Identity Denied: Examining Socio-economic Exclusion and Marginalization of Landless Communities in Urban Nepal

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Abstract

The marginalization of landless people living in informal settlements in urban areas around the world seems to be a systemic issue of citizenship denial and socio-economic exclusion. This study examines how landlessness and the lack of legal identity are intertwined, focusing on marginalized groups such as the Janajati, Dalit, and women in the Kathmandu Valley of Nepal. For this purpose, I collected data by interviewing 30 respondents, selected through purposive sampling, to represent diverse ethnic, gender, and socio-economic backgrounds from the selected urban settlements. In this study, I revealed that landless people face extreme exclusion because they are unable to obtain citizenship certificates, which require landownership and other documents they do not have. In addition, it is further uncovered that those without citizenship are intentionally excluded from access to education, health, work, property, and political rights. Furthermore, women, on the other hand, have to face further challenges due to patriarchal norms that link their access to citizenship with male family members. So, this combination of landlessness and citizenship denial creates a kind of dual nature of marginalization that deepens socio-economic insecurity. Therefore, this study proposes a dual marginalization framework, combining global insights from citizenship literature with Nepal's specific challenges, such as caste discrimination and restrictive land tenure systems. Finally, to solve these issues, this study suggests legal reforms and formal recognition of informal settlements to ascertain equal opportunities for marginalized communities to participate fully in citizenship and socio-economic dynamics.

Keywords

Marginalization, Citizenship Denial, Landlessness, Socio-economic Exclusion, Nepal.

14

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1. Introduction

Nepal has experienced rapid urbanization in recent years, and over half its urban population resides within the Kathmandu Valley (Asian Development Bank, 2020). Yet, the process of urbanization and its consequences, in the form of this rural-urban fringe and the gains that derive from it come at a great socio-economic cost, particularly to vulnerable groups, Janajatis, and the inhabitants of informal settlements—who have traditionally faced disadvantages to tenure over rural land and also in belonging to a besieged political/social space. Since citizenship certificates are crucial for accessing fundamental rights and public services, such as education, employ- ment, land ownership, and political participation (FWLD, 2017), many individuals in Nepal remain excluded from these benefits due to a lack of legal identity. As a result, this denial fuels processes of poverty and social exclusion as people who lack citizenship are deprived of full participation in economic, social, and political activities.

The situation is hardest for landless and informal settlement groups, informally referred to as Sukumbasi Basti, usually existing in groups whose members have been living for centuries on land they own, but without formal land titles or legal recognition of ownership. Because they are usually not part of policy and program measures, a precarious situation puts them even at higher risk of repossession and also at risk of being abused (FWLD, 2017). Furthermore, the inseparability of landlessness and lack of citizenship is also evident in Nepal, where household landholding is frequently a requirement for obtaining citizenship certificates. Accordingly, in the absence of legal proof of residence and land tenure, individuals are vulnerable to acquiring legal identity (Bishwokarma, 2018).

As urbanization has worsened the plight of landless groups, the Kathmandu Valley, a center of economic activity and urban population movement, has 42 informal settlements because of poor

rural development, poverty, and lack of livelihood opportunities in the rest of the country (Subedi, 2018). Despite the lack of security of tenure and government-recognized status as settled communities, these residents have no benefit from the basic infrastructure such as sanitation, potable water, and electricity (Shrestha, 2013). In addition, the loss of a path to obtain citizenship disproportionately isolates them because they are deprived of important legal rights, including registration of births and marriages, tertiary education, driving permits, etc., (FWLD, 2017). In turn, this structural culling traps people and families in a cycle of socioeconomic disadvantage.

Despite the characteristics shared by landless peoples in Nepal with the features of global urban marginalization, the same issues can also be found in some rapidly urbanizing nations like Indonesia. For instance, cities lure rural migrants to seek expanded opportunities, yet a majority of the migrants do not manage to get stable jobs and are locked in a vicious circle of marginalization. In Indonesia, marginalized urban communities face limited access to formal economic opportunities, housing, and infrastructure, resulting in the proliferation of slums on riverbanks, railway tracks, and unused public lands (Suparlan, 1990). Equally, in Nepal, the lack of land, dwelling, and urban management of complexities color distrust of the landless populations (United Nations Habitat Programme, 2003).

Because the physical environment of informal settlements exacerbates the exclusion of marginalized communities, poor housing conditions and inadequate infrastructure-such as the absence of sanitation, proper drainage systems, and clean water-pose significant health risks to residents, particularly in densely populated areas (Kurniasih, 2007). In addition, the lack of formal acknowledgment of these settlements leaves the residents at risk of forced evictions and their inability to enjoy their right to access public services and benefits.

