

ASSESSMENT OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF APARTMENTS IN KATHMANDU VALLEY

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Abstract

Nepal is urbanising at a rapid pace. According to CBS 2011 the urban population accounts for 17% and Kathmandu valley shares the highest urban population. The growing population has put immense pressure on land and housing situation in Kathmandu Valley. Apartments came into picture to accommodate the growing population in the less horizontal space of land but all income groups of people could not afford and access to the facilities and space provided in the apartments.

The current scenario in Kathmandu valley depicts that the developers make investments in construction of apartments as a commercial activity rather than to upgrade housing scenario. Despite, due to the high interest rate, formal collateral in the form of land and house and high income of people to repay loans preferred by commercial banks, the economically weaker section and lower income group of people are not eligible to proceed for the loan. The high cost of Apartment units is beyond affordability of EWS and LIG.

The rapid increment of population concentration on primate cities like Kathmandu has led to scarcity of land to accommodate the increasing migrants and not only that, it has resulted in the unhygienic condition of living, suffocating and deteriorating urban environment. As a result, the high income group are moving in the urban fringe and it's always the poor who are trapped in the vulnerable core cities of Kathmandu. The residential shift of rich people to urban fringe has led to the adhoc development with social disparity and inequity amongst the people living in the same areas.

Keywords: apartment, occupancy ratio, society office.

1. Introduction

Urbanization refers to the process of growth in the proportion of population living in urban areas. Historically, the concept of urbanization has been related to specialization, industrialization and consequent economic development. Asia is urbanizing at a rapid pace. Asia has experienced a number of demographic transformations. In 1950, more than two-thirds (70%) of people worldwide lived in rural settlements and less than one-third (30%) in urban settlements.

In 2014, 54% of the world's population was urban. (UN Population Division, 2015). According to the data (CBS, 2011), urban population in context of Nepal was 17%. With the constraint and high cost of land in the capital and a steady acceptance for Community living Housing projects, "Vertical Living" came into picture. Community living in an Apartment, with all the necessary amenities, in prime locations inside the valley, soon became the hotcakes. With the mushrooming of Apartments inside the valley, the booming market of apartments, the ratio of users and investors changed drastically. Land brokers in delivery of housing plots to urban dwellers came into existence in the late 70's. From 80's it became a lucrative business

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and many parties emerged in this scene and land has been seen as piece of business icon than a space for living.

2. Literature Review

Before the implementation of apartment act various concepts of apartment had evolved in an informal way. Kathmandu Residency, the company's first housing Project (Ansal Chaudhary) is located at Bagdole, Lalitpur. It is the first organized apartments in Nepal which came before 2000 with 180 numbers of units in the area of 7301sq.m. After 2000 and before the enactment of apartment act of 2054 various apartments came as listed in the Table 1. In Malaysia it requires private developers to set aside certain amount of new housing developments for the marginalized groups. Since the introduction of New Economic Policy in 1970 and the National Development Policy of 1991, private housing developers have been required to reserve a certain share of their development schemes for the low-income people. Housing policy developments in

Sri Lanka presents an interesting example of the intent to deal with mass housing poverty and to adapt policy to changing economic and political circumstances. In the years 1984 to 1989, the government in Sri Lanka took positive and determined steps in launching a new million houses program. This was an enlarged self-help and small loans program. The program had a strong low income emphasis. Loans were available at concessional rates from 3% to 6% with a 15-year repayment plan (Aldrich and Sandhu, 1995).

It is a fact that Nepal is undergoing a rapid urbanization, as the rural population could not sustain themselves and their families on the basis of farming only. This process of internal migration further highlights the lack of already inadequate economic and physical infrastructure in the urban areas. Thus, migration to urban areas has resulted in an excessive pressure on limited urban infrastructure and social services.

