

Citizen Charter as Governance Reform Initiative for Quality Services

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ARTICLE INFO

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Article History

Received: 15 March 2024

Accepted: 28 April 2024

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Cite

Kaphle, S. (2024). Citizen charter as governance reform initiative for quality services. *Journal of Productive Discourse*, 2(1), 13–24. <https://doi.org/10.3126/prod.v2i1.65723>

ABSTRACT

The Citizen Charter (CC) is implemented to enhance the capabilities of local government in delivering services to people. It represents the official commitment to providing quality services to the public, and all service recipients need to have clear and concise information about the services and goods being provided. At the heart of the discussion on governance reform and the CC lies the question of whether public institutions foster the creation, dissemination, and processing of knowledge on the CC, which could ultimately lead to improved service delivery quality. Thus, this study examines the role of institutional factors such as procedural transparency and clarity, timely service delivery, and grievance handling systems in municipal service delivery post-implementation of the CC. The philosophical underpinning of this study adopts a pragmatic approach, utilizing a sequential explanatory mixed method. The findings reveal that there is increasing procedural transparency, and timely service delivery is gradually improving. However, the grievance handling system within the municipality still appears to be weak. It is evident from the study that the implementation of the Citizen Charter as a governance reform practice must address issues of reliability, responsiveness, and accuracy (RRA) to ensure quality service delivery (QSD) at the local level.

Keywords: governance reform, citizen charter, good governance, service delivery

Introduction

For a long time, the concepts of ‘governance reform’, ‘good governance’, and ‘quality service delivery’ have been major topics of discourse among researchers and academics to a considerable extent. More specifically, governance reform based on the principles of good governance has been implemented mostly by developing nations over the last two and a half decades. The reform agenda after the 1980s focused on planned changes to public

bureaucracies to make the system innovative, informative, and improvement-oriented to cope with the uncertainties and rapid changes taking place in the organizational environment (Turner & Hulme, 1997). Good governance has been defined by researchers as an interaction among people, structures, processes, and traditions that support the exercise of legitimate authority for the conduct of affairs, the use of resources, and the results of activities. Good governance generally connotes ‘how public institutions conduct public

affairs and manage public resources. Good governance is the cornerstone of transparency, integrity, honesty, loyalty, commitment to the genuine profit of humanity, and the delivery of effective information and knowledge services are the foundation of cultivating good governance in practice (Kigongo & Kaddu, 2011).

Based on good governance principles, the Citizen Charter has been implemented in Nepal as a governance reform initiative for institutional betterment in terms of responsiveness, accountability, transparency, and efficiency in service delivery.

In today's information-rich context, public institutions need to provide clear, succinct, citizen-friendly, unambiguous, and user-friendly information and services. It was the case that before the implementation of the CC, people had to wait in long queues to know the required information (Acharya, 2011).

Rectifying institutional shortcomings is the objective of governance reform to streamline local service delivery; the citizen charter has been implemented at the municipal level in Nepal to make service users friendly in terms of time, cost, and quality. Now, it is the responsibility of the local government to disseminate information and knowledge on the CC to bring clarity and transparency to the system. Nevertheless, remedying institutional shortcomings is the focus of governance reform which could be possible with the application of the CC.

Hence, the CC could act as a means of reform that could lead to better public services for people at the local level. Therefore, this study examines the impact of institutional factors such as procedural transparency and clarity in services, timely delivery of services, and grievance handling systems on quality service delivery after the implementation of CC.

Regarding the Nepalese context, municipalities are prime Local Government Units responsible for providing services to people

within their respective governance jurisdictions. After the enactment of the Local-Self Governance Act 1999, the service delivery of Local Governments focused more on responsiveness and accountability towards the people in their jurisdiction (Rai & Paudel, 2011, p. 17). Likewise, the CC is an instrument of government that aims to bring grassroots service-delivering institutions closer to the people. Previously, there was no such means of free accessibility to public information. In the context of developing countries like Nepal, the Citizen Charter has been inspired by good governance principles to improve local governance functioning by promoting accountability, transparency, impartiality, and the rights to information regarding public services. Henceforth, the Citizen Charter is one of the major initiatives of administrative and governance reforms aimed at modernizing local service delivery.

