



Social Inclusion Policy And Representation Of Marginalized Groups In The Civil Service Of Nepal

Basant Bahadur Bohara

M. Phil Scholar

Abstract

This article “**Social Inclusion Policy and Representation of Marginalized Groups in Nepalese Civil Service,**” analyzes the effectiveness of Nepal’s Social Inclusion Policy in addressing historical injustices and promoting equitable participation of marginalized communities, including women, Aadiwasi Janjati, Madhesis, Dalits, Disabled individuals, and people from remote areas. While the study notes significant progress in enhancing representation within the civil service, it also highlights persistent challenges such as systemic biases, inadequate capacity building, and ineffective policy implementation. Using qualitative methods and focus group discussions, the research identifies key gaps in policy and practice. Findings emphasize the need for improved empowerment, information outreach, and meritocracy, alongside addressing issues like quota misuse. The article concludes with policy recommendations, advocating for a robust Social Inclusion Policy, ongoing evaluation, targeted training programs, and fostering an organizational culture that values diversity, ultimately aiming for a more representative and equitable civil service in Nepal.

Keywords: Social inclusion, social justice, participation, empowerment, diversity management

1. Introduction:

Social inclusion integrates marginalized groups into governance, promoting justice, equality, empowerment, and diversity across societal systems. It is the process of integrating marginalized, disadvantaged, or excluded groups into the governance system through tools like reservation policies, positive discrimination, empowerment, prioritization, and development. It aims to foster social justice, equity, and representation of these groups in social, economic, and political systems. The World Bank defines social inclusion as removing institutional barriers and enhancing opportunities for development (2003). The concept emerged from 1970s French discourse and was expanded globally by Greek philosopher Takis Fotopoulos, who argued that power concentration among elites creates crises in various domains, including economic, social, and political. Social exclusion, once linked to disabilities and substance abuse, now encompasses broader issues like poverty, unemployment, migration, and inequality across gender, ethnicity, and caste, particularly in Asia. Social inclusion combats these disparities by reducing inequality and fostering collaboration (Chaudhary, 2013).

In Nepal, social inclusion gained importance with the Interim Constitution of 2007, which introduced policies to uplift marginalized groups, including women, Aadiwasi Janjati, Madheshis, Dalits, disabled individuals, and remote communities. While these policies have improved representation, critics highlight that the "creamy layer" within marginalized groups disproportionately benefits, sidelining the most disadvantaged.

Social inclusion aims to integrate marginalized groups into governance, yet underrepresentation in civil service reveals gaps in the reservation system, raising equity concerns. This study evaluates the system’s effectiveness, identifies policy shortcomings, and examines barriers faced by marginalized communities. It

offers recommendations to address inequities, providing insights for policymakers striving for equitable representation, social justice, and inclusive governance, fostering increased participation of disadvantaged groups in Nepal's civil service.

2. Literature Review

Social inclusion integrates marginalized groups into all societal dimensions, addressing exclusion through equitable participation. Originating in 1970s France to combat poverty and unemployment, it evolved into a global poverty-reduction strategy. In Nepal, inclusion gained prominence through the reservation policies, and the 2015 Constitution, promoting equality, justice, and inclusive governance.

Studies on Nepal's social inclusion policies in civil service reveal gaps between intentions and outcomes. Mahat (2011) noted minimal representation of women, Dalits, and disabled individuals, especially in officer positions in Jumla. Chaudhary (2013) highlighted the disconnect between policy goals and implementation, with top-down approaches failing to attract marginalized groups. Poudel (2016) observed that elite families within marginalized communities disproportionately benefit, while Joshi (2019) found reservation policies improving disability representation. However, Pandey and Rawal (2021) noted skill limitations among reservation-based recruits, affecting service delivery. Bhul (2021) reported increased representation, though high-caste dominance persists, as corroborated by Ishtiaq and Baniamin (2020), who found Dalits and women concentrated in lower positions.

This study examines Nepal's social inclusion policies in civil service using theories of social justice, participatory development, empowerment, and diversity management. It explores reservation policies and socio-economic factors as independent variables, with social justice, empowerment, and diversity management as dependent variables, emphasizing equity, participation, and institutional representation.