Table 1: Apartments built before the apartment act of 2054 B.S (DUDBC, Kathmandu division, 2012)

SN	Name and location	Developers	Area (sq.m)	No. of units	Drawing approval status
1	Sunrise Homes, Balkumari-Phase1	Shree Oriental constrn. & Development Pvt. Ltd. Balkumari, Lalitpur	13518	115	Approved
2	Kathmandu Residency, Bagdol, Lalitpur	Ansal chaudhary Developers Pvt. Ltd, Sanepa, Lalitpur	7301	180	Approved
3	Neon Apartment, Kuleshwor, Kathmandu	Oriental Colony Pvt. Ltd., Balkhu, Kathmandu	3418	100	Approved
4	Stupa Housing, Buddhanagar, Kathmandu	Shree Ragendra Shakya, Pulchowk, Lalitpur	961.83	50	Approved
5	Grace Apartment, Naxal, Kathmandu	ACE Development Company, KMC, Kanthipath	3310	56	Approved
6	Mount View Residence, Harisidhi, Lalitpur	Ansal chaudhary Developers Pvt. Ltd, Sanepa ,Lalitpur	11911	72	Approved

2.1. Factors Affecting Affordability

Factors affecting the affordability are listed as below:

- Commuting time/distance
- Household income
- Costs
- Right to build
- Consequences of shortages
- Policy tools

2.2. Types of Housing Supply

2.2.1. Formal private sector

Formal private sectors are housing developer (real estate developers) and land developers who need to get formal approval from KVDA and DUDBC in Kathmandu Valley and from local body (local government) and DUDBC division office outside Kathmandu Valley.

In context of Kathmandu Valley, the contribution of individual owner in housing supply is very high. On the mechanism an owner acquired a plot of land, organize and manage the construction of house. The house is expanded incrementally over a period of time as both family and income grows. Rental housing is another type which serves about 35% of total urban population of Kathmandu. Additional source of income can be produced by renting the houses in Kathmandu. According to a study by Lumanti, (1997), it was found that 40% of the total income off owner was derived from the rent. About 95% of the families pay approximately 30% of their total income to rents. It indicates an increasing demand for cheaper in supply of rental units by owner builders has less potential to fulfill the increasing demand of rental accommodation unless formal private sector plays a vital role in bulk supply of housing units within the city (Bajracharya 2066 B.S p26 -27).

2.2.2. Informal Private Sector

Informal sectors are petty land brokers who sell and buy small chunk of housing plots and also individual house owner who rent partially (rooms or flats) or whole building unit. These dealers do not take formal approval from any agency and they do not bother to pay rental tax also. Such activities are not formally recorded in any government agencies.

Housing supply is partially filled by informal private sector through land brokers. Land brokers and land buyers are responsible for opening up new land for housing. In the report of Halcrow Fox, (1991), it is stated that the informal real estate opened up more than 1270 hectares of land for residential purpose in Kathmandu and Lalitpur Municipalities between years 1971 to 1981. Without knowledge of proper planning broker are forces to supply land parcels in an inefficient manner. This is also due to inadequate financial back up.

2.3. Housing Financing

In case of Nepal, the use of mortgage is considered a necessary condition for all housing finance agencies belonging to the formal sector. It is sensible to provide loan whose income is secured to pay back the loan. In such case the low income group people get left out of the existing housing finance system. The poor have no access to credit, other than what they get from money lenders at high rates. Most low income households in Nepal are unable to meet this criterion. From the foregoing, it is clear that the existing financial system is unlikely to adequately serve the needs of low income households. Also, it is uncertain whether various government initiatives would contribute substantially to create an environment which would be conducive enough to generate a viable, replicable finance system for these households. Thus, a new concept of housing finance for the urban poor appears an essential condition within the Nepali socio-economic reality.

In the issue of collateral for the low income groups, there are many examples the world over especially with regard to microfinance of informal sector. The Grameen Bank of Bangladesh is the most successful story, having started housing loan to the poor in 1984, there were 628,102 housing units constructed. The repayment record is 98 percent. However, there was no security or collateral. The main reason for timely and full repayment, amongst other reasons, was the formation of groups of five or six who apply for a loan and were collectively responsible for its repayment.

