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Rural-Urban Differences in Level of Safety, Security and Violence across Provinces in Nepal

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Abstract

This paper examines public perceptions of safety alongside reported experiences of crime and violence across Nepal's provinces. It is based on the national level survey data of Nepal Living Standard Survey (NLSS) IV (2022/23). Survey data indicate that 92.3 percent of respondents feel "completely safe" or "safe" when walking alone in their village or city, reflecting strong community ties, relatively low crime rates, and cultural norms that foster collective responsibility. However, 6.3 percent report feeling only "partially safe," with notable provincial differences-Gandaki and Bagmati record the highest "completely safe" scores, while Sudurpaschim reports the highest proportion of partial safety. Victimization data reveal low overall incident rates, with asset theft (1.8%) most common, followed by psychological violence (0.7%), attacks or robbery (0.4%), physical violence (0.3%), and sexual violence (0.2%). Provincial variations show Koshi and Karnali with higher theft rates, and Sudurpaschim leading in psychological and physical violence. The findings highlight that safety is multidimensional, encompassing both the absence of violent crime and protection from non-physical harm. Addressing these issues requires a combination of formal security measures and informal, community-based strategies to sustain and enhance both the reality and perception of safety. Findings show that over 90% of respondents feel completely safe or safe, with Gandaki and Bagmati reporting the highest complete safety levels. Crime incidents are generally low nationwide, with theft and psychological violence being the most common, while serious violent crimes are rare. The results indicate a generally secure environment, though targeted measures addressing specific concerns in provinces such as Sudurpaschim and Karnali could further enhance community safety.

Keywords

Province, Rural-urban location, Safety, Security, Violence, Nepal.

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1. Introduction

In today's scientific and technological era, every society and nation strives to ensure that people can live better, more civilized, and safer lives. To achieve and sustain such safety, development efforts across communities aim not only to improve the quality of goods and services but also to create a secure living environment.

As Sindhi (2013) explains, "safe and supportive schools" are those that safeguard students' emotional, psychological, and physical well-being. Similarly, Squelch (2001:138) describes a safe school as one free from danger or potential harm—a place where teachers, learners, and staff can work, teach, and study without fear of ridicule, intimidation, harassment, humiliation, or violence. A secure school setting directly enhances learning, enabling students to grow into skilled and productive members of society.

For children's health and development, it is essential that they have access to clean drinking water, fresh air, safe and nutritious food, and a secure place to learn and play. Schools can also set an example for the wider community. A clean, well-maintained school with a positive atmosphere can strengthen the sense of belonging among students and staff, which in turn supports both health and academic achievement.

Building such an environment is a shared responsibility. Students, teachers, administrators, parents, counselors, nurses, and even kitchen staff all play a role. Schools must actively identify issues, analyze them, and make improvements. Yet, as Sindhi (2013) notes, solving one problem often brings new challenges, making this an ongoing process.

1.1 The Physical Environment

Physical environment is important for people to live safely and remain happy and satisfied. Sindhi (2013) highlights that the physical

school environment includes not only the school building itself but also everything within it-such as infrastructure, furniture, and the land it occupies-as well as the surrounding environment, including air, water, and other materials children come into contact with, along with potential hazards. Children are constantly engaging with this environment, whether they realize it or not. However, the vital role of the physical setting in supporting learning often goes overlooked.

Many classrooms remain overcrowded, unattractive, and poorly adapted to children's needs. In many cases, the physical environment is treated merely as a shelter for educational activities rather than as an active component of learning. Across numerous schools, buildings are old, poorly maintained, and uninspiring, while playgrounds or outdoor learning spaces are absent. Such conditions inevitably weaken the quality of learning, even when the curriculum itself is strong.

Meeting basic infrastructure and resource requirements, along with adopting flexible planning to better support curricular goals, should be key priorities for school leaders. This attention to the physical environment benefits nearly every aspect of school life (Sindhi, 2013).

1.2 Social Environment

Social environment can be understood in many ways. Sindhi (2013) explains that learning happens within a network of social relationships, shaped by both formal and informal interactions between teachers and students. Schools serve as shared spaces where these communities of learners-students and teachers alike-come together. The playful moments and occasional quarrels with friends in the schoolyard, the relaxed conversations on benches during breaks, the collective experience of morning assemblies and special celebrations, focused study in the classroom, the nervous flipping of pages before a test, and the excursions taken with classmates and teachers-all of these experiences weave students into a close-knit learning community (Sindhi, 2013).