3. Methodology

This research employs ontological and epistemological approaches to study Nepal's reservation policy in civil service. Ontologically, it investigates the societal realities of marginalized groups, while epistemologically, it examines the collective understanding of social inclusion. Adopting an interpretivist paradigm, the research explores social constructs, policy gaps, and inequalities. It uses focus group discussions (FGDs) and thematic analysis to gain comprehensive insights into how the policy addresses justice, empowerment, and inclusion, contributing to a deeper understanding of its impact on marginalized communities.

4. Interpretation and Analysis

4.1 Representation of marginalized groups and social justice.

Social justice is the concept of creating a society where all individuals have equal rights, opportunities, and access to resources, regardless of their background, identity, or social status. Social inclusion aims to achieve equality by promoting justice, empowerment, and diversity. It employs tools such as reservations, affirmative action, and scholarships to ensure marginalized groups actively participate in governance. In Nepal, the reservation system was implemented in 2008 through the second amendment of the Civil Service Act, targeting historical disparities in civil service representation. This policy has opened doors for disadvantaged communities, leading to a notable increase in their participation in governance roles. Despite its successes, critics argue that the benefits often disproportionately favor elite segments within marginalized groups, leaving the most disadvantaged with limited access. This raises concerns about equitable benefit distribution and highlights the need for mechanisms to address these gaps. To maximize the policy's effectiveness, strategies must focus on empowering the truly disadvantaged within these clusters. The following table offers detailed insights into the representation of marginalized groups in Nepal's civil service since the reservation policy's adoption, identifying its impact and areas for improvement to achieve more inclusive governance.

Table-4.1: Representation of Marginalized Group in Civil Service (2008/09-2022/23)

<i>Fiscal Year</i>	<i>Representation</i>						<i>Total</i>
	Women	Adiwaasi Janajati	Madheshi	Dalits	Disabled People	Remote Area	
<i>2079/080</i>	500	401	310	133	58	58	1460
<i>2078/079</i>	380	288	191	74	53	37	1023
<i>2077/078</i>	9	6	2	1	2	0	20
<i>2076/077</i>	39	26	24	7	3	4	103
<i>2075/076</i>	625	509	409	168	95	77	1883
<i>2074/075</i>	1088	858	711	292	163	132	3244
<i>2073/074</i>	1383	1026	901	385	189	142	4026
<i>2072/073</i>	797	629	503	213	101	95	2338
<i>2071/072</i>	639	547	454	168	95	76	1979
<i>2070/071</i>	626	509	384	173	91	71	1854
<i>2069/070</i>	372	318	254	106	51	35	1136
<i>2068/069</i>	352	280	212	99	40	30	1013
<i>2067/068</i>	471	371	300	105	59	43	1349
<i>2066/067</i>	495	368	319	142	64	43	1431
<i>2065/066</i>	117	94	91	36	15	12	365
<i>2064/065</i>	366	245	183	84	33	17	928
Total	8259	6475	5248	2186	1112	872	24152

Source: (PSC, Annual Report, 2064/65-2079/80)

Since Nepal's reservation policy was introduced, marginalized groups' representation in the civil service has increased, with women at 34.19%, Aadiwasi Janajati at 26.81%, Madheshi at 21.73%, Dalits at 9%, Disabled at 4.60%, and Remote Area residents at 3.67%. Despite this, marginalized groups still make up only 27.45% of civil servants, raising concerns about the policy's effectiveness. Critics argue that elite individuals within these groups benefit more than the most disadvantaged.

4.2 Empowerment

Empowerment involves building human capacity through opportunities, skills development, and education. Nepal's reservation policy aims to empower marginalized groups by ensuring their representation in the civil service, boosting their awareness and competitiveness. Since its introduction, applications and representation from these groups have significantly increased, enhancing their participation and influence.

4.2.1 Application Trend (Attraction in Civil Service)

Information is both power and knowledge, enabling individuals to access opportunities and make informed decisions. The rising trend in applications highlights improved access to information, empowering more people to participate actively. Although challenges in accessing information persist, the implementation of the reservation policy has significantly boosted the number of applicants. This demonstrates how inclusive policies, paired with better information dissemination, can overcome barriers and foster greater participation, ultimately contributing to equity and social inclusion in the civil service of Nepal.