2.4. House Price-to-Income Ratio

House price-to-income ratio is a widely used affordability ratio, which specifies the level of the median free-market price of a dwelling unit relative to the median annual household income. As per household budget survey (2016), the average monthly household income was Rs. 30,121. The average monthly household income in rural area was Rs. 27,511 and such income in urban area was Rs. 32,336. In urban area, the contribution of salary, wages, allowance and pension was 33.03 percent compared to 26.42 percent in rural area, the contribution of income from business was 25.70 percent compared to 22.68 percent in rural area and the contribution of rent and imputed rent was 20.51 percent compared to 12.73 percent in rural area (Average monthly household expenditure in rural area was Rs. 22,928 and in urban area such expenditure was Rs. 28,474 and the Kathmandu Valley had the highest average monthly household expenditure of Rs. 31,761. In the Kathmandu Valley house rent had the highest expenditure share (20.85 percent). urban households allocated 40.48 percent for consumption expenditure on food and beverage items. This shows that affording the average income is not sufficient.

In Kathmandu Valley all the houses are constructed on prototype manner, one storey at a time, with provisions to add floors later. This is basically due to the high cost of housing facility and lower level of income and saving (Mathema,1999). As housing expenditure tends to rise with house prices, many analysts have relied directly on this ratio as a measure of housing

affordability. This is generally based on the fact that house price is a key determinant of home ownership affordability. Therefore, it is assumed that rising house prices not only impede the ability of prospective buyers to accumulate the required down payment (which is usually a specified percentage of the house price) but also push up the monthly mortgage payments on a loan. As a result, buyers must have higher income to meet the qualifying criteria, which in the United States is about 3.5 to 4.0 multiple of the mortgage payment corresponding to about 29% and 25% expenditure to income ratio respectively (Linneman and Megbolugbe, 1992). Most mortgage credit institutions rely mostly on this type of measures in their risk assessment of potential customers.

The increasing use of this ratio in the World Bank/UNDP/UNCHS in their Urban Management Programme, 1986-99, has contributed to its wide recognition as a major measure of affordability. Beyond giving an indication on how much a dwelling might reasonably cost consumers if they were to live elsewhere, the house-price-to-income ratios are used principally to provide insight on the level of access to homeownership in an area. It is generally regarded as the “best measure of pressure on the housing market and ratios of 3 to 5 are regarded as normal. Nevertheless, for each market there are different rules of thumb and the interpretation of house-price-to-income results is difficult because the ratio ignores tax, changes in housing quality, mortgage interest rates and down payments (Pitros 2014).

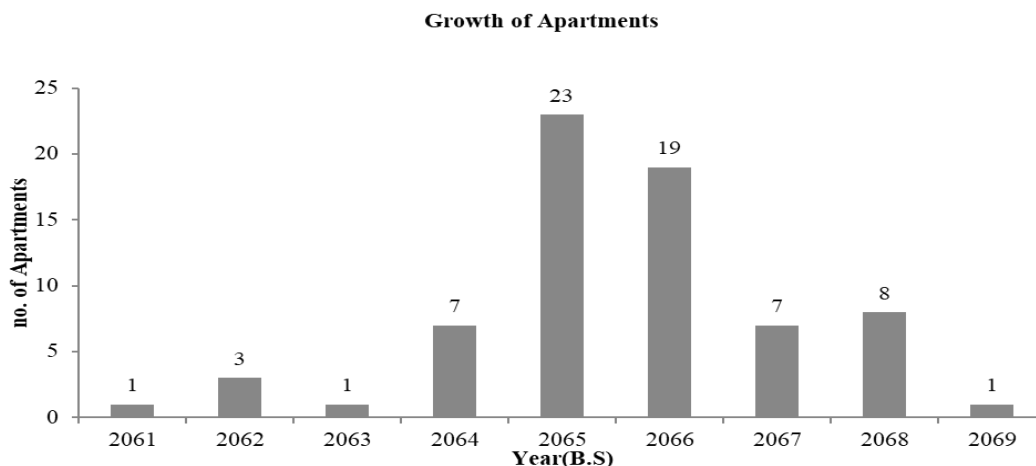


Fig. 1. Growth of Apartments in Kathmandu Valley (Source: DUDBC2069)

