Inclusive Governance in Nepalese Civil Service: A Comparative Study in South Asia

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ABSTRACT

Purpose - This paper examines the landscape of inclusive governance in the civil service of Nepal, utilizing comparative analysis with other South Asian countries. Through a systematic analysis of policies, practices, and outcomes, the paper seeks to identify key factors influencing inclusive governance and to offer insights into potential strategies for improvement.

Methodology - To fulfil the purpose of this paper based on a quantitative descriptive approach by reviewing existing literature and using secondary data and information provided by the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Various articles in the field of inclusive governance were collected and published between 2000 and 2023.

Findings/Results - In terms of inclusive governance, Nepal has been adopted since 2007, after the second amendment of the Civil Service Act, 1993 to bring the disadvantaged groups such as women, and other minorities, who are socially, economically and politically marginalized into the governing system. Until 2023, only 27% of Nepal's public sector employees are women, with men making up the remaining 73% (NIC, 2022). According to data, the government service employs up to 63.50% Khas/Aryas, but only 0.60% Muslims, 2.50% Dalits, 15.40% Madhesis, and 19.5% Indigenous people are represented (Bhul, 2021). Comparative research reveals a fundamental issue with inclusive governance in South Asia, emphasizing considerable gaps in the representation of women and minority groups across the region. While Bangladesh leads in female representation and Sri Lanka in minority representation, inequities continue, emphasizing the importance of specific initiatives to promote diversity. Nepal faces challenges when transforming legal mandates into real results, widening the gap between policy goals and actual successes in inclusive governance. Corruption remains a major obstacle to governance and social integration across South Asia where Bhutan rating highest and Afghanistan ranking lowest.

Originality/value- This paper is a unique effort to review the state of inclusive governance initiative experiences in the field of civil service in South Asia and Nepal.

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Introduction

Since the beginning of human civilization, governance has existed. According to Malapi-Nelson (2017), Plato used the term to describe the "art of navigation" or the proper steering of a community. But the term "governance" as it is used nowadays really originated in the 1990s, when political scientists and economists presented the idea for the first time. Later, third-sector institutions like the World Bank, the IMF, and the United Nations spread the word about it. Governance has evolved into a "broad umbrella" that encompasses a variety of ideas, following a lengthy history of thought development. According to Asaduzzaman and Virtanen (2016), governance is becoming increasingly popular in the discourse of public management and public policy due to its ability to connect numerous arguments and theoretical ideas. Despite its growing popularity among academicians and public policy practitioners over the last three decades, governance is still regarded as a dynamic, controversial idea that is far from a "finished product" (Farazmand, 2012).

In the field of governance, "inclusive governance" is now a euphemism. Scholars in the domains of political science, sociology, administration, and development make substantial utilization of it. Although inclusive governance essentially entails mainstreaming marginalized groups into the bigger picture of governance policies, systems, and practices, it is an integrated approach that also successfully improves the delivery of services in two areas: empowering marginalized communities to demand services and ensuring efficient service delivery. Inclusive governance, defined as policies and practices that encourage equal participation and representation of all society groups in decision-making processes and public institutions, is critical for promoting democratic legitimacy and social cohesion. This approach acknowledges societal diversity and seeks to address historical injustices and structural inequalities by ensuring that marginalized groups, such as women, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable populations, have a voice in governance processes (UNDP, 2016).

In Nepal, inclusive governance has been the main thrust since the country transitioned to a federal democratic republic in 2007. The aim has been to eliminate longstanding social and political inequalities by guaranteeing marginalized groups meaningful participation in decision-making processes and public institutions (Subedi & Shrestha, 2019). Academic studies emphasize how important inclusive governance is in Nepal, especially for the civil service. For instance, Chaudhary's (2013) study focused on the Public Service Commission's (PSC) role in Nepal's civil service and the adoption of inclusive policies since 2007. Despite legislative requirements for inclusion, the study identified challenges to attaining true representation. Prevalent recruitment practices reinforced preexisting inequalities by favouring elites from privileged backgrounds. Low literacy rates were one of the hurdles marginalized communities had to overcome to access opportunities. The supremacy of certain communities revealed the gap between the desired and actual outcomes of policy. Samata Foundation (2016) investigated the role of civil society in fostering inclusive government in Nepal. It underlined the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in campaigning for marginalized groups' rights and keeping the government accountable for inclusive policy implementation. The report highlighted successful CSO-led projects that helped excluded populations be better represented and participate

in decision-making processes. Despite these attempts, transforming inclusive governance policies into practical measures remains challenging. Building institutional capacity, political commitment, and active civil society participation are critical for overcoming these obstacles and achieving inclusive governance in Nepal (Bhul, 2023).