Regarding the Citizen Charter, Nepal does not have a long history of it, and its implementation has been expected to promote and facilitate better service provision at the grassroots level, where service users have direct interaction with service providers. As per Panday & Chowdhury (2023), "the issue of framing and implementation of the CC has been put in place due to the persistent pressing of academicians, politicians, and practitioners advocating for better local service delivery". It is evident that the Citizen Charter is a policy tool of the government for quality service delivery, and its implementation is expected to establish uniformity, standardization, predictability, and neutrality in public service provision, and to reduce nepotism and favoritism in the system. Hence, the CC has the potential to bridge the information gap between service providers and users. The Citizen Charter was first implemented in a few municipalities, and nowadays it has been followed by all local-level municipalities and respective ward offices. Therefore, to enhance local service provisions, all municipalities of Nepal have developed their respective Citizen Charters.

As per Clause 25 of the Good Governance Act 2064 BS (2007) and Rule 14 of the Good Governance Regulation 2065 BS (2008), every government office has to maintain a Citizen Charter in a place within the office premises, visible to everyone. Based on service users' perception, this study examines the service delivery quality of Lalitpur Metropolitan City Office, hereafter, LMCO represents the majority of cases where the citizen charter has been implemented at the local level.

This study examines the present status of the Citizen Charter (provisions and implementations) for better local services. The CC reduces the uncertainty involved in service provisions through information accessibility to the public, with understandable rules and procedures.

Theoretical Framework

The Citizen Charter (CC), as a reform initiative for institutional betterment, has been in practice in the local government of Nepal since 2008. Various studies have asserted that governance reform is a vague concept and needs to be constructed and contextualized. Reform measures should focus specifically on the particular circumstances in which context is very important. Out of the various forms of reform, this study is centered on the functional reform approach to improving institutions. Pyman (n.d.) has opined that simplification, reducing procedural complexities, automating cumbersome procedures, improving controls, and reducing waiting time are the focal points to improve the administrative processes concerning service delivery.

However, Governance is assessed on both the quality and quantity of public goods and services being provided. To improve public service delivery, good governance has widely been practiced in developing countries. It has been observed that it is the quality of governance and not the type of political regime that has made the difference in the economic performance of Asian countries (Manasan et al., 1999). Compared to developed countries, the quality and

quantity of goods and services provided by most government institutions in developing countries are poor. The implementation of the Citizen Charter at the local level believes in the principle that transparency leads towards accountability, in which processes, institutions, and information are directly accessible to service users locally, and service users have direct contact with service providers, and there should be no discrimination in services based on caste, class, and economic status, following the principle of equality in treatment. Transparency here resembles the free flow of public information, which is built on accountability and impartiality towards the people. Hence, the Citizen Charter is understood in this study as a basic link between the good governance principle towards the functioning of local Government via information accessibility to the public. In today's context, Governance refers to institutions that have moved from hierarchy (process and rule-oriented) to Market (NPM focusing on result and output orientation) and now to Network (partnership with civil society, participatory) governance (Jamil et al., 2021).

The municipal service quality has been delimited based on service seekers' opinions and perceptions regarding the reliability, responsiveness, and accuracy of services being achieved so far. Quality, as a concept, is found to have a pragmatic meaning unless related to any specific purpose. Garvin (1987) has proposed eight dimensions of quality, which include performance, reliability, conformance, durability, serviceability, aesthetics, and perceived quality. According to him, a product or service can rank high on one dimension of quality but low on another. Henceforth, it is difficult to define quality in one specific word or dimension. The SERVQUAL model, as proposed by Parasuraman et al. (1985) represents service quality as the discrepancy between a service user's expectations of service offering and a service user's perceptions of the service received. This makes it an attitude and perception measure. Good service quality is considered one that meets

or exceeds the consumer's/user's expectation of the service (Parasuraman et al., 1985). Further, concerning service quality, Zeithaml et al. (1990) have proposed five SERVQUAL dimensions such as reliability (ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately), responsiveness, assurance, tangibility, and empathy. The SERVQUAL model is a good scale to use when measuring service quality, in which the basic dimension of quality is built with reliability and responsiveness among others. So, in this study, reliability, responsiveness, and accuracy have been considered as indicators of municipal service quality in service delivery.

