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Aims and Scope

The Journal of National Development (JND) is an interdisciplinary bi-annual peer reviewed & refereed international journal committed to the ideals of a 'world community' and 'universal brotherhood'. The Journal is a joint effort of like- minded scholars in the field of social research. Its specific aims are to identify, to understand and to help the process of nation-building within the framework of a 'world community' and enhance research across the social sciences (Sociology, Anthropology, Political Science, Psychology, History, Geography, Education, Economics, Law, Communication, Linguistics) and related disciplines like all streams of Home Science, Management, Computer Science, Commerce as well as others like Food Technology, Agricultural Technology, Information Technology, Environmental Science, Dairy Science etc. having social focus/implications. It focuses on issues that are global and on local problems and policies that have international implications. By providing a forum for discussion on important issues with a global perspective, the *JND* is a part of unfolding worldwide struggle for establishing a just and peaceful world order. Thus, the *JND* becomes a point of confluence for the rivulets from various disciplines to form a mighty mainstream gushing towards the formulation and propagation of a humanistic world- view.

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Rural-Urban Disparities in the Condition of Health and Education Facilities across Provinces of Nepal

Tika Ram Gautam¹ & Sudeep Singh Nakarmi²

¹Associate Professor of Sociology and Former Head of Central Department of Sociology, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu (Nepal)
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0009-0006-0261-3013
E-mail:<tika.gautam@cdso.tu.edu.np; trgautam@mswtu.edu.np>

²Assistant Professor of Sociology at Central Department of Sociology, Tribhuvan University, (Nepal) ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0009-0009-2842-0887
E-mail:<sudeep.nakarmi@cdso.tu.edu.np; sudipnakarmi@gmail.com>

Abstract

This paper examines rural-urban disparities and provincial variations in public perceptions of government and private health and education facilities across Nepal, revealing significant disparities in accessibility and quality. This paper utilizes the national level survey data of Nepal Living Standard Survey (NLSS) IV (2022/23) which includes 9,600 households and 46,870 individuals. The method was bivariate analysis including Chi-square test of independence. The findings show that private facilities generally receive higher satisfaction ratings than government services, though their availability is unevenly distributed. Urbanized provinces such as Bagmati and Koshi report greater satisfaction and engagement with private services, while remote regions like Karnali and Sudurpaschim show lower satisfaction and higher non-response rates, reflecting limited access. Karnali stands out with relatively better perceptions of public facilities but weaker private sector presence. Provinces including Madhesh & Sudurpaschim consistently exhibit low satisfaction across sectors, underscoring the need for focused interventions. Overall, there is significant rural-urban disparities in access to both government and private health and education services across all provinces including Bagmati province which is capital city of Nepal. The findings highlight the importance of province- specific strategies that leverage successful models from higher-performing areas to enhance equity and quality in Nepal's health and education systems.

Keywords

Province, rural-urban, disparity, basic services, health, education, Nepal.

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Rural-Urban Disparities in the Condition of Health and Education Facilities across Provinces of Nepal

1. Introduction

Individuals' income, health (and that of their children), and capacity are important determinants to interact and communicate with others. However, these determinants differ from one individual to another and the consequences of access to health and education also differ from individual to individual. Inequalities in education, thus, contribute to inequalities in other important dimensions of well-being (WDR, 2006: 34 as cited in Gautam, 2013). Therefore, measurement of education-related capabilities is important to explain inequalities between individuals and groups. However, measuring inequality in education is not easy. Census and survey data in most countries can generally yield statistics on, for example, years of schooling. But such information does not capture adequately the quality of education and how that might vary across individuals. Nor is it easy to compare years of schooling across countries or social groups, because those years might mean something quite different across countries and societies (WDR, 2006 cited in Gautam, 2013). But comparison is required to examine inter- and intra-group inequalities in terms of education. It is also necessary to make standard criteria to explain the current educational system in any country including Nepal as it is connected to other variables as well.

While talking about health, for sociologists, the experience of sickness and disease is an outcome of the organization of society. For example, poor living and working conditions make people sicker, and the poorer people die earlier, than do the richer people at the top of the social system. Even when there are improved living conditions and medical practices, if inequalities based on class, gender and ethnicity are not tackled, the differences between the rich and the poor persist and widen. Disease and inequality are intimately linked. The outcome of the unequal distribution of political, economic and social resources necessary for healthy life is the social gradient of health. Those at the top of the social system are healthier and live

longer while those at the bottom are sick, do not live as long, and die more from preventable disease and accidents (White, 2002: 1 as cited in Gautam, 2013).

Ensuring equitable access to quality health and education services is essential for sustainable development and improving well-being. In Nepal, however, significant geographic, economic, and social diversity across provinces has created disparities in the distribution and quality of these services. Understanding how citizens perceive health and education facilities is vital for identifying shortcomings, improving service delivery, and shaping effective policies. This study examines provincial differences in accessibility and satisfaction with both public and private health and education services in Nepal, with the goal of highlighting inequalities and informing strategies for more equitable service provision nationwide.

The current Nepal Health Sector Strategic Plan (NHSSP) for the period of 2023 to 2030 AD was developed in alignment with Nepal's federal structure, considering the health-related constitutional mandates and provisions outlined in the Public Health Service Act 2075 BS, National Health Policy, periodic plans, and other related policy documents. The NHSSP is envisioned as an instrument to achieve universal health coverage, especially as Nepal transitions from a Least Developed Country (LDC) to a developing country. The NHSSP aims to continue and strengthen the SWAp, as outlined in the development cooperation policy, to address the major unfinished health agendas. The primary focus of the strategic plan is to improve the health status of all citizens by creating an environment that enables every individual to access optimal health services (DoHS, 2025).

The Department of Health Services (DoHS) is responsible for delivering promotive, preventive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative care services throughout Nepal. DoHS plays an important role in ensuring health service delivery by developing and facilitating the implementation of the service delivery standards from the service delivery outlets throughout the country. Furthermore, it functions as an intermediary between the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) (federal) and other tiers of government (provincial and local level) by providing logistical, financial, supervisory and technical support from the center to the periphery. The DoHS is responsible for maintaining functional viability and

coordination of all health systems building blocks, with the primary objective of guaranteeing the delivery of high-quality services to the public (DoHS, 2025). As mentioned by DoHS (2025), currently, DoHS comprises five divisions[1]. These health institutions work to improve the accessibility and quality of health services in Nepal. The efforts made by these institutions contribute in increasing access to health facilities in Nepal. However, there is disparities among individuals of different social categories.

2. Inequality in Access to Health and Education

Health is generally regarded as an individual and biological phenomenon—a person is ill because of an infection, accident or perhaps because he/she has inherited some problem. If this were the case, one would expect that illness would be randomly distributed across population virtually with everyone having a similar chance of being ill. But this is not the case when we look at social class, for lower the social class, greater the chance of illness (or morbidity, as it should be known) and lower the age of death (permanent mortality) (Moore, 1995: 284 as cited in Gautam, 2013). Moore (1995: 279) further writes that illness is claimed not to be an individual, random occurrence, but something that is distributed among people relative to the distribution of power and wealth-the poorest and the least powerful comprise the sick and disabled, and these states of poverty and disability are actually caused by poverty, they are not its result. However, power and wealth may not be the only causes that influence individual's health status. They may be social and cultural causes as well (Gautam, 2013).

In the context of India, Arora (2012) notes that India is often described as a "high globalizer" and a showcase for globalization (Rato, 2007). Following the 1991 economic reforms, which sought to liberalize policies and integrate India more closely with the global economy, the country experienced significant changes. Yet, the effects of globalization have not been uniform-different social groups, including the rich, poor, women, disabled, marginalized castes, and rural populations, have experienced its impact differently. Although research has widely discussed regional disparities since the reforms, issues such as gender inequality at the sub-national level and its implications for economic growth remain underexplored. Some localized studies have examined gendered dimensions of globalization, but they cover only a limited number of states.

Bambra (2019) highlights that research into health inequalities in the UK has a long history, stretching back more than 300 years (Macintyre, 2003; Smith *et al.*, 2016). For example, in the 1840s, men of higher social status in Bath lived more than twice as long as laborers in the same city (Chadwick, 1842). Similar class-based disparities existed in Liverpool, though overall life expectancy there was lower. Despite improvements in life expectancy across all groups over the past two centuries, significant inequalities remain. Currently, men in the most deprived neighborhoods of England live on average nine years less than those in the least deprived areas, while for women the gap is seven years (ONS, 2015). Regional divides also persist, with poorer health outcomes in the North compared to the South (Bambra *et al.*, 2014). Moreover, gender and ethnicity contribute to health inequalities in intersecting ways (Gkiouleka *et al.*, 2018 as cited in Bambra, 2019).

Chapman (2010) argues that international frameworks, such as the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights' general comment on the right to health, have often been under-emphasized in global health reports. For instance, the Commission on Social Determinants of Health (CSDH) devoted little attention to the Special Rapporteur on the right to health and only briefly cited the Committee's influential interpretations. Chapman further stresses that human rights approaches prioritize equality of dignity, legal recognition, and protection under the law, rather than economic or social parity. Central principles include non-discrimination and equality before the law. States that ratify human rights treaties are therefore obligated to uphold these rights without distinction based on race, gender, religion, political views, or social origin.

Curran and Mahutga (2018) review evidence suggesting a causal link between income inequality and health outcomes (Pickett & Wilkinson, 2015). Mechanisms include psychosocial stress from low social status (Wilkinson, 1999), under-investment in public goods (Lynch & Kaplan, 1997), and declining social trust (Kawachi *et al.*, 1997). These explanations fall into two main categories: integrationist and neo-materialist. Integrationist theories emphasize psychosocial effects, where status comparisons create anxiety, shame, and depression that negatively influence health behaviors. Neo-materialist perspectives focus on reduced investment in public goods and growing individualism, which weakens social cohesion. Both approaches highlight how inequality not only harms

individual well-being but also undermines overall population health (Curran and Mahutga, 2018).

Davis (1991) notes that inequality in health outcomes and access to care has been a central focus of U.S. public health debates for decades. Recognition of disparities by income, race, and geography in the 1960s and 1970s fueled efforts to expand healthcare for vulnerable groups, including proposals for national health insurance. However, these initiatives lacked sufficient political support. By the 1980s, rising healthcare costs shifted policy priorities away from access, resulting in funding cuts and a push for competition in healthcare delivery. Despite these challenges, continued academic attention to vulnerable groups supported modest expansions of programs like Medicaid and community health initiatives (Davis, 1991).

Grimm (2011) emphasizes the complex relationship between health and economic growth. While better health can enhance productivity, skills, and capital accumulation, higher income can also improve health through better services and technology. Although earlier studies questioned whether health significantly drives growth (Acemoglu & Johnson, 2007), more recent analyses (Bloom *et al.*, 2004; Weil, 2007; Cervelatti & Sunde, 2009) suggest that health improvements may have a stronger effect on growth than income does on health. Nonetheless, debates continue, as measurement issues and endogeneity complicate the evidence (Deaton, 2006).

Obuaku-Igwe (2015) emphasizes that population health depends partly on access to healthcare, which in turn is shaped by service availability, professional quality, and financial resources. Despite government interventions, health disparities persist, especially in low- and middle-income countries. Such inequalities are driven by social factors like race, gender, education, income, and geography. In South Africa, for example, life expectancy remains low, and both health and income inequalities have widened since the mid-1990s, with stark differences across regions such as the Western Cape (Obuaku-Igwe, 2015).

Mellor and Milyo (2002) note that many studies find correlations between income inequality and poor health outcomes, often summarized as the "income inequality hypothesis" (IIH). However, they caution that much of the evidence relies on aggregate data without sufficient controls. Some studies show that results vary

depending on time, mortality causes, and statistical models, suggesting that observed associations may not reflect causal relationships at the individual level. Instead, income inequality may act as a proxy for the proportion of low-income individuals, rather than being a direct cause of poor health.

Raphael (2000) explains that health should be understood not only as the absence of illness but also as the presence of resources that enable individuals and communities to thrive. Health promotion, as framed by the WHO's Ottawa Charter, emphasizes empowerment, supportive environments, and policy advocacy. He further highlights the importance of social determinants of health, such as income distribution, education, and community structures. Growing economic inequality, particularly in the U.S., Canada, and the UK, has become a major concern because of its role in shaping health outcomes.

Rasanathan *et al.* (2011) note that interest in primary health care (PHC) has revived after being sidelined in the 1990s. The Alma Ata Declaration (1978) envisioned PHC as central to achieving "health for all" through equity, community participation, and intersectoral action. Recent reforms in countries such as Brazil, Thailand, Chile, and New Zealand reflect this vision, while India and China are also strengthening primary care in their pursuit of universal health coverage. Civil society movements, including the People's Health Movement, have also played a critical role in restoring PHC to the global health agenda. Various efforts made in health and education sector improves the status of health and education all over the world including Nepal.

Ilie and Rose (2016) observe that the global expansion of higher education raises questions about who benefits most. Equity, following McCowan (2007), requires that all individuals with sufficient preparation have access to higher education and that opportunities are not limited to lower-quality institutions. While more places in higher education exist, achieving genuine fairness remains difficult, especially when considering access to elite institutions.

Jacobs (1996) highlights that educational inequality research has long focused on social class, often sidelining gender issues. When gender is considered, it is frequently treated as secondary to class. Some scholars argue that education systematically disadvantages

women, but Jacobs contends that women have gained significant access advantages, even though disparities remain in college experiences and post-graduation outcomes. He stresses the need to differentiate between areas where women have achieved parity and those where inequalities persist.

Li (2002) examines gender inequality in Chinese education, noting that most studies have concentrated on access to formal schooling. This research instead looks at whether male and female students have equal access to knowledge within the school system. Since the 1985 reforms, secondary school curricula and tracking systems have created barriers to female students, limiting their knowledge acquisition, opportunities for higher education, and career prospects, thereby reinforcing broader gender inequalities. However, there are various aspects of health and education including rural-urban disparities in accessibility and quality of health and education services which are still less explored in the context of Nepal.

Mishra (2010; 2070 VS), Pandey (2010), Gautam (2013) and Nakarmi (2021) have emphasized on the structural dimension of inequality in the context of Nepal. The macro structure at state level and micro level at individual and household level play an important role in shaping access to health and education opportunities. Nakarmi (2021) discusses the Newar community, where socio-economic background significantly affects their access to opportunities and resources. At micro level, access to educational opportunity differs by the ethnic background of individual as well (Gautam, 2017) which is one of the reasons of inequality in the context of Nepal. Thus, the background of individuals including socioeconomic status, place of residence, region and so on of individuals and households have some kind of role in shaping access to and perception on health and education facilities in Nepal. It is therefore important to look for the status of government and private-non-government services on health and education in the rural-urban setting of Nepal.

3.   Objectives

The primary objective of this study was to investigate rural-urban disparities in public perceptions of health and education facilities across the provinces of Nepal. The study aimed to identify differences in satisfaction and accessibility between government and private services and to explain how these variations correlate with

geographic and socioeconomic factors. Additionally, the research sought to highlight provinces with unique service profiles and those requiring targeted interventions to improve equity and quality in health and education sectors.

4.   Methods

This paper utilized large-scale survey data of Nepal Living Standard Survey IV (2022/23) collected from 9600 households and 46870 individuals across all provinces of Nepal, capturing their ratings of health and education facilities in both the public and private sectors. Statistical analyses were conducted to assess the significance of differences in satisfaction levels, non-response rates, and patterns of service access among provinces. Comparisons were made between urbanized and remote regions to identify gaps and unique regional characteristics. The robust sample sizes allowed for confident interpretation of provincial-level variations, informing recommendations for province-specific policy interventions.

5.   Study Area

As mentioned earlier this study utilized large-scale survey data collected from respondents across all seven provinces of Nepal, encompassing both urbanized and remote regions to capture a comprehensive national perspective. The survey gathered public perceptions and satisfaction ratings of health and education facilities in both the public and private sectors. Statistical analyses were conducted to assess the significance of differences in satisfaction levels, non-response rates, and access patterns among provinces. This provincial-level approach allowed for detailed comparisons between more developed areas such as Bagmati and Koshi and less developed, remote provinces like Karnali and Sudurpaschim. The robust sample sizes enabled confident interpretation of regional disparities, providing a foundation for tailored policy recommendations.

6.   Rural-Urban Disparities in access to Health and Education across Provinces of Nepal

Rural-urban disparities in health and education are of critical importance because they directly influence social equity, human development, and long-term prosperity. In many developing contexts, including Nepal, rural areas often face limited access to healthcare facilities, trained medical personnel, quality schools, and

educational resources compared to urban centers. These gaps contribute to higher rates of preventable diseases, malnutrition, and maternal and child mortality in rural regions, while also restricting educational attainment and employment opportunities. As a result, rural populations are caught in a cycle of poverty and social exclusion, widening inequalities within the nation. Addressing these disparities is essential not only for improving individual well-being but also for achieving inclusive economic growth, reducing migration pressures, and fostering balanced national development. In this regard, the experiences of people on health facility are presented in the following Table-1:

Table-1: Rural-Urban Disparities in the Condition of Government Health Facility across Provinces of Nepal

Province	Rural-Urban	Test values	Condition of Government Health Facility (%)				
			Good	Fair	Bad	N/A	Total
Koshi	Other urban	χ^2=21068.10	15.7	68.3	8.8	7.2	100.0
	Rural	df=3	11.7	75.1	11.3	1.8	100.0
	Total	**p=0.00**	**14.3**	**70.6**	**9.7**	**5.4**	**100.0**
Madhesh	Other urban	χ^2=21068.10	9.0	74.6	11.7	4.7	100.0
	Rural	df=3	6.1	75.3	13.7	4.9	100.0
	Total	**=0.00**	**8.3**	**74.8**	**12.2**	**4.8**	**100.0**
Bagmati	Kathm-andu	χ^2=11376.32	26.1	61.1	6.4	6.5	100.0
	Other urban	df=3	27.6	62.6	5.5	4.3	100.0
	Rural	p=0.00	22.4	66.3	8.3	3.0	100.0
	Total		**25.9**	**62.5**	**6.4**	**5.2**	**100.0**
Gandaki	Other urban	χ^2=11978.90	25.1	64.1	4.9	5.8	100.0
	Rural	df=3	15.1	77.0	3.1	4.8	100.0
	Total	**p=0.00**	**21.9**	**68.2**	**4.3**	**5.5**	**100.0**
Lumbini	Other urban	χ^2=16044.17	20.4	69.4	6.2	4.0	100.0
	Rural	df=3	17.4	77.7	2.8	2.1	100.0
	Total	**p=0.00**	**19.2**	**72.7**	**4.9**	**3.2**	**100.0**

Karnali	Other urban	χ^2=3960.23	36.5	52.8	9.9	0.8	100.0
	Rural	df=3	27.0	60.9	11.5	0.5	100.0
	Total	***p*=0.00**	**32.4**	**56.3**	**10.6**	**0.7**	**100.0**
Sudur-paschim	Other urban	χ^2=6077.43	18.0	66.9	12.3	2.8	100.0
	Rural	df=3	13.7	72.5	13.4	0.4	100.0
	Total	***p*=0.00**	**16.5**	**68.9**	**12.7**	**1.9**	**100.0**
	Kathm-andu	χ^2=82156.61	26.1	61.1	6.4	6.5	100.0
	Other urban	df=3	18.7	68.0	8.5	4.7	100.0
	Rural	*p*=0.00	15.4	73.5	8.5	2.6	100.0
Nepal			**18.6**	**68.8**	**8.3**	**4.3**	**100.0**

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

The perception of health facility quality varies noticeably across Nepal's provinces, revealing both areas of concern and examples of relative satisfaction. Overall, the majority of respondents in all provinces rated services as "Fair", with provincial figures ranging from 56.3% in Karnali to 74.8% in Madhesh, suggesting that while facilities generally meet basic expectations, they often fall short of being considered "Good". Notably, Karnali stands out with the highest proportion of respondents (32.4%) expressing satisfaction, more than 13 percentage points above the national average of 18.6%, indicating a comparatively positive public perception. Bagmati (25.9%) and Gandaki (21.9%) also record above-average satisfaction levels. In contrast, Madhesh, with only 8.3% rating facilities as "Good" and 12.2% as "Bad", reflects the lowest satisfaction and one of the highest dissatisfaction rates, pointing to possible gaps in infrastructure, accessibility, or service quality. Similarly, Sudurpaschim shows elevated dissatisfaction (12.7%), despite a moderate "Good" rating (16.5%). The relatively low "N/A" responses across most provinces suggest that people are engaged and willing to share their views, making these findings a valuable reflection of lived experiences. These patterns highlight the need for targeted improvements in provinces such as Madhesh and Sudurpaschim, while also encouraging policymakers to draw lessons from better-performing regions like Karnali and Bagmati.

The perception of health facility quality varies noticeably across Nepal's provinces, and the differences are not just descriptive-they are statistically significant. The majority of respondents in all provinces rated services as "Fair", with figures ranging from 56.3% in Karnali to 74.8% in Madhesh, suggesting that while facilities often meet basic expectations, they frequently fall short of being considered "Good". Karnali stands out with the highest satisfaction level (32.4%), well above the national average of 18.6%, followed by Bagmati (25.9%) and Gandaki (21.9%). In contrast, Madhesh records the lowest satisfaction (8.3%) alongside one of the highest dissatisfaction rates (12.2%), indicating notable service gaps, while Sudurpaschim also shows elevated dissatisfaction (12.7%).

The findings indicate that perceptions of government health facilities in Nepal vary significantly across provinces and between rural and urban areas. Overall, most respondents rated facilities as Fair (68.8%), followed by Good (18.6%) and Bad (8.3%), with only a small proportion (4.3%) indicating N/A. Urban residents consistently reported higher Good ratings compared to rural residents, who tended to rate facilities more as Fair. Bagmati and Karnali provinces showed the highest proportion of Good ratings, reflecting relatively better perceived service quality, while Madhesh and Sudurpaschim reported lower satisfaction levels. Across all provinces, the differences between rural and urban perceptions were statistically significant ($p<0.001$), highlighting notable disparities in health service quality and accessibility between urban and rural areas.

The Chi-square test results ($\chi2=322,122.678$, df=18, $p<.001$) confirm that these differences are highly significant and unlikely to have occurred by chance. The large sample size (n=7,185,103) further reinforces the robustness of this finding, with zero cells having expected counts below the statistical threshold. This suggests that the observed provincial disparities in perceived health facility quality reflect real and substantial differences in public experience, underscoring the need for targeted policy interventions in low-performing provinces like Madhesh and Sudurpaschim, while drawing lessons from higher-performing regions such as Karnali and Bagmati.

Across all provinces of Nepal, there are statistically significant rural-urban disparities in the perceived quality of government health facilities ($p<0.001$). Urban residents consistently report a

higher proportion of "Good" ratings compared to their rural counterparts, while rural areas tend to have more "Fair" or "Bad" assessments. For instance, in Gandaki, 25.1% of urban respondents rate facilities as good versus only 15.1% in rural areas, and in Koshi the gap is 15.7% versus 11.7%. Karnali's urban areas stand out with the highest "Good" rating nationally (36.5%), while Madhesh records the lowest across both urban (9.0%) and rural (6.1%) populations. In most provinces, "Fair" dominates as the most common rating, often exceeding 70%, especially in rural Madhesh, Gandaki, and Lumbini. These patterns indicate a consistent urban advantage in perceived quality of government health facilities, with substantial and significant gaps persisting across all regions. There is also private/non-government facility available in Nepal. The perception of people on the condition of private/non-government facility on health is shown in the following table-2.

Table-2: Rural-Urban Disparities in the Condition of Private/Non-Government Health Facility across Provinces of Nepal

Province	Rural-Urban	Test values	Health Facility (Private/Non-Government) (%)				
			Good	Fair	Bad	N/A	Total
Koshi	Other urban	χ^2=4961.40	34.7	57.3	2.7	5.2	100.0
	Rural	df=3	33.2	55.0	4.3	7.5	100.0
	Total	***p*=0.00**	**34.2**	**56.6**	**3.3**	**6.0**	**100.0**
Madhesh	Other urban	χ^2=9534.27	34.6	57.7	2.2	5.5	100.0
	Rural	df=3	38.9	51.0	1.1	8.9	100.0
	Total	***p*=0.00**	**35.7**	**56.0**	**1.9**	**6.4**	**100.0**
Bagmati	Kathm-andu	χ^2=42298.19	47.3	47.8	1.9	3.0	100.0
	Other urban	df=3	38.6	54.5	2.0	4.8	100.0
	Rural	p=0.00	33.8	52.3	3.2	10.6	100.0
	Total		**42.3**	**50.6**	**2.2**	**4.9**	**100.0**
Gandaki	Other urban	χ^2=7836.59	30.8	61.3	1.4	6.5	100.0
	Rural	df=3	21.1	71.5	0.9	6.5	100.0
	Total	***p*=0.00**	**27.7**	**64.6**	**1.3**	**6.5**	**100.0**

Lumbini	Other urban	χ^2=8105.37	41.2	54.5	1.2	3.0	100.0
	Rural	df=3	33.8	61.4	1.1	3.8	100.0
	Total	***p*=0.00**	**38.3**	**57.2**	**1.2**	**3.3**	**100.0**
Karnali	Other urban	χ^2=3837.30	18.9	70.5	7.3	3.4	100.0
	Rural	df=3	14.8	69.8	8.1	7.4	100.0
	Total	***p*=0.00**	**17.1**	**70.2**	**7.6**	**5.1**	**100.0**
Sudur-paschim	Other urban	χ^2=9779.42	25.4	60.2	8.7	5.7	100.0
	Rural	df=3	17.0	59.9	14.1	9.1	100.0
	Total	***p*=0.00**	**22.5**	**60.1**	**10.6**	**6.9**	**100.0**
	Kathm-andu	χ^2=98454.07	47.3	47.8	1.9	3.0	100.0
	Other urban	df=3	34.3	57.9	2.8	4.9	100.0
	Rural	***p*=0.00**	**30.2**	**58.9**	**3.7**	**7.3**	**100.0**
Nepal			**34.6**	**57.0**	**3.0**	**5.4**	**100.0**

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

The perceptions of private health facilities show marked variation across Nepal's provinces, with overall satisfaction levels notably higher than in the earlier public facility dataset. Nationally, 34.6% of respondents rated private facilities as "Good", while 57.0% considered them "Fair" and only 3.0% rated them as "Bad", suggesting a generally favorable impression of private sector health services. Bagmati leads with the highest proportion of "Good" ratings (42.3%), followed by Lumbini (38.3%), Madhesh (35.7%), and Koshi (34.2%), indicating stronger perceived service quality in these provinces. Gandaki (27.7%) and Sudurpaschim (22.5%) fall below the national average, while Karnali records the lowest satisfaction (17.1%) and one of the highest dissatisfaction rates (7.6%), pointing to regional inequities in access or quality of private care. Sudurpaschim stands out with the highest "Bad" rating (10.6%), over three times the national average, highlighting a localized gap in performance. The consistently low proportion of "N/A" responses across provinces suggests respondents felt confident in evaluating these facilities. Taken together, these findings indicate that while private health facilities are generally perceived more positively than public ones, significant disparities persist, with provinces such as

Karnali and Sudurpaschim requiring targeted policy attention, and high-performing provinces like Bagmati and Lumbini offering potential models for improvement.

The perceptions of private health facilities vary significantly across Nepal's provinces, and these differences are confirmed to be statistically meaningful. Nationally, 34.6% of respondents rated private facilities as "Good", 57.0% as "Fair", and only 3.0% as "Bad", reflecting an overall favorable view of private sector services compared to public facilities. Bagmati leads with the highest satisfaction (42.3%), followed by Lumbini (38.3%), Madhesh (35.7%), and Koshi (34.2%), suggesting stronger perceived service quality in these regions. In contrast, Gandaki (27.7%) and Sudurpaschim (22.5%) fall below the national average, while Karnali records the lowest "Good" rating (17.1%) and a relatively high "Bad" rating (7.6%), highlighting regional inequalities in access or service quality. Sudurpaschim's dissatisfaction rate (10.6%)-over three times the national average-signals a concentrated challenge in that province.

The findings for private or non-government health facilities show that overall perceptions are more positive compared to government facilities, with the majority of respondents rating them as Good (34.6%) or Fair (57.0%), and only 3.0% as Bad. Urban residents generally reported higher Good ratings than rural residents, although in some provinces, such as Madhesh, rural areas rated facilities slightly higher in Good. Bagmati province, particularly Kathmandu, had the highest proportion of Good ratings (47.3%), indicating strong satisfaction with private health services, while Karnali and Sudurpaschim recorded lower Good ratings and higher Bad ratings, reflecting regional disparities. Across all provinces, the rural-urban differences were statistically significant (p < 0.001), highlighting that private health facilities are perceived more favorably overall, but access and quality perceptions still vary considerably between regions and settlement types.

The Chi-square test results (χ^2=317,576.167, df=18, *p*<.001) indicate that these provincial differences are highly significant and unlikely due to chance, supported by a very large sample size (n= 7,185,102) and no cells with small expected counts. These findings underscore that while private facilities are generally perceived more positively than public ones, significant disparities remain, warranting targeted health sector interventions in provinces like Karnali and Sudurpaschim, and drawing on best practices from high-performing provinces such as Bagmati and Lumbini.

Across all provinces, there are statistically significant rural-urban disparities in perceptions of private or non-government health facilities (p<0.001). Urban residents generally rate such facilities more positively, with a higher share of "Good" responses compared to rural areas, though the gap is narrower than for government health facilities. For example, in Bagmati's Kathmandu, 47.3% rate private facilities as good versus 33.8% in rural areas, while in Lumbini, the figures are 41.2% and 33.8%, respectively. However, in Madhesh, rural respondents actually report slightly higher "Good" ratings (38.9%) than urban residents (34.6%), and in several provinces, rural areas also have higher "Fair" ratings, suggesting relatively less dissatisfaction with private services. Negative ("Bad") ratings remain low across the board, typically below 4% except in Karnali and Sudurpaschim, where they exceed 7%-particularly in rural Sudurpaschim (14.1%). Overall, while urban residents tend to have more favorable perceptions, private/non-government health facilities are rated relatively well in both rural and urban areas, with smaller but still significant disparities compared to the government sector. There is also disparities in the condition of government education facility across rural-urban location and provinces of Nepal (Table-3).

