Citizen Trust Towards Border Governing Agencies at Border Crossing Points of Nepal

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Abstract

This article based on citizen trusts is the most important lifeline of good governance. Border governance can be achieved only by acquiring citizen trust and confident. The objective of this paper is to examine the citizen trust towards border governing agencies at the border crossing points and to analyze various determinant factors of citizens' trust. The research follows by the sequential explanatory research design using both primary and secondary sources. Primary data are extracted from stratified sampling technique using five points, Likert- scales questionnaire where 1850 responses were acquired from 10 border crossing points of Nepal. The findings shows that border governing has a citizen trust of 65.44 percent and all the determinant factors of citizen trust are correlated. The regression analysis shows that determinant factor of border governing agencies have 85 percent effect in citizen trust. The study suggest on enhancing all the determinant factors of citizen trust of all border governing agencies by incorporating required law necessary to improve border governance of Nepal.

Keywords: Citizen Trust, Border governing Agencies, Border crossing Points and Border governance.

Introduction

Border Governing agencies are the national institutions established with legal provisions for administrating cross-border movement of people, regulating socio-cultural aspect by promoting peace, security and stability at the border areas of country. COMSEC (2018) focuses border governing agencies are established to achieve efficiency on four principles i.e. transparency, simplification, harmonization and standardization to build a trust upon the citizens. The success of the democratic system depends upon the citizens' trust towards government agencies (Gupta, 2011). The borders of any country are considered as challenging areas for enhancing good governance. Governments have established different functional agencies to protect citizens, secure borders, and improve service level for mitigating risk and controlling costs (Shrestha, 2003; Upreti, 2021; Pulami, 2023). Kim (2010) noted that citizen trust in government can be measured by the degree to which citizens have confidence in public institutions to behave in the best interests of society and its residents. Trust in government is the confidence of citizens that the government operates under public interests and expectations (Barnes & Gills, 2000).

Borders are the crucial land of any country that holds a decisive role in promoting international relationship. Due to strategic importance of borders, it is necessary to build citizen confident by border governing agencies in order to achieve a state mandated task of protecting the national territory, regulating the cross border movements of people and protects the life of border citizens (Fukuyama, 2013; Ejotubu, 2021). The adaptation of coordinated border management with different clusters to curb the border issues have been a milestone in promoting a governance of Nepal (Upreti, 2022). Citizen trust of border governing agencies denotes a greater services delivery, vigorous security, exemplary infrastructure development, social-cultural gratification of citizens. This paper attempts to examine the citizen's trust towards border governing agencies at border crossing points of Nepal.

Objective

The objectives of this paper are as follows:

i)   To examine the citizen's trust towards border governing agencies at border crossing points of Nepal.

ii)   To analyze of the various determinant factors of citizens trust towards border governing agencies of Nepal.

Literature Review

Although several studies have been conducted on citizen trust around the world, there has never been commonly accepted definition. Trust is a key to positive interpersonal relation in various settings because it is central to how we interact with others for enhancing effectiveness and legitimacy (Harrison, 1993; Armstrong, 2005). According to Jamil, Askvik & Dahal (2016) trust is a multidimensional concept which focuses on public institutional assessment measured by citizen confident in delivery of services. Trust refers to the willingness to depend on others to act on our behalf in the expectation that they can make effective decisions and to take our interests into account (Houston & Harding, 2013). Barnes and Gill (2000) viewed trust in government as the confidence that citizens have in authorities to do the right thing. The public expects the government entities to be upright, provide them with justice, and safeguard their fundamental rights of food, health, shelter. According to Coleman (1990), trust is all about exchange of service performed by public entity with honesty for calculating the expectations of gain and loss of citizen. Trust is an important element of government performance that affects institutional performance, well-being, economic development, and the reduction of crime (Putnam 1995; Marozzi, 2014). Citizens' trust of border agencies are the degree to which citizens have confidence in duty holders' for their dedication, fairness and professionalism actions under institutional norms as well as the extent to which they are fulfilled (Johnston & Shearing, 2003; Hainmueller & Hopkins 2014). Trust in government is the confidence of citizens that the government operates under public interests and expectations. Institutions shape trust as they behave properly and honestly on behalf of the people (Barnes & Gill, 2000). Honesty, fairness, benevolence, and competence are four key qualities that a trusted government and public