Table 1. Inclusive Governance in Nepalese Civil Service (2000-2024)

Category	Nepal	India	Bangladesh	Sri Lanka	Pakistan
Introduction of Legal Frameworks	Civil Service Act 1993, 2007, 2015	Constitutional Amendments (1950-2008)	Quota System Introduced in 1972	16th Amendment 1987	Federal Quota System 1948
Legal Revisions and Updates	Amendments in 2007	Multiple Amendments (1979, 1993, 2008)	Periodic Legal Revisions (2000-2023)	Significant in 2003, 2009, 2016	Occasional Revisions (2002, 2010, 2019)
Civil Service Composition	Gender, Ethnicity, Caste breakdown	Gender, Caste (General, OBC, SC/ST)	Gender, freedom fighters, Ethnicity (Bengali, Others)	Ethnicity (Sinhalese, Tamil, Others)	Ethnicity, Religion (Muslim, Other)
Representation Ratios	45% Women, Minorities vs Population	49.5% SC/ST/OBC vs Population	56% Women, Ethnic minorities vs Population	No Specific Quotas, Affirmative Action	92.5% Ethnic minorities vs Population
Women in Civil Service (2000-2024)	5% (2000), 12% (2007) to 28.45% (2024)	13% (2000) to 23.5% (2023)	9% (2000) to 22% (2023)	20% (2000) to 36% (2023)	5% (2000) to 10% (2023)

Source: Author

Table 1 presents a comparative analysis of the state of shared governance in Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan's civil services between the years 2000 and 2024. For example, Nepal followed up with some landmark legal provisions initiated by the 1993 Civil Service Act and further amended in 2007 and 2015, leading to incremental increases in women's representation from 5 per cent in 2000 to 28.45 per cent in 2024. Similarly, in the case of India, constitutional amendments have widened the process of inclusiveness, and women's participation has risen from 13% to 23.5%. Bangladesh had adopted a quota system back in 1972, through which their proportion increased from 9% to 22%. Sri Lanka did not have any formal quotas, but it had affirmative action policies under which its participation by females increased from 20% to 36%. In the case of Pakistan, the federal quota system was in place since 1948, with very few amendments; thus, its progress has been very slow, and the proportion of women has increased from merely 5% to only 10% during the same period. These data underline the very different effectiveness of policies aimed at inclusive governance

across South Asia, with important steps in Nepal and Sri Lanka, while Pakistan fares low with respect to both gender and ethnic inclusiveness.

Objective

The major objective of this article is to analyze the notion of inclusive governance in Nepal after a comparative review of the south Asian countries in 2022-2024. This article scrutinizes the outcomes, and present achievements in Nepal since 2007 to conclude.

Research Method

The methodology adopted for this research on the topic 'Inclusive Governance in Nepalese Civil Service: Comparative Analysis in South Asia' is based on a quantitative descriptive design and is essentially a literature review and secondary data analysis. This study is based on a vast range of articles spanning from 2000-2024, covering diverse issues on inclusive governance. Secondarily, this research has drawn on data and information that have come from credible organizations like the World Bank and UNDP to further advance the analysis. It further delved into precisely how the practices of inclusive governance in Nepal have fared within a South Asian comparative framework.

Results and Discussion

Comparative Analysis of Inclusive Governance in South Asia

In South Asia's changing landscape, inclusive governance is an important target for long-term development. The civil service, which serves as the foundation of government operations, is vital to this endeavour. This article does a comparative analysis of inclusion in civil services across selected South Asian countries, reflecting light on their development, obstacles, and opportunities. Addressing fundamental socioeconomic inequities and strengthening democratic governance in South Asian nations have made inclusive governance necessary. In this multicultural region, academic research by Bhul (2023) exposes challenges and opportunities for inclusive governance. The condition of inclusive governance in South Asia was investigated by Khan (2017), who additionally emphasized the complicated relationships between political, social, and institutional elements. The research emphasized the value of implementing inclusive policy frameworks that give priority to the participation and representation of underrepresented groups, such as women, ethnic minorities, and low-income communities. Nonetheless, it also recognized enduring obstacles such as political instability, inadequate institutional capacity, and corruption that restrict the successful execution of inclusive governance programs.