Previous studies have stated that developing countries have failed to ascertain efficient and effective services to the people, and these countries are commonly termed 'traditional systems,' resembling insensitivity to serving the people (Acharya, S., 2011; Sharma, 2012). Over the last two decades, administration systems in developing countries have undergone significant changes. As a result of the globalized trend of transformation from centralized to decentralized political and administrative systems, the underlying aim of reforms like the CC has been to improve service delivery at the grassroots level. It is obvious that in developing nations, governance has been least ventured to respond to the social and political needs of citizens (Askvik et al., 2011; Jamil et al., 2013, p. 12). According to Jamil et al. (2013, p. 6), 'All societies encounter numerous governance challenges and these become even more precarious in a democracy. South Asia is gradually introducing democratic practices in its quest for better governance. This global reality becomes a precursor for the rise of good governance for restructuring and reforming public service in developing countries, and Nepal is also no exception to it. The government of Nepal has introduced policies that could enhance public access to information, and the most prominent are the Right to Information Act, 2064 (2007); and the Citizen Charter- 2008 envisioned by the Good Governance Act 2008.

Quantifying the impact of the Citizen Charter in service delivery is a complex issue for investigation due to several associated variables and factors. In this study, the implementation result of the Citizen Charter has been understood as better services of local Governance. Better services in terms of delivering quality services to people. Stated differently, the Citizen Charter acts as a 'means' to achieve the 'ends' as the improvement in service standards. The issues that have been focused on in this study are related to procedural transparency, timely delivery of services, and grievance handling. Hence, the Citizen Charter at the local level envisioned improving the old bureaucratic service delivery system to make it more citizen-oriented, transparent, and accountable to the public needs.

To date, the result of the Citizen Charter for promoting governance reform in Nepal is unidentified. 'A Citizen Charter of local government services has been a gleaming initiative in the spirit that it has taken citizen-centric governance to a new platform; such an initiative creates a sense of quality governance' (Sharma, 2012, p. 92). Hence, this study is contextual to contribute knowledge on the perspectives of citizens' entitlements for quality service delivery after the Citizen Charter implementation in Nepal. This study analyzes the present status of the Citizen Charter for better local services.

In the view of Fukuyama (2013), governance is about the government's ability to make and enforce the law and to deliver services, i.e., governance is about better services to people. Quality of governance, state capacity, and good governance are relatively new concepts that have a close nexus with each other, and these concepts have exerted the highest influence on policy circles since the mid-1990s (Holmberg & Rothstein, 2012, p. 13).

The theoretical basis of the citizen charter grounds on good governance principles since the CC in Nepal is implemented to improve the quality of services based on the Good Governance Act, 2008. Particularly, "good governance" is

focused more by the World Bank and the United Nations towards the developing countries or 'transition nations' as per Smith (2007). It has also been argued that there is a serious lack of conceptual precision in their use (Andrews 2010; Fukuyama 2011, p. 469). Good governance is open to many interpretations, as per Root (1995), accountability; transparency, and predictability are the principal elements of good governance. However, the United Nations (2008) follows the overall six core principle elements of good governance that have been widely accepted: (i) Participation, (ii) Decency, (iii) Transparency, (iv) Accountability, (v) Fairness, and (vi) Efficiency.

Participation. It regards the degree of involvement of all stakeholders (public-individual citizens, private organizations, and governing actors); as a citizen, any man or woman should have a voice in policy decisions, either directly or through legitimate institutions that represent their interests. This participation should be built on the freedom of association as well as the ability to participate constructively.

Decency. It regards the degree to which the formation and stewardship of the rules are undertaken without harming or causing grievance to people. Decency here resembles the rule of law. Weingast (1997, p. 245) has defined the rule of law as "a set of stable political rules and rights applied impartially to all citizens. Government power must be used according to law and it prevents the arbitrary will of public officials. The rule of law thus embodies the principle of equality before the law.

