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Articles

कृष्णाहरि बास्कोटा/ डा. संजिव हुमागाई	प्रसंग: स्थानीय सरकार सञ्चालनको सातवर्ष प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतको भूमिका र अभिमत	१७७६
Jamuna Dangal	The Role of Good Governance in Strengthening Public Administration: Nepalese Perspectives	1793
Dr. Dilip Raj Paudel	Reforming the Pension System in Nepal: Sustainability, Adequacy, and Coverage	1804
Hari Bhakta Shahi (Ph.D)	Contribution of Remittance to the National Economy of Federal Nepal	1820
Dr. Mukesh Kumar Bastola	Revisiting the Political-Administrative Dichotomy: Navigating the Blurred Lines	1832
Baburam Bhul	Inclusive Governance in Nepalese Civil Service: Comparative Analysis in South Asia	1841
Amin Palikhe/ Shreeram Phuyal	Ethical Consideration of Editing of Data in Research	1865
Surendra Bahadur Shahi	Deep Diving Capabilities and Operational Challenges of Armed Police Force, Nepal: Analysing the Simaltaal Accident	1884
Ramesh Kumar KC/ Dr. Dilip Raj Paudel	Effectiveness of Accountability Mechanism of Local Governments in Nepal	1895

Public Administration Association of Nepal (PAAN)

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CONTENTS

Articles

प्रसंग: स्थानीय सरकार सञ्चालनको सातवर्ष प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतको भूमिका र अभिमत	कृष्णहरि बाँस्कोटा / डा. संजिब हुमागाई	१७७६
The Role of Good Governance in Strengthening Public Administration: Nepalese Perspectives	Jamuna Dangal	1793
Reforming the Pension System in Nepal: Sustainability, Adequacy, and Coverage	Dr. Dilip Raj Paudel	1804
Contribution of Remittance to the National Economy of Federal Nepal	Hari Bhakta Shahi (Ph.D)	1820
Revisiting the Political-Administrative Dichotomy: Navigating the Blurred Lines	Dr. Mukesh Kumar Bastola	1832
Inclusive Governance in Nepalese Civil Service: Comparative Analysis in South Asia	Baburam Bhul	1841
Ethical Consideration of Editing of Data in Research	Amin Palikhe/ Shreeram Phuyal	1854
Deep Diving Capabilities and Operational Challenges of Armed Police Force, Nepal: Analysing the Simaltaal Accident	Surendra Bahadur Shahi	1873
Effectiveness of Accountability Mechanism of Local Governments in Nepal	Ramesh Kumar KC/ Dr. Dilip Raj Paudel	1884

Public Administration Association of Nepal (PAAN)

Message from the PAAN President

The **Public Administration Association of Nepal (PAAN)** is delighted to publish yet another *PAAN Journal* in continuity of its signature publication. Since last year, it has been included in the *NepJOL* platform for online publication. It is widely distributed at national and international levels. The journal holds significance because of its focus on academic and professional contributions.

Starting with this issue, we have adopted the policy of **peer review** to enhance the journal's quality and standard. The Poush 2081 issue of the PAAN Journal brings a diverse mix of academic contributions from various well-known writers and researchers. On behalf of PAAN, I would like to extend our gratitude to everyone who contributed their research papers to this issue.

I would also like to express my gratitude to former Presidents of PAAN, Mr. Krishna Hari Baskota, Mr. Krishna Gyawali, and Dr. Hiramani Ghimire, for fulfilling their editorial responsibilities. My appreciation also goes to Mr. Mukunda Prasad Niraula, Vice President of PAAN, for coordinating with our journal partners and supporters. My thanks are due to Dr. Govinda Tamang, and Dr. Dinesh Prasad Pant, of the PAAN Executive Committee for their roles in bringing this issue.

Similarly, I appreciate Dr. Dilip Raj Paudel, General Secretary of PAAN, for editorial management, and Ms. Jamuna Dangal, who worked diligently at the PAAN Secretariat, for their contributions to bring this issue on time.

Finally, I would like to thank all the readers and subscribers for keeping faith in this journal and for encouraging us to continue this publication.

On behalf of the editorial team, I would like to invite comments and suggestions for further improving this journal in the next issues.

I take this opportunity to extend my best wishes to all the PAAN members for the upcoming festive season and a Happy New Year 2025.

Madhu Raman Acharya

President

Public Administration Association of Nepal (PAAN)

Editorial Message

We are pleased to present the **31st volume** of the PAAN Journal, published in **Poush 2081 (January 2025)**. The journal is a continuation of the Public Administration Association of Nepal's (PAAN) commitment to fostering academic excellence and practical knowledge in public administration, governance, and related fields.

This edition marks a milestone, as the journal is now peer-reviewed to ensure academic rigor and quality. Contributions from experienced researchers, practitioners, and experts reflect insightful perspectives on contemporary administrative and socio-economic issues.

The PAAN editorial board extends heartfelt gratitude to all contributors, reviewers, and stakeholders for their unwavering support. We are particularly grateful to the authors for their valuable articles and to the dedicated editorial team for their meticulous efforts.

We hope this edition will provide thought-provoking insights and encourage further academic discourse. Your continued feedback and suggestions will help us improve and strengthen this platform.

Thank you for being a part of this journey toward academic and professional excellence.

The Editorial Board
PAAN Journal

प्रसंग: स्थानीय सरकार सञ्चालनको सातवर्ष

प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतको भूमिका र अभिमत

✍ कृष्णहरि बास्कोटा*

✍ डा. संजिव हुमागाई*

लेखसार

नेपालको संघीय प्रणाली र स्थानीय सरकारहरूको सञ्चालनमा प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतहरूको महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका र कर्तव्यहरूको विश्लेषण गरिएको छ । संघीय संरचनामा तीन तहका सरकारहरूको स्थापना भएको छ र स्थानीय सरकारहरू यी तहहरूको महत्वपूर्ण अंगका रूपमा काम गर्दैछन् । नगर प्रमुख र गाउँपालिका अध्यक्षहरूले राजनैतिक नेतृत्व प्रदान गर्दै स्थानीय जनताको समस्याहरूलाई सम्बोधन गर्छन् भने, वडाध्यक्षहरू वडास्तरमा प्रशासनिक कार्यहरूमा सक्रिय छन् । प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतहरूले संघीय सरकारका प्रतिनिधिहरूको रूपमा स्थानीय प्रशासनको नेतृत्व गर्दछन् र सरकारका कार्यक्रमहरूको कार्यान्वयनमा पारदर्शिता र दक्षता कायम राख्ने प्रयास गर्छन् । लेखमा प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतहरूको जिम्मेवारीहरूको पनि चर्चा गरिएकोछ, जसमा स्थानीय सरकार सञ्चालन ऐन, २०७४ अनुसार आर्थिक विकास, गरिवी निवारण, महिला, बालबालिका र पिछडिएका समुदायलाई प्रत्यक्ष लाभ पुर्याउने कार्यक्रमहरूको कार्यान्वयन गर्नुपर्ने कुरा उल्लेख गरिएको छ । यसका साथै, दीर्घकालीन र आवधिक योजनाहरूको निर्माण र बजेट निर्माणको महत्त्व पनि वर्णन गरिएको छ ।

अन्त्यमा, प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतहरूको कानूनी जिम्मेवारीहरू, तिनीहरूको भूमिका र कार्यप्रणालीका बारेमा अभिमत प्रस्तुत गरिएको छ । यसले सार्वजनिक प्रशासनमा रहेका समस्याहरू, जस्तै असारे विकास र न्यून पुँजीगत खर्चको समस्या समाधानमा सहयोग पुर्याउन सक्छ ।

शब्द कुन्जी :

संघीय प्रणाली, स्थानीय सरकार, प्रशासनिक व्यवस्था, प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतको भूमिका, स्थानीय आर्थिक विकास, कानूनी प्रावधानको कार्यान्वयन, सुशासन र पारदर्शिता ।

परिचय:

मुलुक संघीय प्रणालीमा प्रवेश गरी तीन तहका सरकारहरूको स्थापनासँगै स्थानीय सरकारहरू संघीय शासन प्रणालीका महत्वपूर्ण खम्बा बनेका छन् । स्थानीय सरकारहरूको प्रमुख भूमिकामा नगर प्रमुख वा गाउँपालिका अध्यक्ष रहेका छन् जसले राजनीतिक नेतृत्वको बागडोर समाल्दै स्थानीय जनताको

*श्री बास्कोटा पूर्व सचिव तथा प्रमुख सूचना आयुक्त । हाल नेपाल जनप्रशासन संघको पूर्व अध्यक्ष (IPP) हुनुहुन्छ ।

*डा. हुमागाई कार्यक्रम संयोजक, नेपाल खुल्ला विश्वविद्यालय, मानवशास्त्र, समाजशास्त्र तथा राजनीतिशास्त्र, एमफिल कार्यक्रम ।

समस्याहरूलाई सम्बोधन गर्दै, विकासको कार्यलाई अगाडि बढाउँदै राजनैतिक भूमिका निर्वाह, सहकार्य, समन्वय जनअपेक्षाअनुरूप काम गरिरहेका छन् । यसबाहेक, वडा सञ्चालनको जिम्मेवारी वडाअध्यक्षले पाएका छन् । वडाअध्यक्षले आफ्नो वडा क्षेत्रको विकास र प्रशासनिक गतिविधिहरूमा महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाउँछन् । जसले स्थानीय स्तरमा सरकारको कार्य प्रभावकारी बनाउन मद्दत पुऱ्याउँछ । प्रशासनिक पक्षमा प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतहरूको भूमिका अत्यन्तै महत्त्वपूर्ण छ । यिनीहरूले संघीय सरकारका प्रतिनिधिको रूपमा स्थानीय प्रशासनको नेतृत्व गर्छन् र कार्यान्वयनमा यथासम्भव पारदर्शिता र दक्षता कायम राख्न प्रयास गर्दछन् । यिनीहरू प्रशासनिक कामका साथै राजनीतिक दलहरू बीच समन्वयकारी भूमिकामा रहन्छन् । जसले गर्दा विभिन्न दलहरूको बीचमा सुसम्वाद र सहकार्य स्थापित गर्नमा मद्दत पुऱ्याउँछ । संघीय शासन प्रणालीका यी प्रमुख अंगहरूको सही समन्वय र नेतृत्वले स्थानीय सरकारहरूको कार्यसम्पादनलाई मजबुत बनाउँछ र यसले लोकतान्त्रिक प्रणालीको मजबूती र विकासमा योगदान पुऱ्याउँछ ।

प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतहरू सर्वप्रथम उनीहरू संघीय गणतन्त्रात्मक लोकतन्त्रप्रति मन, वचन र कर्मले प्रतिबद्ध हुनुपर्छ । उनीहरू सुशासन र विधिको शासनका पक्षधर हुनुपर्छ । उनीहरूले तीन तहको सरकारको सुसम्बन्ध, सहयोग र सहअस्तित्वमा प्रभावकारी भूमिका निर्वाह गर्नुपर्छ । साथै, उनीहरूले जनताबाट अनुमोदित भएका जनप्रतिनिधिले निर्माण गरेका नीतिहरूलाई प्रभावकारीढंगले कार्यान्वयन गर्नुपर्छ ।

यसरी प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतहरू सम्बैधानिक व्यवस्था, स्थानीय सरकार सञ्चालन ऐन, २०७४ र अन्य प्रचलित कानूनको हुबहु कार्यान्वयनमा खरो उत्रिनु पर्छ । स्थानीय सरकार सञ्चालन ऐनमा आर्थिक विकास तथा गरिवी निवारणमा प्रत्यक्ष योगदान पुऱ्याउने, उत्पादन तथा छिटो प्रतिफल प्राप्त गर्न सकिने, जनताको जीवनस्तर, आमदानी र रोजगारी बढ्ने तथा स्थानीय वासिन्दाको सहभागिता जुट्ने, स्वयंसेवा परिचालन गर्न सकिने तथा कम लागत लाग्ने आयोजनालाई प्राथमिकता दिनुपर्ने व्यवस्था छ । यसैगरी, स्थानीय स्रोत, साधन, सीपको अधिकतम् प्रयोग हुने, महिला, बालबालिका तथा पिछ्छिडिएका वर्ग र समुदायलाई प्रत्यक्ष लाभ पुग्ने, लैंगिक समानता र सामाजिक समावेशीकरण अभिवृद्धि हुने, दिगो विकास, वातावरणीय संरक्षण तथा सम्बर्धन गर्न सघाउ पुऱ्याउने र भाषिक तथा सांस्कृतिक पक्षको जर्गेना र सामाजिक सद्भाव तथा एकता अभिवृद्धिमा सघाउ पुऱ्याउने कार्यक्रमहरूलाई प्राथमिकता दिनु पर्ने व्यवस्था छ । यस अनुसार दीर्घकालीन सोच, आवधिक योजना, मध्यमकालीन खर्च संरचना र वार्षिक नीति तथा कार्यक्रम र बजेट निर्माणमा प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतले अहम् भूमिका निर्वाह गर्नुपर्छ ।

नेपालको संघीय संरचनामा प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतहरूको भूमिका अत्यन्त महत्त्वपूर्ण छ । यी अधिकारीहरूले संविधान, स्थानीय सरकार सञ्चालन ऐन, २०७४ अन्य प्रचलित कानूनहरूको कार्यान्वयनमा खरो उत्रनु पर्दछ । प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतहरूको मुख्य दायित्व भनेको सरकारी नीति र कानूनी प्रावधानहरूको पालना गर्दै स्थानीय सरकारका क्रियाकलापहरूलाई प्रभावकारी बनाउनु हो ।

स्थानीय सरकार सञ्चालन ऐन, २०७४ ले स्थानीय सरकारहरूलाई आर्थिक विकास र गरिवी निवारणमा प्रत्यक्ष योगदान पुऱ्याउने आयोजनाहरूलाई प्राथमिकता दिन निर्देशन दिएको छ । यस ऐनमा उत्पादन र छिटो प्रतिफल प्राप्त गर्न सकिने, जनताको जीवनस्तर र रोजगारीमा सुधार ल्याउने, र स्थानीय

वासिन्दाको सक्रिय सहभागिता सुनिश्चित गर्ने कार्यक्रमहरूको महत्त्व उल्लेख गरिएको छ । प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतहरूले यस प्रावधानलाई ध्यानमा राखी कम लागतमा बढी फाइदा दिने योजनाहरूको कार्यान्वयनमा ध्यान दिनुपर्छ ।

यस्तै, यस स्थानीय सरकार सञ्चालन ऐनमा महिला, बालबालिका र पिछडिएका वर्गका समुदायलाई प्रत्यक्ष लाभ पुऱ्याउने, लैंगिक समानता र सामाजिक समावेशीकरणलाई बढावा दिने, र दिगो विकासका लक्ष्यहरू हासिल गर्ने कार्यक्रमहरूको प्राथमिकता निर्धारण गर्ने व्यवस्था गरिएको छ । प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतहरूले यी कार्यक्रमहरूलाई प्रभावकारी रूपमा कार्यान्वयन गर्नु अत्यन्त आवश्यक छ, जसले गर्दा सामाजिक न्याय र समानता सुनिश्चित होस् । दीर्घकालीन योजनाहरू र बजेट निर्माण गर्नु प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतहरूको अर्को महत्त्वपूर्ण कर्तव्य हो । यसमा, मध्यमकालीन खर्च संरचना र वार्षिक नीति तथा कार्यक्रमहरूको समन्वय आवश्यक छ । प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतले वार्षिक नीति र बजेटको निर्माणमा महत्त्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाउँदै योजनाहरूको प्रभावकारी कार्यान्वयनको सुनिश्चितता गर्नु पर्दछ । यसका लागि, प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतहरूले समग्र स्थानीय स्रोत र साधनहरूको अधिकतम प्रयोग गर्नुपर्नेछ । यसले स्थानीय सरकारका योजनाहरूलाई कार्यान्वयन गर्ने क्रममा प्रभावकारिता र दिगो विकास सुनिश्चित गर्न मद्दत पुऱ्याउँछ ।

समाजको सशक्तिकरण र एकताका साथै प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतहरूले सामाजिक समावेशीकरण र सामाजिक सद्भावको प्रवर्द्धनमा पनि भूमिका खेल्नुपर्छ । यसका लागि विविध भाषिक र सांस्कृतिक पक्षको संरक्षण र प्रवर्द्धन गर्ने कार्यक्रमहरूको कार्यान्वयनमा जोड दिनु पर्छ । यसले न केवल स्थानीय समुदायको एकता बढाउँछ, बरु सामाजिक र सांस्कृतिक विविधतालाई सम्मान गर्ने वातावरण पनि सिर्जना गर्दछ । प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतहरूले स्थानीय सरकारको प्रभावकारी सञ्चालन र समृद्धि सुनिश्चित गर्न सविधान, कानून, र ऐनका प्रावधानहरूलाई प्राथमिकताका साथ कार्यान्वयन गर्नुपर्नेछ । यसका साथै, उनीहरूले दीर्घकालीन र प्रभावकारी योजना निर्माण, बजेट निर्माण र कार्यक्रमहरूको कार्यान्वयनमा नेतृत्व दिनुपर्नेछ, जसले स्थानीय सरकारलाई जनताको हितमा दिगो र सुसज्जित बनाउँछ ।

स्थानीय सरकार सञ्चालन ऐनमा बृहत् पूर्वाधार निर्माण, ठूला मेशिन तथा औजार खरिद, विपद् व्यवस्थापन, यातायात सञ्चालन तथा व्यवस्थापन र फोहोरमैला व्यवस्थापनको काम छिमेकी पालिकाहरूसंग मिलेर गर्नुपर्ने व्यवस्था छ । साथै, बस्ती विकास र भूउपयोग योजना, पर्यटन प्रवर्द्धन र सांस्कृतिक विकास, संयुक्त उद्यम, आधारभूत र माध्यमिक शिक्षा तथा प्राविधिक शिक्षा तथा स्थानीय बजार व्यवस्थापन र वातावरण संरक्षणसम्बन्धी काममा पनि छिमेकी पालिकासंग सहकार्यमा गर्नुपर्ने व्यवस्था छ । यी कामको समन्वय प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतले गर्नुपर्छ ।

गाउँ र नगर सभा सञ्चालनका लागि प्रदेश सभाबाट कानून निर्माण हुन्छ । यसैगरी, जनप्रतिनिधिका सुविधासम्बन्धी कानून पनि प्रदेश सभाबाट नै जारी हुन्छ । यस अतिरिक्त, गाउँ वा नगरसभाबाट कानून निर्माणको प्रक्रिया पनि प्रदेश सभाबाट निर्मित कानूनद्वारा निर्धारित हुन्छ । यसर्थ, प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतले यी कानूनको अध्ययन गरी सबै जनप्रतिनिधिहरूलाई तालीमका माध्यमद्वारा जानकारी समेत गराई सभालाई व्यवस्थित र मर्यादीतढंगले सञ्चालन गरी सभाको सचिवको साख राख्नुपर्छ ।

मुख्यतः तालीम दिने कार्यलाई प्राथमिकता दिनु पर्दछ । यसरी, जनप्रतिनिधिहरूलाई यथासम्भव कानून र प्रक्रियासम्बन्धी पूर्ण जानकारी दिनु आवश्यक छ, ताकि सभा व्यवस्थित र मर्यादितढंगले सञ्चालन होस् । प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतले एक महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निर्वाह गर्दै सभाको सचिवको रूपमा काम गर्नु पर्छ । यसले जनप्रतिनिधिहरूको कार्यसम्पादनलाई प्रभावकारी बनाउन सहयोग पुऱ्याउँछ, र लोकतान्त्रिक प्रक्रियामा पारदर्शिता सुनिश्चित गर्दछ । प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतको दायित्व भनेको सभाको सञ्चालनलाई नियमसंगत र तर्कसंगत ढंगले सुनिश्चित गर्नु हो, जसले जनताको चासो र विश्वासलाई जित्न मद्दत गर्छ । यसरी, प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतको नेतृत्वमा, कानूनको राम्रो ज्ञान र यसको कार्यान्वयनमा दक्षता सुनिश्चित गर्दै, सभालाई प्रभावकारी र व्यवस्थित ढंगले सञ्चालन गर्ने क्षमता प्रदर्शन गर्न सकिन्छ ।

प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतले सभा र कार्यपालिकाको सचिवकोरूपमा भूमिका निर्वाह गर्ने क्रममा यी निकायहरूबाट भए गरेका निर्णयहरूको कार्यान्वयन गर्नु गराउनु पर्छ । यसैगरी, निजले वार्षिक कार्यक्रम तथा बजेट तर्जुमा, कार्यान्वयन र अनुगमनमा प्रभावकारी योगदान गर्नुपर्छ । प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतले भ्रष्टाचार नियन्त्रणमा सून्य सहनशीलताको नीति अख्तियार गर्दै बेरुजुरहित स्थानीय सरकार निर्माण गर्न मिहिनत गर्नुपर्छ । यसैगरी, पूँजीगत बजेटको खर्च बृद्धि गर्न, फजुल खर्च नियन्त्रण गर्न र स्थानीय सरकारभित्रको सार्वजनिक सम्पत्तीको सुरक्षा गर्न निकै चनाखो हुनुपर्छ । पालिकाको स्वमूल्यांकन, वित्तिय जोखिम न्यूनीकरण, बालमैत्री शासनलगायतका सूचकांकमा पालिकालाई उत्कृष्ट स्थानमा पुऱ्याउन पहल गर्नु पर्छ । यिनै कामको माध्यमद्वारा प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतले आफ्नो उपस्थिति प्रमाणित गर्न सक्तछन् । यिनै कानूनी व्यवस्था र व्यवहारिक कार्यप्रणाली बीच प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतको भोगाइका नजरबाट स्थानीय सरकारलाई नियाल्ने ध्येयले उनीहरूको अभिमतसमेत यस आलेखमा समेटिएको छ ।

अभिमतको पृष्ठभूमि

Centre For Innovative Governance Practices (CIGP) ले काठमाण्डौंमा दुई समूहमा गरी ५९ जना प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृत (प्र.प्र.अ.)हरूलाई स्थानीय सरकार सञ्चालनका विधिहरूका सन्दर्भमा तीन दिने प्रशिक्षण सञ्चालन गरेको थियो । सो प्रशिक्षणमा सहभागी भएका प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतहरूको अभिमत बुझी स्थानीय सरकार सञ्चालनका विविध पाटोलाई उजागर गर्ने प्रयास गरिएको छ । प्रशिक्षणको क्रममा सहभागीहरूले स्थानीय सरकारका कानूनी, प्रशासनिक र संरचनात्मक पक्षबारे गहन छलफल गरेका थिए । सहभागीहरूले स्थानीय सरकारका योजनाहरूको प्रभावकारीता, चुनौति र समाधानबारे अनुभव आदानप्रदान गरेका थिए । सो सर्वेक्षणमा विभिन्न तह र वर्गका प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतहरूको प्रतिनिधित्व रहेको थियो । सहभागीहरूको विचार, अनुभव, र सुझावले स्थानीय सरकार सञ्चालनका पाटाहरूलाई थप स्पष्ट बनाउन योगदान पुऱ्याएको थियो । यस प्रशिक्षणले स्थानीय सरकारलाई अझ सुदृढ र प्रभावकारी बनाउन महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका खेलेको थियो । यस सर्वेमा निम्नानुसारका प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतहरूको सहभागिता रहेको छ ।

- सर्वेक्षणमा सहभागी स्थानीय तहका ५९ प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृत (७.८४%)
- प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतको रूपमा पहिलो पालिका ३१.०३%, प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतको रूपमा दोस्रो पालिका स् २७.५८%, प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतको रूपमा तेस्रो पालिका: १७.२४%, प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतको रूपमा चौथो पालिका: १२.०७%, प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतको रूपमा पाँचौं पालिका: १२.०७%
- २० देखि २९ वर्ष उमेर समूह : १.७%, ३० देखि ३९ वर्ष उमेर समूह स् ४२.३%, ४० देखि ४९ वर्ष उमेर समूह : ३०.५%, ५० देखि ५९ वर्ष उमेर समूह : २५.४२%
- शैक्षिक योग्यता: स्नातक : ५%, स्नातकोत्तर: ९५%
- प्रदेश : कोशी १६%, मधेश १६%, बागमती २२.८%, गण्डकी १६%, लुम्बिनी २१%, कर्णाली १.७%, सुदूरपश्चिम, ५.२६%

प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतको कानुनी व्यवस्था:

स्थानीय सरकार सञ्चालन ऐन, २०७४ को दफा ८४(१) मा गाउँपालिका तथा नगरपालिकाको प्रशासकीय प्रमुखको रूपमा काम गर्न एक जना प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृत रहने व्यवस्था छ। कानूनअनुसार सभा र कार्यपालिकाको सचिवका रूपमा प्र.प्र.अ.ले अहम् भूमिका निर्वाह गर्नुपर्छ। निजले यी दुई निकायबाट भएका निर्णयको कार्यान्वयन गराउनु पर्छ। प्र.प्र.अ.ले दीर्घकालीन सोच, आवधिक योजना, मध्यमकालीन खर्च संरचना, वार्षिक नीति तथा कार्यक्रम र वार्षिक बजेटको खाका तयार गर्नुपर्छ। हरेक स्थानीय सरकारको वित्तीय कारोवारको जिम्मेवार अधिकृतको भूमिका निर्वाह गर्नुपर्छ। निजले विकास कार्यक्रमको कार्यान्वयन गराउने, सरकारको सम्पत्ती संरक्षण गर्ने, समितिहरूलाई प्रभावकारी तुल्याउन सहजीकरणको भूमिका निर्वाह गर्ने लगायत स्थानीय सरकार सञ्चालनका यावत काम गर्नुपर्छ। यी सबै काममा तपाईं कर्तिको सन्तुष्ट हुनुहुन्छ भनी सोधिएको प्रश्नको उत्तर निम्नानुसार जवाफ प्राप्त भएको छ:

विश्लेषण १ : साधारण सन्तुष्टि

आफ्नो काम प्रतिको सन्तुष्टि (%)

पूर्ण सन्तुष्टि	आंशिकरूपमा सन्तुष्टि	ठिकै	थोरै मात्र सन्तुष्टि	पूर्ण रूपमा सन्तुष्टि
४२	४४	१४	-	-

यसलाई सार्वजनिक प्रशासनको वृहत समस्याको रूपमा बुझ्नु पर्दछ। स्थानीय सरकारका प्रशासकीय प्रमुखहरू मध्ये ५०% पनि अहिले आफूले सम्पादन गरिरहेका कामहरू प्रति पूर्ण रूपमा सन्तुष्ट हुन नसक्नुका कारणहरू पहिचान गर्दा मात्रै अहिले हामीले सार्वजनिक प्रशासनमा भैली रहेका समस्या जस्तै असारे विकास, न्यून पुँजीगत खर्च, खस्कदो सार्वजनिक शिक्षाको गुणस्तरमा सुधार गर्न सक्दछौं।

आफ्नो सहकार्य क्षमता प्रतिको सन्तुष्टि (%)

पूर्ण सन्तुष्ट	आंशिकरूपमा सन्तुष्ट	ठिकै	थोरै मात्र सन्तुष्ट	पूर्णरूपमा सन्तुष्ट
२६	५८	१४	२	-

यो तथ्याङ्कलाई माथिको तथ्याङ्क संग जोडेर विश्लेषण गर्नु आवश्यक छ। आफ्नो कामप्रतिको असन्तुष्टिलाई सार्वजनिक रूपमा स्वीकार गरेका उनीहरूले आफ्नो सहकार्य क्षमतामा आफैले प्रश्न गरेका छन्। यसले आगामी दिनमा सहकार्यको वातावरण र क्षमता विकासमा विशेष ध्यान दिनु पर्ने प्रष्ट संग देखाएको छ।

स्थानीय सरकारका कर्मचारीको अबस्था :

हालका स्थानीय सरकारहरूमा विभिन्न किसिमका कर्मचारी कार्यरत छन्, जसले प्रशासनिक विविधता र कार्यक्षमतामा विभिन्नता ल्याएको छ। प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृत (प्र.प्र.अ.) संघीय सरकारका प्रतिनिधिकारूपमा सेवा गरिरहेका छन्, जब कि लेखापाल लगायतका अन्य केही कर्मचारी संघीय सरकारबाटै खटिएका छन्। कतिपय स्थानीय सरकारहरूमा प्रदेश सरकारका कर्मचारीहरूको पनि उपस्थिति देखिन्छ। गाउँपालिका र नगरपालिकामा संघीय लोकसेवा आयोगको परीक्षा उत्तीर्ण गरी समायोजन भएका कर्मचारीहरूको योगदान उल्लेखनीय छ। साथै प्रदेश लोकसेवा आयोगको परीक्षा उत्तीर्ण गरी कार्यरत कर्मचारीहरू पनि छन्। यस बाहेक, विभिन्न निकायबाट समायोजन भै आएका स्थायी कर्मचारी, अस्थायी नियुक्तिमा रहेका कर्मचारी, ज्यालादारी आधारमा काम गर्ने कर्मचारी तथा दातृ निकायहरूको सहायताबाट खटिएका कर्मचारीहरूको उपस्थिति स्थानीय सरकारमा पाइन्छ। यस्ता कर्मचारीहरूको विविध पृष्ठभूमि र नियुक्ति प्रक्रियाले स्थानीय सरकारको कार्यक्षमतामा सकारात्मक र नकारात्मक दुवै प्रभाव पार्न सक्छ।

प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतहरूसँग गरिएको सर्वेक्षणमा सहकर्मी कर्मचारीहरूको क्षमताप्रति सन्तुष्टि मापन गर्दा उनीहरूको धारणा र अनुभवहरू फरक-फरक देखिएको छ। प्राप्त उत्तरहरूले सङ्केत गर्दछ कि कर्मचारीहरूको विविधतालाई प्रोत्साहन गर्दै एकीकृत प्रशिक्षण, क्षमता विकास, र संस्थागत समन्वयमार्फत स्थानीय सरकारहरूको समग्र कार्यसम्पादनलाई सुधार गर्न सकिन्छ। यस्तो व्यवस्थापनले मात्र स्थानीय सरकारको प्रभावकारिता र जनउत्तरदायित्व सुनिश्चित गर्न सहयोग पुऱ्याउनेछ। यस सन्दर्भमा प्र.प्र.अ.हरूसँग सहकर्मी कर्मचारीको क्षमताप्रतिको सन्तुष्टि मापन गर्न सोधिएको प्रश्नको उत्तर निम्नानुसार प्राप्त भएको छ।

विश्लेषण २ : क्षमता प्रतिको सन्तुष्टि:

सहकर्मी कर्मचारीको क्षमता प्रतिको सन्तुष्टि (%)

पूर्ण सन्तुष्ट	आंशिकरूपमा सन्तुष्ट	ठिकै	थोरै मात्र सन्तुष्ट	पूर्ण रूपमा सन्तुष्ट
७	४८	४०	५	

मुलुक संघीयतामा गएपश्चात् स्थानीय तहका कर्मचारीहरूको भूमिका परिवर्तन भए पनि तदनुरूपको क्षमता र वातावरण विकासमा पर्याप्त काम हुन नसकेको स्थानीय तहका प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतहरूको निष्कर्ष रहेको छ। वातावरण विकासका लागि संघीय निजामती कर्मचारी ऐनको बारेमा धेरै चर्चा भए पनि क्षमता विकासको बारेमा सोहीअनुसारको चर्चा हुन सकेको थिएन। यो तथ्याङ्कले क्षमता विकास त्यसमा तीन तहका सरकार, गैर सरकारी क्षेत्रको सहकार्य र नियमित अनुगमनको पाटोलाई पनि उजागर गरेको छ :

हरेक स्थानीय सरकारमा निर्वाचित जनप्रतिनिधि छन्। नगर प्रमुख वा अध्यक्षले कार्यकारी अधिकारसहित स्थानीय सरकारको नेतृत्व गरेका छन्। उपप्रमुख र उपाध्यक्षले न्यायिक समितिको संयोजकसहितको जिम्मेवारी पाएका छन्। सबै वडाअध्यक्षहरू वडा समितिको प्रमुख र कार्यपालिको सदस्यको हैसियतको भूमिका छन्। केहि जनप्रतिनिधिहरू कार्यपालिकाको सदस्य तथा विभिन्न समितिको संयोजक र सदस्य भएका छन्। यी सबै प्रकारको भूमिका निर्वाहप्रति प्र.प्र.अ. को सन्तुष्टि मापन गर्ने प्रश्नमा निम्नानुसार जवाफ प्राप्त भएको छ :

जनप्रतिनिधिको क्षमता प्रतिको सन्तुष्टि (%)

पूर्ण सन्तुष्ट	आंशिकरूपमा सन्तुष्ट	ठिकै	थोरै मात्र सन्तुष्ट	पूर्णरूपमा सन्तुष्ट
-	३६	३८	२२	४