Table 2. Condition of Female, Minority Representation and Accessibility in South Asia.

Country	Female Representation (%)	Minority Representation (%)	Accessibility Index (out of 10)
Bangladesh	28	12	6.2
Nepal	27	9	5.8
India	24	14	6.5
Sri Lanka	19	18	5.5
Pakistan	17	7	4.9
Afghanistan	14	5	4.3

Source: World Bank - Women, Business, and the Law (2022), UNDP Human Development Report (2022)

Diversity in gender within the civil service is still a vital condition for inclusive governance. There are notable differences amongst South Asian countries, according to the tabulated statistics. Certain nations have made significant progress toward gender inclusion, while others still lag behind. Compared to Bangladesh, Nepal and India have larger percentages of women in the civil service. An overview of the most important sociopolitical variables in six South Asian nations is given in Table 2. Bangladesh stands out as the country with the largest percentage of female representation (28%), closely followed by India and Nepal (27% and 24%, respectively. To promote social cohesion and fair representation, ethnic and religious minorities must be included in civil services. Inequalities still exist throughout South Asia, though. Comparatively speaking to other nations in the region at eighteen per cent, Sri Lanka has the greatest percentage of any country on the list devoted to minority participation. With an index of 6.5 out of 10, India leads South Asia in accessibility, indicating a comparatively higher degree of ease in accessing opportunities and resources. Afghanistan, on the other hand, has the lowest accessibility score (4.3), the lowest percentages of minority and female representation, and steadily decreasing rankings across the board.

**Table 3: Federalism in South Asian Countries
(Sharing of Power and Decentralized Structure)**

Country	Federal Status	Key Features	Source
India	Federal Republic	- Union of states with a strong centre - Division of powers between the central government and states (28 States 8 union territories) - Bicameral legislature (Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha)	Constitution of India, Articles 1-4
Pakistan	Federal Republic	- Division of powers between federal and provincial governments - Four provinces and federally administered territories - Bicameral legislature (National Assembly and Senate)	Constitution of Pakistan, Articles 1-4
Nepal	Federal Democratic Republic	- Transitioned to federalism in 2007 - Divided into seven provinces, 2015 - Three-tier government structure (federal, provincial, local), 2016 - Bicameral legislature (Pratinidhi Sabha and Rastriya Sabha)	Constitution of Nepal, Part 1 (3,4)
Sri Lanka	Unitary State with Devolution	- Unitary structure with limited devolution of power to provinces - The 13th Amendment introduced provincial councils - Centralized system with strong presidential powers	Sri Lankan Constitution, 13th Amendment
Bangladesh	Unitary State with Decentralization	- Unitary structure with decentralized local government - Division of powers between central and local government bodies - Union Parishad, Upazila Parishad, and Zila Parishad system	Constitution of Bangladesh, Articles 59-60

Source: constitutions of concerned South Asian countries

In South Asia, India was first realized as a Federal Republic, with a union of states, a strong central authority, and power division between the central government and the states, facilitated by a bicameral legislature that ensures representation at all levels. Similarly, Pakistan, also known as the Federal Republic, divides authority between the federal and provincial governments, structured into four provinces and federally managed regions, with a bicameral legislature providing supervision. Nepal, designated as the Federal Democratic Republic, adopted federalism in 2007 and is now divided into seven provinces with a three-tier administrative system. Sri Lanka retains a unitary state framework but has implemented devolution by the 13th Amendment, whereas Bangladesh, a unitary state with decentralization, functions under a unitary system with decentralized local government.

Corruption Perception Index 2023 in South Asian Countries

Corruption remains a significant challenge and is mostly associated with the effectiveness of bureaucracy in many South Asian countries, impacting governance, economic development, and social cohesion. This index provides a comparative analysis of corruption levels and governance indicators in South Asian countries for 2023, utilizing data from reputable sources such as Transparency International and the World Bank.