Transparency. It regards the degree of clarity and openness with which decisions are made. Transparency is built on the free flow of information, processes, institutions, and information. These should be adequately accessible to citizens with enough to understand and monitor their information. Transparency in decision-making and implementation reduces uncertainty and can curb corruption among public officials.

Accountability. It regards the extent to which political actors are responsible to society for what they say and do; decision-makers in government, the private sector, and civil society organizations are accountable to the public and stakeholders. This accountability is necessary for citizens. Accountability holds public officials responsible for government behavior and makes it imperative for them to be responsive to the needs of the citizenry. At the local level, it refers to the flexibility of structures that would allow beneficiaries to improve program implementation.

Fairness. It resembles the rule of law where legal frameworks should be fair and enforced impartially, particularly the laws on human rights and the degree to which rules apply equally to everyone in society; where all men and women have equal rights and opportunities for a prosperous life.

Efficiency. The extent to which limited human and financial resources are applied without waste, delay, or corruption or without prejudicing future generations. Processes and institutions are created to meet the needs while making the best use of resources.

In works of literature, words such as reform, transformation, modernization, and change may be generally used interchangeably for explaining reform phenomena in the context of public organizations. In general, reform may be a process of change for the betterment of organizational performance. However, public administration is generally criticized for being more bureaucratic and rigid. Jamil et al. (2007) observe, "bureaucrats are criticized for buck-passing, sitting on files, delaying decisions making, and excessively adhering to rules and regulations." There should, therefore, be continued reforms in the public sector to overcome these bureaucratic malpractices. If implemented properly, reforms like the CC play a vital role in improving the quality of public services and making the operations of government more efficient and transparent. However, it is important to learn how

the reform process is organized, what course of action is taken, and what outcome is produced (Christensen et al., 2007).

Reform may also be necessary in an organization for its adaptation to the changed environment. It is a continuous process undertaken to work in the changed context, time, and public aspiration. Reform may be a means to make the administrative system a more effective instrument for bringing justice to society and for achieving economic growth in the country (Turner and Hulme, 1997). In sum, administrative reform may be necessary for bringing changes in established bureaucratic structures, practices, mindsets, and behaviors for better service performance to achieve organizational goals. To reform the public sector, good governance has been practiced in the public sector since the late 1980s across the world. Good governance implies cooperative problem-solving through the participation of citizens or groups in the decision-making process and the implementation of policies and programs. good governance is the reformed concept of bad, autocratic, undemocratic, and poor governance (Lamichhane, 2021). Henceforth, the success of governance reform like the CC relies on local government capabilities to adhere to and address it strategically. Dissemination of knowledge, information, and awareness on the CC via effective and efficient communication channels towards wider sections of society is required so that reform measures like the CC work at the grassroots level.

Quantifying the impact of Citizen Charter in service delivery is a complex issue for investigation due to several associated variables and factors. In this study, the implementation result of the Citizen Charter has been understood as better services for local Government. Better services in terms of delivering quality services have been examined based on three independent variables such as procedural transparency and clarity, timely delivery of services to people, and

grievance redress mechanisms. Stated differently, the Citizen Charter acts as a 'means' to achieve the 'ends' as the improvement in Governance quality by delivering quality services to people. The issues that have been focused on in this study are linked with the ease of access to public information, regulations, and bureaucratic procedures, and citizens' entitlements in public affairs as citizenry rights. Hence, the Citizen Charter at the local level envisioned improving the old bureaucratic service delivery system to make it more citizens-oriented, participative, transparent, and accountable to the public demands.

To date, the result of the Citizen Charter in promoting governance reform in Nepal remains unidentified. "A Citizen Charter of local government services has been a gleaming initiative in the spirit that it has taken citizen-centric governance to a new platform; such an initiative creates a sense of quality governance" (Sharma, 2012, p. 92). Hence, this study is contextual in contributing knowledge on the perspectives of citizens' entitlements for quality service delivery after the implementation of the Citizen Charter in Nepal.