Table-3: Rural-Urban Disparities in the Condition of Government Education Facility across Provinces of Nepal

Province	Rural-Urban	Test values	Education Facility (Government) (%)				
			Good	Fair	Bad	N/A	Total
Koshi	Other urban	χ^2=29039.96	10.9	50.4	4.5	34.2	100.0
	Rural	df=3	8.1	63.5	7.0	21.4	100.0
	Total	***p*=0.00**	**10.0**	**54.8**	**5.3**	**29.9**	**100.0**
Madhesh	Other urban	χ^2=12272.38	9.4	47.4	5.7	37.4	100.0
	Rural	df=3	3.7	47.2	6.6	42.5	100.0
	Total	**=0.00**	**8.0**	**47.4**	**6.0**	**38.7**	**100.0**
Bagmati	Kathmandu	χ^2=4821.47	18.1	55.3	3.1	23.4	100.0
	Other urban	df=3	19.9	52.6	4.3	23.2	100.0
	Rural	*p*=0.00	18.6	52.2	5.6	23.6	100.0
	Total		**18.8**	**54.0**	**3.9**	**23.4**	**100.0**

Gandaki	Other urban	χ^2=9817.90	21.8	41.2	1.1	35.9	100.0
	Rural	df=3	14.3	52.9	1.1	31.7	100.0
	Total	***p*=0.00**	**19.4**	**44.9**	**1.1**	**34.6**	**100.0**
Lumbini	Other urban	χ^2=3805.43	17.1	50.6	1.7	30.6	100.0
	Rural	df=3	15.4	47.5	1.5	35.6	100.0
	Total	***p*=0.00**	**16.4**	**49.4**	**1.6**	**32.6**	**100.0**
Karnali	Other urban	χ^2=3509.93	28.5	37.9	5.2	28.3	100.0
	Rural	df=3	21.3	44.0	7.5	27.3	100.0
	Total	***p*=0.00**	**25.3**	**40.6**	**6.2**	**27.9**	**100.0**
Sudur-paschim	Other urban	χ^2=5122.02	15.8	46.5	4.0	33.7	100.0
	Rural	df=3	13.3	55.0	5.2	26.4	100.0
	Total	***p*=0.00**	**15.0**	**49.4**	**4.4**	**31.2**	**100.0**
	Kathm-andu	χ^2=48206.35	18.1	55.3	3.1	23.4	100.0
	Other urban	df=3	15.4	48.0	3.8	32.9	100.0
	Rural	*p*=0.00	12.7	52.1	4.6	30.5	100.0
Nepal			**14.9**	**50.1**	**4.0**	**31.0**	**100.0**

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

Perceptions of government education facilities in Nepal reveal substantial provincial variation, with generally lower satisfaction levels than those seen for health facilities. Nationally, only 14.9% of respondents rated government education facilities as "Good", while half (50.1%) considered them "Fair", 4.0% viewed them as "Bad", and a notably high 31.0% either did not respond or felt the question was not applicable. Karnali stands out with the highest "Good" rating (25.3%), suggesting relatively better perceived performance in the government education sector there, followed by Gandaki (19.4%) and Bagmati (18.8%). In contrast, Madhesh records the lowest satisfaction (8.0%) and one of the highest dissatisfaction rates (6.0%), along with the largest proportion of "N/A" responses (38.7%), potentially reflecting disengagement or weaker connection with government education services. High "N/A" levels across most provinces, particularly Gandaki (34.6%) and Lumbini (32.6%), suggest either limited experience with these facilities or a lack of willingness to evaluate

them, possibly due to the presence of alternative education options, such as private institutions. These results point to both performance gaps and participation challenges, with provinces like Madhesh requiring urgent policy attention, while lessons could be drawn from relatively better-performing Karnali and Gandaki to inform targeted improvements in public education provision.

Perceptions of government education facilities in Nepal vary markedly across provinces, and these differences are statistically significant. Nationally, only 14.9% of respondents rated government schools as "Good", while 50.1% considered them "Fair", 4.0% viewed them as "Bad", and a substantial 31.0% gave "N/A" responses, indicating either limited personal engagement with the public education system or reliance on non-government alternatives. Karnali leads with the highest satisfaction level (25.3%), followed by Gandaki (19.4%) and Bagmati (18.8%), suggesting comparatively stronger public education services in these regions. In contrast, Madhesh records the lowest satisfaction (8.0%) and one of the highest dissatisfaction rates (6.0%), alongside the highest proportion of "N/A" responses (38.7%), pointing to both quality concerns and possible disconnect between communities and public schools.

The findings for government education facilities in Nepal indicate that overall perceptions are moderate, with the majority of respondents rating them as Fair (50.1%) and a smaller proportion rating them as Good (14.9%) or Bad (4.0%), while a significant share (31.0%) reported N/A, suggesting either non-availability or inability to assess. Urban respondents generally rated facilities slightly higher in Good compared to rural respondents, although rural areas often reported higher Fair ratings, reflecting a perception of adequacy rather than excellence. Bagmati and Karnali provinces exhibited relatively higher Good ratings, particularly in urban areas, while Madhesh showed the lowest Good ratings and the highest N/A responses, highlighting challenges in accessibility or quality perception. Across all provinces, differences between rural and urban ratings were statistically significant (p<0.001), indicating notable disparities in perceived quality and availability of government education facilities across regions and settlement types.

The Chi-square results ($\chi2$=260,746.726, df=18, p<.001) confirm that these provincial differences are highly significant and unlikely to have arisen by chance, supported by a large sample size (n = 7,185,104) and robust expected counts. The high proportion of "N/A" responses-particularly in Gandaki (34.6%) and Lumbini

(32.6%)-highlights a potential structural challenge, as accessibility or perceived relevance of public education may be uneven across regions. These findings underline the need for targeted interventions in provinces like Madhesh, while drawing on the experiences of better-performing regions such as Karnali and Gandaki to enhance equity and quality in government education services.

Across all provinces, rural-urban differences in perceptions of government education facilities are statistically significant ($p<$ 0.001). Urban residents generally report a higher share of "Good" ratings, while rural areas more often select "Fair" or "Bad", though the "N/A" category is notably high in both settings, often exceeding 25%. For example, in Koshi, 10.9% of urban respondents rate government education facilities as good compared to 8.1% in rural areas, while rural residents more frequently choose "Fair" (63.5% vs 50.4%) and "Bad" (7.0% vs 4.5%). Gandaki and Karnali show some of the largest urban advantages, with urban "Good" ratings of 21.8% and 28.5%, respectively, compared to rural ratings of 14.3% and 21.3%. In contrast, Madhesh records low "Good" ratings overall, particularly in rural areas (3.7%), where the majority responses are "Fair" or "N/A". While positive ratings are generally higher in urban areas, the high proportions of "Fair" and "N/A" responses suggest that many respondents-especially in rural areas-perceive government education facilities as average or have limited experience with them. This kind of disparities can be observed in the condition of private/non-government education facility too (Table-4).

Table-4: Rural-Urban Disparities in the Condition of Private/Non-Government Education Facility across Provinces of Nepal

Province	Rural-Urban	Test values	Education Facility (Private/Non-Government) (%)				
			Good	Fair	Bad	N/A	Total
Koshi	Other urban	χ^2=13348.62	29.8	39.8	1.4	28.9	100.0
	Rural	df=3	24.7	36.7	3.9	34.8	100.0
	Total	***p*=0.00**	**28.1**	**38.7**	**2.3**	**30.9**	**100.0**
Madhesh	Other urban	χ^2=30645.37	16.7	32.2	0.7	50.4	100.0
	Rural	df=3	17.5	17.0	1.1	64.3	100.0
	Total	***p*=0.00**	**16.9**	**28.4**	**0.8**	**53.9**	**100.0**

Bagmati	Kathm-andu	χ^2=109885.34	43.2	41.2	1.3	14.3	100.0
	Other urban	df=3	33.4	38.1	1.6	26.9	100.0
	Rural	p=0.00	22.1	33.6	2.4	41.9	100.0
	Total		**36.5**	**38.9**	**1.6**	**23.0**	**100.0**
Gandaki	Other urban	χ^2=29521.41	25.9	35.0	1.4	37.8	100.0
	Rural	df=3	8.7	40.0	0.7	50.6	100.0
	Total	***p*=0.00**	**20.4**	**36.6**	**1.2**	**41.9**	**100.0**
Lumbini	Other urban	χ^2=57555.83	26.3	38.0	1.1	34.5	100.0
	Rural	df=3	16.5	27.6	0.7	55.3	100.0
	Total	***p*=0.00**	**22.4**	**33.9**	**0.9**	**42.8**	**100.0**
Karnali	Other urban	χ^2=13552.03	17.4	15.5	5.3	61.8	100.0
	Rural	df=3	5.9	11.9	5.7	76.5	100.0
	Total	**=0.00**	**12.4**	**13.9**	**5.5**	**68.2**	**100.0**
Sudur-paschim	Other urban	χ^2=27140.29	21.3	25.1	1.3	52.3	100.0
	Rural	df=3	9.0	16.0	3.3	71.7	100.0
	Total	***p*=0.00**	17.1	22.0	2.0	59.0	**100.0**
	Kathm-andu	χ^2=454196.72	43.2	41.2	1.3	14.3	100.0
	Other urban	df=3	24.5	34.3	1.4	39.7	100.0
	Rural	p=0.00	16.7	27.5	2.2	53.6	100.0
Nepal			**24.4**	**33.1**	**1.6**	**40.9**	**100.0**

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

Perceptions of private education facilities in Nepal show notable differences across provinces, with a generally higher share of "Good" ratings compared to government schools, but also a much larger proportion of "N/A" responses, indicating uneven access or engagement. Nationally, 24.4% of respondents rated private education facilities as "Good", 33.1% as "Fair", and only 1.6% as "Bad", while a substantial 40.9% either did not respond or indicated non-applicability-possibly reflecting the high cost or limited

availability of private schooling in some areas. Bagmati stands out with the highest satisfaction (36.5%) and one of the lowest "N/A" rates (23.0%), suggesting broader accessibility and perceived quality. Koshi also performs well (28.1% "Good"), while Karnali (12.4% "Good") and Sudurpaschim (17.1% "Good") record both low satisfaction and very high "N/A" levels (68.2% and 59.0%, respectively), indicating that private education is either less common or less valued in these provinces. Madhesh presents an interesting case: its "Good" rating (16.9%) is below the national average, but its "Bad" rating is the lowest in the country (0.8%), suggesting that those who do use private schools generally rate them positively, even though over half (53.9%) report no direct engagement. Overall, these findings suggest that private education is perceived as higher quality than government education where it is available, but its reach is highly uneven, with rural and less developed provinces lagging far behind more urbanized regions like Bagmati and Koshi.

Perceptions of private education facilities in Nepal differ sharply across provinces, and these differences are highly statistically significant. Nationally, 24.4% of respondents rated private education as "Good", 33.1% as "Fair", and only 1.6% as "Bad", while a large share (40.9%) gave "N/A" responses, indicating no direct engagement-likely due to cost barriers or limited availability in certain areas. Bagmati emerges as the top performer, with 36.5% "Good" ratings and a relatively low "N/A" rate (23.0%), suggesting both broader access and stronger perceived quality. Koshi follows with 28.1% satisfaction, while provinces like Karnali (12.4% "Good") and Sudurpaschim (17.1% "Good") show low satisfaction and extremely high "N/A" rates (68.2% and 59.0%, respectively), pointing to limited private school penetration. Madhesh presents an interesting profile: its satisfaction level (16.9%) is below average, but it has the lowest "Bad" rating (0.8%), suggesting that while private schooling is less common (with 53.9% "N/A"), those who access it tend to view it favorably.

The findings for private or non-government education facilities in Nepal show that overall perceptions are more positive than government schools, with 24.4% of respondents rating them as Good and 33.1% as Fair, while only 1.6% rated them as Bad. However, a substantial proportion (40.9%) reported N/A, indicating either limited access or inability to assess these facilities. Urban respondents generally rated private schools higher in Good compared to rural respondents, who often had higher N/A responses. Bagmati province,

particularly Kathmandu, had the highest Good ratings (43.2%), reflecting stronger satisfaction with private education, whereas Karnali and Madhesh showed low Good ratings and high N/A responses, pointing to limited availability and access. Across all provinces, rural-urban differences were statistically significant (p<0.001), highlighting disparities in access, perceived quality, and availability of private education facilities across regions and settlement types.

The Chi-square results (χ2=654,550.302, df=18, p< .001) confirm that these differences are highly significant and unlikely due to chance, bolstered by a very large sample size (n=7,185,104) and strong expected counts. Overall, the findings indicate that while private education is generally rated more positively than government education, its benefits are unevenly distributed, with urbanized provinces like Bagmati and Koshi enjoying far better access and perceptions than rural and remote provinces such as Karnali and Sudurpaschim.

Across all provinces, perceptions of private or non-government education facilities show significant rural-urban disparities (p < 0.001), with urban residents generally giving higher "Good" ratings and rural residents more often selecting "N/A", indicating lower access or familiarity. The gap is most striking in provinces like Bagmati, where 43.2% of respondents in Kathmandu rate facilities as good compared to only 22.1% in rural areas, and in Gandaki, where urban "Good" ratings reach 25.9% versus just 8.7% in rural areas. Rural areas in Karnali (5.9% Good) and Sudurpaschim (9.0% Good) have some of the lowest positive ratings, paired with very high "N/A" responses (over 70%), suggesting limited presence or accessibility of private education institutions. In contrast, urban areas tend to have both higher "Good" and "Fair" ratings and much lower "N/A" percentages, indicating greater availability and use. While "Bad" ratings are generally low in both settings, slightly higher values appear in rural areas of Karnali and Sudurpaschim. Overall, private education facilities are perceived more positively in urban areas, with rural-urban differences driven less by dissatisfaction and more by differences in access and exposure.

7. Findings

The analysis reveals significant provincial disparities in perceptions of both health and education facilities across Nepal, with

these differences being statistically robust given the large sample sizes. Generally, private facilities are rated higher than government ones, reflecting better perceived quality where available. However, access to private services is uneven, with urbanized provinces like Bagmati and Koshi showing higher satisfaction and lower rates of non-response, while more remote regions such as Karnali and Sudurpaschim exhibit lower satisfaction and substantial proportions of respondents indicating "N/A", highlighting gaps in availability or engagement. Notably, Karnali presents a unique profile with relatively higher satisfaction in public education and health services but lower ratings for private facilities, suggesting reliance on government provisions in the absence of strong private alternatives. Provinces like Madhesh and Sudurpaschim consistently show lower satisfaction across both sectors, underscoring the need for targeted interventions to address service quality and accessibility challenges. These findings emphasize the importance of province-specific strategies, drawing lessons from higher-performing regions to improve equity and quality in Nepal's health and education systems.

The comprehensive analysis across all aspects of health and education facilities in Nepal highlights pronounced provincial disparities in public perceptions of service quality. Private facilities-both health and education-tend to receive higher satisfaction ratings compared to government counterparts, reflecting a general preference where private options are accessible. However, availability and engagement with private services vary widely, with more urbanized provinces such as Bagmati and Koshi reporting higher satisfaction and lower non-response rates, while remote and less developed regions like Karnali and Sudurpaschim exhibit lower satisfaction and notably higher proportions of "N/A" responses, indicating limited access or familiarity. Karnali uniquely shows relatively better perceptions of government services but weaker private sector engagement, suggesting reliance on public provision in the absence of robust private alternatives. Provinces including Madhesh and Sudurpaschim consistently register lower satisfaction and higher dissatisfaction across health and education sectors, signaling urgent needs for targeted improvements. These statistically significant differences underscore the importance of tailored, province-specific policies that address both quality and accessibility, leveraging lessons from better-performing regions to promote more equitable and effective health and education services nationwide.

Across Nepal, there are consistent and statistically significant rural-urban disparities (p < 0.001) in perceptions of both health and education facilities, whether government or private. Urban areas generally report higher proportions of "Good" ratings for government health facilities, private health facilities, and both government and private education institutions, while rural areas more often select "Fair" or "Bad" for government services and show notably higher "N/A" responses for private education, indicating limited access. The rural-urban gap is most pronounced for government health facilities, where positive ratings are consistently lower in rural areas, and for private education facilities, where "N/A" exceeds 70% in some rural provinces such as Karnali and Sudurpaschim. Provinces like Bagmati, Gandaki, and Karnali show relatively higher urban satisfaction across sectors, while Madhesh often records the lowest "Good" ratings for government services. Negative ratings for private services remain generally low, suggesting that disparities are driven more by access and service quality gaps in government facilities than by outright dissatisfaction with private providers. Overall, the data point to an entrenched urban advantage in both quality perception and service availability across sectors, with rural populations facing both lower satisfaction and more limited exposure to non-government options.

8.   Discussion

The analysis reveals significant provincial disparities in perceptions of both health and education facilities across Nepal, highlighting the uneven geography of service quality and access. Provinces such as Bagmati and Koshi, which are more urbanized and better resourced, consistently report higher satisfaction with both government and private services. By contrast, more remote provinces such as Karnali and Sudurpaschim show markedly lower satisfaction, accompanied by higher proportions of "N/A" responses, reflecting limited access or engagement with available services. These differences are statistically robust, underscoring how geography, infrastructure, and economic development intersect to shape citizens' evaluations of basic services. Similar patterns of regional variation in health outcomes have been observed elsewhere, such as in South Africa, where Obuaku-Igwe (2015) notes persistent health disparities across provinces despite state interventions, driven largely by uneven service distribution and broader socioeconomic inequalities.

A consistent finding across the analysis is the preference for private over government facilities in both health and education. Where private options are accessible, they are generally rated higher, with low negative responses suggesting greater satisfaction with their quality. However, the rural-urban divide amplifies access inequalities, with rural areas-particularly in Karnali and Sudurpaschim-reporting high levels of "N/A" for private education facilities, in some cases exceeding 70%. This pattern suggests that dissatisfaction is not rooted in poor private services but in their absence or limited penetration in rural contexts. Such disparities resonate with Mellor and Milyo's (2002) caution regarding the broader income inequality-health debate: perceived inequities often reflect structural barriers in access rather than intrinsic differences in service quality. For Nepal, this indicates that service gaps are as much a matter of availability and affordability as they are of quality.

Interestingly, Karnali emerges as a unique case where satisfaction with government services is relatively stronger compared to private alternatives. This suggests a reliance on government provision in contexts where private services remain weakly developed. The finding illustrates how reliance on public services is not necessarily a matter of preference but of necessity, shaped by structural constraints. This aligns with Obuaku-Igwe's (2015) argument that health outcomes are contingent not only on quality but also on service availability and financial resources, with marginalized regions forced to depend disproportionately on state services. In this sense, improving government service quality in lagging provinces may have greater immediate impact than promoting private alternatives, which are less likely to reach remote populations without targeted policies.

The analysis also reveals consistent disadvantages for Madhesh and Sudurpaschim, where satisfaction levels remain low across both health and education sectors. These patterns echo Jacobs' (1996) observation in the education domain that structural inequalities persist even as some groups make progress. While Jacobs emphasizes gender inequalities in educational outcomes, the parallel here is regional inequality: despite national improvements, specific provinces remain structurally disadvantaged in service access and quality. Likewise, Li's (2002) findings on gendered barriers in Chinese education highlight how systemic structures-curriculum, tracking, and institutional access-can reinforce broader inequalities.

For Nepal, structural provincial disparities in service provision may be reinforcing cycles of disadvantage in health and education, leaving already marginalized regions further behind.

Taken together, the findings point to entrenched provincial and rural-urban disparities in Nepal's health and education systems, with statistically significant gaps that demand province-specific strategies. Drawing from better-performing regions such as Bagmati and Koshi, policies could focus on strengthening government service quality in underserved provinces, while also gradually expanding private sector engagement where feasible. However, as the literature reminds us, inequality is multidimensional-shaped by geography, income, gender, and social structures. Thus, tackling disparities in Nepal requires more than replicating urban or provincial "best practices"; it requires a holistic strategy that accounts for accessibility, affordability, and equity across all regions.

9. Conclusions

The findings show significant rural-urban and provincial disparities in public perceptions of health and education services across Nepal, highlighting underlying inequalities in both quality and access. Private facilities consistently receive higher satisfaction ratings than government ones, indicating a preference for private options where available. However, access to private services is uneven, with more urbanized provinces such as Bagmati and Koshi reporting greater satisfaction and lower non-response rates, while remote regions like Karnali and Sudurpaschim experience lower satisfaction and higher proportions of "N/A" responses, reflecting limited availability and engagement. Notably, Karnali stands out with relatively higher satisfaction in public facilities but weaker private sector presence, suggesting dependence on government services. Provinces such as Madhesh and Sudurpaschim exhibit persistent dissatisfaction across sectors, underscoring urgent needs for targeted interventions to improve service quality and accessibility. These findings emphasize the importance of tailored, province-specific policies that leverage successful practices from higher-performing regions to promote equitable and effective health and education systems throughout Nepal.

The finding further shows a clear and persistent rural-urban divide in the perceived quality and accessibility of health and education facilities across Nepal. Urban residents consistently report

higher satisfaction with both government and private services, reflecting better service quality, infrastructure, and availability, while rural populations face lower satisfaction with government facilities and significantly reduced access to private education and, to a lesser extent, private health care. The high proportion of "N/A" responses in rural areas, particularly for private education, underscores the role of service absence rather than mere dissatisfaction. These disparities suggest that improving rural service quality, expanding access to private sector options, and addressing infrastructure gaps in government facilities are critical for reducing inequalities and ensuring equitable development across provinces.

Overall, the analysis indicates that both health and education facilities in Nepal exhibit significant rural-urban and provincial disparities. Government facilities are generally perceived as adequate but not excellent, with most respondents rating them as Fair, while private facilities tend to receive higher Good ratings, reflecting better satisfaction and perceived quality. Urban areas consistently report more positive assessments than rural areas, highlighting gaps in access and service quality. Provinces such as Bagmati and Kathmandu show relatively higher satisfaction for both private and government services, whereas regions like Madhesh, Karnali, and Sudurpaschim report lower ratings and higher N/A responses, indicating limited availability or engagement. These patterns underscore the need for targeted interventions to improve accessibility, quality, and equity in both health and education services across Nepal.

Footnotes

1. Family Welfare Division (FWD), Epidemiology and Disease Control Division (EDCD), Curative Service Division (CSD), Nursing and Social Security Division (NSSD), and Management Division (MD), Additionally, it includes five centres: National Tuberculosis Control Center (NTCC), National Health Training Center (NHTC), National Health Education Information and Communication Center (NHEICC), National Center for AIDS and STD Control (NCASC), and National Public Health Laboratory (NPHL), along with two sections: Personnel Administration Section (PAS) and Financial Administration Section (FAS).

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Rights of Accused Person in India: A Critical Analysis

Dhruv Rastogi[1] & Kuldeep Kumar[2]

[1]Ph.D. Research Scholar in Law, School of Law and Constitutional Studies (SLCS), Shobhit Institute of Engineering & Technology (NAAC 'A' Grade Accredited Deemed-to-be University) Meerut, Uttar Pradesh (India)
E-mail:<Dhruvrastogi.adv@gmail.com>

[2]Associate Professor of Law, School of Law and Constitutional Studies (SLCS), Shobhit Institute of Engineering & Technology (NAAC 'A' Grade Accredited Deemed-to-be University) Meerut, Uttar Pradesh (India)
E-mail:<kuldeep.kumar@shobhituniversity.ac.in>

Abstract

The basic object of criminal law is to protect society from offenders by imposing appropriate punishment under statutory provisions. The state's foremost duty is to safeguard people from wrongful acts and uphold the rule of law, ensuring justice for those harmed. The criminal justice system rests on four pillars: conduct of trial, proof of charges, protection of the victim, and punishment of the guilty. Alongside victim protection, safeguarding the rights of the accused is equally essential, ensuring compliance with international and national legal standards such as the UDHR, the Constitution of India, and criminal law statutes including the BNS, BNSS and BSA (formerly IPC, Cr.P.C. and the Evidence Act). An accused remains a human being and is presumed innocent until proven guilty, a principle vital for effective criminal justice. This paper examines the rights of the accused as reflected in international human rights instruments and Indian constitutional, statutory, substantive and procedural laws, supported by judicial decisions. Its aim is to outline these rights across all stages of the criminal process—pre-trial, trial and post-trial.

Keywords

Accused, Administration of Criminal Justice, Criminal, Constitution of India, UDHR, Cr. P.C., IPC, Indian Evidence Act, BNSS, BNS, BSA, Trial, Prison, Punishment.

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Rights of Accused Person in India: A Critical Analysis

1. Introduction

Every person is to be treated as human being, irrespective of the status, including the fact that such person is a criminal. As per the legal principle, one is considered innocent until proved guilty. The legal maxim reads out—*"Ei incumbit probatio qui decit, non qui negat"* meaning—the burden of proof is on the one who declared, not on the one who denies. This is what appropriately defines why it is necessary for having the rights of accused person. Under fundamental principles of law, each and every person has basic human rights.

The basic object of criminal law is to protect society from unruly people who are generally known as law - breakers and criminals and for this purpose the state provides for the administration of criminal justice, ultimately ending in the punishment to the law-breakers and thus making efforts for the establishment of Rule of Law and to have a better peaceful society. The ultimate object of the criminal justice system is to ensure public justice, to chasten the criminal and to ensure that the trial is concluded promptly before the memory of the witness fades out. A fair procedure in criminal trial is the foundation stone of the criminal justice system. Therefore, on the basic principle that human rights are for all human beings, the accused person is also provided with certain rights under the Constitution of India and the basic criminal law.

2. Who is an Accused

As per the Oxford Dictionary accused is the past tense of the verb accuse, *"to say that somebody has done something wrong or broken the law."*

According to New Webster's Dictionary of the English Language, accused is *"A person or persons charged with a crime; a defendant in a court of law."*[1]

Thus, "the accused" refers to a person or people who have been formally charged with a crime in a legal process. They are the individual(s) facing criminal proceedings and are being judged for a

potential offence, distinguishing them from mere suspects who are still under investigation.

In India's code of criminal procedure (Cr. P.C.), an accused is a person against whom criminal proceedings have been formally initiated in a criminal court, or against whom proceedings are instituted under the code (Cr. P.C.).

3. Objectives

Following are the objectives of the present study:

1. To analyze the constitutional rights of the accused.
2. To identify and analyze various rights of the accused in substantive law.
3. To identify and analyze various provisions/ safe guards available to the accused in procedural laws.
4. To understand right of accused to legal consultation and aid.
5. To analyze the judicial interpretation of various provisions to secure the rights of the accused.

4. Methodology

This study adopts a doctrinal research methodology, relying primarily on secondary sources to critically analyze the rights of accused persons in India. The research is based on an in-depth examination of constitutional provisions, statutory frameworks, and judicial interpretations that shape the legal position of the accused. Key sources include the Constitution of India, the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), and earlier statutes such as the Cr.P.C., IPC and the Indian Evidence Act.

A major component of the methodology involves case-law analysis, wherein judgments of the Supreme Court of India and various High Courts are reviewed to understand the evolution, scope, and practical enforcement of accused persons' rights. Landmark and recent decisions have been purposively selected to highlight judicial trends, constitutional interpretations, and gaps between legal protections and their implementation.

Data collected from these secondary sources is analyzed qualitatively. Content analysis techniques are used to identify themes, patterns, and inconsistencies in legal provisions and judicial reasoning. This approach allows for a critical assessment of whether the current legal mechanisms adequately protect the rights of the accused and where reforms may be necessary.

Thus, the methodology integrates doctrinal analysis, case-law study, and qualitative evaluation of secondary literature to provide a comprehensive and critical understanding of the rights of accused persons in India.

5.   Rights of Accused

With the rise of awareness and concerns for human rights, various International Conventions and Declarations have included the provisions for the protection and also enforcement of basic rights of all individuals, including that of an accused person and have made it mandatory for signatory countries to follow them stringently. Any law interfering with the basic rights and privileges would go against the notions of liberty and humanity. Some of these aspects have been included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 (UDHR), Article 3 of UDHR declares that "Everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security of person. The same principle has been reiterated emphatically in Article 21 of the Constitution of India. It is a matter of common knowledge and experience that the principle of liberty is being violated everywhere, and that too by the people who are supposed to protect it. In order to fill the gap between theory and practice, the state provides for legal provisions to secure the adequate implementation of the rights of accused. This research paper will discuss and analyse the Constitutional provisions regarding liberty and protection of human rights of the accused. These Constitutional provisions have been given concrete shape by the Code of Criminal Procedure (Cr. P.C.)/Bhartiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) which confer a number of rights and liberties upon an accused, implying corresponding duties on the arresting authorities. Besides Cr. P.C./BNSS, this paper will also cover the various rights given to the accused person under the Indian Penal Code (IPC)/ Bhartiya Nyaya Sinhita (BNS) and Indian Evidence Act/Bhartiya Sakshya Adhiniyam along with the case law, to analyze their impact on the various statutory laws on the subject and their contribution to the development of the rights of the accused and their protection.

5·1   Constitutional Rights of the Accused

5·1·1 Presumption of Innocence

Article 21 of the Indian Constitution along with Article 14(2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Right, 1966 provide for the protection of the basic principle of criminal jurisprudence that

an individual is presumed to be innocent till the contrary is proved against him. Article 11(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 (UDHR) says that, everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantee necessary for his defence. Section 101 of the Indian Evidence Act (Section 104 of the *Bhartiya Suraksha Adhiniyam*) casts a reasonable burden upon the prosecution to prove the case against the accused, as every accused has the right to have the benefit of presumption of innocence till his guilt is proved beyond reasonable doubt.

5·1·2 Right to Fair Trial

The most important principle that *"No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law."*[2] The scope of Article 21 has been extensively extended by judicial interpretation by the Supreme Court, inserting the doctrine of "Due Process" as true interpretation of the words "procedure established by law", providing protection not only against executive action but also against legislation. This principle is also contained in Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966.

Article 21 implies some inalienable rights for, not only the citizens, but all persons or people including the accused and the condemned. To reinforce the effect of Article 21, Article 20 and 22 specifically provide for certain rights which are expressly in respect of arrest, detention and conviction for offences. European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms have incorporated this right as a basic human right and states in Article 6(1) that *"Every person charged has a right to fair trial"*, and in Article 6(2) that *"Everyone charged with a criminal offence will be presumed to be innocent until proven guilty according to law."*

The Indian judiciary has moreover, through its decisions laid down several principles guaranteeing many more rights to the accused as well as to the convicts, thereby, securing their right to live with dignity. These rights include prohibition of inhuman prison practices such as solitary confinement,[3] handcuffing[4] and torture.[5] Prisoners have other rights also, like right to medical attention,[6] free legal aid,[7] speedy trial,[8] fair trial,[9] to get paid for their work in prison,[10] and to be produced before the magistrate within a period of twenty-four hours of arrest and no such person shall be detained in custody beyond the said period without the authority of a magistrate.[11]

A number of landmark judgements such as Sunil Batra v. Delhi Administration[12] Charles Sobharaj v. Superintendent, Central Jail, Tihar, New Delhi,[13] D.K. Basu v. State of W.B.[14] have further widened the ambit of the rights of the accused. The accused has also been given right to appeal, in cases of conviction, to the Supreme Court under Article 132(1), 134(1) and 136(1) of the Constitution of India.[15] Right to produce defence witness.[16] Besides, an accused shall be tried by an independent and impartial judge[17] and the accused has the right to get copy of the judgement when sentenced to imprisonment.[18]

5·1·3 Right Against Ex-Post Facto Operation of Criminal Law

Article 20(1) of the Constitution of India says, *"No person shall be convicted of any offence except for violation of a law in force at the time of the commission of the act charged as an offence, nor be subject to a penalty greater than that which might have been inflicted under the law in force at the time of the commission of the offence. This is a guarantee against ex-post facto operation of criminal law."* Article 20(1) is in corroboration of Article 11(2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which says that *"No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or commission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time penal offence was committed."*

5·1·4 Protection Against Double Jeopardy

Article 20(2) of the Constitution of India says, *"No person shall be prosecuted and punished for the same offence more than once."* This is known as the rule again double jeopardy. Section 300 of the Cr. Pc/ Sec. 337 of BNSS also provides that if a person has been either acquitted or convicted by a court of competent jurisdiction, he cannot be tried for the same offence again, nor for another offence on the same facts.