1.3 Psychological Environment

The material condition of people alone is not enough for the happy and satisfied life of people. Happiness and satisfaction is what people feel and experience from their surroundings. Sindhi (2013)

describes a school's environment as the subtle yet vital thread linking the many activities that take place on campus. Though this thread is often invisible, its presence is felt by everyone. Just as safe, well-kept buildings and grounds are essential, so too are positive relationships and attitudes toward school. When a school is clean, secure, and well-maintained-and fosters a healthy psychosocial climate-it can strengthen students' and staff's sense of connection to the school. This connectedness not only supports well-being but also enhances students' academic success. The psychosocial environment reflects the collective attitudes, emotions, and values of the school community. It includes physical and emotional safety, respectful relationships, acknowledgment of individual needs and achievements, and encouragement for learning. Beyond the school's own culture, its environment can also be shaped by broader forces such as the economy, cultural and religious norms, geography, family socioeconomic status, and the influence of legal, political, and social institutions (Sindhi, 2013).

The emphasis in this paper is the role of school Principals to create a safe school environment. The school leadership is required to provide guidance to teachers and students so that they can work toward a safe school environment an environment in which students are free to learn and teachers are free to teach. Here the emphasis is on prevention as well as on intervention. School policies must do more than minimize unsafe, aggressive or violent behavior. The goal should be to develop students' character and sense of community (Sindhi, 2013).

1.4 Capacity Building Initiatives

Leadership is to this decade what standards-based reform was to the 1990's if you want large-scale sustainable reform (Fullan 2003a, b). The main mark of a successful leader is not his or her impact on the bottom line of student learning at the end of their tenure, but rather how many good leaders they leave behind who can go even further. A school principal is a leader who is expected to bring systemic reform in the school with the help of all the stakeholders (Sindhi, 2013).

Nepal Living Standard Survey (NLSS) IV (2024) shed light on the security experiences and incidence of various forms of violence across different demographics in Nepal. Focusing on general security perceptions, indicates that a majority of the population (91.9 percent)

feels either “Completely safe” or “Safe”, with only a small percentage (0.1 percent) feeling “Completely insecure”. However, there is a gender difference, with females reporting a slightly higher feeling of insecurity compared to males. This trend persists across various geographic regions and poverty levels, though the sense of insecurity is more prevalent in rural areas and among the poor. NLSS explores the specific experiences of violence across age groups. While the overall incidence of reported violence remains relatively low, there are experiences of “Sexual violence”, which is notably higher among females compared to males. Additionally, females report a higher incidence of “Mental violence” than males. These findings highlight a heightened vulnerability of females to certain types of violence. Furthermore, individuals in the 30-39 age group report the highest incidence of all forms of violence. The experience of safe feeling and violences differ by rural-urban divide across provinces of Nepal which remains still unexplored in the context of Nepal.

2. Research Objectives

This paper aims to analyze how living in different provinces of Nepal relates to individuals’ physical and psychosocial feelings about their environment. It also seeks to assess the influence of socio-demographic factors-such as provincial status and geographic location-on people’s perceptions of safety and violence across various regions. Additionally, the research examines the connection between provincial residence and perceptions of safety, exploring how feelings of security may differ depending on where individuals live. Finally, the study intends to identify regional and cultural variations in experiences related to the school environment among people from different provinces of Nepal.

3. Methodology

The concept discussed in this paper seems qualitative in nature which indicates that it requires a qualitative research approach to explore the social environment in terms of perception on safety. Data were collected through a national level household survey to capture diverse perspectives on the psychosocial and physical aspects of safe feeling in any environment. Thematic analysis would have been good to identify key patterns and themes related to safety, relationships, culture, and external influences such as socioeconomic

and cultural factors. Ethical considerations, including informed consent and confidentiality, were strictly observed throughout the research process to ensure the integrity and trustworthiness of the findings. However, this study is based on national level survey data to capture the provincial safe environment in the context of Nepal.

This study utilizes a quantitative research design based on national-level survey data collected across Nepal. The data source includes large-scale, standardized surveys that capture various indicators related to school environments, student well-being, academic achievement, and socio-demographic factors. Statistical analysis methods, such as descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis, were applied to examine relationships between school environment variables and student outcomes. The use of nationally representative data ensures the generalizability of the findings to the broader population of Nepali people. Rigorous data cleaning and validation procedures were followed to maintain accuracy and reliability throughout the analysis.

4. Study Area

In the context of Nepal's diverse provinces, creating a safe and welcoming environment in schools requires understanding how physical and social features are perceived differently by various community members—students, teachers, and parents—across regions. Just as the urban school district in Maxwell's (2000) study emphasized the importance of both safety (keeping unauthorized individuals out) and a welcoming atmosphere, schools in Nepal's provinces must consider local cultural, social, and geographic factors when designing and maintaining their facilities. The distinct needs and perceptions of each group within provincial communities influence how physical school environments contribute to feelings of safety and belonging. Recognizing these differences is essential for policymakers and educators in Nepal to develop strategies that foster inclusive, secure, and supportive learning spaces across the country's varied provincial contexts.

