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Socio-Demographic Status among Rural Municipalities in Humla District, Nepal: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

This study compares the status of rural municipalities in the Humla district of Nepal regarding various household and demographic variables. This paper aims to compare rural municipalities of the Humla district in terms of population, area, sex ratio, literacy ratio, dependency ratio, fuel used, drinking water, internet user, etc. It is based on secondary data from the central bureau of statistics (CBS). The descriptive and comparative design is used to explore the result. It analyzes the data from the perspective of rural development. Rural development is the process of creating wellbeing and ensuring the quality of life among rural people. This study revealed that there are unequal situations in rural municipalities. In some rural municipalities, there is a situation of demographic loss. There is a lack of well-being among people. Deficiencies and deprivation of socio-economic requirements are common for them. Rural areas in the northern belt have acute problems compared to the south-eastern belt of the district. Three tiers of government along with market and cooperative sectors must focus to launch their policy and program to uplift the miserable situation of rural municipalities in Humla district.

Keywords: *clean fuel, dependency ratio, rural development, rural municipalities*

Introduction

In Nepal, there are three tiers of government i.e., the federal government, provincial government, and local government. There are 7 provinces,77 districts, and 753 local units in Nepal. The local unit is further divided into municipalities and rural municipalities. There are 293 municipalities and 460 rural municipalities all over the country. Rural municipalities are considered rural areas and municipalities are considered urban areas in Nepal. There are various research efforts to compare the rural and urban areas. There are few efforts for the comparative study between rural municipalities. To fulfill this research gap, this study

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attempts to compare 7 rural municipalities of Humla districts. It explores similarities and differences among rural areas regarding demographic and household indicators.

Rural areas have a rich history and identity of their own, even while they share some aspects in common with urban areas (Woods 2011). Rural development encompasses efforts that are economic and social in nature, intended to encourage growth or expansion in areas outside cities. The efforts for rural development require holistic traits, such as sustaining local services, maintaining the local population, reducing negative climate impacts, providing local services and employment, and sustaining local community events, social capital, and a strong sense of local identity (Steiner and Atterton, 2015).

Basically, the location is classified as rural and urban areas. Rural areas are a spatial category. The meaning of rural areas is varied in various countries. There is no common meaning to the concept of 'rural'. Thus, it is challenging to define the term rural. It has different meanings in different disciplines such as economics, geography, sociology, anthropology, etc. Scholars have been unsuccessful in reaching a consensus on a single definition of the term 'rural'. There are multi-criteria approaches to define and stratify rural areas according to different needs and goals. Even within the same country, rural areas show vastly different characteristics and trends. Disparities may be quite large, in terms of ecological aspects, human typologies and settlements, economic variables, past trends, and future potential.

The rural area is associated with certain patterns of human activity related to agriculture. There is an unclear and vague comparison between rural and urban areas. The definition of the rural area becomes problematic and confusing because rural areas are mostly defined with reference to urban areas. Rural populations have a variety of income sources and occupations. (Dasgupta et. al.,2015). Although there are large variations between places, the urban area is usually addressed at the municipal level (Hersperger et al., 2019).

The status of rural areas is different from one another. It is essential to understand the varied nature of rural areas to determine their problems and prospects. The status of natural resources, human resources, financial resources, and social resources determine the potentiality of rural development. This article tries to answer the questions such as; what is the present status of rural municipalities in terms of household and demographic variables? What are the similarities and differences among rural municipalities in the Humla district? What will be the strategies of rural development? This paper provides guidelines for concerned authorities for the development of rural areas. The article makes effort to fulfill the following objectives:

- To compare rural municipalities of the Humla district concerning demographic variables.
- To find out similarities and differences among rural municipalities regarding socio-demographic condition in the Humla district.

- To compare rural municipalities of the Humla district concerning household variables.

Material and Methods

The prime concern of the central bureau of statistics is to conduct a survey and publish reports on various aspects of Nepal. The central bureau of statistics Nepal published an authentic report 'Humla district profile' in 2075 BS. This study used the data of the Humla district profile provided by the central bureau of statistics. It compares 7 rural municipalities of the Humla district based on area, population size, population density, literacy rate, dependency ratio, and sex ratio. It also analyzes the basic condition of rural areas regarding the household unit, houses with cemented foundations, modern toilet, internet facilities, piped water supply, and clean food to cook. It analyzes the demographic and household variables. It describes and analyzes data by using a simple table. To meet the requirements of objectives, the literature review was conducted simply and systematically via various search engines such as google. To analyze the data and produce results, this study is based on the rural development approach.