5·1·5 Rule Against Self-Incrimination

Right against self-incrimination is enshrined under Article 20(3) of the Constitution of India which says, *"No person accused of any offence shall be compelled to be a witness against himself."* It is the fundamental right of an accused to remain silent to questions relating to the offence alleged against him. An accused cannot be administered oath[19] because it may go against his interest. This special right of an accused is based on the Doctrine of Presumption of Innocence, which is being considered as a cardinal principle in the administration of criminal justice throughout the world. This

provision emanates from the basic principle of criminal law that the burden of proof in all criminal cases is on the prosecution. Hence an accused cannot be compelled to be a witness against himself.

Thus, the Constitution of India guarantees some fundamental rights to all people in India against the State, which represent the basic value of a civilized politico-legal society and so are given paramount importance. The rights under Article 20 and 21 have acquired the status of non-derogable human rights. They cannot be suspended at any time, not even during an emergency by virtue of Article 359. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966, to which India is a signatory, also states in Article 14 (3)(g) that an accused has the right *"not to be compelled to testify against himself or to confess guilt."*

5·2 Rights of the Accused under Substantive Law

In addition to the Constitutional right, the accused is provided with the frights under substantive law of India, specially, the code of criminal procedure (Cr. P.C.), 1973 which is substituted by the Bhartiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) in the year 2023. It contains specific legal provisions which further reinforce the safeguards to the accused. The "presumption of innocence" is the core premise of criminal justice in India. This fundamental concept ensures that an accused is assumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt, and the prosecution bears this burden of proof. This principle emphasizes the importance of a fair and impartial trial in which the defendant is allowed to present evidence and challenge any accusation levelled against him.

The rights of the accused in Indian criminal justice system are provided at different stages. These include the following:

5·2·1 Rights in the Pre-Trial Stage

Any person who is guilty of committing a crime has been given some of the rights so that his freedom and liberty are not hampered.

The primary or first stage of a trial is the pre-trial stage where FIR is filed based on which the police arrest a person and searches his property. The stage prior to the commencement of a trial by the court is extremely crucial and any person accused of a crime must be granted the following rights:

1. **Right to know about the accusation and charges**.[20]

2. **Right against wrongful arrest**[21]**:** Article 22 (2) of the Constitution of India provides that a person arrested must be produced before a judicial magistrate within 24 hours of arrest.

3. **Right to privacy and protection against unlawful searches:** Article 21 of the Constitution of India provides a shield against unlawful intrusion to uphold the right to life and liberty, which includes the right to privacy. This right exists even after an arrest. The property of an accused cannot be searched/seized by the police without a search warrant.

4. **Right against self-incrimination**[22]**:** The accused is bound to answer questions asked concerning the case, but he can refrain from answering questions that may lead to self - guilt and thus he cannot be compelled to be a witness against himself. The Supreme Court in M.P. Sharma v. Satish Chandra[23] explained this provision and right in the following manner:

   - It is a right available to an individual accused of a crime.
   - It protects him from being forced to be a witness in such a case.
   - It protects him from testifying against himself under coercion.

This right has been further upheld in Nandini Sath Pathy v. P L Dani & others.[24]

5. **Rights against the ex-post facto law**[25]**:** This right provides that a person cannot be tried and convicted under laws that mere not in force at the time of occurrence of the alleged crime. This states that retrospective effect of a law is not applicable. In Mara Ram v. Union of India[26] the Supreme Court held that amendments modifying the punishment for certain offences cannot be applied retrospectively to the disadvantage of the accused.

6. **Right against Double Jeopardy**[27]**:** A person cannot be prosecuted and punished for the same offence more than once. In Natarajan v. state[28] the Supreme Court clarified that an individual tried and acquitted or convicted for an offence shall not be retried for the same or different offences arising from the same act.

7. **Right to Bail:** An accused arrested for a crime is entitled to bail unless the offence is a non - bailable one. There are three kinds of bail under the Indian law - anticipatory bail, interim bail and bail by bond. A bail application for normal bail can be

filed in cases of bailable offences. Even in case of non-bailable offence, bail can be granted under certain conditions. A person also has the right to file an anticipatory bail through his lawyer, before his arrest.

8. **Right to Legal Aid**[29] **:** Every accused has a right to free legal aid and advice to be provided by the State.[30] In cases like Sheela Barse v. State of Maharashtra the immediate implication of legal aid at the time of arrest is highlighted. Legal aid must be provided to the poor and needy at different stages of the legal process to uphold their fundamental rights. In Suk Das v. Union territory of Arunachal Pradesh[31] the Supreme Court highlighted the need for legal literacy and awareness among the public about the right to legal aid.

9. **Right to be Examined by a Doctor.**[32] When any person is arrested, he shall be examined by a medical officer in the service of Central or State Government and in case the medical officer is not available by a registered medical practitioner soon after the arrest is made.

5·2·2 Rights During the Trial Stage

There are certain rights of the accused during the trial or when the case is in process in the court. It is to be ensured that due process of law must be followed, the accused gets quick and impartial trial and he is not subjected to torture or forced to implicate himself. Following may be the rights of an accused during the trial state.

1. **Right To a Free, Fair and Expeditious Trial:** The right of the accused includes to have an expeditious trial, which is free of any bias or prejudice. This right includes the right to a speedy trial under Article 21, as held in A.R. Atulya v. R.S. Naik and Another.[33] This was further elaborated upon in Hussainara Khatoon v. Home Secretary, State of Bihar,[34] where the Supreme Court held that the State cannot avoid its constitutional obligation to provide a speedy trial by taking the defence of financial or administrative inability.

2. **Right To be Present During Trial**[35]**:** The accused has a right to be present during the trial to witness the presentation and recording of all evidence and documents in the court.

3. **Right to Obtain copies of documents**[36]**:** The accused has a right to receive copies of all the documents presented in the court, including evidence from both the prosecution and

defence, court orders, and any other document related to the proceedings of the case. This ensures that he remains fully informed about the proceedings and has a fair chance to defend himself against the allegations.

4. **Right to be Presumed Innocent Until Proven Guilty:** The fundamental principle of presumption of innocence is recognized in Article 11 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well, which considers it a fundamental right of every accused. In India, this principle is constitutionally granted and places the burden of proving the guilt on the prosecution.

5. **Right to Cross-Examination**[37]**:** During the trial, the accused has a right to cross-examine the witnesses presented by the prosecution. This stage, involving Chief Examination and Cross-Examination, allows the accused to challenge and highlight the loopholes in the evidence and present his version of events, which contribute to proving the accused's innocence.

5·2·3 Rights in the Post-Trial Stage

An accused person has certain rights once the trial is over. These rights of the accused depend upon the outcome or result of his trial, *i.e.* whether he has been acquitted by the court, or he has been held guilty and arrested by the police.

(A) Rights of the accused, if found innocence:
- Right to receive a copy of the judgement of acquittal.
- Right to get protection from police if there are reasons to believe that there is a threat to his life post-acquittal.

(B) Rights of the convicted person:
- Right to file an appeal against his conviction in a higher court.
- Right to Humane Treatment in Prison: This right includes both physical and mental well - being. It includes adequate food, living conditions, medical care and freedom from torture or cruel inhumane, or degrading treatment. This is a fundamental right under Article 21 and the same has been upheld in the case of D.K. Basu v. State of West Bengal.[38]

  Guidelines are also provided in the Prison Act, 1894.
- Right to have family visits in jail.
- Right against solitary confinement.

- Right to Rehabilitation and Social Integration: The goal of the criminal justice system is not mere punishment/imprisonment, but also the reformation of the criminal. The right includes access to education, vocational and psychological programmes to help inmates develop skill and better reintegrate them into society post their sentence.

- Right to Compensation for wrongful conviction: The criminal jurisprudence recognizes the right of an individual to seek compensation for wrongful conviction. In the case of Rudal Sah v. State of Bihar[39] such compensation was for the first time awarded.

6. Conclusion

In the sphere of criminal law, understanding the rights of accused person is imperative for safeguarding individual freedoms and ensuring a fair legal process. These rights include the presumption of innocence, right against self - incrimination. Besides, the right to legal representation is also important along with the right to a fair trial. This right, together with the rights during arrest and conditions for bail, forms a protective framework for the accused. These rights are not only a reflection of the procedural fairness mandated by law but also crucial for maintaining public trust in judicial system.

It is immaterial where the accused has been arrested or after arrest has been kept in police custody or judicial custody, or has been released on bail, So long as the trial continues and a judgement is not pronounced, he continues to be an accused and, therefore, required to be entrusted with all the rights. The accused does not cease to be a human being just because some criminal case is going on. Rights of the accused, suspects and under trial prisoners are so fundamental that no one can violate them. These rights are not just theoretical protections but are practical tools as well.

The rights of the accused are firmly protected under the Indian Legal System, ensuring impartiality and upholding the fundamental principle of innocence until proven guilty. The criminal justice system shows sensitivity to the complexities of system by providing safeguards such as humane treatment and rehabilitation post - trial along with pre-trial protections against arbitrary arrest and self - incrimination. It creates a balance between individual liberty and

the need for accountability. The rights support a society in which justice reigns supreme, establishing the Rule of Law and thereby, protecting innocent people from punishment and providing possibilities and probability for rehabilitation and reintegration.

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16. Section 243 Cr. P, C./ Section 266 BNSS.

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19. Sec. 313(2) Cr. P.C./ Sec. 351 BNSS.

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21. Section 57 Cr. P.C.; Section 58 BNSS

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The Deposition of Wazir Ali Khan of Awadh: Understanding the Dynamics of Colonial Interventions (1797-98)

Shreya Pathak

Associate Professor, Department of History, Vasanta College for Women (Admitted to the Privileges of Banaras Hindu University), Krishnamurti Foundation India, Rajghat Fort, Varanasi-221001, Uttar Pradesh (India)
E-mail:<shreyapathak165@gmail.com>

Abstract

The demise of Nawab Asaf-ud-daula on 21st September, 1797, brought Awadh's state of affairs in a complete flux. Lumsden, then English Resident at Lucknow, without approbation of upper echelon authorities at Calcutta, took the risk of declaring the deceased Nawab's eldest son Wazir Ali Khan as his successor inspite of the fact that he was cognizant of the controversy regarding his low birth origin. This sudden decision got Council's approbation by passing a resolution on 29th September, 1797, but in December, a volte-face was witnessed in the Company's policy. Governor General, who previously so firmly supported the claim of Wazir Ali to the extent of using force, suddenly conducted an enquiry himself on the issue birth spuriousness of Wazir Ali and soon, within four months, Nawab was deposed. The paper deals in detail with the events and contemporary changes of the concerned time period and attempts to study profoundly the reasons behind the volte-face of the English and the determining factors of the colonial policy regarding succession and deposition of the Awadh Nawab. The research is based on the interpretation of the correspondence and minutes of the principle figures involved in this policy related matters from Fort William to Lucknow. It studies the archival sources mainly consulted from National Archives of India, New Delhi, Regional Archives, Prayagraj and UP State Archives, Lucknow.

Keywords

Asaf-ud-daula, Awadh, Banaras, Sir John Shore, Lumsden, Saadat Ali Khan, Wazir Ali.

3

The Deposition of Wazir Ali Khan of Awadh: Understanding the Dynamics of Colonial Interventions (1797-98)

Awadh, also known as granary of India, always played significant role in shaping the nation's history due to its strategic importance. Being located in the proximity of Delhi, maintaining sway over this fertile region of *doab* was one of the mandatory requisite for the English. During the eighteenth century, when English Company was still in its formative phase of building the empire, the politics of Awadh directly catches the coveted eyes of these foreign traders, who commenced active interference into internal affairs since the battle of Buxar. They were cognizant that being a buffer state between Delhi and Company's territories, any political flux in that region would call for repercussions in Bengal territory sooner or later. This high-handed interference into Awadh internal affairs was triggered with the demise of Nawab Asaf-ud-daula and the issue of succession that was raised immediately after the death of the Nawab on 21st September, 1797. The next four months was a period of complete political flux where the decision over the legal heir to the musnud was determined by the vested interests of the Company.

The demise of Asaf-ud-daula was not the first time that English interfered, infact it started during his lifetime itself, when Governor General Sir John Shore visited Lucknow in January 1797 and appointed Tafazzul Hussain as the Chief Minister of the Nawab much against his will and choice Almas Ali Khan. Almas Ali was an able administrator, who proved his mettle through his work. Sleeman appreciates the work of Almas Ali Khan in his words, *"He held for about forty years districts yielding to the Oudh Government an annual revenue of about eighty lakhs of rupees (₹800,000). During all this time he kept the people secure in life and property, and as happy as people in such a state of society can be; and the whole country under his charge was, during his lifetime, a garden"* (Irwin, 1880: 98-99).[1] The Nawab was not even free to make appointments of ministers of his choice. This high-handed interference multiplied to a tremendous degree after the demise of Asaf-ud-daula, when the most pertinent question

for the Company suddenly emerged for which they were not prepared: Who's next?

This question of succession became an issue of much more political import as it happened at a time when Company was preparing for impending invasion of Zaman Shah. Though this invasion was confined to Punjab in 1797, but the apprehensions of the English were strong, especially at a time when they were involved into hostile relations and military confrontations with so many Indian powers. Sir John Shore mentioned his reflections to the Board on the volatile political situation on 25th January, 1797, *"I should certainly conclude that he had for object the Invasion and Plunder of the Dominions of the Nabob Vizier or the Company, and the following considerations then…Whether the combined Forces of the Vizier, and the Company are sufficient for their Protection; if not, whether a Junction of both with the Mahratha, Troops would afford that security, and, thirdly, whether it would be prudent to Detach the Forces of the Company and the Vizier beyond the Jamuna."* Shore further expressed the possibility of Tipu Sultan decision to commence hostilities against the Company in this situation and so the Company must ponder over the use of southern detachment and asked the Board members to consider whether these detachments would be required more for their services in the northern provinces or in south.[2]

Shore was incessantly receiving intelligence regarding the military plans of Zaman Shah and his apprehensions were based on these reports. William Palmer, Resident at Sindhia's Court, wrote to Shore expressing confidently that the circumstances make him suspicious of Shah's views to be more extensive than mere expulsion of Maratha and that his expedition was planned in concert with Tipu Sultan "for the ultimate purpose of depressing the British Power in India." *There were also reports that French people were approaching Zaman Shah in his durbar indicating towards their endeavours to form an anti-English confederacy. The Resident concluded his report with the statement that though his conjectures might be overstrained, but in this political context, it was important to have "unremitting attention"* on Zaman Shah strategies and military movements and also *"the conduct of the Native Governments in Hindostan."*[3] The very next day Palmer wrote another letter to Shore that Zaman Shah had strong resentment against the Vizier and the wealth and capital of Awadh may excite his avidity.[4] By January, Company had asked Nawab Asaf-ud-daula to make preparations and adopt measures

necessary for the protection of this territory in light of the success and speedy approach of Zaman Shah's army.[5]

In such a volatile political situation and escalating danger of invasion, the demise of Nawab was a matter of great concern for the English that calls their immediate attention where the decision was to be determined keeping in view the situation on the north-west frontier, the high possibility of invasion on Nawab's territory penetrating as far as Banaras, due to its plethora of wealth.[6] Lumsden, who was the Resident at Lucknow, immediately visited the palace as soon as he came to know about the demise of Nawab. Initially, he deemed it proper to issue orders in the name of Nawab's mother till the decision of the successor was determined; but soon he realised possibility of a greater risk of an insurrection throughout Awadh turning the political milieu conducive for the enemies. The exigencies of the situation was too high that within few hours of the demise of Asaf-ud-daula, parwanas were expedited to all the amils announcing the succession of Wazir Ali, who received *Khil'at* of Investiture from the Begum. Soon, his succession was proclaimed throughout Lucknow on the same day. According to Lumsden, his decision of successor was determined by his discussion with the Begum and minister Tafazzul Hussain over the issue and assuming that it would be generally acceptable among all persons of prominence. In his words, *"no one could be found in every respect so eligible as Mirza Vizier Ali, who had long been acknowledged as the eldest son of the deceased."*[7]

Though the high probability of intrigues and insurrection was the main cause behind the Resident's chosen course of action regarding the succession issue, even without any instructions from the Board in Calcutta, but his choice of successor was more determined by the vested interests of the Company. Inspite of having no authority to take such pertinent decision as that of succession without the approbation of the upper echelon authorities, Lumsden was still confident as it goes in line with the Company's political and commercial interests in the region of Awadh and gives them control over the executive powers. It seems here apposite to quote these lines directly from the letter of Lumsden, where his words speak everything loudly and overtly,

"I have been assured repeatedly by Vizier Ali, both in the course of yesterday evening and this morning that his sole dependence is on the protection and support of your Government, and that he will do

nothing without my approbation and that of Toffusal Hussein Khan on these declarations…The executive department will remain entirely in the hands of the Minister, and may be regulated as you shall hereafter suggest…Altho' very young and unqualified for taking any part in the administration of affairs, his disposition is mild and he will be easily advised, at least for the present…" Lumsden had also clearly mentioned in the letter that it was generally understood that Wazir Ali was not the son of the deceased Nawab.[8]

Soon, all these proceedings of Lumsden got approbation by the minute of Governor General passed by the Board. In this minute, Governor General addressed the English approach towards the issue of spuriousness of Wazir Ali's birth. He accepted the fact that though Wazir Ali was born in harem and not the son of Asaf-ud-daula, but he was publicly acknowledged by the Nawab as his son, received suitable education and was invested with the office of minister. Moreover, it was beyond the English capabilities to investigate it and Wazir Ali was always seen as heir apparent.[9] According to Shore, the decision to support the claim of Wazir Ali was mainly because he was the ostensible successor, heir apparent and the concurrence of the principle natives at Lucknow including elder Begum, who publicly presented *Khil'at* of Investiture that displayed no objection on the birth issue and claim of succession.[10]

Regarding the birth spuriousness issue, the approach of Governor General was very clear in the sense that if it's politically convenient for the Company, then the succession of Wazir Ali must be supported and all issues raised in contrary to the decision must be denied in toto. He opined in Board, *"…we can have no hesitation in acknowledging the succession of Vizier Ali, and of determining that it shall be supported. If any doubt could be entertained of the propriety of his determination, it would still be highly imprudent to declare them. The Preservation of the Peace and tranquility of Oude indispensably require that the administration of Vizier Ali, should be acknowledged and supported by this Government. He has the ostensible Right of succession and we have no right when any grounds before us to dispute it, or to support claims and objections, which have not been preferred."* The Board further instructed Agent to Governor General at Banaras to oppose every endeavour of Saadat Ali Khan, to proceed outside Banaras without previous sanctions of the Government and also authorised him to use force, if required.[11]

The claim of Wazir Ali on the throne of Awadh that was "unexceptionable" in the eyes of Lumsden and *"ostensible right"* in the words of Shore, soon changed. Within two-three days of the demise of Asaf-ud-daula, Lumsden was visited by the sons of Shuja-ud-daula in Lucknow where they displayed their fidelity, but refused to offer customary *nazar* to the new Nawab due to his low origin that was known to all.[12] On the basis of these reports by the Resident, Shore instructed Lumsden on 30th September to conduct a secret investigation on the issue of birth spuriousness of Wazir Ali with all circumspection and to report about the possibility of alteration in the resolution passed by the Board that was open to reconsideration. Shore made this a point to confirm that this enquiry must be held surreptitiously and was not meant to be disclosed as he was apprehensive of anarchical state that Marathas would not fail to take advantage of.[13] Only minister Tafazzul Hussain was cognizant of this enquiry.[14] On the same day when Governor General asked for the enquiry, he received letters from Nawab Wazir Ali,[15] Begum[16] and Minister Tafazzul Hussain Khan[17] that made Shore to reconsider his instructions of enquiry. These letters were in extremely submissive language, where Begum accepted the claim of Wazir Ali. The new Nawab writes, *"…he (Asaf-ud-daula) rested his hopes of prosperity and welfare present and to come, and the …(one word not clear) arrangement and power of his Hereditary Government upon the greatness of your favor and regard; This indeed from its extreme publicity needs not to be repeated, it is clear as is Sun and apparent as the Mon, and celebrated throughout the four quarter of the Globe."* These three letters were laid before the Board members on 2nd October, 1797 and a Minute was passed by the Governor General, where he reasserted the Company's decision and reconfirmed the original resolution passed by the Board on supporting Wazir Ali's claim as the successor. The Minute further suspended the instructions of enquiry given to Resident Lucknow on 30th September stating the reason that such secret enquiry, due to its nature, must be unsatisfactory and would be a discredit to the Company. It was passed in strong terms that the succession of Wazir Ali to be supported against all endeavours to molest it to the extent that the Commanding Officers of Kanpur and Fatehgur were instructed to take prepare the troops to take the field in shortest notice.[18] A day after the Minute was passed in favour of Wazir Ali, Shore assured him the support of the Company in the same way as it was towards his predecessors.[19]

Though Governor General suspended the enquiry, but the Minute that was passed was never meant to end all its possibility of reopening the case in future. In order to identify the subtle underlying currents behind the decision to withhold the enquiry, it is apt to mention here the Minute of Commander-in-Chief that was laid and approved by the Board on 9th October, 1797. This Minute gives briefly an exact picture of the intensity of military exigencies in light of Zaman Shah invasion. The Minute clearly mentions that though the present force was enough to cope up with the invasion on the fields, but Company had to rely on Nawab's troops for guards to protect the cantonments and to escort stores and provisions. Further, he states that in the long stretch of territory from Chittagaon to Chunar there were only four regiments of native infantry, three in Bihar and five in Bengal, where to its maximum, only one regiment could be called from Bihar or it would expose the territory to plunder. In case of Bengal, the place was too distant to call the regiment for the purpose. So, it was proposed that each native battalion be increased by 100 privates, which would mean an additional 2000 men in total.[20] All these military plans required a submissive Nawab in Awadh and English control over the executive powers.

By the time, Lumsden was communicated with the Minute passed regarding the suspension of enquiry; he had conducted some and wrote to Shore on the issue. According to his enquiry done furtively, it was universally believed that Wazir Ali was not the real son of Asaf-ud-daula, but when he was born in zenana in May 1780, he was announced to be the eldest son and heir.[21] On 4th October, 1797, Shore received a letter from Saadat-Ali-Khan claiming the masnad of Awadh being the eldest surviving son of the family. He claimed himself to be the rightful heir as Asaf-ud-daula had no son of his own and this could be reconfirmed through the English Residents in Awadh at that time, Bristow and Cherry.[22] Bristow, who was Resident at Awadh from October 1782 to early months of 1784, accepted that the Nawab introduced Wazir Ali as his son, who was 2 or 3 year of age at that time. No other person was introduced to him in such a way.[23]

On 17th October, Saadat Ali reiterated his claim on the throne manifesting his zeal for Company's interest in a much greater degree than his predecessors.[24] This claim further raised the question of Wazir Ali's claim on the throne. On 20th October, 1797, Shore passed another Minute supporting the claim of Wazir Ali. The Minute mentioned that Wazir Ali was placed on the throne *"to prevent the*

unavoidable consequences of Anarchy" otherwise it would have made the situation conducive for the pathans, rohillas and Marathas and this immediate declaration of successor done by the resident was in concurrence with all the principal inhabitants at Lucknow including minister and begum. The birth of Wazir Ali was not recorded on the proceedings at that time, but was mentioned by the Resident Middleton on 7th April, 1782 that he was invited to celebrate Wazir Ali's birth anniversary on 29th March, 1782. The Minute further states that the marriage of Wazir Ali was publicly celebrated in 1794 as the son of Nawab, who also invited the Government people on the occasion. In June 1796, Wazir Ali was appointed as Dewan. All these acts of Nawab Asaf-ud-daula give strong evidence in favour of Wazir Ali's claim. This was a protracted deliberation on the issue of the birth of Wazir Ali as evident from the long and elaborative Minute where all the councilors gave their arguments to support his succession.[25] Thus, the Minute passed on 20th October reiterated Company's strong support to the claim of Wazir Ali on the throne inspite of its objection by Saadat Ali Khan.

In the meantime, Shore continued to receive communications regarding the issue of succession. The minister came to meet him in Jaunpur on 6th December and expressed that no son of the deceased Nawab had the right to succession due to low birth origin and as per the rules of justice the right of Saadat Ali to succession was indisputable. Many people of prominence in Lucknow had expressed their disappointment after Wazir Ali' elevation and regarded that the decision was "hasty and inconsiderate". The Minister opined that Wazir Ali had gained support of many sections, particularly army by being liberal and offering future benefits. Wazir Ali' spurious birth was also confirmed by Busra Mirza, who was *daroga* of the *Dewan Khana* under Nawab Shuja-ud-daula. All this led to Shore's decision to open an enquiry on his right to masnad without raising suspicion. The Governor General when left Calcutta, had no plans of reversal of his previous decision on the succession issue, but, soon after he reached Jaunpur his mind changed and determined to conduct enquiry on the spuriousness of the birth. He writes, *"…but under the state impression I conceive it possible that the repugnance of the inhabitants of Oude to the Title of Vizier Ali might be such as to force upon me the further consideration of it."* Shore conducted his enquiry during this period of protracted journey. He reached Lucknow on 23rd December 1797 and attempted to gather information related to

parentage of Wazir Ali. Shore, in his letter, refers to three papers collected from Zehseen Ali Khan, where the first contains an account of the children of Rehmat, mother of Wazir Ali; second was an explanatory answer of Zehseen Ali and third paper includes the history of other 15 surviving sons of the deceased Nawab. According to first paper, Rehmat was in zehseen house, where her monthly income was Rs. 4. She had three children and when the third child Wazir Ali was about to born Nawab said that he would take the child for Rs 500 to which Rehmat consent. These reports are so exhaustive that it includes mention in almost 75 pages.[26]

Shore gives in detail his arguments against Wazir Ali on the basis of the information gathered and enquiry conducted. According to Shore, Wazir Ali was undoubtedly of low birth and by character and conduct was unworthy of accession. Any support to him would bring indelible disgrace to Company's reputation and ruin its sway over the region of Awadh. Since all the sons of Asaf-ud-daula were undoubtedly spurious, the succession line should be transferred to the lineage of Shuaj-ud-daula. He firmly recommended deposition of Wazir Ali and his replacement by Saadat Ali Khan.[27]

The closing lines of 76 pages long letter speak out loud all about the mind of Shore and the exact reasons behind the *volte-face* of his policy and sudden reversal of his decision on the issue of succession. He remarked, *"In a question of this nature when the Eyes of all Hindostan are upon us the reputation of our decision even undefendeatly of the justice a fit is no …(one word not clear due to brittle paper) consideration to the political interest of the Company…. A regard to justice, to reputation and to our political interests as involved with them require the revocation of a decision which has already affected them all."* The birth spuriousness of Wazir Ali was a universal fact and known to all Company's officer. Even if the Resident, due to emergent situation at the time of the demise of Asaf-ud-daula, took the decision to make announcement in favour of Wazir Ali succession, this should not have been approved by the Board later. The decision of the Board to support Wazir Ali and its reiteration later by passing another Minute of Governor General, all was taken cognizance of the fact related to his low origin. Earlier Saadat Ali Khan, who was not even permitted to leave Banaras and instructions were given to use force against him, if required, was now been regarded as "an illustrious family" that was deprived of "an exclusive right" to the *masnad*.

Shore was apprehensive of violent disturbance in the execution of his decision, so he made all his military preparations. There was an army of about six to seven thousand men encamped near his place of stay and force of almost same strength was stationed in Kanpur in case emergency reinforcements required.[28] Furtively, he deliberated with Saadat Ali Khan through Cherry, Agent to Governor General at Banaras, on the provisions of new treaty with the Company[29] and it was signed on 13th January, 1798.[30] On 21st January, 1798 he was placed on the throne.[31] Wazir Ali was asked to move to Banaras with a monthly pension of Rs.12,500.

If we go through the correspondence between Calcutta and Lucknow authorities and minutes of the Board and interpret those documents, it will become too obvious that the colonial approach adopted towards Awadh at the time of Wazir Ali's succession and deposition was that of political convenience. If we compare the minutes of 29th September and 20th October 1797 with the Governor General's letter of 13th and 14th January 1798, a lot of conflict in their own statements and reasons of their decision are quite evident. The cogent reasons that English drafted with an unerring knack supporting Wazir Ali's claim, suddenly withered away by the month of December. In the letter of 13th January, 1798 the cogent reasons suddenly diverted against Wazir Ali. Apparently, what was politically convenient to the Company and goes with the wave of their vested interests must be supported, otherwise it should be eliminated. A Nawab of 17-18 years age, who was a weak claimant, inexperienced and inefficient administrator, was definitely a smart choice for the English that would allow them to effortlessly control the affairs of Awadh. When he turns hostile towards English, the controversy, that was earlier suppressed, suddenly came on the fore to establish a cogent reason to depose him. The spuriousness of birth, which was difficult to enquire as it was a matter that happened about two decades earlier, could now be enquired very efficiently with all evidence. All the principle inhabitants of Awadh, who were, till now, in favour of Wazir Ali, suddenly turned against his succession. The English were able to dig out the evidence of Wazir Ali's low birth origin that was impossible for them couple of months back. All these correspondences manifest loudly that English were cognizant of all, but they willingly suppressed it and the moment they realized that the new Nawab may not become a puppet in the show, they deposed him using the same causes that were earlier suppressed.

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Corporate Governance and ESG Integration: An Empirical Analysis of NIFTY 50 Companies

Luvnica Verma

Dubai Business School, University of Dubai, Academic City Emirates Road - Exit 49 (Dubai) E-mail:<luvnica@gmail.com>

Abstract

This study empirically examines the relationship between corporate governance mechanisms and ESG integration among India's NIFTY 50 companies. Using panel data analyzed in STATA, the study test five hypotheses linking governance quality, board diversity, ESG committees, institutional ownership, and financial performance to ESG outcomes. Results reveal robust positive associations: governance quality (=0.91, <0.001) and institutional ownership (r=0.9176, <0.001) strongly predict ESG integration, while diverse boards (F=2401.68, <0.001) and dedicated ESG committees (=8.87, <0.001) enhance ESG performance and reporting quality. Notably, ESG integration correlates with superior financial performance (ROA: =0.15; ROE: =0.22; Tobin's Q: =0.08; all <0.001). The findings highlight governance as a critical enabler of sustainability practices in India's large-cap firms, offering actionable insights for policymakers mandating ESG disclosures and investors prioritizing sustainable investments. Limitations include sample focus on NIFTY 50 firms and correlational design. This study contributes to emerging-market ESG literature by quantifying governance-ESG linkages with robust empirical evidence.

Keywords

ESG integration, Corporate governance, Board diversity, Institutional ownership, Financial performance, NIFTY 50.

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Corporate Governance and ESG Integration: An Empirical Analysis of NIFTY 50 Companies

1. Introduction

The incorporation of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) considerations into business strategy is becoming more significant for global companies. In India, changing regulations and increased investor demand for sustainable conduct have positioned ESG integration at the centre for larger corporations. The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) now obliges the largest 1,000 listed companies to report Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reports (BRSR), reflecting the increasing significance of ESG disclosures. Yet, the depth and quality of ESG integration differ considerably between companies. This requires critical questions regarding the drivers of successful ESG adoption. Recognizing these drivers is vital for corporate executives, investors, and policymakers interested in fostering sustainable business practices.