Table 4.2.1: Application Trend (Attraction in Civil Service) 2064/65-2079/80

<i>Fiscal Year</i>	<i>Application</i>			<i>Percentage Change</i>
	Female	Male	Total	
2064/65	32457	53711	86168	24.57
2065/66	67435	107687	175122	103.23
2066/67	139963	160500	300463	71.57
2067/68	110307	141344	251651	-16
2068/69	113785	157792	271577	8
2069/70	173418	195387	368805	36
2070/71	255234	305681	560915	52
2071/72	360506	239162	599668	7
2072/73	318503	275877	594380	-1
2073/74	382485	461812	844297	42
2074/75	269704	271149	540853	-36
2075/76	70578	73175	143753	-73
2076/77	209825	241701	451526	214
2077/78	244969	288579	533548	18
2078/79	176642	188792	365434	-32
2079/80	227622	255581	483203	32
Total	3053541	3256532	6310073	

Source: (PSC, Annual Report, 2064/65-2079/80)

The table highlights trends in civil service applications since Nepal implemented its reservation policy, showing notable growth in total applicants and marginalized group representation. Over 15 years, 6,310,073 individuals applied, with 51.51% male and 48.49% female, reflecting a shrinking gender gap. In FY 2064/65, 86,168 applied, with women comprising 37.67%. By 2079/80, female representation rose to 47%. Applications peaked in 2076/77 with a 214% surge but dipped in 2075/76 due to the pandemic, recovering strongly afterward. Despite progress, grassroots gaps persist, emphasizing the need for local outreach, preparation resources, and integrating civil service curricula into education to sustain inclusivity.

4.2.2 Competitiveness in Civil Service

Civil service upholds meritocracy, permanence, hierarchy, professionalism, neutrality, and commitment. While reservation is seen as conflicting with meritocracy, competition within targeted groups has grown. Despite criticism of limited competition in reserved quotas, they have become more competitive, enhancing overall competitiveness, including in open categories. The table below illustrates competition levels in civil service post-reservation policy implementation.

Table 4.2.2: Competitiveness in civil service of Nepal (Open vs. Reservation)**(2075/76-2079/80)**

<i>S. N.</i>	<i>Marginalized Groups</i>	<i>Post</i>	<i>Applicants</i>	<i>Competition</i>
1	Open	5360	1972703	368
2	Women	1500	384810	257
3	Aadiwasi Janajati	1189	156713	132
4	Madheshi	999	148083	148
5	Dalits	439	35073	80
6	Disabled	223	12804	57
7	Remote Area	165	24877	151
Total		9875	2735063	277

Source: (PSC, 2075/076-2079/080)

The table highlights civil service recruitment competition over five years, totaling 9,875 posts with an average of 277 applicants per post. Open category posts (5,360) face intense competition (368 applicants per post), while reserved categories (4,515 posts) have fewer applicants (138 per post). Women encounter the highest reserved competition (257 per post), followed by remote area (151), Aadiwasi Janajati (132), Madheshi (148), Dalits (80), and disabled candidates (57).

4.2.3 Representation of Marginalized groups in Civil Service from Open and Reservation

The representation of marginalized groups in Nepal's civil service signifies their empowerment, bolstered by the reservation policy introduced after the People's Movement of 2062/63 B.S. The policy established quotas to increase their participation, encouraging competition in public service. Consequently, appointments of marginalized groups have risen in both reserved quotas and open competition. This progress highlights the policy's success in motivating marginalized communities, improving their representation and opportunities. The table below details their representation in both categories.

Table 4.2.3: Representation of Marginalized groups in Civil Service from Open and Reservation (2075/76-2079/80)

<i>Clusters</i>	<i>Open vs. Reservation (2076/076-2079/80)</i>					<i>Total (in %)</i>	
	Open	%	Quota	%	Total	Open	Reservation
<i>Women</i>	1167	37.83	1553	34.94	2720	42.90	57.10
<i>Aa. Ja.</i>	597	19.35	1230	27.67	1827	32.68	67.32
<i>Madheshi</i>	709	22.98	909	20.45	1618	43.82	56.18
<i>Dalits</i>	100	3.24	366	8.23	466	21.46	78.54
<i>Disabled</i>	87	2.82	211	4.75	298	29.19	70.81
<i>Remote</i>	425	13.78	176	3.96	601	70.72	29.28
Total	3085	100.00	4445	100.00	7530	40.97	59.03

Source: (PSC, 2075/076-2079/080)

The table examines marginalized groups in Nepal's civil service, showing 7,530 appointments: 40.97% via open competition and 59.03% through reservations. Remote area candidates excelled in open competition (70.72%), while Dalits had the lowest representation. Women (57.10%), Dalits (78.54%), and disabled individuals (70.81%) benefited significantly from reservations, highlighting socio-economic barriers. Progress exists, but challenges persist for Dalits and disabled candidates.