Table 4: Corruption Perception Index (CPI) Scores for South Asian Countries (2023)

Country	CPI Score (out of 100)	Ranking (out of 180)
Bhutan	68	26
India	39	93
Maldives	39	93
Nepal	35	108
Sri Lanka	34	115
Pakistan	29	133
Bangladesh	24	149
Afghanistan	20	162

(**Source:** Corruption Perception Index (CPI) by Transparency International, 2024)
Note: Higher CPI scores indicate lower perceived levels of corruption

The perceived levels of corruption in eight South Asian countries are indicated by the CPI scores, which are displayed in Table 4 and are expressed as a percentage out of 100. Among the nations in the area, Bhutan has the lowest perceived level of corruption, with a CPI score of 68, making it the top performer. With a combined CPI score of 39, India and the Maldives are judged to have moderate levels of corruption. Following closely behind with a CPI score of 35, Nepal is believed to have higher levels of corruption than Bhutan, India, and the Maldives, while Sri Lanka and Pakistan have ratings of 34 and 29, respectively. The countries with the lowest CPI scores Bangladesh and Afghanistan, with 24 and 20, respectively also have the highest perceived levels of corruption. The table highlights notable differences in how corruption is considered in South Asian nations, with Afghanistan being viewed as the most corrupt and Bhutan as the least corrupt. For policymakers and other stakeholders, these CPI ratings are crucial indicators as they point out areas that need attention and intervention to effectively combat corruption and promote transparent governance throughout the region.

The 2023 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) shows corruption is thriving across South Asia. The CPI ranks 180 countries and territories around South Asia by their perceived levels of public sector corruption, scoring on a scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean). More than two-thirds of South Asian countries score below 50 out of 100, which strongly indicates that they have serious corruption problems except Bhutan (68). The global average is stuck at only 43, while the vast majority of countries have made no progress or declined in the last decade.

Women's Empowerment Index and Global Gender Parity Index in South Asia

The comparative study of gender parity and women's empowerment across different South Asian nations is presented in Table 4. It consists of the Global Gender Parity Index (GGPI) and the Women's Empowerment Index (WEI), two important indexes. On the other hand, the GGPI divides nations into groups according to how far they have come toward gender parity, from "Low" to "Lower-middle".

Table 5. Women's Empowerment Index and Global Gender Parity Index in South Asia.

Country	Women's Empowerment Index (WEI)	Global Gender Parity Index (GGPI)		
Bangladesh	0.443	Low	0.527	Low
Bhutan	0.562	Low	0.625	Low
India	0.520	Low	0.560	Low
Maldives	0.518	Low	0.575	Low
Nepal	0.491	Low	0.618	Low
Pakistan	0.337	Low	0.428	Low
Sri Lanka	0.568	Low	0.516	Low

Source: World Bank - Worldwide Governance Indicators (2023)

Table 5 above contains the comparison of WEI and the GGPI for South Asian countries for 2023 based on the Worldwide Governance Indicators proposed by the World Bank. In this regard, the scores are uniformly low in the region, displaying huge disparities concerning gender. In the case of Bangladesh, the WEI score gathered is 0.443, and the scores under GGPI are 0.527, both in the low category. Similarly, Nepal presses forward with a modest WEI of 0.491 and a GGPI of 0.618. Sri Lanka leads with a score of 0.568 in the WEI; on the low side, it scores 0.516 in gender equality. In contrast, Pakistan lags with a WEI of 0.337 and a dismally low GGPI of 0.428, signifying the enormous challenges in gender equality and women empowerment. The figures thus obtained portray very wide-pitched gender inequalities in South Asia, hence calling for focused policies and interventions towards improving women's empowerment and bridging the gap toward gender equality. With the highest WEI of 0.562, Bhutan stands out from the rest of the region. Sri Lanka is next with a score of 0.568, suggesting even greater levels of women's empowerment. However, Bhutan and Sri Lanka are classified as having "Low" GGPI, indicating considerable gaps in achieving gender parity across multiple domains, despite their relatively higher WEI scores. Similar WEI scores, ranging from 0.518 to 0.520, are shown by India, the Maldives, and Nepal; all three are classified as "Low" according to the GGPI. This suggests a pattern of significantly lower levels of women's empowerment and difficulties in these nations reaching gender parity. Bangladesh and Pakistan had WEI scores of 0.443 and 0.337, respectively, indicating lower levels of women's empowerment. Both countries are likewise classed as "Low" on the GGPI, suggesting significant gender gaps across numerous socioeconomic variables.

Table 6. Women's Empowerment Index (WEI) in South Asia.