स्थानीय तहमा कर्मचारी र निर्वाचित पदाधिकारी बीच अविश्वास छ भन्ने विषय लामो समय देखि चर्चामा थियो र यो अध्ययनको नतिजाले पनि त्यसको धारणा धेरै हद सम्म सत्यता रहेको देखिएको छ। त्यसता अविश्वासका धेरै कारण र आयामहरू हुन सक्दछन्। यो अध्ययनले जनप्रतिनिधिको क्षमताको बारेमा जनप्रतिनिधिहरूले राख्ने धारणालाई प्राथमिकता दिएको थियो। माथिको तथ्याङ्कले जनप्रतिनिधिको क्षमतामाथि प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतहरूको केही प्रश्न रहेको देखाउँछ। उनीहरूले के-कस्ता क्षमतामाथि प्रश्न उठाएका छन् र एउटा जनप्रतिनिधिसँग प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृत वा अन्य कर्मचारीहरूले सोचेअनुसारको क्षमता हुनुपर्दछ कि सोभन्दा भिन्न क्षमता आवश्यक हुन्छ भन्ने विषयको चिन्तन पनि सँगसँगै गर्नु पर्ने देखिन्छ।

स्थानीय सरकारका सम्वादको अबस्था :

हाल हामी संघीय लोकतान्त्रिक गणतन्त्रात्मक शासन प्रणालीमा छौं, जसको प्रभावकारी कार्यान्वयनका लागि सबैका बीच समझदारी अति आवश्यक छ। यसका लागि आपसी संवादको महत्व अत्याधिक छ, जसले नीति निर्माण र कार्यान्वयनलाई सहज र प्रभावकारी बनाउँछ। प्र.प्र.अ.लाई जनप्रतिनिधि र कर्मचारीसँगको संवादको अवस्था बारे सोध्दा प्राप्त जवाफले यसका विभिन्न पक्षलाई उजागर गरेको छ। यसले संवादमा सुधार र संस्थागत समन्वयको आवश्यकतालाई भल्काउँछ, जसले समग्र शासन प्रणालीको कार्यक्षमतामा सकारात्मक प्रभाव पार्न सक्छ। यसका लागि आपसी सम्वाद अति महत्वपूर्ण हुन्छ। यस्मा प्र.प्र.अ. लाई जनप्रतिनिधि र कर्मचारीसँगको संवादको अवस्था बारे प्रश्न सोध्दा प्राप्त जवाफ निम्नानुसार रहेको छ:

विश्लेषण ३ : संवादको अवस्था प्रतिको सन्तुष्टि

जनप्रतिनिधिहरू बीच छलफलको अवस्था प्रतिको सन्तुष्टि (%)

पूर्ण सन्तुष्ट	आंशिकरूपमा सन्तुष्ट	ठिकै	थोरै मात्र सन्तुष्ट	पूर्ण रूपमा सन्तुष्ट
१०	४५	३६	७	२

जनप्रतिनिधिहरू बीच छलफलको अवस्थामा प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतहरू कम सन्तुष्ट देखिएका छन्, यसले जनप्रतिनिधि र कर्मचारीबीचको संवादमा कमीकै संकेत गर्दछ, जुन प्रशासनिक प्रक्रियामा प्रभावकारी निर्णय र समन्वयमा बाधा पुऱ्याउन सक्छ। प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतहरूले जनप्रतिनिधिहरू बीचको संवादमा कमी देखेनुले संवादको स्तर र प्रभावकारिता बारे पुनः विश्लेषण आवश्यक बनाउँछ। यसलाई सुधारका लागि संस्थागत समन्वय र सहकार्यलाई प्राथमिकता दिनुपर्ने आवश्यकता छ।

जनप्रतिनिधिहरू र कर्मचारीहरू बीच छलफलको अवस्था प्रतिको सन्तुष्टि (%)

पूर्ण सन्तुष्ट	आंशिकरूपमा सन्तुष्ट	ठिकै	थोरै मात्र सन्तुष्ट	पूर्ण रूपमा सन्तुष्ट
११	४७	३३	९	-

जनप्रतिनिधिहरूको बीचमा हुने छलफल भन्दा जनप्रतिनिधि र कर्मचारी बीच हुने छलफल केही मात्र धेरै हुने गरेको देखिएको छ। यसलाई सकारात्मक रूपमा लिनु पर्दछ।

कर्मचारीहरू बीच छलफलको अवस्था प्रतिको सन्तुष्टि (%)

पूर्ण सन्तुष्ट	आंशिकरूपमा सन्तुष्ट	ठिकै	थोरै मात्र सन्तुष्ट	पूर्ण रूपमा सन्तुष्ट
३०	५०	१४	६	-

जनप्रतिनिधि र जनप्रतिनिधि एवं जनप्रतिनिधि र कर्मचारीको बीचमा हुने छलफलभन्दा कर्मचारीबीच हुने संवादमा तुलनात्मकरूपमा धेरै सन्तुष्टि देखिए पनि प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतहरूले यसमा पनि आंशिक सन्तुष्टि जाहेर गरेका छन्।

स्थानीय सरकारमा कामको वाडफाडको अवस्था:

स्थानीय सरकार सञ्चालन ऐन, २०७४ को दफा १६ को उपदफा (४) (क) मा अध्यक्ष वा नगरप्रमुखको काम, कर्तव्य र अधिकारमा बैठक सञ्चालन गर्ने, एजेण्डा निर्माण गर्ने, वार्षिक कार्यक्रम निर्माण गर्ने, सभा आवाहन गर्ने, सभा र कार्यपालिकाको निर्णय कार्यान्वयन गराउने, स्थानीय सरकारको दैनिक कामको सुपरिवेक्षण गर्ने, पदाधिकारी र कर्मचारीलाई काजमा खटाउने, आवश्यक सिफारिश गर्ने, सार्वजनिक सम्पत्तिको रक्षा गर्ने, विभिन्न समितिहरूको कामको समन्वय गर्ने, गुनासो व्यवस्थापन गर्ने लगायत तोकिएका छन्।

यसैगरी, दफा १६ को उपदफा (४) (ख) मा उपाध्यक्ष वा उपप्रमुखको काम, कर्तव्य र अधिकारमा न्यायिक समितिको नेतृत्व गर्ने, गैससको समन्वय गर्ने, उपभोक्ता हित संरक्षणको काम गर्ने, योजनाको अनुगमन गर्ने, समितिहरूको काममा सहजीकरण गर्नेलगायत तोकिएका छन् ।

साथै, दफा १६ को उपदफा (४) (ग) मा वडाअध्यक्षको काम, कर्तव्य र अधिकारमा वडा समितिको अध्यक्षता गर्ने, सदस्यहरूको कामको समन्वय गर्ने, वडाको विकास योजनाको कार्यान्वयन र अनुगमन गर्ने, विभिन्न सिफारिस तथा प्रमाणित गर्नेलगायत तोकिएका छन् । यसैगरी, कानूनमा प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतको काम, कर्तव्य र अधिकार पनि लेखिएका छन्, जसको चर्चा माथि गरिसकिएको छ । प्रस्तुत सन्दर्भमा जनप्रतिनिधि र कर्मचारीलाई तोकिएको कामको बाँडफाँडप्रति प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतहरूको अभिमत निम्नानुसार पाईएको छ:

विश्लेषण ४ : कामको बाँडफाँट प्रतिको सन्तुष्टि:

संविधान अनुसार तीन तहका सरकारको कामको बाँडफाँट (%)

पूर्ण सन्तुष्ट	आंशिकरूपमा सन्तुष्ट	ठिकै	थोरै मात्र सन्तुष्ट	पूर्ण रूपमा सन्तुष्ट
८	४६	२५	१७	४

संविधान अनुसार काम, कर्तव्य र अधिकारको बाँडफाँडसम्बन्धमा कानून, कार्यविधि र सहकार्यको खाँचोको बारेमा आम बुझाइअनुसार नै प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतहरूले आफ्नो धारणा व्यक्त गरेका छन् । प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतहरू सङ्घको कर्मचारी भए पनि वर्तमान अवस्थाप्रति आंशिकरूपमा मात्रै सन्तुष्ट देखिनुले अहिलेको अवस्थामा थप सुधार र सहकार्यको मागलाई देखाएको छ ।

स्थानीय तह भित्र कामको बाँडफाँट (%)

पूर्ण सन्तुष्ट	आंशिकरूपमा सन्तुष्ट	ठिकै	थोरै मात्र सन्तुष्ट	पूर्ण रूपमा सन्तुष्ट
७	५२	२७	१४	-

तीन तहका सरकारको अनुपातमा नै स्थानीय तह भित्रको कामको बाँडफाँटको अवस्थाको बारेमा देखिएको सन्तुष्टिले भने धेरै प्रश्नहरू सिर्जना गरेको छ । स्थानीय सरकारको अभ्यास सुरु भएको ७-८ वर्ष हुँदा पनि प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतले सोचे अनुरूपको कामको बाँडफाँट हुन नसक्नुका कारण र त्यसको समाधानको बारेमा आगामी दिनमा थप अनुसन्धान एवं विचार विमर्श आवश्यक देखिन्छ ।

कामको बाँडफाँटको बारेमा जनप्रतिनिधिको बुझाइ (%)

पूर्ण सन्तुष्ट	आंशिकरूपमा सन्तुष्ट	ठिकै	थोरै मात्र सन्तुष्ट	पूर्ण रूपमा सन्तुष्ट
-	२२	४६	२९	३

स्थानीय तहमा कामको बाँडफाँटको बारेमा जनप्रतिनिधिहरूको बुझाइको बारेमा प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतहरूको सन्तुष्टि अत्यन्तै न्यून देखिएको छ। यसलाई माथिको प्रश्न संग पनि जोडेर विश्लेषण गर्न सकिन्छ। स्थानीय तहमा कामको बाँडफाँटको बारेमा जनप्रतिनिधिहरूको कमजोर बुझाई पनि कामको पूर्ण बाँडफाँड हुन् नसक्नुको एउटा कारण हुन् सक्दछ। यद्यपि यो थप अनुसन्धान र विश्लेषणको विषय हो।

कामको बाँडफाँटको बारेमा कर्मचारीको बुझाइ (%)

पूर्ण सन्तुष्टि	आंशिकरूपमा सन्तुष्टि	ठिकै	थोरै मात्र सन्तुष्टि	पूर्ण रूपमा सन्तुष्टि
१०	५४	२९	७	-

जनप्रतिनिधिको तुलनामा कर्मचारीहरूको कामको बाँडफाँटको बारेमा बुझाइमा प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतहरू केही सन्तुष्टि देखिए पनि पूर्ण सन्तुष्टि भन्दा आंशिक रूपमा सन्तुष्टि देखिए छन्। आफ्ना कर्मचारीहरूले नै कामको बारेमा नबुझेको भन्ने उनीहरूको धारणाको बारेमा आगामी दिनमा थप विचार र विमर्श आवश्यक छ।

स्थानीय सरकारको नीति निर्माण र विविध गतिविधिको अबस्था

नेपालको संविधानले स्थानीय सरकारलाई आफ्नो सभाबाट कानून निर्माण गर्ने अधिकार दिएको छ, जसको अभ्यास विगत सात वर्षदेखि भइरहेको छ। प्रत्येक वर्ष कार्यपालिकाले नीति तथा कार्यक्रम जारी गर्दै आएका छन्, जसमा केही कानून र नीतिहरू उदाहरणीय देखिन्छन् भने कतिपयमा सुधारको आवश्यकता देखिएको छ। स्थानीय सरकारको कार्यपालिकाभित्र सामान्यतः कम्तीमा पाँचवटा समिति र सभाभित्र तीनवटा समिति गठन हुने प्रावधान छ। यी समितिहरू केही स्थानीय तहमा प्रभावकारी रूपमा क्रियाशील छन् भने कतिपयमा निष्कृय देखिएका छन्। यसैगरी, स्थानीय सरकारहरूले विकास आयोजनाहरू सञ्चालन गर्नुकासाथै आन्तरिक राजस्व संकलन गर्ने कार्यलाई प्राथमिकता दिइरहेका छन्। तर ७५३ वटा स्थानीय सरकारको कार्यक्षमता, कानुनी कार्यान्वयन, र व्यवस्थापनस्तर एकरूप छैन। प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतहरूको विचारलाई आधार मान्दा यी विषयहरूको प्रभावकारिता र चुनौतीबारे निम्न नतिजा देखिएकोछः

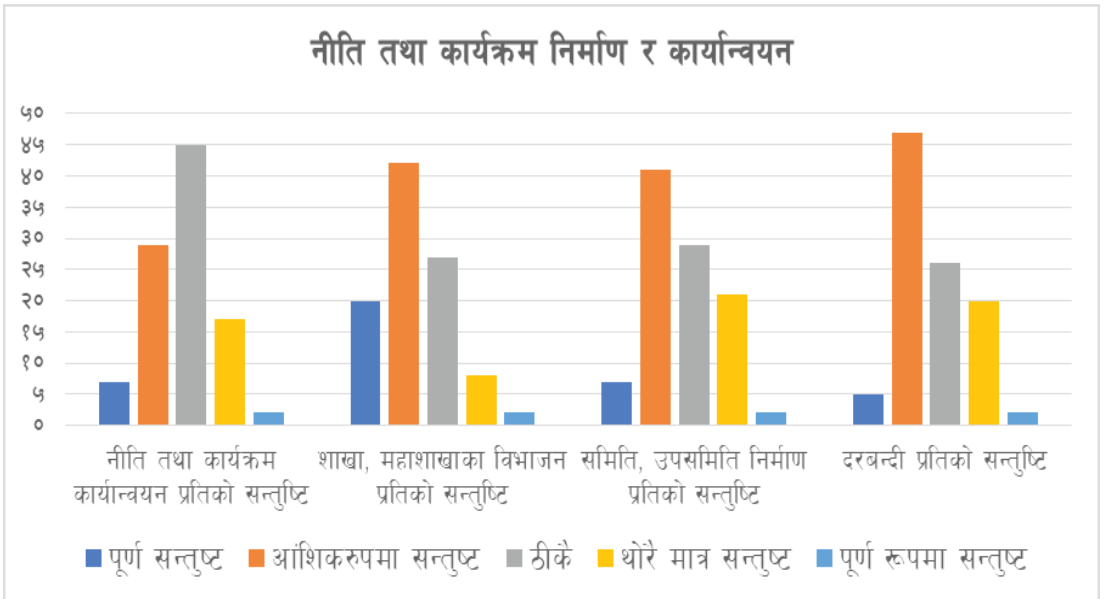
विश्लेषण ५ : नीति र संरचना प्रतिको सन्तुष्टिको अवस्था

नीति निर्माणप्रतिको सन्तुष्टि (%)

प्रश्नावली	पूर्ण सन्तुष्टि	आंशिकरूपमा सन्तुष्टि	ठीकै	थोरै मात्र सन्तुष्टि	पूर्णरूपमा सन्तुष्टि
नीति तथा कार्यक्रम कार्यान्वयन प्रतिको सन्तुष्टि	७	२९	४४	१७	३
शाखा, महाशाखाका विभाजन प्रतिको सन्तुष्टि	२०	४२	२७	८	३

समिति, उपसमिति निर्माण प्रतिको सन्तुष्टि	७	४१	२९	२१	२
दरबन्दी प्रतिको सन्तुष्टि	५	४७	२६	२०	२
परियोजना विकास विधि	-	३४	४१	१७	८
परियोजना छनौट विधि	२	३३	३४	२१	१०
परियोजना अनुगमन विधि	५	४१	४१	१३	-
राजश्व संकलन रणनीति	३	४०	४१	१५	१
राजश्व संकलनको अवस्था	४	३३	४३	२०	-
जनप्रतिनिधिको क्षमता विकास कार्यक्रम	-	३०	३४	२९	७
कर्मचारी क्षमता विकास कार्यक्रम	२	४६	३२	१८	२

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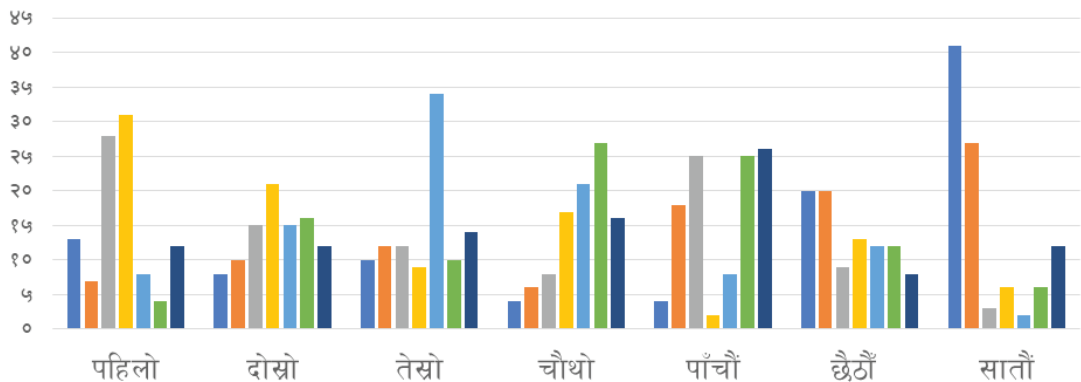
यसबाट स्पष्ट हुन्छ कि प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतहरू नीति निर्माणको प्रक्रिया र यसको कार्यान्वयनमा पूर्ण सन्तुष्टि छैनन्। उनीहरूले विधिको पालना र दीर्घकालीन रणनीतिक आधारमा योजना निर्माणका अभावमा गुनासो जनाएका छन्। यस सन्दर्भमा, नीति निर्माणका प्रक्रियामा सुधार र दीर्घकालीन दृष्टिकोणमा आधारित योजना निर्माणको आवश्यकता रहेको देखिन्छ। प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतहरूको सन्तुष्टिको स्तरलाई मद्दत पुर्याउनका लागि नीतिहरूमा पारदर्शिता र प्रभावकारी कार्यान्वयनको सुनिश्चितता गर्न आवश्यक छ। साथसाथै, नीति निर्माणमा विधिको पालन र दीर्घकालीन रणनीतिका आधारमा योजनाहरू बनाउन ध्यान दिनु पर्छ, ताकि समग्र प्रशासनिक प्रक्रिया अझ प्रभावकारी र जनहितकारी बनेोस्।

हाल कार्यरत स्थानीय तहको सुधारको क्षेत्र वर्गीकरण (%)

प्राथमिकता	संवाद	कामको पुनः बाँडफाँट	स्थानीय कानून एवं कार्यविधि निर्धारण	क्षमता विकास	व्यवस्थित योजना तर्जुमा	व्यवस्थित सार्वजनिक खरिद	साधन र स्रोतको व्यवस्थापन
पहिलो	१२	७	२७	३०	८	४	१२
दोस्रो	९	११	१६	२१	१५	१६	१२
तेस्रो	१०	१२	१२	९	३३	१०	१४
चौथो	५	६	८	१७	२१	२७	१६
पाँचौं	६	१६	२२	४	८	२१	२५
छैठौं	२०	२०	१२	१३	१२	१२	११
सातौं	४१	२७	४	७	३	६	१२

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हाल कार्यरत स्थानीय तहको सुधारको क्षेत्र वर्गीकरण



■ संवाद

■ कामको पुनस् बाँडफाँट

■ स्थानीय कानून एवं कार्यविधि निर्धारण

■ क्षमता विकास

■ व्यवस्थित योजना तर्जुमा

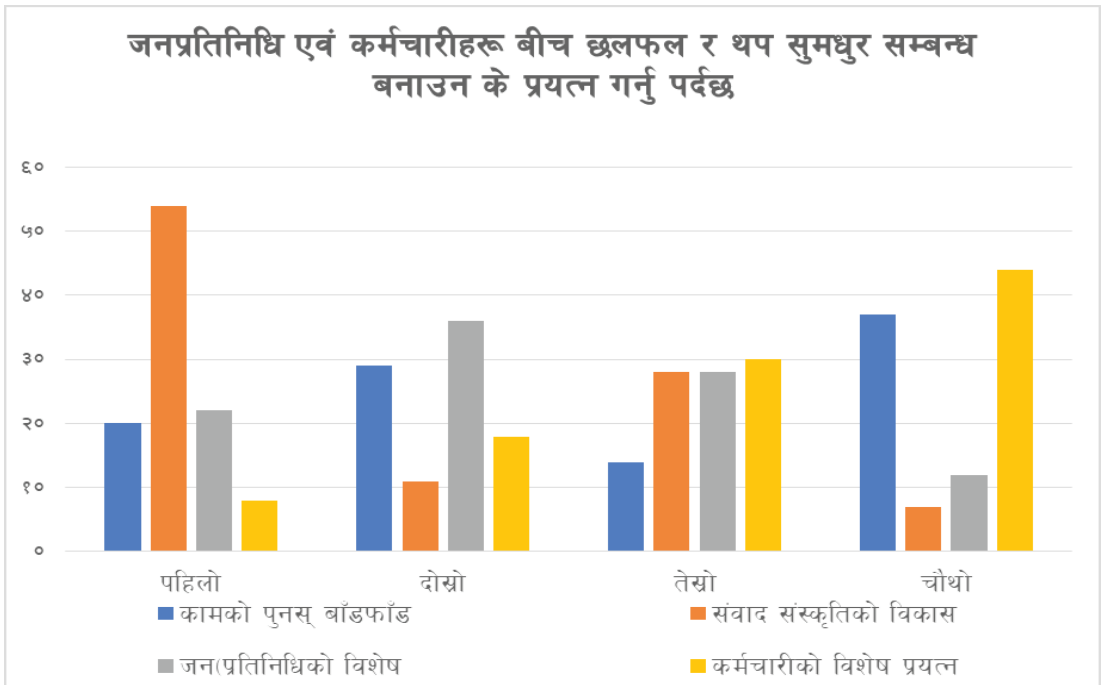
■ व्यवस्थित सार्वजनिक खरिद

■ साधन र स्रोतको व्यवस्थापन

जनप्रतिनिधि एवं कर्मचारीहरू बीच छलफल र थप सुमधुर सम्बन्ध बनाउन के प्रयत्न गर्नु पर्दछ ? (%)

प्राथमिकता	कामको पुनः बाँडफाँट	संवाद संस्कृतिको विकास	जन-प्रतिनिधिको विशेष	कर्मचारीको विशेष प्रयत्न
पहिलो	२०	५०	२२	८
दोस्रो	२९	१७	३६	१८
तेस्रो	१७	२८	२८	२७
चौथो	३७	१०	१२	४१

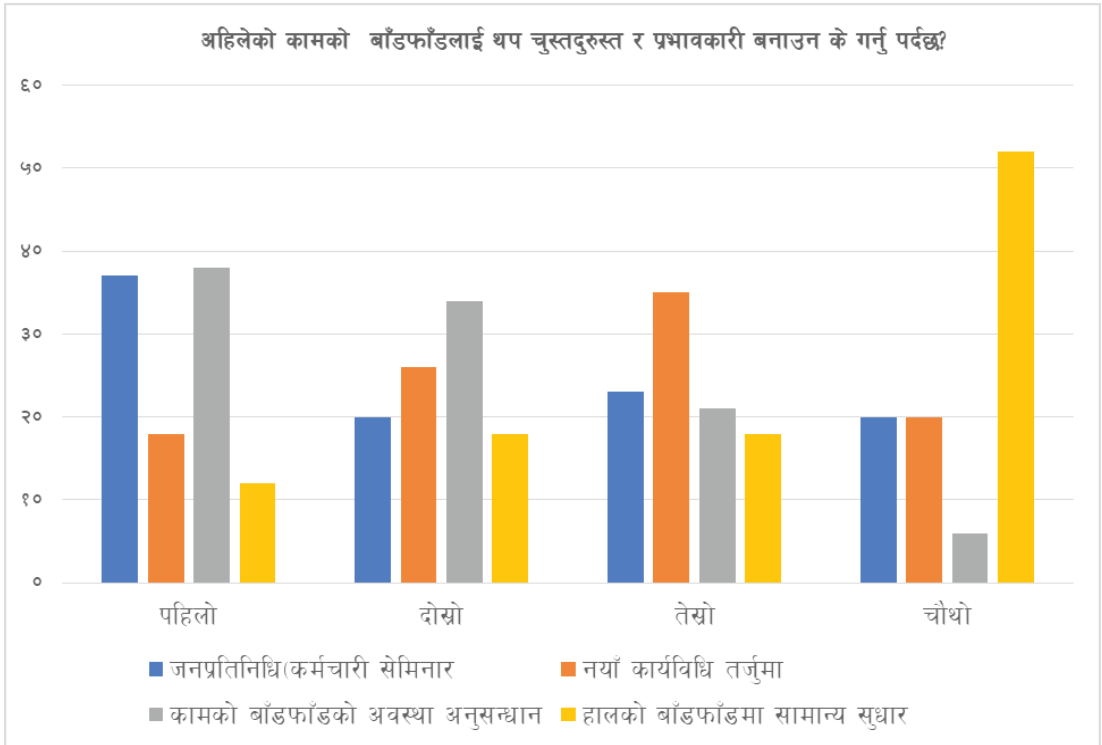
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अहिलेको कामको बाँडफाँटलाई थप चुस्तदुरुस्त र प्रभावकारी बनाउन के गर्नु पर्दछ? (%)

प्राथमिकता	जनप्रतिनिधि-कर्मचारी सेमिनार	नयाँ कार्यविधि तर्जुमा	कामको बाँडफाँडको अवस्था अनुसन्धान	हालको बाँडफाँडमा सामान्य सुधार
पहिलो	३६	१७	३५	१२
दोस्रो	२१	२६	३४	१९
तेस्रो	२३	३५	२१	२१
चौथो	२०	२०	८	५२

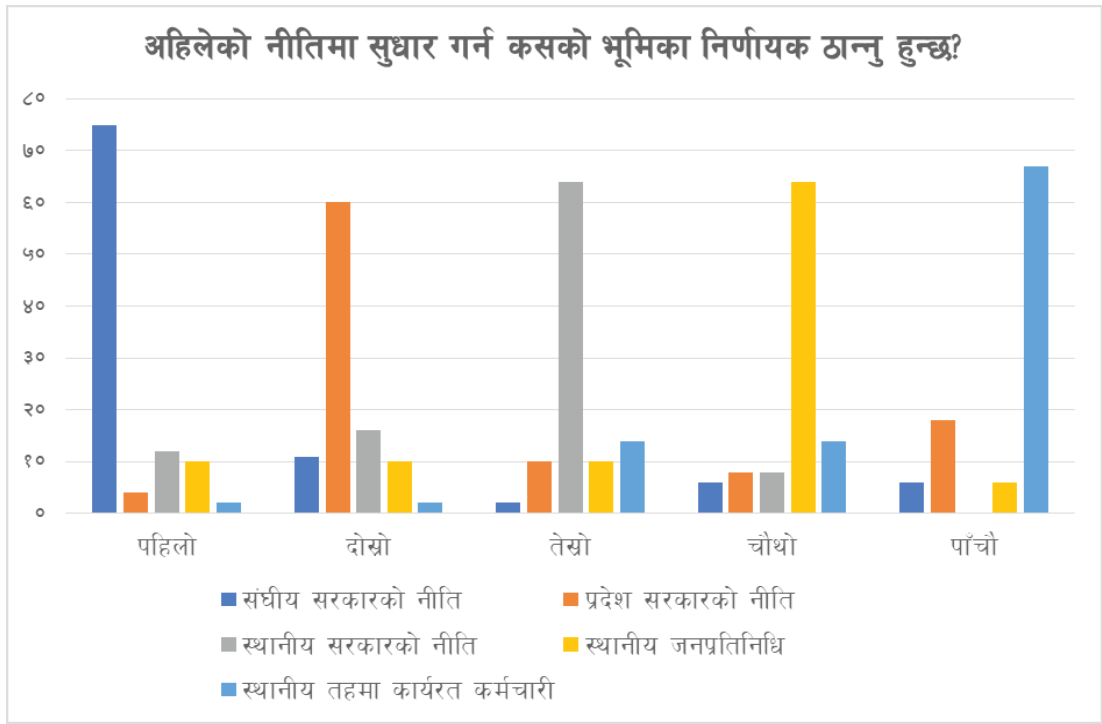
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अहिलेको नीतिमा सुधार गर्न कसको भूमिका निर्णायक ठान्नु हुन्छ? (%)

प्राथमिकता	संघीय सरकारको नीति	प्रदेश सरकारको नीति	स्थानीय सरकारको नीति	स्थानीय जनप्रतिनिधि	स्थानीय तहमा कार्यरत कर्मचारी
पहिलो	72	4	92	90	2
दोस्रो	99	60	96	90	3
तेस्रो	2	90	64	90	94
चौथो	6	5	5	64	94
पाँचौं	5	95	-	7	67

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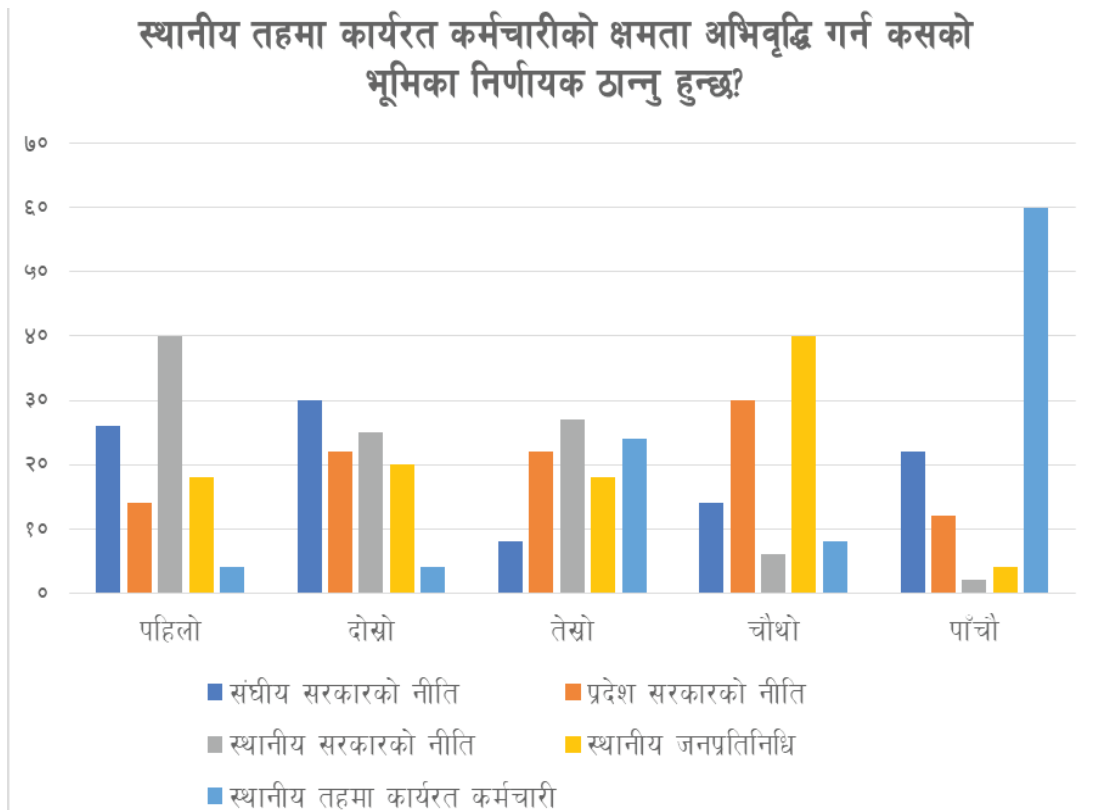
स्थानीय तहमा कार्यरत कर्मचारीको क्षमता अभिवृद्धि गर्न कसको भूमिका निर्णायक ठान्नु हुन्छ? (%)

प्राथमिकता	संघीय सरकारको नीति	प्रदेश सरकारको नीति	स्थानीय सरकारको नीति	स्थानीय जनप्रतिनिधि	स्थानीय तहमा कार्यरत कर्मचारी
पहिलो	२५	१४	३९	१८	४
दोस्रो	२९	२२	२५	२०	४
तेस्रो	९	२२	२७	१८	२४
चौथो	१४	३०	८	४०	८
पाँचौं	२२	१२	२	४	६०

स्रोत: Centre For Innovative Governance Practices (CIGP)

स्थानीय तहमा कार्यरत कर्मचारीको क्षमता अभिवृद्धि गर्न विभिन्न तहको नीति र प्रयास निर्णायक ठहरिन्छ। संघीय सरकारको नीति पहिलो र दोस्रो प्राथमिकतामा उच्च स्थानमा छ। जसले यसको महत्व उजागर गर्छ। प्रदेश सरकारको नीति दोस्रो र तेस्रो प्राथमिकतामा सन्तुलित भूमिकामा रहेको देखिन्छ।

स्थानीय सरकारको नीति पहिलो र तेस्रो प्राथमिकतामा अग्रणी छ, जसले नीतिगत कार्यान्वयनमा यसको प्रभावकारिता देखाउँछ। स्थानीय जनप्रतिनिधि र कर्मचारीको योगदान पनि चौथो र पाँचौँ प्राथमिकतामा महत्वपूर्ण ठहरिएको छ।



निष्कर्ष तथा आगामी पाईला:

प्रस्तुत आलेखमा स्थानीय सरकारको प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतको कानूनी हैसियत र तिनको कार्यक्षेत्रको महत्वलाई उजागर गरिएको छ। स्थानीय सरकारहरूको प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतहरूका कर्तव्य र जिम्मेवारीहरूको पृष्ठभूमिमा आधारित मूल्याङ्कनले हामीलाई विगत सात वर्षको अभ्यासबाट महत्वपूर्ण निष्कर्षहरू प्राप्त गराउन मद्दत गरेको छ। यस निष्कर्षअनुसार, स्थानीय सरकारहरूले जनतासम्म पुग्न सफल भई संघीयताका आधारस्तम्भका रूपमा आफूलाई स्थापित गर्नसकेका छन्। तथापि, उनीहरूको कार्यान्वयन प्रक्रियामा अबै केही चुनौतीहरू रहेका छन् जसले सुशासन र विधिको शासनको विकासमा अवरोध पुऱ्याएको छ।

स्थानीय सरकारका गतिविधिहरूमा अपेक्षित गति र प्रभावकारिता अभावको कारण एकतापूर्ण र समग्र विकासमा असहजता आएको देखिन्छ। निर्वाचित जनप्रतिनिधि र प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतहरू बीचको

दूरी र आत्मीयता अभावका साथै कार्यकारिणी प्रक्रियामा पारदर्शिता र स्पष्टताको कमीले स्थानीय सरकारको कार्यप्रवाहलाई अनिश्चितता र ढिलो प्रभाव पुऱ्याएको छ। स्थानीय सरकारका प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृत र निर्वाचित जनप्रतिनिधिहरू बीच स्पष्ट कार्यसम्पादन करार र आपसी समझदारीको आधारमा काम गर्नुपर्ने आवश्यकता छ। यसले प्रत्येक पक्षको जिम्मेवारीलाई निश्चित पार्नेछ, र स्थानीय सरकारको कार्यान्वयनलाई प्रभावकारी बनाउनेछ। स्थानीय सरकारहरूको प्रभावकारिता र दिगो विकासको लागि कानुनी, प्रशासनिक र संरचनात्मक सुधार अत्यावश्यक छ। प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतहरूको क्षमता, जिम्मेवारी र संस्थागत सहयोगमा सुधारले स्थानीय सरकारलाई जनतासम्म प्रभावकारी र पारदर्शीरूपमा पुग्नमा सघाउँछ। यी सुधारहरू लागू गर्न सकिएमा स्थानीय सरकारको कार्यान्वयन समग्र विकासमा सकारात्मक परिवर्तन ल्याउनेछ।

सन्दर्भ सामाग्री:

नेपालको संविधान

स्थानीय सरकार सञ्चालन ऐन, २०७४

स्थानीय सरकार सञ्चालनसंग सम्बन्धित प्रचलित कानूनहरू

प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतहरूको भूमिका सम्बन्धी आलेखहरू

दीर्घकालीन योजनाहरू र बजेट व्यवस्थापन दिग्दर्शन

प्रमुख प्रशासकीय अधिकृतहरूको भूमिका र जिम्मेवारीका बारेमा बनाइएका रिपोर्टहरू (CIGP)

The Role of Good Governance in Strengthening Public Administration: Nepalese Perspectives

 *Jamuna Dangal**

Abstract

Good governance is a cornerstone of effective public administration, promoting transparency, accountability, and inclusivity in government operations. This paper delves into the theoretical foundations of good governance and its role in public administration, drawing on global best practices and their applicability to Nepal. Key governance models, such as Network Governance, Weberian Bureaucracy, and New Public Management, are examined alongside Nepal's governance challenges, including corruption, bureaucratic inefficiency, and decentralization issues. Recommendations are provided for institutional reforms, capacity building, and e-governance technologies to align Nepal's governance structures with international standards. The article highlights how fostering public trust, efficiency, and citizen participation can strengthen public administration, ultimately improving governance outcomes in Nepal.