2.5. Urban Housing Home in High Rises in Nepal

The conventional system of owner-built housing is still predominant but with the growing demand for land-for-house, the Kathmandu Valley is experiencing a space-constraint in recent times. It is becoming increasingly difficult for people to find suitable land to build individual residences on. However, inducing paradigm shift is a substantial challenge to overcome the tradition of building one's own house. Vertical living, due to its sheer nature of accommodating multiple units, promises to become the preferred lifestyle option for many. Currently, the housing industry of Nepal is worth an estimated whopping Rs 200 billion.

A total of 54 companies have received permission for construction of community or collective housing so far in the three districts of the Kathmandu Valley till 2069. These companies have received the nod to build 3,633 units of family residences against a demand of 30,000 units which is expected to exceed

well over 40,000 units each year in the valley by 2020. While fiscal years 2007-08 and 2008-09 saw the highest number of new projects registration, some approved projects have continued to progress while some others have slowed down, delayed or downsized and as per the DUDBC 74 apartments have taken permit till 2075 B.S.

2.6. Source of Financing in Nepal

The source of financing in Nepal can be either formal source or informal source.

2.6.1. Formal sources

- Commercial banks
- Nepal housing development finance company ltd. (NHDFC)
- Employee's provident fund (EPF)
- Saving and loans (cooperative) programme

- Nagarik lagani kosh
- Remittance money

2.6.2. Informal sources

Traditionally people used to borrow money from friends or relatives or go to traditional money lenders for loans for different purposes including housing loans. The money lenders provide loan against collateral usually land or house. However, in recent years there has been a remarkable decline in these practices. Due to institutional availability of agricultural credit and fast and wide spreading of a network of banking and financial sector including micro finance and co-operatives in the country, the number of alternative sources of finance grew rapidly. In 1991 it was estimated that roughly 70% of shelter financing came from the informal sector. According to Nepal Urban Housing Sector Profile 2011, 2010 CIUD household survey shows that this percentage is as low as 4%. The majority (53%) relies on own savings, while as much as 33% has accessed a loan from a commercial bank, see Fig.2. Indeed, due to availability of attractive home loan schemes at competitive interest rates from different financial institutions an increasing number of regular income earners prefer to borrow from these financial institutions to buy a home or an apartment rather than borrowing from relatives and friends and traditional money lenders or waiting for many years to accumulate savings and to self-build a home or buy an apartment.

The household survey 2010 CIUD shows that as much as 85 per cent of the households have shown their preference to loan from bank and financial institutions rather than from friends and relatives and traditional money lenders. Not surprising since traditional money lenders usually charge exorbitant interest rates rate of interest up to 36 percent as against 10~15 percent by commercial banks and finance companies.

