

The Gen Z Rebellion in Nepal: Digital Activism, Social Transformation and Political Renewal

Shiba Datta Gnawali, PhD

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Universal College, Kathmandu, Nepal

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**Corresponding email: shiba.gnawali@uc.edu.np*

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Abstract

The Gen Z revolution in Nepal marks a pivotal phase of youth-led public engagement shaped by online interconnectedness, generational consciousness, and broad-based dissatisfaction with political governance. Drawing on multiple theoretical frameworks, this paper explores how Nepal's Generation Z emerging as digital natives within a context of economic precarity, bureaucratic inertia, and decline in moral standards has transformed individual frustration into collective political action. Methodologically, the study employs qualitative analysis of protest narratives, media discourse, digital platforms, public statements, and secondary literature to explore the motivations, strategies, and symbolic dimensions of the Gen Z uprising. Findings suggest that online tools functioned not merely as means of interaction but as infrastructures of mobilization, enabling decentralized organization, emotional resonance, and rapid diffusion of protest narratives. Social media platforms facilitated the formation of emotionally engaged communities, enabling youth to articulate grievances related to corruption, nepotism, unemployment, and governance failure beyond conventional political avenues. The study further argues that the Gen Z revolution reflects a broader crisis of political legitimacy, as youth challenge deep-rooted hierarchies and reject hierarchical authority in favor of transparency, meritocracy, and ethical leadership. However, the movement also reveals limitations, including organizational fragility, elite co-optation, and the gradual dilution of revolutionary momentum. From a politico-sociological perspective, these dynamics illustrate how institutional power can absorb youth dissent through token gestures without meaningful change. Integrating classical texts, modern political theory, and contemporary digital activism scholarship, this research contributes to understanding how generational identity, digital media, and socio-political structures interact in shaping youth-led movements. The paper concludes that The Gen Z cohort in Nepal revolution, despite its challenges, signals a transformative shift in civic consciousness and political participation, offering critical insights into the possibilities and constraints of digital-era governance reform in developing democracies.

Keywords: Corruption, digital activism, megalomania, paradigm shift, social transformation, socio-political change, transparency

Introduction

Over the past three decades, Nepal has undergone major political, social, and demographic transformations that have reshaped its governance and collective identity. The 1990 People's Movement ended the party-less Panchayat system and restored multiparty democracy through a new constitution guaranteeing fundamental rights. However, ongoing political turbulence and the decade-long Maoist insurgency followed, culminating in the 2006 People's Movement. This second uprising led to the reinstatement of parliament, the *Comprehensive Peace Agreement 2006 (CPA)* between the government of Nepal and the communist party of Nepal (Maoist), and the 2008 Constituent Assembly elections, which abolished the monarchy and declared Nepal a federal democratic republic. Despite these landmark changes, entrenched systemic issues corruption, inefficiency, patronage, impunity, nepotism, and weak institutions remained unresolved.

The *State of World Population 2023* underscores that young people now constitute the largest demographic cohort globally, with those aged 16–25 representing a substantial share of the world's population (*United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA], 2023*). In Nepal, this global youth bulge intersects with a prolonged political transition, limited employment opportunities, and deepening institutional distrust, creating fertile conditions for generational mobilization. Nepal's Gen Z has thus emerged not merely as a demographic category but as a consequential political force, transforming widespread frustration and socio-economic precarity into collective action. Unlike earlier youth movements that were largely aligned with party structures, this generation operates through decentralized, digitally mediated networks, challenging elite-driven governance and exposing the limitations of Nepal's post-conflict political arrangements. Viewed through the UNFPA framework, Nepal's Gen Z movement reflects a broader global shift in which youth agency increasingly drives demands for political accountability and democratic renewal.

Within this youth bulge, Generation Z born from the mid-1990s to the early 2010s has emerged as a defining sociopolitical force. In contrast to earlier generations, Gen Z has grown up entirely in the digital age, shaped by smartphones, social media, and instant global connectivity. Platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, Discord, and Reddit serve not only as tools of communication, but as spaces for learning, identity formation, and political mobilization that transcend traditional hierarchies of class, geography, and authority.

In Nepal, Gen Z includes students, young professionals, migrant workers, and first-time voters who are deeply engaged with digital media and global political discourse. Continuous exposure to conversations on democracy, inequality, climate change, and human rights has heightened their awareness of systemic corruption, nepotism, exclusion, and governance failure. As a result, they increasingly demand transparency, accountability, justice, and meaningful institutional reforms. This generational consciousness culminated dramatically in September 2025 during the so-called Gen Z Revolution.

The uprising was triggered by the government's attempt to ban social-media platforms but was fueled by long-standing grievances. Leaderless, spontaneous, and digitally-coordinated, thousands of young people mobilized nationwide using online platforms. When security forces opened fire on protesters on 8 September, unrest escalated rapidly, leading to the burning of key state institutions and the resignation of Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli. In the aftermath of the political vacuum, youth activists used the Discord platform *Youths Against Corruption*, to conduct an online vote that symbolically nominated former Chief Justice Sushila Karki as interim prime minister, illustrating the growing influence of digitally-networked youth activism (Sharma).