To make the system of local government more efficient several reform measures have been adopted by the government of Nepal some specific measures are:

1. *Local Self-Governance Act, 2055 (1999)*
2. *Right to Information Act, 2064 (2007)*.
3. *Good Governance (Management and Operation) Act, 2064 (2008)*

All these Acts are highly appreciated at the local level. Specifically, after the enactment of the Right to Information Act 2007, people have the right to know what services are available from a particular office, what formalities need to be completed, and what their timeframe is. Improving citizens' access to such information

and their participation in governance processes would lead to greater accountability and transparency, resulting in an improvement in the service delivery mechanism. This was the reason behind the establishment of CC. Hence, the foundation of the CC is about citizens' right to information and the obligation of public offices to provide public services based on transparency, impartiality, and improved service quality.

Based on the above discussions, three hypotheses have been formulated: H1 concerns Procedural Transparency and clarity, H2 concerns Timely services, and H3 concerns Grievance handling of municipalities after the implementation of CC.

H1: The more procedural clarity and transparency on services perceived by service seekers, the better the municipal service quality.

H2: The more timely delivery of services perceived by service seekers, the better the municipal service quality.

H3: The quicker the Grievance handling mechanism perceived by service seekers, the better the municipal service quality.

Methodology

This study employed a positivist approach with a sequential explanatory mixed method. The unit of analysis is the Lalitpur Metropolitan City Office (LMCO). The pre-coded structured questionnaire survey was administered to service recipients of municipalities from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays to minimize subject or participant error. The total sample size of the study is 81 (79 service recipients and 2 municipal officials), in which 79 questionnaires were administered to service recipients using a random sampling method. Later, 15 out of 79 service recipients, with their prior consent, were selected through purposeful sampling and followed up for further information with interviews. The qualitative information obtained

from interviews with respondents (15) is used to elucidate the service delivery-related problems in the municipality such as resource constraints and grievances. The information obtained is very useful to understand the pertinent facts.

To enrich the quantitative information, the survey data is analyzed in two ways. Initially, univariate analysis is conducted with frequency distribution, and in the second phase, bivariate analysis based on Spearman's rho (rs) is executed to show the relationship between the dependent and independent variables of the study.

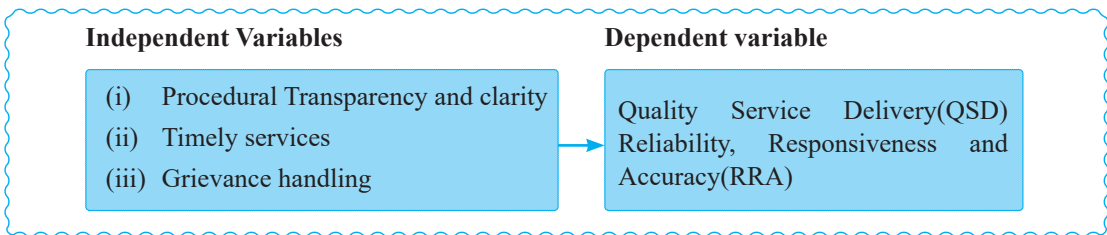
To understand the service providers' perspectives on service delivery after the CC, in-depth interviews have been conducted with 2 officials of the municipality. One official belongs to the complaint department (Officer), who frequently deals with service recipients, and another official belonging to the communication section (IT officer) has been interviewed. As I have been involved in data collection, it helped me to better perceive the current situation of service delivery status and provisions of the local government. This enables me to obtain accurate and reliable information firsthand so that the variables under investigation become clearer and more understandable. Moreover, municipal publications and bulletins have also been studied to validate the findings. To strengthen the validity of data and findings, triangulation has been done via several sources such as questionnaires, expert interviews, and observations, as the data gathered from one technique can be questionable, weak, and biased. Hence, in this study, utmost importance has been given to maintaining the reliability and validity of data.

Analytical Framework

The Relationship between the Independent Variables and the Dependent Variable after the implementation of CC.

Figure 1

Analytical Framework of the Study



(Source: Developed by Author based on Good Governance Principles and SERVQUAL model)

In this framework, Quality Service Delivery (QSD) is the dependent variable of the study and this is operationalized based on three indicators of SERVQUAL such as reliability, responsiveness, and accuracy(RRA) in municipal service delivery after the implementation of the CC. So far, three factors have been considered as independent variables such as procedural transparency and clarity, timely delivery of services, and grievance handling having an impact on the quality service delivery of the municipality.