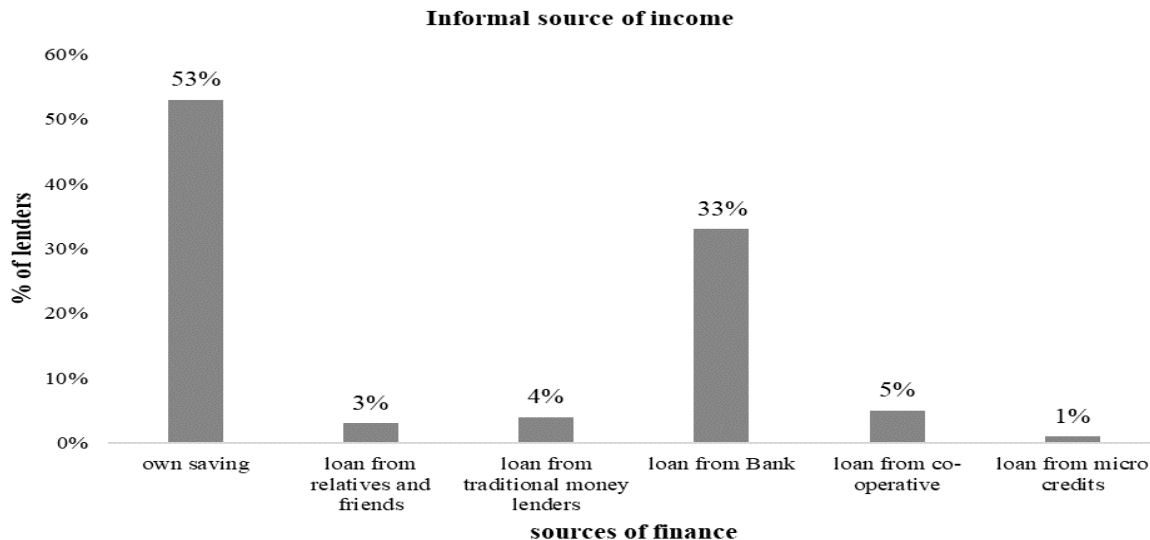


Fig. 2. Source of financing for purchase of land or housing construction (2010 CIUD Household Survey)

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Sensing and realizing problem

The first step was observing the situation and sensing the problem which was done through literature review and observation of scenario in Kathmandu Valley.

3.2. Problem Identification

Once the level of awareness of the problem was increased, attention was focused on associated factors through further search of evidence.

3.3. Research Question

Research question was put forward to get the answers of the critical problems that is currently happening in case of Kathmandu valley that all people could not think of living in apartments.

3.4. Literature Review

The literature review was done by referring to various books, journals, articles, thesis books and internet search. The practices and policies adopted in neighboring countries (India and Philippines) for making housing and apartments accessible by all people were referred. Various acts and policies adopted in Nepal (for housing and apartments) were reviewed. Besides the provisions of housing finance, loans provided by various financial institutions and their payback periods were studied.

3.5. Case Studies

The case study research method was adopted in the investigation because it excels at bringing an understanding of a complex issue and can extend experience or add strength to what is already known through previous research. Primary as well as secondary data were collected for the study.

3.5.1. Primary data collection

Primary sources of information included case studies, interviews, questionnaires and observations. For collection of primary data, methods included questionnaire survey, physical mapping and references provided by concerned organizations. Questionnaire surveys were conducted with the occupants living in the apartments. An investigation survey was conducted for the identification of the study areas. The study areas were identified and delineated. For this purpose, internet surfing was done and the office of developers were visited to get the idea of target group by apartment and to know the occupancy status of apartment

a. Interview: The interview is an important tool of research. The oral questionnaire method was used in the analysis and the response of the interviewee were written and recorded.

b. Questionnaire: A questionnaire is a formulated series of questions. It is used when factual data and information is desired. Questionnaires administered personally to an individual or groups

of individuals have a number of advantages. The person administering the instrument has an opportunity to establish rapport, to explain the purpose of the study and to explain the meaning of the questions that may not be clear.

It is generally of two types: (a) the closed form: Questionnaires that call for short, check responses are known as closed form type. They provide for making a yes or no answer, a short response or checking an item from a list of suggested responses. It is easy to fill out, takes little time and is fairly easy to tabulate and analyze but may yield superficial information. (b) The open form: The open form type of questionnaire calls for a free response in the respondent's own words. The following open form question gives an example: Why did you choose this apartment to stay? Both types of questionnaire were conducted during the survey depending upon the response of occupants.