The paper explores the socio-political, cultural, and generational significance of this watershed moment. It explores how Gen Z's digital literacy, global exposure, and political disillusionment have reshaped activism and identity; the structural and psychological forces driving youth mobilization; and comparisons with similar movements in South Asia. Framed within the global rise of networked social movements, the paper argues that the Gen Z revolution in Nepal represents a fourth turning a crisis era marked by generational realignment and demands for institutional renewal (Howe and Strauss). From the cultural perspectives, Nepal's Gen Z blends tradition with global influences, actively reimagining norms and values. Ultimately, the study emphasizes that this generational awakening holds the potential for profound social transformation but also poses risks if not appropriately guided and governed.

Literature Review

The literature on youth activism and political transformation emphasizes the strong relationship between generational consciousness, ethical leadership, and social change. *Youth-bulge* theory argues that societies with large young populations especially when youth face unemployment, exclusion, or limited political voice are particularly prone to mobilization and protest (Urdal). This insight is reinforced by classical philosophical, religious, and literary traditions. Texts such as the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Mahabharata*, and the *Ramayana* highlight how the abandonment of moral duty, greed, nepotism, and personal ambition by leaders ultimately destabilize societies and lead to collective ruin (*Bhagavad Gita*; *Mahabharata*; *Ramayana*). Han Christian Andersen's *The Emperor's New Clothes* similarly critiques how corrupt authority survives through collective silence rather than legitimacy (Andersen).

Modern literature continues this critique of unethical power. Orwell's *1984* warns against authoritarian control and manipulation (Orwell), Shakespeare's *King Lear* depicts political collapse driven by moral decay (Shakespeare). Adrienne Rich's *Diving into the Wreck* metaphorically explores a corrupted civilization and the necessity of confronting buried historical and moral truth (Rich), and Eliot's *The Waste Land* reflects widespread social disillusionment (Eliot). *Keats' Ode on a Grecian Urn* captures the longing for idealism amid societal fragmentation (Keats). *Biblical* and *Quranic* texts also stress that injustice and corruption result in public suffering and societal decline (The Bible; The Quran). Together, these works reveal a consistent pattern: when governance fails morally and ethically, youth

often emerge as agents of resistance. Applied to Nepal, these frameworks help explain how ethical failure, demographic pressure, and civic awareness converged to produce Gen Z activism, while also revealing a significant gap in Nepal-focused scholarship.

In generational theory, Mannheim conceptualizes generations as groups shaped by shared historical and cultural experiences that shape collective consciousness and political orientation (Mannheim), while William Strauss and Howe's cyclical model highlights cohorts characterized by skepticism toward institutions (Strauss and Howe). Nepal's Gen Z grew up during democratic transition, post-conflict restructuring, and rapid digital globalization. These experiences fostered values such as inclusivity, distrust of ingrained authority, and frustration with bureaucratic inertia. From a global studies perspective, Nepal's Gen Z activism aligns with transnational youth movements shaped by online interconnectedness, global human rights norms, and comparative experiences of civic engagement. Collectively, these theoretical frameworks suggest how ethical breakdown, demographic realities, and political awareness intersect to generate youth-led movements, while underscoring the lack of Nepal-specific empirical analysis.

Digital activism literature highlights how technology reshapes contemporary social movements. Manuel Castells' concept of the network society explains how decentralized communication enables rapid information flow, coordination, and challenges to hierarchical power (Castells). Papacharissi's idea of emotionally engaged communities, conceptualizing these perspectives, emphasizes the emotional and cultural dimensions of online engagement, where shared narratives and collective emotions strengthen participation (Papacharissi). Global cases such as the *Arab Spring*, Hong Kong's *Umbrella Movement*, where landmark youth-led political mobilization across different context (Lee). However, Nepal remains under-researched, despite distinctive conditions such as uneven internet access, labor migration, and fragmented media environments.

Across South Asia, young people are increasingly challenging systemic inequalities and demanding accountability. In Bangladesh, the ongoing protests against job quota policies have mobilized students and youth who seek fairness and merit-based opportunities. Similarly, Sri Lanka's *Aragalaya* in 2022 demonstrated how widespread economic hardship and political mismanagement can catalyze a mass movement for democratic change. Both movements illustrate a broader pattern: Gen Z and young adults are no longer passive observers they are asserting their voices, leveraging digital networks, and pushing governments to respond to justice-oriented demands. These struggles reflect a generational shift toward activism that is decentralized, digitally connected, and unwavering in its pursuit of transparency and equity. High-profile scandals and the fixed "*afno manchhe*" patronage system have eroded trust and restricted opportunity, reinforced by Nepal's poor ranking as per Transparency International's *Corruption Perceptions Index-2024*, on global corruption indices 107 out of 180 countries. Gen Z protests directly challenged this culture of impunity.

Nepali scholars interpret the Gen Z uprising as a convergence of structural pressures, ethical disillusionment, and political awakening, with digital platforms acting as accelerators of generational consciousness rather than spontaneous triggers.

Theoretical Framework

The research employs an interdisciplinary theoretical framework to explain The Gen Z peer group in Nepal uprising by integrating generational, digital, identity-based, political, economic, and moral perspectives. Together, these approaches reveal how historical experience, technological transformation, ethical consciousness, and power relations converge to produce contemporary youth activism.

