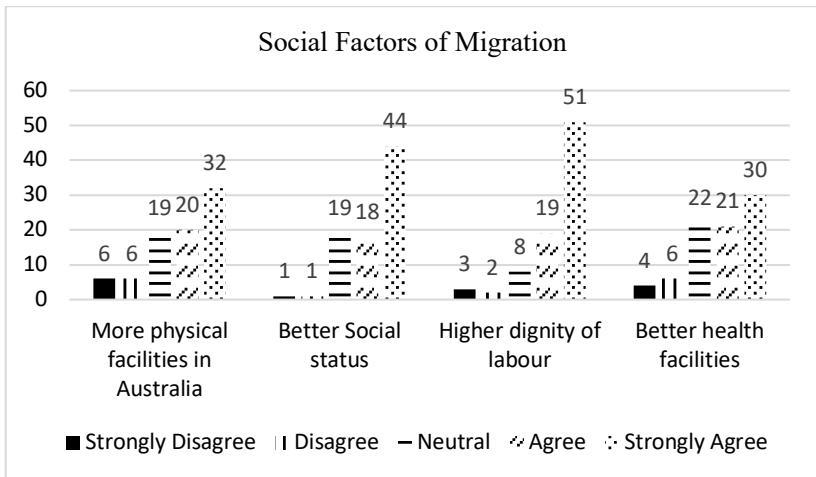
The higher dignity of labour in Australia has been rated as the most important factor of emigration ($M=4.36$, $SD=1.0$).

Social Factors

The highest number of respondents (61.4 %, n=51) strongly agreed that the lower dignity of labour led them to emigrate. It could be attributed to the culture and mentality of the Bhutanese. The low dignity of labour could also be due to characteristics of the workplace, such as blue-collar job and inadequate income. Secondly, the need for a higher social status (53%) led the Bhutanese to emigrate. This is best explained by Britannica (2008) using the concept of “relative deprivation,” where a person who could be much worse off than they are still feels deprived in comparison with even more fortunate groups, which play a prominent role in social movements.

Figure 5

Social Factors of Migration



Additionally, the elevation of the middle class by itself leads to more emigration. Emigration is a regular occurrence among government workers who were raised in rural regions, educated, and employed in occupations that provided for their

basic needs but not retirement savings. Thirdly, more and adequate physical facilities in Australia were the factor with which 38.6 percent of the respondents (n=32) strongly agreed. What is considered a luxury in Bhutan, like modern amenities, is just a convenience in Australia (Wangdi, 2021).

Social Factors

73.5% (n=61) of the respondents strongly agreed that the higher income in Australia attracted them, followed by the better job opportunities in Australia, where 57.8% (n=48) respondents strongly agreed on it. Only 1 respondent (1.2%) strongly disagreed that the higher income and job opportunities were a factor that attracted them.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics of Economic Factors

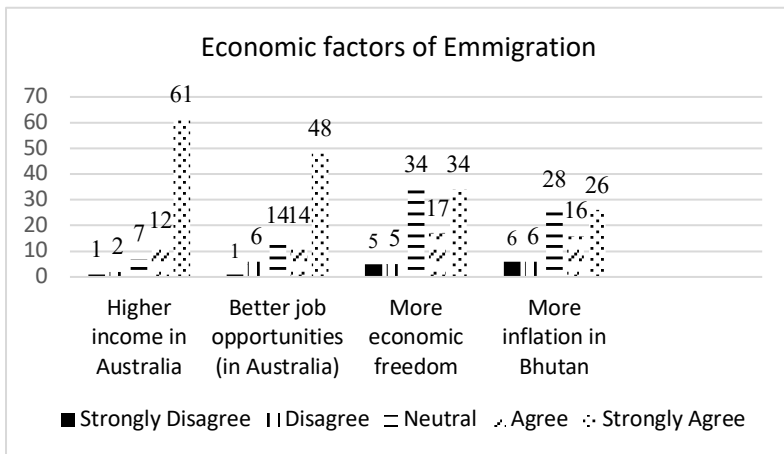
Economic Factors	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Higher income in Australia	83	4.57	0.844
Better job opportunities (in Australia)	83	4.23	1.051
More economic freedom	83	3.55	1.129
More inflation in Bhutan	83	3.59	1.220

