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Association Between Inter-Agencies Cooperation and Border Governance of Nepal

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Abstract

Border agency cooperation is the process by which different agencies joins together for the purpose of attaining a common goal in building efficiencies for facilitating international trade, cross border travel by improving cross border security. The government of Nepal has established different agencies to enhance border governance. The purpose of this article is to analyze the relationship between inter-agency cooperation and border governance of Nepal. The research follows a sequential explanatory research design using primary and secondary data. Primary data are extracted from stratified sampling technique using five point likert-scale questionnaires where 202 responses were acquired. The findings show that there is a positive relationship between independent variables of inter-agencies cooperation and border governance of Nepal. Furthermore, inter-agency cooperation and border governance have a positive correlation coefficient of 0.391 at 1 percent level of significant. The regression analysis show interagency cooperation has 30 percent effect in border governance of Nepal. The beta value shows one unit of change in inter-agency cooperation will bring 0.523 unit of change in border governance of Nepal. The study suggest on enhancing information, intelligence & data exchange program on daily basis and improvement on mutual negotiation, synchronized border inspection, and mutual trust within the border governing agencies for maintaining good border governance of Nepal by enhancing service delivery.

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Introduction

Border governance involves the ability of government officials to enforce the rules for delivery of services to border population and enhance national defense for public security by protecting state sovereignty against both external and internal security threats posed by vulnerability (Fukuyama, 2013). With the paradigm shift in international model of border governance, and the liberalization of global markets in trade and capital, borders have shifted from fortified military lines to open spaces for commercial transactions (Andreas, 2003). Ejotubu & Jude (2021) define border governance as an act of administering security along state's borders through constitutionally mandated agencies with properly trained security personnel to ensure illegal migrants influx, genuine socio-economic transactions and other related activities. The Coordinated Border Management (CBM) have been adopted by European union countries where border governing agencies and the international community work together to achieve common objective of facilitating cross border movement of people and cross border trade ensuring high safety and security in order to enhance border governance (Doyle, 2010). Article 8 of WTO agreement includes border agency cooperation is one of the key element of trade facilitation which can achieve by cooperation and coordination of their respective mandates, policies and procedures (WTO, 2018).

Good border governance promotes the balance between trade facilitation and cross-border movement of people by enhancing identity Management process in regulatory migration mobility as well as improving accurate identification that controls the borders (Aniszewski, 2009). Due to lack of communication and coordination between border agencies, the vital information necessary to make an informed decision about potential threats, that would leads to inefficient delivery of government services would result in failure of good governance (COMCEC, 2016). Inter-agency cooperation consists sharing of responsibility for regulating and controlling cross border movement of people, flow and transit of commercial goods, predict and plan their operations for security. There is also an opportunity for government agencies to use cooperation mechanisms for simplifying processes to reduce documentary requirements by improving the efficiency and effectiveness of trade transactions and reduce the burden of compliance on traders to increase trade volumes (WCO, 2010). Successful implementation of inter-agency cooperation will yield greater transparency and credibility to customs, trade and security leading a positive correlation with good border governance by fostering transparent, consistent and predictable processes reduces bribes and informal payments to officials and enhances border agency accountability (WTO, 2018).

The government of Nepal has adopted cooperative border management with different clusters agencies to curb the issues for smooth border governance. Different studies and subject matter experts have suggested on enhancing inter-agency cooperation for good border governance. In order to maintain good border governance, there are different functional agencies from policy to operational level. Currently, there are 12 ministries at federal level and 14 departments with 670 borderline agencies in five different

clusters. The central ministry, departments, regional offices, District offices and borderline offices follows both horizontal and vertical hierarchical coordination system to govern the border areas of Nepal (Upreti, 2022).

The specific objective of the study is to analyze the relationship between inter-agency cooperation and border governance of Nepal. In order to meet the objective of the research the following alternative hypothesis has been stated. For this study, hypothesis 1 is "There is significant association between indicators of inter-agencies cooperation", hypothesis 2 is "There is significant association between indicators of border governance" and hypothesis 3 is "There is significant association between inter-agencies cooperation and border governance of Nepal".