officials should possess (Coleman, 1990; Johnston & Shearing, 2003; Hainmueller & Hopkins 2014; Yao, 2014). Rose-Ackerman (2001) argued that honesty is an essential substantive value with a close connection to trust which includes both truth-telling and responsible actions aimed at obeying the rules. Honesty, fairness, benevolence, trustworthiness, commitment, and competence are important aspects of institutional trustworthiness which have a direct relationship with citizen trust (Wall, 1990; Kim, 2005; Yao, 2014). (Mayer et al., 1995) derived an integrative model of trust which indicates that trust for trustee will be a function of the trustee's perceived ability, benevolence and integrity and of the trustor's propensity to trust.

Conceptual Framework

Citizen trust towards the government is the foremost element of good governance. In order to enhance good governance in the border areas of Nepal, there should be a coordinal relationship between all the government agency and service seeker. It has been a vibrant instrument to measure the efficiency of government. The study of the citizen trust towards border agencies at border crossing points is a virgin study in the field of border governance of Nepal. By assessing the literature of citizen trust the following conceptual framework has been have been developed:

Fig 1

Researcher Conceptual Framework
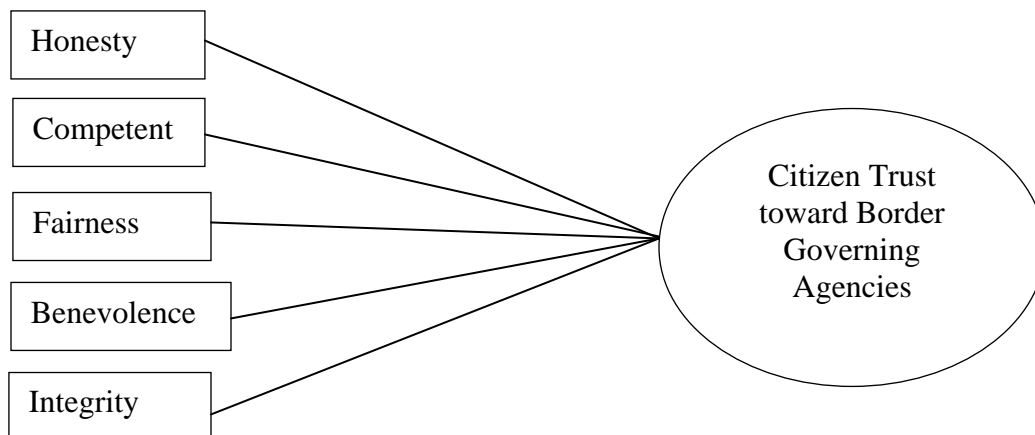
(Source: Adapted from literature review where five independent variables are the determinant factors of citizen trust)

Methodology

In order to meet the objective of research, sequential explanatory research design has been used. The research follows quantative approach and also tests the hypothesis. Both primary data and secondary data are extracted to generalize the concept. Primary data are extracted from the five point (Likert- scales) questionnaire and secondary data are books,