A respondent, in an open-ended question, said, “There is a big economic disparity between the haves and the have-nots; the rich are becoming richer and the poor are becoming poorer with high living expenses compared to the low salary.” This aligns with what Wangdi (2021) said: an individual who works a full shift may save a year’s worth of savings back home in Australia in just a fortnight. Furthermore, respondents cited the availability of part-time jobs along with their studies in Australia as a big pull factor. Thet (2014) reasoned that, being an agrarian country, there are limited industries to provide jobs to all its people. However, with even highly respected employees leaving their jobs to relocate to Australia, it is the low wages and unaffordable, high living

standards that drive people to the country. Hence, confirming the survey results, income is the most important factor. What attracts the Bhutanese is the higher value of the dollar, which has a high purchasing capacity when converted to *Ngultrum*.

Figure 6

Economic Factors



39 respondents (47%) cited the lack of entrepreneurship and economic freedom and the lagging private sector in Bhutan as factors pushing them out of Bhutan. According to the Heritage Foundation, Bhutan’s economic freedom score is 59.3, making Bhutan’s economy the 94th freest in the 2022 Index and below the world average of 60 (Bhutan Times, 2022). Bhutan’s modest tax burden supports economic freedom, but the lack of trade freedom and financial freedom continues to hold back progress. There are fewer business opportunities due to the private sector being left behind, high interest rates, and because people don’t focus on entrepreneurship.

Table 9

Correlation

		A.1. Age	Economic Factors
A.1. Age	Pearson Correlation	1	-.219*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.046
	N	83	83

Note. *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

There is a significant negative relationship between the age and the economic factors, $r(81) = .046$, $p < .05$. The younger people who were very economically active rated the economic factors to be the most important factors which has led them to emigrate. The old people say economic factors are not the factor.

Table 10

Descriptive Statistics of Administrative Factors

Administrative Factors	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Lower levels of corruption in the administrative systems	83	3.73	1.116
Better leadership in the organizations abroad	83	3.84	1.131
Lesser upward mobility in jobs in Bhutan	83	3.95	1.092
Poorer recruitment systems in Bhutan	83	4.05	1.011
Poorer working conditions (or environment) in Bhutan	83	3.78	1.169
Poorer orientation and coaching in Bhutan	83	3.59	1.169

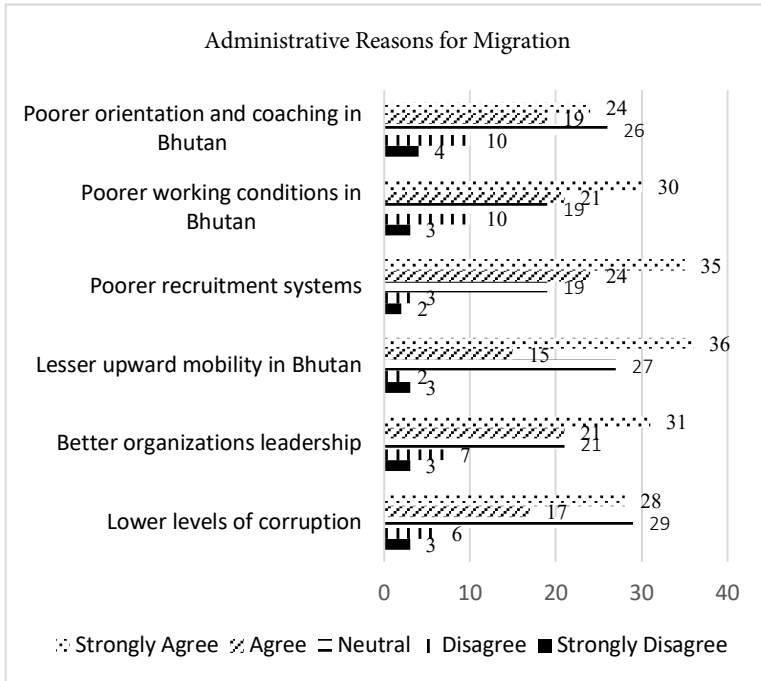
71 percent of the respondents (n=59) either agree or strongly agree that there is a poorer recruitment system in Bhutan, which led them to emigrate. Only 6 percent (n=5) disagree with this. The recruitment process is not scientific, is antiquated, and is unable to locate applicants who are capable or passionate in the particular

