

Exploring the Local Economic Impact of Bulbule Park Tourism from Multiple Stakeholder Perspectives

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Abstract

Bulbule Park, a popular recreational area in Birendranagar, Surkhet, has become a central hub for tourism-related economic activities in Karnali province. This study examines the local economic impacts of tourism based at Bulbule Lake using a multi-stakeholder approach to gather diverse perspectives from local park participants. A mixed-methods design was employed, combining quantitative surveys (N = 25) with qualitative in-depth interviews (N = 4), focusing on its key stakeholders: photographers, boatmen, shopkeepers, and park management staff. The study's findings show that employment generated at the park significantly fosters local economic well-being, with daily earnings generally ranging from NRs 500 to 2000. However, small businesses, especially shops, often generate higher incomes. The park has created new job opportunities, particularly for previously unemployed individuals, and has improved income levels for most workers. The study concludes that achieving lasting and sustainable economic growth depends on the full implementation of the Bulbule Master Plan and targeted investments in physical and service infrastructure. This study will contribute to strengthening policy implications for tourism planning in Karnali, in general, and in Birendranagar, in particular.

Keywords: Economic impact, employment, local tourism, multi-stakeholders, Bulbule park

Introduction

Tourism is considered a key driver of economic growth, particularly in countries such as Nepal, where it has long been a vital component of the economy, generating foreign exchange, creating employment opportunities, and promoting cultural exchange. Understanding the local, grassroots economic impacts of specific tourist sites is essential to developing effective policies.

Bulbule Park, located in Birendranagar, Surkhet, is a popular recreational spot known for its natural lake and green gardens. Surkhet, as the capital of Karnali Province, serves as a significant economic, educational, and transportation hub, enhancing the significance of local economic activities, which are supported by its main attractions. The park's economic activities, such as boating, photography, and retail, have not been specifically examined in prior research on the local economic impact of tourism at Bulbule Park. The lack of research creates a significant gap in the literature regarding regional economic impact assessments in Nepal. This study aims to fill that gap by providing a micro-level, evidence-based analysis of the financial benefits and structural challenges faced by the park's key stakeholders. The primary objective of this study was to examine the economic impact of lake-based tourism on the local community near Bulbule Park. More specifically, the objectives of the study included a) assessing the various economic activities generated by tourism at Bulbule Park; b) examining how the lifestyle of people associated with Bulbule Park was changing; and c) evaluating the role of small businesses in the tourism economy around Bulbule Park.

Literature Review

The word "tourism" originated from the Greek word "tornos," meaning a tool used for describing a circle. This concept reflects the idea of people traveling in a circular itinerary, returning

to their point of origin after visiting various places for leisure or pleasure (Kafle, 2023). So, etymologically, the word 'tourism' describes the act of traveling from one place to another for fun. It involves traveling for leisure, with the primary goal of bringing foreign currency into the country. The effect concerns the impact of tourist spending across different sectors of the economy (Shrestha, 2015). Tourism involves traveling and short stays outside one's usual residence for leisure, recreation, or cultural reasons without earning income at the destination. Nepal has been a popular tourist destination since ancient times, as shown by its rich architectural heritage and cultural traditions (Kafle, 2023). In the country, tourism is viewed as a key driver of job creation, foreign exchange generation, and regional development.

Tourism in Bulbule Park, Surkhet, promotes job opportunities, generates income, supports infrastructure development, and fosters cultural exchange. It creates jobs in transportation, boating, photography, and hotel and restaurant management. Local people benefit as visitors to the park spend money on boating, photography, and other activities. Taxes, entry fees, and permits generate revenue for the local government, enabling it to provide public services. It also promotes infrastructure development, thereby improving local facilities. Sustainable methods, including waste management and environmental conservation, are recommended. Tourism-related spending benefits the local economy by strengthening local businesses and related industries. However, seasonal ecological impacts, such as the rainy season, and long-term economic growth challenges require careful management.

Previous studies have examined the key financial and cultural factors shaping Surkhet's tourism sector. Pant (2006) studied sustainable tourism in Surkhet, and K.C. (2016) examined the impact of ecotourism on development. Similarly, B.K. (2021) explored the potential and challenges of ecotourism in Surkhet. Dhakal (2019) notes that tourism drives Nepal's diverse development, and Bishwakarma (2024) highlights the potential and growth of Karnali tourism. Dhakal and Devkota (2025) examined opportunities and challenges for tourism development in Surkhet District, emphasizing the need for improved infrastructure, training, and community engagement. However, no research has analyzed the local economic impact of Bulbule Park on its key stakeholders, including photographers, shopkeepers, park staff, and boatmen.

Methodology

Research Design and Site Selection

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. The quantitative data provided broad insights into income and employment patterns, while the qualitative data offered in-depth insights into lifestyle changes, sufficiency, and the challenges they posed. Descriptive statistical tools, such as mean and percentage, and the thematic analysis framework developed by Braun and Clarke (2006) were used to analyze and interpret the collected data. The research was conducted in Bulbule Park in Birendranagar, Surkhet.

Universe, Sampling, and Stakeholders

The universe for this study consisted of all key stakeholders actively engaged in tourism at Bulbule Park, including boat operators, photographers, shopkeepers, and park management staff.