As education is a primary means of sustaining marginalization, individuals without access to education tend to experience a range of forms of intersectional exclusion into employment and civic activity, which in turn reinforces their socioeconomic disadvantages (Percy, 2000). Lack of citizenship in Nepal restricts children from landless families to the academic sphere. Consequently, this further perpetuates cycles of poverty and exclusion. Therefore, this multilayered, intersectional exclusion phenomenon signals the urgent need for systemic changes to tackle both relative poverty and landlessness.

To tackle urban marginalization, comprehensive interventions are needed. These approaches also need to be able to identify informal settlements, integrate the poorest districts into integrated city plans, and provide cheap people's housing (Handayani, 2007). Furthermore, infrastructure (such as efficient drainage systems and waste management) is also necessary to enhance the living environment of informal settlements. Inclusive urban policy and practice in which marginalization groups are included in decision-making have also been shown to be relevant for social inclusion and equity production (Panudju, 1999).

As the purpose of this study deals with the experience of landless and informal settlement communities of their residents in Nepal, this paper examines the socio-economic consequences of not having citizenship certificates. It also investigates into the systemic obstacles that disable these people from attaining citizenship, such as poverty, geographic exclusion, and discriminatory administrative practices. Moreover, consideration of the wider consequences of this anomaly across the domains of education, employment, housing, and political activity is also provided in this paper. Thus, to understand the relationship between landlessness and citizenship denial, the present study seeks to contribute to a better understanding of this complex issue, and therefore, to guide the policy for protecting the rights and dignity of excluded communities in Nepal.

2.   Literature Review

2·1 Sociology of Citizenship

The idea of citizenship has a key role in sociology because it unites the rights of the individual with the obligations of society within the system of governance and collective flourishing. As citizenship is a sociological phenomenon that goes far beyond the strict definition in law, it involves a dynamic relationship between rights, responsibilities, and societal membership. According to Janowitz (1980), the maintenance of this balance between these dimensions is important for the stability of democratic values and the promotion of equity.

2·1·1 Citizenship as a Balance of Rights and Obligations

Obligations and Rights critique the prevailing tendency in Western democracies to prioritize the expansion of citizen rights at the expense of obligations. Because he argues that the essence of

citizenship lies in maintaining a balance between these two facets, he asserts that democratic citizenship is fundamentally about "ruling and being ruled" (Janowitz, 1980 : 3). This duality underpins a functioning democracy, where individuals are not merely beneficiaries of rights but also active contributors to the welfare of their communities.

Janowitz is based heavily on the writings of Aristotle and T.H. Marshall, meanwhile, presents their ideas to cope with the changing issues of citizenship in modern industrial societies. Even if, in both works, the definition of Aristotle's conception of citizenship involved an important notion of "being in charge", Marshall's conceptualization of citizenship described a dialectical evolution of citizenship through civil, political, and social rights. Nevertheless, Janowitz criticizes Marshall's method of not giving enough weight to the dimension of "obligations", because it leaves the notion of citizenship too bare, and too individualistic.

2·1·2 The Role of Institutions in Shaping Citizenship

Janowitz investigates the institutional conditions that permit or prevent the fulfillment of citizen rights. Although he emphasizes the essential functions of education, taxation, military service, and voluntary organization as means by which the duties of citizenship can be performed, he observes that education is both a right and a duty to equip people for civic engagement. Analogously, taxation and military service are the involuntary components of duties, which, when performed with knowledge and honesty, help maintain social order. According to Janowitz, electoral participation is not enough in terms of nurturing lively citizenship in the processes of contemporary democracy. Thus, he also argues for greater participation in voluntary organizations and industrial relations, which he calls "industrial citizenship", to redress social inequality and expand civic participation.

Janowitz offers an applicable theoretical framework for understanding the socio-economic off-limits and marginalization of the landless population in urban Nepal. Due to his focus on the relationship between rights and duties within citizenship that is framed for the needs of these communities—which are often deprived of basic rights, such as land ownership, political power, and social integration—it is clear that structural restrictions prevent them from

meeting their civic duties. As these groups are further marginalized by the lack of the following institutional supports, namely, schooling, work, and decision-making within the community, Janowitz's elegance lies in emphasizing the importance of institution-based change, in the form of voluntary associations, collective mobilization, and inclusive civic engagement, to break the cycle. Although his critique of the imbalance in citizenship underscores the importance of creating pathways for landless communities to assert their identity and contribute actively to society, it also moves beyond the narrative of dependency. Focusing on structural injustice and empowerment, this framework provides an in-depth analysis of how urban marginalization can be countered and positions itself as a powerful perspective for exploring the denial of identity and socioeconomic rights of marginalized populations in Nepal.