Keywords:

Governance, Public Administration, Transparency, Accountability, Public Participation, E-Governance

1. Introduction

Governance, in its broadest sense, refers to the structures and processes that ensure equitable management of resources, decision-making, and service delivery. Public administration, on the other hand, refers to the mechanisms and practices through which governments implement policies and deliver services to the public. The relationship between governance and public administration is inextricably linked, as efficient public administration depends on strong governance frameworks that emphasize accountability, transparency, and citizen participation.

In developing countries like Nepal, governance challenges are pronounced due to limited institutional capacities, corruption, and bureaucratic inefficiencies. Strengthening governance is essential for creating an environment where public administration can function effectively, providing services that meet the needs of citizens while ensuring fairness and inclusivity. This article seeks to analyze the role of good governance in enhancing public administration through a comparative study of global best practices and Nepal's current governance systems.

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1.1 Governance Theories

The concept of governance has been extensively explored within academic literature. One of the prominent theories is the Principal-Agent Theory, which examines the relationship between citizens (principals) and public officials (agents). This theory underscores the power dynamics inherent in governance structures, where the principals delegate authority to agents with the expectation that their interests will be served. However, in the absence of adequate accountability mechanisms, agents may exploit their position for personal or political gain, leading to inefficiencies and misuse of resources in public administration (Miller, 2019). Similarly, the **New Public Management (NPM)** theory emphasizes efficiency in public service delivery, promoting privatization, performance measurement, and a results-oriented approach in public administration.

Another key governance approach is Network Governance, which recognizes the complexity of modern governance systems and the need for multi-stakeholder cooperation. Unlike traditional hierarchical models, Network Governance promotes collaboration between government agencies, private sectors, civil society, and international organizations in policymaking and administration (Rhodes, 2007). This model is particularly relevant to addressing complex issues such as corruption, poverty, and social inequality in Nepal.

For Nepal, this model holds significant practical implications, particularly in addressing entrenched governance challenges such as corruption, resource mismanagement, and inefficiencies in public service delivery. For instance:

- **Post-Earthquake Reconstruction (2015):** Network Governance could enhance the coordination between local governments, non-governmental organizations, and international donors to streamline aid distribution and reconstruction efforts.
- **Decentralization:** By fostering partnerships between federal, provincial, and local governments, Network Governance can mitigate jurisdictional conflicts and improve service delivery at the grassroots level.
- **Disaster Risk Management:** A networked approach could strengthen Nepal's preparedness and response mechanisms by integrating expertise and resources from various stakeholders, ensuring timely and effective action during emergencies.

Adopting Network Governance principles can enable Nepal to transcend its bureaucratic silos, align stakeholder efforts, and build a governance system that is flexible, inclusive, and resilient to complex challenges.

To mitigate such issues, the theory advocates for robust oversight frameworks, transparent decision-making processes, and effective mechanisms to align the actions of agents with the goals of the principals. These principles are particularly relevant for Nepal, where weak accountability systems and bureaucratic inertia often hinder effective governance.

1.2 Public Administration Models

Public administration has traditionally been associated with Weberian Bureaucracy, a model introduced by Max Weber in the early 20th century. This model is characterized by hierarchical structures, strict adherence to rules, and a focus on procedure over flexibility. While this approach brought order and predictability to public administration, its rigid nature often hindered adaptability, innovation, and responsiveness to citizen needs. Its limitations, particularly in addressing inefficiencies and red tape, have led to a shift towards more flexible and responsive governance systems.

For instance, in Nepal, Weberian principles dominate many public offices, resulting in procedural delays and inefficiencies, particularly in service delivery and policy implementation.

Recognizing these limitations, modern governance systems have increasingly shifted toward more flexible and responsive models. This shift is exemplified by:

New Public Management (NPM): Emphasizing efficiency, privatization, and a results-oriented approach, NPM seeks to reform traditional bureaucracy by integrating business principles into public service. For example, countries like New Zealand have successfully implemented NPM to enhance service quality and reduce administrative costs.

Participatory Governance: Emerging as an extension of New Public Administration (NPA) from the 1980s and 1990s, this model prioritizes citizen engagement, inclusivity, and transparency in decision-making. In Nepal, participatory governance is reflected in local government initiatives aimed at involving communities in resource allocation and development planning.

In the 1980s and 1990s, **New Public Administration (NPA)** emerged, advocating for greater inclusivity, responsiveness, and citizen engagement in public service delivery. This approach aligns with the principles of good governance, which prioritize transparency, participation, and accountability in decision-making processes (Frederickson, 1980). Nepal's adoption of certain aspects of NPA, especially after its democratic transition, reflects the growing emphasis on these principles.

The adoption of such responsive governance systems offers Nepal an opportunity to address systemic inefficiencies and create public institutions that are more adaptable, inclusive, and capable of meeting contemporary challenges.

1.3 Governance Indicators

Several international organizations, including the World Bank and the United Nations, have developed governance indicators to assess the quality of governance within states. Key indicators include:

- **Transparency:** The extent to which governmental actions, decisions, and policies are open and accessible to the public.

- **Accountability:** Mechanisms that ensure government officials are held responsible for their actions, particularly in terms of misuse of resources or corruption.
- **Rule of Law:** The enforcement of laws fairly and consistently across all individuals and institutions.
- **Public Participation:** The ability of citizens to engage in policy-making processes and hold officials accountable.

These governance indicators are particularly relevant to Nepal, where concerns about corruption, lack of transparency, and weak institutional accountability are prevalent. Strengthening these governance indicators is essential to improving the effectiveness of public administration in the country.

2. Good Governance in Public Administration

2.1 Global Best Practices

Countries like **Singapore**, **Denmark**, and **New Zealand** are often cited as models of good governance, having established systems that prioritize transparency, accountability, and effective public service delivery. In Singapore, for example, the government's commitment to fighting corruption and maintaining a highly efficient civil service has led to significant improvements in public administration (Tan, 2020). Similarly, Denmark consistently ranks high in governance indices due to its emphasis on inclusive decision-making processes, citizen engagement, and strong institutional frameworks (Transparency International, 2021).

2.2 Nepal's Context

In Nepal, the governance landscape is marred by challenges such as corruption, inefficiencies in service delivery, and limited public participation. These issues stem from weak institutional frameworks, a lack of political will, and insufficient accountability mechanisms. While Nepal has made some strides in governance reforms, particularly in terms of decentralizing power to local governments, there is still a long way to go in terms of enhancing transparency and reducing bureaucratic delays.

3. Challenges in Public Administration and Governance in Nepal

3.1 Corruption

Corruption is one of the most significant barriers to effective governance and public administration in Nepal. According to Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index, Nepal ranks low in perceived corruption, with high levels of mismanagement in public offices and weak enforcement of anti-corruption laws. Such corruption undermines

the functioning of public institutions, leading to inefficiency in service delivery, poor public trust, and a lack of accountability (Transparency International, 2021).

In many cases, public officials in Nepal often prioritize personal or political gains over public service, causing delays and misallocation of resources. Government procurement, the management of public funds, and appointments in civil service are often tainted by corrupt practices. For example, the construction of public infrastructure assets in Nepal has been known for cost overruns, delays, and low-quality outcomes due to corruption in awarding contracts.

3.2 Bureaucratic Inefficiencies

Bureaucratic inefficiency is another major issue plaguing Nepal's public administration. The country's public sector is characterized by excessive red tape, slow decision-making processes, and a lack of inter-departmental coordination. As a result, public services are delivered inefficiently, and the country suffers from frequent project delays, high administrative costs, and general dissatisfaction among citizens regarding the government's ability to provide basic services (Shrestha, 2022).

Nepal's bureaucracy operates hierarchically, often leading to rigidity in decision-making and a lack of flexibility in addressing emerging issues. Additionally, there is a significant gap between policy formulation and implementation, with many well-intentioned governance reforms failing to create an impact due to bureaucratic bottlenecks.

3.3 Decentralization Issues

Following the promulgation of Nepal's 2015 constitution, the country moved towards a federal system of governance, transferring significant powers and responsibilities to local governments. However, the decentralization process has faced numerous challenges. Many local government units lack the capacity and resources needed to function effectively. Additionally, there has been a lack of clarity regarding the division of powers between federal, provincial, and local governments, leading to confusion and conflicts over jurisdiction (Dahal, 2021).

The decentralization process has also been hindered by inadequate training for local government officials, leading to inefficiencies in service delivery at the sub-national levels. Poor coordination between federal and sub-national governments has further exacerbated governance challenges, with local governments often feeling neglected or inadequately supported by the federal government.

3.4 Case Studies: Governance Failures in Nepal

Several case studies highlight the governance challenges in Nepal. For instance, the reconstruction efforts following the 2015 earthquake were marred by delays and inefficiencies in resource allocation. Despite international donors pledging billions of dollars for reconstruction, the slow response from the government and corruption in fund management meant that many affected people did not receive timely assistance (Paudel, 2021).

Another example is the management of Nepal's COVID-19 response. While many countries swiftly enacted policies to control the spread of the virus and support their citizens, Nepal struggled with bureaucratic delays and poor coordination between federal and provincial governments. This lack of preparedness and mismanagement had severe consequences for the public health system and the overall pandemic response. Dahal, R. (2021)

4. Role of International Organizations in Governance Reform

4.1 The United Nations and Governance Programs

The United Nations has played an important role in promoting governance reforms in Nepal, particularly through the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**. The UNDP's Governance Programme focuses on building institutional capacity in Nepal, supporting the decentralization process, and promoting human rights and the rule of law. These initiatives aim to strengthen the capacity of government institutions to manage resources more effectively and to promote transparency and accountability in public administration (UNDP, 2022).

The UN's role has also been significant in supporting electoral processes, fostering democratic institutions, and encouraging citizen participation in governance. Through its programs, the UN has worked closely with local and federal governments to promote inclusivity, especially in marginalized groups, such as women, ethnic minorities, and the Dalit community, in governance.

4.2 Donor-Driven Governance Reforms

Donor organizations, such as the **World Bank** and **USAID**, have been supporting governance reforms in Nepal. The World Bank, for example, has supported several governance projects aimed at improving the management of public finances, enhancing public procurement systems, and reducing corruption. These projects often come with conditions, requiring the Nepalese government to undertake certain reforms in exchange for funding.

However, there is an ongoing debate about the effectiveness of donor-driven reforms. While international organizations have provided much-needed technical assistance and funding, the sustainability of these reforms is often questioned. Once donor funding ends, many reforms struggle to be fully institutionalized within the public sector, indicating a need for a stronger commitment from the government to continue these initiatives (World Bank, 2020).

4.3 International Best Practices

Countries like **Denmark**, **Singapore**, and **New Zealand** serve as models for governance reform in developing countries. Denmark, for example, is known for its strong institutional

frameworks that promote transparency and citizen participation. Singapore's governance model, with its emphasis on merit-based civil service, stringent anti-corruption laws, and the use of technology in governance, provides valuable lessons for Nepal (Tan, 2020). By studying such best practices, Nepal can adopt key strategies to enhance the efficiency and accountability of its public administration.

5. Analyzing Perceptions of Good Governance and Public Administration in Nepal

This chapter presents findings from a survey conducted among 100 respondents to assess perceptions regarding good governance and its role in strengthening public administration in Nepal. The survey focuses on key governance dimensions such as transparency, accountability, inclusivity, efficiency, and citizen participation. Respondents included government officials, local representatives, civil society members, and general citizens.

The survey targeted 100 respondents representing local government offices, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the general public. A structured questionnaire was designed with Likert-scale questions (1- Strongly Disagree, 2- Disagree, 3- Neutral, 4- Agree, 5- Strongly Agree). The questions covered governance indicators such as transparency, accountability, public participation, technology adoption, and service delivery efficiency. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, and percentage) were applied for interpretation.

Given table shows the Survey Questions with their dimension

S.N.	Survey Question	Governance Dimension
1	The government ensures transparency in decision-making and public resource allocation.	Transparency
2	There are adequate accountability mechanisms to hold public officials responsible for their actions.	Accountability
3	Citizens can actively participate in policy-making processes at the local and federal levels.	Public Participation
4	Corruption significantly hampers effective public administration in Nepal.	Corruption
5	Bureaucratic inefficiencies lead to delays and reduced quality in public service delivery.	Efficiency
6	The adoption of e-governance and technology can improve transparency and service delivery in Nepal's public administration.	Technology Adoption
7	There is sufficient capacity among local government officials to implement good governance practices effectively.	Capacity Building

S.N.	Survey Question	Governance Dimension
8	Decentralization has enhanced service delivery at the grassroots level.	Decentralization
9	International organizations have contributed effectively to strengthening governance frameworks in Nepal.	International Contribution
10	Nepal can learn valuable lessons from global best practices like Singapore or Denmark to improve public administration efficiency.	Global Best Practices

On the above questions, the summarized data of responses from 100 participants on the Likert scale.

Survey Question (Summarized)	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
Transparency: The government ensures transparency in decision-making.	10	20	30	25	15	3.15	1.14
Accountability: Adequate mechanisms to hold public officials accountable exist.	15	30	25	20	10	2.80	1.15
Participation: Citizens actively participate in policy-making processes.	12	22	35	21	10	2.95	1.10
Corruption: Corruption hampers effective public administration.	5	8	12	45	30	3.87	1.04
Efficiency: Bureaucratic inefficiencies delay public service delivery.	6	12	18	40	24	3.64	1.08
Technology: E-governance improves transparency and efficiency.	3	10	22	35	30	3.79	1.05
Capacity Building: Local officials have sufficient capacity for good governance.	20	30	28	15	7	2.59	1.13
Decentralization: Service delivery has improved through decentralization.	10	18	35	27	10	3.09	1.10
International Contribution: International organizations support governance frameworks.	5	12	30	32	21	3.52	1.09
Global Practices: Nepal can learn from global governance models.	2	8	18	42	30	3.90	1.01

Source: Field Survey 2024

The survey findings reveal key insights into the state of governance and public administration in Nepal. Regarding transparency, the mean score of 3.15 indicates mixed perceptions among

respondents. While 30% remained neutral, 35% either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the government ensures transparency in decision-making and resource allocation. This highlights the urgent need for reforms to strengthen transparency mechanisms. In terms of accountability, the low mean score of 2.80 reflects significant weaknesses in holding public officials responsible for their actions. Nearly 45% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that adequate accountability measures exist, pointing to the necessity of establishing robust oversight frameworks.

Citizen participation in policy-making processes was also found to be limited, with a mean score of 2.95. The responses suggest that citizens lack sufficient opportunities to engage in decision-making, signifying the need for improved platforms and mechanisms to promote inclusive governance. Corruption emerged as a critical issue, with a high mean score of 3.87. Approximately 75% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that corruption significantly hampers effective governance and public administration, emphasizing the need for stringent anti-corruption measures.

In terms of efficiency, the mean score of 3.64 reveals that respondents perceive bureaucratic inefficiencies as a major barrier, with 64% agreeing that delays and poor coordination undermine service delivery. On a more positive note, technology adoption received a favourable response, with a mean score of 3.79. About 65% of respondents agreed that e-governance can enhance transparency and improve the efficiency of public service delivery, reflecting optimism about leveraging digital tools for governance reform.

Conversely, capacity building remains a significant challenge, as reflected by the low mean score of 2.59. Respondents highlighted that local government officials lack the capacity to implement governance practices effectively, necessitating targeted training and skill development programs. Regarding decentralization, the mean score of 3.09 indicates mixed responses. While some improvements in service delivery at the grassroots level were acknowledged, gaps in effective implementation and coordination persist.

The role of international organizations in supporting governance reforms was moderately recognized, with a mean score of 3.52. Respondents acknowledged their contributions in strengthening institutional frameworks and promoting good governance. Finally, strong optimism was expressed about learning from global best practices, with a mean score of 3.90. The relevance of models from countries like Singapore and Denmark was emphasized as a valuable reference for improving Nepal's public administration systems.

The survey findings indicate that while technology adoption and international best practices offer significant opportunities for strengthening public administration, challenges such as corruption, weak accountability, and limited capacity persist. Addressing these issues through institutional reforms, capacity building, and enhanced transparency can contribute to good governance, aligning Nepal's public administration systems with global standards.

6. Recommendations for Strengthening Governance and Public Administration in Nepal

6.1 Institutional Reforms

One of the key recommendations for improving governance and public administration in Nepal is the need for **institutional reforms**. This includes strengthening the legal framework for anti-corruption, improving the accountability mechanisms for public officials, and fostering a more merit-based civil service system. There is also a need to streamline bureaucratic processes and reduce red tape to ensure that public services are delivered more efficiently.

6.2 Capacity Building

Capacity building is critical to improving the performance of Nepal's public administration. Public officials, particularly at the local level, require training and technical support to effectively carry out their roles. International organizations can play a significant role in providing such support, but there must also be a concerted effort from the government to invest in building the capacity of its workforce.

6.3 Public Participation

Enhancing **public participation** in governance is essential for creating a more inclusive and accountable system. The government should create more opportunities for citizens to participate in policy-making processes, such as through public consultations or digital platforms that allow citizens to provide feedback on government initiatives. Promoting civil society engagement in governance processes will also be key to ensuring greater transparency.

6.4 Technology and E-Governance

Technology can be a powerful tool for improving transparency and accountability in public administration. Nepal can benefit from the implementation of **e-governance** systems, which would allow for greater transparency in public procurement, efficient management of public resources, and the delivery of online services to citizens. Singapore, for example, has successfully integrated technology into its governance systems, resulting in significant improvements in service delivery and public sector efficiency (Tan, 2020).

7. Conclusion

Good governance is fundamental to strengthening public administration, particularly in developing countries like Nepal. The country faces significant challenges, including corruption, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and limited capacity at the local level. However, there are clear opportunities for improvement through institutional reforms, capacity building, and the integration of technology. By drawing lessons from global best practices—particularly from

countries with robust governance frameworks—Nepal can implement meaningful reforms to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of its public administration. Promoting transparency, accountability, and citizen participation will enable the government to improve service delivery, build public trust, and ensure the effective management of public resources.

The survey findings underscore both the opportunities and challenges for strengthening governance and public administration in Nepal. While technology adoption and learning from international best practices provide significant potential for reform, persistent systemic issues—such as corruption, weak accountability mechanisms, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and capacity gaps—continue to impede progress.

Addressing these challenges through institutional reforms, targeted capacity-building initiatives, enhanced public participation, and the adoption of digital governance tools can lead to tangible improvements in governance outcomes. Aligning Nepal's governance frameworks with global standards will not only enhance public service delivery but also foster greater transparency, accountability, and trust among citizens.

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Reforming the Pension System in Nepal: Sustainability, Adequacy, and Coverage

 *Dr. Dilip Raj Paudel**

Abstract

Pension systems ensure financial security during retirement, especially in developing countries like Nepal. The sustainability, adequacy, and coverage of pension systems are critical for ensuring social security after retirement, particularly in developing countries like Nepal. This study provides a comprehensive analysis of Nepal's pension framework, examining contributory and non-contributory schemes to identify their strengths, limitations, and areas for reform. Utilizing a mixed-method approach, primary data from 384 respondents and secondary sources, including reports from international organizations, were analyzed. Key findings reveal that contributory pension schemes are preferred for their sustainability and adequacy, while non-contributory schemes face fiscal constraints and limited coverage, especially for informal sector workers. Statistical analysis, including binary logistic regression, highlights living standards, service delivery efficiency, and scheme coverage as significant determinants of beneficiary satisfaction and preference. The study emphasizes the need for reforms to expand coverage, improve administrative efficiency, and ensure the financial viability of pensions. Drawing from global best practices, the research recommends introducing contributory elements into non-contributory schemes, aligning benefits with inflation, and adopting digital solutions for efficient service delivery. This research contributes to policy discussions on strengthening Nepal's pension system to achieve long-term social and economic stability.

Keywords:

Social Security, Social Protection, Pension, Sustainability, Adequacy, Coverage

1. Introduction

Pension systems are integral to social protection frameworks, providing a financial safety net that mitigates economic vulnerabilities during old age. These systems are essential for ensuring income security, reducing poverty, and promoting social stability among retirees. Globally, pension systems vary significantly in structure and efficacy, shaped by differences in economic development, demographic trends, and institutional capacities. They range from contributory models, where benefits are funded by employer and employee contributions, to non-contributory models, which rely on government financing to provide universal or means-tested pensions (Hinz et al., 2005; ILO, 2019).

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In Nepal, the pension system has two categories. Contributory schemes, such as those managed by the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF), apply to government sector employees (Civil Servants, Nepalese Army, Nepal Police, Armed Police Force, Government Teachers, etc.) appointed from 16th July 2019. Similarly, the Social Security Fund (SSF), must manage formal private sector employees. These schemes are financed through contributions from employers and employees, offering benefits such as retirement pensions, gratuity, and social security benefits (Employees' Provident Fund Nepal, 2023). The Pension Management Office (PMO) manages non-contributory pensions for government sector employees. Similarly, non-contributory schemes, on the other hand, are government-funded and aim to provide a basic income to individuals who lack access to formal pension programs. These include allowances for the elderly, single women, and people with disabilities (World Bank, 2021).

In recent years, the Nepalese government has sought to modernize the pension system and address its challenges. These challenges include expanding pension coverage to informal sector workers, ensuring adequate pension benefits, and enhancing financial sustainability.

Overall, the history of pensions in Nepal reflects a gradual evolution from rudimentary provisions to a more structured and comprehensive system. As the country continues to develop, the pension system will likely undergo further reforms to meet the changing needs of its ageing population and ensure the well-being of retirees.

Private sector employees and self-employed individuals can join the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS), a voluntary initiative managed by the Social Security Fund (SSF). This scheme provides retirement benefits based on individual contributions and investment returns.

Government officials appointed after 2076-04-01 contribute 6% of their salary to the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS) managed by the Employees Provident Fund (EPF). Those officials appointed before 2076-04-01 are eligible for the non-contributory pension system managed by the Pension Management Office (PMO).

Despite its implementation, the pension system in Nepal has encountered challenges, including inadequate funding, administrative inefficiencies, and the impact of a rapidly ageing population. The government is actively working to address these issues by enhancing the funding structure and implementing new policies to ensure the long-term sustainability of the pension system.

Despite the critical roles pensions play in securing the well-being of older populations, Nepal's pension system faces several persistent challenges. Coverage remains a significant issue, as large segments of the workforce, particularly those in the informal sector, are excluded from formal pension schemes. Non-contributory schemes, while essential for vulnerable groups, are underfunded and increasingly strained by fiscal pressures, raising concerns about their long-term sustainability (ADB, 2020). Additionally, inadequate benefit levels in both contributory and non-contributory systems fail to meet the financial needs of retirees, undermining the ability of these schemes to maintain beneficiaries' living standards (ILO, 2021).

The specific objectives of a pension system vary in countries. However, the three fundamental objectives of *economic security, poverty reduction, and redistribution are common to most*

pension systems. The objectives of a pension system vary depending on the goals and priorities of the country or organization implementing it. Generally, the primary objectives of a pension system are as follows:

1. **Adequate retirement income:** The principal objective of a pension system is to furnish retired individuals with a consistent income, enabling them to sustain an acceptable standard of living throughout their retirement period. This pension should substitute a portion of their pre-retirement income, guaranteeing financial stability during old age.
2. **Social protection and poverty alleviation:** Pension systems aim to protect elderly individuals from falling into poverty after retirement. By providing a reliable source of income, pensions help alleviate financial hardships for retired individuals and reduce the risk of old-age poverty.
3. **Income redistribution:** Pension systems can incorporate elements of income redistribution to address social inequalities. Governments may design pension schemes to provide higher benefits to lower-income individuals or those with specific needs, promoting a more equitable income distribution.
4. **Long-term financial security:** Pension systems are structured to ensure social protection for retirees over the long term. Adequate and sustainable funding is critical to meet pension obligations for current and future generations.
5. **Encouraging workforce participation and retirement behaviour:** Pension systems can influence workforce participation and retirement behaviour. Pension policies can shape labour market dynamics and support workforce planning by offering incentives or disincentives for early or delayed retirement.
6. **Promoting economic stability:** Well-designed pension systems promote economic stability by fostering savings and investments. Pension funds can be invested in the economy, promoting growth and providing capital for productive investments.
7. **Encouraging long-term savings:** Pensions encourage individuals to save for retirement, ensuring they have sufficient funds to support themselves after they stop working.
8. **Flexibility and customization:** Pension systems may offer flexibility and customization options, allowing individuals to tailor their retirement plans to meet their needs and circumstances.
9. **Adapting to demographic changes:** Pension systems should adapt to demographic changes, such as population ageing and life expectancy, to maintain effectiveness and sustainability.
10. **Enhancing social well-being:** A well-functioning pension system contributes to the overall social well-being of a nation by providing financial security to its elderly population and contributing to social cohesion.

Policymakers need to consider these objectives while designing, reforming, or evaluating pension systems to ensure that they effectively address the needs of retirees and contribute to broader societal goals.

The pension system in Nepal encompasses government employees, public sector employees, and formal private sector employees. Civil servants have a retirement age of 58, while others retire at 60. The pension benefit is calculated using a formula that considers the average of the last three years of salary and the number of years of service (Social et al., 2021). In 2009, the elderly population in Nepal, defined as individuals aged 60 and above, constituted 6.1% of the total population. This proportion is projected to increase to 10% by 2025 and 15.6% by 2050 (UN, 2008).

Out of approximately 11 million workers in Nepal, in the formal and informal sectors. Less than 5% of Nepal's population is covered by a formal pension or provident fund scheme. This coverage includes approximately 320,000 government employees and 130,000 salaried employees from both private and public sectors who are mandatory members of the Employees' Provident Fund. Smaller private sector businesses with at least ten employees can participate voluntarily in the provident fund arrangement. Some larger employers have implemented voluntary provident fund schemes for their employees.

Similar to other South Asian nations, Nepal administers a noncontributory defined benefit pension scheme designed for government employees. Despite its limited coverage, this scheme exerts substantial fiscal pressure. In the fiscal year 2008-2009, pension disbursements to 170,511 retired government employees amounted to NRs 10.37 billion (\$144 million), accounting for 7.23% of the government revenue receipts and 4.75% of the government revenue expenditure. The implicit pension debt (IPD) for the 82,000 current civil servants alone was estimated at NRs 26 billion (\$361 million), representing 4.6% of the country's GDP. This computation does not include the IPD for teachers, armed forces, police personnel, or the 170,511 pensioners. The number of pensioners has since increased to 309,175 individuals receiving pensions. (PMO, 2024)

This study evaluates the current state of Nepal's pension system by examining its adequacy, sustainability, and inclusiveness. Using a mixed-method approach, it identifies the key factors influencing beneficiary satisfaction and preferences while proposing evidence-based reforms to address existing gaps. The findings contribute to ongoing policy discussions, offering actionable recommendations to align Nepal's pension framework with global best practices and ensure its resilience in the face of demographic and economic challenges.

2. Literature Review

The concept of pensions dates back to ancient civilizations, with early forms of pension-like benefits provided to veteran Roman legionnaires in land grants or special appointments. Augustus Caesar is credited with introducing one of history's earliest recognizable pension schemes. In 13 B.C., Augustus established a pension plan for retired soldiers, entitling them to a lump sum pension after serving 16 years in a legion and four years in the military reserves. Initially funded by general revenues, a special fund known as the "terrarium military" was later established to support these pensions. While this initiative helped appease military tensions within the Roman Empire, it also posed financial challenges that contributed to the eventual collapse of the Empire (Wickens, 2005).

A pension refers to a fund accumulating money over an individual year of employment, from which regular payments are made to support persons retiring after leaving the workforce. Pension plans can be "defined benefit plans," where fixed sums are regularly paid to retirees, or "defined contribution plans," in which fixed amounts are invested and accessed upon retirement. It is necessary to distinguish pensions from severance pay. The former involves regular instalments provided throughout one lifetime after retirement while the latter is a fixed amount given after involuntary termination before retirement.

Employers establish an occupational or employer pension for the benefit of their employees. Pension revolves around providing financial compensation to individuals who have devoted their younger and more energetic years to contributing to an organization or the country.

Globally, pension systems mitigate income insecurity during retirement, ensuring financial stability and social protection for older populations. The International Labour Organization's (ILO) *Social Protection Floors Recommendation No. 202* underscores three core principles for effective pension systems: universal coverage, adequacy of benefits, and fiscal sustainability (ILO, 2019). These principles aim to establish a baseline for social security systems, promoting inclusivity and economic resilience.