Generational theory, drawing on Karl Mannheim, provides the foundation for understanding Gen Z as a group shaped by shared historical conditions rather than age alone (Mannheim). Nepal's Gen Z came of age during civil conflict, post-monarchy transition, fragile democratization, and rapid globalization. These experiences fostered a collective identity marked by skepticism toward hierarchical authority, demands for autonomy, and intolerance of political stagnation. Generational consciousness explains why Gen Z responds to governance failure with mobilization rather than resignation.

Digital revolution theory deepens this analysis by explaining how Gen Z organizes and sustains activism. Building on Manuel Castells's concept of the network society, power circulates through decentralized communication networks rather than remaining monopolized by formal institutions (Castells). Platforms such as TikTok, Messenger, Discord, and AI tools enable rapid coordination, narrative framing, and horizontal mobilization outside traditional party structures. Networked publics transform private grievances into collective action, accelerating protest while also creating vulnerabilities such as fragmentation and co-optation.

Postmodern identity theory clarifies the cultural dimension of Gen Z activism. Stuart Hall's conception of identity as fluid and discursively constructed explains how Nepal's Gen Z negotiates local traditions, national histories, and global cultural flows (Hall). Exposure to global discourses on gender equality, caste justice, meritocracy, and human rights has encouraged youth to challenge long-standing hierarchies. Identity is not inherited but continuously negotiated through media and everyday digital practice, making activism simultaneously political and cultural.

Political sociology situates the movement within broader state–society relations. Gen Z activism represents a struggle over legitimacy, citizenship, and accountability. Youth challenge not only corrupt leaders but also exclusionary political structures that limit meaningful participation. Citizenship is redefined as active moral engagement rather than passive electoral compliance, reshaping public expectations of governance.

Economic theory highlights the material roots of discontent. John Stuart Mill's distinction between wealth creation and wealth distribution underscores Gen Z's rejection of an economy that concentrates opportunity and power among elites while educated youth face

unemployment and precarity (Mill). Karl Marx's critique of capitalism further explains this revolt through alienation, elite capture of institutions, and unequal access to opportunity (Marx). Digital media accelerates class consciousness by exposing inequality and enabling rapid mobilization.

Moral and religious traditions reinforce these secular frameworks. *Biblical*, *Quranic*, and *Hindu* texts converge on the warning that societies decay when leaders renounce ethics, justice, and humility. In Nepal, corruption is widely perceived as moral failure rather than mere policy incompetence, giving ethical weight to youth resistance.

Finally, global social-movement theory explains both the successes and constraints of uprising (Tilly; Tarrow). Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony illustrates how elites absorb resistance by adopting reformist language without pursuing structural change, while Tilly and Castells highlight the persistent difficulties of institutionalization and organizational continuity (Gramsci; Tilly; Castells). The Gen Z cohort in Nepal movement transformed public discourse but encountered institutional inertia. This absorption does not signify failure but an unfinished phase in a longer democratic struggle, leaving Gen Z as an enduring moral force awaiting structural realignment.

Research Methodology

The research adopts exploratory and analytical approaches to examine Nepal's Gen Z revolution, with particular emphasis on digital activism, societal change, and governance reform. Due to the absence of prior literature and primary data collection, the research relies on conceptual analysis, observational study, and secondary sources.

Approach:

The study involves a qualitative analysis of publicly available digital content, including social media campaigns, online movements, blogs, and news articles, to identify patterns of activism and social engagement among Nepali Gen Z. It also incorporates conceptual and comparative analysis to explore how digital activism intersects with broader political and societal changes.

Analysis:

A thematic and narrative approach is used to categorize and interpret observable trends, messages, and strategies employed by Gen Z activists. This method allows for the identification of recurring themes, including mobilization tactics, social awareness campaigns, and political advocacy.

Ethical Considerations:

Only publicly accessible online materials were used, ensuring adherence to ethical standards of research.

Limitations:

This study has several limitations. First, it relies primarily on secondary sources, media reports, and public statements, as primary data collection through interviews or surveys was not feasible during the period of unrest. Second, the rapidly evolving nature of the Gen Z protest movement means that some interpretations may change as new developments unfold. Third, the study focuses mainly on urban-based protests and digitally-active youth, which may not fully represent the perspectives of rural Gen Z populations. Finally, given the politically sensitive context, some sources may reflect ideological bias, which could influence the analysis.

Historical Background

The current political context of Nepal is rooted in a long history of democratic struggle marked by repeated uprisings, partial reforms, and enduring structural failures. The fall of the monarchy provides crucial context for understanding the rise of Gen Z activism. The 1990 People's Movement restored multiparty democracy under a constitutional monarchy, yet it failed to dismantle deep-rooted favoritism system that sustained corruption and inequality. Disillusionment deepened as marginalized communities saw little improvement, contributing to the Maoist insurgency (1996–2006), which challenged exclusion and ultimately led to the abolition of the monarchy. The Second People's Movement in 2006 forced King Gyanendra to relinquish power and ushered in an interim constitution promising democracy, judicial independence, and republicanism. Nepal was declared a Federal Democratic Republic in 2008.