Review of the Literature

The African union border governance strategy (2017) defines border governance as an instrument developed to use borders as vectors to promote peace, security and stability, and to improve and accelerate integration through effective governance of borders while facilitating easy movement of people, goods, services and capital among the member countries. Fukuyama (2013) states border governance as actors aside from government such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the World Customs Organization (WCO) and other international security agencies that are involved in cooperative manner for regulating the movement of persons and trade across international borders. Caparini (2006) highlighted democratic governance of border management by removing barriers for trade by reassuring domestic population of state to enforce migration control with generating remittance by shifting responsibility with different stakeholders in collaborative manner and shared goals. World custom organization (2010) argues coordinated border management has existed for many years and refers to a coordinated approach by border control agencies, both domestic and international, in the context of seeking greater efficiencies in managing trade and travel flows, while maintaining a balance with compliance requirements. Standing committee for economic and commercial cooperation of Islam (2016) indicates border governance need to be applied in Technical, operational, legislative and institutional areas for developing social networking among the border citizens by improving border infrastructure.

World custom organization (2010) refers interagency coordination as a coordinated approach by border control agencies, both domestic and international, having Mutual recognitions for building efficiencies in managing trade and travel flows by maintaining a balance with compliance requirements. Coordinated Border Management (CBM) represents an approach to manage borders involving public service agencies working across portfolio boundaries in a coordinated manner to achieve a shared goal thus providing a cohesive government response to the challenges of border management. Standing committee for economic and commercial cooperation of Islam (2016) shows the differences between uncoordinated border management as little or no communication, duplicative control, conflicting requirements, separate functional silos whereas

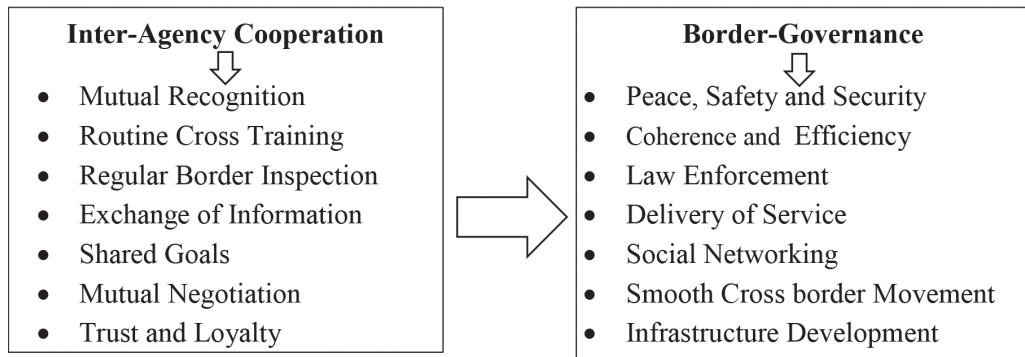
coordinated border management as smooth flow of information, streamlined line control, clarity in requirements, regular border inspections and cross functional collaboration. Polner (2019) highlighted the necessity of interagency cooperation in law enforcement agencies as to increase mutual negotiations, cross trainings for building harmonized trust and loyalty among the agencies member.

Conceptual Framework

Most of the countries of the world have been adopting coordinated border management (CBM) model to facilitate international trade and robust border security. It has been a vibrant instrument to enhance international trade faster and easier. More specifically, coordinated border management is a way to enhance operational efficiency among trade, custom, health and security agencies at the border line. The study of the relation between inter-agency cooperation and border governance is a virgin study in the field of border governance of Nepal. By assessing the literature of border governance and coordinated border management the following conceptual framework has been have been developed:

Figure 1

Researcher Conceptual Framework



Note. Adapted from literature review where inter-agency cooperation is the independent variables whereas border governance is dependent variable with seven indicators of each other.

Methodology

In order to analyze the relationship between inter-agency cooperation and border governance of Nepal, the research follows a sequential explanatory research design with quantitative approach to test the hypothesis. Both primary data and secondary data are extracted to generalize the concept. Primary data are extracted from stratified sampling technique using five point Likert- scales questionnaire (attached in appendix) and secondary data are extracted from books, newspaper, articles, reports and internet explorer. The five point Likert- scales questionnaire was constituted to measure the inter-agency coordination and border governance of Nepal with their indicators. Altogether, 276 questionnaires were distributed to 12 ministries and 14 departments 50 district agencies 100 borderline units and 100 border citizens at different border crossing points for survey and 202 responses (74%) have been achieved. The respondents from

the ministries and department were the spokesperson whereas from districts agencies and borderline agencies were concern officers. The responder from border citizens were permanent resident at different crossing points of Nepal. The study uses mean, standard deviations, standard error, correlation and regression analysis with the help of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS).