In South Asia, diverse pension frameworks reflect regional economic and demographic variations. India, for instance, employs a hybrid model combining contributory and non-contributory schemes, exemplified by programs such as the Atal Pension Yojana, which extends coverage to informal sector workers through co-contributory mechanisms (ADB, 2020). Bhutan, in contrast, adopts a universal approach, offering old-age allowances to its citizens, ensuring broad social protection without means testing (World Bank, 2021).

The World Bank's multi-pillar framework further emphasizes integrating contributory and non-contributory schemes to achieve a balanced and robust pension system. According to Hinz et al. (2005), contributory systems enhance financial sustainability by sharing funding responsibilities between employees and employers. Conversely, non-contributory schemes act as a social safety net, providing essential income security to vulnerable and economically disadvantaged populations. This dual approach mitigates fiscal burdens while addressing coverage gaps.

In the context of Nepal, challenges such as limited coverage and administrative inefficiencies have hindered the effectiveness of its pension system. Gautam (2007) highlighted the pressing need to expand pension coverage to informal sector workers, who constitute a significant portion of Nepal's workforce. Strengthening administrative capacity is also essential for improving service delivery, ensuring timely disbursements, and fostering trust in the system. As Nepal navigates these challenges, global examples provide valuable insights for enhancing its pension framework.

Pension System in Nepal

The inception of Nepal's pension system dates back to the late 19th century when the first pension scheme was introduced for Nepal Army personnel on 17th Bhadra 1998

BS. It marked the pioneering social security initiative in the country, with the pension amount set at 1/5th of the last salary. Subsequently, on 14th Mangsir 1999 BS, the pension scheme was extended to civil servants, with the pension amount established at 1/6th of the salary, with a minimum requirement of 25 years of eligibility service. Over time, this eligibility criterion has been lowered to 20 years of service to receive a pension throughout their life.

A pension benefit serves as a significant means of old-age support. In Nepal, a pension scheme was instituted for army personnel on the 17th of Bhadra, 1998 BS (around 1939 AD). Similarly, civil servants holding positions between "nausind" and "badakaji" with at least 25 years of service are eligible to receive a pension, calculated as 1/6 of their last salary. Subsequently, civil servants with a minimum service period of 20 years qualify for a lifelong pension. The pension amount for civil servants must not be less than 50% of their basic salary and not exceed 100%, depending on factors such as service duration, final salary, and a specific denominator. Civil servants with less than 20 years of service are entitled to a lump sum gratuity. The Nepali pension system operates on a non-contributory basis whereas the entire pension liability is funded from the annual allocation in the government budget.

The current pension system for civil servants ensures that the pension amount is at least 50% of their basic salary and not more than 100%. It depended on factors such as length of service, last drawing salary, and the denominator used for calculation. In the 1950s, after the fall of the Rana regime and the establishment of a democratic government. The Civil Service Act of 1956 laid the groundwork for a formal pension system for civil servants. This act introduced the concept of providing retirement benefits to government employees based on their years of service and salary levels. The pension scheme was designed to provide financial security to retired civil servants and encourage long-term loyalty and commitment to public service.

Over the years, the pension system expanded to cover various sectors, including the Nepal Police, the Armed Forces, and the teaching profession. The government also introduced pension schemes for employees of public enterprises and other autonomous bodies.

According to Rule 7.4 of Civil Service Rule 1956, guaranteed pension for the employees after retirement. Every civil servant who served for a minimum of 25 years or more is eligible to get the pension. The pension amount was determined by the simple calculation method, one-third of the average monthly pay but not exceeding three hundred rupees, calculated from the last three years' monthly average.

Rule 7(5) of CSR 1956 made the provision for the dependent family members to be entitled to draw pension amount as a Family Pension. If a civil servant dies while in service period or within five years from the date he or she started receiving a pension.

As per the Civil Service Act of 1993, a governmental employee with over two decades of service will be eligible to receive a monthly pension at specified rates.

Pension = $\frac{\text{Total year of service} \times \text{amount of the last salary}}{50}$

50

However, a civil employee dismissed from service due to disqualification for future government roles won't be eligible for the pension mentioned in this Section. Similarly, any civil employee found to have falsified citizenship, age, or qualifications to gain or continue in government service won't receive a pension. Despite the above subsection, the minimum pension amount cannot be lower than half the basic salary for an incumbent civil employee in the same position. The maximum pension, however, should not exceed the basic salary scale of the current civil employee in the same role.

Through the first amendment, a provision was added stipulating that if an employee completes fifteen years of service and then passes away, an additional five years will be included in their service period. Their family will have the choice between receiving a pension or gratuity. The second amendment introduced a provision regarding an increase in pension. When the salary of the current civil employee rises, two-thirds of that increment in the basic salary figure will be added to the retired civil employee pension in the same position. Nevertheless, this rule won't apply to civil employees entitled to pensions under Section 39B of the Civil Service Rule 1993.

Section 39 guarantees family pension and gratuity. If a civil employee passes away while in service or before completing seven years after beginning to receive a pension, their family, minor brother, or unmarried sister will receive either gratuity or pension as specified in Section 36 or 37. However, the pension will not continue beyond seven years. Once seven years have elapsed after the start of the pension, no further pension will be provided to the family. If the recipient of such pension is a minor, they will receive it until they reach the age of majority. The surviving husband or wife of a civil employee will receive half of the pension the employee receives, for life, after the period designated for family pension ends. As per the Second Amendment, if the surviving husband or wife remarries, they will no longer be eligible for this pension. Additionally, when the incumbent civil employee's salary increases, two-thirds of the total increment in the basic salary figure will be added to the family pension of the beneficiary.

In 1990, with the restoration of multiparty democracy, the government initiated further reforms to strengthen the pension system and ensure its sustainability. The Social Security Act of 1992 establishes a comprehensive framework for social security in Nepal, including provisions for old-age pensions. Nepal has a broader social pension system, primarily managed by the government and known as the Social Security Allowance (SSA) program. This program provides financial assistance to eligible citizens over 68 below the poverty line. It also extends its coverage to individuals with disabilities and single women over 60 and lacking family support.

In recent years, the Nepalese government has sought to modernize the pension system and address its challenges. These challenges include expanding pension coverage to informal sector workers, ensuring adequate pension benefits, and enhancing financial

sustainability.

Overall, the history of pensions in Nepal reflects a gradual evolution from rudimentary provisions to a more structured and comprehensive system. As the country continues to develop, the pension system will likely undergo further reforms to meet the changing needs of its ageing population and ensure the well-being of retirees.

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Despite its implementation, the pension system in Nepal has encountered challenges, including inadequate funding, administrative inefficiencies, and the impact of a rapidly ageing population. The government is actively working to address these issues by enhancing the funding structure and implementing new policies to ensure the long-term sustainability of the pension system.

Theoretical Insights and Global Perspectives

Social security reform has been the subject of extensive research, particularly in ageing populations and slower economic growth in advanced economies. Toshihiro Ithori and Toshiaki Tachibanaki, in their work *Social Security Reform in Advanced Countries (Evaluating Pension Finance)*, emphasize the need to adapt pension systems to changing demographics and economic realities. Their analysis evaluates three primary reform strategies: transitioning from pay-as-you-go to funded systems, privatizing public pension systems, and integrating tax revenues into social security benefits. These reforms aim to address sustainability while maintaining the adequacy of benefits. Their insights highlight that pension reform is not merely a fiscal challenge but also a societal imperative to ensure intergenerational equity and financial security for retirees.

Salvador Valdés-Prieto, in his 2008 study for the World Bank, presents a "Theory of Contribution Density," offering a nuanced perspective on pension design. He proposes that contributory systems need not be mandatory for all jobs. Instead, they can be selectively applied, integrating earnings with savings and aligning incentives for job choice and financial planning. His model underscores how variations in contribution density can enhance returns for covered jobs while suggesting the importance of "two-pillar" systems combining contributory pensions and non-contributory subsidies. These insights provide a robust theoretical framework for reimagining pension systems, particularly in developing economies like Nepal.

Challenges in Nepal's Pension System

Nepal's pension system, like many developing countries, faces multifaceted challenges. These include demographic shifts, fiscal constraints, and limited coverage, particularly for informal sector workers (Panta, 2016; Dahal et al., 2019). The system predominantly caters to government employees, leaving a significant portion of the population without access to formal retirement benefits (Government of Nepal, 2020). This lack of inclusivity exacerbates inequality and undermines the system's adequacy and sustainability (Rai & Bhatta, 2018).

Efforts to reform Nepal's pension system must prioritize expanding coverage to informal workers. Baral and Bhattarai (2019) argue that introducing contributory schemes tailored to informal sector needs, with financial literacy initiatives, could encourage voluntary participation. Additionally, ensuring the adequacy of pension benefits is critical. Current payouts often fail to meet the basic needs of retirees, necessitating periodic adjustments linked to inflation and wage growth (Dhakal et al., 2019).

International Comparisons: South Asian Experiences

South Asian countries face similar challenges in reforming pension systems, driven by fiscal constraints and ageing populations. India's Atal Pension Yojana provides an instructive example, combining government support with individual contributions to extend coverage to informal workers. Bhutan's universal old-age allowances, though simple, demonstrate the benefits of non-contributory systems to ensure basic income security. Sri Lanka and Bangladesh have also made strides in integrating contributory and non-contributory schemes to address adequacy and coverage gaps (ADB, 2020).

A common thread across these nations is the focus on expanding pension coverage while ensuring the adequacy of benefits. Many countries have adopted dual systems that integrate non-contributory safety nets with contributory schemes, with a baseline level of income security for the elderly. The success of these models underscores the importance of policy innovation and administrative efficiency in overcoming fiscal and demographic challenges.

Key Reform Considerations

Nepal can draw valuable lessons from global and regional experiences. Key areas of reform include:

- **Expanding Coverage:** Ensuring pension inclusivity for informal sector workers through innovative contributory schemes tailored to their needs.
- **Ensuring Adequacy:** Adjusting benefits periodically to align with inflation and minimum living standards.
- **Enhancing Sustainability:** Exploring diversified funding mechanisms, such as sovereign wealth funds, to secure long-term fiscal stability (Budhathoki et al., 2019).

- **Improving Administrative Efficiency:** Investing in digital infrastructure to streamline service delivery and reduce delays.

By examining global best practices and the experiences of South Asian countries, Nepal can develop a resilient pension system that balances adequacy, inclusivity, and sustainability. Theoretical models, such as Valdés-Prieto's contribution density framework, and policy innovations in neighbouring countries provide valuable insights for designing multi-pillar systems that cater to diverse workforce needs. With thoughtful reforms, Nepal can ensure financial security for its ageing population, laying the foundation for a dignified retirement for all citizens.

3. Methodology

This study employed a cross-sectional research design to evaluate Nepal's pension system, focusing on beneficiary preferences, satisfaction levels, and perceptions. Data were collected from 384 respondents representing public and private organizations, ensuring a diverse sample of the population engaged in contributory and non-contributory pension schemes. The sampling aimed to capture variations across demographics, employment sectors, and geographic locations (World Bank, 2021).

Data Collection

A self-administered questionnaire was the primary tool for data collection, capturing quantitative data on key variables, including living standards, service delivery quality, and scheme coverage. The questionnaire was structured to include both closed and open-ended questions, enabling the collection of numerical data and qualitative insights. This method ensured that measurable data could be analyzed alongside narrative responses, adding depth to the findings (Hinz et al., 2005).

In addition to primary data, secondary data were sourced from institutional reports published by the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF), the Social Security Fund (SSF), and global organizations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Bank. These sources provided critical benchmarks and comparative insights into pension system structures and performance (ILO, 2019; EPF Nepal, 2023).

Analytical Framework

Binary logistic regression was employed to analyze the relationship between independent variables (e.g., living standards, service delivery, and coverage) and the dependent variable (pension scheme preference). Statistical analysis was made at a 5% significance level to identify the key factors influencing beneficiary choices. This method was chosen for its ability to estimate the likelihood of categorical outcomes based on predictor variables (Hinz et al., 2005). Qualitative data from focus group discussions enriched the analysis by contextualizing survey findings.

Variables	Type	Definition
Living Standards	Independent	Income level of respondents
Service Promptness	Independent	Perceived timeliness of pension disbursements
Scheme Coverage	Independent	Extent of inclusiveness and accessibility
Pension Preference	Dependent	Preference for contributory or non-contributory

To enrich the quantitative findings, qualitative data from focus group discussions were integrated into the analysis. These discussions offered contextual insights into administrative challenges, beneficiary expectations, and perceived gaps in the current pension system. Triangulating data from multiple sources ensured a robust and comprehensive understanding of the factors shaping Nepal's pension landscape (ADB, 2020).

Reliability and Validity

The research instruments were pre-tested with a small subset of respondents to ensure reliability and validity. Feedback from the pre-test was used to refine the questionnaire, address ambiguities, and enhance clarity. Secondary data were cross-verified for consistency with multiple institutional and global reports to maintain data integrity (ILO, 2021).

This mixed-method approach enabled the study to provide a nuanced analysis of Nepal's pension system, capturing statistical trends and human perspectives to inform evidence-based policy recommendations.

4. Findings

The study categorized respondents by age, gender, and marital status. Among 384 participants, 291 were males and 93 females, with a majority aged 50-55. A significant portion of participants were married (378 out of 384).

Preferences for Pension Systems in **Non-Contributory vs. Contributory Schemes**: 79.1% of respondents favoured contributory pension systems, citing sustainability as the primary advantage. Only 20.1% supported non-contributory systems, highlighting accessibility as a key benefit.

Determinants of Preferences in terms of Living **Standards**, respondents with better living standards were 3.38 times more likely to favour CPS (OR = 3.38; CI = 1.29–11.57). Respondents' responses in **Promptness of Service** and satisfaction with service delivery increased the likelihood of choosing CPS by 4.997 times (OR = 4.997; CI = 2.62–24.9). Similarly, in terms of **Employee Behavior**, Positive employee interactions emerged as a significant factor (OR = 1.7; CI = 1.007–2.888).

Respondents' responses in terms of Adequacy, Coverage, and Sustainability are as given below:

- **Adequacy of Pension Benefits:**
 - Only 43.9% of respondents were moderately satisfied with the adequacy of benefits in the current non-contributory scheme.
 - For contributory schemes, satisfaction levels were higher, particularly among private sector employees.
- **Coverage:**
 - A significant proportion (54.7%) of respondents acknowledged adequate coverage under current schemes, though gaps for informal sector workers remain evident.
- **Sustainability:**
 - Most respondents agreed that a contributory funding model ensures long-term financial sustainability (79.9%).

4.1 Preferences for Pension Schemes

The study revealed that 79.1% of respondents preferred contributory pension schemes, primarily due to their perceived financial stability, timely disbursement mechanisms, and broader coverage. Contributory schemes were often regarded as more reliable for ensuring long-term financial security, especially among individuals in formal employment. Conversely, 20.9% of respondents opted for non-contributory pension schemes. Accessibility and ease of enrollment were the most cited reasons for this preference, reflecting limited administrative requirements and the inclusiveness of these schemes (ADB, 2020).

4.2 Determinants of Pension Preferences

The analysis identified key factors influencing beneficiaries' preferences for pension schemes. Among them, living standards were a significant determinant. Respondents in higher income brackets were 3.38 times more likely to choose contributory schemes (OR = 3.38, CI = 1.29–11.57). This preference was attributed to the ability of contributory schemes to offer returns proportionate to contributions, ensuring better post-retirement financial stability. Additionally, satisfaction with service promptness emerged as a critical factor. Beneficiaries satisfied with timely disbursements were 4.997 times more likely to prefer contributory pensions (OR = 4.997, CI = 1–24.9). Coverage, or the extent to which a scheme catered to a beneficiary's needs, was also significant, with an odds ratio of 2.85 (CI = 1.11–7.32).

Factor	Odds Ratio (OR)	Confidence Interval (CI)
Living Standard	3.38	1.29–11.57
Service Promptness	4.997	1–24.9
Coverage	2.85	1.11–7.32

These findings underline the importance of scheme characteristics such as financial predictability, administrative efficiency, and inclusiveness in shaping beneficiary preferences.

4.3 Sustainability and Adequacy

The study highlighted significant sustainability challenges associated with non-contributory pension schemes. These schemes are heavily reliant on government funding, and fiscal constraints pose a serious threat to their long-term viability, especially as Nepal's elderly population continues to grow (World Bank, 2021). The lack of contributory elements in non-contributory schemes exacerbates these challenges and places an increasing burden on public finances.

In terms of adequacy, contributory pension schemes were found to be more effective in maintaining beneficiaries' living standards. Their design, which links benefits to contributions, ensures proportionality and predictability. Non-contributory pensions, while essential for vulnerable groups, often fell below subsistence levels, limiting their ability to provide meaningful financial security (ILO, 2019). These findings emphasize the need for reforms to enhance the adequacy and sustainability of Nepal's pension system

5. Discussion

5.1 Sustainability Challenges

Nepal's non-contributory pension schemes rely on government funding, which poses significant sustainability challenges, especially in the face of rising fiscal pressures. The growing elderly population further exacerbates this strain, as an increasing number of beneficiaries requires a proportional increase in government expenditures (World Bank, 2021). Current funding mechanisms lack contributory elements, making these schemes fiscally vulnerable in the long term.

Insights from the World Bank suggest that integrating contributory elements into non-contributory schemes can alleviate fiscal stress while maintaining the social safety net. For instance, co-contributory models, where employers, employees, and the government share funding responsibilities, have proven effective in other contexts. These models not only reduce the fiscal burden on the government but also promote individual ownership of retirement planning (Hinz et al., 2005).

5.2 Coverage Gaps

Nepal's pension system fails to address the coverage needs of the informal sector, which constitutes approximately 80% of the workforce (ADB, 2020). Workers in this sector often lack access to formal pension schemes due to the absence of structured employment relationships and limited awareness of pension programs. This exclusion represents a significant shortfall in the system's inclusiveness and equity.

India's Atal Pension Yojana offers a potential model for Nepal to address these gaps. The program incorporates informal workers into the pension system through co-contributory mechanisms, where the individual and the government contribute to the pension fund. Adapting such a model could enable Nepal to extend pension coverage to its large informal workforce while ensuring financial sustainability.

5.3 Administrative Efficiency

The study highlighted significant inefficiencies in the administrative processes of Nepal's pension system. Qualitative feedback from beneficiaries revealed dissatisfaction with delays in benefit disbursement, complex application procedures, and inconsistent service delivery. These inefficiencies erode trust in the system and hinder its overall effectiveness (ILO, 2021).

Improving administrative efficiency is essential for fostering confidence among beneficiaries and ensuring timely access to benefits. Digitalization of pension services, such as automated disbursement systems and online application platforms, could streamline processes and reduce delays. Decentralizing pension services by establishing local administrative units may also enhance accessibility and responsiveness, particularly for beneficiaries in remote areas (ADB, 2020).

6. Policy Recommendations

To address the challenges identified in Nepal's pension system and align it with global best practices, the following policy recommendations are proposed:

1. Expand Coverage

The exclusion of informal sector workers represents a significant shortfall in Nepal's pension framework. To address this gap, inclusive schemes targeting informal sector workers should be developed. International models such as India's Atal Pension Yojana provide a blueprint for integrating informal workers through co-contributory mechanisms. Such schemes can be adapted to Nepal's socio-economic context to expand coverage while ensuring affordability and sustainability (ADB, 2020). Public awareness campaigns and simplified enrollment processes will also be critical to bringing informal workers into the pension system.

To expand the coverage, develop inclusive schemes targeting informal sector workers, inspired by international practices.

2. Ensure Adequacy

Inadequate benefit amounts undermine the ability of pensions to provide meaningful financial security. Aligning benefit levels with inflation and minimum living standards is essential to ensure retirees can maintain a dignified quality of life. Periodic reviews of benefit adequacy, informed by economic indicators and cost-of-living analyses, should

be institutionalized. Additionally, contributory schemes should offer returns proportional to contributions to incentivize participation and ensure fairness (ILO, 2019).

To ensure adequacy, regularly adjust benefits to align with inflation and living standards.

3. Enhance Sustainability

Fiscal sustainability remains a pressing concern, particularly for non-contributory schemes that rely heavily on government funding. Introducing contributory elements to these schemes can reduce fiscal dependency while fostering shared responsibility among beneficiaries and employers. For instance, hybrid models combining government funding with voluntary or mandatory worker contributions can distribute the financial burden more equitably (World Bank, 2021). Such reforms would also enhance the long-term viability of the pension system.

To enhance sustainability, introduce contributory elements in non-contributory schemes to foster shared responsibility

4. Streamline Administration

Administrative inefficiencies, such as delays in benefit disbursements and complex application procedures, erode trust and hinder the effectiveness of Nepal's pension system. Investments in digital infrastructure, including automated disbursement systems and online application portals, can significantly improve efficiency and transparency. Decentralizing pension administration by establishing local offices with enhanced capacity can improve accessibility, particularly for beneficiaries in rural and remote areas. Lessons from digital pension systems in countries like Estonia can be a model for implementing these changes (ILO, 2021).

To streamline administration, invest in digital infrastructure and decentralized service delivery to improve efficiency and accessibility.

By implementing these recommendations, Nepal can build a more inclusive, sustainable, and efficient pension system that meets the needs of its growing retiree population while aligning with global standards.

7. Conclusion

Nepal's pension system is a fundamental pillar of its social protection framework, providing critical financial security to retirees and vulnerable populations. However, the system is constrained by significant challenges, including limited coverage, inadequate benefit levels, fiscal sustainability concerns, and administrative inefficiencies. Addressing these limitations requires a comprehensive approach that prioritizes reforms in key areas.

Expanding pension coverage including informal sector workers is essential to ensure inclusivity and equity while aligning benefit levels with inflation and living standards to enhance adequacy and restore trust in the system. Introducing contributory elements into non-

contributory schemes can reduce fiscal dependency and foster shared responsibility, ensuring the long-term sustainability of the pension framework. Additionally, streamlining administrative processes through digitalization and decentralization will improve efficiency and accessibility.

Drawing lessons from global best practices and adapting them to Nepal's unique socio-economic context can provide a blueprint for reform. By leveraging these experiences and adopting innovative policy measures, Nepal can build a resilient and sustainable pension system that secures the futures of its retirees while contributing to broader social and economic stability.

A well-designed and inclusive pension system not only safeguards individual well-being but also strengthens societal cohesion and supports economic development. Policymakers must act decisively to implement these reforms, ensuring that Nepal's pension system evolves to meet the demands of a changing demographic and economic landscape.

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Contribution of Remittance to the National Economy of Federal Nepal

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Abstract

Labour migration from their nation to another country for employment is called foreign employment. The trend of migration of human resources in Nepal has been prevalent throughout the ancient history of Nepal. In this study, the trend of foreign employment is analyzed using statistics like the labour approval based on the level of skill, labour approval received by the male and female, major destination country for labour approval, remittance received by the country in the fiscal year, national savings, disposable income, foreign exchange reserve of the nation, economic growth, Human Development Index and contribution of remittance on the national economy.

Remittance is the second largest contribution to Nepal's national economy. Most of the migrant workers are unskilled in foreign land from Nepal. Professional and highly skilled workers are minimally from Nepal in foreign lands. Nepali youth are choosing foreign employment for the job opportunities and better livelihoods in developed countries. Remittance generation is the main source for the government of Nepal. Modern economists claim that foreign remittance is not sustainable and good for the national economy. They suggested generating employment, industry, and marketization in the motherland i.e. Nepal. But practically remittance is the second contribution to the GDP of Nepal. Similarly, foreign employment and remittance contributed so many ways to Nepal such as dollar exchange, foreign trade balance, knowledge achievement, skilled transfer, technology advancement and so on.

Key Words:

Remittance, Treaty, Employment, Economy, Migrant, Gulf, Sustainable

1 Background of the Study

Transferring money between parties through a bill, invoice, or even a gift is known as remittance. In a broader sense, "remittance" refers to the money that migrants send home to their families while they are employed and residing overseas. They are also known as migrants or labour transfers. This suggests that the transfer of funds by the migrant worker to the homeland from the country of foreign employment is remittance. The trend of foreign employment in Nepal started after the Sugauli Treaty of 1815 between Nepal and the British. One example is the demand of Nepali youth for the British army. India also continued this trend as the demand for Nepali youth in the Indian army. After the democratization in Nepal in 2046. The government

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of Nepal adopted the LPG policy. Employment was the main challenge at that time in Nepal, but employment generation was not easy, so GoN adopted foreign employment for the Nepali youth. Foreign employment helps reduce poverty, increase economic activities, increase transfer technology, development of skills, capital formation, and so on. The human resources of a nation are eligible for the labour force and potential to behave productively to meet their own needs and their families, which affects the level of welfare in the nation or country.

The National Population and Housing Census 2021 published by the National Statistics Office suggests that 23.4% of households have absentees living abroad among which 82.2% are male (National Statistics Office, 2023). This is due to the reduced absorption rate of human resources in the employment market compared to the production of human resources. The Economic survey published in 2023 also stressed the tendency of the youth to pursue foreign employment in search of suitable opportunities (Ministry of Finance, 2023). The increasing trend of human migration signifies reduced opportunity within the nation and uncertainty of future, career and economic development in Nepal.

The data published by the census, in 2023 shows that 11 per cent of the labour force aged 15 to 59 are outside Nepal for foreign employment (National Statistics Office, 2023). Migration for foreign employment in Nepal has become so pervasive that half of the Nepalese household families have at least one migrant worker working abroad or returning after working abroad (Baral, 2021). The opportunity for foreign employment started from Lahore to Gurkhas and has now extended to 111 countries as destination countries providing a wide range of opportunities. However, the Annual Labour Approval Report (2023) published by the Department of Foreign Employment suggests that a total of 144 countries are chosen by the youth as the destination for foreign employment. This proves that the migration for employment is not new to Nepalese as their ancestors have paved the way for foreign employment and the youths nowadays are following the trend as it is, by the massive numbers of youths.

2 Statement of the Problem

Generally, people from Nepal migrate to foreign lands to earn and achieve opportunities and better livelihoods. The group migrating to foreign lands in search of job opportunities are attracted to gulf countries whereas another group, which intends to permanently live there, is choosing developed nations like Australia, America, Canada, and European countries as the host countries for migration. In this regard, the following research problems are discussed in this study:

- What is the trend of remittance sent by foreign workers in Nepal?
- What is the contribution of remittance to Nepal's national economy?

3 Objectives of the Study

This study is important and valuable because the economy of Nepal is based on remittance. There are many issues regarding industrialization, trade, employment generation and development. Poverty is mainly due to unemployment. Capital formation is another main

problem in Nepal. In this concern remittance is a basic pillar for the economic development of Nepal. The main objective of this study is the contribution of remittance to the national economy. The specific objectives are as follows: -

- To analyze the trend of remittance sent by foreign workers in Nepal.
- To find out the contribution of remittance to the National Economy of Nepal?

4 LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature which is most related to the study is reviewed. For example, foreign employment, remittance, type of human resource, legal provision and so on. Foreign employment in Nepal is an old trend, but it took speed after 1990 AD when the government of Nepal adopted a policy of liberalization, privatization and globalization. The remittance earned by the migrant workers has substantially contributed to the economy of Nepal. It has brought about positive changes in the economy in both the sending and receiving countries. It is well known that remittance generates multiplier effects such as poverty reduction, increase in foreign currency reserves, manifold increase in domestic consumption and consumption-led demands. This, in turn, increases import and import-based revenue (Acharya, 2021). The increase of foreign currency in a remittance-receiving country opens limitless opportunities for development, trade and business, social and other aspects of the nation as foreign reserve increases. Nepal is sending different kinds of manpower like, unskilled workers, semiskilled workers, skilled workers, highly skilled workers and professional workers to the foreign land.

Over the past few years, foreign employment has been booming. This is caused by several circumstances. The country's lack of employment opportunities is the main contributing reason. Poverty, the continued decline of agriculture and related industries, and even political instability are further concerns. Additionally, many believe that living conditions are better elsewhere. Both industrial growth and agricultural output are at a low point. As a result, there is a growing trade deficit since imports outnumber exports. Compared to metropolitan regions, poverty is more pervasive in rural communities. To improve their economic circumstances, more rural residents are moving overseas (Maharjan, 2023).

The National Employment Policy 2071 has emphasized reorganizing international employment agencies to provide services at the local level and training workers who want to work abroad with the right skills and training. To guarantee safe foreign employment, policy-level and institutional development initiatives should be implemented. Additionally, obligatory training should be made available so that individuals who choose to work overseas can easily attend such programs. Foreign employers demand skill-oriented training to handle credit facilities for work abroad and to fortify the monitoring system. The remittance system will be made easier to use, and with the right strategies and programs, remittance investment in productive industries will be promoted. A remittance mobilization policy will be developed for this purpose. By connecting the remittances from abroad (cash, skills, experience, and technology) to domestic output, appropriate institutional mechanisms for poverty alleviation will be implemented.

In 2018, the United Nations General Assembly established the International Day of Family

Remittances (IDFR), observed annually on June 16. Today, more than 200 million migrants are honoured for their efforts to better the lives of their 800 million family members back home and to provide their kids with a bright future. Remittances are most important in rural areas, where poverty and hunger are concentrated, and half of these flows travel there. Additionally, the Day advances the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and encourages the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

5 Research Methodology

Research methodology is an overall guideline for the study. In this study, the research methodology covers the research design and secondary source of data. This study is mainly based on secondary data covering 2018 to 2023. Research is a systematized effort of any branch of knowledge. It is a movement from the unknown to the known and vice versa also a continuous process. This study systematized the secondary data published by the Ministry of Finance, Foreign Employment Board, and Research conducted by the Ministry of Labour Employment and Social Security and Nepal Rastra Bank. This study is based on an explanatory research design. Descriptive statistics is used to describe the facts and causes are explained. Descriptive research design describes the situation of certain things and is used for fact-finding processes. In universities, descriptive research design is used for studies. Descriptive research design needs simple statistical tools such as percentage, frequency, mean, median, and mode. Standard deviation and variance (Shahi, 2023). This study mainly focuses on secondary sources of data. Secondary data are collected from authorized institutions, such as the Central Bureau of Statistics, foreign ministry and economic surveys.

6 Data Presentation and Analysis

Shahi (2021) defined three methods of data analysis, such as univariate, bivariate and multivariate analysis. The study of single variables in data analysis is univariate analysis. The study of two variables are dependent and independent variables and their relationship as bivariate analysis. The study of more than two variables in the data analysis to analyze their multiple relationships is multivariate analysis.

The data collected from secondary sources during research is presented in the table and represented graphically where required.

i. Work Permit

The foreign employment trend in Nepal is increasing day by day. Nepali youths are choosing foreign lands due to a lack of job opportunities and better livelihoods. Nepal is situated between two big countries China and India, so the Nepali market is difficult to explore. Therefore, Nepal is getting support from remittance. For that, the government of Nepal adopted the policy of liberalization, privatization and globalization (LPG). The data on working approval to foreign land from 2018 to 2023 is summarized and tabulated below :-

Table 1: Work Permit

Fiscal Year	High Skilled Manpower (in %)	Professional Manpower (in %)	Semi-Skilled Manpower (in %)	Skilled Manpower (in %)	Unskilled Manpower (in %)
2018/19	0.04	0.15	8.40	35.29	56.09
2019/20	0.01	0.09	9.5	32.6	57.8
2020/21	0.05	0.23	15.08	6.80	77.81
2021/22	0.01	0.10	8.62	46.32	44.92
2022/23	0.03	0.14	7.85	65.69	26.26
Average (\bar{X})	0.03	0.14	9.89	37.34	52.58

Source: Department of Foreign Employment, 2018 to 2023

This shows that unskilled manpower occupies the maximum, whereas skilled and professional manpower occupies the minimum of the total labour permit issued during the year of the study for foreign employment. In an average, only 37.34 per cent of manpower leaving for the job are skilled however 52.58 per cent of manpower are unskilled for foreign employment. This shows that the people are desperate for employment and leave for foreign land without any skill acquisition. These behaviors create work environment risks leading to hazards and accidents in the workplace. Injury and even death of the workers are inevitable due to these actions.

ii. Gender-wise Labour Approval

Generally, males and females are nearly equal in the population census of Nepal. However, Nepali culture is based on Hindu philosophy. Therefore, foreign jobs are mainly occupied by males. The data for 2018 to 2023 is summarized and tabulated below as: -

Table 2: Gender-based New Labour Permit

Fiscal Year	Male	Percentage of male (in %)	Female	Percentage of female (in %)	Total
2018/19	215633	91.28	20578	8.71	236211
2019/20	172191	90.43	18202	9.56	190393
2020/21	64894	90.04	7178	9.95	72072
2021/22	315805	90.52	33062	9.47	348867
2022/23	303265	89.95	33879	10.04	337144
Average (\bar{X})	1071788	90.44	112899	9.55	1184687

Source: Department of Foreign Employment (2018/19 to 2022/23)

This shows that labour permits issued to males are to a greater extent proving the dominance of males to females in labour permit issuance and foreign employment. Within the study period, the lowest of 8.71 per cent of labour permits was issued to females in FY 2018/19 whereas the highest of 10.04 per cent of labour permits was issued in FY 2022/23. The enrollment of females in foreign employment was lowest in the initial year of study and increased to highest in the last year of study. The data shows that the rate of females in foreign employment is increasing with time.

