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Significance Analysis of Poverty, Gender and Human Development in Nepal

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Abstract

This article examines in the areas of poverty, gender and human development in Nepal focusing on caste/ethnicity together with regional, rural, and urban disparities. It employs explanatory and analytical methods using secondary data, including peer reviewed papers. Human Development Reports, initiated by Amartya Sen and Mahbub ul Haq in 1990, have been regularly published by the UNDP, featuring the gender and human development for various countries. Nepal has been publishing its Human Development Report (HDR) since 1998. The level of human development is measured by HDI which is found increasing from 0.380 in 1990 to 0.602 in 2022, i.e., 58.42% improvement. Significant progress has been established in the area of human development and gender but significant inequalities still continued among different castes, ethnicities, and regions in the areas of gender and human development. Both urban and rural service centers face challenges like inadequate access to safe drinking water, and child malnutrition, particularly in the far western part of Nepal, highlights the urgency for continued efforts in gender and human development.

Key words: Human development, gender, regional, inequities, malnutrition, significance

Introduction

The concept of index was emerged to measure the level of development in the areas of gender, Poverty, social dynamics and environment. Pakistani economist Mahbub Ul Haq initiated the human development concept while working at the World Bank in the 1970s and later as Pakistan's Minister of Finance. He argued that Gross Domestic Product (GDP) only provides a partial view of human development. Amartya Sen, an Indian economist, who earned the Nobel Prize in 1998, introduced welfare economics and social choice theory. The Human Development Index (HDI) was grounded on Sen's capabilities approaches, emphasizing human well-being, beyond just income. The introductory Human Development Report (HDR) in 1990 emphasized the importance of creating a helpful environment for people to lead a long and healthy life, education and a decent standard of living, along with other features such as environmental sustainability, human rights, security, and gender equity. It means expanding human capability rather than just income growth. The UNDP continues to release annual HDRs, with the Human Development Index (HDI) helping as a key measure of level of human development. In 1995, the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) and Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) were introduced to observe gender disparities but were excluded in 2010. GEM calculates political and economic involvement and approach to resources by women.

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Although a new gender inequalities index was introduced in 2010, Nepal has been publishing its Human Development Report since 1989, highlighting the need to address gender inequality and regional disparities. Both urban and rural service centers face challenges like inadequate access to safe drinking water, and child malnutrition, particularly in the far western part of Nepal, highlights the urgency for continued efforts in gender and human development.

Overall, human development extends beyond GDP, focusing on improving well-being, and tackling gender disparities remains a significant challenge and urgent need to cope these issue in Nepalese context.

Objectives :

This research provides a comprehensive analysis of poverty, gender and human development in Nepal. The paper examines the level of human development and gender development outcomes in the country and suggests ways to address the disparities through appropriate changes in policies and practices.

Methodology:

The study is based on secondary data that focuses on Nepal's HDI and its influence on gender, human development, and gender mainstreaming. It draws on multiple sources, including official statistics and reports using statistical software for data analysis.

Human Development Report in the Context of Nepal:

The human development reports provide a macro level picture of performance of Nepal in improving the quality of life for its citizens and achieving sustainable development, taking into account political, economic, social, technological and governance changes. In fact, Nepal HDR play a crucial role in monitoring and guiding these efforts. Moreover, there are series of reports reflecting the status of Nepal in the areas of gender and poverty since 1998 based on the official statistics and sample survey.

Reflection of Lowest and Highest level of Variation in Human Development in Development in Different Location of Nepal:

The Human Development Report 2016 describes social inclusion as the reasonable distribution of well-being, reducing inequality and poverty, and ensuring equal access to opportunities in the development process. Inclusive growth seeks to mitigate disadvantages, broaden opportunities, and prevent discrimination, encompassing non-income possibilities of well-being and distribution based on various social groups. Since embracing democracy in 1990, Nepal has actively pursued strategies for human development and inclusivity.

In 2019, Nepal ranked 147 out of 189 countries in the Human Development Index, showing significant improvements in life expectancy, education, and income. However, it remains below the medium human development group average. The HDI values are based on 2011 census data, with varying scores across ecological regions, with the Hills leading, followed by the Tarai and the Mountains showing improvement. The score of HDI in Kathmandu district is found 0.666 in 2011 which is the highest as compare to Bajura having the lowest score 0.310.