In order to measure different independent variables of inter-agency cooperation and border governance, Likert scale values 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 are taken as 'Strongly disagree', 'Disagree', 'Neutral', 'Agree', and 'Strongly agree' respectively. The value 3 is neutral. This means that the mean score of value 3 indicates no effect of variable. The reliabilities of inter-agency cooperation and border governance of Nepal are tested in seven indicators. The indicators and their values of cronbach's alpha are given below:

Table 1

Reliability Test

Variables	Corn batch Alpha	Number of Items
Inter-agency Cooperation	0.82	7
Border Governance	0.86	7

Note. Adapted from Statistical Package for Social Science (2023).

The result shows the value of corn batch alpha for inter-agency cooperation and border governance are 0.82 and 0.86 respectively which shows that reliabilities of these variables are good. The alpha value above 0.7 is considered as a reliable whereas the alpha value below 0.7 is questionable for inferential analysis (Sekaran, 1992).

Findings and Analysis

The findings are sequenced according to the research hypothesis. The first hypothesis and second hypothesis assumes there is significant association between indicators of inter-agencies coordination and border governance of Nepal. The responses of all variables are shown in descriptive value and after computing the variables, correlation test is conducted to measure the coefficient and significant. The third hypothesis assumes there is significant association between inter-agency cooperation and border governance. Both independent and dependent variables are correlated with each other and regression analysis is conducted.

Inter-Agency Cooperation

Inter-agency cooperation is the process by which different agencies joins together for the purpose of attaining a common goal. It involves two or more agencies deciding to work together in partnership to achieve a common goal which is called as horizontal approach cooperation of different organization. The constitution of Nepal has a provision of fulfilling aspirations for sustainable peace, good governance, development and prosperity of the country by adopting all forms of cooperation, co-existence and mutual coordination among all the stakeholders.

The essence of inter-agency cooperation is mutual understanding between the stakeholders. Mutual understanding is the process of knowing each other and knowing responsibility and authority by which work duplication can be reduced. In order to achieve common objective, routine based crossed training are necessary which increases mutual understanding that resulted in healthy cooperation. Border agency cooperation is highly depended upon synchronized border inspection. These tasks are necessary to identify the risk and challenges. In order to reduce risk and challenges, exchange of information is the vital task that increases good governance at border areas of Nepal. All the border governing agencies should have common goals with mutual trust and loyalty. Therefore, these indicators are the determinant factors for good border governance which are extracted from different literature review. The results of the responses are shown below:

Table 2*Responses of Indicators*

Inter-Agency Coordination	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
Mutual Recognition	2	3.5	18.3	58.9	17.3
Routine Based cross training	6.9	10.9	11.9	44.1	26.2
Regular Border Inspection	1.5	24.8	29.2	43.1	1.5
Exchange of Information, Intelligence and data	2	36	27	34	1
Shared Goals	2	19	22	55	2
Mutual Negotiation	3	34	24	23	14
Trust and Loyalty	1.5	28.7	46	16.3	7.4

Number of Respondents (N) = 202

Note. Adapted from Field Survey (2023).

The table shows the responses of different indicators of interagency cooperation. In the first indicator mutual Recognition of border governing agencies with each other, 17.3% respondents strongly agreed and 58.9% respondents agreed. It shows than 94.5% responses above the value 3. In the second indicator routine based cross training, 26.2% of respondents strongly agreed and 44.1% of respondents agreed which holds 82.2% above the value of 3. In the third indicator synchronized border inspection, only 1.5% respondents strongly agreed and 43.1% agreed accounting 73.8% above the value of 3. Similarly, in exchange of information, intelligence and data of 1% of respondent strongly agreed and 36% disagree. This indicator accounts only 62% above the value of 3. In fifth indicators, harmonized trust and loyalty only 2% strongly agreed and 55% agreed accounting to 79% above the value of 3. In mutual recognition 14% strongly agreed where as 34% disagree. This indicator accounts 61% above the value of 3. In the last indicator, 7.4% strongly agreed and 46% stayed in neutral position accounting to 69.7% above the value of 3. The average value and standard deviation of the responses

are shown in the table below:

Table 3

Descriptive Analysis of Indicators

S.N.	Indicators	Mean	S.D.	S.E.
1	Mutual Recognition	3.86	0.81	0.58
2	Routine Based cross training	3.72	1.17	0.83
3	Regular Border Inspection	3.18	0.87	0.62
4	Exchange of Information, Intelligence and data	2.96	0.89	0.63
5	Shared Goals	3.35	0.87	0.62
6	Mutual Negotiation	3.12	1.13	0.79
7	Trust and Loyalty	2.99	0.91	0.64
Inter-Agency Cooperation		3.32	0.39	0.28
Number of Respondents (N) = 202				

Note. Adapted from Research Findings (2023). Mean values are the averages values of the total responses, S.D are the standard deviation which measures the variations. Lower standard deviation indicates the values closer to mean. S.E is standard error.

In the table, mean and standard deviation of all the indicators are shown. The mean responses of all indicators range from 2.96 to 3.86. Among all the indicators, mutual recognition has the highest mean value of 3.86 with standard deviation of 0.81 which means most of the respondent agreed that border governing agencies of Nepal are having a good mutual recognition with each other. The lowest standard deviation tends to be closer to the mean which shows more accuracy of data and comply with a perfect normal distribution. The mean value and standard deviation for exchange of information, intelligence and data are 2.96 and 0.89 respectively. This is the lowest mean value which indicates there are less exchange of information, intelligence and data among the border governing agencies. Furthermore, computing all indicators the composite mean and standard deviation of inter-agency cooperation are 3.32 and 0.39 respectively, which is a normally distributed curve. The correlation analysis of indicators of inter-agency cooperation is shown in the table below.

Table 4

Correlation Coefficient of Indicators

S.N.	Indicators	Inter-Agency Cooperation	P Value
1	Mutual Recognition	.452**	.000
2	Routine Based Cross Training	.537**	.000
3	Synchronized Border Inspection	.509**	.000
4	Exchange of Information, Intelligence & data	.114	.107
5	Shared Goal	.452**	.000
6	Mutual Negotiation	.320**	.000

7	Trust and Loyalty	.495**	.000
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)			
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)			

Note. Adapted from Research Findings (2023). Correlation coefficient range from -1 to +1 to measure relationship, P-value is the probability value for inferring hypothesis result.

In the table, the relationship between indicators of inter-agency cooperation is explained. The correlation coefficient closer to 1 is more statically significance. The values below 0.2 have a negligible relationship, value from 0.2 to 0.4 has low relationship, value from 0.4 to 0.7 has moderate relationship, and value from 0.7 to 0.9 has high relationship and value above 0.9 have very high relationship (Muchinsky, 1993; Parvizifard et al, 2012). The first indicator, mutual recognition has a correlation coefficient of 0.452 with P-value of 0.00 which is less than 0.05. It means that mutual recognition has moderate relationship at 1% Level of significant with inter-agency cooperation. Others indicators, routine based cross training, synchronized border inspection, shared goals, mutual negotiation and trust & loyalty have a positive coefficient of with P-value of 0.00 which is less than 0.05. It means that all these variables are moderately correlated at 1% level of significant with inter-agency cooperation. The P-value of Exchange of information, intelligence and data is more than 0.05 which is not significant and is not correlated with inter-agency cooperation. This indicator needs to be improved by all the border governing agencies.

Result of Hypothesis 1

Since the P-value of all the indicators (Except exchange of information, intelligence and data) are less than 0.05 at 1% level of significant, there is association between independent variables of inter-agencies cooperation.

Border Governance of Nepal

Governing the borders is daunting task of any nation. It is the involvement of both national and international agencies working together for common goal. Peace and safety are the first factor of good border governance. Border agencies working in efficient manner promotes the sense of patriotism among the citizens. It is necessary for all agencies to work in efficient manner to provide needful services. The service provide by these agencies are peace and security, cross border movement facilitation, revenue collection, health care and infrastructural development. To measure border governance of Nepal Seven indicators were extracted from different literature review which is similar to good governance Act 2064. The results of the responses are shown below:

Table 5

Responses of Indicators

Border Governance	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
Peace, safety and security	13	44.1	23.8	12.9	5.4

Coherence and Efficiency	9.9	36.1	23.8	24.8	5.4
Law Enforcement	15.8	12.9	58.4	11.4	1.5
Delivery of Service	2	26.7	36.6	32.7	2
Social Networking	2	40.1	41.5	14.9	1.5
Smooth Cross border Movement	2	22.8	37.1	36.6	1.5
Infrastructure Development	41.1	16.8	33.2	7.4	1.5

Number of Respondents (N) = 202

Note. Adapted from Field Survey (2023).