field. After being selected, young recruits are not appropriately supervised and mentored, which may contribute to the high turnover rate. There is no effective orientation or coaching or mentoring programme after recruiting. Secondly, 62.7 percent (n=52) of them said there was better leadership in Australia, while 12 percent (n=10) disagreed. In addition, Naskar (2022) found that during the second Royal Civil Service Commission, the executives objected to asking their juniors about the performance of other executives or the culture of the organization. This demonstrates the existence of toxic leadership, prevalence of favouritism, vengeance, or totalitarianism. Wangchuk (2022) complemented the fact that there are leaders who like those who know how to attend to them. There is a lack of recognition of talents and motivation from leaders or supervisors. According to one of the respondents, better opportunities and skills are considered a priority in Australia, unlike in Bhutan, where the opportunities to advance economically and academically are only for the rich and powerful. 61.4 percent (n=51) of the respondents claimed that there was less upward mobility in jobs, with only 6 percent disagreeing with it. There was no recognition of in-service qualification upgradation; for those in the Supervisory level of civil service, unlike at professional (P) level, promotion duration is 5 years, and grade 5 SS level officers have to report to P5 officers. This prevalence of the hierarchy system in civil service is very demotivating.

51.8 percent of the respondents (n=43) agreed that a poorer orientation and coaching programme for new employees in Bhutan was a push factor for them and 61.4 percent (n=51) agreed that poorer working conditions led them to emigrate. This is supported by Wangchuk (2022), adding that there are no enabling conditions to work in Bhutan. There is no safety, be it physical or emotional - the continuing workplace harassment cases is the best evidence. Unlike in Bhutan, Australia has work plus protection, and there are many rules for both the employees and employers.

Figure 7

Administrative Factors



45 respondents (54.2%) agreed that lower levels of corruption in Australia were a factor. There is no accountability in the system because everyone receives the same compensation whether they work or not, discouraging sincere workers. According to Transparency International (2021), Bhutan ranks only 25th with a score of 68, while advanced countries like Singapore, which ranks 4th out of 180 countries, has a score of 85 in terms of being free from corruption. There is less opportunity for professionals in Bhutan to advance horizontally and vertically at the same grade and earn a living from their specialization than there is in developed nations.

Table 11

Descriptive Statistics of Political Factors

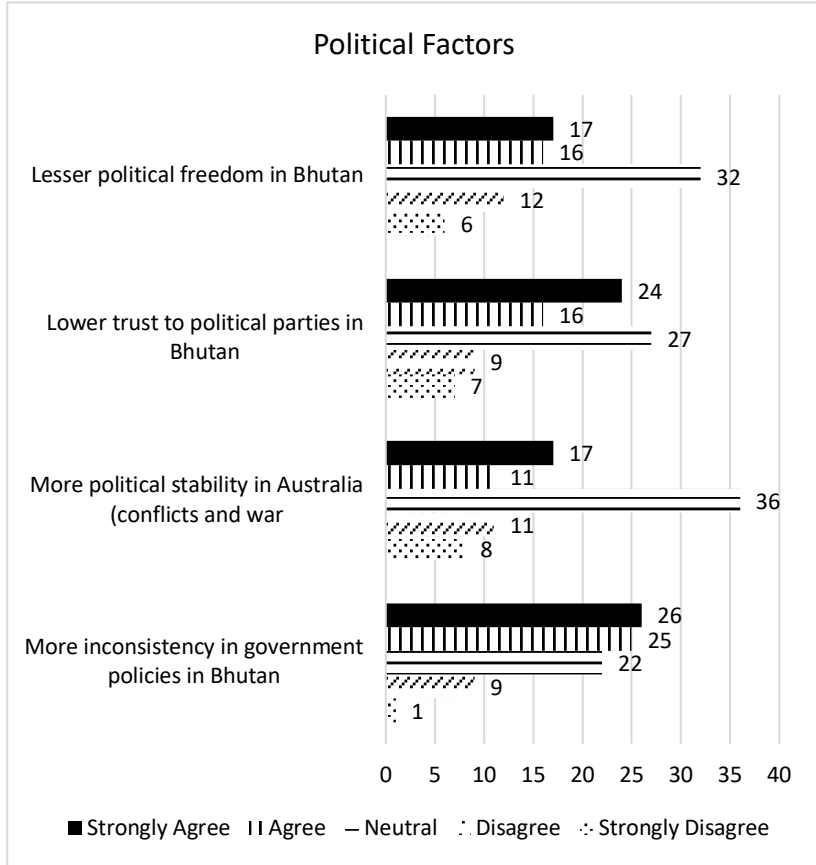
Political Factors	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
More inconsistency in government policies in Bhutan	83	3.80	1.045
More political stability in Australia (conflicts and war)	83	3.22	1.200
Lower trust to political parties in Bhutan	83	3.49	1.253
Lesser political freedom in Bhutan	83	3.31	1.168