Country	Women of reproductive age whose need for family planning is satisfied with modern methods in 2022	Adolescent birth rate 2022	Population with completed secondary education or higher, female 2022	Youth not in education, employment or training, female 2012-2022	Labour force participation rate among prime-working-age individuals who are living in a household comprising a couple and at least one child under age 6, female 2012-2022	Account ownership at a financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider, female 2021	Women in Parliament 2023	In local government 2015-2022	Share of managerial positions held by women 2012-2022	Ever-partnered women and girls subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months of 2018
Bangladesh	73.7	73.3	28.9	44.6	42.7	43.5	20.9	23.4	10.7	23
Bhutan	80.4	18.5	13.8	12.2	72.9	27.7	16.9	12.8	39.7	9
India	77.5	16.3	24.9	43.5	27.1	77.6	14.7	44.4	15.9	18
Maldives	33.5	6.8	9.1	28.5	46.5	74.2	4.6	39.5	18.7	6
Nepal	63.5	63.4	18.5	45.8	33.7	49.9	33.9	41.3	13.2	11
Pakistan	52.8	41.2	10.1	56.4	29.5	13.5	20.1	16.8	5.7	16
Sri Lanka	73.7	15.4	64.0	27.5	31.7	89.3	5.3	10.9	27.0	4
Afghanistan	47.7	79.7	5.2	81.3	23.4	4.7	27.2	..	4.9	35

Source: World Bank - Worldwide Governance Indicators (2023)

Nepal can use several lessons to guide its activities and policies targeted at improving gender equality and women's empowerment. First and foremost, Nepal can benefit from Bangladesh's accomplishment in guaranteeing that a sizable portion of women of reproductive age get their family planning demands handled by contemporary procedures (73.7%). The Table 6 highlights the efficacy of Bangladesh's reproductive health initiatives, which Nepal may consider replicating or customizing to enhance accessibility to family planning services and reproductive health education within its local environment.

Second, the need for funding through sexual and reproductive health education for adolescents is shown by Bhutan's low rate of adolescent births (18.5%). To lower the number of teenage pregnancies and improve the health of young women, Nepal should give priority to initiatives of a similar nature. Third, the comparatively high percentage of Sri Lankan women with a secondary education or above (64.0%) emphasizes the need to invest in girls' education to empower them economically and socially. Nepal could prioritize enhancing educational access and quality, particularly for girls, to increase their options for higher education and improved

job prospects. Nepal can also learn from the Maldives' high labour force participation rate among women living in homes with young children (46.5%) and India's comparatively high account ownership among women at financial institutions or mobile money service providers (77.6%). These examples highlight the importance of policies that promote women's economic empowerment, such as cheap childcare and access to financial services, in allowing women to fully participate in the economy and decision-making processes. Nepal can learn from Sri Lanka's relatively high female representation in parliament (5.3%) and Pakistan's development in local government representation (20.1%). This highlights the importance of focused initiatives to promote women's political engagement and leadership at all levels of government. Finally, Afghanistan's high prevalence of violence against women (35%), underscores the critical need for Nepal to develop its legal frameworks and support services to effectively address gender-based violence and protect the safety and well-being of women and girls.

Inclusive Governance Initiatives in Nepal

Nepal is a country of great diversity. The country's extensive ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity has given it a unique character as a landlocked country between two huge developing economies, China and India. The National Population and Housing Census of 2021 recognized 142 caste and ethnic communities, as well as 124 languages, 10 religions and 60 ethnic groups where everyone has their own identity, history and originality which is unique and diverse in Nepal. Nepal's government included policies and programs for indigenous peoples, women, Madhesis, Dalit, and other marginalized communities in the Ninth Five-Year Plan (1997-2002), addressing a long-standing issue. In this periodic plan, the government confessed its failure to include these communities in the country's mainstream development projects (Gurung, 2009). The People's Movement of 1990 and 2006 established constitutional structures to promote inclusive governance, building on the Ninth Periodic Plan's intervention. Since 2000, all periodic plans have prioritised inclusive development, namely inclusive governance (Sigdel and Sharma, 2013). The Local Self-Governance Act of 1999 marked a significant step toward inclusive governance. The law required disadvantaged populations to be represented in local government entities.

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement with Maoists (2006) and Nepal's Interim Constitution (2007) include measures for Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) to improve inclusive governance. The Constituent Assembly Member Election Act of 2007, Good Governance Act of 2008, and Civil Service Act of 1993 (amended in 2007) establish inclusive representation in government positions via reservation. The Civil Service Act of 1993 includes reservation quotas for women, Indigenous, Madheshi, Dalit, people with disabilities, and backward regions. The reservation has been enforced by all public institutions, including security forces. Until 2023, only 27% of Nepal's public sector employees are women, with men making up the remaining 73% (NIC, 2022). According to the Inclusion Commission, 14,956 people have entered the civil service within 15 years of the inclusion system that started in 2007 (2064).