Nepal is divided into seven provinces, each with unique geographic, cultural, and socio-economic characteristics. From the mountainous terrains of Province 1 and Karnali Province to the more urbanized and accessible areas in Bagmati Province, these regions

differ significantly in terms of infrastructure, ethnic composition, and economic development. Province 2, for example, has a high concentration of Madhesi communities, while Gandaki Province is known for its diverse ethnic groups and tourism-driven economy. The variation across provinces influences not only access to educational resources but also the social environment within schools, shaping how students and educators experience their school settings. Understanding these provincial differences is crucial for tailoring educational policies and school facility planning to meet the distinct needs of each area.

5. Safety Environment and Security

Maxwell (2000) notes that researchers have explored how people's perceptions of physical environments relate to the characteristics assigned to the organizations occupying those spaces. Elements such as color, lighting, ambient temperature, spatial layout, indoor air quality, and the display of organizational symbols (like awards) have been linked to employee satisfaction, productivity, and feelings of achievement (Davis, 1984; Sundstrom, 1986). For instance, the arrangement of plants in a reception area affected visitors' impressions of the organization as warm and caring (Ornstein, 1992). The physical features of a location communicate meanings about the environment that shape perceptions not only of the facility itself but also of the psychological atmosphere within the organization operating there (Ornstein, 1986; Moos, 1979, as cited in Maxwell, 2000).

Lasiter and Duffy (2013) highlight a relatively recent approach to evaluating care quality and safety by focusing on patients' perceptions of their hospital experience and how these perceptions influence their responses to illness. Patients' views on the care they receive are now recognized as a distinct and important aspect of healthcare quality. Hospitalization in the U.S. can be especially intimidating for older adults, who face a complex, stressful, and often impersonal healthcare system. Beyond the institutional impersonality, patients may encounter indifferent healthcare providers during some of their most vulnerable moments. As noted, patients frequently wonder whether they are truly safe and who will support them when they need it most. These anxieties are heightened

by the healthcare system's heavy emphasis on disease, procedures, and treatments rather than on the human experience of illness, hospitalization, and the need to feel secure in a challenging environment. Nurses hold a unique role in improving hospital experiences and achieving better outcomes for older adult patients (Lasiter and Duffy, 2013).

The fact that women have greater fear about public places than men is well documented. In 1972 an American national poll found that over half of the women and only 20% of the men surveyed reported that they were afraid to walk in their neighborhoods at night (Gordon *et al.*, 1980). In 1982 a survey of 61,000 residents in seven major Canadian urban centers revealed that this same fear was expressed by 56% of women and 18% of men. Among men, those who had been the victims of robbery (23%) were most likely to be afraid. Among the women, 72% of those who had previously experienced sexual assault and 70% of robbery victims registered the highest level of fear (Solicitor General Canada, 1985). A recent poll in Ottawa further confirmed the extent of the problem when it found that a third of women are afraid to walk at night in their own neighborhoods, and almost 90% restrict their activities for self-protection (Ottawa Citizen, 1991)

Kim and Seidel (2012) examined how to create safer living environments for urban renters by investigating whether gated and fenced residential areas influence residents' actual and perceived safety. Their study also identified factors that enhance residents' feelings of safety in their neighborhoods. Data were gathered through site visits and surveys of residents in selected apartment communities, which were categorized into three types based on gate and fence control: fully gated communities with controlled access, perceived-gated communities with fences and gates but without full control, and non-gated communities lacking fences and controlled gates. The findings showed that residents in both gated and perceived-gated communities felt safer than those in non-gated ones. This underscores the role of territoriality in boosting perceived safety in apartment complexes. Interestingly, residents' safety perceptions in perceived-gated communities were statistically similar to those in fully gated communities, indicating that exclusive territorial separation from neighboring areas is not essential for ensuring residents' sense of security (Kim and Seidel, 2012).

Hynes, Skeels, and Duran (2025) highlight several important aspects of safety. They view safety not only as a fundamental part of the right to life outlined in the UNCRC but also as a crucial foundation for achieving other rights and positive outcomes. This includes both being safe and feeling safe for young people. Previous work by Richmond (1994) and others, such as Chase (2013), has explored how an individual's "primary ontological security" can be disrupted or lost when they are forced to leave their families, communities, or countries of origin. The experience of feeling "in transit" and the need to regain a sense of ontological security through everyday routines-which helps restore predictability, trust in others, and self-confidence-was clearly reflected in the accounts shared by young people.