This research targets the NIFTY 50 firms, which account for around 66% of India's free-float market capitalization. They are suitable firms for the analysis of ESG practices since they are large, established, and under intense regulatory oversight. The study analyses five important relationships: the effect of governance quality on the integration of ESG, the contribution of board diversity towards ESG performance, the effect of ESG committees on reporting quality, the monetary gains of ESG integration, and the effect of institutional ownership on ESG practices. The analysis is based on thorough data from annual reports, sustainability reports, BRSR disclosures, and financials of all NIFTY 50 firms. Statistical testing was carried out using STATA with correlation analysis, regression analysis, t-tests, Wilcoxon tests, partial correlation analysis, and quantile regression to establish strong results. The study analyses five precise hypotheses concerning the associations between governance structures and ESG outcomes.

2.   Governance Quality and ESG Integration

Previous research suggests that companies with strong governance structures are better at integrating ESG factors into their operations. Agency theory explains this relationship by arguing that good governance aligns management interests with stakeholder interests, leading to greater attention to ESG issues (Yadav & Prashar, 2022). Stakeholder theory also supports this view, suggesting that well-governed companies are better positioned to balance the interests of different stakeholders, including environmental and social considerations.

International research has reported favourable correlations between governance quality and ESG performance. Firms with superior governance structures have been observed to have better ESG ratings and more detailed sustainability disclosures. In India, it has been observed that improvements in governance after the Regulatory Reforms have been linked to enhanced corporate social responsibility initiatives (Tripathi & Gautam, 2024).

The STATA results present robust evidence for the first hypothesis that governance quality strongly predicts ESG integration level. The relationship between governance quality and ESG integration is extremely high ($r=0.8993$, <0.001), showing a strong positive association. The regression result indicates that an increase in governance quality by one unit increases the ESG integration score by 0.91 units ($=0.91$, <0.001). The partial correlation of 0.8992 (<0.001) ensures that this correlation is still robust when other firm attributes are controlled.

These results strongly affirm prior literature and theory. The very high correlation coefficient (0.8993) is even more profound than numerous prior studies have discovered, implying that the quality of governance might be especially relevant for ESG integration in India. This may be a result of the shifting regulatory framework in India, where effective governance frameworks enable corporations to better cope with new ESG standards (Suraj & Divyashree, 2024).

The findings confirm that firms with strong systems of governance, such as independent boards of directors, good audit committees, and well-defined structures of accountability, are significantly more likely to incorporate ESG into their business operations. This also means that the quality of governance offers a suitable foundation for effective ESG implementation.

3. Board Diversity and ESG Performance

Diversity within board plays an important role in ESG performance due to the different approaches, experience and abilities being involved in the process of decision-making. It is proven that gender diversity is a beneficial factor in terms of environmental and social performance because women directors tend to focus on the issues of stakeholders and align the risk-management policy (Singh & Patel, 2025). Diversity in skills will prepare the boards to deal with complicated ESG issues, whereas the diversity in customs will bring diverse sustainability systems (Rao *et al.*, 2023).

The research largely confirms the connection between diversity among the boards and ESG performance, where gender diversity, diversity in skills, and cultural diversity have high positive correlations (<0.001). The shared F-test (F=2401.68, <0.001) supports the overall effectiveness of various boards in the achievement of ESG (Rajan & Sivakumar, 2025). This research is an expansion of previous studies because it proves that diversity, fostered in more than gender, is more effective.

This high F-statistic implies that companies are advised to embark on extensive diversity, rather than slight compliance. The various boards perform better on addressing the ESG concerns with more idea sharing and experience (Padmaja *et al.*, 2023). In this way, achieving overall board diversity plays an essential role in long-term sustainability and excellence in governance.

4. ESG Committees and Quality of Reporting

A formal pledge to make ESG issues part of business strategy is to have stand-alone ESG or sustainability committees. These committees offer professional oversight, systematized evaluation of the ESG performance, and eligibility in the estimated content of ESG disclosure (Oza & Patekar, 2024). Studies show that businesses that have a stand-alone sustainability committee established have better ESG reporting and greater ESG performance.

Research has revealed that ESG committees ensure that the ESG factors are incorporated in the boardroom discussions as well as in the strategic planning processes. They also enable the ESG problems to receive the right attention and expertise within the board (NSE India, 2025).

The third hypothesis relating to the ESG committees improving the quality of reporting is supported by rather strong evidence.

Companies that have specific ESG committees have ESG reporting quality far superior to those companies that do not have an ESG committee. Both the t-test (<0.001) and the Wilcoxon test (z=-7.81, <0.001) show large differences in reporting quality. The regression result indicates that an ESG committee results in a reporting quality score increase by 8.87 points (=8.87, <0.001).

These results offer firm empirical evidence of the importance of formal ESG governance structures. The high coefficient (8.87) suggests that ESG committees significantly impact reporting quality in practice, rather than merely statistically. This is as argued in earlier studies, but offers very strong evidence from the Indian market (Mali & Dalvadi, 2025).

The findings from both the parametric and non-parametric tests establish the consistency of the results. This indicates that ESG committees ensure the focused attention and expertise required to enhance the quality and extent of sustainability disclosures. Firms without ESG committees might not have the intensive oversight to guarantee high-quality ESG reporting (Deshpande & Kumar, 2025).

5.   ESG Integration and Financial Performance

The correlation between ESG integration and financial performance has been widely researched with typically positive but occasionally mixed results. Meta-analyses indicate a positive association between ESG performance and financial indicators, although the intensity of the relationship fluctuates by industry and across geographies. The channels by which ESG integration drives financial performance are enhanced operational effectiveness, diminished regulatory and reputational risk, greater access to capital, and enhanced productivity and loyalty of employees as well as customers (Deshpande & Kumar, 2024).

Certain studies contend that ESG integration results in improved risk management and value creation over the long term, while others contend that the relationship could be driven by unobserved firm-specific characteristics that influence both financial outcomes and ESG performance.

The empirical results strongly support the fourth hypothesis that financial performance is enhanced through ESG integration. ESG integration has significant positive correlations with all three financial performance variables studied: ROA, ROE, and Tobin's Q (all <0.001). T-tests that compare high and low ESG firms have

significant performance differences in all financial measures (all <0.001).

These findings present strong evidence for the business argument in favour of ESG integration in the Indian context. That ESG integration enhances all three measures of financial performance—profitability (ROA), returns to shareholders (ROE), and market valuation (Tobin's Q)—indicates that the benefits are pervasive rather than concentrated on certain performance aspects.

The results are stronger than those of many earlier studies, which tend to identify mixed or weak associations between ESG and financial performance (Yadav & Prashar, 2022). This may be a sign that ESG integration is especially beneficial in emerging economies such as India, where ESG practices might offer higher competitive benefits owing to less competition. The evidence indicates that firms making an investment in ESG integration will experience improvement in accounting-based measures of performance and market-based valuations.

6. Institutional Ownership and ESG Integration

One of the factors that has become instrumental to ESG integration is institutional investors, where most large institutions have included ESG criteria in the investment choices and have engaged companies in environmental and social sustainability (Tripathi & Gautam, 2024). The increasing presence of ESG-related institutional investors has developed incentives towards companies to enhance the quality of their ESG performance and disclosure levels.

It has been found that institutional investors are in a better position to influence corporate practices towards sustainability by pressurising them, especially investors with a long-term investing horizon. The fact is that institutional investors are in a better position to track company performance and manage resources to apply active ownership (Suraj & Divyashree, 2024).

Institutional ownership promotes ESG integration based on the fifth hypothesis, supported largely by the analysis. Institutional ownership and ESG Integration are strongly associated with one another (r=0.9176, <0.001), but it has the highest correlation that exists in the research. Through its regression analysis, it is evident that ESG integration was much higher in the event of a higher institutional ownership (=1.21, <0.001). This relationship was verified by quantile regression outcomes in terms of various degrees of ESG integration (<0.001).

This result is the most indicative of all the tested relations, as well as the highest correlation coefficient (0.9176) in the research. High institutional ownership as a factor can therefore be seen as the most significant contributor to integration of ESG since none of the other factors studied supersede it. The correlation itself is greater than in several other studies related to international markets, which proves that institutional investors can support ESG practices within the Indian market more than usual (Singh & Patel, 2025).

The coefficient of 1.21 shows that, besides being significant, the effect is also economically significant. It implies that corporations concerned with enhancing their integration of ESG factors have to give significant consideration to their institutional investor base and pursue outreach to institutional investors who specialize in ESG.

7. Overall Discussion and Implications

The research confirms that several corporate governance and ownership factors play important roles in determining ESG-related strategies and outcomes.

Hypothesis	Relationship Tested	Statistical Output	-value	Interpretation
H_1	Governance → ESG Integration	= 0.91; r = 0.8993	< 0.001	A 1-unit increase in governance score is associated with a 0.91-point rise in ESG integration.
H_2	Board Diversity → ESG Performance	Joint F = 2401.68	< 0.001	Board diversity across multiple dimensions significantly enhances ESG performance.
H_3	ESG Committee →ESG Reporting	= 8.87	< 0.001	The presence of an ESG committee is associated with an 8.87-point improvement in reporting quality.
H_4	ESG Integration → Financial Performance	ROA, ROE, Tobin's Q (all sig.)	< 0.001	ESG integration is associated with improved profitability and market valuation.
H_5	Institutional Ownership → ESG Integration	= 1.21; r = 0.9176	< 0.001	A 1% increase in institutional ownership correlates with a 1.21-point rise in ESG integration score.

All five hypotheses were strongly supported by statistical analysis, which depicted that governance quality and sustainability integration are interrelated. The very robust relations that were identified (correlation coefficients greater than 7.6) indicate that these factors might be equally critical in the Indian context as compared to developed markets.

To corporate leaders, the findings portray clear directions on types of governance that are supportive of having effective ESG integration. The firms are advised to aim at enhancing the quality of overall governance, promoting the diversity of the board on various fronts, creating separate ESG committees, and dealing with ESG-oriented institutional investors (Rajan & Sivakumar, 2025). ESG integration to the financial performance is quite significantly related, which creates a strong business case for such investments.

To investors, the findings indicate that the quality of governance and ownership of institutions are good indicators of ESG performance. With these insights, investors will be able to select companies that will perform exemplary in ESG integration and financial performance.

On the part of the policy makers, the findings affirm the need to push the requirements of corporate governance as well as the diversification of the boards (Padmaja *et al.*, 2023). It is also implied by the findings that a possibility to spur the developments related to improved corporate sustainability practices on a broader scale is the stimulation of the participation of institutional investors in matters of ESG.

8. Limitations and Future Research

The study focuses on large, well-established companies in the NIFTY 50, which may limit the generalizability of findings to smaller companies with different governance structures and resource constraints. Future research could examine whether these relationships hold for mid-cap and small-cap companies, and could use longitudinal data to better establish causal relationships. Due to the observational nature of the panel dataset, this study cannot confirm causality. The reported associations, while robust, may be influenced by unmeasured confounders. To better isolate causal effects, future research could employ instrumental variable techniques or leverage natural experiments that address potential endogeneity between governance structures and ESG performance.

9. Conclusion

This study provides comprehensive evidence of strong positive relationships between corporate governance mechanisms and ESG integration among India's largest companies. The findings demonstrate that governance quality, board diversity, ESG committees, and institutional ownership are significant drivers of ESG integration and performance, which in turn leads to superior financial results.

The research contributes important evidence to the growing literature on sustainable finance and provides practical guidance for companies, investors, and policymakers. The strong statistical relationships found across all hypotheses suggest that investing in robust governance structures and comprehensive ESG integration can deliver both sustainability benefits and superior financial returns.

As ESG considerations become increasingly central to business strategy and investment decisions, understanding the governance drivers of ESG integration becomes crucial for long-term value creation. The findings support the view that companies with strong governance foundations are best positioned to succeed in the evolving landscape of sustainable business practices.

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Tribes and UCC: A Perspective Beyond the Civil Code

Sultan Singh Yadav[1] and Neha Tamta[2]

[1]Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Government Degree College, Tanakpur, Uttarakhand-262309 (India)
E-mail:<drssyadav20@gmail.com>

[2]Research Scholar, Department of Political Science, Government Degree College, Tanakpur, Uttarakhand-262309 (India)
E-mail:<neha.tamta493@gmail.com>

Abstract

The debate on the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in India raises critical concerns about its impact on the tribal communities' distinct customary laws and cultural autonomy guaranteed under the Fifth and Sixth Schedules of the Constitution. This study explores the intersection of tribal rights and the UCC, moving beyond the legal uniformity to address broader issues of identity, self-governance, and pluralism. Using a doctrinal methodology, the research analyzes constitutional provisions, legislative frameworks, and judicial precedents while incorporating insights from ethnographic studies and interviews with tribal leaders and legal experts. The findings reveal that implementing a one-size-fits-all UCC risks undermining tribal autonomy, disrupting traditional legal systems, and fostering cultural alienation. Drawing from comparative legal frameworks in countries like South Africa and Canada, the study emphasizes the need for a context-sensitive approach that harmonizes gender justice and human rights with respect for tribal traditions. This work advocates for a pluralistic UCC model, ensuring inclusivity and equity while preserving India's diverse socio-cultural fabric.

Keywords

Uniform Civil Code (UCC), Tribal rights, Customary laws, Cultural autonomy, Constitutional pluralism, Self-governance, Gender justice, Human rights.

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Tribes and UCC: A Perspective Beyond the Civil Code

1. Introduction

India's legal framework reflects its cultural diversity, yet the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) has remained a subject of intense debate, especially regarding its implications for tribal communities. Rooted in Article 44 of the Directive Principles of State Policy in the Indian Constitution, the UCC seeks to establish a uniform set of laws governing personal matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, and adoption across all religions and communities. While proponents argue that the UCC promotes gender justice, equality, and national integration, critics emphasize its potential to erode cultural identities and disregard customary practices of tribal societies that function under distinct traditions and self-governance systems. This paper aims to explore the complex relationship between the UCC and tribal customary laws, analyzing whether a pluralistic legal model can balance modern legal principles with cultural preservation. The study examines the constitutional safeguards for tribal autonomy, conflicts arising from the implementation of uniform laws, and comparative global frameworks like South Africa and Canada to propose a context-sensitive approach for India. By delving into case studies, legal precedents, and field insights, the research highlights the need for inclusivity and equitable reforms that uphold human rights without dismantling the social fabric of tribal communities. Through this analysis, the paper underscores the importance of moving beyond the civil code to envision a harmonious legal structure that accommodates diversity while ensuring justice.

2. Understanding Uniform Civil Code (UCC)

The Uniform Civil Code (UCC) is a proposed legal framework aimed at replacing personal laws based on religion, customs, and traditions with a common set of laws governing marriage, divorce, adoption, inheritance, and property rights for all citizens of India. Envisioned under Article 44 of the Directive Principles of State Policy in the Indian Constitution, the UCC seeks to promote equality and secularism by ensuring a uniform legal structure that upholds

gender justice and individual rights. Advocates argue that a uniform law will address discriminatory practices in personal laws, especially those affecting women's rights within patriarchal systems. However, critics contend that the UCC risks marginalizing cultural identities by disregarding the customary laws and autonomous practices of tribal communities and religious minorities.

3.   Tribal Communities in India: An Overview

India is home to over 700 recognized tribal groups, collectively referred to as Scheduled Tribes (STs) under Article 342 of the Indian Constitution. These tribes constitute approximately 8.6% of the country's population (Census 2011). Tribal societies are characterized by distinct cultural practices, linguistic diversity, and customary laws that govern their marriages, inheritance, property ownership, and dispute resolution mechanisms. Unlike mainstream Indian laws, which focus on individual rights, tribal systems often emphasize collective ownership, custom-based justice, and matriarchal or patriarchal governance structures.

In the context of the UCC, tribal groups fear losing their cultural identity and indigenous practices under a standardized legal framework. Their customary laws often perform better in areas like land rights, women's inheritance, and community governance than modern laws. For example, Santhal laws prioritize collective ownership of land, ensuring socio-economic stability that modern property laws fail to achieve.

4.   Intersection of UCC and Tribal Customary Laws

The intersection of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) and tribal customary laws highlights a complex legal and cultural dilemma. While the UCC aims to unify personal laws to ensure equality, gender justice, and secularism, tribal communities operate under customary laws rooted in traditions and ancestral practices. These customary laws, often passed down through oral traditions, govern marriage, divorce, inheritance, and land ownership within tribes and are central to maintaining their identity and social cohesion.

One of the key conflicts arises from the collective rights embedded in tribal traditions, which often contrast with the individual rights promoted by modern legal frameworks. For example:

- ▸ **Inheritance Laws:** Tribes such as the Khasis of Meghalaya follow a matrilineal system where property is inherited through

the female lineage, empowering women economically. However, the UCC's emphasis on gender-neutral laws could unintentionally disrupt this empowerment by enforcing equal inheritance rights for male heirs.

⤷ **Marriage and Divorce Practices:** The Santhals and Gonds recognize cohabitation unions and informal divorces, providing social legitimacy without formal legal procedures. Imposing UCC regulations might invalidate these unions, leading to social alienation and legal challenges.

⤷ **Land Rights:** Tribal laws often emphasize collective ownership of land, protecting community resources and preventing alienation to outsiders. The UCC's focus on individual ownership could undermine community governance systems, causing land disputes and loss of tribal lands.

Several legal battles highlight these conflicts. For instance:

⤷ **Madhu Kishwar v. State of Bihar (1996):** The Supreme Court upheld tribal customary laws over modern inheritance laws, acknowledging the unique socio-cultural context of tribes.

⤷ **Shimbhu and Another v. State of Haryana (2013):** The case raised questions about gender equality versus customary practices, emphasizing the need for context-specific reforms rather than universal laws.

While gender justice and equality remain fundamental, imposing a one-size-fits-all framework like the UCC could violate tribal autonomy and constitutional protections under Fifth and Sixth Schedules.

5. Case Studies: Tribal Customary Laws vs. Uniform Civil Code

A comparative analysis of cases worldwide where tribal customary laws conflicted with national legal frameworks highlights the successes and challenges of legal pluralism. The following table presents various examples:

Country	Tribal Group	Customary Law	Conflict with National Law	Resolution/ Impact
India	Nagas, Santhals, Bhils	Customary land and inheritance laws	Conflict with UCC proposals regarding property rights	Debate over UCC implementation to ensure protection of tribal autonomy

South Africa	Zulu, Xhosa	Customary marriages & succession laws	Inconsistencies with constitutional rights for gender equality	Recognition of Customary Marriages Act, balancing tradition and gender justice
Canada	First Nations, Métis, Inuit	Indigenous governance & land rights	Federal laws occasionally override self-governance rights	Constitution Act, 1982, acknowledges indigenous rights and self-governance
Australia	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples	Native Title & traditional dispute resolution	Conflict with state-imposed legal frameworks	Native Title Act, 1993, grants legal recognition to land claims
New Zealand	Mâori	Tikanga Mâori (customary laws in family and land matters)	Conflict with national judiciary system	Treaty of Waitangi & Mâori Land Court ensure legal integration
United States	Native American Tribes	Tribal sovereignty in family and criminal law	Federal intervention in tribal legal matters	Tribal Law and Order Act, 2010, strengthens tribal legal autonomy
Nigeria	Various ethnic groups	Customary marriage and inheritance laws	Conflict with constitutional rights and gender equality laws	Legal reforms to balance customary and statutory laws
Philippines	Igorot, Lumad	Ancestral domain claims and community governance	Overlapping national land laws	Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act, 1997, protects ancestral land claims
Brazil	Amazonian Indigenous Tribes	Land ownership and resource use	State development policies clashing with indigenous rights	Legal recognition of indigenous reserves under Brazilian Constitution

These cases illustrate the complexities of integrating customary laws with national legal frameworks. While some countries have successfully balanced legal pluralism, others continue to face challenges in harmonizing tribal customs with modern legal standards.

6.   Key Challenges & Criticisms of UCC in the Tribal Context

Key challenges of UCC in the tribal context are as follows:

▸ **Loss of Cultural Identity:** Tribal laws uphold centuries-old traditions. Imposing a UCC risks cultural homogenization, eroding tribal autonomy and ancestral heritage.

▸ **Gender Justice vs. Collective Rights:** UCC promotes gender equality, but tribal customs often prioritize community welfare. For instance, the Khasi matrilineal system may be undermined by gender-neutral inheritance laws.

▸ **Land Ownership & Resource Rights:** Tribal communities practice collective land ownership for sustainable management. UCC's focus on individual property rights could lead to land alienation and economic exploitation.

▸ **Legal Pluralism vs. Uniformity:** The Indian Constitution grants special protections to tribes under the Fifth and Sixth Schedules. UCC may conflict with these provisions, creating legal ambiguities.

▸ **Resistance & Political Backlash:** Tribes see UCC as an attempt at forced assimilation, sparking protests. For instance, North-Eastern tribes and the Gond community oppose changes that threaten their autonomy.

Criticisms of UCC in tribal context relates to the following:

▸ **Top-Down Approach:** Ignores local governance and cultural diversity.

▸ **Violation of Constitutional Protections:** Articles 244 and 275 safeguard tribal rights, questioning UCC's validity.

▸ **Gender Inequality in Customary Laws:** Some tribal customs empower women, while others need reform-requiring a balanced approach rather than forced uniformity.

For key focus, a pluralistic legal approach is needed—modern reforms should respect traditions, ensuring inclusivity without eroding tribal rights and cultural diversity.

7.   Constitutional Provisions Safeguarding Tribal Autonomy

India's Constitution ensures tribal rights, culture, and governance through special provisions. The UCC debate raises

concerns about potential dilution of the following safeguards and provisions:

‣ **Fifth Schedule:** Governs Scheduled Areas, allowing Governors to modify laws to protect tribal customs, land rights, and governance via Tribal Advisory Councils.

‣ **Sixth Schedule:** Grants self-governance to tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram through Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) with legislative powers over marriage, land, and social practices.

‣ **Article 244:** Enables administration of tribal areas through customary laws under the Fifth and Sixth Schedules.

‣ **Article 13(3)(a):** Recognizes customary laws within the legal framework, ensuring their protection if not violating fundamental rights.

‣ **Article 19(5):** Restricts non-tribals from owning land in tribal areas, preventing exploitation.

‣ **Article 371(A) & 371(G):** Grants Nagaland and Mizoram autonomy over religious practices, social customs, and land laws, requiring state consent for parliamentary legislation.

8. Policy Recommendations and Way Forward

Major policy recommendations for the way forward are as under:

‣ **Gradual & Inclusive Reforms:** Implement step-by-step changes, addressing gender issues without eroding tribal traditions. Use pilot programs and tribal consultations for policy inclusivity.

‣ **Hybrid Legal Systems:** Maintain a dual framework where customary laws coexist with modern laws, modeled on South Africa and Canada's legal pluralism.

‣ **Gender Justice Within Tribal Laws:** Promote gender-sensitive reforms while respecting cultural values through legal literacy programs.

‣ **Community Participation:** Form Tribal Consultative Bodies, engage grassroots leaders, and encourage voluntary adoption of progressive reforms.

‣ **Codification of Customary Laws:** Document tribal laws for legal recognition, creating a national database for judicial clarity.

- **Dispute Resolution Mechanisms:** Strengthen traditional mediation with modern judicial principles and train tribal leaders for effective conflict resolution.
- **Legislative Amendments:** Modify laws like the Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act to balance gender equality with customary land rights, ensuring special UCC exemptions for tribes.
- **Education & Awareness:** Conduct legal awareness campaigns for tribal communities and train judicial officers in handling tribal law cases sensitively.
- **Recognition of Customary Practices:** Legally validate tribal customs that align with constitutional values, preserving traditions while addressing inequalities.

A balanced UCC should ensure equality without undermining tribal autonomy. Legal pluralism, cultural preservation, and gender justice must coexist to uphold India's constitutional democracy.

9. Balancing Uniformity and Diversity: Towards an Inclusive Legal Framework

The challenge of implementing a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society like India lies in balancing the principles of uniformity and diversity. Tribes, with their distinct customs, beliefs, and legal traditions, represent a microcosm of diversity that requires a context-sensitive approach rather than legal homogenization. This section explores how a pluralistic legal framework can preserve tribal identity while promoting gender justice, equality, and human rights.

9·1 Recognizing Legal Pluralism

Customary laws practiced by tribes are often rooted in oral traditions and community-based governance systems that are efficient and respected within their societies. For example, Naga customary laws emphasize communal ownership and dispute resolution mechanisms, which have proven effective in conflict mitigation without external intervention. Recognizing these plural legal systems can ensure that tribal customs are protected under the UCC, creating a hybrid model that accommodates diversity.

9·2 Addressing Gender Inequality without Undermining Culture

While some tribal customs promote gender equality-such as Khasi matrilineal inheritance systems-others may discriminate against women's rights in property ownership and inheritance. A

progressive UCC should focus on eliminating gender-based discrimination through dialogue and reform rather than outright imposition of laws. Programs promoting legal awareness and capacity building can empower tribal women to demand reforms within their cultural framework.

9·3   Preserving Cultural Autonomy

Articles 371(A) and 371(G) already protect tribal autonomy in states like Nagaland and Mizoram, allowing them to follow customary laws related to marriage, divorce, and inheritance. Extending similar protections to other tribal areas under the Fifth and Sixth Schedules can ensure continuity in traditions while enabling gradual reforms. Codifying customary laws can also create a formal framework that safeguards tribal practices while ensuring compliance with constitutional values.

9·4   Legal Flexibility for Local Adaptations

Learning from Canada and South Africa, where customary laws operate alongside national laws, India can adopt a flexible legal system that respects local practices while ensuring universal rights. Establishing tribal councils or autonomous judicial bodies within the framework of the UCC can handle local disputes using customary practices, thus harmonizing tradition and modernity.

9·5   Promoting Inclusivity Through Dialogue

Policymakers must consult tribal communities, leaders, and activists to build trust and cooperation rather than imposing legal reforms unilaterally. Inclusive policy debates and grassroots involvement can foster acceptance and participation, making reforms sustainable. It may be concluded that balancing uniformity and diversity requires a hybrid legal approach that recognizes customary laws as legitimate while harmonizing reforms with constitutional principles. India's legal framework must aim for inclusivity, fairness, and pluralism, ensuring that tribal communities are partners in reform rather than subjects of imposition.

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Changing Dynamics of Poverty in Nepal

Bala Ram Acharya

Associate Professor of Sociology, Padma Kanya Multiple Campus and Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu (Nepal)
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0009-0000-0125-6663
E-mail:<balaram_72@yahoo.com,acharyabr1972@gmail.com>

Abstract

Poverty in Nepal has changed at a moderate level over the past two decades. It is possible through structural shifts in politics and state authority patterns. Rising remittances and expanding social protection schemes, exploring options of livelihood beyond agriculture at the household level, are other factors that contribute to reducing poverty in Nepal. This article examines long-term poverty trends using data from the Nepal Living Standards Survey II (2003/04), III (2010/11), and IV (2022/23). It explains how government policies, remittances, urbanization, and inequality create new patterns of deprivation and poverty. It also emphasizes that consumption-based poverty has steadily declined across NLSS II, NLSS III, and NLSS IV. However, the trend and the speed of declining poverty have slowed compared to its efforts. At the same time, new forms of vulnerability have appeared after the quake and COVID-19. Vulnerability consists of urban informal settlements, widespread informal labour, and marginal social groups. Increasing climate-related risks are also major factors that lead to increased poverty. The article concludes that Nepal's poverty reduction efforts reflect both improvement and fragility at the same time. It demands a future effective strategy that needs to strengthen productive employment entirely, build human capability based on marginal social groups, and expand shocks-responsive social protection with significant priority in the government plan.

Keywords

Poverty, Tribal rights, Customary laws, Cultural autonomy, Constitutional pluralism, Self-governance, Gender justice, Human rights.

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Changing Dynamics of Poverty in Nepal

1. Introduction

Poverty is a significant problem in Nepal in the 21st century. Poverty in Nepal has long been influenced by a complex structural, historical, and socio-economic forces. Since the post-1990 restoration of the democratic system, Nepal has experienced major political and economic changes. These shifts have continued through the current federal system and market economy. It has changed household livelihoods, income sources, and social welfare systems. Understanding multidimensional poverty within political and social transformation requires longitudinal and data-based analysis. It was only made possible through the Nepal Living Standards Survey (NLSS). It was the most comprehensive and diverse household dataset in the country. The NLSS series-NLSS II (2003/04), NLSS III (2010/11), and NLSS IV (2022/23) offers a strong empirical basis for examining long-term patterns in consumption, income, inequality, human development, and spatial disparities.

The concept of poverty has also shifted within development studies and development academia. Earlier work measured poverty mainly through deficits in income or consumption (Sen, 1981; Ravallion, 1992). It was headcount poverty. More recent scholars' views suggest that poverty is a multidimensional condition involving deprivation in health, education, dignity, political participation, and access to opportunities (Alkire & Santos, 2010; UNDP, 2010). Nepal also reflects this conceptual shift in its plan and program. Headcount poverty has declined in Nepal in a moderate level. However, multidimensional poverty remains high among many disadvantaged groups. It consisted mainly on marginalized castes, remote regions, female-headed households, and land-poor families (NPC, 2021; OPHI, 2022).

The period covered by the NLSS surveys marks Nepal's movement through wide-ranging socio-economic changes. It reshaped livelihoods and welfare outcomes. A major seen feature of this period was the growth of labour migration and the rise in remittance flows. It contributes to transformed household income structures, labour markets, and consumption patterns equally (Seddon, Adhikari, &

Gurung, 2002). Rapid urbanization and the spread of informal settlements also created new forms of urban poverty (Acharya, 2024). It challenged the traditional rural-urban divide data-based measures of poverty (Muzzini & Aparicio, 2013). The economy of Nepal has experienced shifts from subsistence agriculture to services and diverse non-farm work. It leads to greater income diversification and inequality among people. At the same period the government expanded different social protection schemes to mitigate social poverty. Nepal has launched different social security schemes including old-age allowances, child grants, and disability benefits that helped strengthen household resilience and protect vulnerable groups from economic shocks (Holmes & Upadhyay, 2009; Acharya, 2022). Improvements in education and health have been significant. It shows higher literacy, better school attendance, and expanded healthcare access, enhanced human capabilities, and long-term well-being (CBS, 2011; NSO, 2023). These combined transformations shape the broader context of this analysis in which poverty trends recorded in NLSS II, III, and IV must be interpreted based on a multidimensional framework.

Despite reducing headcount poverty, structural challenges for inequality persist, which are challenges for policymakers. Inequality of opportunity related to geography, caste, gender, and class continues to influence poverty outcomes (Bhatta, 2011; World Bank, 2018). Climate risks are another challenge to reducing poverty. Uncontrolled internal and external migration and insecurity in informal labour markets, in which millions of lower-income people are involved. It has created new vulnerabilities for low-income households. These trends show that Nepal's poverty reduction is significant but uneven and less multidimensional.

The NLSS series offers a strong basis for systematically comparing poverty and well-being. It provided data on poverty across national, regional, and socio-economic groups in Nepal. Each survey represents a different stage in the country's socio-political and economic transition. NLSS II (2003/04) shows that Nepal had weak and unstable political conditions. These problems were mainly the result of the ongoing armed conflict between government and Maoist during that period. That was marked by high inequality, weak access to services, and limited livelihood options due to the cause of the political transition. During the post-conflict reconstruction phase, NLSS III (2010/11) was implemented with proper initiation of

government of Nepal. It shows certain improvements brought about by increased remittance flows. It indicates substantial increases in household consumption at that time. Nepal adopted federal restructuring after key political agreements between political parties. NLSS IV (2022-2023) was then conducted under this new federal system. That was a period of global shocks such as COVID-19 and inflation. This report considered both continued progress and new vulnerabilities side by side.