Table 7: Position of community participation in civil service

Communities	Population Percentage	Participation Percentage
Madhesi Brahmin	0.8	3.3
Khas Brahmin Shretri	31.20	61.15
Newar	5	69
Other Madhesi	14.5	9.7
Adhivasi Janajati	23.5	13.6
Tharu	6.6	3
Muslim	4.4	0.7
Dalit	13	1.4

(Sunam, 2020)

However, there has been no meaningful participation in policymaking at the highest level. For this, we still have to wait at least a decade and a half. After the introduction of reservation in Nepal's civil service, a quantitative picture of inclusion has been seen in the past fifteen years, but in essence, it seems that the real benefit of inclusion has not yet reached the target group. According to Table 7, the government service employs up to 63.50% Khas/Aryas, but only 0.60% Muslims, 2.50% Dalits, 15.40% Madhesis, and 19.5% indigenous people are represented (Bhul, 2021). This paper analyses the state of inclusive governance in South Asia particularly the nature and scope of inclusiveness noticed in civil service in Nepal, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Shri- Lanka. In recent years, there has been a growing incentive among public sector employees to involve women and people from diverse economic classes and ethnic groups, and it is believed that this trend would help the bureaucracy become more inclusive of the nation as a whole.

Therefore, when analyzing based on the achievements of the long struggle the meaning of the constitution and the experience of 15 years of reservation quota implementation, now there is no option to redistribute the system based on the compensation of deprivation and discrimination and give special priority, concession and reservation to the target communities and areas within the scope of reservation as well as women within it. The facts/data confirm that the strategy adopted by the Bihar state of India to uplift Dalits who are disadvantaged in services/facilities including reservation by making a list of weak Dalits among the Dalits is also necessary here. According to the provision of filling the posts prescribed in sub-section 11 of section 7 of the Civil Service Act, 2049 (amended), the Public Service Commission has recommended 39,979 candidates in the civil service of Nepal in the last fifteen years. Out of that, 14,956 i.e. 37.40 percent were recommended under reservation. It has played an important role in creating an inclusive and diverse work environment within the civil service. However, there has been no meaningful participation in policymaking at the highest level. Based on the

system to be reviewed every 10 years, the recommendations of the Inclusion Commission and the judgment of the Supreme Court, it is necessary to analyze, redefine and clarify the state of filling the posts in the civil service. It seems necessary to study the 15-year implementation of reservation and redefine and focus on the target groups and communities while portraying the real situation of the communities that are asked to make special provisions by the constitution. Since Nepal's inclusion is passive and not clearly defined, there are also ideas that it has further increased the exclusion. In this situation, the current course of action should be to actively include the backward marginalized communities based on proportional representation according to the constitutional mandate and historical isolation from the government in Nepal, and it is necessary to address and specify this issue judiciously through the upcoming Federal Civil Service Act.

Conclusions

It reveals the one major issue of inclusive governance, the representation of inequalities in South Asia. Comparative research finds major differences in the representation of women and minority groups across South Asian countries. While Bangladesh has the highest percentage of female representation in civil service, Sri Lanka leads in minority representation. Inequalities continue, highlighting the need for specific measures to enhance inclusivity. Nepal, although having legislative mandates for inclusion, struggles to translate inclusive policies into real accomplishments, emphasizing the gap between policy aims and actual outcomes in the quest for inclusive governance. Another key challenging issue in inclusive governance is corruption, which continues to be a big challenge throughout South Asia, affecting governance and social harmony. The Corruption Perception Index highlights differences in perceived corruption levels, with Bhutan securing the highest, Nepal and Sri Lanka below average and Afghanistan the lowest ranking in the South Asia region. Combating corruption is critical for creating transparent and accountable governing systems that promote inclusion and equitable development. However, corruption remains a concern in many South Asian countries, highlighting the need for ongoing efforts to tackle this issue. To summarize, overcoming representation gaps and corruption concerns is critical to achieving inclusive governance in Nepal and South Asia. Countries in the region must emphasize specific attempts to increase inclusion and transparency in public services and governance systems. This comparative research provides policymakers and stakeholders with significant insights to inform evidence-based policies that promote inclusive governance and equitable development throughout South Asia.

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