Approximately 45 people are associated with Bulbule Park. A random sampling technique was used to select 25 respondents for the quantitative survey, whereas four respondents were purposively selected for in-depth interviews to capture detailed, contextual insights. Thus, this approach ensured a multi-stakeholder perspective on the impacts of tourism.

Data Collection and Analysis

The study used three primary methods of data collection: a) field observation, in which the researcher examined economic activities and tourist interactions; b) a structured questionnaire to collect quantitative data on stakeholders' income activities; and c) in-depth interviews to collect qualitative insights into tourism's economic impact. Survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages) in SPSS, while interviews and field notes were analyzed thematically following the framework of Braun & Clarke (2006). Finally, both quantitative and qualitative results were triangulated to gain a detailed understanding of Bulbule Park's tourism impacts.

Results and Discussion

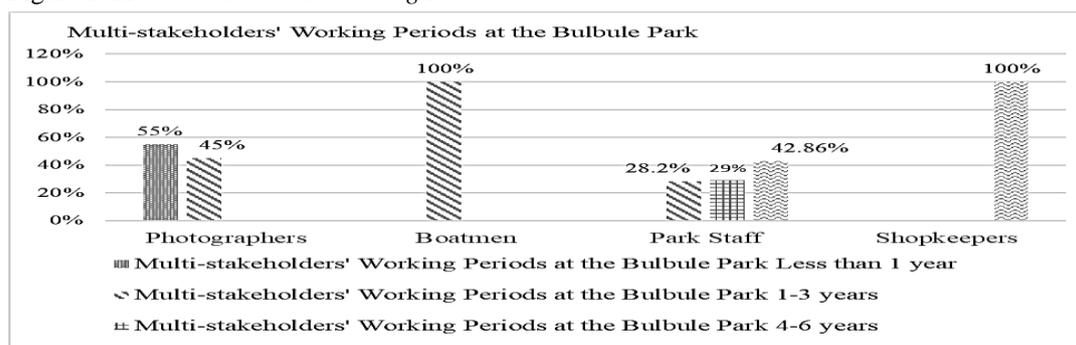
Demographic Information of the Respondents

For the survey, 25 respondents were selected: 11 photographers, 4 boatmen, 7 park management staff, and 3 shopkeepers. These participants were chosen to provide a multi-stakeholder perspective on the park's activities, featuring details on tourist flows and demand, as well as commercial activities. Of the 25 participants, 22 were male, and 3 were female. The respondents' ages ranged from 21 to 56 years, and educational levels ranged from pre-literate to a bachelor's degree.

Multi-stakeholders' Working Periods

The study reveals patterns of employment duration across various occupational groups within Bulbule Park, reflecting varying levels of workforce stability and experience.

Figure 1: *Multi-stakeholders' Working Periods*



Source: Field Survey, 2025

Figure 1 shows that among photographers, more than half (55%) have been in their current jobs for less than a year, suggesting a relatively high turnover rate and recent entry into the field. The remaining 45% have between one and three years of experience, suggesting some continuity, but overall, this category has a relatively young workforce.

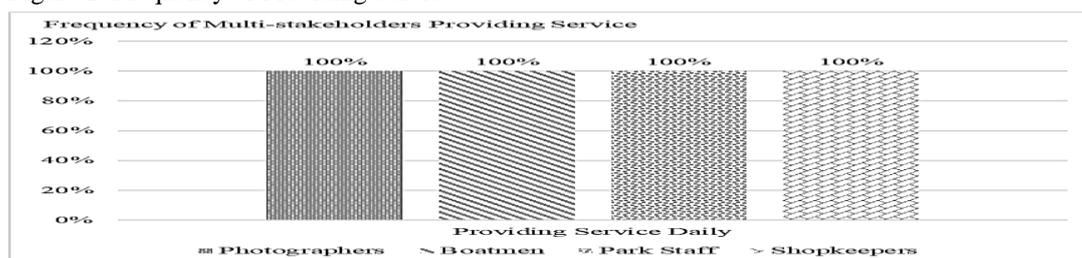
All boatmen surveyed reported that their employment ranged from one to three years. Similarly, 42.80% of park management staff have been employed for over six years, indicating sustained retention and the accumulation of institutional knowledge within this group. The remaining park management staff members reported intermediate tenures, ranging from one to five years, with a distribution of one to three years (28.2%) and four to five years (29%), reflecting a mixed type of experience. Shopkeepers at Bulbule Park showed the highest level of employment stability, with 100% having been involved in business activities within the park for more than six years.

To summarize, these findings reveal a diverse employment landscape at Bulbule Park, with some jobs marked by short-term or transitional employment, while others show long-term stability. These insights into workforce tenure are vital for understanding the human resource dynamics that support the park's operations and tourism activities.

Frequency of Providing Service

The study shows how often they provide service to customers at Bulbule Park.