1 Major Destination for a new work permit

The major destination countries for the rural youth are Malaysia, Qatar UAE, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, whereas the major distribution for the urban youth is in America, Canada, Australia, the U.K., Japan and other European Countries. The major destination countries from 2018 to 2023 are summarized and tabulated below as: -

Table 3: Destination from Nepal for Foreign Employment

Country	2018/19		2019/20		2020/21		2021/22		2022/23	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Malaysia	9828	171	38759	400	103	4	24833	1258	170009	5139
Qatar	71322	3702	27453	2383	21076	1054	72475	4348	26433	2855
UAE	55444	7332	44698	7359	9257	2352	40916	12928	24882	9245
Saudi Arabia	44493	1857	39012	248	23234	85	125160	208	33462	59
Kuwait	14417	1578	7764	1207	2	-	19054	3732	15915	6123
Bahrain	4198	435	2892	412	2972	174	6954	638	2322	516
Oman	2401	321	1705	291	1401	155	3004	622	1215	667
Japan	870	89	808	131	468	85	1897	581	2467	783
Others	12660	5363	9100	5771	6381	32699	21512	8747	26560	8492

Source: Department of Foreign Employment from (2018/19 to 2022/23)

This shows that Saudi Arabia is the most chosen destination for foreign employment. Malaysia, Qatar, other countries, Bahrain, Oman, Japan, Kuwait and UAE are chosen in descending order for the country of foreign employment. People choose Gulf countries for foreign employment as the processing fees are minimal and the government has announced free visas and free tickets to those countries though it is less in practice. Academic qualification is not required for employment in the Gulf countries. Unskilled manpower is also easily welcomed in the Gulf countries. So, people usually opt for foreign employment in Gulf countries.

2 Labour Permit and Remittance

Table 4 shows the data on labour permits issued and the total remittance received in the same year. The total labour permits issued include new and renewal labour permits issued to Nepali migrants worldwide. The lockdown and closure of government offices and travel restrictions by various countries during the COVID-19 pandemic have negatively impacted the issuance of new labour approvals. However, subsidies like work permit extensions have benefited remittance inflow positively.

Table 4: Ratio of Remittance to labour permit

Fiscal Year	Total Labor Permit	Total Remittance Inflow (in USD billion)
2018/19	508827	879.37
2019/20	368373	875.03
2020/21	103298	961.05
2021/22	630090	1007.31
2022/23	771327	794.32
Average (\bar{X})	476383	903.416

Source: Economic Survey and Department of Foreign Employment (FY 2018/19 to 2022/23)

This shows that the remittance was gradually increasing from FY 2018/19 and remained unaffected even during the COVID-19 pandemic and decreased in FY 2022/23. But the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the labour approval procedure in Nepal in FY 2020/21. During the study, remittance did not increase despite the increase in labour permits in FY 2022/23 whereas in FY 2021/22 remittance increased despite a decrease in labour permits.

3 Remittance And National Saving

The second main source of the nation's economy is remittance. The Nepali economy is supported by foreign remittance. Some economists claim that a remittance-based economy is not good. But remittance helps to remove poverty and increase national savings which is summarized and tabulated below as: -

Table 5: Remittance received and National savings of Nepal

Fiscal Year	Total Remittance Inflow (in billion)	National Saving (in billion)
2018/19	879.37	1625.2
2019/20	875.03	1250.6
2020/21	961.05	1372
2021/22	1007.31	1431.5
2022/23	794.32	1703.8

Source: Economic survey (2018/19 to 2022/23)

In FY 2018/19, National savings are nearly double the remittance inflow. The pattern of decrease in remittance decreases the national saving followed in FY 2019/20 and the pattern of increase in remittance increase national saving is noted in FY 2020/21, 2021/22. The negative relation between remittance and national saving was noted in 2022/23.

4 Remittance and Disposable Income

Foreign employment and remittance increase directly or indirectly the income of Nepali society. People are happy in Nepal due to foreign income. The data from 2018 to 2023 is summarized and tabulated below as: -

Table 6: Remittance inflow and disposable income in Nepal

Fiscal Year	Total Remittance Inflow (in billion)	Disposable Income (in billion)
2018/19	879.37	4893.6
2019/20	875.03	4916.9
2020/21	961.05	5447.2
2021/22	1007.31	6080.5
2022/23	794.32	6739.9

Source: Economic survey (2018/19 to 2022/23)

The table shows the increase in disposable income and remittance from FY 2018/19 to 2022/23 except for the decrease in FY 2022/23. This shows that the increased remittance has increased the disposable income. However, in FY 2022/23, the decrease in remittance has not disturbed the increase in disposable income.

5 Remittance and Foreign Exchange Reserve

The Foreign exchange reserve and remittance are shown in Table 7. The data collected from the economic survey and the annual report of Nepal Rastra Bank during the period of 2018 to 2023 is summarized and tabulated as: -

Table 7: Remittance impact on Foreign Exchange reserve

Fiscal Year	Total Remittance Inflow (in billion)	Foreign exchange reserve (in billions)
2018/19	879.37	1539.4
2019/20	875.03	1215.8
2020/21	961.05	1399.0
2021/22	1007.31	1401.8
2022/23	794.32	1038.9

Source: Economic survey (2018/19 to 2022/23)

The data presented in the table shows that the foreign exchange reserve has always increased with an increase in remittance and decreased with a decrease in remittance.

6 Remittance And GDP

Remittance from migrant workers contributes continuously to the national economy. The contribution of remittance to the gross domestic product from 2018 to 2023 is summarized and tabulated below as: -

Table 8: Remittance and its contribution in GDP

Fiscal Year	Total Remittance Inflow (in billion)	Contribution of remittance in GDP (in %)
2018/19	879.37	22.8
2019/20	875.03	22.5
2020/21	961.05	22.1
2021/22	1007.31	20.4
2022/23	794.32	22.7

Source: Economic survey (2018/19 to 2022/23)

During the study, the contribution of remittance to GDP reached the highest of 22.8% in FY 2018/19 and the lowest of 20.4% in FY 2021/22. The data tabulated from FY 2018/19 to 2022/23 regarding remittance and its contribution to GDP shows that the decrease and increase in the contribution of remittance is not dependent on the amount of remittance inflow in the nation.

7 Remittance and Economic Growth

Table 9 has tabulated the remittance inflows and economic growth within five fiscal years. The data of the Human Development Index is obtained from the Human Development report published by the National Planning Commission.

Table 9: Remittance inflow and Economic growth

Fiscal Year	Total Remittance Inflow (in billion)	Economic growth (in %)
2018/19	879.37	6.7
2019/20	875.03	-2.4
2020/21	961.05	4.2
2021/22	1007.31	5.8
2022/23	794.32	4.4

Source: Economic Survey, National Planning Commission (2018/19 to 2022/23)

The Economic growth is highest in the fiscal year FY 2018/19. The data shows that the increase in the remittance during FY 2021/22 and FY 2021/22 shows an increase in economic growth. Similarly, the decrease in the remittance inflow shows a reduction in the economic growth in FY 2019/20 and FY 2022/23.

8 Remittance and HDI

World Bank report highlighted remittance and foreign employment reduced poverty in Nepal. Due to the remittance and foreign employment knowledge, skill and technology are exchanging. The human development index has also increased due to foreign employment and remittance in Nepal. The remittance and HDI from 2018 to 2023 is summarized and tabulated below as: -

Table 10: Remittance inflow and HDI

Fiscal Year	Total Remittance Inflow (in billion)	Human Development Index
2018/19	879.37	0.601
2019/20	875.03	0.611
2020/21	961.05	0.604
2021/22	1007.31	0.602
2022/23	794.32	0.601
Average	903.42	0.6038

Source: Economic Survey, National Planning Commission (2018/19 to 2022/23)

During the study period, HDI falls in the category of medium human development index. On average, the HDI index is 0.6038 and the revenue remittance amount received is USD 903.42 billion on average.

6. FINDING OF THE STUDY

From the above study, remittance has played a vital role in Nepal's national economy. Nepal is mainly based on remittance from foreign land. Although it is not a good source of the national economy practically it become vital in Nepali society.

During foreign employment, professional and highly skilled manpower has occupied a minimal percentage of the total labour permit issued in the year. On average, only 37.34 per cent of manpower leaving for the job are skilled however 52.58 per cent of manpower are unskilled for foreign employment.

In this research, it is found that males have been dominating the foreign employment market. During the study, it was found that the percentage of labour permits issued to females is between 8.71 and 10.04.

The study shows that Malaysia and Gulf countries viz. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab

Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman are mostly chosen countries of destination for foreign employment.

The study shows that the labour permit and remittance inflow have direct relationships. In contrast, FY 2022/23 and FY 2020/21 show indirect relations.

The study shows that national savings, foreign exchange reserves and economic growth have a direct relationship with remittance. The study concludes that political insurgencies, poverty, unemployment, globalization, economic inequalities, and economic and environmental crises.

Globalization, economic instability, political insurgencies, scarcity of job opportunities, inability to fulfil basic needs, and various push and pull factors have contributed to labour migration in Nepal.

Generally, the study helped to understand the trend of foreign employment in Nepal.

7. CONCLUSION

Most of the migrant workers are unskilled in foreign land from Nepal. Professional and highly skilled workers are minimally from Nepal in foreign lands. Nepali youth choose foreign employment for job opportunities and better livelihoods in developed countries. Remittance generation is the main source for the government of Nepal. Modern economists claim that foreign remittance is not sustainable and good for the national economy. They suggested generating employment, industry, and marketization in the motherland i.e. Nepal. But practically remittance is the second contribution to the GDP of Nepal. Similarly, foreign employment and remittance contributed in many ways to Nepal such as dollar exchange, foreign trade balance, knowledge achievement, skilled transfer, technology advancement and so on.

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Revisiting the Political-Administrative Dichotomy: Navigating the Blurred Lines

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Executive Summary

The relationship between political leadership and administration has been debated in public administration. Based on the review of extant literature, this article examines the relationships between politics and administration. It is worth noting that despite being distinctive, their relationships are an evolving and dynamically interactive process in contemporary governance. Therefore, it is unwise to overlook their constant cross-cutting engagements, power relations in politics, and the administration's influence in policymaking. Against this backdrop, this article underscores the need to move beyond the simplistic dichotomy of the political and administrative spheres to understand the distinctive logic that shape political and administrative behaviour.

Keywords:

Politics, elected officials, administrator, dichotomy, complementarity

1. Introduction

The relationship between elected political leaders (politicians or elected officials) and public administrators (administrators or appointed officials) and their dynamics are central topics in public administration. Their interaction is crucial for understanding how government organizations function, and public policies are formulated and implemented. In addition, Their complex and sometimes contentious relationship and the appropriate boundaries between political and administrative functions are directly relevant to the roles of public leaders and have broader implications for the constitutional and democratic underpinnings of government (Callahan & Mau, 2024).

The core of government and public administration is the relationship between political leaders, administrators, and the public. The appropriate roles of political leaders and administrators in the political processes and the politics-administration dichotomy grounded in an ideological construct have significantly influenced public administration discourse (Skelley, 2008; Tahmasebi & Musav, 2011) because the relationship between political officials and appointed officials is fundamental to understanding the governing process (Hansen & Ejersbo, 2002).

Although the politics-administration dichotomy has been centuries long central issue in the study of public administration (Agnihotri & Sharma, 2011) and remains highly relevant in

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public administration theories and practices (Svara, 2008; Tahmasebi & Musav, 2011), it has been a central problem (Grønnegaard Christensen, 2006), a subject of ongoing extensive debate, and the most disreputable theories of public administration (Hansen & Ejersbo, 2002; Overeem, 2005; Skelley, 2008) since its inception in the late 1880s (Demir & Nyhan, 2008). The debate revolves around defining and separating the proper roles and boundaries between the political and administrative domains, significantly influencing public administration theories and practices (Grønnegaard Christensen, 2006; Svara, 2008; Tahmasebi & Musav, 2011).

This article examines the relevance of the traditional political-administrative dichotomy and the independent nature of politics and administration. It assumes the traditional separation of politics and administration fails to capture the politics-administration relationship in the contemporary governance paradigm. It takes an interpretive approach to analyzing the theoretical and empirical evidence on the political-administrative interface. It uncovers explicit and implicit historical and philosophical ideas by analyzing scholarly works and comparative literature on politics-administration relationships and synthesizes the appropriate boundaries, overlaps, and interdependencies between the political and administrative functions of government. It reviews key tenets of the traditional politics-administration dichotomy, its complexities, and shortcomings of the strict separation between the two domains, emerging theoretical perspectives that account for the complex and interdependent interface between them, and how they have become blurred and integrated. Based on the review of extant literature, the article offers a new theoretical framework that captures the realities of their dynamic relationships.

2. Traditional Politics-Administration Dichotomy

The politics-administration dichotomy (the dichotomy) is rooted in Montesquieu's ideas in 1748. He postulated separating legislative and executive powers to protect individual liberty, laying the philosophical foundation for separating politics and administration (Agnihotri & Sharma, 2011). The dichotomy, a contentious issue for over a century (Tahmasebi & Musav, 2011), is conceptually linked to administrators' political neutrality, central to classical American and European public administration theory (Overeem, 2005).

The distribution of power and authority between elected and appointed officials has been a central topic in public administration in the seminal works of influential scholars Max Weber and Woodrow Wilson (Agnihotri & Sharma, 2011; Carboni, 2010). The dichotomy model was further promoted and institutionalized in the Progressive Era in the USA since the late 19th to early 20th century, as progressives recognized its potential to achieve their political goals. They entrenched the dichotomy to insulate public personnel systems from partisan influences and pursue their broader political objectives (Rosenbloom, 2008).

In the American context, the traditional dichotomy was deeply entrenched, primarily in the influential work of Wilson's 'The Study of Administration' (1887) and Frank Goodnow's 'Politics and Administration' (1900) (Dahlström, 2012). Wilson (1887) emphasized that politics is concerned with policymaking and values, while public administration is concerned with implementing politically determined policies through the expertise and skills of the

administrators. He argued that although politics sets the administrative tasks, it should not manipulate administrative offices, as the administration operates outside the spheres of politics. Similarly, Goodnow (1900) identified two government functions: policymaking and administration. Policymaking is the expression of public will and is the field of elected officials. On the other hand, the administration is concerned with implementing political will through the institutional apparatus of states (Idris & Lawal, 2019). Wilson anticipated a strict separation between politics and administration, and Goodnow emphasized a hierarchical, superior-subordinate dynamic between elected and appointed officials.

Weber's work largely influenced the politics-administration relationship as he conceptualized a clear separation between the roles and influence of elected political leaders and appointed bureaucrats in the European context (Hansen & Ejersbo, 2002), arguing that the increasing power of bureaucrats required the conceptual distinction to protect the administration from the influence of politics (Tahmasebi & Musav, 2011). Weber's model predicted a division of labour between elected and appointed officials. While the former formulated visions and goals, later implemented political directives, and managed daily government operations (Weber, 2017), aiming to streamline the relationship between elected and appointed officials.

The American tradition, advocated by Wilson, and the European tradition, portrayed by Weber, arrived at the traditional politics-administration dichotomy from different and contrasting perspectives and reasons (Overeem, 2005). Although they stressed the political neutrality of administration, Wilson was considered the pioneer of the conceptual separation between politics and administration (Tahmasebi & Musav, 2011). Wilson emphasized studying public administration separately from politics, arguing for distinct hierarchical relationships (Demir & Nyhan, 2008).

Wilson aspired to establish public administration as a professional and impartial field distinct from politics. He emphasized a clear division between politics and administration to protect public administration from the turbulent realm of politics. He thought administrative and political issues were fundamentally different and politicians should not manipulate the administration. His perspective was rooted in a hierarchical superior and subordination relationship where politics was formally superior to the administration, and administration was subordinate to politics. Elected officials formulate policies, and administrators implement them, maintaining political neutrality (Dahlström, 2012). His ideas delineated the different roles of politicians in policy formulation and administrators' roles in providing neutral, nonpartisan, and technical advice in policy implementation (Cameron, 2003).

The influential scholars Wilson, Goodnow, and Weber emphasized the strict separation of politics and administration and the division of work within the government to operate effectively and avoid the influence of partisan politics on the administration (Plessis, 2022). They aimed to keep the administration out of partisan politics, improve the functions of politics and administration (Overeem, 2005), and increase democratic accountability and administrative performance by dividing authority between elected and appointed officials (Demir & Nyhan, 2008). The classical dichotomy model was a purposeful mechanism and a political tactic for achieving a more profound political transformation by protecting the administration from the

influence of partisan politics (Rosenbloom, 2008). The Weberian's perspective held that policy implementation, as the exclusive domain of administration, allows the selection of public administrators based on merit and competence (Cameron, 2003). Thus, the meritocracy in appointing bureaucrats is the core of Weber's bureaucratic model.

3. Critiques of Traditional Dichotomy

The politics-administration dichotomy faced growing criticism during 1927-1936 (Rosenbloom, 2008), as scholars and practitioners argued that administration plays a legitimate role in policymaking rather than being a neutral implementer (Tahmasebi & Musav, 2011). The dichotomy has been characterized as 'political metaphysics' (Demir & Nyhan, 2008) and an oversimplified foundation for public administration (Huber, 2007). Critics contend that classical scholars like Wilson conflated 'politics' with partisan politics rather than the broader policymaking process. Rosenbloom (2008) contends that the traditional dichotomy was strategically constructed by civil service reformers to serve specific political purposes rather than represent a proper separation between the two domains. Post-war public administration scholars have rejected the classic dichotomy, re-conceptualizing bureaucratic political neutrality as excluding administrators from partisan politics rather than policymaking (Overeem, 2005).

The traditional dichotomy prevailed as a longstanding debate due to the lack of alternative conceptual frameworks (Plessis, 2022). Contemporary scholars assert that politics and administration are distinct but overlapping and interdependent domains (Agnihotri & Sharma, 2011). The dichotomy is better conceptualized as a fluid rather than a rigidly defined notion, representing a contestable political space subject to democratic discourse rather than a fixed boundary (Miller, 2015). The erosion of the assumptions of dichotomy marked a significant turning point in the evolution of the academic discipline and professional practice of public administration (Tahmasebi & Musav, 2011). The essence is that the classical dichotomy is not reflected in practice as administrators exercise discretion and influence over policy matters.

4. Conceptual Models Beyond the Traditional Dichotomy

Scholars have questioned the assumptions of the classical politics-administration dichotomy model and the traditional conceptualization of the relationship between politicians and administrators and their roles in the political process. In their views, classical scholars failed to capture how the politics-administration relationship manifests in practice. Carboni (2010) argues that rigid dichotomy necessitated an alternative bridging the gap between the two spheres. Politics and administration are distinct spheres of government. Politics determines how to address issues and challenges a government faces and involves choosing alternatives, values, and goals and shaping the direction and priorities of government and public policy (Agnihotri & Sharma, 2011). Administrators are primarily guided by organizational goals and formal rules (Hansen & Ejersbo, 2002) and can play a range of advisory roles, from passively presenting information to actively framing issues in the political process (Svara, 2008). High-level administrators tightly control subordinates to implement policies (Huber, 2007).

Wilson distinguished between partisan politics and policymaking. However, Goodnow recognized a conceptual and institutional dichotomy (Montjoy & Watson (1995), suggesting that the traditional dichotomy was a complex phenomenon. Maynard-Moody (1998) further differentiated administrative and legislative policymaking. According to Maynard-Moody, the administrators' values shape administrative policymaking, and elected officials' values legislative policymaking. The growing complexity and scope of the government and expanded demands from elected officials have blurred the traditional boundaries between the two spheres (Grønnegaard Christensen, 2006).

Overeem (2005) reconceptualized traditional dichotomy by distinguishing partisan politics and policy politics. He argued that appointed officials could participate in policymaking but should remain outside partisan politics. Hansen and Ejersbo (2002) proposed an alternative model, namely the 'Dichotomy-Dulaty-Model' (DDM). This model comprehensively explains complicated interactions and relationships between elected and appointed officials. The model has four dimensions: mission, policy, administration, and management. While mission and policy are political functions and fall under political leadership, administration and management are administrative functions led by appointed officials. Since elected and appointed officials have monopoly power in their particular functions and shared power in other functions, the distinction between the two domains gets blurred.

Huber (2007) introduced the strategic neutrality model (SNM), which represents an administrative behaviour model. According to Huber, strategically neutral appointed officials function within internal and external political constraints and exercise power to shape and influence policy agendas. Likewise, Demir and Nyhan (2008) offered two constructs: natural competence and political guidance. While the former includes administrators' expertise and neutrality and political guidance from political leadership, the latter consists of political leadership and legislative oversight, where politicians determine public preferences, communicate them to administrators, and monitor administrative functions. It points out that the neutral competence of administrators to implement policies can ensure democratic accountability towards political leadership.

5. Evolving Trends and Perspectives

In recent years, scholars have challenged the strict separation of roles and responsibilities of administrators and elected leaders (Idris & Lawal, 2019). Building on traditional dichotomy and empirical studies, they demonstrated the inextricable links between the political and administrative domains: administrative actions have political consequences as appointed officials shape policy and elected officials oversee administrative functions (Skelley, 2008). As an alternative to traditional dichotomies, Svava (2001) presented a 'Complementarity' model, which rejects rigid separation between functions of politics and administration rather than recognizes their high interdependence. Administrators maintain professional independence, respect political control, and implement public policies in the interest of citizens. Svava emphasizes that although political leaders and administrators have distinct roles, they are interdependent with each other and pursue effective government.

The Complementarity Model highlights focus on political control and professional neutrality, that is, the capacity of elected leaders to provide policy directions and political oversights and appointed officials' ability to provide expertise in policy formulation and implementation per their backgrounds and values (Carboni, 2010). In this regard, appointed officials respect elected officials' political supremacy, and elected leaders acknowledge the involvement of administrators in policymaking and their discretion and expertise (Svara, 2008). The complementarity perspective emphasizes administrative independence, respect for political supremacy, compliance with political leadership, and administrative professionalism for effective policy implementation (Idris & Lawal, 2019).

First, scholars assert that the complementarity perspective views the relationship between elected and appointed officials as an interaction between political control and professional independence (Svara, 2001), arguing that political guidance has a limited impact on administrators, elected leaders dominate policy legitimization, and administrative expertise and neutrality are insufficient for effective policy implementation (Demir & Nyhan, 2008). The model contends that administrators need strategic political direction, and elected officials need effective administration to implement their interests (Idris & Lawal, 2019).

The Italian case demonstrated that the NPM reforms resulted in productive collaboration between elected and appointed officials, their complementary contributions to successful policymaking, and the reconciliation of dilemmas between political control and administrative autonomy (Carboni, 2010). The case suggests distinct but overlapping functions and mutual dependency rather than a clear separation between politics and administration.

In addition, it underscores the interdependence and reciprocal influence between elected leaders and administrators. Accordingly, elected leaders appoint administrators to lead government agencies and influence bureaucratic functions to promote their public image (Grønnegaard Christensen, 2006; Hansen & Ejersbo, 2002). On the other hand, administrators shape the political agenda by pressing politically neglected public issues in the policy process and advancing their priorities (Maynard-Moody, 1998). This interdependence between them arises because political appointments of administrators allow control of administration. Similarly, administrators have the information and expertise that elected leaders need to perform their functions (Dahlström, 2012; Grønnegaard Christensen, 2006). The Complimentary model recognizes their interdependence, reciprocal influence, mutually supportive roles, unique perspectives, values, norms, political oversight, and professional standards.

However, it is worth noting that as sovereign representatives of political values, norms, and interests, elected officials are primarily motivated to maintain a high public profile, engage with their constituencies, and popularize their political interests to get re-elected (Hansen & Ejersbo, 2002) and consider administrators as their subordinates (Carboni, 2010). Similarly, rather than neutral actors, bureaucrats exercise discretion and professional judgment in policymaking by drawing on their experiences and expertise rather than strictly following political doctrines (Miller, 2015).

Second, studies have found that administrators emphasize compliance with formal rules and regulations, and politicians focus on democratic principles. They influence administrators to implement their perceived interests in their constituencies (Agnihotri & Sharma, 2011). The studies indicated misunderstanding and conflict between bureaucrats and their political leaders if the administrators are indifferent or oppose complying with political interests. Hansen and Ejersbo (2002) argue that elected leaders are guided by inductive logic and context, while appointed officials are driven by deductive logic and rules. Their distinct logic of actions and thinking leads to disharmony. It is argued that political control and bureaucratic autonomy can be balanced with a stable political and institutional system and favourable organizational cultures (Carboni, 2010). The overarching theme is that there should be clear boundaries between the two spheres and their functions. Effective cooperation and joint efforts between elected and appointed officials result in better government performance.

Third, in the contemporary governance paradigm, politicians' political will and administrators' administrative capacities are not the primary determinants of policy agendas and government outcomes. Instead, diverse actors with distinct interests engage in complex interactions beyond the dichotomy (Plessis, 2022). Thus, the previous discussion on politics and administration largely overlooks contemporary policy formulation and implementation practices. Callahan and Mau (2024) recently introduced a multilateral model that recognizes the complex and fluid interactions among elected officials, political appointees, administrators, and other actors. Going beyond the political-administrative dichotomy, the model acknowledges the complex and multilateral dynamics that characterize the relationships between politics and administration in the contemporary governance paradigm.

6. Conclusion

Since the mid-20th century, the traditional politics-administration dichotomy has faced growing criticism that administrators play legitimate and significant roles in policymaking instead of being neutral implementers. In this regard, the Complementarity model offers an alternative perspective recognizing distinct roles and high interdependence, reciprocal influence, and dynamic relationships between politics and administration in pursuing effective government.

Similarly, the recent multilateral model goes beyond limited bilateral relationships, which depicts complex interactions among diverse actors and the exercise of their political power in government. Effective collaborations between appointed and elected officials may vary depending on organizational, institutional, and environmental contexts. It is worth noting that joint efforts of diverse actors and clear boundaries between administrative and political functions result in desired government outcomes. A deeper understanding of the complex and interconnected relationship between elected and appointed officials contributes to better governance. It further enhances public administration's position in the political system and its interface with political leadership to navigate the complex relationship.

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Inclusive Governance in Nepalese Civil Service: A Comparative Study in South Asia

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ABSTRACT

Purpose - This paper examines the landscape of inclusive governance in the civil service of Nepal, utilizing comparative analysis with other South Asian countries. Through a systematic analysis of policies, practices, and outcomes, the paper seeks to identify key factors influencing inclusive governance and to offer insights into potential strategies for improvement.

Methodology - To fulfil the purpose of this paper based on a quantitative descriptive approach by reviewing existing literature and using secondary data and information provided by the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Various articles in the field of inclusive governance were collected and published between 2000 and 2023.

Findings/Results - In terms of inclusive governance, Nepal has been adopted since 2007, after the second amendment of the Civil Service Act, 1993 to bring the disadvantaged groups such as women, and other minorities, who are socially, economically and politically marginalized into the governing system. Until 2023, only 27% of Nepal's public sector employees are women, with men making up the remaining 73% (NIC, 2022). According to data, the government service employs up to 63.50% Khas/Aryas, but only 0.60% Muslims, 2.50% Dalits, 15.40% Madhesis, and 19.5% Indigenous people are represented (Bhul, 2021). Comparative research reveals a fundamental issue with inclusive governance in South Asia, emphasizing considerable gaps in the representation of women and minority groups across the region. While Bangladesh leads in female representation and Sri Lanka in minority representation, inequities continue, emphasizing the importance of specific initiatives to promote diversity. Nepal faces challenges when transforming legal mandates into real results, widening the gap between policy goals and actual successes in inclusive governance. Corruption remains a major obstacle to governance and social integration across South Asia where Bhutan rating highest and Afghanistan ranking lowest.

Originality/value- This paper is a unique effort to review the state of inclusive governance initiative experiences in the field of civil service in South Asia and Nepal.

Keywords:

Governance, Inclusion policies, Civil Service, South Asia, Nepal

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Introduction

Since the beginning of human civilization, governance has existed. According to Malapi-Nelson (2017), Plato used the term to describe the "art of navigation" or the proper steering of a community. But the term "governance" as it is used nowadays really originated in the 1990s, when political scientists and economists presented the idea for the first time. Later, third-sector institutions like the World Bank, the IMF, and the United Nations spread the word about it. Governance has evolved into a "broad umbrella" that encompasses a variety of ideas, following a lengthy history of thought development. According to Asaduzzaman and Virtanen (2016), governance is becoming increasingly popular in the discourse of public management and public policy due to its ability to connect numerous arguments and theoretical ideas. Despite its growing popularity among academicians and public policy practitioners over the last three decades, governance is still regarded as a dynamic, controversial idea that is far from a "finished product" (Farazmand, 2012).

In the field of governance, "inclusive governance" is now a euphemism. Scholars in the domains of political science, sociology, administration, and development make substantial utilization of it. Although inclusive governance essentially entails mainstreaming marginalized groups into the bigger picture of governance policies, systems, and practices, it is an integrated approach that also successfully improves the delivery of services in two areas: empowering marginalized communities to demand services and ensuring efficient service delivery. Inclusive governance, defined as policies and practices that encourage equal participation and representation of all society groups in decision-making processes and public institutions, is critical for promoting democratic legitimacy and social cohesion. This approach acknowledges societal diversity and seeks to address historical injustices and structural inequalities by ensuring that marginalized groups, such as women, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable populations, have a voice in governance processes (UNDP, 2016).

In Nepal, inclusive governance has been the main thrust since the country transitioned to a federal democratic republic in 2007. The aim has been to eliminate longstanding social and political inequalities by guaranteeing marginalized groups meaningful participation in decision-making processes and public institutions (Subedi & Shrestha, 2019). Academic studies emphasize how important inclusive governance is in Nepal, especially for the civil service. For instance, Chaudhary's (2013) study focused on the Public Service Commission's (PSC) role in Nepal's civil service and the adoption of inclusive policies since 2007. Despite legislative requirements for inclusion, the study identified challenges to attaining true representation. Prevalent recruitment practices reinforced preexisting inequalities by favouring elites from privileged backgrounds. Low literacy rates were one of the hurdles marginalized communities had to overcome to access opportunities. The supremacy of certain communities revealed the gap between the desired and actual outcomes of policy. Samata Foundation (2016) investigated the role of civil society in fostering inclusive government in Nepal. It underlined the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in campaigning for marginalized groups' rights and keeping the government accountable for inclusive policy implementation. The report highlighted successful CSO-led projects that helped excluded populations be better represented and participate

in decision-making processes. Despite these attempts, transforming inclusive governance policies into practical measures remains challenging. Building institutional capacity, political commitment, and active civil society participation are critical for overcoming these obstacles and achieving inclusive governance in Nepal (Bhul, 2023).

Table 1. Inclusive Governance in Nepalese Civil Service (2000-2024)

Category	Nepal	India	Bangladesh	Sri Lanka	Pakistan
Introduction of Legal Frameworks	Civil Service Act 1993, 2007, 2015	Constitutional Amendments (1950-2008)	Quota System Introduced in 1972	16th Amendment 1987	Federal Quota System 1948
Legal Revisions and Updates	Amendments in 2007	Multiple Amendments (1979, 1993, 2008)	Periodic Legal Revisions (2000-2023)	Significant in 2003, 2009, 2016	Occasional Revisions (2002, 2010, 2019)
Civil Service Composition	Gender, Ethnicity, Caste breakdown	Gender, Caste (General, OBC, SC/ST)	Gender, freedom fighters, Ethnicity (Bengali, Others)	Ethnicity (Sinhalese, Tamil, Others)	Ethnicity, Religion (Muslim, Other)
Representation Ratios	45% Women, Minorities vs Population	49.5% SC/ST/OBC vs Population	56% Women, Ethnic minorities vs Population	No Specific Quotas, Affirmative Action	92.5% Ethnic minorities vs Population
Women in Civil Service (2000-2024)	5% (2000), 12% (2007) to 28.45% (2024)	13% (2000) to 23.5% (2023)	9% (2000) to 22% (2023)	20% (2000) to 36% (2023)	5% (2000) to 10% (2023)

Source: Author

Table 1 presents a comparative analysis of the state of shared governance in Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan's civil services between the years 2000 and 2024. For example, Nepal followed up with some landmark legal provisions initiated by the 1993 Civil Service Act and further amended in 2007 and 2015, leading to incremental increases in women's representation from 5 per cent in 2000 to 28.45 per cent in 2024. Similarly, in the case of India, constitutional amendments have widened the process of inclusiveness, and women's participation has risen from 13% to 23.5%. Bangladesh had adopted a quota system back in 1972, through which their proportion increased from 9% to 22%. Sri Lanka did not have any formal quotas, but it had affirmative action policies under which its participation by females increased from 20% to 36%. In the case of Pakistan, the federal quota system was in place since 1948, with very few amendments; thus, its progress has been very slow, and the proportion of women has increased from merely 5% to only 10% during the same period. These data underline the very different effectiveness of policies aimed at inclusive governance

across South Asia, with important steps in Nepal and Sri Lanka, while Pakistan fares low with respect to both gender and ethnic inclusiveness.