Result and Discussion

Humla district is situated in Karnali province. It is one of the most remote, inaccessible rural districts of Nepal. It is located in the north-western region of Nepal. It is the highest district in Nepal, with most villages lying at about 3,000m-5,000m above sea level. The mixture of spectacular landscapes, Himalayan peaks, and a wide range of flora and fauna makes this area as beautiful and attractive. In terms of the political and administrative system, it is divided into 7 local units (CBS,2075). All 7 local units are rural municipalities. Namkha of Humla is the largest rural municipality of Nepal in terms of area. This study focuses to compare 7 rural municipalities in terms of various social and household variables.

3.1 Comparison of rural areas in terms of demographic indicators

Table 1: *Comparison of Rural Municipalities in Terms of Demographic Indicators*

Rural Municipalities	area km2	wards	Population	sex ratio	dependency ratio	literacy ratio	Density
1. Adanchuli	150.6	6	7116	0.99	106.3	41.38	47.25
2. Chankheli	1310.4	6	5517	1.02	102.6	51.95	4.21
3. Kharpunath	880	5	6011	0.97	95.35	46.49	6.83
4. Namkha	2419.6	6	3900	0.94	63.72	39.66	1.61
5. Sarkegad	306.7	8	9868	1.02	99	44.40	32.17
6. Simkot	785.9	8	11557	1.07	81.5	55.44	14.71
7. Tanjakot	159.1	5	5964	0.98	103	47.78	37.49

Data source: CBS, 2075

Adanchuli rural municipality is located in the southern part of the district. It has a 7116 total population in 6 wards and covers a 150.6 square KM area with 47.25 people per square

KM population density. It is bordered by Sarkegad rural municipality to the north and east, Mugu district to the south, and Tanjakot rural municipality to the west. There are 99 males in 100 females which means the number of females is higher than males. The literacy rate is 41.38 % which means 59 % of people cannot read and write even their mother tongue. The literacy rate of males (57.39 %) is higher than females (25.25 %) indicating gender inequality. The dependency ratio of 106.3 % clarifies that 100 independent people must support 106 economically passive people. The status of human resources is unfavorable for performing developmental efforts. There is the situation of demographic loss.

Chankheli rural municipality is located in the eastern part of the district. It has a 5517 total population in 6 wards and covers a 1310.4 square KM area with 4.21 people per square KM population density. It is bordered by China to the north, Mugu district to the east, Mugu district to the south, and Kharpunath & Sarkegad rural municipality to the west. There are 102 males in 100 females which means the number of females is lower than males. The literacy rate is 51.95 % which means 48 % of people cannot read and write even their mother tongue. The literacy rate of males (65.86 %) is higher than females (37.53%) indicating gender inequality. The dependency ratio of 102.6 % clarifies that 100 independent people must support 102 economically passive people. The status of human resources is not favorable for performing developmental efforts. There is the situation of demographic loss.

Kharpunath rural municipality is located in the middle part of the district. It has a 6011 total population in 5 wards and covers an 880 square KM area with a 6.83 person per square KM population density. It is bordered by China to the north, Chankheli rural municipality to the east, Sarkegad & Chankheli rural municipality to the south, and Simkot rural municipality & Bajura district to the west. There are 97 males in 100 females which means the number of females is higher than males. The literacy rate is 46.49 % which means 54% of people cannot read and write even their mother tongue. The literacy rate of males (61.90 %) is higher than females (31.20 %) indicating gender inequality. The dependency ratio of 95.35 % clarifies that 100 independent people must support 95 economically passive people. The status of human resources is favorable for performing developmental efforts. There is the situation of demographic bonus.

Namkha rural municipality is the largest rural municipality of Nepal in terms of area. It is located in the western part of the Humla district. It has a 3900 total population in 6 wards and covers a 2419.6 square KM area with 1.61 people per square KM population density. It is bordered by China to the north, Simkot rural municipality to the east, Bajhang, and Bajura district to the south, and China to the west. There are 94 males in 100 females which means the number of females is higher than males. The literacy rate is 39.66 % which means 61 % of people cannot read and write even their mother tongue. The literacy rate of males (52.85 %) is higher than females (26.25%) indicating gender inequality. It has the lowest literacy rate compared to other areas. Concerned authorities must give attention to upgrading the literacy rate of this area. The dependency ratio of 63.72 % clarifies that 100 independent people must

support 64 economically passive people. The status of human resources is favorable for performing developmental efforts. There is the situation of demographic bonus.