2·1·3 Citizenship Denial and Marginalization

The problem of socio-economic marginalization and exclusion of landless communities in urban Nepal can also be approached from the theoretical perspective of citizenship denial and interaction with structural deprivations. This framework, as described by McKeever (2007), enables us to gain important insights into the systemic obstacles that drive exclusion in transitional or conflict societies and constitutes an ideal prism through which to view the experience of Nepal's landless communities.

2·1·4 Citizenship and Its Denial

Although citizenship, as defined by T.H. Marshall (1963), rights to civil, political, and social rights that allow men and women to be fully integrated into society, denial of citizenship through legal, social, or structural means, has the effect of depriving men and women of their capacity to claim rights. As a result, they are therefore cut off from the social and political field of their societies. McKeever (2007) points out that citizenship denial is not just a legal question but a system issue that includes poverty, lack of recognition, and exclusion from state benefits and state protection. Due to that disruption, landless communities are disenfranchised from the potential for basic rights and access, such as housing, education, and economic security, from the lack of formal landownership in Nepal, too often unfortunately, means the absence of formal legal identity.

2·1·5 Marginalization Through Structural Inequalities

Marginalization as analyzed by McKeever, derived from political ex-prisoner research in Northern Ireland, occurs as a consequence of state and self-disenfranchisement. As state exclusion is formulated in law and regulation, that is, denial of issuing citizenship documents or reason, land use title, it necessarily means the barring of access to the wider social sphere. For instance, peasant communities, landless, are systematically marginalized from the state benefits or rights that citizenship typically accords to them. This is analogous to the lived experience of disadvantaged communities in Northern Ireland, where social disadvantage generates virtuous cycles of marginalization and deprivation (McKeever, 2007).

In addition, McKeever characterizes poverty as the core impediment to social inclusion, stressing how the causal effect of systemic deprivation is not just to deepen social inequalities, but to perpetuate marginalization. In the Nepali landless communities where poverty and denial of citizenship are a reflection of the process of illusory identity, the absence of legal identity limits schooling, work, and social welfare scheme opportunities, creating cyclical social-economic exclusion.

2·1·6 Social Citizenship as a Path to Inclusion

For McKeever (2007) social citizenship, focused on entitlement to welfare, education, and economic security, is both a necessary condition and a foundation for both inclusion and for addressing systemic exclusion. Because of the rapid urban and socioeconomic change of transitional societies like Nepal, some segments are left behind in this change. Therefore, social citizenship offers a pragmatic pathway toward integration. The requirements of Nepal's landless portions must be addressed through powerful interventions, i.e., social welfare policies, inclusive urban governance, and citizenship documents that will keep this population from becoming alienated.

2·1·7 Recognition and the Role of the State

Denial of citizenship is always connected to the ineffectiveness of the state to constitute, that is, to acknowledge. As McKeever (2007) argues that recognition is central to citizenship-justifying people's claims to rights and benefits-it is not so surprising that it continues to foster exclusion. Due to the lack of formal land entitlement in Nepal, the "undisclosed" status of the landless group

is common and they are excluded from State service as well as mainstream social recognition. As this situation is mirrored by the experience of marginalized social groups in Northern Ireland, in which the inattentiveness of the state to the political legitimacy of ex-prisoners deprived them of access to social and political inclusion, Nepal's landless communities need recognition by way of legal reforms and inclusive policies to dismantle systemic barriers.

2·1·8 Implications for Socio-Economic Exclusion in Nepal

If McKeever's theoretical model is applied to the case study of Nepal's landless people, the rather obvious truth emerges that citizenship denial, structural disadvantage, and socio-economic pauperism are inextricably linked. Although it also highlights the importance of breaking down the structural obstacles in the legal and policy field to advance inclusion, social citizenship, as defined by McKeever, represents a tool to overcome the socio-economical marginalization of landless people. Therefore, it also points to the critical role of state accountability and state action towards exclusion.

Therefore, the theoretical framework suggested by McKeever (2007) may be considered an especially relevant theoretical model for investigating the socio-economic marginality and exclusion of landless people in urban Nepal. Since it reveals how citizenship denial contributes to the perpetuation of structural inequality and how social citizenship can become a way for inclusion, policymakers may start to break down the systemic mechanisms sustaining exclusion by way of overcoming citizenship barriers and acknowledging the rights of excluded social groups.