The table shows the responses of the indicators of border governance. In the first indicator Peace, safety and security only 5.4% respondents strongly agreed and 12.9% respondents agreed where as 13% strongly disagreed and 44.1% disagreed. It shows than only 42.1% responses above the value 3. In the second indicator greater efficiency, 5.4% of respondents strongly agreed and 24.8% of respondents agreed which holds 54% above the value of 3. In the third indicator law enforcement, only 1.5% respondents strongly agreed and 11.4% agreed accounting 71.3% above the value of 3. Similarly, in delivery of service 2% of respondent strongly agreed and 32.7% disagree. This indicator accounts only 71.3% above the value of 3.

Table 6

Descriptive Analysis of Indicators

S.N.	Indicators	Mean	S.D.	S.E.
1	Peace, safety and security	2.52	1.06	0.75
2	Greater Efficiency	2.79	1.09	0.77
3	Law Enforcement	2.69	0.93	0.65
4	Delivery of Service	3.06	0.87	0.62
5	Social Networking	2.74	0.79	0.56
6	Smooth Cross Border Movement	3.13	0.85	0.59
7	Infrastructure Development	2.12	1.07	0.76
Border Governance		2.73	0.71	0.49

Note. Adapted from Research Findings (2023).

In fifth indicator, social networking only 1.5% strongly agreed and 14.9% agreed accounting to 57.9% above the value of 3. In smooth cross border movement 1.5% strongly agreed where as 36.6% disagree. This indicator accounts 75.2% above the value of 3. In the last indicator, 1.5% strongly agreed and 7.4% agreed accounting to 42.1% above the value of 3. The average value and standard deviation of the responses are shown in the table above.

In the table, mean and standard deviation of all the indicators are shown. The mean responses of all indicators range from 2.12 to 3.13. Among all the indicators, smooth cross border movement has the highest mean value of 3.13 with standard deviation of

0.85 which indicates a smooth cross border movement of people. The mean value and standard deviation for infrastructure development are 2.12 and 1.07 respectively. This is the lowest mean value which indicates there is fewer infrastructures development at border areas of Nepal. Furthermore, computing all seven indicators the composite mean and standard deviation of border governance are 2.73 and 0.71 which is a normally distributed curve. The correlation of analysis of indicators of inter-agency coordination is shown in the table below:

Table 7

Correlation Coefficient of Indicators

S.N.	Indicators	Border Governance	P Value
1	Peace, safety and security	.785**	.000
2	Greater Efficiency	.907**	.000
3	Law Enforcement	.606**	.000
4	Delivery of Service	.374**	.000
5	Social Networking	.849**	.000
6	Smooth Cross border Movement	.817**	.000
7	Infrastructure Development	.884**	.000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Note. Adapted from Research Findings (2023).

In the table, the relationship between indicators of border governance is explained. The first indicator, peace, safety and security have a correlation coefficient of 0.785 with P-value of 0.00 which is less than 0.05. It means that peace, safety and security are highly correlated at 1% Level of significant with border governance. Next indicator greater efficiency has a correlation coefficient of 0.907 which is highly correlated with border governance. Similarly, law enforcement has a correlation coefficient of 0.606 which have a moderate relationship with border governance. The delivery of service has a correlation coefficient of 0.374 which shows a low relationship with border governance. Even though this indicator has the second highest mean value, its relationship with border governance is comparatively low. Therefore, all concerned the agencies need to abide service delivery for better improvement. Rest of the indicators i.e. social networking, smooth cross border movement and infrastructure development have a positive coefficient above 0.8 which is highly correlated with border governance. All the indicators of border governance are positively correlated with border governance.

Result of Hypothesis 2

Since the P-value of all the indicators are less than 0.05 at 1% level of significant, there is association between indicators of border governance of Nepal.

Inter-Agency Cooperation and Border Governance of Nepal

In order to test the relationship of inter-agency cooperation and border governance of

Nepal, the composite mean and standard deviation are shown in the table below.