Despite these historic milestones, deeper problems persisted. Corruption, nepotism, megalomaniacal leaders, weak institutions, and the fragility of institutions continued to plague governance. Young people who came of age in the 2010s witnessed frequent government changes, inter-party power struggles, and major corruption scandals, including the Lalita Niwas land grab, fake Bhutanese refugee scheme, Wide-Body aircraft procurement controversy, and chronic infrastructure mismanagement. Raised on promises of republican transformation, this generation experienced growing frustration as those promises remained unfulfilled.

Demographically, Nepal fits the youth-bulge model, where a large youth population can drive either transformation or instability depending on state response (Goldstone). Expanded access to education has produced some literate and globally connected generation in Nepal's history. However, economic growth has lagged behind expectations. High unemployment and underemployment, combined with large-scale labor migration, have generated social strain, family separation, and an acute brain drain. This widening gap between expanding capacities often unaccompanied by commensurate skills and shrinking opportunities has become a defining catalyst of generational anger.

These pressures culminated dramatically on 8 September 2025, when the government announced a ban on major social-media platforms to curb alleged misinformation. For Gen Z, whose civic engagement and livelihoods are deeply tied to digital spaces, the ban symbolized a direct attack on freedom and the culmination of years of misgovernance. Within

days, mass protests erupted across Kathmandu and provincial capitals. The unrest resulted in heavy casualties, widespread injuries, extensive damage to state institutions, and enormous economic losses. The crisis forced the prime minister to resign, parliament to dissolve, and an interim administration to form. Yet Gen Z activists soon expressed dissatisfaction with the slow pace of reform and lack of accountability.

The 2025 uprising is best understood as part of Nepal's recurring Cycle of Revolt: rebellion against injustice, hegemony of leaders, partial reform, elite co-option, and renewed disappointment (Tilly; Goldstone). From the 1990 People's Movement to the Maoist insurgency and the 2006 uprising, each phase delivered change without resolving core structural problems. Gen Z, as the educated and digitally-connected cohort, has become the generation unwilling to tolerate another failed renewal.

The Gen Z peer group in Nepal movement also reflects a global pattern of youth-led revolts seen across Africa, South and Southeast Asia, and the Middle East. Shared grievances unemployment, corruption, inequality, and elite privilege are amplified through digital platforms such as Discord and Telegram. Decentralized leadership, transnational solidarity, and the creative use of memes, symbols, and AI-driven content characterize this new wave of activism.

In Nepal, the uprising has also created a volatile power vacuum involving four competing forces: remnants of the former monarchy, traditional political parties, the Gen Z movement, and external geopolitical influences. Traditional parties resist demands for structural change, including calls for a directly elected executive to ensure stability. But the Gen Z wants to dismantle this old rigid and megalomaniac mindset. They seek to hold legally accountable these political thieves leaders who misuse authority, manipulate institutions, distribute patronage, and convert public office into private gain. Such practices steal not only public funds but also the nation's future by destroying trust and opportunity.

Ultimately, there is no doubt, Nepal's progress depends on these four parties' agreeing on a common roadmap for all-round development and effective governance. Gen Z's uprising represents a profound generational shift a determination to break the cycle of revolt and disappointment and to redefine Nepal's democratic trajectory through accountability, ethical leadership, and sustained action.

Cultural Transformation

The Gen Z revolution in Nepal extends beyond street protests and digital activism to represent a profound cultural awakening that challenges institutionalize norms, values, and systems of authority. This movement questions not only political corruption but also the deeper culture of governance, leadership, and social relations that has long sustained instability and inequality.

A central demand emerging from this shift is the call for a directly elected President or Prime Ministerial system. This reflects Gen Z's frustration with fragile coalition politics and a belief that direct electoral accountability can foster political stability, moral responsibility,

and merit-based leadership. More broadly, this demand signals a transition from passive acceptance to active civic ownership, prioritizing accountability over party loyalty and inherited privilege.

Culturally, the movement marks a decisive break from silence and submission. Gen Z's insistence on justice for revolutionary victims and strict action against corruption reflects a wider moral renaissance. Traditional hierarchies rooted in caste, gender, and lineage are increasingly challenged by meritocratic ideals, digital empowerment, and creative expression. Culture is no longer seen as static inheritance but as a living, evolving practice responsive to contemporary realities.

Artistic expression has become a key site of resistance. Social media poetry, rap, digital storytelling, and visual art expose political hypocrisy and moral decay while envisioning renewal and hope. Echoing T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, young artists portray the barrenness of the old order, while Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale* resonates in their longing for freedom and transcendence (Eliot; Keats). Similarly, the imagery of the horse in Adrienne Rich's *Power* symbolizes unbridled energy and transformative resistance, mirroring Gen Z's challenge to insulated political and bureaucratic elites (Rich).

The redefinition of gender identity, individual freedom, and civic morality further underscores this transformation. Women and marginalized groups assert visibility and voice, replacing obedient citizenship with critical participation. Ultimately, Gen Z's rebellion is ethical, aesthetic, and existential seeking to redefine what it means to be Nepali in the 21st century through conscience, creativity, and courage. Thus, Gen Z did not merely protest; it discombobulated power.

Core Traits of The Gen Z cohort in Nepal: Catalysts of a New National Awakening

The Gen Z youth bloc in Nepal is redefining the nation's identity and political consciousness. Tech-savvy, justice-oriented, emotionally aware, and fiercely independent, this generation refuses to inherit a broken system. Instead, they are determined to reform, rebuild, and renew Nepal through accountability, innovation, and collective action. Their voice amplified through digital platforms has become a powerful force for transparency, civic participation, and national progress.