3.   Research Site and Methodology

This study focused on individuals living in landless and informal settlement communities within the Kathmandu Valley, specifically targeting areas of Thapathali, Ramhiti, Sankhamol, Sinamangal, Manohara, and Bansighat. As these communities were intentionally drawn to offer rich and relevant information about landlessness and the issue of the absence of citizenship certificates, an explorative and descriptive study design was used to examine this phenomenon. Despite enabling greater insight into the socio-economic reality, coping strategies, and systemic barriers of these disadvantaged groups, the same also highlighted the urgently needed, inclusive policy measures.
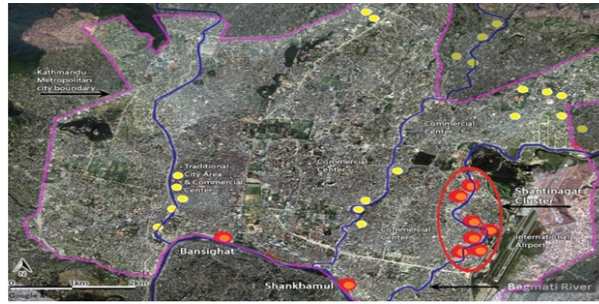
Figure-1 : Map showing the location of squatter settlements in Kathmandu Valley, Nepal (Thapathali, Ramhiti, Sankhamol, Sinamangal, Manohara, Bansighat, and others). Map data: © Google, Airbus, Technologies.

Similarly, using a purposive sampling method from the universe, a total of 30 families were selected, with a mixed representation of their backgrounds to provide valuable contributions to the study. The data were collected through face-to-face interviews, tabulated, and analyzed using simple statistical tools and techniques. As the protection of respondents' confidentiality, the informed consent, and the withdrawal of the participants in case of their discomfort in the process have been given priority, the present study followed the best ethical practices.

4. Data Presentation and Interpretation

4·1 Ethnicity of Respondents

Ethnicity is an important factor in analyzing socio-economic marginalization in Nepal, mostly found among landless individuals. This is because citizenship is closely linked to land administration and family records, which are hampered by disadvantaged marginalized ethnic groups in Nepal. The following table shows the ethnic breakdown of the respondents and provides insight into the disproportionate experience of a particular community's denial of citizenship:

Table-1 : Ethnicity of Respondents

Ethnicity	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Janajati	14	47.0
Dalit	8	27.0
Madhesi	1	3.0
Other	7	23.0
Total	**30**	**100.0**

Source : Field Survey, 2024.

The data depicted in Table-1 show that Janajati 47% and Dalits 27% form the majority of respondents without citizenship certificates, reflecting their disproportionate exclusion. The lower percentage of Madhesi respondents is 3%. The "Other" group 23% represents other marginalized ethnic groups, demonstrating that social reality denial of citizenship is a problem faced by a broad spectrum of communities, although its disproportionate impact is observed among Janajati and Dalit populations. These results reveal the systemic character of citizenship denial in Nepal.

4·2   Gender Disparity in Citizenship Access

The denial of citizenship disproportionately affects women due to deeply entrenched patriarchal norms and gendered legal frameworks. Women at risk of statelessness are usually denied access to education, the labor market, health, and property rights, trapping them in socio-economic precariousness. These legal and social obstacles are considerably more difficult for women than for men to obtain a legal identity. Table-2 shows the gender breakdown of respondents, and clearly shows how deep the over-representation is and the systematized gender-biased exclusion of women resulting from their efforts to obtain citizenship.

Table-2 : Gender Disparity in Citizenship Access

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Women	23	77.0
Men	7	23.0
Total	**30**	**100.0**

Source : Field Survey, 2024.

Data depicted in the above table reveal that 77% of the respondents denied citizenship are women, while men account for only 23%. This drastic difference reflects the ingrained gender-differentiated exclusion from Nepal's citizenship regime. Women's dependency on male family members for documentation not only delays but often entirely blocks their ability to secure legal identity. This is especially the case for women living in landless or marginal areas where access to resources and social capital is to a greater extent already restricted.

4·3   Access to Financial Services

Access to formal financial services is a key channel for fostering socio-economic inclusion and stability. Without access to basic

financial instruments like bank accounts, loans, and credit, individuals are unable to secure financial independence or invest in opportunities for growth, such as education, entrepreneurship, or property acquisition. In Nepal, citizenship is a prerequisite for opening a bank account, applying for loans, and participating in cooperative savings systems. Financial barriers faced by respondents based on citizenship denial category are described in the following table, including the severe barriers that respondents face in accessing formal financial systems.