According to Waterworth et al. (2022), more inconsistency in government policies also contributes to increasing emigration, which is validated by 61.4 percent (n=51) ($M=3.8$ and $SD=1.04$), the highest number of respondents in agreement with this statement. Five percent of the respondents (n=4) commented in the open-ended question that, due to changes in government policies, the private schools were closed, which led to a lack of job security, and hence they had to look for alternatives, which is migration to Australia.

Changing policies with successive changes in government in human resource-intensive sectors like health and education lead to huge increases in human resource requirements. A case in point is the frequent change in the education sector's policies, where many new interventions are being introduced even before the earlier systems and processes stabilize. This raises questions of the quality, cost-effectiveness, and sustainability of such policies (Royal Civil Service Commission, 2021). 48.2 percent (n=40) of the respondents claimed that lower trust in political parties in Bhutan led them to migrate.

Figure 8

Political Factors



33 respondents (39.8%) cited the lack of political freedom in Bhutan as a push factor for them. The rest, 61.2 percent of the respondents, were either neutral or stated that it was not the factor that led them to migrate. According to worldwide governance indicators, Bhutan scored higher in voice compared to Singapore. Many studies on international migration have confirmed that political instability and strict laws are two of the

major driving forces behind migration (Docquier et al., 2009). While in Bhutan, 19 respondents (22.9%) cited it as the least important factor in determining their decisions to emigrate. The Worldwide Governance Indicator, as given in Table 12, shows that Bhutan scored lower in political stability and absence of violence or terrorism, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption compared to Singapore (World Bank, 2020).

Table 12

Worldwide Governance Indicators: Bhutan vs. Singapore

Indicator	0 (lowest score) 100 (highest score)	
	Bhutan	Singapore
Voice & Accountability	54	38
Political Stability & Absence of Violence	85	97
Government Effectiveness	66	100
Regulatory Quality	40	100
Rule of Law	71	99
Control of Corruption	93	99