Hynes, Skeels, and Duran (2025) emphasize that safety is critically important, reflecting on the difficult and traumatic experiences young people often endure. They highlight how many continue to carry feelings of panic and trauma upon arriving in new places. Their accounts reveal an ongoing quest for safety, encompassing physical, relational, and psychological dimensions. As discussed in earlier chapters, this pursuit of safety is deeply intertwined with political issues for these young people (Hynes, Skeels, and Duran, 2025).

Secondly, the authors address the need for protection-not just for survival, but also from abuse, harm, and future exploitation. Young people have a broad understanding of protection, which includes transnational factors and relationships that span the various places they live and move through.

Thirdly, they point out a significant lack of research on how experiences of human trafficking impact the physical, emotional, and social development of these young individuals. Acknowledging this gap, the study shifts focus toward what young people themselves believe they need to achieve healthy and meaningful development in their lives (Hynes, Skeels, and Duran, 2025).

'I am safe' and 'I feel safe'

Hynes, Skeels, and Duran (2025) emphasized that safety was a key concern for young people involved in both studies and was seen as essential for achieving their other rights and entitlements. However, as mentioned earlier in the chapter, these young people

expressed feelings of insecurity, often describing experiences of 'living in different places' and being 'in transit' before arriving in the United Kingdom, where they then had to actively seek safety. The Creating Stable Futures Positive Outcomes Framework (CSF-POF) study revealed two distinct but related goals: young people wanted to both 'be safe' and 'feel safe' in their lives. Similarly, the a Modern Slavery Core Outcomes Set (MSCOS) study highlighted that young people and ICTG staff prioritized not only being safe but also avoiding harm, resulting in the outcome statement 'I am safe and protected from harm', which is discussed further in the protection section (Hynes, Skeels, and Duran, 2025).

The concept of "human security" emerged in international discussions during the 1990s as a way to address new or more widespread risks that could impact everyone. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defined human security as encompassing both protection from ongoing threats like hunger, disease, and oppression, as well as safeguarding against sudden and disruptive changes to everyday life. Although the term "human security" was formally introduced by the UNDP in 1994, its roots can be found in earlier United Nations commissions focused on environmental issues, development, and global governance. Additionally, the Clinton administration incorporated the term frequently in foreign policy speeches during 1993 and 1994. Even before this, the 1975 Helsinki Accords had connected state security with the protection of individual human rights (Howard-Hassmann, 2012).

Holley and Steiner (2005) describe a "safe space" in the classroom as an environment where students feel confident to take risks, express their views openly, and engage in examining their own knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. This notion of safety focuses less on physical security and more on protecting students from psychological or emotional harm. As Boostrom (1988: 399) points out, it involves guarding against the kinds of harm people may experience in society-or, within the classroom, from teachers and peers. In such a space, students are encouraged to express their individuality freely, even when their perspectives or identities differ sharply from those of the instructor, the academic community, or fellow students (Holley & Steiner, 2005).

Burdick-Will (2013) introduced new perspectives by noting that several alternative explanations could challenge the presumed causal

link between school violent crime and student achievement. A major concern is the possibility that lower-achieving students are disproportionately enrolled in schools with higher rates of violence. Such selection effects are a persistent challenge when assessing the impact of school environments (see Lauen & Gaddis, 2013), but they are particularly relevant here because the students themselves may be involved in committing these crimes. Indeed, one of the few rigorous quantitative studies on the relationship between reported violent crime and academic performance-Grogger's (1997) analysis based on principals' reports of teacher-student conflict-suggests that selection bias could be a significant issue (as cited in Burdick-Will, 2013).

Burdick-Will (2013) explored the idea of safety in educational settings, noting that academic outcomes differ greatly among U.S. schools. Many low-performing schools-particularly in Chicago-face high levels of violent crime on campus. Such frequent exposure to violence may significantly influence the educational experiences of already disadvantaged students. However, measuring the impact of school violence on learning is challenging due to potential selection bias and the overlap with other school-level issues. Drawing on detailed crime reports from the Chicago Police Department, comprehensive administrative records from Chicago Public Schools, and school climate surveys conducted by the Consortium on Chicago School Research (2002-2010), the study used changes in violent crime rates within schools over time to assess their effect on achievement. School and neighborhood fixed-effects models revealed that violent crime rates negatively affect test scores but not grades. This suggests the impact is more likely linked to reduced learning caused by cognitive stress and classroom disruptions rather than to changes in perceived safety, overall school climate, or disciplinary practices.