Table-3 : Access to Financial Services

Access to Financial Services	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Cannot open bank account	18	60.0
Denied loans	10	33.0
Rely on informal savings groups	4	13.0
Total	**30**	**100.0**

Source : Field Survey, 2024.

Data contained in the above table show that 60% of respondents are unable to open bank accounts, which significantly limits their ability to save securely or access basic financial services. Without bank accounts, these people are financially excluded from formal economic systems and thus are deprived of the possibility of receiving government subsidies, managing their savings, and accessing secure payment systems. This exclusion further perpetuates their socio-economic marginalization.

Further, 33% of respondents have declined loans, which points to another significant implication of lost citizenship. Without access to credit, these individuals cannot invest in small businesses, education, or housing, which are essential for improving their quality of life and breaking the cycle of poverty. The absence of formal financial access often forces them to resort to informal savings groups or very high-interest moneylenders, which can have the effect of perpetuating economic exploitation. Formal financial services are limited, although informal savings groups are used by only 13% of respondents, nor are they secure and provide the potential of formal financial services.

4·4 Impact on Children's Education

The denial of citizenship has significant consequences for children, most notably with respect to their access to education, a

fundamental right and a tool for the interruption of cycles of poverty and exclusion. Citizenship certificates and/or birth certificates are commonly needed to enroll in a school, sit for an examination, or receive an educational certificate in Nepal. Children from landless/dispossessed families who are without citizenship can be exposed to a confluence of disadvantageous circumstances. The following table provides a detailed description of the educational issues that the families have to deal with, as their families are facing in the country without citizenship:

Table-4 : Impact on Children's Education

Educational Impact on Children	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Denied admission due to no ID	9	30.0
Unable to take exams	11	37.0
Dropped out of school	10	33.0
Total	**30**	**100.0**

Source : Field Survey, 2024.

The above table reveals that 37% of children from families without citizenship are unable to sit for exams, despite being enrolled in schools. Furthermore, 33% of children are forced to leave school because of systemic discrimination and the stigmatization of being undocumented. But not only does the negligence of the dropout cease to be individual personal development, but the victim's level of personal exploitation also increases, for example, through child labor or poverty. A particularly notable result is that 30% of children are denied entry to schools because they are not able to produce ID documents. This blanket refusal of access to education keeps them voiceless and without human rights and without the possibilities to seize a better future.

4·5 Psychosocial Effects of Statelessness

Statelessness caused by the deprivation of citizenship has deep and long-lasting psychosocial consequences that go beyond the need for access to socio-economic opportunities. Uncertainty about the fate of those without formal identity can lead to a high burden of mental health problems. The fear of not receiving essential services, the lack of the possibility to plan an everyday life on an individual scale, and the social stigma of being undocumented lead to increased levels of anxiety and stress. Beyond the personal difficulties, stateless people

often experience social alienation. They can also be labeled as outsiders or illegitimate, not only damaging to the self-esteem but also disrupting the ability to establish a firm foothold in society. This disenfranchisement fosters feelings of isolation and powerlessness, which in turn aggravates their mental health conditions. As illustrated in the following table-5, the psychosocial impact reported by respondents is classified according to the emotional and social consequences of statelessness.

Table-5 : Psychosocial Effects of Statelessness

Psychosocial Effect	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Anxiety about future	12	40.0
Social stigma	10	33.0
Depression or stress	8	27.0
Total	**30**	**100.0**

Source : Field Survey, 2024.

The above table indicates that 40% of participants reported having experienced worrying fears for the future. Social stigma was described (33% by respondents), which illustrates the discrimination and intolerance of stateless people in the society. Mental health burden through depression or stress was reported in 27% of participants, which is consistent with the mental health issue that comes with statelessness. These findings show the urgent need for psychological treatments and community-based interventions to reduce the psychological distress of statelessness.

4·6 Political Exclusion

Citizenship is embedded in political engagement, which is guaranteed to the citizen through the right to suffrage, to candidature, and to community control. However, in the case of noncitizens, these experiences are completely beyond reach, leading to political frustration and exclusion from the political process. Political exclusion has profound consequences, as it systematically erases the political identities of stateless individuals and prevents them from advocating for their rights or influencing policies that affect their lives. Table-6 classifies the level of political disenfranchisement experienced by survey respondents and describes the systemic obstacles towards political participation for those lacking in citizenship on the next page.