Source: The World Bank, 2020

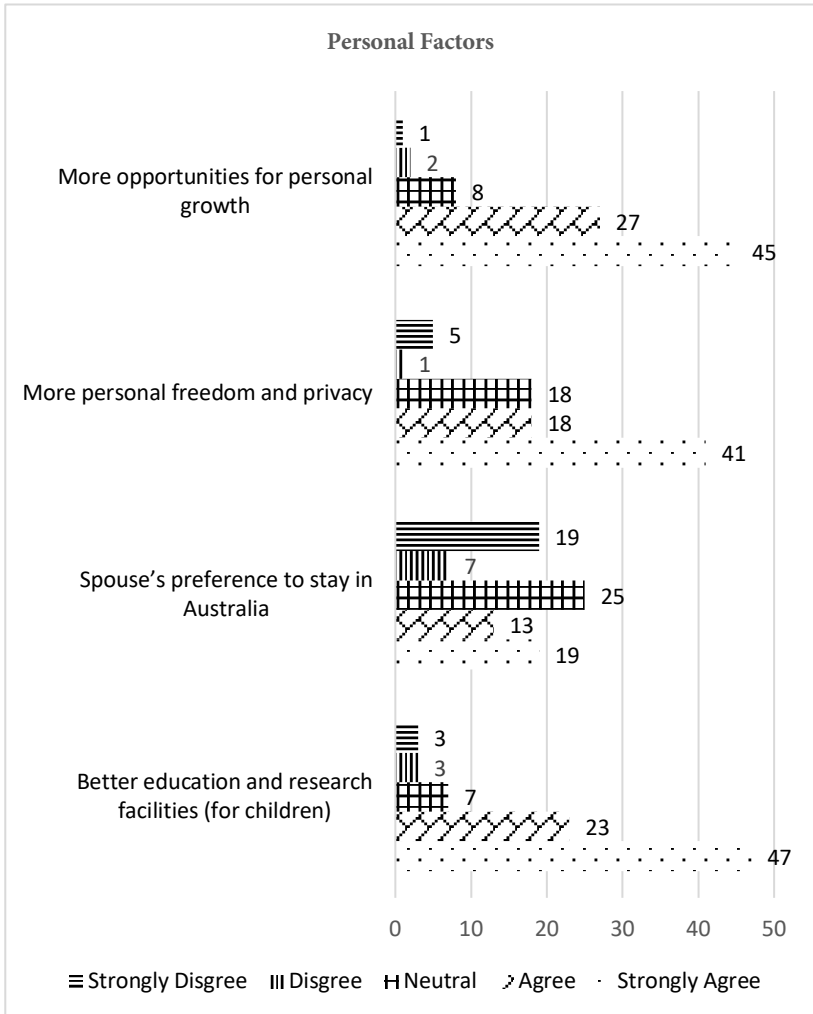
Table 13

Descriptive Statistics of Personal Factors

Personal Factors	N	Mean	Std.
			Deviation
Better education and research facilities (for children)	83	4.30	1.021
Spouse's preference to stay in Australia	83	3.07	1.446
More personal freedom and privacy	83	4.07	1.145
More opportunities for personal growth	83	4.36	0.849

Figure 9

Personal Factors



Most of them, 86.7 percent (n=72) of the respondents, emigrated to upgrade their qualifications and educational level. “I wanted to gain much better experiences and exposure before returning to Bhutan,” one of the respondents explained. 84.3 percent (n=70) agreed that better education and research facilities for their children were the main factors that led them to emigrate. “I decided to come to Perth for the better future of my kids. There is better quality education for children, better work opportunities for them, and spouses in Australia.” The next factor was because of less personal freedom and privacy in Bhutan, also known as the civil liberties, with 59 (71%) of them citing it as a reason. A 16-year-old female living in Canberra emigrated because of her parents, who were already residing there. This is in line with the social capital theory of migration, whereby one person emigrates initially and then calls all their family members to live with them. If this trend continues, Bhutan might see a huge exodus of migrants to Australia in the next few years.