newspaper, articles, reports and internet explorer. The five point (Likert- scales) questionnaire was constituted to measure the trust of border governing agency along with their determinant factors. Samples were collected from ten different border crossing points of Nepal which is as shown in the figure.
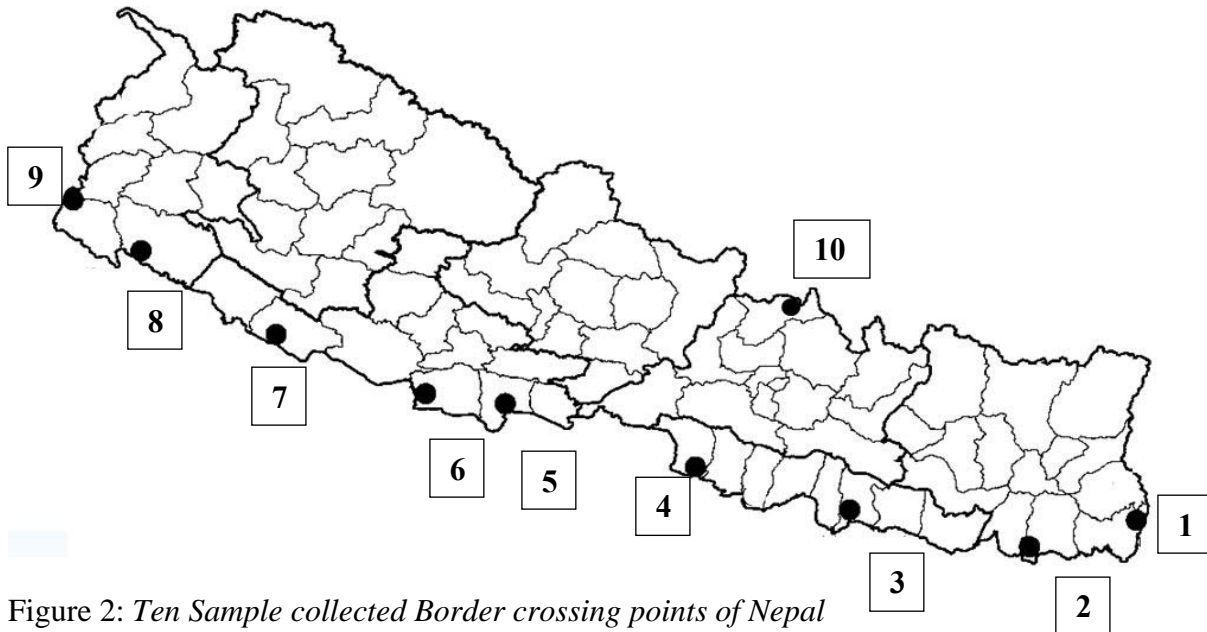
Figure 2: *Ten Sample collected Border crossing points of Nepal*

Table 1

Number of samples collected Border crossing points of Nepal.

No	Border Crossing Point	Number of Agencies	Samples
1	Kakarbhita	7	214
2	Biratnagar	8	202
3	Janakpur	7	192
4	Birjung	8	205
5	Bhairahawa	8	195
6	Krishnanagar	7	196
7	Jamuniha	8	183
8	Gaurifanta	7	172
9	Gaddachauki	7	165
10	Rasuwa	6	126
Total			1850

(Source: Field Survey, 2023)

This paper used descriptive and inferential analysis. The mean, standard deviations, standard error are used to measure variability in trust whereas correlation and regression analysis is used to measure relationship between variables with the help of Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) Software.

Results and Discussion

Border Governing Agencies at border crossing points of Nepal

Officially there are 25 crossing points in Nepal. Due to geographically difficulty there are numerous unofficial crossing points in Indo-Nepal border and only 3 crossing points in China-Nepal border. The government of Nepal has deployed various agencies to enhance good border governance. The followings are the number of agencies with different cluster deployed at the crossing points of Nepal.

Table 2

Border governing agencies with different clusters

SN	Clusters	Agencies	Numbers
1	Administration	Border Administration Offices	**7**
		Immigration Offices.	10
		Forest Posts	39
2	Custom & Trade	Custom Office	166
		Integrated Check Post (ICP)	4
		Dry Port (ICD)	7
3	Security	Border Out Post (BOP)	228
		Police Station	65
4	Health & Safety	Quarantine Office	14
		Health Post	-

(Source: Adapted from related agencies documents and website)

Citizen Trust of border governing Agencies of Nepal

The government of Nepal has been partially success in managing its international borders with India and China, as it is crucial for the country's security and economic interests. In federal level, Ministries acts as policy drafting and legislative procedure ensure effective border management. At district level, different clusters are engaged in administrative, monitory, supervisory and scrutiny role where as in borderline, the agencies are engaged in operational acts of border controls, surveillance, regulation and facilitation. The entire task performed by agencies is essential for maintaining the country's security, economic interests, and diplomatic relations with neighboring countries. Citizen trust of these agencies enhances good governance, social cohesion, peace stability and prosperity in border areas of Nepal.