Table-6 : Political Exclusion

Political Exclusion	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Unable to vote	18	60.0
Excluded from community committees	8	27.0
Denied political candidacy	4	13.0
Total	**30**	**100.0**

Source : Field Survey, 2024.

The above table shows that 60% of interviewees are unregistered voters because of a lack of citizenship, effectively canceling their individual participation in electoral processes. Moreover, 27% of respondents reported being excluded from community committees, which play a critical role in local governance and resource allocation. In addition, 13% of respondents reported that they were prevented from seeking political office. These results illustrate the extensive political marginalization experienced by landless people. Being denied the right to vote, to sit on community committees, or to stand for political office means that their political identity is systematically erased and their marginalization is further cemented.

4·7   Forced Evictions

Forced evictions are a major problem in informal settlements for households that are landless. Due to the lack of legal recognition of their land or civil status, these communities get subjected to an ongoing risk of eviction, and that places them in an uncertain life characterized by vulnerability. Evictions are commonly executed without prior notice or fair process, directly displacing families from their homes and breaking their links to school, health, and work. The following table-7 analyzes the frequency and nature of eviction experiences reported by respondents and provides information on the vulnerable housing situations in the landless population.

Table-7 : Forced Evictions

Eviction Impact	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Evicted without notice	8	27.0
Constant threat of eviction	15	50.0
Relocated without compensation	7	23.0
Total	**30**	**100.0**

Source : Field Survey, 2024.

The information in table-7 shows that 50 percent of respondents live under a permanent threat of eviction, which emphasizes the precarious living situation of landless groups. Further, 27% of participants reported being unlawfully evicted, illustrating the absence of legal redress for landless individuals. A total of 23% of participants also stated that they were displaced uncompensated. The results bring to light the systemic marginalization experienced by the landless population, who are considered adventitial residents residing in these places for generations. Forced evictions not only are a violation of their right to housing, but they snatch from them their dignity and belonging feeling.

4·8 Barriers to Accessing Citizenship

Citizenship is of pivotal importance for entitlement to basic rights and services; nonetheless, the road to acquiring citizenship is full of difficulties, especially for the disadvantaged and landless communities. A large number of applicants cannot fulfill the document related requirements, like a certificate of birth or evidence of parental status entitlement, which are mandatory criteria for citizenship applications. The following table describes the type of barriers respondents have encountered, which offers a deeper insight into the systemic barriers operating within the citizenship process.

Table-8 : Barriers to Accessing Citizenship

Barrier	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lack of required documents	12	40.0
Bureaucratic delays	8	27.0
Family/spousal disapproval	6	20.0
Geographic/administrative issues	4	13.0
Total	**30**	**100.0**

Source : Field Survey, 2024.

The above table reveals that the most frequent barrier to obtaining citizenship, by which 40% of the interviewees stated that the difficulty of obtaining the necessary documents is due. Bureaucratic delays, experienced by 27% of respondents, highlight inefficiencies within the system that discourage applicants or leave their cases unresolved for extended periods. Family or marital disapproval was reported as a major obstacle by 20% of respondents, driven by the impact of patriarchal social expectations on

applications for citizenship. Geographic and administrative issues (reported by 13% of respondents) are further challenges to those in rural or remote areas.

These results shed light on the systemic issues inherent in the operation of Nepal's citizenship machinery. The blocking of these barriers requires legislative changes to ease burdens of bureaucratic record keeping, enhance administrative ease, and provide equal access to citizenship for disadvantaged segments of the population. Construction of networked service hubs and provision of mobile outreach services may help overcome geographical obstacles, and promoting public understanding of citizenship entitlements alongside challenging patriarchal practices may increase the inclusivity and fairness of the service.

4·9 Dependency on Informal Networks

The lack of legal status, i.e., citizenship, compels landless people to strongly depend on informal networks in order to satisfy their core needs. Living outside of formal financial structures, healthcare, or governmental assistance, these people are not included in stable and regulated means of provision. Consequently, they reach out to family, community organizations, or informal creditors to deal with their financial and social difficulties. Table-9 below classifies the modes of informal dependencies reported by the respondents, highlighting the unstable character of their survival strategies.

Table-9 : Type of Dependency on Informal Networks

Type of Dependency	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Borrowing from relatives	15	50.0
Informal loans (high interest)	10	33.0
Community savings groups	5	17.0
Total	**30**	**100.0**

Source : Field Survey, 2024.