Table 1 : Districts with the highest and lowest HDI scores of HDI in 2001 and 2011

Highest				Lowest			
2001		2011		2001		2011	
Kathmandu	0.652	Kathmandu	0.666	Mugu	0.304	Bajura	0.425
Bhaktapur	0.595	Lalitpur	0.604	Bajura	0.310	Bajhang	0.430
Kaski	0.593	Kaski	0.623	Kalikot	0.322	Kalikot	0.432
Lalitpur	0.588	Bhaktapur	0.618	Bajhang	0.331	Humla	0.432
Rupandehi	0.546	Manang	0.608	Jajatkot	0.343	Achham	0.446

Source: UNDP, 2014

Similarly, based on census and survey data of 2011m the Human Development Index (HDI) for caste and ethnicity in Nepal, it is clear that the top HDI values are among Brahmans and Newars having the score of 0.557 and 0.565 respectively due to good income and entrepreneurial skills.

The average HDI of highest score of five districts was found 0.5948 whereas the average value of lowest five district was found 0.322 for the year of 2001. These two values are statistically significant at 5% level of significant because $T_{calculated} = 0.706$ and $T_{tabulated} (8, 5\%) = 0.705$. This result is representative for the year of 2011 in similar pattern. The result is found significant in between lowest and highest HDI values. Similar pattern is found in between 2001 and 2011.

Table 2: Human Development Index (HDI) Values by Major Caste and Ethnic Groups in 2011

Major Caste/Ethnicity Groups	HDI Values	Major Caste/Ethnicity Groups	HDI Values
All Brahmin/Chhetry	0.538	All Janajatis Excluding Newar	0.482
Hill Brahmin	0.557	Hill Janajati	0.509
Hill Chhetry	0.507	Terai Janajati	0.473
Madhesi Brahmin/Chhetry	0.536	Muslim/Musalman	0.422
Medhesi Other Caste	0.460	All Hill/Mountain Groups	0.511
All Dalit	0.434	All Tarai/Madhesi Groups	0.454
Hill Dalit	0.446	Newar	0.565
Madhesi Dalit	0.400	Others	0.586

Source: UNDP, 2014

In summary, the assessment points out disparities in human development index scores among different cast and ethnic groups in Nepal, with implication for economic and political opportunities. These disparities are influenced by both caste and ethnicity and geographical factors. The Madhesi Dalits are found in low status where as Newars and hill Bramins are found in high status in the areas of human development.

Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) and Gender Development Index (GDI) in Nepal

GDI and GEM function as harmonizing metrics, providing a holistic view of gender disparities and empowerment. GDI measures discrepancies on development outcomes, while GEM concentrates on women's empowerment in political and economic realms. When used together, these measures assist policymakers and researchers in acquiring the understanding of gender challenges and opportunities within a society. Identifying the interconnectedness of human development, gender empowerment, and gender development is crucial. It's noteworthy that the choice between arithmetic and geometric mean can impact GDI values, with the geometric mean being more sensitive to find the disparities in the presence of significant gender gaps. Regardless of the method chosen, these values offer valuable insights into gender disparities in human development across Nepal's diverse ecological regions in 2011.

Table 3: GDI and GEM in Different Location with Reference to Different Time Period:

Regions	2001- GDI	2006- GDI	2011- GDI	2001- GEM	2006- GEM	2011 GEM
Mountain	0.363	0.423	0.487	0.363	0.423	0.487
Hill	0.498	0.534	0.564	0.498	0.534	0.564
Terai	0.450	0.482	0.512	0.450	0.482	0.512
Eastern Development Region (EDR)	0.475	0.516	0.534	0.475	0.516	0.534
Central Development Region (CDR)	0.467	0.517	0.551	0.467	0.517	0.551
Western Development Region (WDR)	0.477	0.411	0.546	0.477	0.411	0.546
Mid-western Development Region (MWDR)	0.385	0.441	0.498	0.385	0.441	0.498
Far-western Development Region (FWDR)	0.377	0.447	0.481	0.377	0.447	0.481
Nepal	0.452	0.499	0.534	0.452	0.499	0.534

Source: UNDP, 2014

The text highlights regional gender development gaps, lower GDI values in specific areas to factors like low life expectancy and female literacy rates. It highlights progress over time, particularly in certain regions. The importance of considering all three GDI dimensions for a comprehensive understanding of gender disparities is emphasized. Average GDIs for 2001, 2006, and 2011 are 0.452, 0.499, and 0.534, reflecting slight progress in gender development and empowerment.