Burdick-Will (2018) examines research indicating that exposure to neighborhood violence affects students' classroom behavior and engagement. Because schooling is inherently social, such effects can extend beyond the directly affected individuals, influencing their classmates' learning as well. Using detailed administrative data from five cohorts of Chicago Public School students (2002-2010), crime records from the Chicago Police Department, and school-level surveys by the University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research, the study evaluates the magnitude of this peer effect. Findings show a significant negative relationship between peers' exposure to neighborhood violent crime and individual academic

achievement, even after controlling for other peer characteristics and student fixed effects. Survey data suggest that these impacts are linked to issues of trust, discipline, and safety in cohorts with higher proportions of students from violent neighborhoods.

Burdick-Will (2018) notes that neighborhood-effects research has traditionally focused on demographic differences-such as poverty rates-and highlighted how geographic and cultural isolation can socialize youth into subcultural, anti-academic norms while limiting access to the material and institutional resources necessary for academic success (see Johnson, 2012; Sampson, Morenoff, & Gannon-Rowley, 2002). More recent studies have shifted attention from poverty alone to examining how local exposure to violent crime influences educational outcomes. For instance, Sharkey (2010) found that neighborhood homicides are linked to short-term declines in standardized test performance, while Harding (2009) demonstrated that violent-crime rates account for much of the relationship between neighborhood socioeconomic disadvantage and high school graduation rates. Burdick-Will (2016) reported that early exposure to neighborhood violence is associated with slower test score growth through high school, and Schwartz *et al.* (2016) showed that repeated exposure to local violence produces increasingly large declines in test scores.

6. Rural-urban Differences in Safety, Security & Violence across Provinces of Nepal

Provincial safety, security, and violence in Nepal vary considerably across regions, reflecting differences in geography, governance capacity, socio-economic conditions, and local conflicts. While most provinces enjoy relative peace, challenges persist in the form of petty crimes, occasional political unrest, gender-based violence, and disputes over resources or borders. Weak law enforcement capacity, limited infrastructure in remote areas, and socio-political tensions can undermine security, particularly in rural and marginalized communities. Strengthening provincial policing, community engagement, and judicial systems is essential to ensure safety and address both the causes and consequences of violence. The feelings among peoples living different provinces of Nepal is presented in Table-1 on next page.

Table-1: Safe Feeling while Walking Alone in the Village/City across Provinces (10 Years and Above)

Province	Rural-Urban	Experiences of Safe Feeling Among Individuals (%)					Total
		Completely safe	Safe	Partially safe	Insecure	Completely insecure	
Koshi	Other urban	31.8	57.3	8.5	2.3	0.0	100.0
	Rural	27.7	63.3	6.7	2.0	0.3	100.0
	Total	30.4	59.4	7.9	2.2	0.1	100.0
Madhesh	Other urban	18.8	75.9	4.1	1.2		100.0
	Rural	19.5	73.6	5.6	1.2		100.0
	Total	19.0	75.3	4.5	1.2		100.0
Bagmati	Kathm- andu	30.2	62.0	6.9	0.8		100.0
	Other urban	30.6	60.4	8.2	0.7	0.2	100.0
	Rural	31.3	60.8	6.8	1.1		100.0
	Total	30.5	61.3	7.3	0.8	0.0	100.0
Gandaki	Other urban	34.9	58.0	6.6	0.4		100.0
	Rural	38.1	54.7	6.0	1.2		100.0
	Total	35.9	57.0	6.4	0.7		100.0
Lumbini	Other urban	18.8	73.5	6.7	0.3	0.7	100.0
	Rural	13.9	77.8	7.5	0.8		100.0
	Total	16.8	75.2	7.0	0.5	0.4	100.0
Karnali	Other urban	20.5	72.6	4.9	1.9	0.0	100.0
	Rural	17.2	77.2	3.5	2.1	0.1	100.0
	Total	19.0	74.7	4.3	2.0	0.1	100.0

Sudur- paschim	Other urban	19.1	71.4	7.6	1.7	0.1	100.0
	Rural	15.9	65.9	14.2	3.7	0.3	100.0
	Total	18.0	69.5	9.9	2.4	0.2	100.0
	Kathm- andu	30.2	62.0	6.9	0.8		100.0
	Other urban	24.2	67.9	6.5	1.2	0.2	100.0
	Rural	22.3	69.0	7.1	1.5	0.1	100.0
Total		24.4	67.5	6.7	1.2	0.1	100.0

Source: Computed from NLSS IV (2022/23) Data Set (The results in the table are weighted)

The data reveal that perceptions of safety across Nepal are generally high, with 92.3 percent of respondents reporting that they feel either “completely safe” or “safe” when walking alone in their village or city. Only 1.3 percent of respondents feel insecure or completely insecure, suggesting that, at a national level, public safety is not perceived as a significant threat. This overall sense of security can be understood through a sociological lens as the product of strong community ties, low crime rates in many rural and semi-urban areas, and cultural norms that promote collective responsibility and informal community monitoring. Nevertheless, the presence of 6.3 percent who feel only “partially safe” points to underlying vulnerabilities, which may be linked to harassment, theft, inadequate infrastructure, or social divisions.