Analysis and Findings

The findings are divided into two parts. Firstly, quantitative data analysis from the service seekers survey is conducted, and in the second part, in-depth interviews from service providers and service seekers are analyzed, respectively. Service seekers' views on services have been analyzed both by univariate (frequency analysis) and bivariate (Spearman's rho) methods using three measures: Procedures have become more transparent and clear after the CC, Timely delivery of services is improved after the CC, and Grievance handling is improving after the CC, as shown in Table 1 and 2.

Table 1

Service Recipients' View on Services: Percent Distribution

Peoples' view on services		
Statements	Agreed % (partly and strongly)	Total (N)
Procedures have become more transparent and clear after CC	65	79
Timely delivery of services is improving after the CC	62	79
Grievance handling is improving after CC	53	79
Quality Service delivery is improving after the CC	60	79
Q. Please give your opinion on the following statements. (1. Completely disagree, 2. To some extent, Disagree, 3. Neutral/no change, 4. Partly agree, 5. Completely Agree) (Source: Field Survey, 2022-2023)		

Table 1 shows that most LMC residents are positive about the service provision. It depicts the fact that the highest 65 percent of respondents agree completely or partly with the statement “Procedures have become more transparent and clear after CC”. Likewise, 62 percent of respondents agree

completely or partly with the statement “Timely delivery of services is improving after CC”. However, in the statement “Grievance handling is improving after the CC,” only 53% of respondents agree completely or partly.

To understand the perception of respondents on the service provision of municipalities after the CC, the statement “Quality Service delivery is improving after CC” was asked, and it was found that 60% of the respondents agreed (partly and strongly) with the statement, reflecting the fact that service provisions have been improving after the CC. Table 1 shows a univariate positive evaluation of municipal services by respondents as service

seekers of the municipality. Further, to enrich the information, a bivariate correlation (Spearman's rho) test is conducted between the dependent variable (Improvement in Service quality after CC) and three independent variables (Procedural transparency and clarity, Timely delivery of services, and Grievance handling), the result of which is depicted in Table 2.

Table 2

*Correlation Between Procedural Transparency, Timely Delivery Of Services, Grievance Handling, and Service Quality After the CC. N=79**

Service seekers' perception on institutional factors	Improvement in Service Quality after the CC (disagreed - agreed) (Spearman's rho(rs))
(i) Procedures have become more transparent and clear after CC(disagreed – agreed)	0.34**
(ii) Timely delivery of services is improving after CC(disagreed – agreed)	0.29**
(iii) Grievance handling is improving after CC(disagreed – agreed)	0.14

*The values of Spearman's rho(rs) range from -1.0 to +1.0. **Correlation is significant at the .01 level. The scale for each of these variables varies from 1 to 5 where the lowest value is 1 for 'Completely disagree', 2 for 'To some extent Disagree', 3 for 'Neutral/no change', 4 for 'Partly agree', and 5 for 'Agree' * Neutral/no change' is excluded from analysis. (Source: Field Survey, 2022-2023)*

The findings in Table 2 reveal that procedural transparency and the timely delivery of services are positively related to the improvement in service quality after the CC. It shows that ‘Procedures have become more transparent and clear after CC’ and ‘improvement in service quality’ is found statistically significant correlation coefficients of 0.34**. Likewise, ‘Timely delivery of services after the CC’ with ‘improvement in service quality’ have also found statistically significant correlation coefficients of .29** respectively. Regarding the ‘Grievance

handling is improving after the CC’ it is unable to show statistically significant results.

Based on the analysis so far, Hypothesis 1 and 2 (more procedural clarity and transparency, better service quality, and more timely delivery of services, better service quality) are supported by the findings. So far, Hypothesis 3 (The quicker the Grievance handling mechanism, the better the service quality) is not supported by the findings. At this point, it can be said that service seekers are not fully assured about the Grievance handling status in the municipality so it is quite clear that municipalities need to be more sensitive in this issue.