Regional disparities in gender empowerment in Nepal, as indicated by the GEM, highlight the variations in political representation and economic participation. Policymakers and advocates may use this data to pinpoint areas for enhancing gender equality and women's empowerment. Over the time, positive shifts are observed, with a 26.8% increase in 2006 and 45.26% in 2011, compared to the base year of 2001. The eastern region consistently outperforms, while the far western region lags behind due to lower female representation in positions of authority. Here the GEM and GDI have no significant different. The GDI and GEM reflect the similar status in these areas. There is good progress in these two areas, i.e. 2001 and 2011.

Table 4: High and low level of Human Poverty Index (HPI) with Reference to Time and Location

Highest				Lowest			
2001		2011		2001		2011	
Humla	63.8	Humla	49.26	Kaski	24.9	Kaski	16.50
Dolpa	61.9	Achham	46.68	Lalitpur	25.0	Lalitpur	19.18
Mugu	61.1	Rautahat	46.43	Kathmandu	25.8	Bhaktapur	19.43
Bajhang	59.9	Bajhang	45.32	Jhapa	29.2	Jhapa	21.82
Achham	59.2	Mugu	45.22	Rupendehi	29.2	Kathmandu	22.45

Source: UNDP, 2014

Tackling these challenges demands a comprehensive strategy, surrounding improvements in healthcare, infrastructure, expanded access to quality education, assurance of a clean and safe water supply, and addressing the root causes of poverty in both rural and urban settings. Specifically, targeted initiatives in the most deprived districts are crucial to alleviate these issues and enhance the overall well-being of the population in Nepal's Mid-Western and Far Western regions. Based on the provided information, it is evident that districts such as Humla, Dolpa, Mugu, Achham, and Bajhang are more deprived as compared to Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Bhaktapur, Jhapa, Rupandehi and Kaski in Nepal. There is highly significant difference about the poverty status in 2001 and 2011. Those two series values reflect that Humla, Dolpa, Mugu, Bajhang and Achham were found more deprived as compare to Kathmandu, Jhapa, Bhaktapur, Lalitpur and Kaski. Here the $T_{calculated}=14.59$ (from the highest HPI value of 2001 and 2011) $T_{calculated}=28.42$ (from the HPI value of 2001 of two highest and lowest location), $T_{Calculated}=4.8$ (from the same location but having different time period) $T_{tabulated}(8,5\%)=0.705$. The calculated values are significantly larger than tabulated value. It reflects that the poverty scenario of these districts significantly differs in both of the time, i.e. 2001 and 2011. These results reproduce that the implemented policies work towards the poverty reduction.

Conclusion

This study emphasizes Nepal's HDRs on addressing significance difference and inequalities pattern of HDI, GDI, GEM and HPI. Different caste, ethnicity, location, and gender development are associated with the value of GDI, GEM and HPI. Nepal has long struggled with challenges in poverty, gender and human development, with varying growth rates in the area of Human Development across communities, castes, and ecological regions. Whereas some regions exhibit medium human development. Urban areas like Kathmandu, Biratnagar, and Pokhara claim higher HDI, but educational disparities found continued among different regions, castes, and ethnic groups whereas significant improvement is observed on reducing poverty and gender disparities and assuring gender empowerment. Both urban and rural service centers face challenges like inadequate access to safe drinking water, and child malnutrition, particularly in the far western part of Nepal, highlights the urgency for continued efforts in gender and human development.

Recommendation:

The advancements in human development, gender development, and poverty reduction have moved into a satisfactory level. However, to improve policy formulation process, only significant different value may not be sufficient for idea generation. Hence cluster analysis, discriminant analysis are supposed necessary. This opens up new opportunities for research in the state of cluster analysis, offering an opportunity to investigate deeper into understanding and refining policies in these critical areas.

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