Figure 2: Frequency of Providing Service



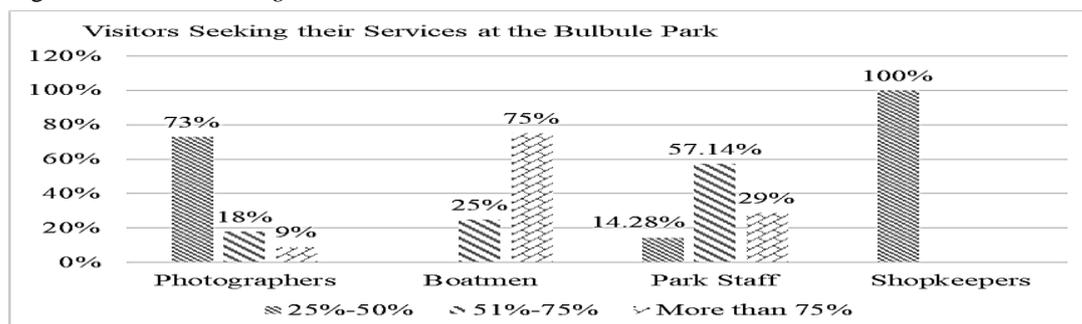
Source: Field Survey, 2025

It is evident that all respondents (100%), including photographers, boatmen, park management staff, and shopkeepers, provide daily services at Bulbule Park, showing a strong level of involvement and dependence on the park for their livelihoods or daily activities.

Visitors Seeking Services

The study shows the number of visitors who come to Bulbule Park for its services.

Figure 3: Visitors Seeking Services



Source: Field Survey, 2025

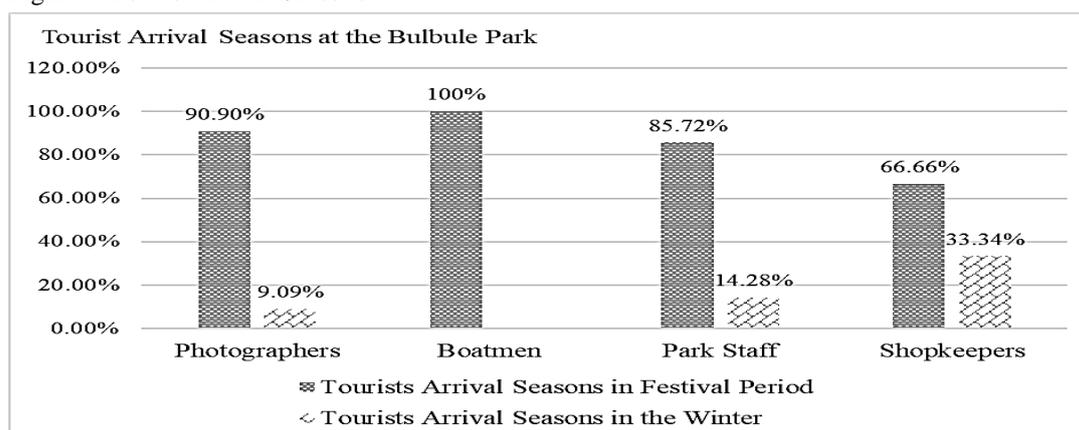
Figure 3 reveals that a significant majority of photographers (73%) reported that 25–50% of their visitors receive their services. A smaller number of photographers (18 percent) reported service demand in the 51–75 percent range, while only 9 percent stated that more than 75% of visitors used

their service at the park. This illustrates that photographers have a moderate but consistent flow of customers, with a few examples of really high demand. The results indicate a considerably higher demand for photography services. While 25% of boatmen reported that 51–75% of visitors sought their services, the majority (75%) reported that more than 75% of visitors did so. This indicates that boating is a major attraction at Bulbule Park and a primary recreational activity for visitors. Visitor interaction with park management staff shows a more even distribution. Approximately 14.28 percent reported that 25-50% of visitors required their services, with more than half (57.14%) falling between 51% and 75%. A further 29% reported service demand from more than 75% of visitors. This shows that park management staff play an important role in service delivery, with consistently high levels of interaction with visitors. The findings show that shops have the highest interaction rates, with 100% of respondents stating that 25–50% of park visitors seek their services. This means that every tourist interacts with stores in some way, emphasizing the importance of commercial activity in maintaining Bulbule Park's tourism economy.

Tourist Arrival Seasons

The study indicates that the festival season draws the highest number of tourists to the park.

Figure 4: *Tourist Arrival Seasons*



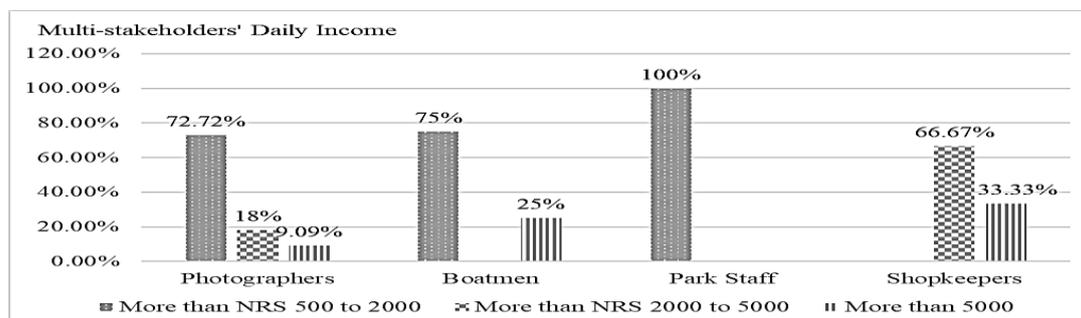
Source: Field Survey, 2025

Findings across respondent groups consistently show that the festival season is the peak time for tourists at Bulbule Park. Photographers reported that 90.90% of visitors come during festivals, with only 9.09% visiting in winter. Similarly, all boatmen (100%) identified the festival period as the park's busiest season. Park management staff reported that 85.72% of visitors arrive during festivals, while 14.28% prefer the winter season. Shopkeepers' views also support this pattern, with 66.66% indicating the festival season as the busiest, compared with 33.34% for winter. This result aligns with Dahal and Thapa's (2024) finding that peak tourism occurs during favorable weather and events.