3.5.2. Secondary data

Secondary data was in the form of data, information and published materials. Data, statistics and findings from relevant previous investigations and literature studies were reviewed. Secondary data collections were collected through the census data, magazine, bulletin, aerial photographs, maps etc. The data was collected through the Department of Urban development and building construction, Central Bureau of statistics. The secondary data was collected from the society

office of apartments, developers of the apartment as well as from the consultant.

3.6. Analysis and Synthesis of Data/Evidences Collected

Data analysis was done using the excel workbook. It helps to analyze the collected data in a definite form considering the comparative study. The data collected through the questionnaire survey with the occupants were compiled in the excel work book and the necessary charts and comparative graphs were taken out. With the help of graphs and charts, the data were interpreted and comparative study was done.

4. Case Study and Analysis

4.1. Case Studies Selected

Three apartments were selected for the case study shown in Table 2. The apartments were selected on the criteria of target group of clients like middle income group (MIG) and higher income group (HIG) and there were no such apartments which are of low costs. Sunrise Towers and the Guna Colony were targeted to the middle income group people and the Rio Apartment was targeted towards high income group. Besides, the location of apartment was some criteria for the selection of apartment for study. Sunrise Towers is located within the ring road, Guna Colony nearby ring road and Rio Apartments within the inner-city.

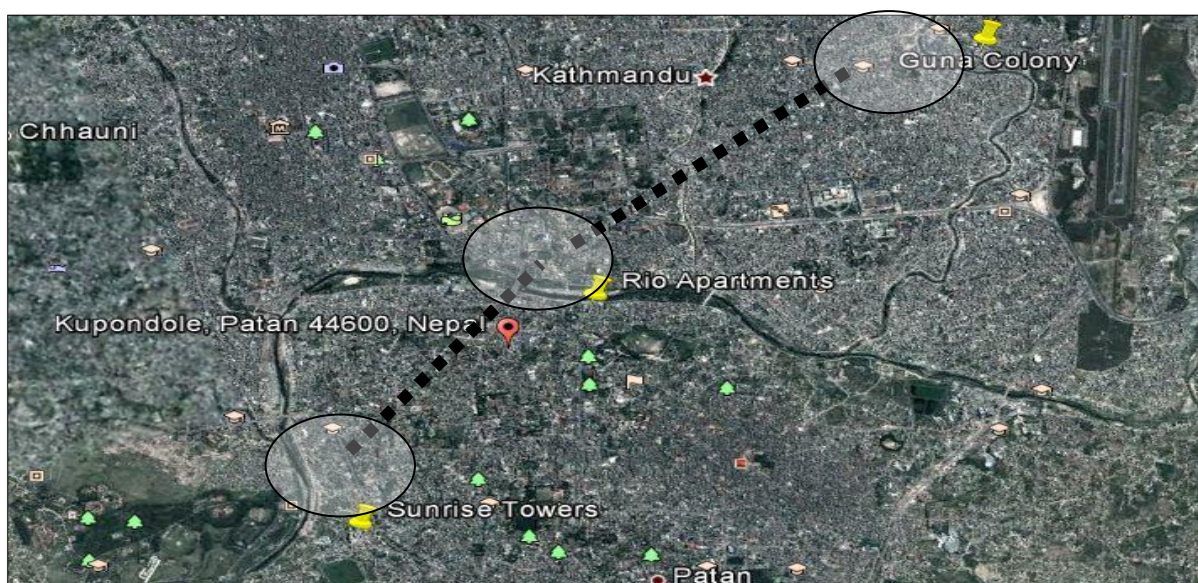


Fig. 3. Google map showing spatial distribution of apartments studied

Table 2: Apartments selected for case study

S.N	Name of apartment	Developer	Location
1	Sunrise Towers	Sunrise Developers (P) Ltd	Dhobighat, Lalitpur
2	Guna Colony	Stupa Housing (P) Ltd	Sinamangal, Kathmandu
3	Rio Apartments	CM Developers (P) Ltd	Kupondole, Lalitpur

4.2. Project Overview

The above apartments are almost the old apartments in Kathmandu Valley where people have been residing for more than 10 years. The recreational spaces in the apartment are not sufficient however open spaces are the outcomes to meet the byelaws and regulatory criteria only. The area of the units in the apartment varied as per the target group of the apartment for example

the unit area of Rio apartment is more than that of other apartment studied and so the price is a dependent factor as per the area and target group. The apartments have been handed over to society office. Society office is a formal organization formed by the members of apartment within apartment. the responsibility of society office is managing infrastructure like electricity, water supply, garbage, cleaning and maintenance, security and acting as a mediator.