Key characteristics of the Gen Z group in Nepal are:

Hyperconnected yet Locally Rooted

Raised in a digitally-networked world, Gen Z absorbs global ideas while remaining deeply grounded in Nepal's realities. They use social media not merely for expression, but as a tool for justice, accountability, and public engagement.

Authenticity-Driven

They reject hypocrisy, empty rhetoric, and symbolic leadership. Truth, transparency, and action matter more than authority or age. Their demand for sincerity in governance represents a quiet but profound cultural shift.

Result-Oriented Doers

Rather than waiting for political leaders, Gen Z steps in directly organizing protests, exposing corruption, countering misinformation, and demanding measurable outcomes. Prepared, adaptable, and pragmatic, they act when it matters most.

Rapid Responders to Injustice

Gen Z mobilizes swiftly against misuse of power, responding before issues are silenced or normalized. Their activism prioritizes real reform over symbolism.

Self-Determined Innovators

They resist rigid hierarchies, outdated politics, and systems that limit dignity or creativity. Valuing freedom, flexibility, and initiative, they carve their own paths instead of seeking permission.

Participatory Citizens

Silence and exclusion are no longer acceptable. Gen Z demands representation and meaningful participation in schools, workplaces, and governance, redefining citizenship as engagement rather than obedience.

Purpose-Driven and Collaborative

Their activism is rooted in national interest, not partisan loyalty. They seek fairness, opportunity, and a Nepal where potential is not wasted by incompetence or corruption. Collective action strengthens their resilience.

Socially and Ethically Conscious

From climate justice to anti-corruption movements, their causes are moral, compassionate, and future-oriented. Values not power drive their activism.

Mentally Aware and Emotionally Honest

Gen Z openly addresses stress, trauma, and systemic pressure. By breaking stigma around mental health, they foster empathy, solidarity, and a more humane vision of progress.

Independent Learners and Fast Decision-Makers

Through online platforms and global exposure, they educate themselves beyond outdated structures. Their ability to process information quickly enables rapid decision-making and adaptive problem-solving.

Advocates of Holistic, Future-Ready Education

They strongly oppose rote learning and disconnected higher education. Gen Z calls for flexible, affordable, AI-integrated, project-based education linked to entrepreneurship, skills, and employment within Nepal aimed at stopping mass youth migration. Their primary emphasis is on achieving quality education that drives innovation in a technology-enabled environment.

Challengers of Disorder and Dysfunction

They reject nepotism, authoritarianism, and hollow promises. With digital power, corruption is exposed instantly, enabling mass mobilization that has already reshaped political outcomes.

Technologically Empowered Reformers

Smartphones, social media, and AI are not just tools of entertainment but instruments of resistance. Gen Z amplifies ignored voices and dismantles propaganda through digital activism.

Nation Builders

Visionary and reform-oriented, The Gen Z cohort in Nepal ignites patriotism rooted in integrity and accountability. They challenge corruption, demand ethical leadership, and embody the collective hope for a just, progressive, and dignified Nepal.

Nepali Gen Z is a generation of action, conscience, and courage. Globally aware yet locally committed, emotionally honest yet fiercely determined, they reject outdated systems and demand meaningful reform. Through technology, collaboration, and principled activism, they are not merely protesting a broken nation they are rebuilding it.

Academic Vision

The young Nepali generation envisions an education system that is flexible, learner-centered, and globally connected, designed to nurture purpose rather than rote achievement. They seek personalized learning pathways aligned with individual strengths, moving beyond memorization toward project-based, experiential, and problem-solving approaches. As digital natives, they expect technology, AI tools, and online collaboration to be integral to classrooms, making learning interactive, accessible, and relevant to real-world challenges.

Central to this vision is the development of core competencies critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, and adaptability that equip students to navigate complex social and professional environments. Gen Z values inclusive and participatory learning spaces where diverse voices are respected and teachers act as mentors and facilitators instead of authoritarian instructors. Assessment, in their view, should prioritize authentic measures such as projects, portfolios, and continuous feedback, emphasizing application, digital fluency, and lifelong learning over high-stakes examinations.

For Nepali youth, education is not merely academic advancement but a tool for empowerment, innovation, and national renewal. They stress the importance of student well-being, trust, and meaningful engagement, arguing that learning flourishes when curiosity and motivation

are prioritized over pressure and compliance. As John Hattie argues, the country needs smart educators who make visible the process of learning, actively engage student's passions and adapt their teaching to maximize impact (Hattie).

This outlook aligns closely with Sir Ken Robinson's learner-centered model, which critiques factory-style, traditional, standardized education for stifling creativity and failing to accommodate individual learning styles, interests and intelligence, and advocates for organic, ecosystem-like systems that integrate arts, technology, and interdisciplinary learning (Robinson). Robinson's emphasis on empowering teachers as creative professionals resonates strongly with Gen Z's aspiration for schools that nurture diverse talents and independent thinking.

Gen Z places particular value on divergent thinking, collaboration, and curiosity as drivers of innovation and leadership transformation. They view the best educational institutions as communities of shared discovery rather than rigid hierarchies. Ultimately, the Gen Z youth population in Nepal sees education as a human-centered force that builds inner capacities values, resilience, creativity, and purpose before external success, enabling a dynamic transition toward a future-ready education system.