Provincial variations are notable. Gandaki (35.8%) and Bagmati (30.8%) report the highest proportions of individuals feeling “completely safe”, likely reflecting better infrastructure, stronger governance, and targeted safety measures, particularly in tourism-dependent regions. By contrast, provinces such as Madhesh, Lumbini, and Karnali report high levels of “safe” responses (above 75%) but lower “completely safe” scores, suggesting a more cautious sense of security. This could stem from social tensions, day-night differences in safety, or perceived risks from localized disputes. Sudurpaschim stands out with the highest “partially safe” rate (10.6%), indicating greater public concern, potentially linked to geographic isolation, weaker policing, and cross-border vulnerabilities, as well as entrenched gender norms that limit women’s mobility.

The small but present levels of insecurity in provinces such as Sudurpaschim (2.4%) and Koshi (2.3%) further underscore that safety concerns are not entirely absent. Importantly, insecurity in the Nepali context is not always linked to criminal activity alone—it may also arise from environmental hazards, poor lighting, inadequate public facilities, or experiences of harassment. Gender is an important implicit factor, as women in patriarchal societies often face restrictions on movement and heightened concerns about public safety, even in objectively secure environments.

From a social capital perspective, areas with strong bonding social capital—characterized by close community relationships—may maintain a sense of safety without substantial formal policing. However, where bridging social capital is weaker, and trust between different social, ethnic, or caste groups is low, the likelihood of reporting “complete” safety declines. Overall, while the perception of safety is encouragingly high, provincial disparities highlight the importance of localized safety strategies that strengthen infrastructure, build social trust, and ensure inclusivity in public spaces.

Across Nepal’s provinces, the majority of individuals reported feeling either “completely safe” or “safe,” with notable variations by region and settlement type. Gandaki Province recorded the highest proportion of respondents feeling “completely safe” (35.9%), particularly in rural areas (38.1%), followed by Bagmati (30.5%) and Koshi (30.4%). In contrast, Madhesh (19.0%), Lumbini (16.8%), Karnali (19.0%), and Sudurpaschim (18.0%) showed lower levels of complete safety. Rural areas in Gandaki, Bagmati, and Koshi tended to report slightly higher “completely safe” feelings than their urban counterparts, while the reverse was true in Madhesh and Sudurpaschim. Feelings of insecurity were generally low nationwide (around 1-2%), though Sudurpaschim’s rural population had the highest proportion of “partially safe” or “insecure” responses (14.2% and 3.7%, respectively). Overall, 91.9% of people across Nepal expressed feeling safe to some extent (either “completely safe” or “safe”), indicating a generally high sense of security despite regional and rural-urban disparities.

The Chi-square test results indicate a highly significant association between the province and how safe individuals feel when walking alone in their village or city (Pearson Chi-Square = 4,629,569.505, $df = 24$, $p < 0.001$). The likelihood ratio and linear-by-linear association tests also confirm this significance, with

p-values less than 0.001. These results suggest that perceptions of safety vary significantly across provinces. Additionally, the test assumptions were met, as no cells had an expected count less than 5, ensuring the validity of the Chi-square analysis.

Another important aspect of safety involves theft, robbery, and violence, all of which are closely linked to the overall safety environment. Understanding people's experiences is essential for explaining incidents of insecurity in any setting. The Nepal Living Standards Survey also captures such experiences. Table 2 presents data on incidents including asset theft, attacks or robbery, physical violence, psychological violence, and sexual violence.