Sarkegad rural municipality is located in the southwestern part of the district. It has a 9868 total population in 8 wards and covers a 306.7 square KM area with 32.17 people per square KM population density. It is bordered by Kharpunath rural municipality to the north, Chankheli rural municipality and mugu district to the east, Adanchuli and Tanjakot rural municipality to the south, and Bajura district to the west. There are 102 males in 100 females which means the number of females is lower than males. The literacy rate is 44.40 % which means 55 % of people cannot read and write even their mother tongue. The literacy rate of males (57.86 %) is higher than females (30.73 %) indicating gender inequality. Around 30 % of female literacy creates obstacles in all aspects of development. The dependency ratio of 99 % clarifies that 100 independent people must support 99 economically passive people. The status of human resources is not favorable for performing developmental efforts.

Simkot rural municipality is located in the middle part of the district. It has a 11557 total population in 8 wards and covers a 785.9 square KM area with 14.71 people per square KM population density. It is bordered by China to the north, Kharpunath rural municipality to the east, Bajura district to the south, and Namkha rural municipality to the west. There are 107 males in 100 females which means the number of females is lower than males. The literacy rate is 55.44 % which means 45 % of people cannot read and write even in their mother tongue. The literacy rate of males (68.72 %) is higher than females (40.35 %) indicating gender inequality. The literacy rate of this municipality is the highest of other rural municipalities. The dependency ratio of 81.5 % clarifies that 100 independent people must support 82 economically passive people. The status of human resources is favorable for performing developmental efforts. There is the situation of demographic bonus.

Tanjakot rural municipality is located in the southern part of the district. It has a 5964 total population in 5 wards and covers a 159.1 square KM area with 37.49 people per square KM population density. It is bordered by Sarkegad rural municipality and Bajura district to the north, Adanchuli rural municipality to the east, Bajura, and Mugu district to the south, and Bajura district to the west. There are 98 males in 100 females which means the number of females is higher than males. The literacy rate is 47.78 % which means 53 % of people cannot read and write even their mother tongue. The literacy rate of males (63.33 %) is higher than females (34.12 %) indicating gender inequality. The dependency ratio of 103% clarifies that 100 independent people must support economically passive people. The number of the economically passive population is higher in this area. The status of human resources is not favorable for performing developmental efforts. There is a demographic loss situation.

SDG 6 targets universal access to safe drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene for all by 2030 (WHO &UNICEF,2017). Water is the base of human life. It directly influences human civilization and progress. It shapes human settlements, agricultural capability, and industrial development. Water scarcity affects vast parts of rural areas. Due to acute scarcity,

Comparison of rural areas in terms of household indicators

Table 2 : *Comparison of Rural Municipalities in Terms of Household Indicators*

Rural Municipalities	Total house	House of cemented foundation	House of Pipe water supply	House with Clean energy to cook	House with modern flush toilet	Internet-facilitated house.
1. Adanchuli	1121	2	934 (83.3%)	1	402 (35.86%)	0
2. Chankheli	963	1	574 (59.6%)	1	82 (8.5%)	0
3. kharpunath	1132	0	812 (71.7%)	1	351 (31%)	0
4. Namkha	835	6	597 (71.5%)	2	84 (10%)	0
5. Sarkegad	1794	0	1239 (69%)	4	437 (24%)	0
6. Simkot	2566	53	1803 (70%)	134	942 (36.71%)	64
7. Tanjakot	1026	2	642 (62.5%)	2	286 (27.8%)	0

Data source: CBS, 2075

people drink water from open sources. The supply of safe drinking water is the prime concern of the government. About 844 million people on Earth do still not have access to basic water supplies and 79% of them are rural residents (WHO,2017). At the same time, 2.1 billion people have no safely managed drinking water supply system service. This means that 14.9% of the urban- and 45.2% of the rural population need improved services (WHO & UNICEF,2017). There are different sources of drinking water. The nature of water sources determined their pattern of use. Unsafe drinking water causes various water-borne diseases. Pipe water is considered a modern and safe supply of drinking water. Table 2 revealed that the piped water supply for drinking purposes is in good condition. More than 60% of households have fresh drinking water supplied through pipes. Among 7 rural municipalities, Adanchuli is in the highest position by supplying piped water for 83.3% of the total household. Chankheli rural municipality is in the lowest position by supplying piped water for 59% of households.

Without communication, no information will be provided to relevant stakeholders as a guide for the effective promotion of community development (Okwor,2009). Group dynamics, coordination, and change will not be achieved without communication in human organizations in society (Onah,2015). By creating global access to information and human

resources, it becomes a panacea for rural development. The flexible nature of the internet makes it a decentralized information-sharing tool. The pace of social and economic development is geared up by the internet. It enhanced communication services and the accessibility of information. It offers a means for bridging the gaps between development professionals and rural people. It helps to initiate public dialogue about a rural concern. It boosts up an intersectoral network among various organizations dedicated to rural wellbeing. It can support bottom-up mechanisms of development to empower rural people. Effective communication breaks out the culture of silence and encourages exploring causes of rural problems. Table 2 revealed that out of 2566 households 0nly 64 houses have internet facilities in the simkot rural municipality. No one reported about the use of the internet in their household in the other 6 rural municipalities. This is the indicator of backwardness.