The surveys cover a wide set of indicators based on consumption and expenditure, income sources, and remittances. Similarly, it was based on employment, education, and health access, infrastructure, housing and sanitation, asset ownership, financial inclusion, and household coping strategies indicators. It shows the NLSS survey was based on a multidimensional framework. This broad coverage allows us to look beyond income-based measures and assess poverty through wider human development and capability approaches (Sen, 1999; Alkire & Foster, 2011).

Understanding these patterns and multiple measures is crucial to identifying multidimensional poverty, which has been faced by Nepal for a long time. The rate of poverty reduction has slowed as efforts. It is showed by the NLSS IV that regional disparities remain strong even after government initiations. Karnali and Sudur-pashchim are still highly marginalized. The mountain regions also experience severe marginalization. Uncontrolled foreign migration has created new risks due to unstable global labour markets and unstable remittance growth. Urban poverty has become more visible in excluded places. It was consisted mainly in informal settlements where households face rising living costs and insecure work (Acharya 2024). Structural inequalities in wealth, education, and labour opportunities still limit upward mobility of the excluded social groups. These barriers affect lower-class people in both rural and urban areas. Federal restructuring has also changed in resource distribution and development roles without an efficient development mechanism. In this context, examining poverty through NLSS II, III, and IV provides data-based insights into how Nepali households have progressed and faced new pressures under shifting political, economic, and social conditions.

This study has four main objectives. It reviews Nepal's long-term poverty trends using three NLSS surveys. It compares changes in income, consumption, employment, and inequality

between three surveys. It identifies new vulnerabilities such as migration dependence, urban informality, and regional disparities. It also examines how government programs and foreign support influence poverty outcomes.

2.   Methodology and Data Sources

Understanding long-term poverty trends needs a clear method and approach. The method must use reliable and comparable data. This study uses secondary quantitative data from Nepal. It uses the Living Standards Survey (NLSS) series of the Government of Nepal. The study includes NLSS II (2003/04), NLSS III (2010/11), and NLSS IV (2022/23). These three surveys provide the main evidence for the analysis. They follow the World Bank's LSMS model, which keeps the data comparable.

Nepal's three NLSS surveys cover two decades. It offers a detailed longitudinal view of household welfare, demographic transition, and structural change. NLSS II was carried out by the Central Bureau of Statistics during the armed conflict. It surveyed about 4,000 households across the country. The data focused high inequality, limited infrastructure access, and the early patterns of labour migration in Nepal. NLSS III, with roughly 6,000 households, was used for data. It was conducted during the post-conflict reconstruction period. NLSS IV, implemented by the National Statistics Office after federal restructuring, surveyed about 7,000 households. It provides the first nationwide picture of post-COVID socioeconomic conditions and new forms of vulnerability. All, these surveys create a consistent dataset. This allows meaningful comparison over two decades.

All three NLSS surveys use a stratified multi-stage cluster sampling design. It ensures national, provincial, urban-rural, and ecological representativeness at different levels. Primary sampling units were selected geographically. Households were randomly chosen within each cluster. Because these surveys use similar methodological designs and measure the same variables across all three series, the comparisons remain statistically valid (CBS, 2004, 2011; NSO, 2023).

3.   Analytical Framework

The analytical framework of this study combines quantitative methods and qualitative interpretations. Trend analysis under this

research compares monetary poverty, consumption, labour participation, income and remittances, service access, and inequality patterns under different contexts. It examines how these indicators change across the three NLSS surveys. Spatial analysis examines disparities between urban and rural areas, provinces, ecological regions, and demographic groups, including caste/ethnicity and gender.

The study uses a wide range of variables from the NLSS data. These variables come from different levels of household, individual and community data. Economic indicators include per capita consumption, household income, remittances, and types of employment in agriculture, non-agriculture, and services. Social indicators cover literacy, school attendance, health service use, drinking water, sanitation, and housing quality. Measures like the Gini coefficient, consumption groups, land size, and assets show inequality. Household traits such as caste and ethnicity show differences in poverty. Gender of the household head, family size, and region also show vulnerability. These factors show how social and geographic conditions shape household risks and provide a fuller picture of economic and social change over time.

The NLSS surveys have several limitations. Temporary migrants working abroad may be undercounted. The size of Migrants is seen significant. It requires the use of remittance data and household reports as substitutions. Differences in political and economic periods limit direct numerical comparison. This makes structural interpretation important. NLSS measures welfare but not subjective well-being. Broader theories of deprivation and vulnerability are needed. Still, NLSS is Nepal's most reliable national dataset on poverty. Using NLSS II, III, and IV together is valid because they cover conflict, post-conflict migration, and the post-federal, post-COVID period. This article shows how poverty, vulnerability, and well-being changed over two decades.

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

4·1 Overall Poverty Trend

Nepal's poverty trend across the three NLSS surveys shows a steady yet uneven decline in monetary poverty. NLSS II (2003/04). It was carried out during the conflict period, and reported a national poverty rate of 30.8%. At that time, poverty was reflected in limited infrastructure, weak access to basic services, and the early expansion

of labour migration. By NLSS III (2010/11), poverty had dropped to 25.2%. It marks the fastest reduction in Nepal's history. This improvement followed post-conflict stabilization. Rapid growth in remittances also played a major role. Policy reforms expanded electrification, schooling, and access to public services. NLSS IV (2022/23) showed that poverty continued to decline and reached about 20.3%. However, the progress in poverty reduction slowed down than expected. The slowdown has several causes. COVID-19, global inflation, and lower remittance growth from Malaysia and the Gulf affected the economy. Rising living costs in cities added more pressure. Rural agriculture also remained weak. These factors slowed poverty reduction. Under unstable politics, poverty reduction became more vulnerable. Structural problems strongly influenced these trends.

4·2 Urban-Rural Poverty

Data shows that rural poverty remains consistently higher than urban poverty across all NLSS surveys. It reflects long differences in infrastructure, service access, and economic opportunities. Urban areas experienced faster poverty reduction compared to rural areas. It was possible by better connectivity, expanding service sector employment, and greater economic concentration in urban areas. However, the nature of urban poverty is changing. Despite lower overall urban poverty rates, informal and unmanaged settlements mainly concentrated in urban areas show increasing vulnerability (Muzzini & Aparicio, 2013; Acharya, 2024). Households in these areas face insecure housing, dependence on informal labour, unstable incomes, and rising costs of food, transport, and housing rent (Acharya, 2024). It shows that the pattern and nature of poverty are different from the national data. Poverty remains in either city or rural areas in a multidimensional form concentrated on specific social groups and locations, which is ignored by policy.

4·3 Provincial and Regional Differences

The latest NLSS IV was conducted after Nepal's shift to federalism. It provides the first detailed provincial poverty profile and development status. Different level data shows poverty is highest in Karnali and Sudurpashchim Provinces. Households' experience of these provinces indicates that weak market access, limited economic diversification, difficult terrain, poor connectivity, and high climate vulnerability exist. These conditions reinforce heavy dependence on migration as a livelihood strategy even after federalism. In contrast,

Bagmati and Gandaki Provinces show the lowest poverty rates. Due to higher urbanization, strong service-sector development, tourism-related income, and better access to education and health facilities, poverty has significantly decreased (CBS, 2011; NSO, 2023). These regional patterns show that poverty in Nepal is increasingly shaped by geography and the availability of regional opportunities. These imbalance patterns are shaped more by regional opportunities than by household consumption and expenditure characteristics alone.

4·4 Consumption and Expenditure Patterns

Changing characteristics in consumption and expenditure patterns across the NLSS surveys have been under different contexts, providing additional evidence of rising living standards in Nepal. It shows that the share of total expenditure spent on food at the household level has steadily declined. Spending on education, health, communication, and housing has increased at the same time (CBS, 2011; NSO, 2023; World Bank, 2016), which is a significant trend for social development. Ownership of durable goods such as mobile phones, televisions, motorcycles, and other appliances has increased sharply in the latest context. It shows the signs of consumerism and dependence Access to electricity, LPG, and the internet services has increased in Nepal at later context. These improvements have helped living conditions. But these gains are uneven across provinces, castes, and income groups. This shows that material inequalities still persist among people.

4·5 Migration, Remittance and Poverty Reduction

Labour migration and remittances continue to be the strongest part of the development of Nepal. It has a significant impact on Nepal's poverty trends. Remittances made up about 15% of household income in NLSS II and increase to nearly 28% in NLSS III (National Statistics Office. (2023). It has contributed significantly to such an increase through labour migration to Gulf countries and Malaysia. Data show that remittances remained high compared to both previous surveys in NLSS IV. However, their growth slowed because of global labour market instability. The COVID-19 pandemic further reduced opportunities and disrupted migration flows around the world. Remittances helped reduce poverty by boosting rural purchasing power significantly. It enables people to invest in housing, education, and health. It has supported reducing consumption-based

poverty. Yet they also created structural vulnerabilities and a cycle of poverty. It may create dependence on external labour markets, declining agricultural labour supply, family separation, and greater exposure to uncertain global economic shocks (Seddon *et al.*, 2002; Sharma, 2011; Lokshin & Glinskaya, 2009). So, remittances help families to improve their living conditions at one level. However, the situation also makes the overall economy vulnerable and weak in the long run because Nepal depends heavily on foreign jobs. Millions of Nepali people are out of the nation for life-sustaining opportunities.

4·6   Employment Patterns and Structural Transformation

A significant structural shift in Nepal's labour market is evident across the NLSS surveys. Agricultural employment has declined slowly. Similarly, non-farm work has increased significantly at the same time. Yet agriculture is one of the main sources of livelihood in Nepal. It now makes up a smaller share of the workforce in agriculture as many young people migrate abroad for work and study. Consequently, more agricultural work is now done by older adults and women. Many farmers still trust on traditional skills, which keeps productivity very low. Non-farm jobs have grown across the country. Service-sector employment has also expanded. These sectors consist especially of construction, transportation, retail trade, hospitality, education, and informal services. Urban areas have become key centers for these emerging opportunities. Most of the jobs created are informal, insecure, and low-wage, mainly in urban centers (Muzzini & Aparicio, 2013). Informality is still widespread, including in Nepal. Most workers sustain their livelihood with lacking contracts, social protection, and stable earnings from the informal sectors. This nature of exclusion limits social mobility and creates an unsupportive situation for long-term poverty reduction.

4·7   Inequality: Uneven Trends

Inequality trends from the NLSS data taken at different times and contexts show a mixed and uneven pattern. Consumption-based inequality, which is measured through the Gini coefficient method, has declined from 0.41 in NLSS II to 0.33 in NLSS III. It further increased to about 0.30-0.31 in NLSS IV. It indicates a modest improvement in consumption distribution. Nepal still has deep structural inequalities. Wealth gaps remain large because land ownership is unequal. Access to good education also varies widely. Differences in skills and health services add to these gaps. Digital

access is also uneven between locations and communities. These problems show that monetary inequality has only narrowed just slightly. Opportunities and capabilities are still unequal between social groups and class. These inequalities continue to shape how households consume and spend.

4·8 Multidimensional Poverty

However, NLSS was not designed under the multidimensional poverty index. NLSS IV exposes several forms of deprivation that extend and persist in society beyond income. Many rural hill households still lack safe drinking water. Improved sanitation is also limited. Learning gaps remain across regions and social groups. Health services are still weak in remote districts. Access to reliable healthcare is low in these areas. Housing quality also varies widely between communities. Energy access is also uneven. In mountain areas, many households still depend on biomass fuels. It shows that capability deprivation is continues in Nepal (OPHI, 2022; NSO, 2023). These findings from the periphery or marginal sectors and groups, show limited progress in human development. Monetary poverty reduction has not brought equal improvements in other areas. Non-income poverty still limits the well-being of marginalized people.

4·9 Poverty in Vulnerable Groups

Despite national progress in poverty reduction, NLSS IV shows that several population groups still face high poverty risks. These include Dalits, Muslim households, landless families, and female-headed households. People living in mountain regions with poor infrastructure facilities and limited social services are also more vulnerable, which is not particularly addressed. People living in informal, unmanaged, and slum settlements face high poverty risks. Individuals with disabilities and elderly-only households are also very vulnerable. Families without remittance income show a greater likelihood of poverty (Acharya, 2024). These patterns highlight the need for deeper sociological research in Nepal. Research should study how caste, gender, geography, disability, land access, and secure jobs shape vulnerability and deep poverty. Evidence shows a need for targeted policies. These policies must address the structural barriers of marginalized groups.

4·10 Income, Employment and Remittance Dynamics

Income dynamics continue to shape how households move in and out of poverty. The three NLSS surveys show major changes in

household income composition, labour market participation, and the growing role of migration-based remittances. These types of shifts have shaped poverty outcomes in Nepal. It is also creating new forms of economic vulnerability and broader structural changes in Nepal's economy simultaneously.

Over the past twenty years, household income sources have become diversified. In NLSS II (2003/04), agriculture was the dominant source of livelihood. It reflects limited non-farm opportunities. Labour migration was still in its early stage. By NLSS III (2010/11), wage work, small businesses, and foreign employment had expanded greatly. It shows that the non-farm income trend increases significantly. NLSS IV (2022/23) shows more diversification in income sources. Agriculture is no longer the main source of income in Nepal. Migration has created labour shortages in farming is become serious issues for agricultural production. Low productivity and weak commercialization also make weak agricultural production. These factors have reduced the share of agriculture-based work. However, agriculture still remains essential for many jobless people. During the same period, wage employment in construction, transportation, services, and small enterprises has increased sharply. It was supported by the urbanization trend and growing local markets. Self-employment also expanded through individual initiatives. Micro-businesses such as small shops, tailoring, food vendors, and repair services provide important livelihood opportunities for women and low-income groups in the present context. Remittances remain the most important contributor to the household income of diverse Nepalese people. It significantly increased between NLSS II and NLSS III and later stabilized. Global labour markets became more uncertain during the time of NLSS IV. Now the situation has changed again, and remittance inflows have reached record levels. In fiscal year 2024/25, Nepal received NPR 1,723.27 billion in remittances. It marked the highest inflow ever recorded (Nepal Rastra Bank, 2025). This nature of changes shows a long-term shift from an agriculture-centered economy to a remittance-based economy.

4·11 Employment Patterns

Changes in employment patterns have been central to Nepal's transforming income structure, which is significant. In NLSS II, agricultural employment dominated, with more than two-thirds of

households depending on farming. By NLSS IV, this share had fallen sharply due to the cause of foreign labour migration and the increasing trend in the service sectors. The decline reflects long stagnation in agriculture, land fragmentation, and large-scale outmigration. As a result, agriculture now works more as a basic safety net than a huge support for changes. During the same period, service and non-agricultural employment expanded rapidly across NLSS III and IV. New sectors emerge as transportation and logistics, hospitality, education, health services, retail trade, construction, and real estate. This pattern shows Nepal's gradual changes toward a service economy, like the South Asian trend (ADB, 2020).

Despite this expansion of modern sectors besides agriculture, informality remains the major feature of Nepal's labour market. Most workers remain with irregular and low income in all survey years. This nature of growth without formality limits the sustainability of poverty reduction. Employment changes also show clear gendered patterns. Women have historically been concentrated in unpaid agricultural work. However, participation in small-scale self-employment increased in NLSS IV. These shifts are partly a possible cause of male outmigration. It has transformed household labour roles and expanded the burden on women (Ellis & Freeman, 2007; CBS, 2011).

Remittance dynamics in Nepal remain the most crucial factor for poverty reduction across all NLSS surveys. Remittances made up roughly 14-15% of household income in NLSS II and rose significantly to nearly 28% in NLSS III. It reflects a dramatic increase in foreign labour migration. This trend of foreign labour migration was driven by conflict-related push factors, easy mobility across the open border with India, and expanding labour markets in the Gulf and Malaysia. Stronger migrant networks were expanded at that time. Remittances played a decisive role in improving food security. It plays a positive role in raising household consumption, increasing school attendance and health service use, upgrading housing quality, financing small enterprises, and reducing high-interest borrowing from the community through the formal banking channel. These effects contributed significantly to the decline in poverty between 2003/04 and 2010/11.

However, NLSS IV shows a slowdown in remittance growth due to saturation in Gulf labour markets. Similarly, reduced demand from Malaysia was also at that time. It is rising recruitment costs

and post-COVID return migration. On the other hand, growing competition in Southeast Asian labour markets further limits available opportunities abroad. This slowdown in remittance threatens Nepal's migration-dependent poverty reduction model. It shows that the vulnerabilities of an economy like Nepal heavily depend on external labour demand.

The trends across NLSS II, III, and IV show remittance-based changes. It depends on a consumption-oriented economy supported mainly by informal services. Production sectors in Nepal are very weak. Nepal's development has been strongly shaped by mass labour migration for abroad and internal. Low agricultural productivity and the growth of low-skilled urban jobs, combined with slow formal-sector expansion, have affected the internal economy. These changes have helped reduce poverty, but only at a modest level. However, it also created new vulnerabilities under the unsustainability and inclusiveness of Nepal's economic transition.

4·12 Emerging Vulnerabilities

Nepal's inequality pattern shows uneven progress between different social groups. Some areas have improved, but others still have significant gaps. Consumption-based inequality has slowly declined over time. The Gini coefficient fell from 0.41 in NLSS II to 0.33 in NLSS III, and further to about 0.30-0.31 in NLSS IV, which shows slight changes. This decline was possible due to the impact of remittances. It increased consumption among poorer households. It also helped narrow the gap in household spending. However, data show that wealth inequality remains substantial. Land distribution is still highly unequal. Access to quality education and health services varies widely, and disparities exist in asset ownership of vehicles, computers, and internet connectivity. It points to structural inequalities that have remained for a long time that consumption measures alone do not reveal (World Bank, 2018). Nepal, therefore, shows low and declining consumption inequality. However, high and persistent structural inequality indicates deeper stratification in opportunities.

Geographic and environmental vulnerabilities add another layer to Nepal's poverty landscape, which is less noticeable to policy-makers. Mountain and hill regions continue to face severe constraints related to transport costs, weak and unsafe market access, limited employment opportunities, floods, and strong climate sensitivity

conditions. Acute vulnerability found in Karnali and Sudurpashchim Provinces. The Terai region is more economically dynamic with availability of infrastructures of development and fertile land. However, it still faces serious challenges. High population density, landlessness, and exclusion among Dalit and Muslim communities remain major problems. These conditions show how geography reinforces socio-economic marginalization. Urban poverty has become a major and growing issue in Nepal. Average poverty is lower in urban areas, but new problems are emerging. NLSS IV shows rising urban vulnerabilities. Recent sociological studies find that informal settlements have become major poverty focused area (Acharya, 2024; Lumanti, 2010). This shows a shift in Nepal's poverty pattern. Urban hardship now exists along with rural deprivation. Socially excluded groups still face high poverty risks. Dalits, Muslims, and rural hill Janajatis remain very vulnerable. Female-headed households, widows, and elderly-only households also face severe risks. Landless families and persons with disabilities experience multiple forms of poverty. Households without remittance income experience additional vulnerabilities (Bennett *et al.*, 2013; NPC, 2021). These groups face overlapping economic, social, and cultural barriers. The excluded situation limits their ability to benefit equally from development progress. It is reinforcing persistent inequality across generations.

After the 2015 earthquake and the COVID-19 pandemic, new and complex layers of vulnerability and new poverty dynamics have emerged in Nepal. Households affected by the earthquake experienced severe housing destruction. It has rising indebtedness, disrupted livelihoods, and highly uneven reconstruction. The COVID-19 crisis further intensified vulnerabilities through widespread job losses. Mass return migration after Covid-19 without adequate reintegration support, increased health expenditures, and the collapse of small and micro-enterprises. NLSS IV calculates many of these shocks and documents their effects on consumption patterns, employment, and overall household security.

These patterns show why inequality remains even when poverty declines. Structural factors like caste and discrimination and centralized state are still shape people's life chances. Market growth helps skilled workers for livelihood and urban areas more. Migration benefits families that can pay high initial costs which is unbearable. Land inequality and poor education continue across generations can

be continued vulnerabilities. State programs are often poorly targeted. Unmanaged urbanization and an informal labour market limit inclusive growth. Nepal's poverty has declined, but progress is uneven across communities and places.

4·13 Structural Change and Policy Responses

Evidence from the three NLSS surveys shows that Nepal's poverty transition is shaped by several forces. These include demographic mobility, structural economic changes, and targeted government programs. Poverty reduction in Nepal cannot be linked to any single factor. It reflects the combined influence of rising remittance-driven income and expanded social protection. It reflects on improved access to education, health services, roads, and electrification. These factors explain the significant decline in consumption-based poverty up to 2011, though with a slower improvement. Migration-led foreign employment played a particularly decisive role in reducing poverty. Remittances allowed rural households to avoid weak domestic labour markets. It directly improves their consumption, housing, and investment in education. The benefits of migration have clear limits for the development of Nepal. By NLSS IV, remittance growth had slowed due to low labour demand, COVID-19 disruptions, and increasing migration costs. Remittances have not significantly raised productivity in the agriculture or manufacturing sectors. Large-scale labour migration is growing in Nepal. It is increasing dependence on foreign labour markets instead of supporting internal structural change. Nepal has therefore shown an example where further poverty reduction cannot depend on foreign employment only.

Despite notable achievements in monetary poverty reduction in Nepal. Structural inequalities remain significantly in question for development experts and policymakers. Regional disparities persist greatly between Karnali and Sudurpashchim with Bagmati and Gandaki across most welfare indicators. Caste and ethnicity-based inequalities also continue. Dalits, Muslims, and several hill Janajati groups face high poverty risks. Wealth inequality remains significant. It consists especially of land distribution, access to quality education, and the accumulation of productive assets. Informal employment, dominant in all NLSS surveys, further restricts upward mobility for the lower-class people. Most workers lack job security, social protection, and adequate earnings, mainly in urban informal sectors.

These trends show a dual pattern in Nepal's development. Nepal has reduced poverty, but it has not achieved structural transformation. Higher household income has not created equal opportunities for all. This remains a major challenge for policymakers.

5. Discussion

5·1 Government Policies for Social Transformation

The Government of Nepal has tried to reduce poverty since 1956 when planned development was started. It has launched many national development plans to support social change. The Tenth Plan/PRSP (2002-2007) was especially important in setting these priorities. The latter Thirteenth and Fourteenth Plans continued this focus by emphasizing human development, rural infrastructure, and targeted welfare programs (NPC, 2003, 2013, 2016). A major achievement has been the expansion of social protection in Nepal. It now includes the old-age allowance, child grant, disability benefits, and targeted support for Dalits and single women. These programs have reduced extreme vulnerability. They have also helped households manage better with shocks (Holmes & Upadhyay, 2009; Khanal, 2018). After the political transition, federal restructuring under the 2015 Constitution changed how the state interacts with citizens. Municipalities were given more responsibility for delivering services. This shift has made local governments more central in social protection delivery.

It assigned a targeted role to the local body with the right and responsibility for delivering services and making a development plan. Decentralization has improved local accountability. However, differences in administrative capacity across municipalities have led to uneven service quality (Sijapati, 2017). Parallel progress in education and health has been seen. Expanded school enrollment, literacy gains, and strengthened primary health facilities have enhanced basic capabilities, as is a major example (CBS, 2011; Khanal *et al.*, 2023).

Government investment focused on infrastructure. Investment concentrated mainly on electrification, roads, drinking water, and communication networks has also played a transformative role. These investments have improved mobility. They have also expanded market access and strengthened service delivery. Better infrastructure allows rural households to participate more effectively in the national economy. These gains support with Sen's (1999)

argument on the importance of public services. Strong services and enhanced capabilities help expand freedoms and reduce poverty.

5·2   International Development Partners for Social Change

International development partners have played a key role in Nepal's social and economic change. They have influenced major policy frameworks and development priorities. The World Bank helped Nepal adopt the Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS) survey method. It also supported NLSS II, III, and IV, which strengthened poverty monitoring and proper policy making (Grosh & Glewwe, 2000; World Bank, 2016).   World Bank programs in community development, education reform, and social protection system strengthening expanded Nepal's institutional capacity. They also helped improve the delivery of public services (World Bank, 2013, 2021).

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has been a key investor in rural infrastructure. It focused on hydropower and urban services, improving connectivity and employment prospects as well (ADB, 2020). UNICEF has contributed significantly to the expansion of child-focused social protection. UNDP has helped Nepal adopt multidimensional poverty frameworks. It has also supported capacity building for local governance (UNDP, 2010; UNICEF, 2020). Bilateral donors like DFID/UK, USAID, JICA, and the EU support many sectors continually after 1950s. They focus on education, health, governance, disaster recovery, and gender equality. Their support has strengthened Nepal's development efforts with collaboration of government of Nepal. Many social inclusion and community-based programs have grown through these partnerships. These efforts help address structural hierarchies and vulnerabilities but results are not as satisfactory as the level of investment.

5·3   Transnational Labour Migration

Foreign labour migration has been the most influential external factor in Nepal's poverty reduction since the early 2000s. Remittances contributed 14-15% of household income during NLSS II, and it rose to nearly 28% by NLSS III. It lifts millions of people out of poverty. Its supporting improvements concentrated mainly on social sectors like education, housing, and consumption (Seddon *et al.*, 2002; Lokshin *et al.*, 2007). Extensive research justified that remittances reduced poverty. It helps to narrow consumption

inequality by allowing rural households to overcome domestic labour market constraints (Sharma, 2024; Salike, 2022).

This migration-dependent path has created serious structural risks for long-term development. High recruitment fees and heavy reliance on Gulf and Malaysian labour markets add to these challenges. Major international disruptions like the mass return migration during COVID-19 exposed the instability of Nepal's recent development gains which supported by remittance (Paneru & Añazco, 2022). Acharya (2022) notes that Nepal's constitution guarantees broad social security rights mainly targeted for marginalized social groups. However, a wide gap remains between these commitments of the government. It reflects on people's everyday realities under inequality and vulnerabilities. Many citizens still do not receive the support they are entitled to in the targeted group. Marginalized groups face the greatest challenges because of low literacy, weak documentation, and uneven institutional delivery. These barriers limit their access to state benefits and deepen existing vulnerabilities. Marginalized groups are affected the most. A few underprivileged groups also lack citizenship documents, which is also a barrier to accessing targeted services. Fragmented, uneven, and weak institutional delivery further increases their vulnerability.

6. Conclusion

Evidence from NLSS II, III, and IV shows moderate level progress in reducing consumption-based poverty in Nepal. Poverty fell from about 31 percent in 2003/04 to around 20 percent in 2022/23 (NSO, 2023), which is significant. Several reinforcing factors contributed to this improvement. However, improved integrity and integration between programs is needed to achieve more effective results. Rising remittances, expanding non-farm jobs, and better access to services all supported poverty reduction. Government initiatives and social protection measures also played a positive role. Remittances, in particular, raised household incomes in a substantial way. Improved access to education, health services, basic infra-structure, non-farm employment, and wider social protection programs has also strengthened overall well-being. However, the speed of poverty reduction has slowed as much as efforts. The deeper structural vulnerabilities remain largely unresolved, yet under a diverse nature of society. Geography, caste and ethnicity, and gender continue to shape unequal life opportunities. Similarly, rapid

urbanization has created new forms of insecurity in informal settlements, mainly in urban areas. The post-earthquake and COVID-19 periods further exposed the instability of Nepal's remittance-dependent welfare improvements. The poverty trajectory exposed through the NLSS data shows that Nepal's progress is significant. However, marginal groups are still excluded. It has been driven more by external labour migration. Gradual improvements in services rather than by transformative structural change are seen. It is concluded that sustaining poverty reduction will require an internally stable development strategy that strengthens domestic productive sectors. It can expand human capabilities and reduce spatial and social inequalities. It can also help build strong and inclusive institutions that are better able to respond to emerging economic and environmental shocks.

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Revisiting the Digital Divide: Mobile Technology and the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women in Sindhupalchowk, Nepal

Guman Khattri[1] and Zhao Zipeng[2]

[1]Lecturer of Sociology in the Central Department of Sociology, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu (Nepal) E-mail:<khatrigs2020@gmail.com>

[2]Central Department of Sociology, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu (Nepal) E-mail:<a1206635159@foxmail.com>

Abstract

This paper examines the complex relationship between digital divides and economic empowerment among rural women in Sindhupalchowk, Nepal. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study integrates survey data, in-depth interviews, and ethnographic observations with twenty-five rural women to explore how mobile phone usage mediates women's access to information, financial services, and market participation. Findings demonstrate that while mobile phones have increased women's communication autonomy, access to financial transactions, and engagement in income-generating activities, deep-rooted structural inequalities, patriarchal norms, digital illiteracy, and infrastructural limitations, continue to restrict full empowerment. Drawing on Kabeer's (2005) resources-agency-achievements framework and Sen's (1999) capability approach, this paper argues that empowerment must be understood as a socially embedded process rather than a technological outcome. The study concludes with policy recommendations emphasizing gender-sensitive digital inclusion strategies, literacy programs, and community-based empowerment initiatives to advance equitable participation in Nepal's digital transformation.

Keywords

Digital divide, Gender inequality, Economic empowerment, Mobile technology, Rural women.

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Revisiting the Digital Divide: Mobile Technology and the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women in Sindhupalchowk, Nepal

1. Introduction

Across the developing world, digital technologies are reshaping the contours of social and economic life. Yet, access to these technologies remains profoundly unequal, reinforcing pre-existing hierarchies of class, gender, and geography. In Nepal, mobile phone ownership stands at 81% among men but only 65% among women (Nepal Telecommunication Authority, 2024). These disparities illuminate how the promise of digital inclusion is mediated by persistent patriarchal structures and resource inequalities.

Sindhupalchowk District, located northeast of Kathmandu, provides an especially relevant setting for exploring this issue. The district, predominantly rural and economically marginalized, records a poverty rate of approximately 25.2% (Nepal Central Bureau of Statistics, 2023). For women, access to resources, education, and technology remains particularly constrained. However, the expansion of mobile connectivity has opened new possibilities for communication, entrepreneurship, and financial participation.

This research tries to find out the answers of following two interrelated questions:

1. How does mobile phone usage affect the economic empowerment of rural women in Sindhupalchowk?
2. What social and structural barriers constrain women's ability to use mobile technology for economic advancement?

The study contributes to sociological debates on gender and technology by situating digital inequality within broader social relations of power. It challenges the techno-deterministic view that access to devices automatically leads to empowerment, arguing instead that meaningful inclusion depends on agency, social capital, and supportive institutional structures.

2.   Literature Review

2·1   Theoretical Perspectives

The concept of the 'digital divide' has evolved from a simple binary of access to a multidimensional framework encompassing disparities in motivation, material access, digital skills, and usage outcomes (Van Dijk, 2006). Within this schema, women's exclusion often reflects intersecting inequalities of gender, class, and geography.

Sen's (1999) Capability Approach provides a foundational lens for understanding empowerment as the expansion of substantive freedoms. In the context of digital access, mobile phones become "conversion factors" that may enhance individuals' capabilities, such as communication, mobility, and decision-making, depending on their social environment.

Kabeer's (2005) resources-agency-achievements framework further refines this perspective. Empowerment is not simply the acquisition of resources but the process by which individuals convert those resources into agency and achievements. In patriarchal contexts like rural Nepal, women's agency is mediated by family norms and social expectations.

Social Capital Theory (Putnam, 2000) adds another dimension, emphasizing how social networks influence access to information and opportunities. For rural women, mobile phones serve both as bridges to new social networks and as reinforcers of existing hierarchies when mediated through male-controlled communication channels.