Daily Income

The income patterns among different occupational groups within Bulbule Park showed notable differences.

Figure 5: *Daily Income*



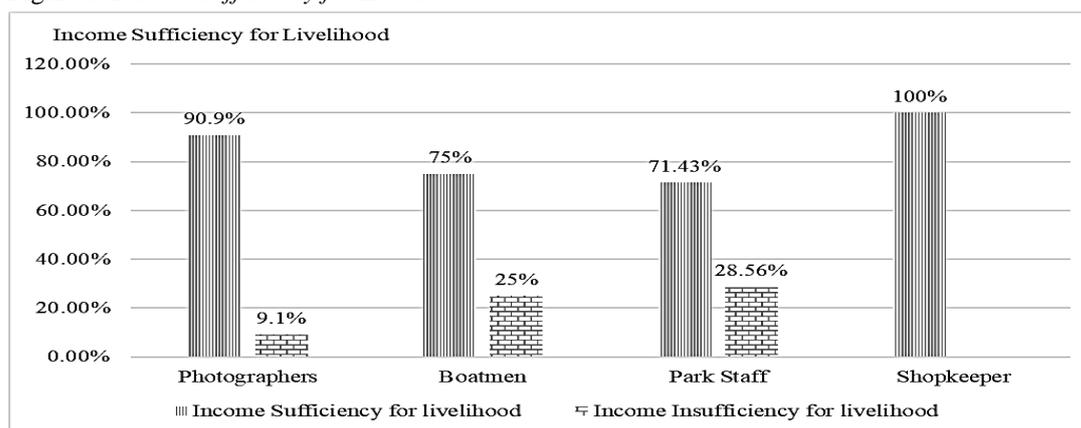
Source: Field Survey, 2025

Among the photographers, the majority (72.72%) reported earning between NRS 500 and NRS 2000 per day, while 18.18% earned between NRS 2000 and NRS 5000, and a smaller percentage (9.09%) earned more than NRS 5000 per day. A similar pattern was observed among the boatmen: 75% earned between NRS 500 and NRS 2000 per day, and the remaining 25% earned more than NRS 5000. The park management staff had the most consistent income distribution, with all respondents reporting daily earnings between NRS 500 and NRS 2000. On the other hand, shopkeepers earned higher incomes: 66.67% earned between NRS 2000 and NRS 5000 per day, and 33.33% earned above NRS 5000 per day. Overall, these results suggest that while most service providers in the park earn modest daily incomes within the NSR 500–2000 range, some occupations, especially shopkeeping, generate higher earnings, reflecting differences in market demand, customer engagement, and the nature of services offered.

Income Sufficiency for Livelihood

The study presents various stakeholders' views on whether the money they earn from their current jobs is sufficient to sustain their livelihoods.

Figure 6: *Income Sufficiency for Livelihood*



Source: Field Survey, 2025

Various occupational groups report that their income from Bulbule Park is sufficient to support their livelihoods. Among the photographers, most (90.9%) reported that their earnings are satisfactory, while a small percentage (9.1%) stated that they are only partially adequate, indicating

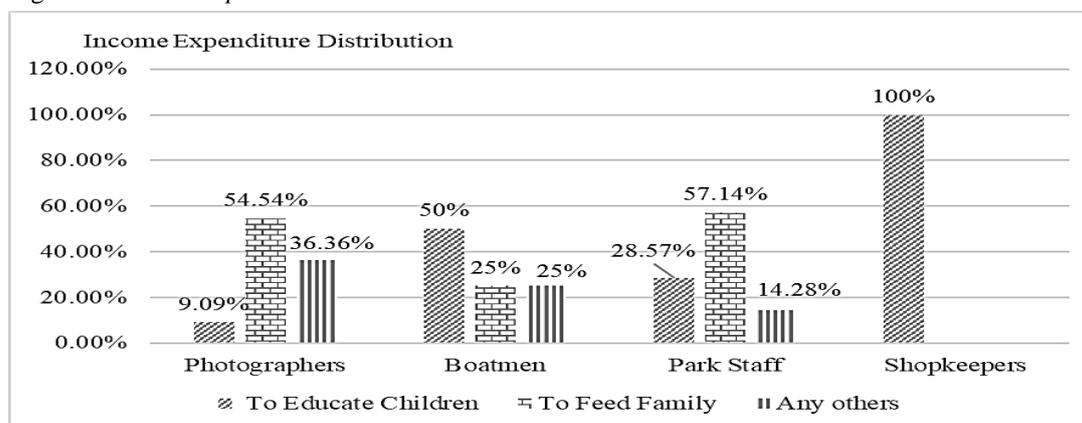
that they rely on additional income sources. Similarly, 75% of the boatmen said their income was sufficient, while 25% found it only partially adequate. Among the park management staff, 71.43% reported having sufficient income, while 28.57% stated it was insufficient. Additionally, all shopkeepers (100%) indicated that their earnings from the park are enough to meet their livelihood needs. Overall, these results suggest a generally high level of income sufficiency among those involved in various economic activities within the park, although some groups—particularly boatmen and park management staff—show a small minority facing partial or complete insufficiency.