Citizen trust in border governing agencies can vary depending on a range of factors such as task, nature of job, capabilities, strength and resources. In general, trust in these agencies can be influenced by perceptions of their effectiveness, transparency, accountability, and fairness. The essence of this research is to measure citizen trust of five variables. The first variable honesty is the fundamental element of trust which exposes ethnics, credibility, and accountability of agencies in building public relationship. The second variable, competency are the knowledge, skill and ability of the agencies which

enhance their professionalism. The third variable fairness is the impartiality, respect and devotion rendered by agencies to all the service seekers. The fourth variable benevolence are adhering human value and humanity in providing assistance and protection to vulnerable group residing in border areas of Nepal. The last variable integrity are ethical and moral conduct by avoidance of self-interest and corruptions creating self-love towards the duty.

The survey conducted at 10 border crossing points of Nepal shows satisfactory level of trust towards border governing agencies. Most of the respondents were quite satisfied with the service delivery and inputs on improving institutional integrity. The following table shows the responses of trust towards border governing of Nepal in percentage value.

Table 3

Result of Responses of citizen and its determinant factors

S.N	Agencies	Honesty %	Competent %	Fairness %	Benevolence %	Integrity %	Agency Trust
1	Armed Police Force	75.6	75.5	78.5	74.6	68.8	74.6%
2	Nepal Police	71.4	73.8	71.8	67.8	64.6	69.8%
3	Health Post	61.4	74.6	72.4	69.3	70.6	69.6%
4	Municipal Offices	62.6	70.6	68.7	64.6	65.5	66.4%
5	ICP & ICD	61.4	68.4	62.4	59.2	58.6	62%
6	Quarantine Office	56.6	68.8	64.5	59.4	56.8	61.2%
7	Custom Office	54	67.5	61.5	58.1	59.8	60.1%
8	Immigration Offices.	56.2	64.6	62.6	56.6	57.4	59.4%
	Average Trust Score	**62.44**	**70.46**	**67.88**	**63.74**	**62.72**	**65.44%**
Number of Respondents (N) = 1850							

(Source: Field Survey, 2023)

The table shows the responses of citizen trust of border governing agencies and determinant factors of trust. The data extracted from 1850 respondents from ten different border crossing points of Nepal shows that among eight governing agencies, armed police force Nepal has obtained overall citizen trust score of 74.6%. Standing in the first position, armed police force has obtained highest score of 78.5% in fairness and lowest score of 68.8% in integrity. In second position, Nepal police have obtained overall citizen trust of 69.8% consisting highest score 73.8% score in competency and lowest score of 64.6% in integrity. The health post located in ten border crossing point has obtained overall citizen trust of 69.6% standing in third position. They have obtained highest score of 74.6% score in competency and lowest score of 61.4% in honesty. In fourth position, the municipal offices have obtained overall citizen trust of 66.4% highest score of 70.6% in competency and lowest score of 62.6% in honesty. In fifth position, the integrated check point & Inland clearance depot located in four border crossing points have obtained overall trust of 62% with highest score of 68.4% score in competency and lowest score of 59.2% in benevolence. In sixth position, the Quarantine Office has obtained overall trust of 61.2% with highest

score of 68.8% in competency, and lowest score of 56.8% in integrity. Likewise, Custom Office has obtained overall trust of 60.1% standing in seventh position with highest score of 67.5% in competency and lowest score of 54% in honesty. The immigration Offices have obtained overall trust of 59.4% with highest score of 64.6% score in competency and lowest score of 56.2% in honesty. The average trust score of eight border governing agencies is 65.44% which range from 59.4% to 74.6%.