Together, these frameworks provide an integrated theoretical base to analyze how digital technologies can both enable and constrain women's empowerment within specific socio-cultural structures.

2·2   Global and Regional Contexts

Globally, 52% of women remain offline compared with 42% of men (International Telecommunication Union [ITU], 2023). In low- and middle-income countries, the gender gap in mobile internet use stands at 23% (GSMA, 2023). These divides are shaped by intersecting barriers: affordability, digital literacy, safety concerns, and restrictive gender norms.

In South Asia, women's mobile ownership is closely tied to household income and male approval (Hafkin & Huyer, 2007). Studies in India and Bangladesh reveal that cultural perceptions of women's

morality and honour often determine whether they can possess or freely use mobile phones (Agarwal, 2018). Consequently, even where devices are available, usage patterns remain highly gendered.

In Nepal, despite near-universal mobile coverage, digital inclusion remains uneven. The Nepal Telecommunication Authority (2024) reports that women in rural areas are significantly less likely to own smartphones or use mobile banking services than men. Structural barriers, including limited literacy, poverty, and socio-cultural control, perpetuate digital marginalization.

2·3   Mobile Technology and Women's Empowerment

Empirical research highlights both the transformative and constrained potential of mobile technology. In Kenya, M-Pesa mobile banking has facilitated financial inclusion and increased women's bargaining power within households (Morawczynski, 2017). Similar outcomes are observed in India, where mobile microfinance initiatives support female entrepreneurship (Kumar & Kumar, 2017).

In Nepal, mobile-based interventions have enhanced agricultural productivity and facilitated market participation (Shrestha & Karki, 2021). Yet, gender norms continue to limit women's independent control over digital tools. Studies show that women frequently rely on male intermediaries to operate mobile devices or interpret digital information (Adhikari *et al*., 2022).

These findings suggest that technology can serve as both an instrument of empowerment and a medium through which existing inequalities are reproduced. Recent South Asian scholarship further highlights how digital access intersects with local cultural understandings of gender. In many rural regions of Nepal, women's social reputation is closely tied to modesty, immobility, and limited interaction beyond kin networks. Mobile phones, by enabling communication beyond immediate kinship circles, are often framed as potentially "disruptive" to established gender norms. Community leaders and elder family members sometimes express concerns that "mobile phones lead women astray", linking digital access with fears of romantic autonomy, social independence, or resistance to domestic expectations. Similar narratives have been documented in Uttar Pradesh in India (Agarwal, 2018) and rural Bangladesh (Hafkin & Huyer, 2007), suggesting a regional pattern in which technology becomes symbolically associated with women's moral character and social respectability.

At the same time, feminist technology studies emphasize that digital tools can also serve as subtle means of renegotiating autonomy and self-expression. For younger rural women in particular, mobile phones do not only function as economic instruments but as spaces to articulate identity, maintain emotional relationships, and seek peer support. This dual role of technology, both contested and enabling, creates a dynamic field in which empowerment unfolds not as a direct outcome of access, but as a negotiated, incremental, and socially situated process.

2·4 Research Gaps

Despite a growing body of literature, significant gaps remain. Few studies have systematically examined how rural Nepali women navigate digital access within the constraints of patriarchy, poverty, and low literacy. Moreover, there is limited integration of qualitative perspectives capturing women's lived experiences of empowerment through technology. This study seeks to fill that gap by employing a mixed-methods design to analyze both measurable outcomes and interpretive meanings of mobile phone use.

2·5 Application of Theoretical Framework to Rural Nepal

The theoretical frameworks discussed above are deeply relevant to the social realities of rural Nepal. In Sindhupalchowk, mobile phones can be understood as resources within Kabeer's (2005) model, offering women new channels of communication, information access, and participation in small-scale commerce. However, whether these resources translate into agency depends strongly on household decision-making structures and gender norms. For example, even when women possess mobile phones, their autonomy to use mobile banking or social media is often conditioned upon the approval of husbands, in-laws, or community expectations regarding appropriate female behaviour.

Similarly, Sen's (1999) Capabilities Approach is reflected in how mobile phones expand potential freedoms, such as the freedom to make economic choices, negotiate prices, or seek external assistance. Yet, these freedoms are not uniformly realized. Limited literacy, fear of social judgment, and concerns about moral reputation restrict women's capacity to convert technological resources into meaningful capabilities. Thus, empowerment remains contingent upon wider social support and recognition.

The role of social capital is also particularly crucial. Mobile phones create new horizontal networks among rural women, for instance, cooperative chat groups, mutual aid information sharing, or informal business advertising through Facebook and TikTok marketplaces. However, vertical inequalities persist: access to these networks still favors women who are younger, literate, or socially outgoing. Therefore, the transformative potential of mobile technology must be understood not as universally accessible, but as mediated by layered social hierarchies in rural Nepal.
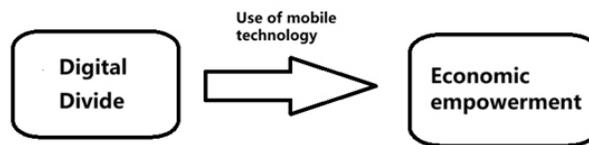

Fig.-1: Digital divide and its Economic empowerment

3. Methodology

3·1 Research Design and Rationale

A mixed-methods approach was employed to triangulate quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative surveys captured demographic and behavioral patterns, while qualitative interviews and ethnographic observations revealed subjective experiences, constraints, and adaptive strategies. This design enabled a holistic understanding of empowerment as both a material and relational process.

3·2 Study Site and Sampling

The research was conducted in Sindhupalchowk District, characterized by dispersed rural settlements and limited infrastructure. Twenty-five women were selected using purposive sampling to ensure diversity in age, education, occupation, and marital status. The majority were subsistence farmers or engaged in small-scale trade. Moreover, the decision to include twenty-five participants is justified based on the principle of qualitative saturation, wherein additional interviews yield diminishing new conceptual insights. The sample reflects diversity in age, economic roles, and education, allowing the study to capture multiple forms of digital engagement. While not statistically representative, the sample is analytically robust for revealing patterns of empowerment and constraint within the broader cultural context of rural Nepal.

3·3 Data Collection

Data collection took place over three months in 2023. Four primary methods were used:

1. Structured surveys to quantify ownership, usage frequency, and purposes.

2. Semi-structured interviews to explore experiences of empowerment and constraints.

3. Participant observation in households and local cooperatives to observe real-life usage.

4. Key informant interviews with local leaders, NGO staff, and telecommunication agents to contextualize institutional influences.

The semi-structured interview guide focused on five thematic domains: (1) the circumstances under which participants first accessed mobile phones, (2) the role of family members in enabling or restricting phone use, (3) emotional and psychological experiences associated with digital communication, (4) specific practices of using mobile phones for economic transactions, and (5) perceived changes in social status or household bargaining power. Participant observation included daily household routines, cooperative meetings, and weekly market exchanges, allowing the researcher to observe real-time interactions involving mobile phone negotiation, instruction, and supervision. These combined methods provided not only descriptive data but also insight into the contextual meaning of empowerment.

3·4 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively using frequency distributions and cross-tabulations. Qualitative transcripts were coded thematically using grounded theory principles. Three major themes emerged: (1) economic opportunity through mobile use, (2) barriers to digital inclusion, and (3) transformation of gendered roles.

3·5 Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained verbally and in writing. Pseudonyms protected participants' identities. Cultural sensitivity was maintained throughout, especially regarding gender norms and privacy in technology use.

4.   Findings

Table-1: Survey Responses on Women's Empowerment and
Mobile Phone Usage   **(n = 25)**

Survey Item	Yes/Agree (n)	No/Disagree (n)
Q1: Women's empowerment is necessary	15	10
Q2: Empowerment leads to social change	21	4
Q3: Economic empowerment is distinct from social empowerment	16	9
Q4: Education is essential for empowerment	20	5
Q5: NGOs play a role in empowerment	18	7
Q6: Men dominate household decision- making	19	6
Q7: Women have access to family income	8	17
Q8: Socio-cultural norms influence empowerment	14	11
Q9: Patriarchal society limits women's opportunities	16	9
Q10: Economic empowerment is overstated by media	6	19
Q11: Women use mobile phones regularly	23	2
Q12: Mobile phones provide practical benefits	21	4
Q13: Mobile phones support development	19	6
Q14: Women experience digital suppression or restrictions	18	7
Q15: Mobile phone impact is mostly positive	20	5
Q16: Private sector telecom performs better than government	7	18
Q17: Satisfaction with government digital efforts	8	17

Source: Field survey, Sindhupalchowk, 2023.

4·1   Ownership and Usage Patterns

Among the 25 participants, 17 owned a mobile phone, eight of which were smartphones. Ownership correlated with education and age; younger and literate women were more likely to own and operate smartphones. Most used phones for calls and messaging, while a smaller subset engaged in mobile banking, market coordination, and social media-based selling.

4·2 Economic Engagement

Mobile banking adoption was reported by 60% of participants, primarily using eSewa and IME Pay. These tools enabled women to receive remittances, pay bills, and save money without male intermediaries. For instance, one participant stated,"Now I can save money myself and decide how to use it".

For example, a 34-year-old participant who sells homemade pickles began using Facebook Messenger and local women's cooperative chat groups to advertise her products. Initially, her husband questioned the necessity of "talking to outsiders", but after observing the increase in household income, he began assisting with delivery logistics. The participant emphasized that mobile communication did not merely expand her customer base; it also enabled her to renegotiate her role in household decision-making.

Another participant, aged 27, uses eSewa to receive remittances from her husband working abroad. Previously, her mother-in-law controlled remittance withdrawals, but mobile banking allowed her to manage savings directly. She described this shift as *"the first time I felt I could decide something important by myself"*.

Women also utilized mobile phones to obtain agricultural information through SMS updates and community groups. Co-operative-led chat groups facilitated collective marketing, improving price negotiation. Six women used social media platforms to advertise homemade products, generating modest but meaningful income.

4·3 Barriers to Digital Empowerment

Despite these gains, multiple obstacles persisted:

- Patriarchal restrictions limited women's ownership and usage freedom; several participants required husbands' permission to buy or use smartphones.
- Digital illiteracy prevented full use of advanced features.
- Economic constraints, high data costs and unreliable power supply, restricted consistent access.
- Social stigma associated with women's smartphone use perpetuated surveillance and moral judgment.

Beyond infrastructural limitations, social judgment emerged as one of the most significant barriers. Several participants described being criticized by neighbors or relatives for "using the phone too much", which was interpreted as neglecting household duties or

violating expectations of female modesty. Phone use in public spaces, such as marketplaces or tea houses with Wi-Fi access, was particularly stigmatized. One participant reported: *"If a woman is seen using her phone outside, people will say she is talking to some other man".* The fear of reputational damage leads many women to restrict phone usage to private spaces, limiting potential for entrepreneurship and cooperative networking.

Notably, married women faced more surveillance than unmarried girls, who were often encouraged to use phones for educational purposes. This paradox suggests that digital restriction is not solely about gender but also linked to marital identity and household honor. The phone becomes a symbolic site where women's expected social roles are reinforced.

4·4   Shifts in Gendered Power Relations

Incremental empowerment was evident. Women reported increased autonomy in communication, participation in financial decisions, and greater confidence in negotiating with traders. Younger women, in particular, exhibited more assertive digital behavior and aspirations for self-employment. However, empowerment remained conditional, dependent on male tolerance, infrastructural availability, and social context.In several cases, women described gaining bargaining power through demonstrating economic contribution. For example, a participant involved in TikTok-based informal product advertising stated that when she began generating enough income to pay for children's clothing and school materials, household discussions shifted. Her husband, initially opposed to her use of social media, began asking for her help in digital payments. This shift reflects not only economic negotiation but an emerging recognition of women's competence. Such incremental changes suggest that empowerment is relational: women's digital participation alters household power not through confrontation but through accumulated evidence of practical value.

4·5   Negotiating Power within Household Decision-making

Empowerment in Sindhupalchowk is not a sudden outcome but a gradual process negotiated within household relationships. The decision to purchase a smartphone is often influenced by husbands or sons, reinforcing initial dependency. However, as women increasingly demonstrate economic contribution through mobile-enabled activities, such as managing remittances or generating small business income, their bargaining power in household decisions

shifts. This shift is often subtle rather than confrontational; women described using persuasion, demonstrated responsibility, and shared benefit framing to negotiate digital autonomy. The household thus becomes a critical arena where digital empowerment is both enabled and contested.

4·6 In-depth Interview Narratives

To deepen the understanding of how mobile phone usage shapes women's everyday economic and social practices, extended interview-based life histories were collected in the study area. These narratives highlight the intersections between migration, gendered labour shifts, and the use of digital tools for coordination and livelihood management.

Interview 1—Ratna Thapa (52), Sindhupalchok, October 9: Ratna Thapa has been responsible for managing agricultural production since her husband migrated to Haldwani, India, to work as a seasonal miner. According to government estimates, approximately 2.2 million Nepalese men currently work abroad, leaving women to assume agricultural and financial responsibilities at home. *"Since my husband works in India now, I am responsible for harvesting all our crops", Ratna explained.*

Although physical separation increases her workload, mobile phones have become essential for maintaining emotional connection and coordinating household management. *"Even though most of our conversations are phone-based, when he comes home with tons of goods and merchandise, seeing my kids rejoice is priceless".*

Mobile phones also assist Ratna in managing land-rental agreements. Over the past six months, she has cultivated only part of her land and leased approximately 1,700 square meters to poorer, low-caste farmers. Regular communication through mobile phones allows her to monitor cultivation progress and receive monthly rental payments. *"My daily livelihood with my children runs because of this small technology"*, she stated, emphasizing that mobile communication has become central to both family continuity and local agricultural cooperation.

This interview reflects broader rural labour transitions. As men migrate, women increasingly assume land management roles, and mobile phones become instrumental in enabling coordination and financial decision-making within rural households.

Interview 2—Subrita (28), Sindhupalchok, October 20: Another participant, Subrita, organizes a small-scale meal production

and delivery network known locally as tiffin. *"Mobile phone has helped me a lot, not just with me-I have 20 women working under me"*, she explained. Her group prepares lunch boxes for agricultural workers who lack time or resources to cook while working in the fields. All orders, scheduling, and deliveries are coordinated through mobile phones, allowing flexible and reliable organization across dispersed settlements.

She emphasized that independent phone ownership among the women involved is essential. Each member uses mobile communication to receive orders, plan daily responsibilities, and coordinate transportation of food. This structure has created a network of mutual support and shared economic responsibility rooted in everyday digital communication.

A similar model appears in a sewing business run by a 67-year-old widow who employs 15 women living across different mountain slopes. Due to difficult terrain and long walking distances, face-to-face meetings are infrequent. Mobile phones allow coordination of orders, production timelines, and distribution logistics. *"After the death of my husband, it was very hard to live. There were no sources of income"*, she explained. *"My daughter gave me the idea of using mobile phones, and slowly the other women understood that phones are not just to contact family but to see different possibilities"*.

Both cases demonstrate how mobile phones function as organizational infrastructure for women-led micro-enterprises. These networks expand income opportunities, build collective skills, and reduce isolation among women in geographically dispersed communities.
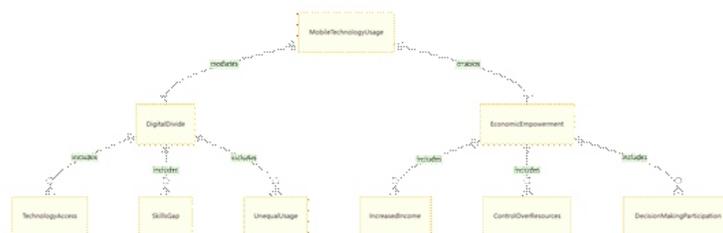

Fig.-2: Conceptual Framework

5.   Discussion

Comparative evidence from South Asia further contextualizes these findings. In India, women's phone usage is frequently policed as

a matter of family honor, with community surveillance mechanisms reinforcing male guardianship. In Bangladesh, mobile technology has been widely incorporated into microfinance systems, enabling women to form digital lending groups and informal market networks. Compared to these contexts, rural Nepal represents a transitional stage: mobile access is relatively widespread, but women's autonomous usage still depends on household negotiation and community acceptance. Thus, empowerment is shaped less by the device itself and more by the socio-cultural landscape in which the device is embedded. This study's findings reveal that mobile phones act as both catalysts and constraints within the process of women's empowerment.

From Kabeer's perspective, access to mobile phones constitutes a new form of resource, but the translation into agency depends on women's capacity to make decisions and control their own usage. In Sindhupalchowk, this agency was partial: women used mobile phones to perform economic functions, yet often within the boundaries of male supervision.

Applying Sen's (1999) capability lens, mobile phones enhanced certain freedoms, communication, information access, and financial participation, but these freedoms remained limited by illiteracy and social norms. Technology alone did not create empowerment; rather, it expanded potential capabilities contingent upon structural supports.

The findings also align with social capital theory. Mobile connectivity strengthened horizontal ties among women, facilitating mutual aid, information exchange, and solidarity networks, but vertical inequalities persisted. Access to digital networks remained mediated by class and education.

In sum, digital inclusion in rural Nepal embodies a paradoxical dynamic: it fosters micro-level empowerment while coexisting with macro-level structural subordination.

6.   Conclusion

The study concludes that mobile phones play a pivotal but incomplete role in empowering rural Nepali women. They have improved communication autonomy, enabled financial participation, and facilitated entrepreneurial initiatives. However, the digital divide remains deeply gendered, reflecting the interplay between poverty, patriarchy, and technology. Unlike prior studies that treat technology as a neutral instrument, this study shows that empowerment is negotiated through household power relations and social reputation, not simply through device ownership.

6·1   Key Insights

- Empowerment is relational: Ownership alone does not equal power; agency is socially negotiated.
- Digital literacy is essential: Without skills, access translates into dependence.
- Structural reforms are required: Infrastructure, education, and social attitudes must evolve simultaneously.

6·2   Policy Recommendations

- Develop gender-sensitive ICT programs focusing on rural literacy and financial inclusion.
- Subsidize mobile data and expand rural network coverage.
- Integrate women's digital cooperatives within agricultural and microfinance systems.
- Foster public-NGO partnerships for localized digital training initiatives.

In addition to national-scale digital inclusion efforts, community-based training programs play a crucial role. Evidence from local cooperatives in Sindhupalchowk suggests that women learn digital skills most effectively in supportive peer-group environments rather than formal instructional settings. Establishing "Women's Digital Circles" in ward-level cooperatives, where women collectively practice using mobile banking, online marketplaces, and government service apps, would help normalize female digital participation and reduce stigma.

Furthermore, literacy and empowerment initiatives should involve men and elders rather than targeting only women. Patriarchal resistance is more likely to soften when husbands and mothers-in-law understand the household-level benefits of women's digital engagement. Programs that frame women's mobile use as a contribution to family welfare, rather than individual autonomy, have greater community acceptance. Therefore, digital empowerment strategies should focus on reshaping social attitudes alongside skill-building.

6.3   Future Research

Further longitudinal research is needed to trace how sustained digital engagement influences household power relations and inter-generational mobility. Comparative studies across districts could deepen understanding of regional variation in digital gender dynamics.

Ultimately, empowerment in the digital age must be understood not as an outcome of technology, but as an evolving social process, negotiated between access, agency, and structure.

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Decoding Swami Dayanand Saraswati's Mindset of a Hidden Revolutionary of 1857

Vighnesh Kumar

Professor, Department of History, Chaudhary Charan Singh University, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh (India) E-mail:<vighneshkmr@gmail.com>

Abstract

Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824–1883) is widely known as a religious reformer and founder of the Arya Samaj, but his ideological contribution to India's early anti-colonial resistance, particularly in relation to the Revolution of 1857, remains underappreciated. This article interprets Dayanand as a "hidden revolutionary" by examining his mindset, writings, and intellectual interventions within the broader context of colonial domination. Although not a direct participant in the uprising, his ideas reveal a strong revolutionary consciousness aimed at challenging British political, cultural, and epistemic control. Through an analysis of Satyarth Prakash and related works, the study highlights how his advocacy of Vedic rationalism, swaraj, and cultural self-respect served as powerful forms of ideological resistance. Dayanand's critique of foreign rule, missionary influence, and colonial education sought to restore indigenous confidence and collective national identity as prerequisites for political freedom. His return to the Vedas was not religious conservatism but a strategic reconstruction of Indian identity to counter colonial hegemony. Exercising caution under colonial surveillance, Dayanand's ideas aligned with the spirit of 1857 and influenced later nationalist thinkers, positioning him as a vital bridge between early armed resistance and the growth of ideological nationalism in nineteenth-century India.

Keywords

Mindset, Hidden revolutionary, *Satyarth Prakash*, Muslim ruler, Indian history, British.

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Decoding Swami Dayanand Saraswati's Mindset of a Hidden Revolutionary of 1857

Mentioning about definition of history, one Mr. Prakash Lohia the then Chairman, Research cell, Hastinapur Research Institute, Meerut writes:[1]

> *"In most generalized layman's terms we may define history as the chronicle of progress of human civilization. History is a great educator as well. We gain confidence and self-respect from the great achievements of our ancestors and also learn lessons from their follies and misdeeds. Through our identification with a region, a nation or the universal human achievements, we ae able to expand ourselves from our little selves and history holds our hand in this noble path of expansion."*

Underlining the importance of political history as a kaleidoscope of achievements of human societies in various fields, he further adds:[2]

> *"Though history deals with different fields of human endeavour like trade and economy, philosophy and religion, arts and literature etc; yet political history plays the most crucial role because its chronology provides comprehensible time dimension in a continuum. The political situation with its manifestation in peace, prosperity, turmoil, peril has a great bearing on the other activities of human mind and at the same time it is a kaleidoscope of the achievements of human societies in the fields.. It reflects the past, reveals the state of affairs under the period of study and provides clues for the future."*

Throwing light on history as an effective means to pass on the wisdom of human experience, he mentions:[3]

> *"Besides being woven with the lives and deeds of larger than life characters around the centre of power, vividly coloured and contrasted, with all the elements of drama, political history holds a great story-like attraction for the laity and thereby becomes an effective means to pass on the wisdom of human experience."*

The political emergence of the East India Company was felt as new comer in the very beginning of the nineteenth century India. Governor-General Lord Wellesley[4] through 2 generals namely General Arther Wellesley his real young brother and General Gerard Lake had won the battlefields in both the Deccan and northern India respectively. The Company has taken Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II into their influence replacing Daulat Rao Sindhaia in September 1803. The arrangement, through the Surjianjongaon treaty held on 30th December, 1803 was made permanent.[5] No Peshva unbrellaover his generals namely Gaekwads, Holkars and Sindhias could be maintained effective so long and as a result, till the year of 1818, the Company had raised as the Supreme power. After it, no great battles are witnessed except that of Punjab (to some extent).

In the year of 1824, at Tankara village in Kathiawad region of present day Gujarat, one Moolshankar was born to an Ayachak Tiwari family. As a teenager, he left his home and became ascetic who has been known later on as 'Swami Dayanand Saraswati'.

On one hand, Lord Dalhousie's policy was executed during his 2 tenures from 1848 to 1856. Then, the Punjab was won and the Oudh was annexed and the Enlistment Act of 1856[6] was enacted by the new Governor-General Lord Canning on the other hand since the great Kumbh-mela[7] of Haridwar held in 1855-56, rumours were continuously being spread through pan-India level that the Almighty had blessed the Firangi-Raj for 100 years[8] and more, those 100 years were going to be completed in Samvat 1915[9] only after one and half years; [i.e. in 1857 C.E.]. The future-tellors, Sadhu-Sanyasis, the mendicants and the Akhadas were greatly channelized in spreading those type of related information's that made the resultant-effect on a very high and sensible level. The common people of that phase of colonial British Imperialism was not only ready to accept the advertisement but it was also witnessed eagerly waiting for that happening. There were a number of reasons for discomfort of common Indian people to be angry with the 'Firangi-Raj'.

The discontent among Indians was simmering for quite a long time at one hand while on the other, at the same time, the enlightenment by great men like Raja Rammohan Roy and others was going on. It made Indian renaissance effective.

Then, not at a sudden but at Peshva Nana Saheb Dhondupant's secret imitation, as the modern researches reveal,[10] the outbreak of

1857 was witnessed. Many-a-historians suspect the active role of Swami Dayanand Saraswati[11] though being the defeated case a bundle of historical evidences clear in names of participants are naturally lacking. A researcher's eye can only unearth them, which are still awaiting to be discovered since then. Late Acharya Deepankar, the known freedom fighter of the Quit India Movement of 1942 establishes the connection of Swami Dayanand Saraswati with 1857 at Meerut,[12] the land of its outbreak on 10th May, 1857.[13] In 1857, after 18 years of 1857, the Swami founded the 'Arya Samaj' at Bombay (present day Mumbai). It is not only a simple coincident that the Sadhu, the suspect had used to live either in the Cantonment among the Kali Pattan on in the Suraj Kund Mandir Campus during April 1857 and Swami Dayanand is also seen repeating his stay at Meerut on the similar spots. It is not less mysterious that he hides his life during the years from 1855 to 1860.

Leaving the controversy at that point of time, while going through his famous work the *Satyarth Prakash*, one finds interesting contradictions of ideas relating to political scenario of India. The Swami seems very sharp to make comments on political scene of contemporary India. Being a *'sanyasi'*, he was supposed to comment on spiritual, religious and even on socio-cultural situation rather than on the political condition during the colonial British imperialism. His thorny and sharp comments made by him in his book enforce a historian to rethink upon.

A new type of fact can be witnessed when one encounters the sixth chapter of Swami Dayanand Saraswati's *Satyartha Prakash*.[14] What an interesting imagination opens his mindset when the place of guns (bandook) attract his attention. He, without hesitation, translates or more correctly refers to top (तोप)[15] and bandook (बन्दूक)[16] in the Rigveda, "the oldest book in the library of the world" as Professor Maxmullor his contemporary declares about it.

Explaining the second mantra of Sukta number 39 in Mandal 6, what he mentions is worth-seeing:[17]

Sthira Vah Santvayudhaa Paraanude Veelu ut Pratishkabhe |
Yushmakamastu tavishi paniyashi ma martyasya maayinah ||

"ईश्वर उपदेश करता है कि हे राजपुरुषों! (व:) तुम्हारे (आयुधा) आग्नेयादि अस्त्र और शतहनी (तोप) भुशुण्डी (बन्दूक) धनुष–बाण करवाल (तलवार) आदि शस्त्र शत्रुओं के (पराणुदे) पराजय करने (उत प्रतिष्कभे) और रोकने के लिए (वीलू) प्रशंसित और (स्थिरा) दृढ़ (सन्तु) हों (युष्माकम्) और तुम्हारी (तविषी) सेना (पनीयसी) प्रशंसनीय (अस्तु) होवे

कि जिससे तुम सदा विजयी होवो परन्तु (मा मर्त्यस्य मायिन:) जो निन्दित अन्यायरूप काम करता है उसके लिए पूर्व चीजें मत हों अर्थात् जब तक मनुष्य–धार्मिक रहते हैं तभी तक राज्य बढता रहता है और जब दुराचारी होते हैं तब नष्ट भ्रष्ट हो जाता है।”

स्थिरा व: सन्त्वायुधा पराणुदे वीकू उत प्रतिष्कभे।

युष्माकम् तविषी पनीयसी मा मर्त्यस्य मायिन:॥

ऋग्वेद मण्डल 1/सूक्त 39/मन्त्र 2॥

While in this explanation of that mantra Swami Dayanad Saraswati ji has been trying to add his own assumptions from his style of explaining the *Rigvedic* verse. In Vedic period no question of guns and muskets arises at all. It is an addition of his own and he even does not stop himself. He increases his idea and adds writing totally a thing out of reference when he writes the last portion of the last sentence:[19]

“......अर्थात् जब तक मनुष्य धार्मिक रहते हैं तभी तक राज्य बढ़ता रहता है और जब दुष्टाचारी होते हैं तब नष्ट भ्रष्ट हो जाता है।”

The last adjective used by the Swami is ‘दुष्टाचारी’. It may be one of the keys to know the history of India's Freedom Struggle and an appropriate answer of the question why a number of the Brahmins are visible on the scene to resist the British even after the failure of the Indian Revolution of 1857.

His book entitled *‘Satyartha Prakash’* had been published in Hindi. He, after revision, got its revised edition in Bhadrapad, Shuklapaksha Samvat 1939 corresponding to August 29 to September 12, 1882 A.D.

In the Introduction “भूमिका”[20] he quotes the *Mundak Upnishad*[21] and the *Gita*.[22] It is interesting to note that the Swami ji preferred to quote “सत्यमेव जयति नानृतं सत्येन पन्था विततरे देवयान:।”[23] As a matter of both the fact as well as of the deeper national interest, the India's national motto सत्यमेव जयते (Truth alone triumphs) is taken from the following mantra of the Mundak Upnishad:[24]   —*Mundak Upanishad*, 3-1-6

सत्यमेव जयति नानृतं सत्येन पत्था विततो देवयान:।

येनाक्रमन्त्यृषयो ह्याप्तकामा यत्र तत् सत्यस्य परमं निधानम्॥[18]

“Truth alone triumphs, not untruth. Through truth the divine path is spread out.”

Now come to the point of ‘दुष्टाचारी’ duraachaari. It is a Hindi word that means bad character. There exist a number of parameters in *Satyartha Prakash* to define it. One of them is based on edibles and

non-edibles. Writing on it, Swami Dayanand Saraswati described in 'Bhumika' that has devoted one full chapter titled:[25]

"10 दसवें समुल्लास में आचार, अनाचार और भक्ष्याभक्ष्य विषय।"

At one place Swami ji declares in writing that "nothing except poverty and sorrows can be there in one's own country under foreigners rule."

Slowly-slowly he comes to his mindset. It can be witnessed in its full glory when he describes wine consuming rulers in India. As a matter of fact the Muslims were infamous for cord-slaughtering but wine was not associated with them, though their rule was most infamous for other things like that of harassing and forcibly religious conversion of the Hindus. But they were not blamed for liquor or wine as a whole.

The swami seems to target the English so forcefully but indirectly when in the 10th chapter, he hits none but there only the English rule. He writes:[26]

"देखों! जब आर्यों का राज्य था तब ये महोपकारक गाय आदि पशु नहीं मारे जाते थे। तभी आर्यावर्त्त वा अन्य भूगोल देशों में बड़े आनन्द में मनुष्यादि प्राणी वर्त्ते थे। क्योंकि दूध, घी, बैल आदि पशुओं की बहुताई होने से अन्न रस पुष्कल प्राप्त होते थे।"

One can get the impression that cow-slaughtering was the point in Swami ji's mind while writing these 2 sentences. For this crime (?) both the foreign origin Muslim rulers and the British are enbrackted.

But the very next line opens the eyes of a reader that the matter was something different. He pin-pointedly target non but the English for being the role reason for India's sorrows and miseries. He writes:[27]

"जब से विदेशी मांसाहारी इस देश में आके गो आदि पशुओं के मारने वाले मद्यपानी राज्याधिकारी हुए हैं तब से क्रमश: आर्यों के दु:ख की बढती होती जाती है।"

As far as author's understanding of both the Swami and the 19th century Indian History, it is a new postulate of his own. In due course of time, further researches will open the secret witnessed in this article.