4.3 Diversity Management

Diversity management promotes social justice, equity, and inclusion by valuing diverse characteristics like race, gender, age, and ethnicity. Nepal's multi-lingual, multi-religious, and multi-cultural society adopted the reservation system to ensure representation of all groups in governance. This study examines the system's effectiveness in fostering an inclusive, culturally competent civil service.

4.3.1 Geographical Representation in civil service

Nepal, diverse in geography with Mountain, Hilly, and Terai regions, exhibits varied climate, lifestyle, language, and culture. Civil service representation compared to regional population highlights disparities. The table below compares regional population distribution with civil service representation over the past five years, revealing imbalances in opportunities across these regions.

Table 4.3.1: Geographical Representation in Civil Service (2075/76-209/80)

Geographical Region	Fiscal Year					Total	Total (in %)	
	2075/ 076	2076/ 077	2077/ 078	2078/ 079	2079/ 080		%	Population
Mountain	693	32	11	332	531	1599	13.83	6.08
Hill	2239	155	766	1537	1879	6576	35.15	40.31
Terai	1842	117	26	803	1265	4053	35.05	53.61
Total	4774	304	138	2672	3675	11563	100.00	100.00

Source: (NSO 2021 & PSC, (2075/076-2079/080)

The table compares civil servant appointments with Nepal's regional population distribution: Mountain Region (6.08% population, 13.83% representation), Hilly Region (40.31%, 35.15%), and Terai (53.61%, 35.05%). The Mountain Region is overrepresented, while the Terai is underrepresented. These imbalances stem from geographic, educational, and socio-economic disparities, highlighting the need for equitable policies.

4.3.2 District wise representation in civil service

Nepal's 77 districts and 753 local levels have seen growing civil service representation over five years due to increased applicants, IT advancements, and youth awareness. However, disparities in district-wise representation persist, highlighting regional imbalances. Targeted policies are needed for equitable participation, as shown in the accompanying table.

Table 4.3.3: District-wise Population and Representation in civil service (2075/076-2079/080)

S. N.	Districts	Civil Service	Population	Total (in %)	
				Civil Service	Population
1	Gulmi	403	246494	3.5	0.8
2	Syanja	390	253024	3.4	0.9
3	Sarlahi	359	862470	3.2	3
4	Kathmandu	344	2041578	3	7
5	Dhanusha	298	867747	2.6	3
6	Surkhet	291	415126	2.6	1.4
7	Rautahat	289	813573	2.5	2.8
8	Saptari	286	706255	2.5	2.4
9	Mohattari	258	796994	2.3	2.7
10	Morang	248	1148156	2.2	3.9
	Total	3166	29164578	100	100

Source: (NSO 2021 & PSC, (2075/076-2079/080))

The table shows district-wise representation in Nepal's civil service from FY 2075/76 to 2079/80, revealing an unequal distribution. Smaller districts like Gulmi and Syangja (0.8% and 0.9% of the population) have disproportionately high representation (3.5% and 3.4%), while Kathmandu (7% of the population) contributes only 3%. No districts from Sudurpashchim or Karnali provinces are in the top ten. These disparities reflect socio-economic factors, cultural norms, and limited awareness, highlighting the need for targeted policies to address regional imbalances and promote inclusive representation.

4.3.4 Caste-wise Representation in civil service

Nepal, with 142 castes (Census 2021), has only 72 represented in its civil service, dominated by Brahmin (Hill) and Kshetri communities. While Kshetri (16.45%) and Brahmin (11.29%) are major groups, others remain underrepresented despite the reservation policy aimed at inclusivity.