In determinant factors of trust, honesty of eight border governing agency has acquired 62.44% score from the respondent. The minimum value of honesty is 54% obtained by custom office and the maximum value of honesty 75.6% obtained by armed police force, Nepal. In second determinant factor of trust, competency of eight border governing agency has acquired 70.46% score from the respondent. This is the maximum score of determinant factor of citizen trust. The minimum value of competency is 64% obtained by Immigration offices and the maximum value of honesty 75.5% obtained by armed police force, Nepal. In third determinant factor of trust, fairness of border governing agencies has acquired 67.88% score from respondent. The minimum value of fairness is 61.5% obtained by custom office and the maximum value of honesty 78.5% obtained by armed police force, Nepal. In fourth determinant factor of trust, benevolence of border governing agency has acquired 63.7% score from respondent. The minimum value of benevolence is 56.6% obtained by Immigration Offices and the maximum value of benevolence is 74.6% obtained by armed police force, Nepal. In the last determinant factor of trust, integrity of border governing agency has acquired 62.72% score from respondent. The minimum value of integrity is 57.4% obtained by Immigration Offices and the maximum value of integrity is 70.6% acquired by health post at border areas.

Table 4

Analysis of Determinant factors of Citizen Trust

S.N.	Variables	Mean	S.D.	S.E.
1	Honesty	3.122	0.776	0.58
2	Competent	3.523	0.347	0.83
3	Fairness	3.394	0.451	0.62
4	Benevolence	3.187	0.484	0.63
5	Integrity	3.136	0.758	0.62
	Citizen Trust	**3.272**	**0.417**	**0.28**
Number of Respondents (N) = 1850				

(Source: Field Survey, 2023)

In the table, mean and standard deviation of dependent factor of citizen are shown. The mean responses of all variables range from 3.122 to 3.523. Among all the variables, competent of border governing agency has the highest mean value of 3.523 with lowest

standard deviation of 0.347 which means most of the respondent agreed that border governing agencies of Nepal are competent, skillful and professional in their respective task. 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 of other determinant factors are above 3.1. This means that all the determinant factors average values are satisfactory. Furthermore, computing all five variables the composite mean and standard deviation of citizen trust are 3.27 and 0.41 which is a normally distributed curve. The correlation analysis of independent variables of inter-agency coordination is shown in the table below.

Table 5

Correlation Analysis

S.N.	Variables	Citizen Trust	P Value
1	Honesty	0.877**	0.000
2	Competent	0.566**	0.000
3	Fairness	0.543**	0.000
4	Benevolence	0.857**	0.000
5	Integrity	0.762**	0.000
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)			
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)			
Number of Respondents (N) = 1850			

(Source: Research Finding, 2023)

In the table, the relationship between citizen trust and determinant factor of border governing agencies are 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; Parivizifard et al, 2012). The first determinant factor honesty have a correlation coefficient of 0.877 with P-value of 0.00 which is less than 0.05. It means that honesty of border governing agencies is highly correlated at 1% Level of significant with citizen trust. The second determinant factor competency have a positive coefficient of 0.566 with P-value of 0.00 which is less than 0.05. It means that competency of border governing agencies are moderately correlated at 1% level of significant with citizen trust. The third determinant factor fairness also have a positive coefficient of 0.543 with P-value of 0.00 which is less than 0.05. It means that fairness of border governing agencies is moderately correlated at 1% level of significant with citizen trust. The fourth determinant factor benevolence also has a positive coefficient of 0.857 with P-value of 0.00 which is less than 0.05. It means that benevolence of border governing agencies is highly correlated at 1% level of significant with citizen trust. The fifth determinant factor Integrity also has a positive coefficient of 0.762 with P-value of 0.00 which is less than 0.05. It means that Integrity of border governing agencies is also correlated at 1% level of significant with citizen

Table 6

Regression Analysis

Coefficients					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.106	.021		5.179	.000
Honesty	.372	.003	. 692	22.267	.000
Competency	.178	.008	. 148	118.211	.000
Fairness	.170	.006	.184	26.179	.000
Benevolence	.252	.006	.292	45.714	.000
Integrity	.474	.018	.862	26.753	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Citizen trust					
R^2=0.896 Adjusted R^2=0.85 F. Stat =18.56 F. Sig =0.000					

(Source: Research Finding, 2023)