The Gen Z wave in Nepal Awakening: From Protest to Purpose

Nepal's emerging youth movement represents a deep national awakening in which youth have transformed frustration into purpose and moral resolve. Rejecting fear and resignation, this generation has asserted that belief, courage, and disciplined action can reshape a nation long weakened by corruption and misgovernance. Their central demand is clear: justice, dignity, and accountability must replace impunity, hypocrisy, favoritism, and political decay. Rather than merely opposing failed systems, Gen Z seeks to imagine and build alternatives grounded in integrity, merit, and public responsibility.

Digital fluency lies at the heart of this transformation. As a generation that values transparency, speed, independence, and skill-based learning, the youth population in Nepal has harnessed digital tools to expose corruption, mobilize rapidly, and challenge entrenched authority. Drawing on insights from scholars of digital power, their activism redefines politics for a networked era, where information flows horizontally and silence is no longer possible. Through technology, creativity, and moral urgency, protest has been converted into policy demands and innovation-oriented thinking.

The movement is also a response to profound governance failure and moral crisis. Many Nepalis feel that the abolition of monarchy merely replaced one ruler with thousands of unaccountable "mini-kings" within an expensive and inefficient federal structure. Repeated corruption scandals ranging from land grabs to procurement fraud have drained public resources and hollowed out state institutions. These failures demonstrate that elections alone do not guarantee good governance; without ethical leadership and institutional accountability, democracy can become a façade for elite capture.

Psychologically, the revolt reflects the lived realities of Nepali youth. High academic pressure, unemployment, identity uncertainty, and lack of emotional support have heightened sensitivity to hypocrisy and injustice. Digitally connected and globally aware, Gen Z has turned personal frustration into collective action. At its core, the movement is a demand to be heard, respected, and entrusted with responsibility, signaling a generational redefinition of citizenship. The rebellion was not led by faces on posters, but by parasocial trust built on screens.

Ultimately, the Gen Z cluster revolution is not just a political protest but a moral and generational redefinition of the nation's future. It prioritizes transparency over manipulation, merit over favoritism, and justice over impunity. The decisive challenge ahead is whether Gen Z can sustain unity, institutional reform, and ethical leadership. If successful, Nepal's future will rest not with discredited elites, but with a startup-minded generation entrepreneurial, innovative, globally aware, and self-reliant ready to build a dignified, accountable, and forward-looking republic.

All Hat and No Cattle: Why the Gen Z class in Nepal is rising

For decades, Nepal's political leadership has promised reform while delivering decline. Slogans replaced substance, institutions were hollowed out, corruption became normalized, and public resources were treated as private property. Governance turned performative loud in rhetoric but empty in results. This prolonged betrayal created the conditions for The Gen Z cohort in Nepal uprising. As Stephen Covey notes in *The Leader in Me*, "when the culture is right, results naturally follow, highlighting the centrality of values, norms, and shared propose in shaping effective organizational or social outcomes" (Covey 47). Nepal's crisis reflects a leadership culture where appearances have long mattered more than outcomes.

The Gen Z movement did not erupt overnight. It grew quietly in digital spaces, where shared frustrations over corruption, nepotism, unemployment, forced migration, and political impunity circulated organically. Leaderless and network-driven, the movement belonged to no party, personality, or elite group. Yet as it gained national visibility, political actors, media narratives, and segments of civil society rushed to personalize, represent, and dilute it threatening to co-opt a collective revolt against systemic failure.

At the heart of Gen Z's anger lies a deliberate policy failure: Nepal's deindustrialization. Public industries many established with international support were dismantled through chronic mismanagement, politicized unions, asset stripping, and the absence of long-term national planning. Domestic production collapsed, imports surged, and a corporate-political nexus flourished. This outcome was not an economic inevitability; it was a political choice.

The burden of this failure fell overwhelmingly on the youth. Jobs vanished, skills stagnated, and migration became a survival strategy. Brain drain was normalized, remittances replaced dignity, and an entire generation was told to leave the country or remain silent. Gen Z has rejected that silence. What was destroyed were not only factories, but futures revealing a crisis of leadership rather than economics.

This breakdown is neither accidental nor isolated. From land grabs and fake refugee schemes to aviation scandals, infrastructure failures, and financial misuse, corruption in Nepal is systemic. A bloated and fragmented governance structure has multiplied power centers while weakening accountability, burdening citizens and hollowing out the state. The Gen Z group in Nepal is educated, connected, and unafraid. It understands corruption not merely as stolen money, but as stolen time, opportunity, and future. Their anger is not chaos; it is conscience. Their dissent is not rebellion; it is responsibility.

This movement is not about replacing faces; it is about transforming systems and a stand against narcissism. The era of all hat and no cattle must come to an end. Nepal's future depends on a generation that remembers what was dismantled, refuses betrayal, and insists on reclaiming what was stolen.

Gen Z is not the problem.

Gen Z is the reckoning.