Table 3: Project overview

Name of apartment	Types of unit (bhk)	Super area of unit (sq.ft)	Avg. cost per sq.ft (NRs)	Rent per month (NRs)
Sunrise Towers	2 bhk	722	6000	15000
	3 bhk	1100	6000	25000
	4 bhk	1634	6000	35000
Guna colony	3 bhk	873	5500	20000
	3 bhk	915	5500	20000
Rio Apartment	2 bhk	1200	8000	\$ 1100
	3 bhk	1800	8000	\$ 1500

Table 4: Cost and area of various units (2069)

Name of apartments	Distance from ring road	Land area (sq. ft/ropani)	Completion date	Types of (bhk)	occupancy
Sunrise apartment (Dhobighat)	150 m south of ring road	103359 sq.ft (18-13-3-3.98)	2066 B.S	2 bhk, 3 bhk, 4 bhk	75%
Guna Colony (Sinamangal)	100 m from the main road	42183.26 sq.ft (7-11-1-0.4)	2065 B.S	3 bhk	77%
Rio Apartment (Kupondole, Jwagal)	200 m from the main road	13347.75 sq.ft (2-7-0-0)	2068 B.S	2 bhk, 3 bhk	42%

4.3. Social Structure

In majority of the apartments the nuclear family was found to be residing which exceeded in 40% of the units surveyed and with nearly equal ratio of male and female population in the apartment. Majority of the age group living in the apartment can be ranged between the range of 15 years old to 39 years old and majority of Marwadi community followed by Brahmins and Newars and almost all Hindus. This shows that the young generation who are busy with their working schedule and have less time to spend in their house prefer apartments. Out of surveyed units the majority of the occupants were found to be from outside Kathmandu Valley. Land is constraint factor in Kathmandu and despite that people are busy and have no time to construct new house and could not give time for the supervision of construction. Because of the busy schedule they could not manage time to buy construction equipments and building material. Besides, it is a tedious job to deal with contractor and labours and on the other hand it's not reliable to completely depend on contractor for construction of new house. Water supply, electricity, waste disposal is a major problem in Kathmandu Valley. The water supply by KUKL once or twice a week for an hour is not sufficient for the household use and the distribution time not being fixed people are suffering the problem. Because the people are busy they could not even manage time for the cleanliness and maintenance of own house. In apartments they pay charges to the society office and services are managed by the office like cold and hot water distribution for 24 hours' electricity backup for 24 hours, availability of manpower for maintenance during emergency and peak hours, collection of waste for disposal. So majority of the occupants preferred apartments from the perspective of services and facilities. Theft and security is another factor because of which people do not want to leave their house with only a lock in a main door. So that people are now more attracted towards living in apartment for safety and security reason where one need not to worry about all these. From the case study it was found that about 29% of the occupants preferred apartments from safety and security reasons and 33% of the people preferred locational feasibility like some prefer easy access to their relatives and

less distance from main road to the apartment. While some occupants were staying because the company where they were working offered them.