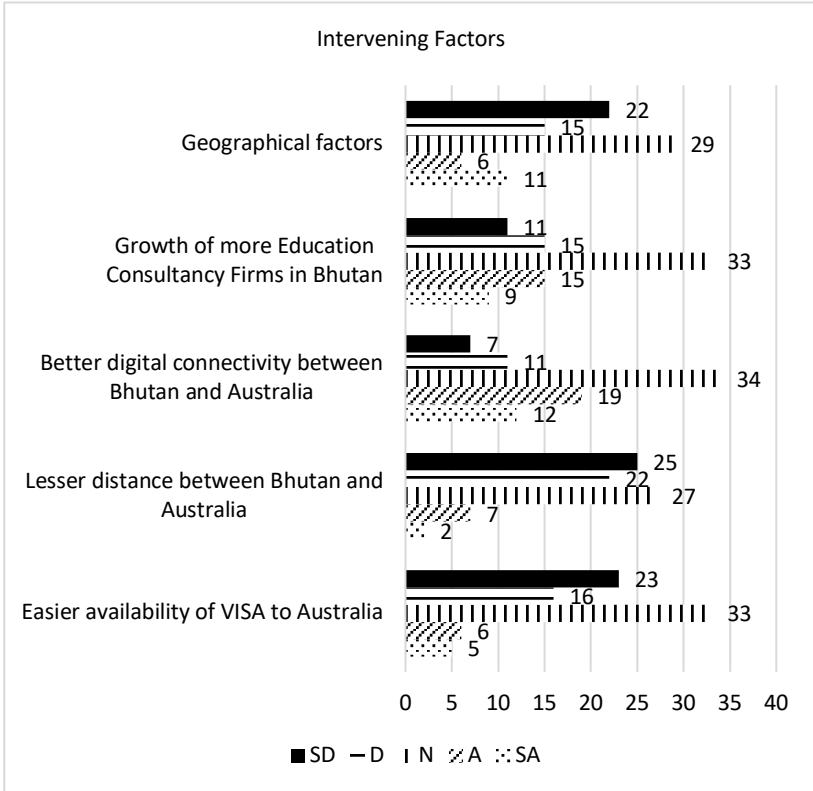
Table 14

Descriptive Statistics of Intervening Factors

Intervening Factor	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Easier availability of VISA to Australia	83	2.45	1.150
Lesser distance between Bhutan and Australia	83	2.27	1.060
Better digital connectivity between Bhutan and Australia	83	3.22	1.116
Growth of more Education Consultancy Firms in Bhutan	83	2.95	1.157
Geographical factors	83	2.63	1.313

Figure 10

Intervening Factors

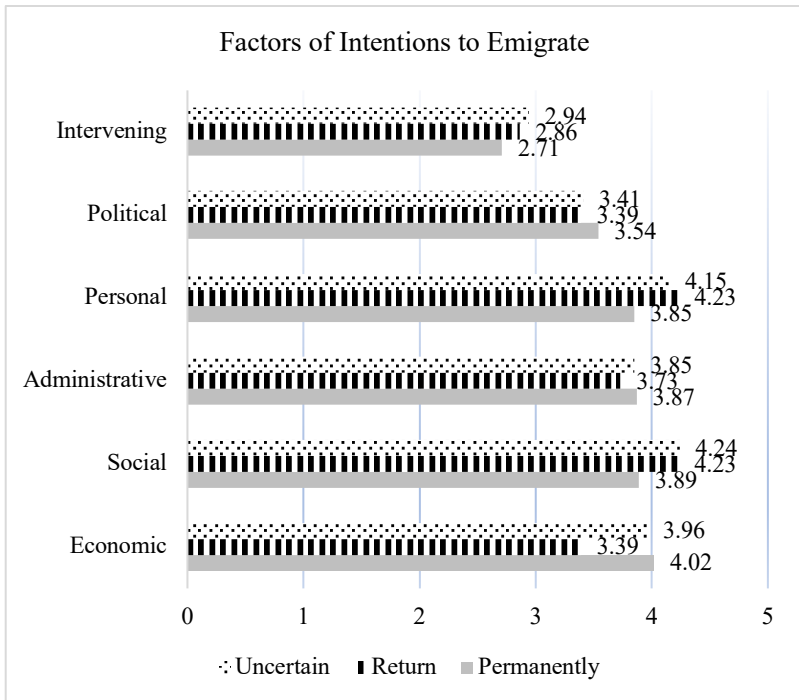


Better digital connectivity was the only pull factor that influenced 37.3 percent of respondents (n=31) to emigrate to Australia. The improved communication facilities like the faster and cheaper transportation, the impact of cinema, television, and good communication networks, and an urban-oriented education have influenced the Bhutanese towards wanting to travel to Australia and this aligns with what Thet (2014) has suggested. Moreover, a respondent in an interview stated that the Australian employers prefer the Bhutanese workers, who have no problem getting

jobs. Bhutan has seen an increase in the number of Education Consultancy and Placement Firms (ECPFs), making it easier for temporary migrants from Bhutan to obtain a student visa. However, the survey shows otherwise, as 31.3 percent (n=26) of the respondents disagreed, compared to only 28.9 percent (n=24) who agreed. Survey shows that 47 percent (n=39) of respondents in Australia said they disagree with the easier availability of visas being a factor that influenced them.