Dilution of Revolution: Co-optation of The Gen Z cohort in Nepal Uprising

This digital native uprising Nepali generation illustrates a common pattern in the life cycle of revolutions: transformation is often weakened not by direct repression, but by co-optation, narrative capture, and symbolic accommodation. While the movement forcefully demanded accountability, employment, and dignity, its radical potential has increasingly been diluted through elite appropriation of protest language, performative reforms, and managed political transitions that leave existing power structures intact. As a result, Gen Z reshaped political discourse but struggled to convert moral authority into durable institutional change.

This trajectory mirrors global experiences comparative cases illustrated the limits of man's protest. The *Arab Spring* succeeded in displacing authoritarian leaders yet often restored elite dominance through reconfigured power structures (Brownlee et al; Anderson). *Occupy Wall Street* reshaped public discourse on economic inequality without achieving substantive redistributive outcomes, while Sri Lanka's *Aragalaya* succeeded in removing political leaders yet left entrenched patronage networks and elite coalitions largely intact (Castells; Milkman et. al). In each case, revolutionary energy was absorbed into negotiations, committees, and symbolic gestures. Nepal reflects this same logic: systemic demands entered mainstream rhetoric, but structural reform was postponed. Such dilution is rarely accidental; it functions as a strategy through which power neutralizes threat without confrontation by transforming dissent into managed participation.

Political sociology helps explain this outcome. Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony shows how ruling elites maintain dominance by adopting oppositional language while retaining material and institutional control (Gramsci). Weberian insights into bureaucratic power further reveal how formal procedures can stall reform without appearing repressive (Weber). Castells' theory of the network society highlights a paradox: while digital platforms enabled rapid, decentralized mobilization and moral awakening, they also exposed movements to fragmentation, media manipulation, and narrative redirection by dominant actors. Without organizational continuity or institutional footholds, networked movements risk becoming symbolic rather than transformative (Castells).

The Gen Z revolt in Nepal fits this framework closely. The movement articulated sharp critiques of corruption, nepotism, electoral distortion, and governance failure. Yet traditional political actors selectively adopted its rhetoric without implementing structural change. Media sensationalism reduced sustained civic engagement into episodic spectacle, while constitutional and electoral systems offered limited pathways for youth demands to translate into policy. The result was absorption rather than suppression: the movement was neither crushed nor fulfilled.

This tension reflects a deeper gap between Nepal's constitutional promises and lived reality. Although the constitution enshrines popular sovereignty, inclusion, and accountability, everyday governance remains marked by corruption, politicized appointments, and declining trust in institutions. Rising youth protests, skepticism toward elections, and digital mobilization are empirical expressions of this disconnect. Gen Z succeeded in delegitimizing elite moral authority, yet encountered institutional inertia that deflected reform.

Importantly, dilution does not equal defeat. History shows that when ethical consciousness advances faster than institutional reform, movements often persist as moral forces awaiting structural realignment. The uprising Gen Z group in Nepal represents an unfinished democratic struggle. The critical challenge ahead is moving beyond protest toward institutional presence developing organizational capacity, policy leverage, and alternative structures capable of converting moral legitimacy into lasting reform. Gen Z has already awakened the national conscience; the unresolved task is ensuring that this awakening reshapes, rather than is absorbed by, the system it seeks to transform.

The Road Ahead

Nepal's path toward durable prosperity after the Gen Z uprising depends on deep structural reform anchored in clean governance, strong institutions, inclusive growth, and visionary, ethical leadership. The uprising exposed a fundamental crisis of leadership: those in power claimed integrity and national commitment while prioritizing personal comfort, privilege, and narrow circles of influence. Citizens' suffering hunger, debt, inequality, and despair was ignored as leaders focused on preserving positions rather than safeguarding the nation. This failure allowed corruption to spread, foreign debt to rise unchecked, and public trust to erode, pushing Nepal toward moral and institutional decay.

Repeated warnings from youth and ordinary citizens went unheeded. Their voices, long suppressed, finally broke through in a collective demand for accountability and dignity. The Gen Z movement emerged not as rebellion, but as responsibility a conscious effort to reclaim Nepal's future from denial and deception. It challenged performative leadership and exposed the gap between promises and reality.

The movement demonstrated that authority today is not derived from age, hierarchy, or office, but from the ability to inspire minds and hearts. Gen Z followed principles integrity, transparency, justice rather than politicians. Through digital activism and moral courage, the movement united rational critique with ethical purpose, redefining leadership as service and

inspiration rather than control. This awakening underscored that national renewal requires leaders who earn trust, ignite hope, and mobilize citizens toward a shared vision.

For this energy to translate into progress, decisive reforms are essential. These include uncompromising action against corruption, a credible rule of law, and transparent, technology-driven public services. Long-term investment in education, skills, and employment especially in technology, tourism, agriculture, renewable energy, and innovation ecosystems is critical to ensure young people can build futures within Nepal. Economic stability must be supported by industrial development, entrepreneurship incentives, and inclusive growth strategies that convert youth dynamism into national productivity. Restoring public trust through social justice, equitable representation, and responsive governance remains central to sustaining reform. As recovery from the Maoist insurgency and the earthquake was underway, these successive shocks reveal, the fragility of the Gen Z uprising disrupted stability once again, damaging public infrastructure and, further straining the socio-political order.