Objective

The major objective of this article is to analyze the notion of inclusive governance in Nepal after a comparative review of the south Asian countries in 2022-2024. This article scrutinizes the outcomes, and present achievements in Nepal since 2007 to conclude.

Research Method

The methodology adopted for this research on the topic 'Inclusive Governance in Nepalese Civil Service: Comparative Analysis in South Asia' is based on a quantitative descriptive design and is essentially a literature review and secondary data analysis. This study is based on a vast range of articles spanning from 2000-2024, covering diverse issues on inclusive governance. Secondly, this research has drawn on data and information that have come from credible organizations like the World Bank and UNDP to further advance the analysis. It further delved into precisely how the practices of inclusive governance in Nepal have fared within a South Asian comparative framework.

Results and Discussion

Comparative Analysis of Inclusive Governance in South Asia

In South Asia's changing landscape, inclusive governance is an important target for long-term development. The civil service, which serves as the foundation of government operations, is vital to this endeavour. This article does a comparative analysis of inclusion in civil services across selected South Asian countries, reflecting light on their development, obstacles, and opportunities. Addressing fundamental socioeconomic inequities and strengthening democratic governance in South Asian nations have made inclusive governance necessary. In this multicultural region, academic research by Bhul (2023) exposes challenges and opportunities for inclusive governance. The condition of inclusive governance in South Asia was investigated by Khan (2017), who additionally emphasized the complicated relationships between political, social, and institutional elements. The research emphasized the value of implementing inclusive policy frameworks that give priority to the participation and representation of underrepresented groups, such as women, ethnic minorities, and low-income communities. Nonetheless, it also recognized enduring obstacles such as political instability, inadequate institutional capacity, and corruption that restrict the successful execution of inclusive governance programs.

Table 2. Condition of Female, Minority Representation and Accessibility in South Asia.

Country	Female Representation (%)	Minority Representation (%)	Accessibility Index (out of 10)
Bangladesh	28	12	6.2
Nepal	27	9	5.8
India	24	14	6.5
Sri Lanka	19	18	5.5
Pakistan	17	7	4.9
Afghanistan	14	5	4.3

Source: World Bank - Women, Business, and the Law (2022), UNDP Human Development Report (2022)

Diversity in gender within the civil service is still a vital condition for inclusive governance. There are notable differences amongst South Asian countries, according to the tabulated statistics. Certain nations have made significant progress toward gender inclusion, while others still lag behind. Compared to Bangladesh, Nepal and India have larger percentages of women in the civil service. An overview of the most important sociopolitical variables in six South Asian nations is given in Table 2. Bangladesh stands out as the country with the largest percentage of female representation (28%), closely followed by India and Nepal (27% and 24%, respectively). To promote social cohesion and fair representation, ethnic and religious minorities must be included in civil services. Inequalities still exist throughout South Asia, though. Comparatively speaking to other nations in the region at eighteen per cent, Sri Lanka has the greatest percentage of any country on the list devoted to minority participation. With an index of 6.5 out of 10, India leads South Asia in accessibility, indicating a comparatively higher degree of ease in accessing opportunities and resources. Afghanistan, on the other hand, has the lowest accessibility score (4.3), the lowest percentages of minority and female representation, and steadily decreasing rankings across the board.

**Table 3: Federalism in South Asian Countries
(Sharing of Power and Decentralized Structure)**

Country	Federal Status	Key Features	Source
India	Federal Republic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Union of states with a strong centre - Division of powers between the central government and states (28 States 8 union territories) - Bicameral legislature (Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha) 	Constitution of India, Articles 1-4
Pakistan	Federal Republic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Division of powers between federal and provincial governments - Four provinces and federally administered territories - Bicameral legislature (National Assembly and Senate) 	Constitution of Pakistan, Articles 1-4
Nepal	Federal Democratic Republic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transitioned to federalism in 2007 - Divided into seven provinces, 2015 - Three-tier government structure (federal, provincial, local), 2016 - Bicameral legislature (Pratinidhi Sabha and Rastriya Sabha) 	Constitution of Nepal, Part 1 (3,4)
Sri Lanka	Unitary State with Devolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unitary structure with limited devolution of power to provinces - The 13th Amendment introduced provincial councils - Centralized system with strong presidential powers 	Sri Lankan Constitution, 13th Amendment
Bangladesh	Unitary State with Decentralization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unitary structure with decentralized local government - Division of powers between central and local government bodies - Union Parishad, Upazila Parishad, and Zila Parishad system 	Constitution of Bangladesh, Articles 59-60

Source: constitutions of concerned South Asian countries

In South Asia, India was first realized as a Federal Republic, with a union of states, a strong central authority, and power division between the central government and the states, facilitated by a bicameral legislature that ensures representation at all levels. Similarly, Pakistan, also known as the Federal Republic, divides authority between the federal and provincial governments, structured into four provinces and federally managed regions, with a bicameral legislature providing supervision. Nepal, designated as the Federal Democratic Republic, adopted federalism in 2007 and is now divided into seven provinces with a three-tier administrative system. Sri Lanka retains a unitary state framework but has implemented devolution by the 13th Amendment, whereas Bangladesh, a unitary state with decentralization, functions under a unitary system with decentralized local government.

Corruption Perception Index 2023 in South Asian Countries

Corruption remains a significant challenge and is mostly associated with the effectiveness of bureaucracy in many South Asian countries, impacting governance, economic development, and social cohesion. This index provides a comparative analysis of corruption levels and governance indicators in South Asian countries for 2023, utilizing data from reputable sources such as Transparency International and the World Bank.

Table 4: Corruption Perception Index (CPI) Scores for South Asian Countries (2023)

Country	CPI Score (out of 100)	Ranking (out of 180)
Bhutan	68	26
India	39	93
Maldives	39	93
Nepal	35	108
Sri Lanka	34	115
Pakistan	29	133
Bangladesh	24	149
Afghanistan	20	162

(Source: Corruption Perception Index (CPI) by Transparency International, 2024)

Note: Higher CPI scores indicate lower perceived levels of corruption

The perceived levels of corruption in eight South Asian countries are indicated by the CPI scores, which are displayed in Table 4 and are expressed as a percentage out of 100. Among the nations in the area, Bhutan has the lowest perceived level of corruption, with a CPI score of 68, making it the top performer. With a combined CPI score of 39, India and the Maldives are judged to have moderate levels of corruption. Following closely behind with a CPI score of 35, Nepal is believed to have higher levels of corruption than Bhutan, India, and the Maldives, while Sri Lanka and Pakistan have ratings of 34 and 29, respectively. The countries with the lowest CPI scores Bangladesh and Afghanistan, with 24 and 20, respectively also have the highest perceived levels of corruption. The table highlights notable differences in how corruption is considered in South Asian nations, with Afghanistan being viewed as the most corrupt and Bhutan as the least corrupt. For policymakers and other stakeholders, these CPI ratings are crucial indicators as they point out areas that need attention and intervention to effectively combat corruption and promote transparent governance throughout the region.

The 2023 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) shows corruption is thriving across South Asia. The CPI ranks 180 countries and territories around South Asia by their perceived levels of public sector corruption, scoring on a scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean). More than two-thirds of South Asian countries score below 50 out of 100, which strongly indicates that they have serious corruption problems except Bhutan (68). The global average is stuck at only 43, while the vast majority of countries have made no progress or declined in the last decade.

Women's Empowerment Index and Global Gender Parity Index in South Asia

The comparative study of gender parity and women's empowerment across different South Asian nations is presented in Table 4. It consists of the Global Gender Parity Index (GGPI) and the Women's Empowerment Index (WEI), two important indexes. On the other hand, the GGPI divides nations into groups according to how far they have come toward gender parity, from "Low" to "Lower-middle".

Table 5. Women's Empowerment Index and Global Gender Parity Index in South Asia.

Country	Women's Empowerment Index (WEI)	Global Gender Parity Index (GGPI)		
Bangladesh	0.443	Low	0.527	Low
Bhutan	0.562	Low	0.625	Low
India	0.520	Low	0.560	Low
Maldives	0.518	Low	0.575	Low
Nepal	0.491	Low	0.618	Low
Pakistan	0.337	Low	0.428	Low
Sri Lanka	0.568	Low	0.516	Low

Source: World Bank - Worldwide Governance Indicators (2023)

Table 5 above contains the comparison of WEI and the GGPI for South Asian countries for 2023 based on the Worldwide Governance Indicators proposed by the World Bank. In this regard, the scores are uniformly low in the region, displaying huge disparities concerning gender. In the case of Bangladesh, the WEI score gathered is 0.443, and the scores under GGPI are 0.527, both in the low category. Similarly, Nepal presses forward with a modest WEI of 0.491 and a GGPI of 0.618. Sri Lanka leads with a score of 0.568 in the WEI; on the low side, it scores 0.516 in gender equality. In contrast, Pakistan lags with a WEI of 0.337 and a dismally low GGPI of 0.428, signifying the enormous challenges in gender equality and women empowerment. The figures thus obtained portray very wide-pitched gender inequalities in South Asia, hence calling for focused policies and interventions towards improving women's empowerment and bridging the gap toward gender equality. With the highest WEI of 0.562, Bhutan stands out from the rest of the region. Sri Lanka is next with a score of 0.568, suggesting even greater levels of women's empowerment. However, Bhutan and Sri Lanka are classified as having "Low" GGPI, indicating considerable gaps in achieving gender parity across multiple domains, despite their relatively higher WEI scores. Similar WEI scores, ranging from 0.518 to 0.520, are shown by India, the Maldives, and Nepal; all three are classified as "Low" according to the GGPI. This suggests a pattern of significantly lower levels of women's empowerment and difficulties in these nations reaching gender parity. Bangladesh and Pakistan had WEI scores of 0.443 and 0.337, respectively, indicating lower levels of women's empowerment. Both countries are likewise classed as "Low" on the GGPI, suggesting significant gender gaps across numerous socioeconomic variables.

Table 6. Women's Empowerment Index (WEI) in South Asia.

Country	Women of reproductive age whose need for family planning is satisfied with modern methods in 2022	Adolescent birth rate 2022	Population with completed secondary education or higher, female 2022	Youth not in education, employment or training, female 2012-2022	Labour force participation rate among prime-working-age individuals who are living in a household comprising a couple and at least one child under age 6, female 2012-2022	Account ownership at a financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider, female 2021	Women in Parliament 2023	In local government 2015-2022	Share of managerial positions held by women 2012-2022	Ever-partnered women and girls subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months of 2018
Bangladesh	73.7	73.3	28.9	44.6	42.7	43.5	20.9	23.4	10.7	23
Bhutan	80.4	18.5	13.8	12.2	72.9	27.7	16.9	12.8	39.7	9
India	77.5	16.3	24.9	43.5	27.1	77.6	14.7	44.4	15.9	18
Maldives	33.5	6.8	9.1	28.5	46.5	74.2	4.6	39.5	18.7	6
Nepal	63.5	63.4	18.5	45.8	33.7	49.9	33.9	41.3	13.2	11
Pakistan	52.8	41.2	10.1	56.4	29.5	13.5	20.1	16.8	5.7	16
Sri Lanka	73.7	15.4	64.0	27.5	31.7	89.3	5.3	10.9	27.0	4
Afghanistan	47.7	79.7	5.2	81.3	23.4	4.7	27.2	..	4.9	35

Source: World Bank - Worldwide Governance Indicators (2023)

Nepal can use several lessons to guide its activities and policies targeted at improving gender equality and women's empowerment. First and foremost, Nepal can benefit from Bangladesh's accomplishment in guaranteeing that a sizable portion of women of reproductive age get their family planning demands handled by contemporary procedures (73.7%). The Table 6 highlights the efficacy of Bangladesh's reproductive health initiatives, which Nepal may consider replicating or customizing to enhance accessibility to family planning services and reproductive health education within its local environment.

Second, the need for funding through sexual and reproductive health education for adolescents is shown by Bhutan's low rate of adolescent births (18.5%). To lower the number of teenage pregnancies and improve the health of young women, Nepal should give priority to initiatives of a similar nature. Third, the comparatively high percentage of Sri Lankan women with a secondary education or above (64.0%) emphasizes the need to invest in girls' education to empower them economically and socially. Nepal could prioritize enhancing educational access and quality, particularly for girls, to increase their options for higher education and improved

job prospects. Nepal can also learn from the Maldives' high labour force participation rate among women living in homes with young children (46.5%) and India's comparatively high account ownership among women at financial institutions or mobile money service providers (77.6%). These examples highlight the importance of policies that promote women's economic empowerment, such as cheap childcare and access to financial services, in allowing women to fully participate in the economy and decision-making processes. Nepal can learn from Sri Lanka's relatively high female representation in parliament (5.3%) and Pakistan's development in local government representation (20.1%). This highlights the importance of focused initiatives to promote women's political engagement and leadership at all levels of government. Finally, Afghanistan's high prevalence of violence against women (35%), underscores the critical need for Nepal to develop its legal frameworks and support services to effectively address gender-based violence and protect the safety and well-being of women and girls.

Inclusive Governance Initiatives in Nepal

Nepal is a country of great diversity. The country's extensive ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity has given it a unique character as a landlocked country between two huge developing economies, China and India. The National Population and Housing Census of 2021 recognized 142 caste and ethnic communities, as well as 124 languages, 10 religions and 60 ethnic groups where everyone has their own identity, history and originality which is unique and diverse in Nepal. Nepal's government included policies and programs for indigenous peoples, women, Madhesis, Dalit, and other marginalized communities in the Ninth Five-Year Plan (1997-2002), addressing a long-standing issue. In this periodic plan, the government confessed its failure to include these communities in the country's mainstream development projects (Gurung, 2009). The People's Movement of 1990 and 2006 established constitutional structures to promote inclusive governance, building on the Ninth Periodic Plan's intervention. Since 2000, all periodic plans have prioritised inclusive development, namely inclusive governance (Sigdel and Sharma, 2013). The Local Self-Governance Act of 1999 marked a significant step toward inclusive governance. The law required disadvantaged populations to be represented in local government entities.

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement with Maoists (2006) and Nepal's Interim Constitution (2007) include measures for Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) to improve inclusive governance. The Constituent Assembly Member Election Act of 2007, Good Governance Act of 2008, and Civil Service Act of 1993 (amended in 2007) establish inclusive representation in government positions via reservation. The Civil Service Act of 1993 includes reservation quotas for women, Indigenous, Madheshi, Dalit, people with disabilities, and backward regions. The reservation has been enforced by all public institutions, including security forces. Until 2023, only 27% of Nepal's public sector employees are women, with men making up the remaining 73% (NIC, 2022). According to the Inclusion Commission, 14,956 people have entered the civil service within 15 years of the inclusion system that started in 2007 (2064).

Table 7: Position of community participation in civil service

Communities	Population Percentage	Participation Percentage
Madhesi Brahmin	0.8	3.3
Khas Brahmin Shretri	31.20	61.15
Newar	5	69
Other Madhesi	14.5	9.7
Adhivasi Janajati	23.5	13.6
Tharu	6.6	3
Muslim	4.4	0.7
Dalit	13	1.4

(Sunam, 2020)

However, there has been no meaningful participation in policymaking at the highest level. For this, we still have to wait at least a decade and a half. After the introduction of reservation in Nepal's civil service, a quantitative picture of inclusion has been seen in the past fifteen years, but in essence, it seems that the real benefit of inclusion has not yet reached the target group. According to Table 7, the government service employs up to 63.50% Khas/Aryas, but only 0.60% Muslims, 2.50% Dalits, 15.40% Madhesis, and 19.5% indigenous people are represented (Bhul, 2021). This paper analyses the state of inclusive governance in South Asia particularly the nature and scope of inclusiveness noticed in civil service in Nepal, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Shri- Lanka. In recent years, there has been a growing incentive among public sector employees to involve women and people from diverse economic classes and ethnic groups, and it is believed that this trend would help the bureaucracy become more inclusive of the nation as a whole.

Therefore, when analyzing based on the achievements of the long struggle the meaning of the constitution and the experience of 15 years of reservation quota implementation, now there is no option to redistribute the system based on the compensation of deprivation and discrimination and give special priority, concession and reservation to the target communities and areas within the scope of reservation as well as women within it. The facts/data confirm that the strategy adopted by the Bihar state of India to uplift Dalits who are disadvantaged in services/facilities including reservation by making a list of weak Dalits among the Dalits is also necessary here. According to the provision of filling the posts prescribed in sub-section 11 of section 7 of the Civil Service Act, 2049 (amended), the Public Service Commission has recommended 39,979 candidates in the civil service of Nepal in the last fifteen years. Out of that, 14,956 i.e. 37.40 percent were recommended under reservation. It has played an important role in creating an inclusive and diverse work environment within the civil service. However, there has been no meaningful participation in policymaking at the highest level. Based on the

system to be reviewed every 10 years, the recommendations of the Inclusion Commission and the judgment of the Supreme Court, it is necessary to analyze, redefine and clarify the state of filling the posts in the civil service. It seems necessary to study the 15-year implementation of reservation and redefine and focus on the target groups and communities while portraying the real situation of the communities that are asked to make special provisions by the constitution. Since Nepal's inclusion is passive and not clearly defined, there are also ideas that it has further increased the exclusion. In this situation, the current course of action should be to actively include the backward marginalized communities based on proportional representation according to the constitutional mandate and historical isolation from the government in Nepal, and it is necessary to address and specify this issue judiciously through the upcoming Federal Civil Service Act.

Conclusions

It reveals the one major issue of inclusive governance, the representation of inequalities in South Asia. Comparative research finds major differences in the representation of women and minority groups across South Asian countries. While Bangladesh has the highest percentage of female representation in civil service, Sri Lanka leads in minority representation. Inequalities continue, highlighting the need for specific measures to enhance inclusivity. Nepal, although having legislative mandates for inclusion, struggles to translate inclusive policies into real accomplishments, emphasizing the gap between policy aims and actual outcomes in the quest for inclusive governance. Another key challenging issue in inclusive governance is corruption, which continues to be a big challenge throughout South Asia, affecting governance and social harmony. The Corruption Perception Index highlights differences in perceived corruption levels, with Bhutan securing the highest, Nepal and Sri Lanka below average and Afghanistan the lowest ranking in the South Asia region. Combating corruption is critical for creating transparent and accountable governing systems that promote inclusion and equitable development. However, corruption remains a concern in many South Asian countries, highlighting the need for ongoing efforts to tackle this issue. To summarize, overcoming representation gaps and corruption concerns is critical to achieving inclusive governance in Nepal and South Asia. Countries in the region must emphasize specific attempts to increase inclusion and transparency in public services and governance systems. This comparative research provides policymakers and stakeholders with significant insights to inform evidence-based policies that promote inclusive governance and equitable development throughout South Asia.

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Ethical Consideration on Editing of Data in Research

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Abstract

Do researchers know the ethical consideration factors and when to apply them in research? This paper uses secondary data sources to describe the various aspects of data editing disciplines and principles with ethical consideration of editing data in research in qualitative and quantitative research approaches. Through the past studies of, the ethical substructure of research contains dimensions on three levels: philosophical, praxis and reflexivity. The data editing process explores and reviews the data for consistency, detection of errors, and outliers and correction of errors, to improve the quality, accuracy and adequacy of the collected data thereby making it more suitable for the purpose for which the data was collected, such as the number and percentage of fields with errors detected to the total number of fields in the database. The data editing process is based on logic, common sense and adherence to a written procedure or editing guidelines for academicians, policymakers, and researcher for future research.

Keywords:

Data editing, database, ethical consideration, praxis, reflexivity

INTRODUCTION

In the age of advanced technology, it is rapidly advancing and social values and roles are changing dramatically (Rogers, 1987). In the conduct of research, a lot of key processes, principles and actions must be observed and preserved. All the scientific research process has an integral part that follows, data collection, management and analysis (Groves, 1989). This shows that when human beings are used as subjects of research investigations. Ideally, data should be free from errors but in reality, it is unreliable, and probability of errors even though researchers use the best design and procedures. Thus, ethical issues and ethical conduct of researchers have received increasingly greater attention because of the misinterpretation and mistreatment of human research subjects in experimental projects (Bums & Grove, 1987). As

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a result, editing of data is the preliminary step in overall data processing in research. It helps in assessing the incorrect and messy data thereby enhancing the quality of data in research by scrutinizing raw data. Its purpose is to reduce gaps in research by identifying technical omissions, checking legibility, and clarifying responses that are logically and conceptually inconsistent (Groves, 1989).

A researcher during data processing should be prudent in ethical considerations when applying mandatory guidelines while editing data. Respondent errors and non-respondent errors are minimized before analyzing the data by checking the errors in various steps after the collection of raw data. It helps in applying the best data analytical approach so that a research work is nearer to truth obeying the principle of falsifiability guided by reliability and scientific validation. The use of jurimetrics, internet, email and computer-assisted technology is becoming vital for checking inconsistencies that occurred during field works and questionnaire collection in any type of research work. They are also generating ethical concerns in research. The various pitfalls during the editing of data in research can be minimized by applying the best editing guidelines and rightful ethical consideration (Leahey et al., 2003).

Research might be qualitative and quantitative. The possible errors, incompleteness, misclassification and gaps in information obtained from the respondents can be misjudged by even the best researchers in research work. Hence, inference-taking, recalling, going back to the respondents, and examining the answers and responses minutely are very crucial. Developing a narrative, identifying the main theme, quantifying by indicating the frequency of occurrence of the main theme, reflecting the notes collected from respondents, recalling the context and correcting the content is very crucial for validation and ensuring the accuracy of data in qualitative research. Qualitative research is likely to lead to a greater range of ethical concerns in comparison with quantitative research, although all research methods have specific ethical issues associated with them. Ethical concerns are also associated with the power relationship between the researcher and those who grant access and the researcher's role either as an external researcher or internal researcher (Mirza et al., 2023).

In the absence of ethical consideration in data editing in research, there may be various consequences and issues arising in research which can significantly affect the integrity and trustworthiness of research findings. In a nutshell, research ethics helps to strengthen the strategies and feasibility which are the important determinants to choose what and where a researcher undertakes the research work. Therefore, potential ethical issues should be recognized and considered from the outset of choosing a research topic and be one of the criteria against which a researcher's research proposal is judged. Thus, this article explored the various aspects regarding ethical consideration while editing data in research work and the touted importance as well as implications therein. Ethical consideration of editing of data in research helps in maintaining fidelity and scientific rigour in all research studies.

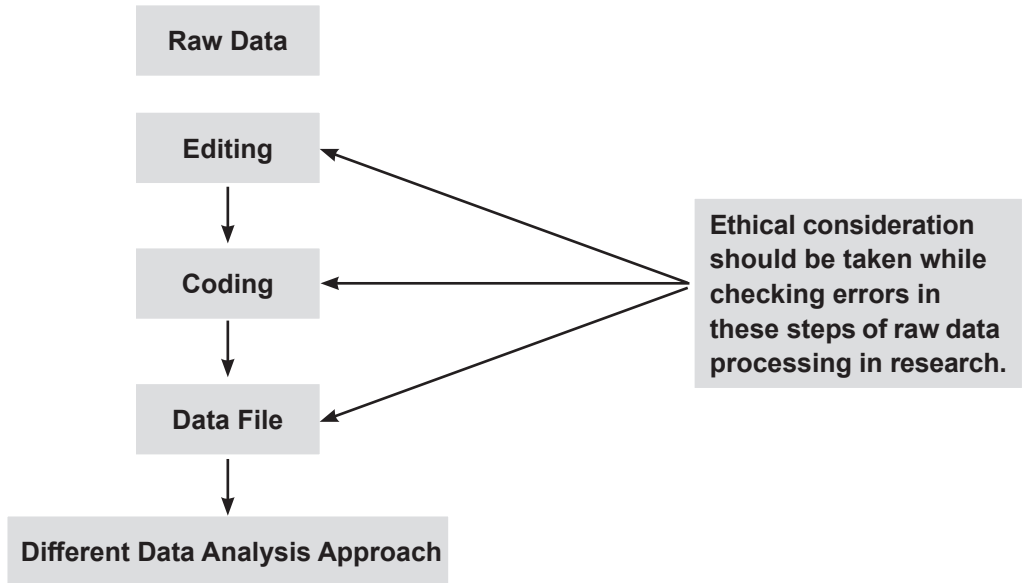
LITERATURE REVIEW AND APPROACH OF THE STUDY

Researchers frequently utilize the adage "garbage in, garbage out." The phrase used by George Fuechsel, an IBM programmer and instructor, is meant to convey the notion that if data is collected improperly or coded inaccurately, your results are "garbage," as that is what was initially placed into the data collection (Awati, 2023; Ozminkowski, 2021). Raw data frequently includes inaccuracies, including respondent and non-respondent errors. A respondent error is an error made by the respondent, whereas a non-respondent error is an error made by the interviewer or whoever is in charge of compiling the electronic data file that contains the responses. During the survey instrument used to the collection of research data either qualitatively or quantitatively evaluate subjective and objective data, chance of error and a wide variety of anomalous and problematic data to handle by the researcher (Leahey, 2010). Although survey research may appear kind and ensure unlike to participants, consideration of ethical conduct in research with the survey is important (Hammer, 2017). Thus, the ethical consideration in data editing is essential and it cannot be overlooked. Ethical practice makes trustworthy, transparent, controlled, and standard, and goes beyond mere legal compliance (Zhang-Kennedy & Chaisson, 2021; Okorie et al., 2024). Good ethical practice ensures that the data collection is technically sound and ethically robust (Andrews et al., 2023). It is significantly multifaced. It protects individual privacy and rights, respects social norms and values and collectively it should be dynamic, inclusive, responsive to the changing nature of data science and also contribute positively to the well-being of society (Zhang-Kennedy & Chaisson, 2021; Andrews et al., 2023; Fisher et al., 2020).

The steps involved in processing research data include editing, coding, classifying, tabulating, charting, and diagramming. Data reduction is the core of research data processing. Data reduction entails creating order out of chaos, separating the irrelevant from the important data, and giving shape to a mass of data. Data editing is the first step in the data processing process in research. The process of editing raises the cadence of the data quality. Finding incorrect data and then fixing it is the improvement. For intentional or unintentional reasons, errors may have occurred along the journey from the respondent to the survey organization's data files. Editing the raw data is the first stage in the analysis. Editing finds errors and omissions and makes the necessary corrections. The researcher must ensure that the data are comprehensive, uniformly recorded, correct, compatible with the questionnaire's objective, and structured to make coding and tabulation easier. There are two ways to modify data: on-site, commonly known as central editing, and in the field. Field editing is the preliminary editing of data performed on the same data as the interview by a field supervisor or researcher. Its goals are to find logical and conceptual inconsistencies in responses, verify legibility, and spot technical errors. Instead of speculating on what the respondent will likely say when gaps between interviews exist, a call-back should be made. As a validity check, the researcher must re-interview at least a few respondents on a few pre-selected questions. All questionnaires are thoroughly edited either in-house or at the centre.

Figure 1

Ethical Consideration and Editing of Data



The two initial phases of data analysis are editing and coding. An electronic file appropriate for data analysis is produced by the first two steps. After that, this file can be applied to a variety of statistical analyses, such as those related to descriptive, univariate, bivariate, or multivariate analysis.

The main scope and purpose of this study is to examine and critically produce the current status of ethical considerations in the field of data handling in research. This study delves into the core ethical principles that govern in data collection and analysis process, focusing on ethical elements required such as privacy and consent in data handling. In addition, it addresses the ethical complexities of data handling. This study explores the challenges and implications of ethical considerations in research. This research fills the research gap in data ethics by suggesting the development of ethical framework and institutional models that can guide the researcher, policy maker and practitioners. By doing so, this study contributes to addressing ethical data handling and encourages responsible and transparent data practices aligned with public and societal values. Therefore, it serves as a valuable insight for professionals, academicians, policymakers and researchers by offering critical ethical dimensions in data handling and suggesting future research and practices.

METHODS

In this research article, the descriptive design with content analysis has been done. Where, the study is based on the secondary data collected from various past studies, books and articles. The nature of the study is qualitative cum descriptive in nature. Ethical consideration

is required in every step of the data processing process but this research articles just limited to analysis of the ethical considerations in the editing during the data processing stage either in qualitative or quantitative research.

DATA PRESENTATION

In the above discussion, this paper discusses the types of data editing, level of data editing, data editing views, consideration and implication of ethical consideration in research.

A Editing of Data

Editing data in research is the process of ensuring sure the data is accurate, consistent, and readable while also getting it ready for coding and storage. Any research that uses fieldwork frequently ends up with inaccurate data. Consequently, the researcher's job is to review questionnaires or other forms of data collecting for mistakes and omissions. To make the data more full, consistent, or readable after finding a problem, the editor makes the necessary adjustments. Data reconstruction may occasionally be necessary for the researcher. Reconstructing responses in this way should only be done when the probable true response is very evident. Data Analysis and Presentation make adjustments to reflect as much information from a respondent as possible (Zikmund et al., 2010).

Types of Data Editing in Research

Editing for quality

It queries if the data forms are full, whether the data are free of bias, whether the recordings are error-free, whether the inconsistencies in responses are within acceptable bounds, whether there are any indications that the interviewers or enumerators were being dishonest, and whether there have been any willful manipulations of the data.

Editing for tabulation

To make tabulation easier, some accepted modifications to the data are made, or even some pieces of data are rejected. For example, excessively high or low-value data items may be disregarded or bracketed with the appropriate class interval.

Field editing

It is used to find technical errors, such as a blank page on an interview form, to examine the legibility of handwriting for open-ended responses, and to explain answers that are incongruous in logic or concept. When in-person interviews were utilized to collect data, field editing is very beneficial. In these circumstances, a daily field edit enables managers to address some concerns by questioning interviewers, who might still be able to recall the interviews, about details that may allow errors to be found and possibly addressed. Additionally, prompt follow-up can help to reduce the frequency of unanswered queries or partial responses. A daily field edit enables fieldworkers to select

respondents who should be contacted again to quickly fill in any gaps in the data. The supervisor may also identify the need for additional interviewer training or to fix flawed procedures using field edits. For instance, training may be necessary if an interviewer fails to accurately follow skip patterns. The interviewer's improper questioning of some open-ended comments may also be noticed by the supervisor (Kothari, 2004).

Central editing

The researcher completes it after receiving all schedules, questionnaires, and forms from the surveyors or respondents. Errors that are immediately apparent can be fixed. The editor may use information provided by additional respondents who were most likely to be contacted as a replacement for any missing data or information. When reasonable efforts to obtain the right answer are unsuccessful, the answer is inappropriate and "no answer" is entered instead.

Validity edits

They concentrate on one cell or question field at a time. They ensure that the record identifiers, invalid characters, and values have been taken into account; that necessary fields have been filled out (for example, no quantity field is left blank where a number is required); that the specified units of measure have been correctly used; and that the reported data lie within an allowed range of value (for example, the reporting time is within the specified limits). Real-time data editing is generally integrated into the data collecting system in computer-assisted data collection methods like web surveys so that the validity of the data is assessed as the data are collected.

Duplication edits

At a time, they look at one complete record. These modifications ensure that a respondent or survey unit has only ever been recorded once by looking for duplicate records. A duplication edit also makes sure that the respondent does not appear more than once in the survey universe, particularly if their name has changed. Last but not least, it guarantees that the data has only been input into the system once.

Consistency edits

They contrast various responses from the same record to make whether they are consistent with one another. There is a difficulty with consistency between the two replies, for instance, if someone says they are in the 0 to 14 age range but also says they are retired. Another type of consistency edit is an inter-field edit. These revisions confirm that if a figure is presented in one section, a similar figure is reported in the next.

Historical edits

They are employed to contrast survey responses from recent and earlier surveys. Any significant changes from the last survey, for instance, will be noted. The ratios and calculations are compared as well, and any percentage variance that deviates from the

predetermined range is noted and scrutinized. Statistical edits: They look at the entire set of data. This type of edit is performed only after all other edits have been applied and the data have been corrected. The data are compiled and all extreme values, suspicious data and outliers are rejected.