The above table shows that 50 respondents rely on their relatives for financial support. Additionally, 33% of respondents reported turning to informal loans with high interest rates. Community savings groups, in which 17% of respondents participate, are one of several coping mechanisms. These results highlight the tenuous nature of the dependence of stateless individuals on informal networks, which in turn are frequently unreliable, unethical, and

abusive. To deal with this problem, specific interventions are needed to bring marginalized groups into the formal system. Policies that dissociate citizenship from financial service access (e.g., microfinance programs, inclusive banking programs) may decrease reliance on informal networks. Besides, the work done to promote the awareness of financial literacy and the development of community-based saving systems can help to develop more stable and resilient support systems for such a vulnerable group.

4·10 Community Perception of Stateless Individuals

The experience of stateless people in their community of origin significantly informs their social relations, access to resources, and quality of life in general. Statelessness is commonly, and sadly, intertwined with illegitimacy, lawlessness, or lack of contribution to society, which then results in stigmatization and exclusion in society. Such negative prejudgments impact people's self-esteem and their ability to become reintegrated into the community, thus ensuring the perpetration of the exclusion and marginalization process. Through the analysis of societal attitudes towards stateless people, the following table reveals how stigma and negative stereotypes further alienate and exclude stateless people.

Table-10 : Community Perception of Stateless Individuals

Perception	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Viewed as criminals/illegitimate	14	47.0
Seen as burden on society	10	33.0
Neutral perception	6	20.0
Total	**30**	**100.0**

Source : Field Survey, 2024.

As shown by the data in table above, 47% of respondents are viewed as criminals or illegal aliens in their own neighborhoods. Additionally, 33% of respondents reported being viewed as burdens on society. However, only 20% of respondents indicated an independent perception from their community. These results point to the pervasive social stigma of statelessness, which in turn intensifies statelessness and exclusion. The solution to these problems involves community-based awareness activities aimed at countering both stereotypes and fostering a sense of empathy for stateless people.

Further, providing platforms for stateless persons to share their stories and fight for their rights is a way to change the stereotypes in the society and therefore promote greater inclusion. Collaborative efforts between government agencies, civil society organizations, and local communities are essential to dismantle the stigma and create a supportive environment for those affected by statelessness.

4·11 Impact on Housing and Infrastructure

Access to proper housing and basic asphalting and plumbing represent basic human rights that have a direct impact on quality of life. Nevertheless, for landless communities or people without citizenship, these basics are still beyond reach. Lacking both de facto land ownership and legal/national identity, these people are generally denied access to government-funded infrastructure services, including sanitation, electricity, and housing upgrades. As a result, they are forced to rely on unsafe or informal systems, which pose significant risks to their health, safety, and overall well-being. The following table shows the challenges faced by landless individuals in accessing housing and infrastructure, illustrating the precariousness of their living conditions:

Table-11 : Challenges faced on Housing and Infrastructure

Challenge Faced	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sanitation services (shared/none)	18	60.0
No formal electricity connection	9	30.0
Unsafe housing structures	3	10.0
Total	**30**	**100.0**

Source : Field Survey, 2024.

Data in the table above reveal that 60% of respondents lack proper sanitation services, relying on shared or inadequate facilities. Furthermore, 30% of respondents reported having no formal electricity connections, underscoring the energy deprivation faced by these communities. Only 10% of respondents indicated living in unsafe housing structures, but this reflects the severity of risks faced by these individuals. The results illustrate the systemic failure to include landless and stateless people in housing and infrastructure building. These problems call for specific policy measures, i.e., the identification of informal settlements and their incorporation in

urban planning schemes. Investments in appropriately sized affordable housing, sanitation systems, and tailored energy infrastructure for marginalized populations can build these gaps. Moreover, providing legal status and citizenship to these persons would allow them to benefit from government schemes and services, thus promoting wider inclusion and better living conditions.

4·12 Coping Mechanisms and Resilience

Despite facing systemic challenges such as landlessness and statelessness, these communities demonstrate remarkable resilience and creativity in coping with their hardships. The lack of legal recognition, land ownership, and entitlement to government support forces them to explore alternative strategies for survival and livelihood. These adaptive mechanisms not only highlight their ability to persevere under difficult circumstances but also reveal the deep-rooted systemic vulnerabilities that perpetuate their exclusion. The following table categorizes these coping strategies and provides an overview of how landless communities navigate systemic exclusion and maintain their livelihoods amidst precarious living conditions:

Table-12: Coping Mechanisms and Resilience

Coping Mechanism	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Collective community efforts	12	40.0
Seeking support from NGOs	10	33.0
Relocating to avoid eviction	8	27.0
Total	**30**	**100.0**

Source : Field Survey, 2024.