A critical turning point came on December 11, 2025, when the government and Gen Z representatives signed a ten-point accord outlining a roadmap for constitutional and governance reform. The agreement emphasizes timely implementation, public accountability, independent investigations into protest-related violence, an end to impunity, institutional reforms in policing and administration, formal inclusion of youth voices, electoral accountability, education and employment aligned with 21st-century skills, enforceable anti-corruption measures, and protection of civil liberties. For Gen Z, the accord symbolizes a transition from protest to policy and from rhetoric to results.

However, proceedings before the Commission of Inquiry revealed institutional defensiveness. Security agencies framed their actions as procedural and collective, emphasizing order and legality while avoiding individual accountability. This response highlights the central challenge ahead: without personal responsibility and genuine reform, agreements risk becoming symbolic. Nepal's future depends on whether the Gen Z awakening is translated into accountable leadership, resilient institutions, and a shared commitment to long-term nation-building.

Conclusion

Nepal's Gen Z calls for a fundamental transformation of both education and governance as the foundation of a functional democracy. In education, they reject rote learning and exam dominance, advocating a learner-centered model that nurtures creativity, critical thinking, and diverse talents through experiential and project-based approaches. Their vision emphasizes global competence alongside local relevance, affordability, skill development, and clear links to employment allowing young people to innovate within Nepal while remaining globally competitive.

The contrast between this vision and the state's response to the Gen Z protests is stark. During the Commission of Inquiry, senior officials largely defended institutional conduct by framing decisions as procedural and situational. Responsibility was diffused across administrative hierarchies, with an emphasis on law and order rather than accountability.

This response reinforced Gen Z's core critique: Nepal's governance culture disperses blame instead of confronting institutional failure and personal responsibility. The leaderless protest flummoxed a leader-dependant-state.

In opposition to this culture, Gen Z imagines a clean, capable, and accountable republic. Their demands include zero tolerance for corruption and impunity, merit-based leadership, an independent judiciary, empowered oversight bodies, and a form of federalism that delivers effective public services rather than political privilege. Economically, they seek results-driven development focused on startups, SMEs (Small and medium-sized Enterprise), agri-tech, green industries, and dignified employment. In foreign policy, they favor a balanced, interest-based approach grounded in sovereignty and national dignity. Politically, they call for ethical, internally democratic parties, meaningful youth participation, gender justice, minority protection, and equality rooted in dignity rather than tokenism.

Rather than longing for monarchy, Gen Z focuses on ending incompetence and unaccountable leadership. Many support structural reforms such as directly elected executive leadership with strong checks and balances not out of ideological rigidity, but from a pragmatic question: who can deliver results and be held accountable? While critics dismiss this agenda as idealistic, Gen Z argues it seeks not utopia, but a functional democracy capable of governing effectively.

A central concern is mass youth outmigration, democracy without accountability, driven by poor governance, weak institutions, and limited domestic opportunities. Gen Z envisions a government that is trustworthy, keeps its commitments, listens to the people, acts responsibly and accountably, shows compassion, serves selflessly, and upholds integrity. They foresee a strong learn-and-earn education system, robust employment linkages, and a supportive ecosystem for entrepreneurship. They identify bad politics and bureaucratic inertia not lack of talent as the root causes of the exodus. Voting for proven dishonesty is not a right exercised-it is a damage inflicted on our own future. Addressing this crisis requires systemic reform, digital transformation, and modernization of education to unlock Nepal's economic potential.

The movement also challenges societal complacency. Continued tolerance of corrupt leadership, they argue, reflects moral inertia as much as ignorance. History shows that while societies may endure many misguided citizens, even a single incompetent leader can endanger national foundations. Truth ultimately sustains nations; falsehood corrodes them.

Looking ahead, Gen Z recognizes that protest alone is insufficient. What has this revolution truly achieved, when it claimed the lives of so many youths, caused widespread destruction, and ultimately repeated elections that reinstated the same corrupt old figures? Lasting change demands sustained, ethical, issue-based civic engagement free from personality politics, hierarchy, and elite capture. This means building political literacy, engaging seriously with laws, budgets, and policies, institutionalizing collective decision-making, and setting clear non-negotiable agendas on anti-corruption, meritocracy, employment, education reform, and digital freedom. Electoral participation, if pursued, must be principled and strategic.

There is no doubt, the Gen Z uprising marks a watershed in Nepal's modern history. Enabled by digital networks, it demonstrated both the power and vulnerability of leaderless movements. Comparative experiences in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh show that lasting transformation depends on institutional reform. With sustained engagement, Nepal can harness its youth to build a more just, inclusive, and prosperous society. The politics of revenge will not prevail.

It may be argued that this rebellion fell short of realizing Gen Z's aspirations; nevertheless, it amplified dissent, shattered silence, and openly challenged entrenched power, even as the final verdict remains beyond the scope of the present movement. Yet, there is a hope of light at the end of the tunnel. What unfolds next will determine whether this uprising marks a genuine turning point or dissolves into another missed historical opportunity. As Antonio Gramsci observed, "*The old is dying and the new cannot yet be born*" (Gramsci 55), while George Orwell reminds us that "*the outcome of any struggle depends on the balance of forces*" (Orwell 130). "*For us, there is only the act of striving; for us, there is only the trying,*" (Eliot 5) while history will decide what endures.

Authors' ORCID iD

Shiba Datta Gnawali: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-4673-9464>

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