The interview data indicate that multiple stakeholders reported positive changes in their lifestyle and living conditions resulting from their jobs in Bulbule Park. For example, a park management staff member named Ram highlighted improvements in social interactions and economic growth as a result of his work at the park. Another Park management staff member, Shila, observed that income stability has enabled better educational opportunities for children, timely payment of house rent, and increased social engagement. Meera, a boatman, noted a rise in household expenses, indicating changes in consumption patterns. Similarly, Laxmi, a photographer, mentioned improvements compared to previous conditions, with progress visible in both economic status and social relationships. Overall, these findings suggest that employment at the park has contributed to better economic well-being while also influencing household spending and social connections.

Income Expenditure

The analysis of income and expenditure among different occupational groups in Bulbule Park shows clear spending priorities, highlighting differences in economic situations and livelihood needs.

Figure 7: *Income Expenditure*



Source: Field Survey, 2025

Figure 7 reveals that more than half of the photographers (54.54%) stated that they primarily use their earnings for basic household needs, indicating that many in this group live in low-income settings. A smaller percentage (9.09%) used their income mainly for their children's education, while 36.36% spent it on other things, such as healthcare, savings, rent, and small investments. Among the boatmen, half (50%) spent their earnings mainly on their children's education, while 25% allocated their income to household food needs and other expenses such as healthcare, debt repayment, and

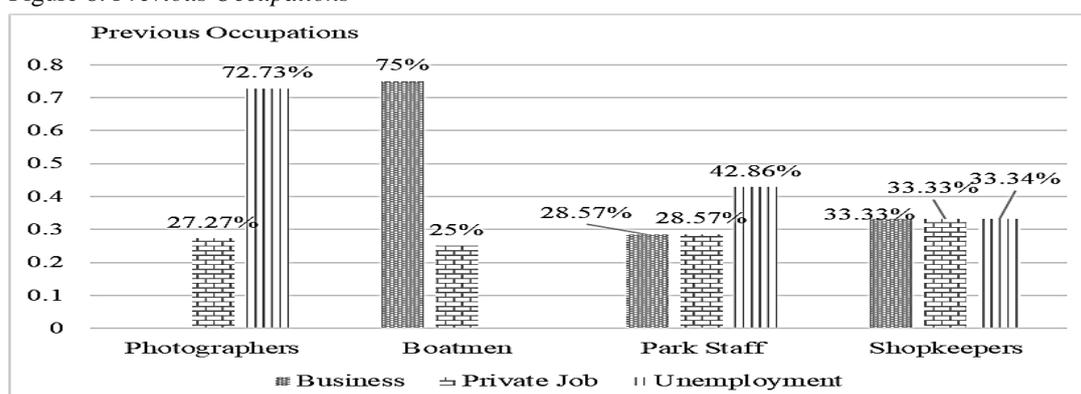
savings. Similarly, over half of the park management staff (57.14%) reported that they primarily spend their income on food for their families, followed by education-related expenses (28.57%) and other uses (14.28%). Similarly, 100% of shopkeepers reported spending their earnings on their children's education.

Overall, the findings indicate that while a significant share of earnings across all groups goes toward household needs, such as food and shelter, education is a secondary priority, particularly among boatmen. Other expenses, such as healthcare, savings, and debt payment, though less common, underscore additional economic responsibilities workers face. These patterns suggest that most tourism-related workers at Bulbule Park prioritize basic spending, leaving limited room for long-term investments or wealth accumulation.

Previous Occupations

An analysis of respondents' employment backgrounds shows differences among occupational groups at Bulbule Park.

Figure 8: *Previous Occupations*



Source: Field Survey, 2025

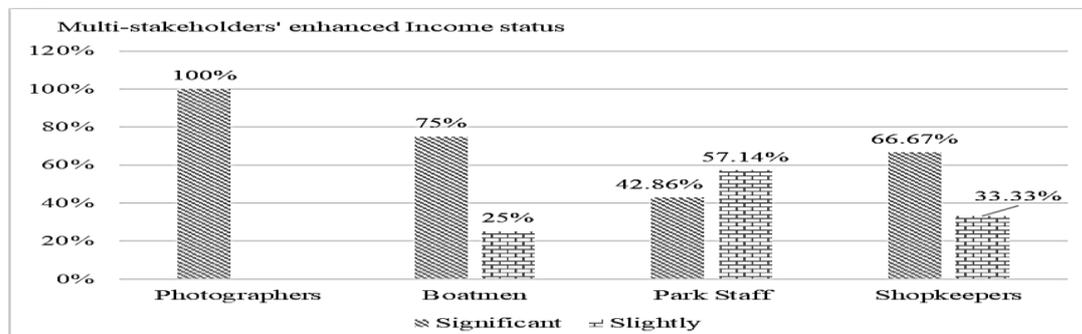
Figure 8 clearly shows that 72.73% of photographers reported being unemployed prior to their current jobs, while the remaining 27.27% found employment in the private sector. On the other hand, most boatmen (75%) had prior business experience before joining the park, with only 25% from the private sector. Among the park management staff, 42.86% were previously unemployed, while more than half (57.14%) had prior experience in business and private jobs. The shopkeepers showed a relatively even distribution: one-third (33.33%) ran their own companies, another one-third (33.33%) worked in private employment, and the remaining one-third (33.34%) were unemployed before taking on their current roles.