Table 4.3.4: Population vs. Caste-wise Representation in civil service(2075/76-2079/80)

S. N.	Castes	Fiscal Year					Total	Recom. (%)	Popn. (%)
		2075/076	2076/077	2077/078	2078/079	2079/080			
1	Bhramin	1595	137	93	1171	1299	4295	39.41	11.29
2	Kshetri	898	39	12	474	683	2106	19.33	16.45
3	Newar	178	17	11	163	166	535	4.91	4.6
4	Magar	230	14	4	109	165	522	4.79	6.9
5	Yadav	239	7	2	68	150	466	4.28	4.21
6	Tharu	179	14	2	79	152	426	3.91	6.2
7	Teli	131	6	3	62	68	270	2.48	1.48
8	Rai	85	2	1	50	70	208	1.91	2.2
9	Kami	92	2	1	29	74	198	1.82	5.04
10	Others	989	66	5	282	529	1771	16.25	41.63
Total		4616	304	134	2487	3356	10897	100.00	100

Source: (NSO 2021 & PSC, (2075/076-2079/080))

The table outlines caste-wise representation in Nepal's civil service from F.Y. 2075/76 to 2079/80. Of 10,897 civil servants, Brahmins (Hill) make up 39.41%, Kshetris 19.33%, Newars 4.91%, Magars 4.79%, with smaller percentages for Yadav, Tharu, Teli, Rai, and Kami groups. Brahmins (Hill) are overrepresented relative to their 11.29% population share. Despite the reservation policy, 72 castes remain unrepresented, with Brahmins and Kshetris dominating even in marginalized categories. Socio-economic factors, family background, and education access drive this trend. Experts suggest revisiting the reservation system, socio-economic caste clustering, and introducing empowerment measures for equitable representation across all castes.

4.3.5 Religion-wise representation in civil service

Nepal's reservation policy was introduced to address the country's diverse socio-economic landscape. The constitution designates Nepal as a secular state, promoting unity among various religions. Religion in Nepal reflects customs, traditions, and social values. The nation is multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious, and multi-cultural, with ten religions recorded by NSO 2021. Hinduism (81.19%), Buddhism (8.29%), Islam (5.09%), Kirat (3.17%), and Christianity (1.76%) are the major religions, while Prakriti, Bon, Jain, Bahai, and Sikh are minority religions. The following table illustrates the religion-wise representation in Nepal's civil service.

Table 4.3.5: Population vs. Religion-wise Representation in Civil Service**(2075/76 -2079/80)**

S.N.	Religion	Recommendation in civil service (FY 2075/076-2079/080)	Total	
			Recommendation %	Population %
1	Hindu	10774	94.82	81.19
2	Buddhist	290	2.55	8.21
3	Muslim	69	0.61	5.09
4	Kirant	64	0.56	3.1
5	Christian	52	0.46	1.76
6	Others	114	1.00	0.65
	Total	11363	100.00	100.00

Source: (NSO 2021 & PSC, (2075/076-2079/080)

The table presents religion-wise representation in Nepal's civil service from FY 2075/76 to 2079/80. Hindus, making up 81.19% of the population, hold 94.82% of civil service positions. Buddhists (8.21% of the population) occupy 2.55%, Muslims (5.09%) hold 0.61%, Kirat (3.1%) represent 0.56%, Christians (1.76%) account for 0.46%, and other religious groups, though 0.55% of the population, hold 1%. Hindu dominance highlights the need for better diversity management, as religious minorities are underrepresented. Empowerment measures are crucial to ensure proportional representation and foster a more inclusive bureaucracy.

4.3.6 Language-wise representation in civil service

Language is a vital means of communication, and according to the Census 2021, Nepal recognizes 124 languages. Language-wise representation in the civil service is crucial for creating a culturally competent bureaucracy. Knowledge of multiple languages enhances communication and improves service delivery. The reservation policy aims to ensure inclusivity by promoting diverse language representation, thereby strengthening public service competency. The presence of individuals from different linguistic backgrounds in the civil service enriches the effectiveness and relevance of governance. The following table illustrates the representation and population distribution of various languages in Nepal's civil service.

Table 4.1.3.6: Language-wise Applicants Vs. Population (2075/076-2079/080)

S.N.	Languages	Language-wise Applicants (F.Y. 2075/076-2079/080)		Population (%)
		Applicants	Percentage	
1	Nepali	1214605	61.6	44.9
2	Maithali	257894	13.1	11
3	Bhojpuri	92164	4.7	6.2
4	Tharu	69422	3.5	5.9
5	Banjika	46589	2.4	3.9
7	Tamang	24688	1.3	4.9
8	Newari	24094	1.2	3
6	Magar	20308	1.0	2.8
9	Awadhi	16666	0.8	3
10	Others	206273	10.5	14.4
	Total	1972703	100.0	100.0

Source: (NSO 2021 & PSC, (2075/076-2079/080))

The table shows that Nepali, spoken by 44.6% of the population, represents 61.9% in the civil service. Other languages like Maithili, Bhojpuri, Tharu, and Tamang have less representation despite being spoken by many. The 115 other languages spoken by 14.4% of the population make up 10.5% of civil service representation. This imbalance reflects a dominance of Nepali speakers in the civil service. While the reservation policy has increased cultural diversity within the civil service, it remains insufficient to ensure proportional representation across all language groups. Still, it contributes to a culturally competent bureaucracy and effective service delivery.