Miscellaneous edits

These include changes to physical addresses, locations, or contacts; special reporting arrangements; survey-specific dynamic edits; correct classification checks; and legibility edits (ensuring that the figures or symbols are clear and easy to read).

The degree of questionnaire complexity has an impact on data editing. Both the duration and the quantity of questions asked are considered aspects of complexity. The questionnaire's topic matter scope and question-by-question detail are also included. Sometimes a question's terminology can be extremely technical. Special reporting arrangements and industry-specific adjustments may be made for these surveys.

Different Levels of Data Editing

Data editing can be performed manually, with the assistance of computer programming, or a combination of both techniques. Depending on the medium (electronic, paper) by which the data are submitted, there are two levels of data editing—micro- and macro-editing.

Micro-editing

It corrects the data at the record level. This process detects errors in data through checks of the individual data records. The intent at this point is to determine the consistency of the data and correct the individual data records.

Macro-editing

It also detects errors in data but does this through the analysis of aggregate data (totals). The data are compared with data from other surveys, administrative files, or earlier versions of the same data. This process determines the comparability of data (Statistics Canada, 2021).

Tenets in Editing of Data in Research

While illustrating inconsistency, whether the respondent's opinion is fact or fiction that should be determined by a researcher. A researcher should have the ability to take action when the response is an error.

Editing technology

The automatic detection of contradictions is now possible thanks to computers. As a result, restrictions that prevent incorrect responses from ever being kept in the file used for data analysis can be entered for electronic questionnaires. These guidelines must reflect a trained data analyst's conservative judgment. To avoid a lot of inconsistent

responses, the rules may even be pre-programmed. As a result of their response to a screening question, respondents to electronic questionnaires can avoid being sent to the incorrect set of questions.

Editing for completeness

A researcher must amend an item's non-response to be thorough. Item non-response is the technical word for an unanswered question on an otherwise full questionnaire that results in missing data. Similarly, a plug value is a response that an editor "plugs in" to fill in blanks or replace missing values to enable data analysis. Here, a value is selected based on a specified decision rule. Impute is another term for filling in a missing data point using a statistical algorithm that offers the best approximation for the missing response based on the available data.

Editing questions that are answered out of order

Rearranging answers to open-ended questions, such as those that may come up in a focus group interview, is another duty a researcher or editor may have to complete. The answer to a future question might have been contained in the respondent's remarks to an earlier open-ended question. The interviewer might not have asked the next question because they didn't want to hear the respondent say, "I already answered that earlier," and they also wanted to keep the interviewer-respondent relationship intact. Certain answers may be moved to the section about the skipped question if the editor is asked to list all questions' answers in a particular order.

Facilitating the coding process

While all of the aforementioned editing tasks will benefit coders, several editing techniques are created specifically to make the coding process simpler. For instance, the editor should look over written comments for any errant markings. Circling responses is a common request made by respondents. A respondent might occasionally draw a circle by mistake that crosses two digits. For instance, both 3 and 4 could be present in the circle. The most accurate response may be determined by the editor, who would then note it on the form. Sometimes a respondent will act in this manner to show uncertainty between the 3 and the 4. Again, the researcher may mark a 3.5 on the form if they see that the circle was thoughtfully designed to include both responses. With an electronic questionnaire, this uncertainty is unattainable.

Editing and tabulating –don't know answers.

In many situations, respondents answer –don't know. On the surface, this response seems to indicate unfamiliarity with the subject matter at question. A legitimate –don't know response is the same as –no opinion. However, there may be reasons for this response other than the legitimate –don't know. A reluctant –don't know is given when the respondent simply does not want to answer a question. For example, asking an individual who is not the head of the household about family income may

elicit a –don't know answer meaning, –This is personal, and I really do not want to answer the question. If the individual does not understand the question, he or she may give a confused –I don't know answer. In some situations the editor can separate the legitimate –don't know (—no opinion) from the other –don't know. The editor may try to identify the meaning of the –don't know answer from other data provided on the questionnaire. For instance, the value of a home could be derived from knowledge of the zip code and the average value of homes within that area.

Pitfalls of editing

The editing process is subject to subjectivity. Data editors need to be knowledgeable, skilled, and impartial. The research analyst should create a systematic process for evaluating the questionnaires so that the editor has well-defined guidelines to follow when making decisions. Any inferences, including imputing missing values, should be made in a way that minimizes the possibility that the data editor's subjectivity will affect the outcome.

Pretesting edit

Pretest editing of questionnaires can be quite beneficial. For instance, fieldworkers, respondents, and analysts would benefit from a shift to wider spaces for the answers if respondents' answers to open-ended questions were lengthier than expected. Because the writers have enough room, the answers will be more thorough and verbatim rather than summarized, making them easier to read. Pretest responses might be examined to spot bad questionnaire wording or insufficient instructions (Eropa, 2023).

Editing of Data in Quantitative Studies

It involves scrutinizing the completed research instruments to identify and minimize, as far as possible, errors, incompleteness, misclassification and gaps in the information obtained from the respondents. Sometimes even the best investigators or researchers can forget to ask a question, record a response, wrongly classify a response, write only half a response and write illegibly. Similar problems can arise in questionnaires. These problems to a great extent can be reduced simply by checking the contents for completeness and checking the responses for internal consistency.

There are several ways of minimizing the problems in questionnaires and interviews as a process of editing the data:

By inference

Certain questions in a research instrument may be related to one another, and it might be possible to find the answer to one question from the answer to another. Of course, a researcher must be careful about making such inferences or may introduce new errors in the data.

By recall

If the data is collected using interviews, sometimes it might be possible for the interviewer to recall a respondent's answers. Again, the researcher must be careful.

By going back to the respondents

If the data has been collected utilizing interviews or the questionnaires contain some identifying information, it is possible to visit or phone a respondent to confirm or ascertain an answer. This is, of course, expensive and time-consuming.

There are two ways of editing data: By examining all the answers to one question or variable at a time and by examining all the responses given to all the questions by one respondent at a time. The researcher may prefer the second method as it provides a total picture of the responses, which also helps to assess their internal consistency.

Editing of Data in Qualitative Studies

There are mainly three ways of editing data in which a researcher can write about his/her findings in qualitative research: Developing a narrative to describe a situation, episode, event or instance, identifying the main themes that emerge from your field notes or transcription of your in-depth interviews and writing about them, quoting extensively verbatim; and in addition to above, also quantifying, by indicating their frequency of occurrence, the main themes to provide their prevalence.

Editing, as understood for quantitative studies, is inappropriate for qualitative research. However, a researcher may be able to go through the notes collected from respondents to identify if something does not make sense. In such an event, a researcher may be able to recall the context and correct the contents, but he/she should be careful in doing so as the inability to recall precisely may introduce inaccuracies (due to recall error) in the researcher's description. Another way of ensuring whether the researcher is truly reflecting on the situation is to transcribe the interviews or observational notes and share them with the respondents or research participants for confirmation and approval. Validation of the information by a respondent is an important aspect of ensuring the accuracy of data collected through unstructured interviews (Kumar, 2019).

Various qualitative software tools like ATLAS.ti, MAXQDA, N-Vivo and computers are used in making notes in the field during research, writing or transcribing field notes and editing them (correcting, extending or revising field notes, transcription of interviews and focus groups). Editing the data in qualitative research is also known as transcription (Flick, 2014).

B) Ethical Consideration

Ethics

The word ethics comes from the Greek word ethos, which means character. Ethics involve morality, integrity, fairness, and truthfulness. Morality is about knowing what

is right and wrong, and integrity is about acting on that knowledge. There is an ethical substructure that impacts every aspect of the research process. The ethical substructure of research contains dimensions on three levels: philosophical, praxis, and reflexivity.

A researcher's ethical responsibility towards respondents does not end once he/she has collected the data for the study. Depending on the nature of the research project, a researcher may build a debriefing phase into the research design. Debriefing provides an opportunity to elicit feedback from the participants about their experiences. Depending on the nature of the project, a researcher might present participants with a brief questionnaire, conduct a small focus group, or have private in-person conversations. In some instances, the debriefing phase may cause modifications to the project moving forward or to report on areas that would suggest changes in future research. The debriefing phase is important when the study has investigated sensitive subject matter or presented the research in a form likely to cause an emotional response.

The ethical issues that a researcher needs to consider during practice are verifying the origin of the data, paying attention to any biases or problems with how the data were collected or archived, paying attention to the procedure of dealing with the data, paying attention to anomalies or discrepancies in the data and make sure to report on them accurately and not omitting that refute the researcher's hypothesis or assumptions (Levy, 2017).

Research ethics refers to the appropriateness of behaviour concerning the rights of those who become the subject of your work or are affected by the work. Potential ethical issues should be recognized and considered from the outset of research and be one of the criteria against which a research proposal is judged. Ethical concerns are likely to occur at all stages of the research project: when seeking access, during data collection, analyzing data and making reports. Qualitative research is likely to lead to a greater range of ethical concerns in comparison with quantitative research, although all research methods have specific ethical issues associated with them. Ethical concerns are also associated with the power relationship 'between the researcher and those who grant access, and the researcher's role (as external researcher, internal researcher or internal consultant). The use of the Internet and email to collect data may also generate ethical concerns. The introduction of data protection legislation has led to this aspect of research assuming greater importance and to a need for researchers to comply carefully with a set of legal requirements to protect the privacy and interests of their data subjects (Saunders et al., 2007).

Ethical Consideration During Data Collection

Respect the site, and disrupt as little as possible

Researchers need to respect research sites so that they are left undisturbed after a research study. This requires that inquirers, especially in qualitative studies involving prolonged observation or interviewing at a site, be cognizant of their impact and minimize their disruption of the physical setting.

Make sure that all participants receive the benefits.

In experimental studies, investigators need to collect data so that all participants, not only an experimental group, benefit from the treatments. Further, both the researcher and the participants should benefit from the research. In some situations, power can easily be abused and participants can be coerced into a project. Involving individuals collaboratively in the research may provide reciprocity. Highly collaborative studies, popular in qualitative research, may engage participants as co-researchers throughout the research process, such as the design, data collection and analysis, report writing, and dissemination of the findings (Burns & Burns, 2008).

Avoid deceiving participants

Participants need to know that they are actively participating in a research study. To counteract this problem, provide instructions that remind the participants about the purpose of the study.

Respect potential power imbalances

Interviewing in qualitative research is increasingly being seen as a moral inquiry. It could equally be seen as such for quantitative and mixed methods research. As such, interviewers need to consider how the interview will improve the human situation (as well as enhance scientific knowledge), how a sensitive interview interaction may be stressful for the participants, whether participants have a say in how their statements are interpreted, how critically the interviewees might be questioned, and what the consequences of the interview for the interviewees and the groups to which they belong might be. Interviews (and observations) should begin from the premise that a power imbalance exists between the data collector and the participants.

Avoid exploitation of participants.

There needs to be some reciprocity to the participants for their involvement in the research study. This might be a small reward for participating, sharing the final research report, or involving them as collaborators. A researcher may sometimes use the participants for data collection and then abruptly left the scene. This results in the exploitation of the participants and rewards and appreciation can provide respect and reciprocity for those who provide valuable data in a study.

Avoid collecting harmful information:

Researchers also need to anticipate the possibility of harmful, intimate information being disclosed during the data collection process. It is difficult to anticipate and try to plan for the impact of this information during or after an interview. For example, a student may discuss parental abuse or prisoners may talk about an escape. Typically, in these situations, the ethical code for researchers (which may be different for schools and prisons) is to protect the privacy of the participants and to convey this protection to all individuals involved in a study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Use of Data Beyond Initial Purposes

Additional ethical challenges arise when qualitative data are used for secondary analyses after the original study is completed. This may be done by the original researcher, or it might be another researcher who is using the previously collected data. The original researcher may reflect on the project and realize that substantial possibilities exist to analyze the data using a different theoretical lens that could yield heretofore unexpected insights into the phenomenon. In such cases, the researcher may no longer have contact with the original participants. This raises issues about the ethics of using data for purposes other than what was included in the initial informed consent process.

Ethical Concerns Rose during Data Editing

Editing responses may constitute a breach in explicit or implicit contracts with research participants. A researcher often assures respondents that they do not have to answer questions that are too personal; telling them to change their answer (or give them one) if they choose not to answer or if their answer does not make sense. Editing data may violate the trust that researchers often work hard to establish in their relationships with research participants. A variety of situational factors like the mode of data collection and the location of the messy data in the analysis could influence response to a particular data edit, such as the research topic, the exact nature of the problem, the number of cases with messy data, and the like (SCAD, 2020).

Perhaps it is easier to edit data that a researcher has collected by himself/herself compared to secondary data, or perhaps researchers are loath to edit the dependent variable of interest but more willing to edit one of several independent variables.

Messy data are ubiquitous; without scientific guidelines on how to handle messy data and without ethical guidelines demarcating what is (and is not) appropriate, researchers may proceed idiosyncratically. Given the fact that researchers –do their own thing even when formal standards exist. We expect such autonomy to be even more pronounced when guidelines are lacking, as they are for data editing.

Objection to Editing of Data

General objection: A researcher is never at liberty to change respondents' answers.

Ethical objection: Selectively changing the scores [is]... unethical. Changing the answers would be a fabrication and a violation of ... human subjects guidelines.

Methodological objection: A researcher crafts the results to fit his/her hypothesis.

Unexamined assumptions: When a researcher believes that he/she knows the intent of the respondents independent of their actual responses. The researcher is relying on his/her recollections of what the respondents intended (Leahey et.al, 2003).

Data collection via surveys in research should not require answers to demographic questions. Missing data can be statistically adjusted, allowing participants to skip questions. Other considerations include participants' understanding of the direct benefit

of a survey, which may not exist, and that some questions can trigger disturbing and unfavourable feelings or memories. If participants are completing surveys in person, this can readily be addressed by immediate referral to psychosocial services. It is more difficult to track participant reactions to mailed or web-based surveys; however, referral contact information can be provided at the beginning and/or end of a survey. Researchers should also disclose the target population of the survey and why it was chosen in the consent form or as a statement before delivering mailed or web-based surveys. Based on this information, participants should be able to choose whether to participate or not (Hammer, 2017).

C) Major Issues Involved in Ethical Consideration of Data Editing

Some of the issues involved in ethical considerations of data editing are: Informed consent (Do participants have full knowledge of what is involved?), Harm and risk (Can the study hurt participants?), Honesty and trust (Is the researcher being truthful in presenting data?), Privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity (Will the study intrude too much into group and/or individual behaviour?) and Intervention and advocacy (What should researchers do if participants display harmful or illegal behaviour?) Three of these were discussed by researchers and scientists in more in-depth. The first is consent. There are instances in which consent is inferred, such as when the researcher is observing participants in public, or when consent to participate was previously gained by another researcher or agency. When data are collected directly from participants (e.g. via surveys or interviews) for the first time, the researcher must assess the participants' willingness and ability to voluntarily consent to participation. Researchers need to explain how they will assess and record voluntary participation. Often, researchers create scripts and/or forms to aid in gaining and recording voluntary consent. The other issue is to take care of privacy. This is also related to the risk of disclosure when data are collected or come from administrative sources. A third ethical issue is fraud in scientific research. Fabrication, falsification and plagiarism, summarized as FFP, are distinct forms of fraud in science. Fabrication is the creation of data as if they were real. Falsification is the manipulation of data (counterfeiting') and other results of research, including the selective omission of certain information (misrepresentation). Plagiarism is misappropriation. Self-control, working with protocols and guidelines, transparency in procedures about data-collection, peer reviews and similar approaches are there to prevent fraud in any way. That includes software capable of detecting plagiarism (Leeuw & Schmeets, 2016).

D) Implication

Data editing may have implications in improving the quality, accuracy and adequacy of the collected data thereby making it more suitable for the purpose for which the data was collected. The following can therefore be identified as the main implications of the data editing process (Naeem, 2019).

- Detection of errors in the data that otherwise affect the validity of outputs.

- Validation of data for the purposes it was collected and completeness of obtained responses.
- Provision of the information that would help assess the overall level of accuracy of the data.
- Detection and identification of any inconsistencies in the data and outliers and to make adjustments for them.
- Verifies that data within a field fall between the ranges specified for the particular field.
- Maintain logical consistency between the data fields or variables, ensuring no replication or duplication of data.
- Set different rules for data editing in coherence with logical relations between the variables.
- Meaningful implication of data editing guidelines in research.
- Lessen the limitation of data editing in the research field
- Check the implication of internal consistency and external consistency of data in research.

DISCUSSION

Ethics is considered as a discipline and deals with what is good and bad with moral duties, responsibilities and obligations. Additionally, it is defined as those principles that guide a group or individual. Ethical principles of research guide the delineation of research priorities, the treatment of research subjects, and the allotment of credit for discoveries. In addition, it is often unrecognized and should guide the analysis of data but there is a failure to uphold the ethical principles in data analysis (Kromrey, 1993). Few guidelines follow during the data editing and social researchers handle the problematic data in a variety of ways (Leahey et al., 2003). Besides that, normative practices, diversified opinions regarding the appropriateness of data editing, and lack of professional consensus in social science research about the appropriateness of various data editing procedures pose challenges for the researchers. In certain cases, data editing may create a questionable research practice. The data editing process is challenging, although overseeing and ensuring integrity is critical in data editing because it has methodological and ethical implications. The data editing process can affect the findings, not reported, leading to ethical issues. Therefore, the three proceeding stages of analysis and data editing practice cannot be overlooked. During the preliminary analysis in the form of data collection, researchers try to have key information and more relevant, detailed and thoughtful questions to develop. In the main analysis, the coding and editing process is important. Researchers need to check data multiple times, grouping them, coded for analysis and finally the validity of the analysis was checked after the analysis was completed by reviewing reports that there was no misinterpretation, misrepresentation and misrepresentation (Leahey, 2008).

The ethical practices in data collection and analysis are largely influenced by technological advancement and digital technology. The need to propose a structural approach, and proactive measures and set broad ethical principles are needed for ethical compliance in data before data analysis. The development of awareness of the ethical implications of data usage, adaptation of ethical framework and principles, and use of digital technology to data collection reflects responsible and transparent data handling in research (Padmapriya & Parthasarathy, 2021; Facca et al. 2020; Stainton & Iordanova, 2017; Okorie, 2024).

The implications of data collection, analysis and use are characterized by the need for careful consideration of ethical challenges and dilemmas in research. It is more challenging and complex and needs continuous dialogue, research and adaptation of ethical principles and societal values in research practice. It is a huge ethical challenge in qualitative research in the case of big data even though their work provides ethical issues in quantitative data that cannot be ignored (Hesse et al 2019). Therefore, there are positive outcomes and negative consequences associated with the field during ethical consideration to address various ethical issues like data ownership, consent, trustworthiness, and privacy needs for a structured approach to address such challenges (Martens, 2022; Hand, 2018). Due to the multifaceted impact of ethics in data handling, it is important to balance between the technology-friendly and ethical considerations that are important to the development of new technology in future in the field of research. The future ethical challenge in data editing requires a proactive and comprehensive approach to ensure technology is friendly aligned with ethical principles and considers societal values (Okorie, 2024).

CONCLUSION

Ethical consideration refers to the appropriateness of a researcher's behaviour about the rights of those who become the subject or are affected by the research work. Research surveys include a wealth of informative content. It is crucial to uphold the principles of ethical research conduct, even in cases where surveys appear harmless. Ensuring scientific rigour and fidelity is crucial for all research investigations. It is crucial to use accurate and trustworthy survey tools, follow the right analysis procedures, and communicate the results. The contribution of this research is the consent, and privacy in ethical data mining as well as adaptability, inclusive ethical framework and principle to address the complexity of big data handling. This study fills the research gap in the ethical consideration of data handling and provides valuable insights into the necessity of developing practical ethical frameworks and models alongside guiding the researcher, policymakers and practitioners through the ethical complexity of data collection and analysis. Lastly, it's critical to reveal the survey distribution format, the methods used to acquire consent or establish whether information is exempt, and how the results are tracked. Therefore, in conclusion, this study emphasizes the necessity of integrating ethical consideration of every aspect of data handling, as well as the importance of adhering critically to ethical principles, equipping researchers and practitioners with knowledge and tools. In light of these findings, enhancing ethical education, training of data science, equipped professionals with skills to minimize the ethical dilemma, inclusive ethical framework and principles are

adaptable, transparent, and strengthen to ensure the ethical standards in data handling. Additionally, public awareness, discussion and engagement about data ethics are crucial for maintaining trust and transparency in data-driven technologies.

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Deep Diving Capabilities and Operational Challenges of Armed Police Force, Nepal: Analysing the Simaltaal Accident

✉ *Surendra Bahadur Shahi**

Abstract

Nepal's geographical slopes and structure and road construction along the rivers have made road safety a critical concern, on key highways like the Kathmandu-Narayangadh, Karnali, Sunkoshi, etc. In particular, the road from Kathmandu-Narayangadh goes alongside the Trishuli River, and road accidents plunging into the river following are frequently observed on that highway. This study explores the capability of the Armed Police Force (APF), Nepal in deep diving and the operational challenges faced by the rescuers during the rescue operation in the Simaltaal accident, which needs to be addressed by the Government of Nepal for the safety and security of property and people. Because of the high number of incidents due to overspeeding, challenging terrain, and poor infrastructure, the APF, Nepal Disaster Management Training School (DMTS) plays a crucial role in rescuing victims. The research employs a descriptive design, and qualitative approach, employing both primary and secondary data to discuss the capability and operational challenges of deep diving rescuers. The findings reveal that the APF, Nepal's preparedness and response in disaster management particularly, in swift water rescue operations is effective and efficient. The available rescue devices and equipment such as pipe inspection sewer cameras, sound navigation and ranging, sewer, underwater drones, rubber boats, and outboard motors have been utilized effectively in swift water rescue operations. The research concludes with suggestions for further improving disaster rescue operations by providing advanced swift-water rescue devices and equipment, and welfare facilities to the rescuers.

1. Introduction

The fragile geology and steep topography have made Nepal the 20th topmost disaster-prone country in the world. Among 200 countries, Nepal ranks 4th, 11th, and 30th in relative vulnerability to climate change, earthquake, and flood hazards, respectively (*Ministry of Home Affairs*, 2023). Nepal's geographical positioning renders it vulnerable to various natural disasters, including earthquakes, fire, drought, epidemics, storm hailstorms, avalanches, Glacier Lake Out-Brust Flood (GLOF), floods, and landslides (Dixit, 2003). Accidents can be caused by human failure, material failure, or bad weather, and this may lead to damage that takes the form of the loss of the vessel, damage to the hull, personal damage, human loss, and ecological damage (Cahill, 1983; Li, 2017).

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Moreover, according to (Dewan, 2015), Nepal has more than 6000 snow-fed perennial rivers and rivulets. Most of those rivers, originated from the Himalayas and after sliding from hills, flow through the Terai plains making the entire Terai floodplain prone to severe floods. Nepal has been affected by extreme weather events resulting in natural disasters such as floods and landslides (Yogacharya & Gautam, 2008). Devastating floods occur in the central Himalayas of Nepal during the monsoon months of June through September.

In 2015, earthquakes and their aftershocks caused over 8,790 deaths, and 22,300 injuries; half a million homes were destroyed; and hundreds of historical and cultural monuments were destroyed or extensively damaged (Lizundia et al., 2017; National Planning Commission, 2015). Likewise, Jure village, Sindhupalchowk killed 156 people by a rainfall-induced massive landslide. So, these events show that natural disasters have a significant effect on human life in Nepal. Likewise, annual floods cause enormous damage worldwide (Jonkman, 2005), which is a sudden outflow of a high volume of water beyond the river channel for a short time (Leopold et al., 1964). According to Bipad Portal data, the total number of natural disaster events documented from 2023/08/23 to 2024/08/22 was 7827, with 577 deaths, 45 missing, and 1635 injured in Nepal. Moreover, particularly by flood and landslides, 185 people lost their lives in the 1004 incident (Bipad Portal, 2024). As Nepal is located in mountainous terrain in the Himalayan arc, landslides are common and are the main cause of natural hazards (Paudel et al., 2003).

A landslide, caused by continuous rainfall from the previous day, swept two buses with 65 passengers into the Trishuli River in Simaltaal, Chitwan district on July 12, 2024. The river was also flooded by the heavy rainfall. The continuous rain caused the landslide that swept the busses into the river where the passenger remained missing in the heavily flooded river. This chain series of hazards made a cascading disaster which showed the cascading effect in the human missing.

According to Pescaroli and Alexander (2015), cascading disaster and cascading effects mean:

“Cascading disasters are intense events, in which cascading effects increase in development over time and generate unexpected secondary events of strong impact. These tend to be at least as serious as the original event and contribute significantly to the overall duration of the disaster’s effects. These subsequent and unanticipated crises can be exacerbated by the failure of physical structures and the social functions that depend on them, including critical facilities, or by the inadequacy of disaster mitigation strategies, such as evacuation procedures, land use planning, and emergency management strategies. Cascading disasters tend to highlight unresolved vulnerabilities in human society. In cascading disasters, one or more secondary events can be identified and distinguished from the source of disaster.”

According to the definition of International Maritime Organization, "Search is an operation, normally coordinated by rescue coordination centre or rescue sub-centre, using available personnel and facilities to locate persons in distress and rescue as the operation to retrieve persons in distress, provide for their initial medical or other needs and deliver them to a place of safety (International Maritime Organization, 1974). From a technical point of view, search,

and rescue refers to the process of finding and providing assistance to those who are in danger or at risk from an external action. Any action aimed at avoiding a great ecological or economic tragedy can also be considered in the last as a rescue operation (Achutegui, 1990).

Simaltaal accident landslide, caused by continuous rainfall, swept two buses into the Trishuli River in Simaltaal, Bharatpur Metropolitan City Ward No. 29, Chitwan District, along the Mugling-Narayangadh road section. One bus, Bagmati Province 03-006 K 1516 Angel Deluxe, was en route from Birgunj to Kathmandu with about 37/38 passengers, and another bus, Bagmati Province 03-001 K 2495 Ganpati Deluxe, was heading from Kathmandu to Gaur with about 26/27 passengers. Among the 65 passengers, three managed to survive by jumping from the bus, but the rest were swept away by the landslide into the river and went missing.

Since the establishment of APF, Nepal DMTS in 2011, has been deploying in Kathmandu-Narayangadh, and Mugling-Pokhara road accidents. From the day of the tragic incident of Simaltaal APF, Nepal DMTS Kurintar, APF, Nepal No. 17th Battalion, Chitwan, Nepali Army, and Nepal Police were immediately deployed for rescue operations. The specialized Deep Diving team and disaster management trained personnel from APF, Nepal DMTS carried out search and rescue operations. During the search and rescue operations the Hi-Target surveying eco-sounder device of Innovative Technological Solution Pvt. was also employed by APF, Nepal. The team of the National Disaster Response Force, with advanced sonar and divers, also performed search and rescue operations jointly with APF, Nepal.

2. Methodology

This study employs a descriptive research design based on a qualitative approach to assess the role of APF, Nepal in responding to road accident rescue operations on the Kathmandu-Narayangadh highway by analyzing the accident of Simaltaal. Both primary and secondary data have been employed for the study. For the primary data, Key Informant Interviews (KII) were taken from rescuers of APF, Nepal DMTS who were directly involved in the rescue operation of the Simaltaal accident. Likewise, the details of disaster management units of APF, Nepal were collected from APF, Nepal Headquarters. The data was used to find out the deep diving capability and operational challenges of APF, Nepal in rescue operations in Trishuli River.

For the primary data, five deep-diving rescuers and experts from APF, Nepal DMTS, and KIs were interviewed to understand the capability, rescue methods, equipment, and challenges during the rescue operation. KIs were involved in Simaltaal rescue operations and other various road accidents, drowning cases, and swift water rescue operations along with the earthquake in 2015, the Melamchi flood, Jure landslides, etc.

Based on both findings derived from primary and secondary data, the suggestions for further improving disaster rescue operations by focusing on training, providing advanced tools, equipment, and technologies, and reward facilities for rescuers in enhancing deep diving rescue operations on hazardous rivers were forwarded. So, the response and rescue operation of APF, Nepal will be more efficient and effective.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Training and Capacity Building in Disaster Management

APF, Nepal DMTS has been conducting various training in the disaster management field such as collapsed structure search and rescue, swift water search and rescue, deep diving, firefighting dead body management, medical first responder, and rope rescue with cable car rescue training. Considering the recurrent accidents on the Kathmandu-Narayangadh and Mugling-Pokhara highways it has established a Trauma Hospital inside the DMTS with the help of the US Embassy. Some 2669 personnel have specialized in disaster management by conducting various training.

3.2 Methods Used in Search and Rescue Operations

Search and rescue (SAR) operations during river floods employ several innovative methods to enhance efficiency and safety. Recent advancements focus on utilizing unmanned vehicles, sensor networks, and path-planning algorithms to optimize rescue efforts. The remote-controlled unmanned water vehicles utilize the YOLOv4 algorithm for real-time human detection, achieving an accuracy of 91.49%. They provide live video feeds and GPS location data, significantly reducing risks to SAR personnel (Llanes et al., 2023). Likewise, unmanned aerial vehicles are employed for aerial imaging, which aids in mapping flooded areas and locating victims. This information is crucial for organizing rescue operations effectively (Ozkan et al., 2019).

APF, Nepal utilized its deep diving personnel with Pipe Inspection Sewer Cameras, Sound Navigation and Ranging (SONAR), Underwater Drone, and Out Board Motorboat (OBM) for effective and efficient search and rescue. Moreover, the rubber rafts were used for river surveillance by a group of rescuers from Simaltaal to the Shivghat area. According to rescuers, a total of 24 dead bodies were found but the remaining passengers and buses are still missing.

According to KI Sub Inspector (SI) Ramesh Thapa, they had utilized all available resources and technologies of APF, Nepal. When they got information they deployed with a mass-casualty response vehicle equipped with nurses, oxygen cylinders, and basic medicines.

3.3 Pipe Inspection Sewer Camera

A Pipe Inspection Sewer Camera is a specialized device used to assess the condition of sewer pipes by capturing video footage of their interiors. This technology is crucial for maintaining urban infrastructure and ensuring public safety by capturing video, processing images, and utilizing wireless technology to link video frames to specific locations with the pipeline, enhancing the accuracy of defect identifications (Chikamoto et al., 2023). Pipe inspection sewer cameras operate through advanced imaging and data transmission technologies to assess the condition of underground sewer systems. These systems utilize various methods, including video capture (Chikamoto et al.,

2023), image processing (Nishida *et al.*, 2024), and 3D reconstruction (Harshini *et al.*, 2022), to identify defects and ensure infrastructure integrity.

The APF, Nepal had used a pipe inspection sewer camera in a search and rescue operation in Trishuli River locating the hole between the stones, woods, and corners, although these are effective in still water and to clear the obstruction inside the drainage and canal.

According to KI, Senior Officer:

"We used pipe inspection sewer cameras, too for the search and rescue of the victims. This camera is effective in corners, holes between the stones, etc. As the capacity to identify the object of this device in the monitor, is 20 meters, we located the corners, holes, and other suspected areas and utilized this device from Simaltaal to Shivghat for searching the victims and buses into rivers."

Furthermore, he stated that:

"Daily 5 deep diving team used to be deployed with other disaster management trained manpower. So, with the help of this device, we searched thoroughly in the suspected areas."

3.4 Sound Navigation and Ranging (SONAR)

Sound Navigation and Ranging (SONAR) is a technique that utilizes sound waves to determine the position and distance of objects underwater or in other challenging environments (Khare & Mani, 2022). Sound navigation and ranging (Sonar) play a crucial role in enhancing the effectiveness of rescue operations, particularly in challenging environments. Various technologies leverage sound for localization, navigation, and communication, significantly improving the chances of successful rescues (Goll & Maximova, 2019). In June 2009, to search for the missing Air France Flight 447 with passengers and crew over the South Atlantic, the Remote Environmental Monitoring Units (REMUS) autonomous underwater vehicles (AUVs), side-looking sonar, and side-scan sonar through Triton Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROV) were also accounted for surface searches in sea, which can operate in 3000 m water depth while it is equipped with various instruments enabling advanced survey activities in all subsea conditions (Stone *et al.*, 2011).

Raymarine a56 (model e7077) is a marine multifunction display designed primarily for boating. It features a Global Positioning System (GPS) which supports SONAR functionality and connects with apps wirelessly for remote and data sharing. This device was used by the deep diving rescue team, which is available with APF, Nepal DMTS, to search and rescue at Simaltaal accident. Likewise, Innovative Technological Solution Pvt. Ltd., Lalitpur supported by providing a Hi-Target Surveying Eco Sounder Device in the search operation. This device is basically, more specialized and modern for hydrographic depth data record.