Overall, the findings indicate that the park has become a source of income for individuals from diverse job backgrounds, including many who were previously unemployed. This indicates that tourism activities at Bulbule Park have generated new job opportunities for individuals with prior experience and those re-entering the workforce.

Enhanced Income Status

The study reveals that the park provides not only a stable income source but also helps improve the standard of living for its workers.

Figure 9: Enhanced Income Status



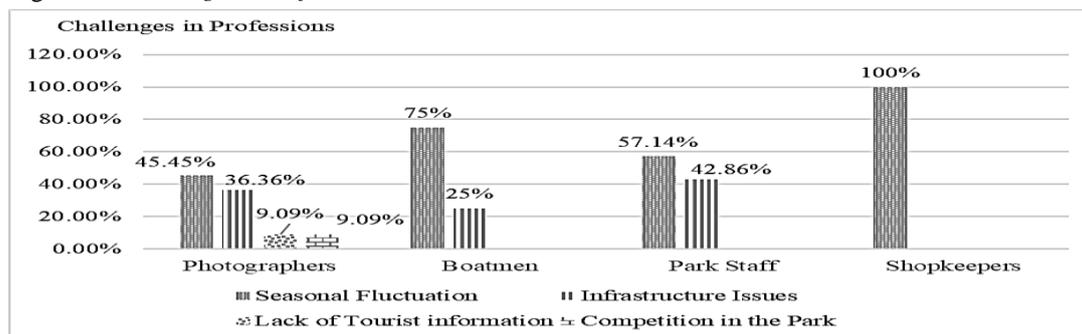
Source: Field Survey, 2025

Figure 9 shows that employment in Bulbule Park has had a positive impact on the economic well-being of workers from various occupational groups. All photographers (100%) reported that their jobs improved their standard of living. Among the boatmen, a majority (75%) stated that their income had increased significantly due to their work at the park. Similarly, all park management staff acknowledged an improvement in their income, with 42.86% reporting a significant increase and 57.14% indicating a slight increase. When combining responses across all occupational groups, 66.67% of respondents reported that their income had improved significantly, while 33.33% reported a moderate improvement. These results suggest that the park not only provides a stable income source but also helps improve workers' standard of living. However, the level of improvement varies by occupation. These findings support the work of Sharma et al. (2022), who noted that participation in tourism-related activities has increased access to financial resources for wetland communities, and many community members have adopted alternative livelihood strategies to maintain economic sustainability year-round.

Challenges in Professions

The study reveals that respondents encountered numerous challenges in their professional roles at the park.

Figure 10: Challenges in Professions



Source: Field Survey, 2025

Figure 10 reveals that seasonal fluctuations are the most prevalent challenge across all occupational groups involved in tourism-related activities at Bulbule Park. Among the

photographers, 45.45% reported seasonal fluctuations as their primary concern, followed by inadequate infrastructure (36.36%), insufficient dissemination of tourist information (9.09%), and competition (9.09%). Similarly, 75% of the boatmen identified seasonal fluctuations as their primary challenge, while 25% cited infrastructure limitations. The park management staff also expressed similar concerns: 57.14% highlighted seasonal fluctuations, and 42.86% reported infrastructural limitations. Notably, all shopkeepers (100%) reported that seasonal fluctuations were the only challenge affecting their businesses. This pattern highlights the fundamental role of seasonality as a constraint for tourism-dependent livelihoods in the study area. At the same time, infrastructural limitations emerge as the second most critical issue for certain occupational groups. The limited mention of challenges, such as insufficient dissemination of tourist information and competition, suggests that these factors are viewed as secondary to the more immediate impacts of seasonal demand fluctuations and inadequate infrastructure.

These findings align with other studies on lake-based tourism in Nepal, which highlight significant challenges despite its potential for sustainable development. For instance, poor accessibility, inadequate facilities, and environmental degradation are key obstacles (Ghimire, 2016). Insufficient infrastructure, limited connectivity, and weak national carriers impede tourism growth (Badal, 2019). To address these issues, strategic collaboration among stakeholders, investment in infrastructure, and increased local engagement are crucial (Khatiwada et al., 2022).