4.4 Socio-Economic status (Employment and Education)

Socio-economic status, comprising education, health, employment, living standards, and opportunities, shapes family development and goal attainment. In civil service, socio-economic status especially family education and employment strongly influence success. Higher social economic status equips candidates with resources, knowledge, and social capital, boosting opportunities.

4.4.1 Applicant's Family's Main Profession and Success in Civil Service

Profession refers to the way of life that individuals have adopted to earn a living. It is an economic activity that requires specialized knowledge and skills. The profession of a family impacts its living standards and plays a key role in determining the socio-economic status of its members. The table below presents the main profession of applicants' families and their success in the civil service from Fiscal Year 2075/76 to 2079/80.

Table 4.4.1: Applicant's Family's Main Profession and success in Civil Service (2075/76-2079/80)

S. N.	Main Profession	Total Applicants (2075/076-2079/080)		Recommendation in Civil Service	
		Applicants	%	Recommendation	%
1	Agriculture	1572380	79.71	8241	72.21
2	Gov. Service	147186	7.46	1068	9.36
3	Teaching	119368	6.05	1018	8.92
4	Business	76254	3.87	620	5.43
5	Private	27673	1.40	275	2.41
6	Others	29842	1.51	191	1.67
Total		1972703	100.00	11413	100.00

Source: (PSC, 2075/076-2079/080)

The data from FY 2075/76 to 2079/80 reveals that most civil service applicants (79.71%) come from agricultural backgrounds, yet they have a comparatively lower success rate. In contrast, applicants from government service backgrounds, while fewer (7.46%), show a higher success rate. This suggests that socio-economic background, particularly government service family ties, may offer advantages such as resources, knowledge, and support, enhancing success. Paudel (2016) similarly found that many successful candidates come from families with civil service experience, indicating that socio-economic factors play a significant role in candidates' success.

4.4.2 Education Level of Applicant's parent and Success rate

Educational level significantly influences social development. It serves as a means of acquiring information and is a vital source of knowledge. The development of a family is largely contingent on the education of its members. Education opens the door to opportunities and access to information. The following table presents the education levels of the applicants' parents, and the success rate of the applicants form 2075/076-2079/080.

Table 4.4.2: Education Level of Applicant's Parent and Success rate of the Applicants (2075/76-2079/80)

S. N.	Educational Level	Applicants	%	Success	%
1	Higher Education	181598	9.2	1378	12.1
2	S.L.C.	176681	9.0	1216	10.7
3	General Literate	992303	50.3	5358	47.2
4	Illiterate	622121	31.5	3411	30.0
Total Applicants		1972703	100.0	11363	100.0

Source: (PSC, 2075/076-2079/080)

The data reveals that from FY 2075/76 to 2079/80, most civil service applicants in Nepal hailed from general literate (50.3%) and illiterate (31.5%) family backgrounds. Success rates were highest among general literate applicants (47.2%) but also significant for those from higher educational backgrounds (12.1%). This indicates that socio-economic factors, especially parental education, strongly influence success. Researchers highlight that educational backgrounds provide skills, information, and support. Enhancing training and orientation for marginalized applicants is crucial to improving their success rates.

5. Findings Analysis

Nepal's reservation policy in the civil service aims to boost representation and promote social justice for marginalized groups, enhancing diversity across caste, geography, religion, and language. While applications and success rates of marginalized candidates have increased, criticism persists, particularly regarding elite capture by privileged sub-groups, such as Newars within Aadiwasi Janajati and higher-caste women. Critics argue the policy lacks a scientific basis and suggest using socio-economic indicators, like the Human Development Index (HDI) and Economic Vulnerability Index (EVI), to allocate quotas. Furthermore, the policy's lack of empowerment measures, such as skill development, exacerbates challenges for marginalized individuals. Scholars call for periodic reviews, empowerment initiatives, and a balanced approach to ensure true equity.