Well talking about the educational background of occupants most of the population were educated with Bachelor's degree. In sunrise apartment and Guna colony the majority of children studied in medium grade school like Modern Indian School, DAV school while in Rio Apartment the majority of children were studying in high end school like Rato Bangla. Community programmes were organized occasionally like in new year, Krishna Janmashthami, Dashain, Tihar and occasions and maximum of the occupants participated the programme and had good level of interaction among each other. The most preferred destination for shopping clothes and accessories was New road which being the agglomerated place for shopping and also their favorite malls and departmental stores and sometimes nearest destination and for buying vegetables nearby destination was preferred. Talking about health services people who had regular consultation with doctor preferred same destination no matter how near or far it is located and in case of emergency they preferred nearby hospitals. Almost units have maid who came from nearby destination and worked one or two hours. People who had migrated from rural areas resided in rent and could not afford for the house worked as a maid in the nearby apartments. In one way it can be seen that nearby people specially women are getting paid jobs and other way we can see it as a social disparity between the people living in same area.

4.4. Economic Structure

Talking about the ownership status most of the occupants were living in their own unit and few were rented but the case of Rio Apartment is different as 70% of the units were rented and in 30% of the apartment units owners were residing which can be seen in Fig.4. So far the occupation was concerned most of the people were businessman which accounts for 44% in sunrise Apartment, 56% in Guna Colony and few occupants with government jobs were traced like 32% in Sunrise Apartment and 11% in Guna Colony. People with service or job in private sector/ NGOs/ UN were also found. Few people

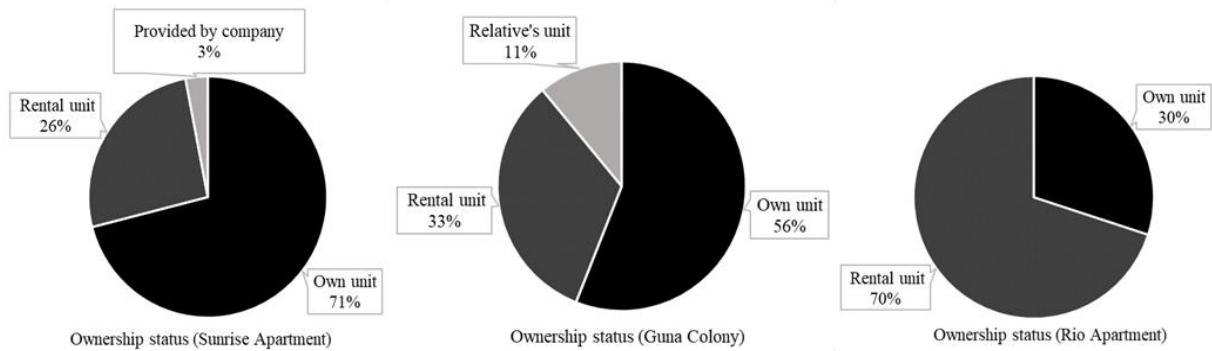


Fig. 4. Ownership status

were working abroad. In case of Rio Apartment almost equal percentage about 40% of businessman and 40% of UN service holder were found to be residing. All the occupants had their own vehicle which accounts majority with four wheelers and less with two wheelers.

5. Conclusion

Urbanization is inevitable process that is increasing at a rapid pace in case of Kathmandu valley. Because of the affordability and availability of chunk of land and allowance of high FAR in the urban fringe, investors are interested as well as attracted in the development of apartments. But inflation in the cost of housing units has an unsympathetic effect on the people. In developed countries, housing costs should be 25% to 30% of gross income but in Kathmandu Valley the expense is on the higher side. Income is primary factor determining affordability so government policy on affordable housing must focus on the price, unit size and availability of such housing stock. There are various factors affecting the affordability like distance, household income, costs and policy tools. Government policy need to give attention on providing safe and affordable housing and such provision must be linked with income source of the users.

Providing housing does not mean providing ownership of housing only but such policy must facilitate availability of affordable rental housing in large number so that low income group family could get an access to housing. Institutional assistance is the must to solve the urban housing problems and we can witness examples of India,

Malaysia and Sri-Lanka, Philippines. There should be formal institutions that should support the poor and make them accessible to the loans and finance to meet the shelter needs. The finance could be made using several modalities such as cooperative housing, social housing, Grameen Bank, corporate social responsibility of commercial banks etc.

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