Table-2: Experiences of Stolen, Robbery and Violence

Province	Rural-Urban	Cash or Asset Stolen	Attack or Robbery	Physical violence	Psychological violence	Sexual violence
Koshi	Other urban	2.8	.4	.3	1.3	.1
	Rural	1.6	.3	.3	.8	.1
	Total	2.4	.4	.3	1.1	.1
Madhesh	Other urban	1.9	.6	.2	.7	.2
	Rural	1.6	.3	.4	.6	.2
	Total	1.9	.5	.3	.7	.2
Bagmati	Kathmandu	2.5	.2	.2	.4	.1
	Other urban	1.8	.5	.6	1.4	.5
	Rural	1.3	.3	.3	.8	.3
	Total	2.1	.3	.4	.8	.3
Gandaki	Other urban	1.0	.2	.1	.4	.0
	Rural	.7	.4	.2	.5	.3
	Total	.9	.3	.2	.4	.1
Lumbini	Other urban	2.5	.6	.5	.9	.3
	Rural	1.3	.2	.2	.6	.0
	Total	2.1	.4	.4	.8	.2
Karnali	Other urban	1.5	.2	.3	.8	.0
	Rural	3.3	.6	.5	1.0	.3
	Total	2.3	.4	.4	.9	.2

Sudur- paschim	Other urban	2.2	.7	.6	1.9	.4
	Rural	1.6	.7	.7	1.1	.2
	Total	2.0	.7	.6	1.6	.3
	Kathmandu	2.5	.2	.2	.4	.1
	Other urban	2.1	.5	.4	1.0	.2
	Rural	1.5	.3	.3	.7	.2
Total		2.0	.4	.3	.9	.2

Source: Computed from NLSS IV (2022/23) Data Set (The results in the table are weighted)

Nationally, reported incidents of crime and violence remain low, with asset theft (1.8%) being the most common experience, followed by psychological violence (0.7%), attacks or robbery (0.4%), physical violence (0.3%), and sexual violence (0.2%). These low rates suggest a relatively secure social environment, yet they also highlight subtle forms of harm-particularly psychological violence-that may not receive the same attention as physical crimes but can have lasting effects on well-being.

Provincial variations are modest but meaningful. Koshi (2.4%) and Karnali (2.3%) record the highest levels of asset theft, which may reflect weaker property security systems or greater exposure to opportunistic crime. Sudurpaschim shows the highest level of psychological violence (1.3%) and also leads in physical violence (0.5%), suggesting deeper social tensions that could stem from poverty, geographic isolation, or entrenched local conflicts. Gandaki reports the lowest rates across nearly all categories, aligning with its relatively high perception of safety in other measures, possibly due to stronger social cohesion and lower population density.

Incidences of crime and violence reported in the past year were relatively low nationwide, with theft being the most common. Nationally, 2.0% of individuals reported cash or asset theft, followed by psychological violence (0.9%), physical violence (0.3%), attack or robbery (0.4%), and sexual violence (0.2%). Provincial differences were notable: theft was highest in Karnali's rural areas (3.3%) and Sudurpaschim's urban areas (2.2%), while Gandaki had the lowest theft rates (0.9% overall). Psychological violence peaked in Sudurpaschim (1.6%), especially in urban areas (1.9%), whereas sexual violence, though rare, was most frequently reported in Bagmati's other urban areas (0.5%) and Karnali's rural areas (0.3%).

Rural-urban patterns varied, with rural Karnali showing higher theft and physical violence rates than its urban counterpart, while urban Sudurpaschim experienced higher psychological violence. Overall, serious violent crimes such as sexual violence, physical assault, and robbery were uncommon, but the prevalence of theft and psychological violence suggests these remain the main security concerns in Nepal.

From a sociological perspective, these patterns underline that safety is multidimensional, encompassing not only the absence of violent crime but also protection from emotional harm and everyday theft. Addressing these issues requires both formal interventions—such as improved policing and infrastructure—and informal mechanisms, including strengthening community networks and promoting social trust.

7. Discussion

As mentioned in Economic and Political Weekly (2013), in both instances, in Delhi and Mumbai, the media drummed up demands for stronger punishment and better policing. Yet, the perception of safety by women is not linked only with minded conduct have disappeared. From small violations to the law and policing, although these are important components. Effective laws implemented with rigour can certainly act as a deterrent and encourage the victims of crime to turn to the law with the confidence that there will be justice. The converse also true, that the abuse of effective laws and poor policing encourages lawlessness. Yet, there are crimes committed in countries with more effective policing than in India. So clearly, better law enforcement alone cannot make women feel safe.

As highlighted by Economic and Political Weekly (2013), public perceptions of safety, particularly for women, cannot be secured solely through stronger laws and better policing. While rigorous law enforcement can deter crime and instill confidence in victims to seek justice, its misuse or poor implementation fosters lawlessness, and even in countries with highly effective policing, crimes persist. This indicates that safety is shaped by a broader set of social and cultural factors beyond legal measures. In Nepal, survey findings reveal a generally high sense of security, with 92.3 percent of respondents feeling “completely safe” or “safe” when walking alone in their locality. This confidence appears rooted in strong community bonds, low crime rates in many areas, and cultural norms that emphasize

collective responsibility. However, variations across provinces highlight that perceptions of safety are nuanced and context-specific. Higher “completely safe” ratings in Gandaki (35.8%) and Bagmati (30.8%) may be linked to better infrastructure and governance, while provinces like Madhesh, Lumbini, and Karnali-despite high “safe” scores-reflect a degree of caution, possibly tied to localized disputes or differing risks between day and night. Sudurpaschim’s relatively high “partially safe” figure (10.6%) suggests that geographic isolation, weaker policing, and gendered mobility constraints also influence perceptions. These findings reinforce that while effective laws are necessary, they must be supported by community trust, cultural cohesion, and equitable access to safety in order to create a lasting sense of security.