The reservation policy in Nepal was introduced to ensure the representation of marginalized groups in the civil service, addressing historical disparities. Over the past fifteen years, the policy has led to the selection of approximately twenty-five thousand candidates from marginalized communities, increasing their participation in civil service. The implementation of the policy has encouraged marginalized groups to compete in the Public Service Commission (PSC) exams, leading to heightened competition, particularly in women's and remote area categories. However, competition remains lower in the disabled and Dalit categories. While the success rate for marginalized groups in the open category has improved, regions like remote areas have shown significant success, whereas Dalits and Madheshi still face challenges. The representation in gazetted positions is still limited compared to non-gazetted roles, reflecting ongoing disparities. District-wise, Gulmi, Syangja, and other districts like Kathmandu have strong representation, though certain provinces like Karnali and Gandaki have higher success rates. However, the geographical representation is still not proportionate to the population distribution, indicating that representation is skewed.

Caste-wise, Brahmins dominate civil service representation, despite making up only 11.29% of the population, with other marginalized groups like Dalits, Madheshi, and women showing low representation in higher positions. The Nepali language, spoken by 44.6% of the population, accounts for 61.66% of civil service representatives, further highlighting the lack of proportional representation across languages. Socio-economic background plays a significant role in success rates, with government service family backgrounds yielding better results. Similarly, family educational background also influences civil service success, with applicants from higher educational backgrounds performing better.

Despite the increase in marginalized group representation, the policy faces several challenges. One significant issue is the disproportionate representation of elite members within marginalized communities, who benefit more from the reservation system. The policy lacks periodic updates and specific indicators to address socio-economic status, which leads to the elite within marginalized groups receiving most benefits. There is also a concern about the misuse of reserved quotas, with some individuals benefiting multiple times for different posts.

Research by scholars like Tsing (1993) suggests that marginality can drive innovation, which resonates with Nepal's reservation policy. However, it also introduces limitations, as seen in the Brahmin and Kshetri communities benefiting from the system despite being socio-economically better off. Chaudhary (2013) sees social inclusion as a transformative force, yet his critique highlights that the top-down nature of the policy has not been as effective in integrating marginalized groups as expected.

Furthermore, Paudel (2016) notes that many civil servants from marginalized communities come from elite families within those groups, limiting the policy's effectiveness in empowering the truly disadvantaged. Empowerment measures like training, workshops, and skill development are lacking, contributing to this issue. Joshi (2019) reports that while there has been positive impact on the representation of disabled people, the misuse of quotas remains a concern. Similarly, Pandey and Rawal (2021) show that civil servants from the reservation category often lack the skills and flexibility needed for effective service delivery, though this research contrasts with the findings of this study, which suggests improved cultural competence and diversity in civil service.

The research aligns with Bhul (2021), who finds a significant link between the representation of marginalized groups and their participation in civil service. However, perception gaps remain, as bureaucratic elites often view reservation appointees as less competent. Ishtiaq and Baniamin (2020) highlight the dominance of high-

caste Hindus in higher positions, while marginalized groups like Dalits and women are underrepresented in higher posts, reinforcing existing inequalities.

In conclusion, while the reservation policy has significantly increased the representation of marginalized groups in Nepal's civil service, there are still gaps in its implementation. The policy needs timely revisions, with a focus on empowering marginalized communities, addressing elite dominance, and ensuring equitable representation through a more inclusive, targeted, and transparent approach. A new civil service act with continuous monitoring mechanisms is necessary to maintain social justice and equity.

6. Conclusion and Implications

Nepal's social inclusion policy, introduced in 2064 B.S., seeks to integrate marginalized groups into the civil service through a reservation system. It has significantly increased representation, enhancing diversity and public service delivery. However, the policy disproportionately benefits elite sub-groups within marginalized clusters due to their socio-economic advantages, such as access to quality education and opportunities. This has resulted in uneven representation across caste, region, and socio-economic status, with privileged groups dominating the system while genuinely disadvantaged individuals face challenges in accessing benefits. Major gaps in the policy include the lack of scientific criteria for identifying marginalized groups, insufficient socio-economic considerations, inadequate empowerment measures, and weak monitoring mechanisms. The quota allocation does not reflect population distributions, and the absence of a review mechanism perpetuates inequities. Recommendations include setting a one-person, one-time reservation limit, reallocating quotas based on need, strengthening empowerment programs, linking civil service curricula to education, and ensuring rigorous monitoring to prevent misuse.

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