Table 8

Descriptive Analysis of Inter-agency Cooperation and Border Governance

	Mean	S.D.	S.E.
Inter-Agency Cooperation	3.32	0.39	0.28
Border Governance of Nepal	2.73	0.71	0.49

Note. Adapted from Research Findings (2023).

The mean value of inter-agency cooperation is 3.2 with standard deviation of 0.39 and means value of border governance is 2.8 with standard deviation of 0.7. The mean value and standard deviation of border governance is lower than inter-agency cooperation which means than inter-agency is more consistence than border governance. Furthermore, the correlation analysis is shown below:

Table 9

Correlation Coefficient of Inter-Agency Cooperation and Border Governance

		Border Governance
Inter-Agency Cooperation	Pearson Correlation	0.391**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	202

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)*

Note. Adapted from Research Findings (2023).

The table shows the correlation analysis of inter-agency cooperation and border governance of Nepal. The P-value of correlation coefficient is 0.00 which is less than 0.05. It is statically significant at 1% level of significant. The correlation coefficient of inter-agency cooperation and border governance is 0.391. The result indicates that there is a positive correlation with moderate relationship to each other. Furthermore, the regression coefficient of dependent and independent are show in the table below:

Table 10

Regression Analysis Inter-Agency Cooperation and Border Governance

		Coefficients				
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.988	.405		2.438	.016
	Interagency Cooperation	.523	.121	.391	4.309	.000
R2=0.35		Adjusted R2=0.30		F. Stat =18.56	F. Sig = 0.000	

Dependent Variable: Border governance

Note. Adapted from Research Findings (2023).

The table shows the regression analysis between interagency cooperation and border governance. The adjusted R² value is 0.30 which means that the independent variable i.e. interagency cooperation have 30% effect in dependent variable i.e. border governance. Likewise, F. Sig value is 0.00 which means that the model is significant for study. The beta value of interagency cooperation is 0.523, which means one unit of change in inter-agency cooperation will bring 0.523 unit of change in border governance of Nepal. The regression equation of the study is as shown:

$$\text{Border governance} = 0.988 + 0.523 \text{ Interagency cooperation} + 0.121$$

Result of Hypothesis 3

Since the P-value of inter-agency cooperation and border governance are less than 0.05 at 1% level of significant, there is significant association between inter-agencies cooperation and border governance of Nepal.

Discussion

After the unification of Nepal, there have been significant role of administrative and security agencies in promoting good governance. These agencies were mandated to protect the border areas, secure the border pillars, collect the revenue and facilitate the cross border movement of people. Due to the open border with India, there has been an instant threat to nation security. Therefore, all the regulatory and monitory agencies need to have a deep cooperation to promote good governance. The findings of this research show that the indicators of inter-agencies cooperation and border governance are correlated with each other. In order to have a cordial relation between border governing agencies of Nepal, exchange of information, intelligence and data plays a crucial role. The research suggest on enhancing information, intelligence and data exchange program on daily basis. Other indicators of inter-agency cooperation such as trust & loyalty of border governing agencies, synchronized border inspection and mutual negotiation are at the averaged figure which also needs to be improved. The mean figure of border governance is below the average value which indicates that there is need of improvement in maximizing the governance at border areas of Nepal. The infrastructural development of border area is below the value of 2.5 which indicates poor condition of infrastructure and resources which need to be reformed. Similarly, the correlation between inter-agency cooperation and border governance is only 0.39, which means that other independent and moderating variables like existing legal jurisdiction of agencies, technological adaptation, border governance policy, foreign policy and diplomatic procedure need to be taken as a determinant factors for good border governance. In order to build a strong relationship between interagency and border governance, the indicators which have a lower correlation coefficient like exchange of information, service delivery and mutual negotiation need an urgent improvement from concern authority.

Conclusion

Inter-agency cooperation is a major determinant factor of good border governance. The objective of this research is to establish relation between inter-agency cooperation and border governance. The research concludes by establishing the relationship between inter-agency cooperation and border governance of Nepal. However, there are many factors required for enhancing interagency cooperation. Lack of information exchange program, synchronized border inspection and trust within the border governing agencies are the areas for improvement. Also, border areas infrastructural development, enhancing service delivery are the major hazards of border governance. It is necessary to take pertinent steps from all the sectors of nation in order to strengthen governance at border areas of Nepal. Among different measures, policy refinement for border governance should be promptly taken in actions. Further research can be conducted on different variables of inter-agency cooperation and border governance.

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