The table shows the regression analysis citizen trust and determinant factor of border governing agencies. The adjusted R^2 value is 0.85 which means that determinant factor of border governing agencies have 85% effect in citizen trust. Likewise, F. Sig value is 0.00 which means that the model is significant for study. The beta value of all the determinant factors of trust are positive which shows a positive change in citizen trust. The beta value of competency is 0.178, which means one unit of change in competency will bring 0.178 unit of change in citizen trust. The beta value of honesty is 0.372, which means one unit of change in honesty will bring 0.372 unit of change in citizen trust. The beta value of fairness is 0.170, which means one unit of change in fairness will bring 0.170 unit of change in citizen trust. The beta value of benevolence is 0.252, which means one unit of change in benevolence will bring 0.170 unit of change in citizen trust. The beta value of integrity is 0.474, which means one unit of change in integrity will bring 0.474 unit of change in citizen trust. All the determinant factor of citizen trust are statically significant (as mentioned by Wall, 1990; Kim, 2005; Yao, 2014). The regression equation of the study is as shown.

Trust = 0.106+ 0.372 honesty+0.178 competency+ 0.170 Fairness+0.252 Benevolence+0.474 Integrity

Discussion

Citizen trust are regarded are significant element in enhancing the good governance of nation. In the context of Nepal, good governance act 2008 has been a primary statutory of public administration in strengthening accountability, transparency, and equitability and inclusive. The citizen trust of public organization is highly depended on the component of good governance. This research have witness the border governance agencies operational capabilities in winning the citizen trust at the border crossing points of Nepal. With the core objective of examining the citizen trust of border agencies research finds security agency on the top position. Among the eight agencies armed police force, Nepal have obtained 74.6% of trust confidence. Armed police force, Nepal was deployed in border security of Nepal in

the year 2008 A.D. From the time of establishment APF have been engaged in border area governance by enhancing border area security, border fortification and border area development programs. Currently, 250 border observation posts are constructed with more than 8000 APF personal actively engaged for twenty four hours (APF, 2023). Most of the duty APF, Nepal is stationed outside the office and their active participation in civic actions, disaster management and local public affair dissolution had made APF Nepal highly trusted border governing agency of Nepal. In the determinant factor of citizen trust APF have obtained 78.5% in fairness which is the highest level confident of the entire determinant factor and 68.8% in integrity which is needed to be improved. In the second position Nepal police have obtained 69.8% of trust confident. Nepal police have been engaged as law enforcement agency consisting 65 border police stations in border of Nepal (Nepal police, 2023). The nature of deployment of Nepal is as similar to APF, Nepal. Both agencies are fully engaged in maintaining peace and security and most of the duties are stationed outside the office. Due to the civic engagement role Nepal police have enormous task in enhancing good border governance. In determinant factor of citizen trust, Nepal police have obtained 73% in competency which shows professional and experienced in job where as 64.6% of score in integrity need to be improved. In the third position, health posts have obtained 69.6% of trust confident of citizen. The health post is available in all the border crossings points of Nepal. The availability and quality of health services varies in different border crossing points. Busy and highly buildup areas like Birjung- Raxual crossing points have dedicated health facilities, while others may rely on nearby hospitals or health posts. The health post have played a tremendous role of health checkup, treatment, referral, vaccination, awareness and counseling to needy people which have brought up a sufficient trust of border citizen. Specially, during the time of COVID-19 health care isolation and quarantine facility have built up the level of trust. In determinant factor of trust the health post have obtained 70.6% in integrity which shows high moral standard of health workers in job where as 61.4% of score in honesty need to be improved. In the fourth position, the municipal offices have obtained 66.4% of trust confident of citizen. The constitution of Nepal 2015 and local level operation Act 2017 has authorized local level with crucial task in promoting good governance. The municipal offices are also considered as an apex unit with supreme task of coordinating administrative, security, health and trade facilitation agencies. The task performed by municipal offices border area infrastructural development, border pillar surveillance, cross border trade, local market management, cross border religious event management and cross border diplomacy. In determinant factor of trust the municipal offices have obtained 70.6% in competency which shows high standard of professionalism and knowledge of municipal offices in service delivery where as 62.4% of score in honesty which needs to be improved. In the fifth position, the integrated check points (ICP) and Inland Clearance Depot (ICD) have obtained 62.4% of trust confident of citizen. ICP & ICD fall under trade facilitating clusters with an enormous role of legitimate movement of goods, ease customs clearance, security check and other regulatory processes for effective border management with coordination among different agencies involved in customs clearance and border control. There are only 4 ICP in four major border crossing points and 8 ICD in