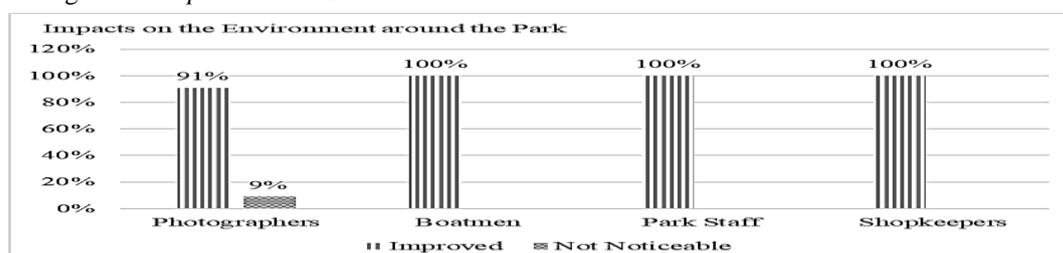
In-depth interviews with key informants in the study support these findings. A park management staff member, Ram, reported challenges managing people with diverse temperaments, as well as occasional disruptions from large crowds and adverse weather conditions. Similarly, Shila noted that, in the past, unauthorized entries and the challenge of dealing with various types of visitors were common; however, the recruitment of security guards has significantly reduced these problems. From a financial operations standpoint, Meera reported that some tourists voiced dissatisfaction with higher ticket prices. In the park's private service sector, Laxmi encountered problems with tourists who refused to pay for photographs, sought steep discounts, and occasionally engaged in disputes.

Overall, these challenges highlight broader issues in customer management, pricing disputes, and environmental factors inherent to tourism-related professions in public recreational areas.

Impacts on the Environment around the Park

The study reveals the impact of Bulbule Park on its surrounding environment.

Figure 11: *Impacts on the Environment around the Park*



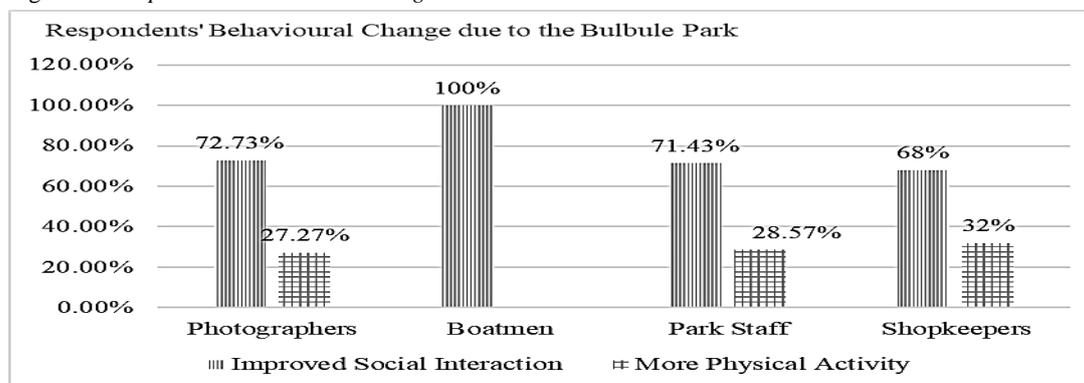
Source: Field Survey, 2025

Figure 11 shows strong agreement among all stakeholder groups on improvements to the park's environmental quality. Among photographers, a large majority (90.91%) felt that the environment around the park had improved, while a small portion (9.09%) reported no noticeable change. In contrast, all boatmen (100%) and all park management staff (100%) confirmed that environmental conditions had improved. This consistent agreement among the latter two groups, along with the overwhelmingly positive perception among photographers, indicates that recent conservation efforts, infrastructure upgrades, or park management actions have had a noticeable and widely recognized impact on the park's environmental quality.

Respondents' Behavioral Changes due to the Park

The respondents reported experiencing various behavioral changes due to their jobs at Bulbule Park.

Figure 12: Respondents' Behavioral Changes due to the Park



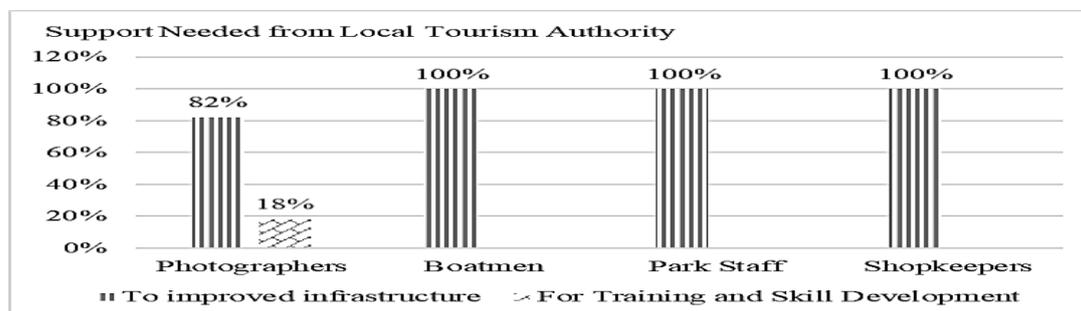
Source: Field Survey, 2025

Figure 12 presents that employment at Bulbule Park has led to significant positive changes in lifestyle among different occupational groups. A large percentage of photographers (72.73%) reported a positive change in their social lives, and 27.27% experienced increased physical activity as part of their daily routines. Likewise, all surveyed boatmen reported increased social interactions since they began working at the park. Among the park management staff, 71.43% identified improved social interaction as a key lifestyle change, while 28.57% noted increased physical activity. For shopkeepers, approximately 68% reported that their opportunities for socialization had significantly increased, and 32% noted improved health due to increased physical activity. These findings collectively suggest that the park not only provides a source of livelihood but also promotes stronger social engagement and healthier lifestyles among those involved in its tourism activities.