8. Conclusions

Survey results indicate that perceptions of safety in Nepal are generally high, with 92.3 percent of respondents feeling either “completely safe” or “safe” when walking alone in their village or city. This widespread sense of security can be attributed to strong community ties, relatively low crime rates in many regions, and cultural norms promoting collective responsibility. However, 6.3 percent of respondents report feeling only “partially safe”, reflecting underlying concerns related to harassment, theft, inadequate infrastructure, or social tensions.

Provincial differences are evident. Gandaki (35.8%) and Bagmati (30.8%) report the highest “completely safe” scores, likely due to better infrastructure and governance. Provinces such as Madhesh, Lumbini, and Karnali show high “safe” ratings but fewer “completely safe” responses, suggesting cautious perceptions of safety, possibly linked to localized disputes or day-night differences in risk. Sudurpaschim records the highest “partially safe” proportion (10.6%), which may stem from geographic isolation, weaker policing, and gender-related mobility restrictions.

While insecurity levels are low nationwide, they are not absent, and perceptions are shaped by both environmental and social factors. From a sociological perspective, strengthening physical infrastructure, fostering trust across social groups, and creating inclusive public spaces are essential for sustaining and enhancing this sense of safety.

Survey findings reveal that public perceptions of safety in Nepal are generally high, with 92.3 percent of respondents feeling either “completely safe” or “safe” when walking alone in their village or city. This broad sense of security likely reflects strong community ties, relatively low crime rates in many areas, and cultural norms that promote collective responsibility and informal surveillance. Nevertheless, 6.3 percent report feeling only “partially safe”, indicating the presence of underlying vulnerabilities, such as harassment, inadequate infrastructure, or social tensions. Provincial variations are evident: Gandaki (35.8%) and Bagmati (30.8%) record the highest “completely safe” scores, possibly due to better infrastructure and governance. In contrast, Sudurpaschim has the highest share of respondents feeling only “partially safe” (10.6%), which may be linked to geographic isolation, weaker policing, and gender-related mobility restrictions.

When compared to actual experiences of victimization, the data support the generally positive safety perceptions. Nationally, asset theft (1.8%) is the most reported incident, followed by psychological violence (0.7%), attacks or robbery (0.4%), physical violence (0.3%), and sexual violence (0.2%). Although these rates are low, they reveal that certain provinces face localized challenges. Koshi (2.4%) and Karnali (2.3%) record the highest theft rates, suggesting vulnerabilities in property security. Sudurpaschim stands out with the highest levels of psychological (1.3%) and physical (0.5%) violence, pointing to possible social tensions rooted in economic hardship, isolation, or entrenched interpersonal conflicts. Gandaki reports the lowest rates across nearly all categories, aligning with its higher levels of perceived safety.

In conclusion, the data indicate that a strong majority of people in Nepal feel safe in their communities, with over nine in ten reporting feeling either completely safe or safe. However, this general sense of security coexists with some variation across provinces and between rural and urban areas, particularly in levels of complete safety. Reported incidents of crime and violence are relatively rare, with theft and psychological violence being the most prevalent concerns, while severe crimes such as sexual violence, physical assault, and robbery remain uncommon. Provinces such as Gandaki and Bagmati exhibit higher feelings of safety and lower crime rates, whereas areas like Sudurpaschim and Karnali show more mixed results, including higher partial insecurity and localized spikes in certain offenses.

These findings suggest that while Nepal enjoys an overall favorable security climate, targeted interventions addressing theft and psychological violence, especially in specific regions, could further strengthen public safety and well-being.

From a sociological perspective, these patterns underscore that safety is multidimensional. While violent crime is rare, non-physical forms of harm-particularly psychological violence-can significantly influence well-being and community trust. Effective safety enhancement therefore requires both formal measures, such as improved policing and infrastructure, and informal mechanisms, including stronger community networks, inclusive public spaces, and trust-building across social groups. Strengthening both the reality and perception of safety will be essential for fostering social cohesion and sustaining public confidence in community life.

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