It is evident that as compared to procedural transparency and timely delivery of services, the grievance handling after the CC is found to be weaker so in this respect a supplementary question regarding the grievance handling has been asked via the semi-structured interviews.

Table 3

Respondents Views on Municipal Grievance System, N = 15

Complaint/grievance system	Just formality	65%
	Worth enough	35%

Q. Provide your views on the municipal grievance system/complaint handling procedure.

(Source: Field Survey, 2022-2023)

The findings of 15 semi-structured interviews have been analyzed in two categories: 'just formality' and 'worth enough'. 65% of respondents have opined that the complaint/grievance system is 'just formality' in the municipality, while 35% of respondents have opined that it is 'worth enough', as depicted in Table 2. The study shows a profound variation in service seekers' perception of the grievance redress system of the municipality.

Further, to attain richer and quality information, in-depth interviews were conducted with officials regarding the municipal practice of complaints registering and grievance handling after the CC. The administered question was, "What kinds of complaints is the municipality receiving from the public?" As per the official, "Most of the complaints are related to local garbage collection, road maintenance, and taxation" - Officer, Complaint Department, LMCO.

Another question was,

"Do service seekers rely on the Citizen Charter for getting services in the municipality?" As per the official, "Nowadays, service seekers are aware of the CC, and they are following the CC to get service on time. But still, in some cases, especially among the elderly, they rely on officials to obtain information. This may be because of their trust in officials. In general, the CC is helping service seekers to get information on municipal services concerning time, cost, and needed documentation"

- *IT officer, LMCO.*

Regarding the in-depth interviews with service seekers, questions were asked regarding

the service delivery-related problems in the municipality and requested their proposed solutions. The two representative questions are as follows:

- Q1. Do you think that people benefit because of the implementation of CC?
- Q2. What is required most to enhance the quality of municipal service delivery?

Regarding the first question (Q1), the service seekers have opined that only the informed citizenry is benefiting from the CC. Therefore, more awareness programs are needed at the municipal level to make more service seekers aware of the CC.

Regarding the second question (Q2), the service seekers' opinions are as follows:

"It is the responsibility of both the service provider (municipality) and service seekers (local people) to contribute to the improvement of the quality of service delivery." - *Service Seekers, LMCO*

"In today's information-rich context, the government needs to be proactive regarding the people's demands as per the changing context. Nevertheless, people's awareness and awakening role as active and informed citizenry need to play a watchdog role for stimulating the quality of service delivery after the implementation of the CC." - *Service Seekers, LMCO*

From the above analysis, it can be said that for better service provisions and to make the system more functional, punctual, transparent, and timely, the first step needs to be taken by the public, regardless of other barriers. Also, municipalities, as local government institutions,

need to bring new ideas that could support the implementation of the CC through several means of disseminating information.

Conclusion

Governance reform encompasses various dimensions, from transparency and accountability to the rule of law and public sector management. In a developing country like Nepal, grasping the complete picture of governance requires a wide range of measures, as no single indicator can capture the diversity of issues. Additionally, it's essential to acknowledge that no measure of governance can be entirely infallible, as there are inherent margins of error in every survey.

In this study, "better services" are defined as the results of implementing the CC to enhance service quality as part of a reform approach to public service delivery. These implementation results, defined as "better services," are assessed based on three measures: (i) Transparency in Process, (ii) Timely delivery of services, and (iii) Grievance handling system.

The objective of this study is to examine the role of institutional factors in improving service quality after the implementation of the CC. The study adopts a positivist approach with sequential mixed methods, including in-depth interviews with both service seekers and providers. The findings reveal greater procedural transparency, with gradual improvements observed in timely service delivery. However, the grievance handling system remains weak post-implementation of the citizen charter. There is a growing demand from citizens for quality service delivery, leading municipal officials to become more responsive.

In conclusion, this study highlights the fundamental outcomes of implementing the CC at the local level in Nepal. As people perceive increased freedom of expression and access to information, governments tend to become more transparent. Given that this study incorporates essential institutional factors, its findings may hold relevance and applicability in other national contexts as well.

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