Support Needed from Local Tourism Authority

The study reveals that stakeholders anticipate receiving logistics and other support from the local tourism authority and government.

Figure 13: Support Needed from the Local Tourism Authority



Source: Field Survey, 2025

Figure 13 shows a strong consensus among tourism-related service providers at Bulbule Park on the need for infrastructure improvements. Most photographers (81.82%) emphasized that infrastructure upgrades are crucial for maximizing tourism benefits, while a smaller group (18.18%) focused on the importance of developing and training communication skills. Additionally, all boatmen (100%) agreed that better infrastructure would directly help grow their business. Overall, all respondents (100%) identified infrastructure development as the main requirement for increasing economic benefits from tourism. This highlights the vital role of both physical and service infrastructures in boosting the economic potential of tourism-related jobs within Bulbule Park. Furthermore, Lamsal et al. (2015) note policy implications, including establishing an entry fee system, government investment in social benefits, and public-private partnerships for conservation.

The respondents interviewed stated that full implementation of the Bulbule Master Plan by the Surkhet Valley Municipality Development Committee, Birendranagar Municipality, Surkhet, would improve their financial stability and allowances. Some, such as the park management staff, depend directly on the plan's completion to sustain their livelihoods. Other respondents, including the boatman facility and photographer Laxmi, acknowledged the support already provided by the Surkhet Valley Municipality Development Committee and Birendranagar Municipality, Surkhet, and expressed hope for continued assistance. Overall, the findings suggest a standard expectation for both ongoing and increased institutional support to bolster their professional and economic security.

Family Income Sources

The stakeholders reported that family involvement in income-generating activities among Bulbule Park workers varies. Ram and Laxmi provide financial stability and reduce dependence on a single source of income. Conversely, Shila and Meera may be more financially vulnerable because their livelihoods rely solely on their earnings. Additional earners enhance household economic resilience by helping mitigate risks, while single earners face greater financial stress.

Expectation in the Profession

The respondents shared diverse views on potential changes that could improve their income or working conditions. Ram emphasized the importance of developing physical infrastructure to improve working conditions and expand income opportunities. Similarly, Laxmi recommended upgrading to a high-quality camera and expanding access to clothing and relevant supplies to improve service quality. Conversely, some respondents indicated satisfaction with their current operations and did not anticipate immediate changes. For example, Shila expressed her intention to

keep her current service approach, which has received positive feedback from visitors. Similarly, Meera stated that they expect no immediate changes to their current strategy because of the existing three-year operational tender.

Infrastructural Changes at the Park

The respondents interviewed highlighted various infrastructure improvements that have upgraded the park's facilities and services. According to Ram and Shila, these include the construction of paved roads within the park, the installation of both electric and solar lighting systems, and the setup of protective fencing around the Bulbule premises. Similarly, Meera pointed out the construction of an office building, the addition of drinking water facilities, and the installation of an electric lighting system. Additionally, Laxmi reported the construction of a dedicated studio, the installation of electricity and lighting, and the development of a changing room equipped with traditional cultural attire and ornaments for photography purposes.

Professions in the Future

The respondents in the study believed that further developing the physical infrastructure at Bulbule Park would significantly enhance its tourism potential and related services. According to Ram, completing the master plan for Bulbule Park could have increased park visitors. However, this would require external funding beyond what the Surkhet Valley Municipality Development Committee, Birendranagar Municipality, Surkhet, can provide. Shila pointed out that, although substantial work has already been completed, additional infrastructure improvements in the coming years would benefit both service providers and visitors. Similarly, Meera at the boating facility and Laxmi at the photo studio emphasized that developing more infrastructure would help attract more tourists to the park.

Conclusion

Tourism has long been a vital component of Nepal's economy, generating foreign exchange, creating employment opportunities, and promoting cultural exchange. In this context, Bulbule Park in Birendranagar, Surkhet, stands out as a notable recreational destination, famous for its natural lake and beautiful garden. The park attracts local, regional, and international visitors, creating jobs in boating, photography, retail, and hospitality, and generating municipal revenue through fees and permits. Despite these contributions, issues such as seasonal variations, ecological concerns, and unequal distribution of benefits persist. The study finds that Bulbule Park offers a diverse range of short- and long-term employment opportunities, with all respondents engaged in daily tourism-related services. Earnings ranged from NRS 500 to 2000 per day, with shopkeepers reporting higher incomes than boatmen and park management staff, indicating occupational disparities. The study concludes that Bulbule Park plays a crucial role in local economic development; however, issues related to income equity, governance, and environmental management persist. Sustainable strategies—such as livelihood diversification, infrastructure development, financial inclusion, and eco-friendly practices—are vital to ensuring fair and sustainable tourism benefits in Surkhet.

Author's Biography

Yamuna Sharma has earned an MA in Sociology from Mid-West University. She has over 16 years of teaching experience from the primary to higher secondary levels. Currently, she serves as

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