Nepal. Nepal intermodal transportation Development Board is a governing board in operation of ICP & ICD in Nepal. In determinant factor of trust ICP & ICD have obtained 68% in competency which shows high standard of professionalism and knowledge of ICP & ICD staff in service delivery where as 58.8% of score in integrity, which need to be improved. The quarantine offices have gained citizen trust of 61.2% which are rated in sixth position. The quarantine offices deployed in border crossing points regulate the plant and animals during export and import in international trade. The plants products and animals product are medically examine to reduce potential health risk arising from plants and animals on board. Quarantine offices are also responsible for managing quarantine facilities at border points by isolating the suspected individuals and monitor individuals who may have been exposed to infectious diseases, health screening and assessment of individual entering from border points. Due to the indoor nature of operation, these offices are not publicly exposed. The service seeker of quarantine offices are cross border trader and travellers. In determinant factor of trust, quarantine office have obtained 68.8% in competency which shows high standard of professionalism and knowledge of quarantine staff in service delivery where as 56.8% of score in integrity, which need to be improved. The custom offices have obtained 60.1% of citizen trust which are rated in seventh position. Custom offices have a vital role in generating the revenue of the nation, custom clearance and facilitating international trade. Custom offices works closely with security agencies in order to control cross border smuggling of illegal goods. Currently, there are 133 custom offices in different border points of Nepal. In determinant factor of trust, custom office have obtained 67.5% in competency which shows high standard of professionalism and knowledge of quarantine staff in service delivery where as 54% of score in honesty, which need to be improved. Immigration offices have obtained 59.4% of citizen trust. There are 10 immigration offices established in different border crossing points of Nepal. The prime objective of immigration is to regulate the cross border movement by enforcing immigration rules and regulation and assist national security agencies by sharing authentic information on illicit acts. In determinant factor of trust, immigration office have obtained 64.6% in competency which shows high standard of professionalism and knowledge of quarantine staff in service delivery where as 56.2% of score in honesty, which need to be improved.

The overall score of determinant factors range from 62.44 to 70.46 % which means that citizen trust towards border governing agencies is satisfactory. All the determinant factors are correlated with citizen trust. The regression shows that one unit of change in honesty and integrity will bring 0.372 unit and 0.474 units of change in citizen trust respectively. These two determinant factors have a greater impact on citizen trust. In order to bring up high confident in citizen trust, the border governing agencies need to be serious in strengthening honesty and integrity. The issues of honesty and integrity of border governing agencies can be corrected by frequent inspection at border crossing point by authorized units, rotational transfer of staff, reward and punishment procedure, complain management and technological adaptation.

Conclusion

Finally this paper concludes by examining the citizen trust towards border governing agencies deployed at ten border crossing points of Nepal. The findings show the level of trust fall under 59.4 to 78.6% with an average trust level of 65.44% which is satisfactory level of citizen trust towards border governing agencies. The security agencies and health post are highly trusted due to their numerous of task on maintaining social security and public affairs. The municipal offices also have gained sufficient trust from border citizens whereas custom and trade agencies have satisfactory level of trust. It is pertinent for all the constituted mandated agencies to gain the citizen trust for better governance. In the determinant factors of citizen, there is a necessity to take necessary actions for improving honesty and integrity of border agencies official. The study also suggests the concern authority on enhancing multi sector engagement cooperative approach for border governance by developing Memorandum of understanding, standard operation procedure based on coordinating mechanism. It is also necessary to synchronize all other agencies for the better governance in border joint actions should apply from the entire agency for rural border development program to promote and uplift the life style of marginalized people. The trust survey conducted on examining citizen trust of border governing agencies is limited only in ten major border crossing points. Currently, there are numerous of unofficial crossing points where research survey could not cover due to time and resources constraints. Lack of uniformity of agencies has also act as a challenge in drawing the trust survey. However, further research can be conducted to various aspect of border governance of Nepal.

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