Rural areas have a lack of toilets. Lack of toilets and open defecation is primarily a rural problem. Open defecation creates health problems. It creates pollution and communicable diseases. People in rural areas use 'open outdoors' as their toilets. Rural people usually defecate in fields, forests, bushes, or open bodies of water. The toilet is the indicator of development and civilization. There were a lack of toilet facilities, lack of water sanitation, and a lack of awareness about the importance of using toilets in rural areas in past. Nowadays increased level of awareness, rural people demand decent toilet facilities to save their life. Table 2 revealed that there is a very low number of households which has modern concrete flush system toilet. Simkot (36.71%) has the highest units of modern toilet facilitated households followed by Adanchuli (35.86%), Kharpunath (31%). Chankheli has the lowest (8.5%) units of the modern toilet facilitated households. In the other 3 areas, there are below 27% of household uses modern toilet system. Due to health concerns, it is mandatory to raise public awareness about the construction and use of the modern toilet. Proper use of modern toilets reduces the intensity of communicable diseases.

Housing is a major development issue facing rural areas. Where social disadvantage exists in rural areas, it is often stoked by a lack of housing (OECD 2003). Due to the use of local construction materials and lack of engineering service, the structure of the house is weak in remote rural areas. It is vulnerable in the earthquake zone of Nepal. The use of modern construction materials is an indicator of development. Table 2 explore that there are 53 units of households in Simkot, 6 units of households in Namkha, 2 units of households in Adanchuli and Tanjakot, and only one unit of households in chankheli in terms of the house with a cemented foundation. In Kharpunath and Sarkegad, there is no one household regarding the use of cement. It indicates that the structure of the house is very weak in all rural areas of the Humla district. Expensive construction materials, poverty, and inaccessible land structure are responsible for the minimum existence of cemented foundations of the house in these areas.

Household air pollution by indoor cooking stove fuels is one of the highest environmental health risks (WHO, 2014). The fuel such as biogas, electricity, LPG, etc. used for cooking and lighting are called clean fuel. Modern and developed society consumes the

maximum amount of clean fuel compared to developing society. The status of clean energy is directly proportional to the status of development. In terms of cooking food, most household consumes traditional fuel such as firewood. 134 units of households use clean energy such as LPG, electricity, and biogas for cooking purposes in Simkot. In another area, there are very few households regarding the use of clean energy to cook food.

Conclusion

There is an unequal size of rural areas in the Humla district. The largest rural municipality of Nepal i.e., Namkha is situated in this district. It is bigger than some districts of Nepal. Namkha rural municipality is 16 times greater than an Adanchuli rural municipality. Division of ward is somehow common i.e., in 5-8 range. There is an unequal distribution of population size. The population of Simkot rural municipality is 3 times greater than a Namkha rural municipality. The population of males is higher than females in Chankheli, Sarkegad, and Simkot rural municipalities. The population of males is lower than females in Adanchuli, Kharpunath, Namkha, and Tanjakot rural municipalities. The number of economically passive population is very high in Adanchuli, Chankheli, and Tanjakot rural municipalities. The literacy rate is very low in all rural municipalities. Among 7 rural municipalities, Namkha has the lowest literacy rate. Regarding population density, all areas are in a low position. There is wide variation in population density i.e., 1 to 47 persons per square KM. High population density indicates a developed area. There is a slow pace of urbanization. Regarding the basic requirement of life and development, there is a deprived situation in all rural municipalities of Humla districts. The pipe supply of drinking water is good within all rural areas. The strong structure of the house, house with clean fuel to cook and house with internet facilities indicates nominal results in all rural areas. The condition of rural areas is not good in terms of the modern toilet in the Hwumla district.

Humla is a mountainous district of Nepal. Compare to the other 10 districts in Karnali province, Humla district is poor and backward in terms of development. Due to the large and rough geographical conditions, the population is unequally distributed. Lack of socio-economic opportunities boosts up out-migration. Outmigration decreases the population year by year. The situation of brain drain hampers the efforts of development. Optimum utilization of the invaluable resources of tourism and natural resources can uplift the present status of the rural areas in the Humla district. It is mandatory to change the curve of out-migration by creating multi-dimensional opportunities for people.

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