The hatred towards the British in Swami Dayanand Saraswati's mind is merely a clue whose so higher a degree can not be assessed without understanding historical scenario of 1857. His findings of guns (तोप) and muskets (बन्दूक) are the inventions of his own mind which were not known to the *Rigvedic* Aryans. It is he who has been drawing such greatly strange imaginations. The question

here arises whether he as one of the established great Vedic scholar should be given credit or discredit. The author is not the competent authority to make any comment on his knowledge of Sanskrit at all but he should not be snatched away or denied from an appraisal relating to history which has been his own discipline since last 4 decades. And if the author can be permitted for a justifiable historical reappraisal on भक्ष्माभक्ष्य, मांसाहारी, मद्यपानी, तोप and बन्दूक words used by Swami Dayanand Saraswati ji some 143 years back in 1882-83, the political scenario having 1857 outbreak sparks one's mind like that of this author, if analyzed historically with the most minute observations of the mindset of this great Krantikari Sanyasi of Gujarat spreading Hindi in the then undivided India, the Bharat varsha or the आर्य्यावर्त he uses.

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Living in a Runaway World: Modern Change and the Limits of Social Control in Indian Society

Dheeraj Pratap Mitra

Independent Researcher, Former Doctoral Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh (India)
E-mail:<dpmitra031@gmail.com>

Abstract

This paper examines contemporary Indian society through the idea of a "runaway world", where social change moves faster than the ability of institutions, norms, and authorities to regulate it effectively. In India, economic reforms, rapid digital expansion, media saturation, and urban growth have quickly reshaped everyday life, while systems of regulation, care, and accountability often lag behind. Drawing on Anthony Giddens' concept of runaway modernity, the paper argues that society is increasingly shaped by human-made systems—markets, technologies, expert knowledge, and state policies—that acquire their own momentum, generating outcomes that are difficult to predict or control. This condition does not create simple disorder but sustained pressure. Social control persists in fragmented forms through law, digital platforms, surveillance, moral fear, and public anger, none of which inspire lasting trust. Consequently, individuals are forced to manage risks once handled by institutions, producing anxiety, adjustment, and everyday exhaustion. Focusing on lived experiences, particularly among youth and socially vulnerable groups, the paper shows how uncertainty around work, education, and belonging is unevenly distributed along social lines. It concludes that responding to a runaway society cannot depend solely on faster policies or technologies, but requires renewed attention to responsibility, protection, and forms of social care that can slow change and sustain social cohesion.

Keywords

Runaway society, Indian modernity, Social control, Uncertainty, Risk, Everyday life, Digital change, Inequality, Late modernity, Governance.

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Living in a Runaway World: Modern Change and the Limits of Social Control in Indian Society

1.   Introduction

Indian society today is often described as changing but that word feels too calm for what is actually being lived because what many people experience is not gradual movement but a sense of being pushed forward by forces that rarely pause, explain themselves or wait for consent and this feeling of speed has quietly entered daily routines, conversations, expectations and fears. Life moves faster. Decisions pile up. Consequences arrive late. For many, this is not an abstract idea discussed in classrooms or books; it is felt in the way jobs appear and disappear, in how technology enters homes before people understand its rules, in how traditions lose their grip while nothing equally firm takes their place. Something feels loose. This paper begins from that everyday feeling and uses it to think about Indian society as part of what Anthony Giddens calls a 'runaway world', a condition where modern institutions and systems created by human action begin to move beyond the capacity of societies to guide or control them in stable ways (Giddens, 1999). The key point here is not simply that India is modernizing but that the pace and scale of change often exceed the ability of social control through law, custom, moral authority or state regulation to keep up. That gap matters. It shapes how people plan their lives, whom they trust and how they deal with uncertainty. The experience of speed is uneven, but it is widespread. From digital payments to online education, from media-driven politics to platform-based work, change enters life quickly sometimes next to older practices that still exist but no longer guide behaviour with the same force. Tradition once worked as a quiet regulator of action offering ready-made answers about family, work, belief and duty, but in contemporary India these answers increasingly appear optional, contested or fragile pushing individuals toward choice-based living where one must decide again and again how to act, who to be and what risks to accept. This shift toward choice is often celebrated as freedom yet as Giddens notes in his work on late modernity, choice without stable support structures also produces

anxiety and what he calls ontological insecurity, a weak sense of continuity in the self and the world (Giddens, 1991). In India, this insecurity is intensified by deep inequalities, rapid urbanization and uneven institutional reach which means that while modern systems spread quickly, protection does not spread at the same speed. Control lags behind change. This lag can be seen in many areas like regulation struggles to match technological innovation, environmental laws chase development projects after damage is done, labour protections trail behind new forms of work and social norms lose authority faster than new ethical frameworks can form. Ulrich Beck's idea of the risk society is useful here as it highlights how modern risks are no longer external or natural but produced within social systems themselves and how responsibility for managing these risks increasingly shifts onto individuals rather than institutions (Beck, 1992).

In the Indian case, this shift is visible in how people are asked to manage their own education, employment, health and even safety in conditions where outcomes feel unpredictable and support feels partial. Control has not disappeared. That would be too simple. Instead, it appears in broken and uneven forms, sometimes through state power, sometimes through market logic, sometimes through digital surveillance and sometimes through moral pressure amplified by media. None of these forms feels complete. This paper takes that tension seriously and treats the runaway world not as a metaphor but as a social condition that shapes lived experience in India. It asks a set of connected questions that guide the analysis like how does accelerated modern change reshape everyday life in Indian society, why do existing systems of social control struggle to keep pace with this change, and who bears the cost of this imbalance between speed and regulation? The core argument developed in this article is that Indian society is experiencing a form of compressed modernity where global processes of economic reform, digital expansion, cultural transformation etc. unfold rapidly on a social base marked by inequality and institutional limits producing a situation where change feels constant but control feels thin. This argument draws on and extends sociological discussions of modernity, risk and social order developed by Giddens (1999), Beck (1992), and Zygmunt Bauman whose notion of liquid modernity captures the sense of instability and weak social bonds characteristic of fast-moving societies (Bauman, 2000). At the same time, the paper is attentive to critiques from scholars of the Global South who caution against

treating Western experiences of modernity as universal pointing out that in societies like India, modernity often arrives unevenly and interacts with older hierarchies of caste, class, gender and region in complex ways (Chakrabarty, 2000; Omvedt, 2003). This makes the Indian case especially important for sociological debates on runaway modernity because it shows how speed and uncertainty are filtered through existing social structures rather than replacing them entirely.

The significance of this study lies in its attempt to bring together theory and lived reality using the idea of a runaway world to make sense of everyday experiences of uncertainty, pressure, adaptation in contemporary India while also contributing to a broader sociology of modernity that takes the Global South seriously as a site of theory-building rather than mere application. Modernity here is not a finished state. It is a condition under strain. And that strain is what this article seeks to understand.

2.   Theoretical Framework

The idea of a runaway society emerges from Anthony Giddens' broader attempt to understand late modernity as a condition in which the main forces shaping social life are no longer external or traditional but produced from within society itself and once set in motion these forces often move faster than collective reflection, regulation or moral agreement can follow (Giddens, 1999). Giddens does not describe modernity as a stable system with clear direction; instead, he treats it as a dynamic process driven by human-made institutions like markets, science, technology, expert knowledge and bureaucratic systems etc. that gradually slip beyond the control of the very actors who created them. This is the core of runaway modernity. Change accelerates not because nature demands it, but because social systems reward speed, expansion and constant revision, and this acceleration creates a gap between what societies can do and what they can govern. That gap is crucial. In late modern conditions, social order is no longer anchored primarily in tradition or inherited authority but in abstract systems that operate across distance and time often without direct human contact, a process Giddens famously describes as disembedding (Giddens, 1991). Money, digital communication, legal systems, expert knowledge lift social relations out of local settings and reorganize them on a wider scale making everyday life dependent on systems that are trusted

rather than fully understood. Time and space shrink. Decisions made far away have immediate effects close to home. This compression intensifies the feeling that life is being lived inside structures that cannot easily be questioned or slowed down. Reflexivity deepens this condition. In late modernity, individuals and institutions are forced to constantly monitor, revise and justify their actions in the light of new information yet this reflexivity does not bring certainty; instead, it often produces instability because knowledge itself is provisional and open to challenge (Giddens, 1991).

Traditions lose their taken-for-granted authority not because they vanish but because they must now explain themselves, compete with alternatives and survive in an environment of choice. For individuals, this means that biography becomes a project rather than a given, shaped by repeated decisions about work, relationships, belief and identity, decisions that are made under conditions of uncertainty rather than guidance. The emotional cost of this condition is captured in Giddens' concept of ontological insecurity, a fragile sense of continuity and trust in the world that arises when routines are frequently disrupted and future outcomes feel unpredictable (Giddens, 1991). This insecurity is not a personal failure. It is social. Ulrich Beck's work on risk society extends this argument by showing how modern societies increasingly organize themselves around risks that are manufactured rather than natural, risks that are produced by industrial, scientific and technological activity and whose consequences are difficult to calculate or contain (Beck, 1992). In Beck's account, responsibility for managing these risks is steadily shifted away from institutions toward individuals who must navigate dangers they did not create and cannot fully control. This shift fits closely with the idea of a runaway world where systems generate side effects faster than regulation can respond.

Zygmunt Bauman's notion of liquid modernity adds another layer emphasizing how social forms like jobs, relationships, communities even identities lose durability and become flexible, temporary and easily replaced leaving individuals to constantly adapt without the assurance of long-term stability (Bauman, 2000). Liquidity captures the lived texture of runaway modernity as things move but they do not settle. Manuel Castells' analysis of the network society further helps explain how power, communication and economic activity are reorganized through global networks enabled by information technology producing a social structure where flows

of information matter more than fixed locations and where inclusion and exclusion are shaped by access to networks rather than formal membership alone (Castells, 1996). Together, these perspectives form a theoretical conversation that frames runaway society not as a single theory but as a shared diagnosis of late modern conditions marked by speed, uncertainty, weakened forms of control. Yet applying these ideas to Indian society requires care. These theories were largely developed in Western contexts where welfare states, relatively stable institutions and industrial histories shaped the experience of modernity.

In India, modern change unfolds on a social terrain marked by deep inequality, strong but contested traditions, and uneven institutional capacity producing what many scholars describe as compressed or uneven modernity, where different historical stages coexist and collide (Chakrabarty, 2000). This does not invalidate runaway society theory; it complicates it. The disembedding of social relations in India occurs alongside enduring caste hierarchies, informal economies, moral frameworks etc. that still matter even as their authority weakens. Reflexivity exists, but it is unevenly distributed, shaped by education, class position and access to resources. Ontological insecurity is felt more sharply by those who lack buffers against risk. In this sense, runaway modernity in India does not erase structure; it rearranges it. This paper uses Giddens' framework as a starting point rather than a finished map placing it in dialogue with risk, liquidity and network perspectives while remaining attentive to the specific social conditions of Indian society. The goal is not to import Western theory unchanged, but to use it as a tool to think through how speed, uncertainty and weakened control are experienced, managed and resisted in a context where modernity arrives fast, unevenly and with consequences that are shared very unequally. That tension sits at the center of the analysis.

3. Modern Change in Indian Society

Modern change in Indian society is often narrated as a story of progress but when seen up close it feels less like a smooth journey and more like a constant push forward, uneven, tiring and hard to pause, and this section places that lived sense of speed at the center of analysis. Since the early 1990s, economic liberalization has restructured markets, work, consumption, aspiration etc. in ways that have reached deep into everyday life linking households, cities,

and even villages to global flows of capital, goods, and images at a pace that earlier generations never experienced (Jaffrelot, 2011). Markets expanded quickly. Opportunities appeared. So did insecurity. Stable employment shrank next to flexible and short-term work while consumption became a key marker of social status, reshaping desires and comparisons across class lines (Fernandes, 2006). This economic opening did not unfold evenly; it layered global market logic onto an already unequal social structure producing sharp gaps between those able to ride new opportunities and those left to adjust without protection. Speed increased. Protection did not.

Alongside market expansion, digitalization has transformed governance, economy and social relations with remarkable force pushing India into what many describe as a digitally mediated society where state services, banking, education, communication increasingly operate through platforms rather than face-to-face interaction (Nayar, 2012). Digital systems promise efficiency and reach but they also shift responsibility downward asking citizens to manage technology, data and risk on their own, often without clear support. This shift is visible in digital payments, online welfare delivery, platform-based work where systems function quickly but accountability remains hard to locate. Life becomes easier in some ways and more fragile in others. Urbanization and migration intensify this condition. Indian cities have grown rapidly pulling in migrants from rural and small-town backgrounds who arrive seeking work and security but often encounter informal housing, unstable employment and weak civic support creating a constant churn of population that strains infrastructure and social cohesion (Breman, 2016). Urban space expands faster than planning, and migration becomes a survival strategy rather than a clear path to stability. Media saturation adds another layer to this compressed modernity. News, social media, advertising and entertainment circulate without pause compressing time and attention while shaping opinions, fears, desires at high speed, often faster than verification or reflection can follow (Thussu, 2007). Information accelerates. Meaning struggles to settle. Public debate becomes reactive, emotional and short-lived reinforcing a sense that society is always responding rather than steering.

All of this unfolds in a context where modern systems coexist with fragile institutions. Laws exist but enforcement is uneven. Welfare schemes expand yet access remains partial. Traditional norms weaken but new moral frameworks remain thin. This

coexistence produces what can be called compressed modernity, a condition where multiple stages of social change collide rather than replace one another creating pressure instead of balance (Chakrabarty, 2000). Anthony Giddens' idea of runaway modernity helps make sense of this pattern, as it highlights how human-made systems gain momentum beyond social control, a dynamic clearly visible in India where economic reform, digital governance and media expansion often outpace regulation and ethical debate (Giddens, 1999).

Ulrich Beck's insight that modern risks are socially produced rather than external further sharpens the picture, showing how environmental damage, job insecurity and data vulnerability emerge from development itself and are unevenly distributed across social groups (Beck, 1992). The key point is not that Indian society lacks control but that control arrives late, fragmented and often reactive. Modern systems move fast. Institutions adjust slowly. The ground is uneven. This section argues that Indian society is not simply modernising but doing so under conditions of speed that magnify inequality and uncertainty producing a social landscape where change feels constant, stability feels temporary and individuals are left to navigate futures that appear open yet insecure. Too much happens at once. That is the problem.

4.   The Crisis of Social Control: State, Institutions and Regulation

The idea of social control often brings to mind law, authority, regulation etc. but in contemporary Indian society control is better understood through its limits, delays and uneven presence because what stands out today is not the absence of rules but their inability to keep pace with the speed of modern change. The state still exists. Institutions still function. Laws are still written. Yet across technology, environment, labour and data, governance repeatedly arrives after damage has already been done, reacting to problems rather than shaping their direction in advance. This lag is not accidental. It is built into the way late modern systems operate where innovation, markets and digital platforms move faster than deliberation, accountability or ethical agreement, a condition that Anthony Giddens describes as central to a runaway world in which human-made systems escape steady social control (Giddens, 1999).

In India, this is visible in the rapid expansion of digital technologies that restructure communication, finance, welfare

delivery, work etc., while data protection laws, labour safeguards, accountability mechanisms struggle to keep up leaving individuals exposed to risks they did not choose and cannot easily contest. Governance gaps widen. Environmental regulation offers another clear example. Large development projects, mining, urban expansion, and infrastructure growth proceed in the name of progress often supported by policy urgency while environmental assessments, rehabilitation plans and long-term impact reviews are delayed, diluted or bypassed turning regulation into a formality rather than a protective force (Beck, 1992). Control becomes symbolic. Bureaucratic overload deepens this crisis. Indian regulatory institutions operate under heavy pressure, tasked with managing complex and fast-moving domains using procedures designed for slower times producing delay, confusion, and selective enforcement rather than consistent oversight. Files move slowly. Markets move fast. Innovation rarely waits. Law struggles to respond to the speed of change especially in areas like digital platforms, gig work, financial technologies and artificial intelligence where new practices emerge before legal categories are clearly defined forcing regulators into a cycle of catch-up that rarely closes the gap. This tension between law and speed is not unique to India but its effects are sharper in a society marked by uneven institutional capacity and deep social inequality where those with resources can navigate regulatory ambiguity while others absorb its costs.

At the same time, traditional institutions that once exercised moral authority family, community, religious leadership and local social norms have seen their influence weaken not because they vanish but because they no longer command unquestioned obedience in a world structured by choice, mobility and competing value systems (Giddens, 1991). Authority fragments. Guidance thins out. What once regulated behaviour quietly now requires explanation, negotiation or enforcement and often fails to do even that. In this space of weakened formal and moral control, new forms of regulation emerge, informal yet powerful, operating through surveillance, algorithms and market pressure rather than public accountability. Digital platforms monitor behaviour, rank performance and shape visibility producing compliance without dialogue. Markets discipline through precarity, rewarding flexibility and punishing delay. Media amplifies moral outrage creating cycles of public shaming that substitute speed for justice. Control shifts shape. It does not disappear. This fragmentation aligns closely with Ulrich Beck's argument that late

modern societies manage risk by shifting responsibility downward, placing the burden of adaptation on individuals rather than institutions, a process that creates insecurity while maintaining the appearance of choice (Beck, 1992). Zygmunt Bauman's description of liquid modernity further helps explain why control feels weak yet inescapable, as power becomes mobile, indirect and hard to confront while individuals remain fixed within systems they cannot easily exit (Bauman, 2000). In the Indian context, this liquidity interacts with long-standing hierarchies of caste, class and gender, meaning that fragmented control does not operate evenly; it follows social lines offering protection to some and exposure to others.

Manuel Castells' work on the network society adds another layer showing how power increasingly operates through networks rather than institutions, privileging speed, connection and adaptability over stability and accountability (Castells, 1996). Seen through this lens, the crisis of social control in India is not a failure of governance alone but a structural condition of runaway modernity where institutions are asked to regulate processes that no longer move at institutional speed. Control becomes reactive, responding after disruption rather than preventing it, and uneven, protecting certain interests while leaving others vulnerable. This paper argues that understanding this crisis requires moving beyond the idea that stronger control simply means more rules or faster enforcement. The problem lies deeper, in the mismatch between the tempo of modern change and the capacity of social institutions to absorb, regulate and give meaning to that change. In Indian society, this mismatch produces a condition where control is everywhere and nowhere at once, felt through pressure rather than guidance, through surveillance rather than care. It works sometimes. It fails often. And in that tension, uncertainty grows.

5. Everyday Life in a Runaway Society: Uncertainty, Anxiety and Adaptation

Everyday life in contemporary Indian society offers perhaps the clearest window into what it means to live inside a runaway world, because it is here, in ordinary routines and quiet decisions that large theories of modernity translate into pressure, worry and constant adjustment. Work is a good place to begin. For many people, especially in cities and expanding towns, employment no longer provides a stable horizon around which life can be planned; instead, it appears as a series of short-term arrangements, contracts,

platforms and informal tasks that promise flexibility but deliver insecurity, pushing individuals to remain permanently alert, available and adaptable (Standing, 2011). The future becomes difficult to imagine with confidence. Plans shrink. Anxiety grows. What once felt like a collective responsibility managed through labour laws, unions or long-term employment is now increasingly treated as a personal problem to be solved through skill-building, self-branding, constant competition. Education, which was earlier seen as a relatively clear path toward mobility has also been drawn into this logic of speed and pressure. Schools, coaching centres and universities operate in an atmosphere of relentless comparison where examinations, rankings, and outcomes arrive faster than reflection and aspiration multiplies without clear routes to fulfilment (Jeffrey, 2010). Students are told to compete harder, learn more, move faster often without corresponding expansion in opportunities producing what can be described as aspiration overload, a condition where hopes rise quickly while structural support remains thin. Failure is internalised. Stress becomes normal. Family life, too, reflects this shift. Marriage, intimacy and household arrangements are no longer regulated solely by tradition or kinship norms yet they are not fully supported by new social frameworks either leaving individuals to negotiate relationships through trial, adjustment and sometimes quiet confusion (Giddens, 1992).

Choices expand but guidance weakens. Relationships become more negotiable and more fragile at the same time. For many young people, this creates a constant balancing act between personal desire, family expectation and economic reality, a process that shapes identity formation in uncertain ways. Youth stand at the sharp edge of runaway modernity. They are encouraged to imagine limitless futures while navigating shrinking certainties around work, belonging, and recognition, a contradiction that produces frustration, restlessness, in many cases, mental strain (Arnett, 2014). Identity becomes something to be built and rebuilt often through digital spaces that amplify comparison and exposure while offering little protection from failure or rejection. Social media intensifies this experience by compressing time and attention making success and disappointment visible at the same moment and blurring the line between private emotion and public performance. Life feels watched. Judged. Measured. In this environment, religion and spirituality take on renewed significance not necessarily as rigid belief systems but as flexible resources for coping, meaning-making

and emotional grounding (Berger, 1967). Rather than disappearing under modern conditions, religious practices adapt, offering comfort, routine and moral language in a world where institutional support feels uncertain. Faith becomes personal, selective and sometimes experimental reflecting the broader pattern of reflexivity described by Anthony Giddens where individuals are required to actively construct coherence in their lives rather than inherit it ready-made (Giddens, 1991). Across these domains, a shared pattern emerges like risks that were earlier managed collectively through institutions are now shifted onto individuals, who must calculate, absorb and respond to uncertainty on their own.

Ulrich Beck's argument that late modern societies produce risks that individuals are forced to manage privately is sharply visible here, as insecurity around work, education, relationships and mental well-being becomes a normal part of daily life rather than an exceptional condition (Beck, 1992). Zygmunt Bauman's idea of liquid modernity further captures this experience, highlighting how social bonds loosen and responsibilities become individualized, leaving people free in theory but burdened in practice (Bauman, 2000). In the Indian context, this individualization unfolds unevenly shaped by class position, gender, caste and access to resources meaning that while some can buffer uncertainty through wealth or networks others face it with little support. What emerges is not a society without order but one where order is produced through self-management, emotional labour and constant adjustment rather than stable institutional care. People cope. They adapt. They endure. Yet this endurance comes at a cost, one that is often hidden in personal stress, quiet exhaustion, and the feeling that life is always slightly out of control. That feeling is not accidental. It is the everyday face of a runaway society.

6. Unequal Exposure: Risk, Inequality and Marginalized Groups

Discussions of runaway modernity often speak in general terms about speed, uncertainty and loss of control but what tends to fade into the background is a harder truth as not everyone is exposed to this runaway world in the same way, and in India, vulnerability follows old social lines even when the forces producing risk appear new. Modern change does not land on a flat surface. It moves across a society already shaped by caste hierarchy, class inequality, gendered power and sharp regional gaps, and these structures quietly decide

who absorbs risk and who is shielded from it. For upper and middle classes, uncertainty may appear as anxiety about career growth or lifestyle choices but for marginalized groups it often takes the form of direct exposure to harm, loss of livelihood, displacement and insecurity without fallback options.

Ulrich Beck's argument that modern risks are socially distributed rather than universal becomes especially visible here because the dangers created by development, technology and markets do not circulate evenly but settle more heavily on those with the least capacity to resist or recover. Caste remains central to this uneven exposure. Despite claims that modernization weakens caste, many of the risks generated by rapid economic and infrastructural change continue to be borne by Dalits and Adivasis whether through hazardous labour, informal work, environmental damage or forced displacement linked to mining, dams, and urban expansion (Deshpande, 2011). Development promises growth. Costs fall elsewhere. Class deepens this divide. Those with stable income, education and networks can manage uncertainty through savings, mobility and access to private services while the urban poor and informal workers face risk as a constant condition rather than a temporary disruption living close to loss with little institutional support (Breman, 2016). Gender further sharpens vulnerability. Women often experience runaway modernity as a double burden, carrying the pressure of changing work expectations while remaining responsible for unpaid care and domestic stability and when systems fail, it is often women who absorb the emotional and practical cost (Connell, 2009).

Regional inequality also matters. Large parts of rural and peri-urban India encounter modern change mainly through extraction, displacement, migration rather than secure opportunity creating zones where development arrives without protection. The digital divide adds a newer layer to this unequal exposure. As governance, welfare, education and work shift onto digital platforms, access to devices, connectivity, literacy, stable infrastructure becomes a gatekeeper of rights turning technology into a filter that includes some while quietly excluding others (Nayak, 2010).

Digital systems promise neutrality but in practice they mirror and amplify existing inequalities making access conditional on resources that marginalized groups often lack. Failure to navigate technology becomes framed as personal inadequacy rather than

structural exclusion. Environmental risk offers another stark example of how runaway modernity distributes harm unevenly. Pollution, climate vulnerability and ecological degradation linked to rapid development disproportionately affect communities with the least political voice pushing them into cycles of displacement, illness and economic loss that are rarely counted as part of progress (Guha & Martinez-Alier, 1997). These risks are not accidents. They are produced by policy choices that privilege speed, growth and visibility over long-term protection and justice.

Anthony Giddens' idea of manufactured uncertainty helps to explain how such risks emerge from human action itself yet in the Indian case, this uncertainty is filtered through social hierarchy meaning that some groups live closer to danger while others experience modernity mainly as convenience and choice (Giddens, 1999). Zygmunt Bauman's insight that liquidity frees some while trapping others is useful here, as mobility, flexibility, and choice function as advantages for the privileged but as sources of instability for those without resources. The result is a society where risk management becomes an individual task for those least equipped to perform it, while institutions retreat or respond selectively. Who bears the cost of runaway modernity in India is therefore not an open question. It is structured. Vulnerability follows caste, class, gender and region, even as the language of development presents change as universal. This section argues that any serious engagement with runaway society must confront this unequal exposure because without addressing how risk is socially distributed, the theory remains abstract and incomplete. Speed may define modern change, but inequality decides who pays for it. That is the uncomfortable reality.

7. Conclusion

This paper set out to understand Indian society not as a case of delayed or incomplete modernity but as a social formation living inside a runaway world where the problem is not absence of change but its excess and where control struggles because the ground beneath it keeps shifting. Seen through this lens, Indian modernity appears neither smooth nor linear; it is compressed, uneven and restless, shaped by rapid market expansion, digital systems, urban growth and media speed that often move ahead of institutional capacity and ethical reflection. What runaway society reveals, above all, is that

modern change in India has not dissolved structure but rearranged it, pushing risk, uncertainty and responsibility downward while allowing systems to move upward with remarkable freedom. Control still exists but it rarely feels protective. It operates in fragments, through delayed laws, selective enforcement, market discipline, digital surveillance and moral panic, rather than through steady institutional care. This condition exposes a central limit of contemporary governance like regulation alone cannot restore control when institutions are stretched thin and trust remains uneven. Without ethical renewal and institutional strengthening, control becomes reactive rather than guiding, responding to crisis after crisis without addressing their shared roots.

Ulrich Beck's insight that modern societies increasingly manage the side effects of their own success remains deeply relevant here especially in India where development-induced risks are unevenly distributed and often absorbed by those with the least voice. Speed becomes the norm. Protection lags behind. This imbalance cannot be corrected simply by adding more rules or faster policy responses, because speed itself has become part of the problem. The findings of this study suggest the need for reflexive governance not in the narrow sense of constant policy revision but as a broader commitment to slowing down decision-making where social consequences are deep, expanding public accountability and designing regulation that recognizes inequality rather than assuming uniform capacity. Inclusive regulation matters. When digital systems, labour markets, environmental policies and welfare mechanisms are built on the assumption that all citizens can adapt equally, they quietly reproduce exclusion. A runaway society makes such assumptions dangerous.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in extending the idea of runaway modernity beyond its Western origins and grounding it in the lived conditions of Indian society where late modern dynamics intersect with long-standing hierarchies of caste, class, gender and region. By bringing together insights from Giddens on reflexivity and ontological insecurity, Beck on risk, Bauman on liquidity and Castells on network power, the article shows that runaway society is best understood not as a single theory but as a shared diagnosis of a world where human-made systems gain momentum faster than collective control. At the same time, the Indian case complicates this diagnosis by demonstrating how

runaway modernity operates on uneven ground intensifying vulnerability for some while offering flexibility and opportunity to others. This unevenness is not a side issue. It is central. For sociology, this means that future research on modernity must move beyond abstract accounts of speed and uncertainty and pay closer attention to how risk is distributed, resisted, and normalized in everyday life. Empirical work that listens to those living at the sharp edge of change like informal workers, migrants, students, women, marginalised communities will be crucial for understanding how runaway processes are managed from below often through quiet adaptation rather than visible resistance.

There is also a need to study emerging forms of informal control especially those operating through digital platforms and markets which shape behaviour without democratic oversight and blur the line between regulation and coercion. Finally, this paper argues that living in a runaway world demands something different from societies than constant acceleration or technical fixes. It demands social imagination, the ability to think beyond immediate gain and crisis response and responsibility, understood not as individual self-management but as collective care embedded in institutions. Speed alone will not repair the gap between change and control. Slowing down where necessary, rebuilding trust and recognising unequal exposure to risk are not signs of weakness. They are conditions for holding society together in a world that otherwise keeps running ahead.

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Analyzing Cryptocurrencies and their Implications for Traditional Financial Systems

Mohan Kumar[1] and Paramjeet[2]

[1]Associate Professor of Commerce, Government College Bahu, Jhajjar, Haryana (India) E-mail:<singlamohan1@gmail.com>

[2]Associate Professor of Economics, Government College for Women, Badhra, Haryana (India) E-mail:<parmjeet79@gmail.com>

Abstract

The rise of cryptocurrencies has presented significant challenges and opportunities for traditional financial systems, warranting a comprehensive examination of their implications. This study employs a mixed-methods research approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative techniques to provide an in-depth analysis of cryptocurrency markets and their interplay with conventional financial assets such as stocks, bonds, and commodities. Thematic analysis was used to extract insights, which were cross-referenced with quantitative findings to ensure coherence and reliability. Key areas of investigation included market trends, volatility, and trading patterns, enabling the identification of distinct behaviors and correlations between cryptocurrencies and traditional assets. The findings offer a nuanced understanding of how cryptocurrencies impact financial stability, investment strategies, and regulatory frameworks, ultimately contributing to the evolving discourse on integrating digital assets into established financial ecosystems. This research provides policymakers, financial institutions, and market participants with actionable insights into the dynamics of cryptocurrency markets and their implications for the broader financial landscape.

Keywords

Cryptocurrencies, Financial, Stock, Cash, Traditional market.

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Analyzing Cryptocurrencies and their Implications for Traditional Financial Systems

1. Introduction

Cryptocurrencies are among the most game-changing inventions in the annals of contemporary finance. Bitcoin, Ethereum, and other cryptocurrencies are built on decentralized blockchain technology; they pose a serious threat to the underlying concepts of conventional financial systems that have been controlled by governments, regulatory agencies, and banks for a long time. The original idea behind cryptocurrencies was a decentralized, peer-to-peer payment system. However, since its inception, cryptocurrencies have grown into intricate financial instruments with many uses, including speculative investments, smart contracts, and platforms for decentralized financing (DeFi).

Existing financial infrastructure's stability, adaptability, and long-term viability are major challenges raised by this shift. Consumer safety, economic stability, and regulatory conformity are the pillars upon which traditional financial systems rest. However, users are both empowered and exposed by the rapid innovation, decentralization, and anonymity that characterize the crypto ecosystem. Users are at increased risk of fraud, volatility, and legal uncertainty due to these elements. Central banks and lawmakers face the daunting task of integrating or regulating the parallel system of digital assets without impeding innovation or jeopardizing economic stability, as these assets become more intertwined with traditional financial markets.