Moreover, along with 4 deep divers, a total of 12 personnel from the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) from India deployed with advanced SONAR and magnetic devices together with APF, Nepal. Two magnetic devices of 14 kg and 19 kg were brought with them. The team searched from the accident place to 35 km up to the Kavreghat area. But due to the depth and high current of the river the missing buses and personnel couldn't be found.

According to KI, SI Ramesh Thapa:

“Our SONAR device was not as advanced as India’s NDRF team has, still we tried our best to search the missing. The main obstacles or barriers were the high current of the river and its unknown depth. These devices are mainly, made for still water such as ponds, lakes, and, the sea but in the context of Nepal, we have to employ these devices in flowing water. Due to the geographical slope, the current of the rivers is high in the mountain and hilly regions. So, these devices cannot produce good results. Moreover, we have been working in this field for 12 years, and in this river for more than 5 years. So, we know the anatomy, characterization, and current of the river better than rescuers from another country. Despite high technology coordinating with Innovative Technological Solution, NDRF couldn’t find out the missing buses and passengers because of the above reasons.”

3.5 Under Water Drone

Underwater drones, or unmanned underwater vehicles (UUVs), are advanced robotic systems designed for various applications in aquatic environments. These drones are equipped with sophisticated technologies, including high-definition cameras and sensors, enabling them to perform tasks such as exploration, surveillance, and environmental monitoring. Moreover, many underwater drones are equipped with high-definition cameras for capturing images and videos, facilitating detailed exploration and monitoring of marine environments (V. V Dhole, 2024). Likewise, certain models are designed to operate in the air and underwater, showcasing versatility for military and research applications (Hosur et al., 2024).

The underwater drone was used by APF, Nepal to search the buses and missing passengers in the Simaltaal River. By sending the drone under the water the camera attached to it sends the image to the monitor outside and then the object can be identified by the shape.

According to KI, Senior Head Constable:

“The drone was used to search in the accident area and around 500 meters in the river. Due to the high current of the river, this underwater couldn’t be as effective as it can be in sea, lakes, ponds, etc. When we drove the drone under water it used to sweep away because of the high current of the river. Therefore, this device couldn’t be effective in the following river. The next thing is, the depth of the river is unknown from place to place, so there was a chance of losing the device. Another, as the capacity of the drone is very low, the search operations by using our underwater device couldn’t be as expected.”

3.6 Surveillance through River Run Using Raft Boat and Out Board Motor Boat (OBM)

Surveillance using raft boats for rescue operations is an innovative approach that enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of emergency responses, particularly in flood scenarios. Due to the high current and depth of the river, there was a need to inspect the area because the missing passengers and buses could be stocked in any place. Moreover, using a helicopter was risky because of the ridges and narrow hills, APF, Nepal started to search using robber boats side by side.

Moreover, outboard motors are essential for effective flood rescue operations in rivers, providing the necessary power and manoeuvrability to navigate turbulent waters. Their design allows for rapid deployment and efficient operation in emergencies, making them invaluable tools for rescuers (Mårtensson et al., 2015). Outboard motors enable rescue teams to reach victims quickly, even in fast-flowing currents, which is critical during floods (Terry, 2010).

APF, Nepal has been conducting OBM training since its establishment as a part of disaster management. It has medium-size OBM only and the main feature is; that it can be used only in static water. Though it was used by taking risks for search of the Trishuli River. Surveillance through the river can be best as the rescuers are involved in close inspection of the area. They utilized locally improvised methods to find out the location of the missing, too.

According to KI, Constable

In all the places sending drones and using SONAR was not appropriate and possible, so we used improvised devices such as long bamboo, sticks, etc. from which we could feel some strange objects inside the river.

Moreover, he added about the adverse weather:

“The continuous heavy rain was the main challenge of the search team. Despite all the situation we were fully involved in the operations. The surveillance of the whole 34 km river was not possible in one day. So, we continued our search operation by dividing the different teams and marking the place. The challenge was that the marking signs used to be washed away by the heavy rain, the next day. Waking up early in the morning, preparing the search devices and equipment, and mobilizing to search the vehicles and missing people was day-by-day work. Though we employed all our capacity and available devices, we couldn't find all the missing passengers. Even the two buses are still unknown.”

3.7 Deep Diving

Deep diving training is a specialized preparation for rescuers involved in river flood operations, emphasizing safety and efficiency in high-risk environments. This training is crucial as it equips responders with the skills to handle emergencies effectively,

particularly in flood scenarios where drowning risks are heightened. Training programs enhance the knowledge and skills of water incident responders, enabling them to perform rescues safely and effectively during floods (Beerens et al., 2014).

According to APF, Nepal Headquarters for the deep diving training, 25 APF Nepal personnel were sent to Bangladesh in 2069 to meet the need to rescue from rivers, ponds, lakes, etc. Among them, only 16 are remaining in the organization. Now, deep diving training has been given to its personnel by trained manpower of APF, Nepal, and reached a total number of 110. This trained manpower are deployed in all 7 Brigades, DMTS Kurintar, Chitwan, Disaster Rescue Battalion Sinamanga, Sindhuli, Khurkot, and 24 Battalion Kaski.

According to KI, SI Ramesh Thapa

"When we reached at accident place, we saw the landslide caused by flood which swept the road into the rivers. We consulted with the eye-witnessed and tried to locate the buses and the missing passengers. The flood of the Trishuli River was too high as the rainfall was continuous from the previous day. As we were all 25 disaster management personnel with a deep diving team we started search and rescue immediately."

According to another KI, HC Dilli Bhattarai:

"As the morning began, we started the search into the Trishuli River by wearing a Self-Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus (SCUBA) Diving Set such as a Wet Suit, Oxygen Cylinder, Weight, Hood, Knife, Back Inflation Diving System/Buoyancy Control Device, Regular etc. By using those teams Open Circuit Diving System methods were used with Line Signals during search into the river. We (the Deep Diving Team) searched the 24 Kilometres from Simaltaal to Devghat by locating the suspected area."

3.8 Operational Challenges Faced During the Rescue

The challenges faced during the vehicle and missing person search and rescue operation were multifaceted. On the day of the incident, landslides blocked various points on the route that rescuers needed to access the accident site. The other main challenges were the water level, and its currents, created additional obstacles, including timing waves, whirlpools, and eddy lines which hampered the search efforts. Moreover, the hazardous river conditions are characterized by sharp and large rocks, and muddy, debris-filled water making it difficult to utilize available resources effectively.

The water level was extremely high with a rapid current which made it difficult to stabilize rafts, deep divers, and search devices such as underwater drones and pipe inspection sewer cameras. Likewise, the large crevices and massive logs carried by the river created a high risk to divers. Sometimes, the aquatic animals like crocodiles in the south of Devghat also became threats.

The main challenges included the lack of modern equipment, including difficulties using rafts and OBM in strong currents, the camera-based devices, and the SONAR device's

inability to capture clear sketches if the boat was not stationary, including fast-flowing rivers during the monsoon, was significant challenges.

Another challenge was the lack of motivation for the rescuers. According to the rescuers, the incentive is only 300 Nepali rupees on the day of deployment in the river rescue for deep divers. Though the APF, Nepal has provisioned for 10 lakh insurance, it is low compared to the threat the deep divers face during the swift water rescue.

In conclusion, the anatomy of the Trishuli River itself was a challenge during the search and rescue operation. Moreover, the high monsoon current and the river depth remain as challenges. The unavailability of modern equipment and devices was another challenge of the rescue operation.

4. Conclusion

The study highlights the complex challenges faced by the Armed Police Force (APF), Nepal, during search and rescue operations following a swift water disaster on the Trishuli River. The combination of severe weather, high river currents, and limited access to modern equipment complicated efforts to locate missing vehicles and passengers in the Trishuli River. Despite deploying deep divers and advanced technologies like sound navigation and ranging systems, underwater drones, and Pipe Inspection Sewer Cameras, the search yielded limited success due to the river's treacherous conditions. Operational obstacles included dangerous watercourse environments, inadequate resources, and insufficient incentives for rescuers. The research emphasizes the need for further improving disaster rescue operations by providing advanced swift-water rescue devices and equipment, and welfare facilities to the rescuers.

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Effectiveness of Accountability Mechanism of Local Governments in Nepal

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Abstract:

This paper examines the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms within the local governments of Nepal, with a primary focus on evaluating their influence on governance and the delivery of public services. Employing a descriptive analysis, the study analyzes various accountability structures such as the municipal executive committee, the council, the monitoring committee, the legal committee, etc. It investigates the implementation and execution of these mechanisms and assesses their outcomes. Through case studies and situational analyses, the research highlights the strengths and weaknesses inherent in these systems, pinpointing key factors that either contribute to or impede their success. The findings contribute valuable insights to the ongoing discourse surrounding the enhancement of local governance in Nepal, providing actionable recommendations for policymakers and stakeholders to bolster accountability practices and foster improved public administration at the grassroots level of the country.

Keywords:

Local Government, Accountability, Good Governance, Irregularities Complaints

1. Introduction:

The 2015 constitution of Nepal introduced a federal democratic system of governance with three tiers. Clause 56 of the constitution outlines the Structure of the State and the Distribution of State Power in the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, dividing the state into the Federation, Province, and Local Levels. At the Local Level, there are Rural Municipalities, Municipalities, and District Assemblies. These government units have been assigned 22 specific functions and duties according to Schedule 8 of the Constitution. Additionally, they possess 15 concurrent powers outlined in Schedule 9. This constitutional framework establishes the operating structure of the local government system in Nepal,

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defining the responsibilities and powers of each level to ensure effective governance and service delivery at the grassroots level.

Nepal has a total of 753 local-level governments, which include 293 municipalities and 460 rural municipalities. Along with the federal and provincial governments, these local governments play a crucial role in providing public services and contributing to the strengthening of democracy. They hold executive, judiciary, and legislative powers within their jurisdictions. Ensuring accountability is essential to strengthen democracy at its core. Accountability mechanisms are vital in promoting transparency and responsible governance. Therefore, it is crucial to evaluate the effectiveness of these mechanisms, especially considering that local governments in Nepal have the authority to make decisions directly impacting the lives of citizens. Assessing the accountability mechanisms employed by local governments in Nepal and their effectiveness in promoting good governance and citizen participation is significant.

The responsibilities of local governments are outlined in detail in the Local Government Operation Act of 2017. These tasks include functions and duties such as establishing local development plans, providing and maintaining infrastructure, collecting and mobilizing revenue, and delivering essential services. Local governments also have the task of performing general judicial functions, managing administrative and development functions, promoting peace, good governance, justice, and prosperity, and handling key sectors like basic education, basic health, agriculture extension, and livestock development.

In addition to these major functions and duties, local governments have other important responsibilities like acquiring human, financial, and other resources necessary for carrying out their functions, formulating plans, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating projects and initiatives, and building individual and institutional capacity. Furthermore, local governments are responsible for responding to local demands, managing vital registration processes, and safeguarding cultural and social dignity. All these responsibilities collectively contribute to the effective functioning and development of local government systems in Nepal. Local governments must fulfil these duties to address the needs and aspirations of the local communities they serve, promote sustainable development, and enhance the overall well-being of the people.

In Nepal, the mobilization of financial resources at the local level is predominantly dependent on subsidies provided by the federal government, supplemented by modest contributions from provinces. Local governments also generate internal revenue through fees, taxes, charges, penalties, and fines. The subsidies received from the federal government include Fiscal Equalization grants, Conditional grants, Special grants, and Complementary grants. Furthermore, local governments receive revenue-sharing and royalties from the federal government. Although municipal employees fill most staff positions, the appointment of the Chief Executive Officer is typically done by the federal government for a term of approximately two years.

Table 1.**List of Functions and Duties of Local Government in Nepal**

As per Clause 11 of the Local Government Operation Act of 2015, the rural municipality or municipality has various functions and responsibilities, including the following:	
1. Municipal Police	15. Agriculture and Livestock
2. Cooperative agency	16. Management of senior citizens and people with disabilities
3. FM Operation	17. data collection of those who are unemployed
4. Local tax, fees, and penalties	18. Agriculture Extension
5. Management of local services	19. Drinking water, small energy and water resources
6. Local statistics and recordings	20. Disaster Management
7. Local development Programs & projects	21. Water source protection
8. Basic and Secondary Education	22. Protection of language and culture
9. Basic Health and Sanitation	23. Sports and Games
10. Local market management and environmental protection	24. Social security and poverty alleviation
11. Local roads and irrigation	25. Vital statistics
12. Mediation and Arbitrators	26. Royalties of natural resources
13. Local record management	27. Transportation and commuting management
14. Issuing of Landowner's certificate	28. Others

Source: Local Government Operation Act 2017

The local government plays a critical role in ensuring prosperity, development, and the strengthening of democracy in a community. Given the extensive responsibilities entrusted to local governments, enhancing accountability becomes crucial. This involves creating mechanisms and systems that enable transparency, oversight, and effective governance. Accountability can be achieved through improved processes and robust monitoring systems. By promoting accountability, local governments can build trust, encourage responsible decision-making, and ultimately contribute to the overall well-being of the community.

2. Objective:

The key objective of this article is to evaluate the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms in local governments in Nepal. To accomplish this, the following specific objectives have been identified:

1. Assess the current state of accountability within local governments in Nepal.
2. Analyze the assessment results to develop recommendations for policy changes.

Through these objectives, this study seeks to conduct a thorough analysis of the accountability practices employed in the local government system. Ultimately, the study aims to provide valuable insights and suggestions to improve governance and accountability in local government operations.

3. Methodology:

The focus of this article is to assess the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms in local governments in Nepal. To achieve this, a mixed approach has been employed to gather and present comprehensive information. A thorough document review of relevant laws, policies, and regulations concerning accountability in local government has been conducted to understand the existing legal framework and institutional arrangements, while also identifying any gaps or inconsistencies that may impede accountability. Drawing upon extensive literature on the topic, the findings have been organized into relevant subheadings to present the current issues surrounding accountability and governance.

4. Accountability and Governance:

Accountability is a critical aspect of governance, characterized by the responsibility of individuals and institutions to answer for their actions and decisions. It encompasses transparency, integrity, and the implementation of robust mechanisms to ensure compliance with standards, rules, and regulations. In the context of strengthening democracy in Nepal, accountability plays a pivotal role. Firstly, it fosters trust between the government and its citizens by ensuring that those in power are answerable for their actions. When leaders are held accountable, it promotes transparency and reduces the likelihood of corruption, nepotism, and misuse of public resources. This, in turn, enhances citizens' confidence in the democratic process.

Accountability strengthens local governance by empowering local officials to serve their communities effectively. Local governance in Nepal depends on elected representatives and administrative bodies at the grassroots level. When these officials are held accountable, it ensures they remain responsive to the needs of the people they represent. By having mechanisms to monitor and evaluate their performance, accountability helps identify areas for improvement, fosters citizen participation and enables local governments to efficiently deliver essential services. Accountability is necessary for strengthening democracy and local governance in Nepal as it promotes transparency, reduces corruption, and ensures that elected officials and government institutions are held responsible for their actions. It is crucial for building trust, enhancing citizen participation, and driving effective decision-making and service delivery at national and local levels.

5. Strengthening accountability:

Strengthening accountability at the local level in Nepal is of utmost importance due to the inherent necessity of accountability in governance and democracy. Democracy is considered the pinnacle of governance precisely because it upholds accountability. There are several compelling reasons to prioritize accountability at the local level in Nepal.

- a) **Effective Service Delivery:** Local governments are responsible for delivering essential services such as education, healthcare, infrastructure development, and waste management. Strengthening accountability mechanisms ensures that resources are allocated efficiently, and services are delivered effectively to the local population.
- b) **Citizen Empowerment:** Accountability empowers citizens to actively engage in decision-making processes and hold their local representatives accountable for their actions. It enhances transparency, responsiveness, and citizen participation, fostering a sense of ownership and strengthening democracy at the grassroots level.
- c) **Resource Management:** Enhancing accountability in local government is necessary for resource management and justifying value for money in public investments. By establishing effective accountability mechanisms, such as financial audits and monitoring systems, local governments can reduce corruption risks, prevent misallocation of funds, and promote better resource management. Furthermore, accountability helps justify the use of public resources by demonstrating their efficient and effective utilization. Through rigorous monitoring, reporting, and evaluation, local governments can prove the value generated from investing in public resources, which builds trust and confidence in the government's ability to deliver tangible results.
- d) **Trust and Confidence:** Promoting trust and confidence is a crucial outcome of accountability in local government. When local governments demonstrate transparency, responsiveness, and accountability, it instils a sense of trust among citizens. This trust assures citizens that their concerns and grievances will be addressed, leading to public satisfaction and cooperation between the government and the community. By upholding accountability, local governments gain credibility and enhance citizens' confidence in their ability to serve their interests. This foundation of trust is essential for cultivating a healthy and productive relationship between the government and the community.
- e) **Controlling corruption and establishing good governance:** Strengthening accountability mechanisms such as financial audits, reporting systems, and transparency measures helps to prevent corruption and misuse of public funds. This ensures that resources are allocated and utilized in the best interests of the community, promoting good governance.
- f) **Strengthening democracy from the bottom-up:** Accountability in local government is crucial for fostering democracy. When officials are held accountable for their actions and decisions, it promotes transparency, citizen participation, and responsive governance. This allows the voices and needs of the local community to be heard and incorporated into decision-making processes.

- g) Rule of Law: Upholding the rule of law is a fundamental principle in any society. Accountability measures in local government play a crucial role in defining and limiting the responsibilities of government officials through legal means. By establishing accountability, individuals in positions of authority are held responsible for their actions, ensuring they are not above the law. This prevents the abuse of power and fosters a culture of transparency, fairness, and equality before the law. Emphasizing accountability in local government reinforces the notion that no one is exempt from the consequences of their actions, promoting a just and accountable governance system.

Enhancing accountability in local government is crucial to combat corruption, strengthen democracy, instil trust, ensure transparent use of public funds, and clearly define the responsibilities of government officials. These factors contribute to establishing a transparent, efficient, and responsible system of governance at the local level. The primary focus of assessing the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms in local governments in Nepal is to evaluate how well these mechanisms are implemented and exercised.

6. Accountability Mechanism at the Local Level:

Based on the legal foundation and practices, local levels implement several accountability mechanisms to promote transparency, prevent corruption, and ensure that officials are accountable for their actions. These accountability mechanisms can be categorized as internal, and external.

Table 2. Accountability Mechanism at the Local Level

S No	Internal	External
1	Village/municipal executive body,	The MoFAGA provides guidance and directions.
2	Village/municipal Council meetings,	Social Auditing and Public hearings
3	Local Government Institutional Self-Assessment (LISA).	Media, Press and Local pressure group
4	Project and program Monitoring committees,	Final auditing
5	Internal auditing	Election
6	Legal committee	CIAA and Courts

Internal:

Internal accountability mechanisms include various measures such as the functioning of the village/municipal executive body, council meetings, judicial committees, monitoring committees, internal auditing, and the Local Government Institutional Self-Assessment (LISA). These mechanisms monitor and evaluate the performance and behaviour of local governments and officials, ensuring that they adhere to proper governance practices and carry out their responsibilities effectively.

External:

External accountability mechanisms involve oversight and regulation by external entities. The Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration provides guidance and directions to local governments, ensuring they comply with relevant laws and regulations. Financial auditing is conducted to ensure proper financial management and detect any possible misappropriation of funds. Social auditing allows for community participation in assessing the performance of local governments and holding them accountable. Public hearings offer a platform for citizens to voice their concerns and grievances, enabling them to engage with local government officials directly. Additionally, the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) takes legal action against any corrupt practices or misconduct by local government officials, ensuring they are held accountable for their actions.

Clause 16 of the Local Government Operations Act of 2017 delineates the allocation of responsibilities and sets performance expectations for the local level in the executive committee, which governs the functions of Local Government. The ultimate authority for endorsing, deciding, and implementing policies and programs at the local level lies with the Council under Clause 19 of the same Act, LGOA 2017. Furthermore, according to Article 217 of the Constitution of Nepal 2015 and Clause 46 of the Local Government Operations Act of 2017, the Local Level Legal Committee plays a crucial role in addressing general legal matters at the community level. This committee is convened by either the deputy mayor or the vice chairperson.

The Local Government Operations Act of 2017 includes provisions for a Budget and Program Formulation Committee, chaired by the deputy mayor or vice chairman (Clause 67). Additionally, there is a provision for financial auditing (Clause 77). Under Clause 114 of LGOA, local governments must follow the directives of the Government of Nepal under Article 232 of the constitution. To promote accountability within Local Government, the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration has introduced a self-assessment mechanism known as LISA. This assessment mechanism evaluates the performance and practices of the local government. Various auditing practices, such as social auditing, public hearings, and environmental assessments, are employed within the local government. Parliamentary committees, constitutional agencies such as the CIAA and Auditor General, media, and pressure groups all play a role in enhancing accountability within the local government. Pressure groups, civil society inquiries, and the electoral process serve as mechanisms to ensure accountability in local government. The combination of these internal and external accountability mechanisms helps to establish a system of checks and balances, ensuring that local governments in Nepal operate transparently, and effectively, and are accountable to the public they serve.

7 Fiscal Discipline and Accountability in Local Government:

Accountability and good governance at the local government level are closely tied to financial discipline. It is essential to address the growing instances of irregularities and complaints

identified during final audits in Nepal's local governments. These issues serve as a cause for concern, as they shed light on challenges related to accountability, transparency, and the efficacy of existing governance mechanisms at the local level. Immediate attention is necessary to address these matters.

Table 3
Final Audit and Irregularity of Local Level in Nepal

Rupees in Crore

Report No. and the year	Audited Local Levels among 753	Audited Figure	Irregularity	Percentage among audited
56. 2074/75 (2018)	747	57151	2414	4.20
57. 2075/76 (2019)	743	73823	3748	5.08
58. 2076/77 (2020)	694	81395	4024	4.90
59. 2077/78 (2021)	744	99359	4119	4.15
60. 2078/79 (2022)	749	110206	4283	3.89

Source: Various Final Audit Reports from Office of Auditor General Nepal.

The table above presents data on the final audit and irregularities detected in the local governments of Nepal between 2018 and 2022. Report number 56, from the year 2074/75 (2018), indicates that out of the total 753 local levels, 747 underwent auditing. These audits revealed irregularities amounting to 4.2% of Rs 57,151 Crore. Similarly, in subsequent years, significant irregularities were observed at the local government level in Nepal. In 2022, out of a total audited amount of 110,206 Crore Nepalese Rupees, irregularities accounted for approximately 3.9%.

These figures emphasize the lack of financial accountability within Nepal's local government system. It is crucial to address these irregularities to ensure effective financial management and enhance accountability. The reports issued by the Office of Auditor General Nepal provide valuable information for identifying areas that require improvement and rectifying financial irregularities at the local government level.

8. Issues of Accountability in Local Levels in Nepal:

The local level in Nepal has numerous accountability issues that hinder its effective functioning. One of the major issues is the failure to hold council meetings on time, which leads to a lack of transparency and delays in decision-making processes. This, in turn, affects the allocation of resources, the timely passage of bills, and the implementation of reform activities. These accountability gaps significantly hamper the overall governance and functioning of local governments.

Another critical issue that needs reform is the increasing number of irregularities observed after final audits. This trend indicates a lack of adherence to standard norms and regulations

or a capacity gap within the system. Such irregularities pose serious challenges to financial management and accountability, paving the way for corruption and the misuse of public funds. This signifies the urgent need to address these issues through extensive reforms aimed at enhancing transparency, enforcing strict compliance with standards, and strengthening oversight mechanisms.

Several cases have been filed against officials for breaching norms and legislation, undermining the importance of upholding the rule of law from the grassroots level. The growing number of complaints received by the CIAA signifies a lack of accountability. Therefore, it is crucial to enhance the monitoring and enforcement of anti-corruption measures at the local level to rectify these accountability lapses.

Excessive politicization of issues exacerbates the already vulnerable state of accountability at the local level. When decisions are influenced by partisan interests rather than the welfare of the public, the integrity of the decision-making process is compromised. A key concern is the performance of local governments, as evidenced by widespread dissatisfaction among the public. This dissatisfaction is likely a result of the failure to efficiently deliver essential services, effectively address public grievances, and actively engage with the community.

Unnecessary staff appointments can undermine transparency and merit-based selection processes. Positions such as advisors, personal assistants, and office assistants without any logical basis, not only misuse resources but also serve as a symbol of autocracy. Additionally, the irrational disbursement of budgets further compounds the issue by potentially leading to the misallocation of resources and impeding the effective implementation of development projects.

Table 4

Corruption Complaints registered in the CIAA and proportion of Local level in Nepal.

Report no	Year	CIAA Registered Total Complaint	Complaints related to Local Level	percentage
29	2075/76 (2020)	24084	8860	36.78
30	2076/77 (2021)	25152	10560	41.98
31	2077/78 (2021)	22625	9629	42.55
32	2078/79 (2022)	24331	11455	47.08
33	2079/80 (2023)	28067	14432	51.42

Source: Various Reports of CIAA Nepal.

The table provides insights into Corruption Complaints registered at the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) in Nepal, focusing on the proportion associated with the local level. This data has been sourced from various reports published by the CIAA in Nepal.

In the year 2075/76 (2020), out of a total of 24,084 complaints registered with the CIAA, 8,860 were directly linked to corruption at the local level. This accounts for approximately 36.78% of the overall complaints. The subsequent years demonstrated an upward trend in the proportion of complaints related to them. By 2023, more than half, specifically 51.42%, of the corruption-related complaints were attributed to local-level governance. These figures indicate a significant presence of corruption within the local government system in Nepal. Addressing these issues and strengthening accountability mechanisms is important. It would help promote transparency, combat corruption, and establish effective governance for the benefit of all citizens.

9. Challenges to maintaining Accountability at the Local Level:

In Nepal, despite sufficient legal foundations, simplified processes, and planning and programs, the expected enhancement of accountability in local governance has not been realized. The implementation of accountability mechanisms appears ineffective, leading to criticism of local governments in good governance. Challenges persist that hinder the effectiveness of these mechanisms.

1. Lack of Public Awareness:

A significant challenge is the limited awareness among citizens regarding their rights, roles, and responsibilities within the local governance system. Many individuals tend to overlook the significance of local government in areas outside their immediate vicinity, leading to indifference towards these matters. This lack of awareness often results in low citizen engagement and limited utilization of accountability mechanisms. To address this issue, it is crucial to enhance public education and awareness campaigns on the importance of local governance and the roles citizens can play in promoting accountability.

2. Limited Capacity:

Local governments, especially in rural regions, experience limitations in terms of human resources and expertise, which hampers their ability to implement accountability mechanisms. Additionally, challenges such as lack of electricity, internet access, and other necessary facilities further contribute to these capacity constraints. These limitations can directly influence the efficiency and effectiveness of the accountability processes.

3. Political Interference:

Political interference in local governance poses a significant threat to accountability mechanisms. This interference often leads to favouritism, politicization, and a lack of evaluation mechanisms, resulting in undeserving individuals being rewarded while those who perform well are demoralized. When officials are swayed by political interests, it becomes difficult to maintain transparency and accountability in the system.

4. Inadequate Monitoring & Evaluation in Policy & Program Implementation:

Despite laws and guidelines, effective resource management, and established structures, significant weaknesses remain in the implementation process due to a lack of timely monitoring and evaluation. Proper monitoring during the execution phase is crucial for enhancing accountability. Unfortunately, this aspect is lacking in the governance of local levels in Nepal.

5. Structural Weakness in Promoting Accountability at the Local Level:

Despite the proximity of local government to communities in Nepal, there are capacity gaps that hinder effective accountability mechanisms. Moreover, there exists an imbalance in the power distribution among the legislative, judiciary, and executive branches. At the federal level, government formation heavily relies on the majority in parliament, which serves as a watchdog, while constitutional bodies aim to ensure accountability. In contrast, at the local level, there are fixed tenures, and oversight agencies are often distanced from the community, leading to high costs associated with corruption investigations. To tackle these issues, establishing a local oversight agency with enhanced authority is recommended to enhance accountability. In the meantime, the district coordination committee (DDC) could serve as an interim measure for extensive monitoring.

10. Enhancing Effective Accountability in Local Governance:

Accountability is the foundation of good governance. When accountability is undermined, it can have a detrimental impact on democracy and overall governance. There can be preventive, curative and promotive strategies to enhance effective accountability in Local government. To enhance the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms in local governments, it is important to implement certain measures.

- 1. Promoting Public Awareness:** It is crucial to prioritize efforts aimed at increasing public awareness about the governance structure and citizens' rights and responsibilities. Enhancing people's active and meaningful participation in the local decision-making process should be a key objective. Implementing awareness campaigns and education programs can empower citizens to actively engage and contribute to their local communities' decision-making processes.
- 2. Upholding Exemplary Ethics and Conduct:** Local-level leaders should consistently demonstrate exemplary conduct and uphold high ethical standards. Voters should be encouraged to elect candidates with a strong reputation for integrity and ethical behavior.
- 3. Enhancing Internal Control and Monitoring Mechanisms:** Strengthening internal control and monitoring systems is essential in identifying and addressing accountability gaps. It is imperative to establish a monitoring mechanism that responds promptly

and efficiently to any issues that arise. By implementing a regular monitoring system, accountability at the local level can be significantly improved. Additionally, maintaining discipline through effective internal control measures is vital for the smooth functioning of any organization.

4. **Developing and Enforcing Realistic and Feasible Policies in Local Governance:** Local governments must prioritize the creation and implementation of comprehensive and achievable policies and regulations. Moreover, it is essential to establish robust norms, standards, and a code of conduct to uphold accountability. By providing clear guidelines and expectations, local governments can effectively uphold a high level of accountability in their day-to-day operations.
5. **Bolstering the Legal Framework:** The legal framework should be strengthened by enacting and rigorously enforcing comprehensive laws, regulations, and policies that aim to promote accountability within local governance in Nepal. This entails ensuring that legal measures effectively address accountability issues at the local level and provide a strong basis for accountability mechanisms to function effectively.
6. **Strengthening Capacity Building:** Local governments should prioritize investing in the capacity development of their officials and staff. This can be achieved by offering comprehensive training programs and providing necessary resources to enhance their understanding of accountability mechanisms and enable them to implement them effectively. Furthermore, establishing a sophisticated work environment equipped with information technology can further support their efforts to maintain accountability.
7. **Establishing Robust Local-level Oversight Bodies:** It is imperative to establish a dedicated oversight mechanism at the local level to address issues of corruption and malpractices. This oversight body can either be integrated within each local level or be a separate agency responsible for monitoring and addressing such matters at the provincial level or as deemed appropriate. An alternative option would be to enhance the authority and efficacy of the District Coordination Committee (DCC) for monitoring local government activities. By having a strong local-level oversight mechanism in place, swift actions can be taken in response to any instances of abuse and corruption.
8. **Enhancing Transparency in Decision-Making and Utilizing Information Technology:** Foster transparent and inclusive decision-making processes to hold local authorities accountable and cater to the community's needs and interests. Focus on upgrading and modernizing the information technology infrastructure within local governance to facilitate streamlined data management, online services, and easy access to information. This will greatly enhance transparency and accountability in local governance.
9. **Promoting Citizen Engagement and Collaboration:** Emphasize the importance of active citizen involvement in local governance by promoting public consultations, civic education programs, and awareness campaigns. This will cultivate an atmosphere of accountability and enhance transparency in decision-making processes. Furthermore, establish collaborations with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), non-governmental

organizations, and other stakeholders to monitor, advocate for, and advance accountability in local governance. By working with CSOs, local authorities can ensure transparency and good governance are upheld within their communities.

- 10. Timely Reporting and Transparent Financial Management:** Set up effective mechanisms to facilitate regular reporting and public disclosure of local government activities, encompassing financial reports, project implementation updates, and progress reports. This will foster transparency and allow for public scrutiny, promoting accountability. Implement rigorous financial management and auditing systems to ensure transparency and accountability in utilizing local government funds. This may entail conducting periodic financial audits and publicly disclosing financial reports. By adhering to these measures, local authorities can enhance trust and accountability in their financial practices.

Conclusion:

There is a pressing need to enhance accountability in local governance. The significance of accountability in local governance cannot be understated. It is an integral aspect of good governance that must be prioritized. In Nepal's local governance, there are evident gaps that require attention to strengthen accountability. The existing mechanisms and structures for accountability have proven ineffective, obstructing responsible governance and citizen participation in public service provision. This undermines the values of democracy and collaborative decision-making. Despite commendable efforts made by Nepal to establish accountability mechanisms, numerous challenges persist. It is crucial to confront these challenges directly and implement strategies that can enhance the effectiveness of these mechanisms. By doing so, local governments in Nepal will be able to promote transparency, uphold the principles of good governance, and better address the needs of their constituents. Ultimately, this will contribute to strengthen the democratic framework, reinforcing it as a resilient and enduring system.

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