As can be seen from the above table, 40% of respondents find their response relying on collective communal activities. Support from NGOs is 33% of the listed coping mechanisms, which highlights the important role NGOs play in filling in the gaps left by the state. Eviction as the reason for relocation was stated by 27% of respondents, highlighting the precariousness of these populations. These results highlight the ingenuity and adaptation of landless populations in the event of structural exclusion. Nonetheless, the use of coping mechanisms by itself is not advisable and unsustainable. The welfare issues they face can only be responded to by

government-led action, specifically secure housing initiatives, tenure-reform measures, and inclusion policies aimed at diminishing reliance on illicit systems and NGOs. Identifying and supporting collective community action and linking these communities to formal systems will strengthen their resilience and promote long-term stability.

5.   Major Findings

- Janajati (47%) and Dalit (27%) respondents face significant denial of citizenship, reflecting systemic exclusion and marginalization of these ethnic groups. The "Other" category (23%) further highlights the broader impact on marginalized communities.

- Women (77%) are disproportionately denied citizenship compared to men (23%), primarily due to patriarchal norms, legal barriers, and dependency on male family members for documentation.

- A majority (60%) cannot open bank accounts, significantly limiting their access to formal savings and financial services. Additionally, 33% are denied loans, forcing them to rely on informal, high-interest lenders.

- 37% of children are unable to sit for exams despite being enrolled, while 30% are denied school admission outright due to lack of ID. Another 33% drop out of school, perpetuating cycles of poverty and exclusion.

- Statelessness causes severe mental health challenges, with 40% experiencing anxiety about their uncertain future, 33% facing social stigma, and 27% reporting stress or depression.

- Citizenship denial prevents 60% of respondents from voting, while 27% are excluded from community-level committees, and 13% are unable to contest for political office, erasing their political voice.

- 50% of respondents live under a constant threat of eviction due to their lack of legal status. Additionally, 27% reported being evicted without notice, and 23% were displaced without receiving any compensation.

- The most significant barrier reported by 40% of respondents is the lack of required documents like birth certificates.

Bureaucratic delays (27%) and family or spousal disapproval (20%) further restrict citizenship access.

➻ A majority (60%) of respondent's lack access to proper sanitation facilities, while 30% have no formal electricity connection. Unsafe housing structures reported by 10% further exacerbate their vulnerable living conditions.

➻ Due to systemic exclusion, 50% depend on financial support from relatives, 33% turn to informal loans with high interest rates, and 17% rely on community savings groups, which are unstable and risky.

➻ Social stigma is widespread, with 47% being viewed as criminals or illegitimate and 33% seen as burdens on society. Only 20% reported neutral or non-discriminatory perceptions from their community.

➻ To adapt to systemic exclusion, 40% rely on collective community efforts, 33% seek support from NGOs, and 27% relocate to avoid eviction. These strategies, however, remain unsustainable without systemic change.

6.   Conclusion

The results of the study of landless households in urban Nepal are found to show some degree of overlap between the topic raised in the literature review and the specific characteristics of citizenship denial as it applies to the Nepali reality. Along with the plank of Janowitz's (1980) concerning the interplay between rights and obligations, the research also shows that the absence of official citizenship creates a barrier against a counteracting civic duty, which further contributes to Dalit 27% and Janajati 47% marginalization. McKeever's (2007) analyses of structural disadvantage and poverty itself as hurdles to entry are echoed in the results, especially in the cyclical impoverishment resulting from lack of education, employment, and state social welfare. Lack of access for women in the nature of citizenship access, as determined by patriarchal norms and gendered laws, fits well with McKeever's claim that state recognition lies at the heart of the achievement of equitable citizenship. These similarities point to how systemic impediments to becoming a citizen reinforce socio-economic marginalization worldwide, as has been the case for stigmatized groups in Northern Ireland and other transitional states.

On the other hand, the paper also raises some special features of the citizenship denial in Nepal that are not clearly discussed in related literature. The high overlap between land ownership and legal personhood in Nepal produces a special case of marginalization where the lack of land tenure directly excludes landless people from the entitlements of citizenship. This double marginalization, by way of landlessness and by virtue of lack of legal personality, is compounded by the historical caste system discrimination and by deep-rooted socio-cultural inequalities that disproportionately impact Dalits and women. There is a particular requirement for contextualized approaches, i.e., legal reforms, participatory urban strategies, and acknowledgment of informal areas. Through a synthesis of theoretical claims and empirical evidence, the paper highlights the need to equip minority groups for empowerment through institutional reform and equitable access to citizenship and socio-economic participation.

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