Figure 11

Intention to Emigrate



As depicted in Figure 11, economic ($M=4.02$), administrative ($M=3.87$), and political factors ($M=3.54$) are rated as the most influential factors leading to emigration by those who want to permanently settle in Australia. Those who stated that the main

factors leading to emigration are social ($M=4.22$), personal ($M=4.05$), and intervening ($M=2.91$) factors did not want to settle permanently in Australia. These findings indicate that, in the long run, the government can focus on improving the economy of the country in order to encourage the return of Bhutanese emigrants.

Recommendations

Immediate Solution: Improving the Working Conditions

Creating a safer work environment with essential facilities and ensuring fair recruitment practices is crucial. Allocating more time to hiring the right candidates and using psychometric tests during interviews can enhance candidate evaluation. Implementing an internal feedback programme during biannual appraisals, as supported by Goswami & Jha (2012), and conducting exit interviews with emigrants, as recommended by Ramadevi and Sangeetha (2019), are also beneficial. Enhancing job relevance and growth opportunities boosts employee satisfaction and reduces turnover. Inhumane treatment of employees should be addressed, promoting human resource dialogue and leadership development, as suggested by Cleveland et al. (2015). Leaders should establish an exchange-oriented relationship with employees, fostering high performance and commitment through resource sharing. Transformational leaders who uphold high ethical standards inspire loyalty and create a compelling vision (Cleveland et al., 2015).

Empowering employees in decision-making processes and emphasizing lower-level workers' perspectives, as recommended by Zawadzki (2018), can improve the dignity of labour. Respecting employee rights, assisting in problem-solving, and emphasizing development and wellbeing are essential. Chacko (2017) noted that India successfully attracted highly specialized engineers back due to a supportive work environment, growth opportunities, and

comparable salaries to the US. Enhancing business and institutional partnerships on financial, industrial, and commercial levels would be advantageous.

Intermediate Solution: Improving Our Private Sector, the Engine of Growth

Higher economic freedom in Australia is a significant pull factor, and privatization should be targeted. Kollamparambil & Nicolaou (2011) stated that while public spending hasn't directly influenced private investment, it has increased aggregate demand for private sector products and services. Increasing public investment in non-commercial sectors can accelerate private investment and improve the investment-to-GDP ratio. Public policy should focus on building infrastructure and maintaining a stable socioeconomic environment to encourage private investment. Promoting an entrepreneurial mindset, family businesses, and reducing bureaucratic red tape for business licenses are also necessary. The government can enhance the job relevance and growth prospects through career development programmes and public-private partnerships. Therefore, the solution lies in improving the private sector through economic policies, financial support, infrastructure development, and education and training.

Long-term Solution: Instituting a Part-Time Job System

Low income and unemployment drive emigration and implementing a part-time job system could help. In Australia, blue-collar jobs offer better pay and convenient hours, making them attractive. Introducing a part-time system in Bhutan would elevate the dignity of labour and provide additional income sources. Flexible work hours could allow individuals to balance multiple jobs. Encouraging work while studying, similar to practices in Australia, can improve skills and work experience.

As one of the primary factors is the high living costs, decongesting urban areas through urban planning and development of remote work infrastructure could address this. Technological advancements enable remote work, making it feasible to distribute ministries and agencies across various dzongkhags.

Conclusion

Australia has become a dream destination for many Bhutanese, resulting in significant emigration. While this trend brings benefits such as remittances and improved living standards, it could have long-term implications for Bhutan. According to Lee's migration theory, various push, pull, personal, and intervening factors drive emigration from Bhutan to Australia. Key pull factors include higher income, dignity of labour, social status, and job opportunities, while significant push factors in Bhutan include poor recruitment systems, limited job mobility, inconsistent policies, and poor working conditions. Solutions to reduce emigration include improving working conditions, enhancing the private sector, and instituting a part-time job system. Decongesting urban areas and increasing income through responsible policies and hard work can help create a thriving economy in Bhutan.

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