In addition to monetary sovereignty, international trade, and geopolitical influence, the effects of bitcoin adoption go far beyond the realm of economics. When it comes to capital regulations and financial oversight, some countries see digital currencies as dangers, while others see them as a way to avoid conventional banking systems. A rising number of policymakers are taking cues from bitcoin ideas when crafting new digital currencies, and central bank digital currencies (CBDCs) are an example of this trend. Therefore,

studying cryptocurrencies is crucial to comprehending how the world's financial system is changing as a result of technological upheaval; it's not just a game for financial speculators.

2.　Review of Literature

Sharma, Shresth (2025): Digital or virtual money that is secure via encryption and runs on decentralized networks enabled by blockchain technology is known as cryptocurrency. There is no single entity that controls cryptocurrencies, unlike the governments that issue fiat currencies. This decentralization has several benefits, including security, transparency, and the possibility of financial inclusion. The potential of cryptocurrencies to support decentralized transactions, cut out middlemen, and protect investors against inflation has garnered a lot of attention since Bitcoin's launch in 2009. Nevertheless, lawmakers, investors, and financial institutions are still debating their possible effects on monetary policy and financial stability, as well as their volatility and the difficulties associated with regulations. Regardless of these obstacles, blockchain technology and cryptocurrencies are changing the face of international finance and opening the door to new ideas like decentralized financing (DeFi) and digital currencies issued by central banks (CBDCs).

Akuoko-Sarpong, Roland *et al*. (2024): There will be far-reaching effects on the efficiency of conventional financial markets brought about by the advent of cryptocurrencies. In terms of price discovery, volatility, interdependence, and information transmission, this research aims to investigate how cryptocurrencies impact several other conventional markets. Applying multivariate cointegration analysis to cryptocurrency prices and event study analysis of daily price changes shows that cryptocurrencies are inefficient due to their illogical behavior, bubbles, and wildly varying volatilities. The return and volatility spillover effects they display, however, imply that information flows from one market to another, and they impact a variety of commodities, stock, and currency indices. Despite first impressions, Alnet, cryptocurrency markets really improve the efficiency of traditional linked markets as a whole thanks to increased involvement and interconnection of the world's financial systems. Topics covered in the study include market structure, behavioral characteristics, and regulatory consequences, all of which provide light on how financial markets are changing in the digital age.

Batool, Farwa (2024): The Bitcoin Value List (BPI) and its effects on global markets are the focal points of this investigation into

the volatile financial aspects of cryptocurrencies. We examine the relationships between the BPI and conventional market indicators like as the S&P 500, NASDAQ 100, oil, and gold through a thorough analysis that includes historical measurements, pairwise correlations, and regression models. The results highlight the interdependence of bitcoin with established financial metrics and show that the S&P 500 has a significant effect on the BPI. Incorporating both irregular and fixed-impacts models into multicollinearity and board data analyses deepens the inquiry and reveals subtle transitory variations. In particular for fixed-impact models, our findings highlight the need of taking individual-explicit impacts into account. For investors, politicians, and analysts interested in the robust interaction between cryptocurrencies and traditional financial markets on a global scale, this analysis provides nuanced bits of information.

Kumshe, Hauwa *et al.* (2024): Financial inclusivity, transaction efficacy, regulatory barriers, and financial resilience are some of the aspects that this study examines as they pertain to the conventional banking industry and the implications of crypto-currencies on it. This study offers a comprehensive assessment of how cryptocurrencies are reshaping the financial landscape by analyzing current data and scholarly works. Cryptocurrencies present both opportunities and threats to traditional financial institutions, as this analysis shows. The studies recommend that traditional financial institutions adopt blockchain technology and use it in their operations. They also say that regulators and financial institutions should work together to create cryptocurrency regulations that are both effective and consistent. Lastly, they say that traditional financial institutions should be involved in discussions and pilot programs about Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs). To make sure CBDCs fit properly with the current financial system, it's best to work with central banks to create and launch them.

Ramazonov, Muhammad (2022): Issues such as international cooperation in the field of cryptocurrency circulation, the experiences of other countries in this area, and the characteristics of the object and subject of crimes committed in this space are relevant to the research topic, which is aimed at studying and developing a new financial instrument. Both the answer to these questions and the development of strategies to curb and avoid cybercrimes involving cryptocurrency usage by transnational criminals depend on our ability to answer them. Another thing to keep in mind is that for the

sake of this last piece of qualification work, the words cryptocurrency, virtual currency, digital money, and digital cash will all refer to the same thing. In this age of rapid technological advancement and globalization, the impact of the virtual world is hard to ignore. The Internet has made many things easier to do in real life. Just a few short years ago, criminal activity was more regional and less global in scope.

Awad, Engy Mahmoud & Yeongseop, Rhee (2018): Cryptocurrencies pose serious concerns to financial stability, pricing stability, and payment system stability, as this dissertation shows. Without regulation under a disincentive international legal framework, these dangers could worsen. The study contrasts this by acknowledging the potential advantages and opportunities that various payment systems may bring, as well as the attractiveness that investors may consider them to have. In addition, it brings attention to the fact that these schemes can be utilized by dishonest individuals to conduct unlawful actions, such as money laundering, fraud, and criminal activity. As a result, these schemes pose challenges to public authorities. Using yearly statistics for fifteen selected nations, this article also investigates what drives demand for Bitcoin, the most traded cryptocurrency, from 2013 to 2017. The paper documents multiple findings using the 2SLS approach. To start, there seems to be a strong correlation between economic policy concerns, trade barriers, and remittance transfers as well as Bitcoin market-related variables such econometric Beta, trading volume, and volatility. This holds true for both established and developing nations. In addition, although the stock of foreign migrants is generally insignificant, it seems to have a lower P-value in industrialized nations. That economic uncertainties and trade frictions are important regardless of how countries are categorized shows that this is true. However, when it comes to the demand for Bitcoin, factors such as income level and tax payments are significantly affected by the country's classification. Lastly, there is substantial evidence that variables such as the number of internet users and exchange rates are statistically insignificant, suggesting that the null hypothesis is likely to be accepted.

3. Research Methodology

A mixed-methods research strategy was used to conduct the study, which included quantitative and qualitative techniques to provide a thorough assessment. For the quantitative data, the study used a cross-sectional analysis. For the in-depth insights, it relied on

qualitative interviews. Data on regulatory information, market mood indicators, and important events impacting both the cryptocurrency and traditional financial asset markets, as well as their respective historical prices and trade volumes, were compiled by the researchers. Researchers used theme analysis to glean qualitative information from semi-structured interviews with market participants, financial specialists, and institutional investors.

Examining cryptocurrency market trends, volatility, and trading patterns alongside stock, bond, and commodities market performance indicators was the focus of the study. In addition, the qualitative data was confirmed by cross- checking it with the quantitative results to make sure they were consistent.

By collecting data on quantitative trends as well as qualitative insights from important players, this mixed-methods study hopes to give a detailed assessment of how cryptocurrencies interact with conventional financial markets.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 The Interplay between Cryptocurrencies and Traditional Financial Markets

Numerous quantitative trends and qualitative viewpoints from important players characterize the dynamic relationship between conventional financial markets and cryptocurrency. I will offer a detailed assessment of this interaction below:

4.1.1 Quantitative Trends

⤷ **Market Correlation:** In the past, when economic uncertainty or market volatility was prevalent, cryptocurrency prices would often mirror those of more conventional financial markets. Factors including regulatory announcements, macroeconomic conditions, and investor mood can cause correlations to fluctuate and not always remain stable.

⤷ **Volatility:** The volatility of cryptocurrency prices is sometimes higher than that of more conventional asset classes like stocks and bonds. Investors' risk management tactics and market sentiment could be affected by this volatility.

⤷ **Trading Volume:** Retail and institutional investors alike have seen a marked increase in their trading activity in crypto-currency over the past few years. Because of this increased activity, cryptocurrency derivatives markets have emerged, and

cryptocurrencies have begun to be integrated into more conventional financial instruments.

⇢ **Market Capitalization:** The cryptocurrency sector is still tiny compared to the rest of the financial industry, even though cryptocurrencies are growing at a rapid pace. But their market valuation has been climbing, drawing the interest of more conventional investors and banks.

⇢ **Regulatory Landscape:** The connection between cryptocurrency and conventional financial markets is being shaped by regulatory developments. Market instability and a loss of investor trust can result from unclear regulatory frameworks.

4·1·2 Qualitative Perspectives

⇢ **Investor Sentiment:** Some investors regard cryptocurrencies as game-changing financial tools with enormous return potential, while others are wary owing to worries about regulatory risks, security concerns, and the absence of intrinsic value in the market.

⇢ **Financial Institutions:** Some banks and asset managers already provide cryptocurrency-related services to their clients, demonstrating the growing interest of traditional financial institutions in cryptocurrencies. On the other hand, some people are still wary of the asset class because of worries about regulation and the risks they see.

⇢ **Regulators and Governments:** From completely banning cryptocurrencies to recognizing them as valid financial instruments, regulators and governments have taken varying approaches. Financial stability, investor safety, and anti-money laundering (AML) compliance are some of the pressing concerns that lawmakers are attempting to address in the ever-changing regulatory landscape.

⇢ **Technology and Innovation:** Blockchain technology is being investigated for a variety of uses outside digital currencies, including supply chain management, identity verification, and decentralized finance (DeFi), thanks to the innovation in financial technology (FinTech) that cryptocurrencies have sparked.

4·1·3 Challenges and Opportunities

⇢ **Regulatory Uncertainty:** Crypto markets and conventional banks seeking to interact with them continue to face the

formidable obstacle of unclear regulations. To reduce risks and boost investor confidence, clear and uniform policies are needed.

‣ **Market Integration:** Opportunities for diversification and portfolio management strategies arise as cryptocurrencies become more incorporated into regular financial markets. Systemic risk and the possibility of contagion during times of market stress are worries that this integration also raises.

‣ **Security and Custody:** Institutional cryptocurrency adoption is contingent upon security and custody solutions. Investors and banks alike continue to place a premium on secure digital asset storage and management.

‣ **Education and Awareness:** To help people better grasp the potential benefits and drawbacks of this asset class, it is crucial to increase crypto education and awareness. Responsible market development and well-informed decision-making can be achieved through education of regulators, lawmakers, and investors.

Numerous stakeholders' qualitative viewpoints and quantitative trends contribute to the complex dynamics at work in the relationship between cryptocurrency and conventional financial markets. Blockchain technology has many potential benefits, such as increased diversity and creativity, but it also raises concerns about security, market integration, and governance. In order to overcome these challenges and fully utilize cryptocurrencies in the wider financial ecosystem, it is crucial that players maintain open lines of communication and work together.

4·2   Analysis of how the Entry of Cryptocurrencies affects the Dynamics of Traditional Financial Markets

Traditional financial markets, such as stock exchanges, bond markets, and commodities markets, are significantly altered by the introduction of cryptocurrencies. An examination of these impacts follows:

4·2·1 Stock Exchanges

‣ **Increased Volatility:** Stock market volatility can be heightened by the availability of cryptocurrencies. Quick price fluctuations can occur if investors decide to split their money between equities and cryptocurrencies depending on how the market is feeling.

» **Shifts in Investor Sentiment:** When opposed to traditional equities, cryptocurrency tends to draw in a different type of investor. When emotion shifts or market-specific events impact the bitcoin market, it has the potential to influence investor behavior in the stock markets as well.

» **Competition for Investment:** Cryptocurrencies are vying for investors' money alongside more conventional stocks as they grow in popularity. Stock prices and market dynamics can be influenced by this competition, especially for companies in industries that are seen as being directly affected by blockchain technology or digital currencies.

4·2·2 Bond Markets

» **Flight to Safety:** Investors may seek solace in more conventional safe-haven assets, such as government bonds, when the bitcoin market is volatile or unpredictable. Bond yields and prices are susceptible to this flight to safety.

» **Interest Rate Expectations:** Markets for cryptocurrencies are being watched by policymakers and central banks for signs that they may influence interest rates, monetary policy, and expectations of inflation. Interest rate forecasts and bond market dynamics may need to be adjusted in response to substantial changes in bitcoin values.

» **Risk Perception:** In comparison to bonds, cryptocurrencies are often considered to be riskier investments. Bond rates and investor behavior can be impacted by shifts in market sentiment toward cryptocurrencies or changes in regulations, which in turn affect how the financial markets perceive risk.

4·2·3 Commodity Markets

» **Alternative Investment Option:** Some people think of cryptocurrencies as a kind of alternative investment that is comparable to commodities like silver or gold. That is why they are in direct competition with more conventional commodities for the interest and resources of investors.

» **Hedging Strategies:** Cryptocurrencies, like some commodities, are seen by some investors as possible protections against inflation and geopolitical dangers. Cryptocurrency price fluctuations have the potential to impact commodity market hedging and risk management techniques.

‣ **Technological Innovation:** The underlying blockchain technology has ramifications for commodities markets, specifically in supply chain management, traceability, and trade financing. This technology is relevant to the cryptocurrency industry as a whole. The infrastructure and operations of the commodity market might be affected by innovations in blockchain technology that are driven by cryptocurrencies.

All things considered, conventional financial markets are facing new dynamics and factors due to the introduction of cryptocurrency. Some of these effects include altered risk perceptions, more volatility, changes in investor mood, rivalry for investment funds, interest rate and commodities market activities, and variations in volatility. The impact of cryptocurrencies on conventional markets is here to stay, and both market players and regulators may need to adjust to keep up with the changing landscape.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, the advent of cryptocurrency has started a major change in the structure of international finance by bringing decentralized models that question the efficacy and power of conventional banks. Financial inclusivity, speedier transactions, and resistance to censorship are just a few of the positives of cryptocurrencies. However, there are also considerable concerns about regulatory supervision, systemic risk, and economic stability that come with these digital currencies. Comprehensive frameworks that can combine innovation with accountability are necessary due to the volatility, lack of consumer protections, and potential for misuse in criminal operations.

A hybrid model, with conventional financial institutions embracing blockchain technology and governments investigating the possibility of issuing central bank digital currencies (CBDCs), is likely to define the financial system of the future as the lines between digital and conventional finance continue to blur. How well the financial sector adapts to the needs of the digital age will depend on the interaction between regulatory measures and technical innovation. Examining cryptocurrency and its effects on the market has led to a reevaluation of global economic power, value, and trust, as well as a revolution in financial instruments.

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Artificial Intelligence: Pros and Cons

Hemlata Saini[1] and Pooja Kandpal[2]

[1]Professor, Department of Sociology, S.B.S. Govt. P. G. College, Rudrapur, US Nagar, Uttarakhand (India) E-mail:<hemsaini81@gmail.com>

[2]Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, S.B.S. Govt. P. G. College, Rudrapur, US Nagar, Uttarakhand (India) E-mail:<pujakandpal07@gmail.com>

Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as one of the most transformative technologies of the contemporary world, reshaping the way humans think, work, and interact with their surroundings. It refers to the development of computer systems capable of performing tasks that normally require human intelligence, such as learning, reasoning, decision-making, and problem-solving. In everyday life, AI plays a significant role by simplifying complex processes, increasing efficiency, and enhancing accuracy across diverse fields including healthcare, education, industry, governance, and communication. From medical diagnosis and smart transportation to personalized learning platforms and digital assistants, AI has the potential to improve productivity and overall quality of life. However, alongside its advantages, AI also raises serious concerns. Issues such as job displacement due to automation, ethical dilemmas, data privacy, surveillance, and the growing dependence on intelligent machines highlight its potential risks. Unequal access to AI technologies may further widen social and economic inequalities. This article aims to critically examine both the positive and negative dimensions of artificial intelligence by analyzing its applications, benefits, and limitations. By adopting a balanced perspective, the study seeks to emphasize the need for responsible development, ethical regulation, and human-centric use of AI to ensure that technological progress contributes to inclusive and sustainable social development.

Keywords

Artificial intelligence, Applications of AI, Advantages, Disadvantages.

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Artificial Intelligence: Pros and Cons

1.   Introduction

Humans are the only creatures in this vast universe that God has given the capacity to use or abuse their intellect. Humans have come a long way via intelligence, skill, and proficiency. They have given human life a new direction by using their cognitive powers to create computers, smartphones, and other electronic devices. Human intelligence has advanced to the point where people can now build robots that can think and comprehend like them. New technologies have made human life easier. One tool that has greatly aided in changing human life is Artificial Intelligence. In computer science, artificial intelligence refers to a set of techniques that can mimic human intelligence and problem solving abilities.

In 1955, John McCarthy used the term Artificial Intelligence (AI). He was an American computer scientist, which is why he is also called the Father of AI. The debates surrounding artificial intelligence have been going on for a while. The Matrix, I, Robot, and Terminator are examples of AI-based films that feature machines that think, move, and behave like people. In the domains of business and technology, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is now a tool that is frequently addressed. Despite the belief held by many that artificial intelligence is the way of the future, we can see that it is already here. We are all somehow linked to AI in addition to technology. As a result of recent investments in machine learning by numerous businesses, we now have access to a wide range of AI applications.

2.   The Meaning of Artificial Intelligence

The term artificial intelligence (AI) describes how machines that have been taught to think and behave like humans can mimic human behavior. This word is primarily used to solve human-related problems. AI is a technique where we teach a machine to behave like a human, such as operating a vehicle. The ability of a computer or computer-controlled robot to perform tasks typically performed by intelligent beings is known as artificial intelligence (AI). Artificial intelligence is the ability of a computer-controlled robot to accomplish a task.

Artificial Intelligence simply means the approximation of human intelligence in machines. The foundation of AI is the idea that human intellect can be described in a way that makes it simple for a computer to replicate and carry out activities, from the most basic to the most complex. The applications for AI are endless. It is evident from its goals which include computer-enhanced learning, reasoning, and perception as it involves the development of algorithms and models that enable computers to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence (Mahajan, 2023).

Artificial Intelligence has been defined as the capacity of a digital computer or computer-controlled robot to carry out actions often associated with human intellect. According to McCarthy, "It is the science and engineering of making intelligent machines, especially intelligent computer programs. It is related to the similar task of using computers to understand human intelligence, but AI does not have to confine itself to methods that are biologically observable" (McCarthy, 2007).

Scholars like Chopra and White (2004), Chatterjee (2015) among many others have considered AI as an accurate tool in the context of problem solving without human help. According to Chatterjee and Bhattacharya (2020), AI is usually considered as a computer-centric technology capable of easily solving various problems in the complex situations in a flawless, cost-effective and quick manner without slightest assistance of humans which was previously deemed to be unique treasure of humans.

3.   Applications of Artificial Intelligence

AI technology is being used currently across diverse sectors. The fields of medicine, economics, teaching, transportation, e-commerce, cyber security, the media, entertainment, and space exploration are all profoundly impacted by artificial intelligence. This can be illustrated as follows:

3·1   AI in Health Care

AI is used in the healthcare sector in various ways. For example, AI assists in X-rays, CT scans, and MRIs by utilizing medical imaging technologies to accurately and efficiently detect bone fractures, cancer, and neurological disorders. AI-based chatbots have been developed to provide solutions to our problems when we ask them certain questions. Most importantly, in the field of surgery,

robotic surgery is a highly convenient technology that enables complex surgeries to be performed with ease. Smart watches, health apps, and fitness trackers developed using AI are technologies that allow us to monitor and track health parameters such as heart rate, blood pressure, and more.

Speed and accuracy, and optimize treatment plans, its implementation in medicine has been seen as a chance to advance medicine. However, a lot of doctors worry that AI will displace medical personnel and cause medicine to become less human. The development of AI in medicine has promise for improved results through more accurate personalized treatments and more effective diagnosis. Therefore, in order to preserve the humanistic art of medical practice, suitable regulatory laws must be investigated to guarantee the safe application of AI in medicine (Salomon and Olivier, 2024).

3·2   AI in Education

Artificial Intelligence is transforming education by enabling personalized learning experiences tailored to students' abilities and pace. AI-powered tools assist teachers in assessment, grading, and identifying learning gaps, thereby improving instructional efficiency. Intelligent tutoring systems and virtual classrooms enhance access to quality education, especially in remote areas. However, concerns related to data privacy, over-reliance on technology, and reduced human interaction need careful regulation and ethical use.

Teaching and learning approaches at many levels are impacted by artificial intelligence (AI), a potent educational technology with autonomous observation, comprehension, prediction, and action capabilities (Hwang *et al.*, 2020). AI tools like ChatGPT and Google Gemini are proving to be a boon for students in today's time. Finding answers to any kind of question has become very easy with them. Some robots, like Ozobot and Cubelets, are helping learners and children.

Hwang *et al.* (2020) have explained as to how AI technologies, which simulate human intelligence to make inferences, judgments, or predictions, computer systems can provide personalized guidance, supports, or feedback to students as well as assisting teachers or policymakers in making decisions. Although AIED (Artificial Intelligence in education) has been identified as the primary research focus in the field of computers and education, its

interdisciplinary nature presents a unique challenge for researchers with different disciplinary backgrounds. They have proposed a framework to show the considerations of implementing AIED in different learning and teaching settings.

3·3   AI in Social Media & Entertainment

AI plays a central role in social media and entertainment by curating personalized content, recommendations, and advertisements based on user behavior and preferences. AI algorithms enhance user engagement through targeted feeds, music and video suggestions, and real-time content moderation. In entertainment, AI is used in gaming, animation, visual effects, and even script and music generation. However, excessive algorithmic control can create echo chambers, spread misinformation, and influence public opinion. Issues of privacy, data misuse, and digital addiction highlight the need for ethical regulation of AI-driven platforms.

Millions of people use social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter, and AI has taken care of the proper storage of their data. New trends, news, knowledge, hashtags, and other material are neatly arranged by AI. AI helps in social media by analyzing our preferences. If we watch a video, view images, or read news, it provides us with similar and related content based on our interests.

3·4   AI in E-Commerce

AI supports e-commerce in a variety of ways, including online reviews and buying. Chatbots driven by AI fix client problems around-the-clock. AI keeps e-commerce sites completely safe and identifies fraudulent transactions. In conclusion, artificial intelligence (AI) offers a number of significant applications in e-commerce, and merchants are making significant technological investments to remain competitive and relevant (Nimbalkar and Berad, 2021).

The function of artificial intelligence in e-commerce is examined in this review. The e-commerce era has grown rapidly during the past few years. At the same time, technology advancements have produced many stages that might be helpful in updating trends and capturing consumer needs. Thus, the applications of artificial intelligence in e-commerce are the main emphasis of this paper (Soni, 2020).

3·5   AI in Cyber Security

Artificial intelligence (AI) is developing through more concentration on preventing cybercrime. AI is affecting people worldwide and is quickly becoming an essential component of any business. Cybercrime is one of the most well-known domains where AI has begun to show promise. Therefore, most organizations are implementing AI as their first line of protection in their systems. Since AI is faster than humans in spotting new attacks, it is the ideal choice for enhancing defenses against cybercrime. The development potential of AI technologies is greater (Bibhu Dash *et al.*, 2022). These days, CCTVs are installed practically everywhere in the world and are increasingly often used to prevent and solve crimes.

AI has become a crucial tool in cyber security now-a-days by detecting threats, malware, and suspicious activities in real time. AI systems analyze vast amounts of data to identify patterns and predict potential cyber-attacks before they occur. Automated response mechanisms help organizations reduce response time and limit damage from security breaches. AI also strengthens authentication through biometric and behavioral analysis. However, cyber criminals can also use AI to develop sophisticated attacks, making ethical use and continuous monitoring essential.

3·6   AI in Transportation

In big cities, transportation faces many problems related to traffic. The main reason for this is the increase in the human population, along with the rising number of vehicles on the roads. Autonomous vehicles are in the category of the easiest means of transportation for the future. With the help of AI, all systems will be set in the vehicle, ensuring that humans do not face any kind of problem. AI will aid in the creation of environmentally friendly transportation networks. The integration of electric and driverless vehicles into transportation networks can be facilitated by machine learning algorithms, which can also minimize energy use and encourage environmentally beneficial driving practices. Additionally, AI-powered routing and logistics systems will give preference to eco-friendly choices, lowering carbon emissions and encouraging sustainable mobility (Bharadiya, 2023).

AI is now transforming transportation by enabling smart traffic management, route optimization, and reduced travel time. AI-powered systems support autonomous and semi-autonomous

vehicles, enhancing road safety by minimizing human error. In public transport, AI helps in scheduling, predictive maintenance, and improving passenger experience. Ride-sharing and logistics services use AI to optimize fuel efficiency and delivery networks. However, concerns related to safety, employment displacement, and regulatory challenges remain significant.

3·7 AI in Space

AI plays a vital role in space exploration by enabling autonomous navigation, data analysis, and decision-making in distant and hostile environments. Space exploration is changing for the better thanks to AI. It is assisting researchers with finding new planets, analyzing data, and carrying out difficult jobs. Rovers and spacecraft use AI to detect obstacles, manage energy, and conduct scientific experiments independently. AI also improves mission planning and fault detection in spacecraft systems. AI will also make it feasible to investigate cosmic phenomena and extraterrestrial life. However, reliability, high costs, and ethical concerns about autonomous decision-making in space remain key challenges.

4. Advantages of Artificial Intelligence

Many scholars have explained the pros (advantages) and cons (disadvantages) of AI. For example, Bhosale *et al.* (2020) have tried to discuss AI's pros like efficiency, error reduction, automation, and innovation, while highlighting cons such as high costs, potential for job loss, lack of emotion, and making humans lazy, aligning with general research on AI's transformative but challenging impact. Similarly, Mahajan (2023) has analyzed the impact of artificial intelligence, both positive and negative, on society and shown that while the positive impacts are significant, it's crucial to address challenges such as ethical considerations, job displacement, and the potential misuse of artificial intelligence technologies. Such sholars have stressed that AI has made human life much easier in many ways.

Some of its advantages are as follows:

- ‣ When a human performs a task, there is always a chance of errors. However, if the same task is done by AI, the chances of errors are significantly reduced.

- ‣ AI is available 24/7 for our convenience, allowing us to find solutions to our problems anytime. Moreover, this round-the-clock availability improves efficiency and responsiveness in

critical services such as healthcare, customer support, and emergency management, ensuring timely assistance without human fatigue.

‣ With the help of AI, humans do not face any difficulties in decision-making, nor does it take much time. As a result, decisions may become overly data-driven and lack human judgment, ethical sensitivity, and emotional understanding, which are often essential in complex social situations.

‣ AI has automated many tasks, reducing human labour and saving time. Additionally, by automating routine and repetitive tasks, AI allows humans to focus on more creative, strategic, and value-oriented work, thereby enhancing productivity and innovation.

‣ AI can efficiently analyze large-scale data. As a result, AI helps in identifying patterns, trends, and insights that support accurate predictions and better planning in fields such as healthcare, business, governance, and research.

‣ AI helps detect fraud in banks, offices, or online transactions, preventing financial losses. Additionally, AI enhances transparency and trust by continuously monitoring activities in real time and quickly flagging suspicious behavior for timely intervention.

‣ A machine neither needs rest nor a break like a human. Therefore, AI-driven machines can maintain consistent performance and high productivity over long periods without fatigue, ensuring uninterrupted and reliable operations.

Everyday apps like Google's Gemini, Windows Copilot, Microsoft 365 copilot and Apple Siri are essential to our daily life. With the help of AI and other technologies, computers will be able to make decisions and act more quickly than humans. Humans consider a variety of aspects while making decisions, both practically and emotionally, whereas AI-powered machines follow instructions and provide results more quickly (Bhbosale *et al.*, 2020).

5. Disadvantage of Artificial Intelligence

Inspite of positive impact of artificial intelligence on society, there is its other side also. AI has also brought us many drawbacks as it brings about various challenges. Although AI has greatly facilitated our lives, it has also presented us with a number of difficulties. Some of its disadvantages are:

➤ To use AI for our convenience, machines and apps are developed, which require a high cost of production. Extensive use of AI-driven machines and applications leads to high maintenance, energy consumption, and upgrade costs, making them less accessible to small organizations and economically weaker sections of society.

➤ Since AI is performing tasks like humans, its biggest drawback is that it is making humans lazy. Additionally, over- dependence on AI reduces critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills among individuals, as people increasingly rely on machines instead of developing their own abilities.

➤ If all work starts being done by machines, the biggest issue we will face is unemployment, as humans will no longer be needed for jobs. Artificial intelligence has the potential to lead to job displacement through automation, a process where tasks traditionally performed by humans are taken over by machines or algorithms.

➤ Unlike humans, machines do not have any emotions. As a result, AI lacks empathy and moral understanding, which can lead to insensitive decisions in areas that require emotional intelligence, ethical judgment, and human compassion.

➤ One of the biggest misuses of AI can be seen on social media platforms. AI can also be exploited to spread misinformation, deepfakes, and propaganda, influencing public opinion and creating social unrest.

➤ Being entirely dependent on AI negatively affects human thinking. Over-reliance on AI may also reduce problem-solving skills and creativity, as individuals increasingly depend on machines to make decisions and generate solutions.

➤ AI raises ethical questions regarding privacy, consent, and the responsible use of data. One major ethical concern of AI is the manifestation of biases in AI systems, perpetuating and amplifying societal prejudices present in training data.

➤ AI systems can be vulnerable to adversarial attacks, where malicious actors manipulate input data to deceive AI models. Such vulnerabilities can lead to critical errors in sensitive areas like healthcare, finance, and autonomous vehicles, posing serious risks to safety and security.

Machines are undoubtedly superior at operating efficiently, but they cannot take the place of the interpersonal relationships that form a team. One crucial quality in team management is that machines are incapable of bonding with people. Human interactions involve empathy, trust, motivation, and emotional support, all of which are essential for fostering collaboration and a positive work environment. While AI can assist in organizing tasks and providing data-driven insights, it cannot inspire, understand personal challenges, or mediate conflicts the way humans can. Therefore, effective teamwork still relies heavily on human connection, communication, and mutual understanding, areas where machines remain limited.

6. Conclusion

From the above discussion, we have seen how artificial intelligence has made human life easier in every way, whether in the field of health, education, social media, entertainment, or any other sector it has made human life easier everywhere than before. Throughout the world people are depending on use of artificial intelligence and it is expected this trend will increase with passage of time. AI has greatly helped humans in all areas. AI is a technology that is rapidly developing across the world. In the future, AI can make human life even more convenient and simple, and it is already doing so. Artificial intelligence technologies can provide a competitive advantage in many ways. On the other hand, it also has many drawbacks. A number of studies have highlighted the potential misuse of AI on society. This misuse is related both to ensuring that such AI do not harm humans and other morally relevant beings, and to the moral status of the machines using AI themselves.

It may be concluded that the impact of artificial intelligence is profound and multifaceted, ushering in transformative changes across various domains. In simple and straightforward language, we can say that 'AI is either the best invention made by humans or the worst'. Because as much as this technology is making human life easier, it is also bringing forth risks. We need to be mindful of how we use and misuse it. We may benefit much from this technology if we use it wisely. However, considering its potential risks and drawbacks, we must use it in a balanced and ethical manner. If we utilize it improperly, it might endanger not only the human race but the entire world.

As we navigate this era of technological advancement, it is crucial to prioritize ethical considerations, inclusivity, and the preservation of human values to ensure that AI contributes positively to society, empowering individuals, fostering equity, and enhancing overall well-being. The future impact of AI hinges on our ability to harness its potential responsibly, striking a balance between innovations and safeguarding the principles that define a fair, just, and equitable society.

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Form 4 (See Rule 8)

I, Dr. Dharam Vir, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Dharam Vir

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