Riggs' Prismatic Model & its Application in Nepal's Public Administration

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Abstract

This study endeavors to examine Fred W. Riggs' Prismatic model within the framework of Nepal's contemporary public administration and democratic system. It analyses the discrepancy between the ideals of democracy and the reality of governance in the Nepali experience, which began after the fall of the Rana autocracy in 1951. With the use of qualitative methods, interpretive techniques, and a systematic review of scholarly literature, the study identifies Riggs' model as a key theoretical foundation in comparative public administration for studying developing administrative structures and processes. The research conceptualizes Nepal as a prismatic society, wherein traditional norms and modern administrative practices coexist, generating institutional hybridity and structural overlap. Despite a history of democratic reforms, including the establishment of a federal republic under the 2015 Constitution, Nepal remains, as Riggs posited, in a transitional phase. Structural imbalances, such as hierarchical rigidity, weak institutional capacity, nepotism, and favoritism, have produced administrative instability and inefficiency. Key features of the prismatic model, including heterogeneity, formalism, and overlapping functions, are evident as formal democratic institutions are often undermined by informal patronage networks and socio-cultural expectations. This hybridity erodes public trust in governance. Riggs' prismatic model thus becomes a critical analytical instrument to examine Nepal's political-administrative development and the persistent challenges in achieving a fully integrated, transparent, and accountable society. Unchecked nepotism, patronage, and corruption in Nepal's administration will inevitably deepen the nation's crisis, eroding public trust, stalling development, and damaging its global standing.

Keywords: Fused model, diffracted model, Prismatic model, Comparative Public Administration

Introduction

Public administration in Nepal has witnessed a complex evolution, which has been shaped by historic, cultural, and political developments (Bhul, 2023). Unlike most of the European, African, and Latin American countries, which moved from imperial or colonial types of government to modern democratic government relatively early, some regions went through decades of political and economic hardship after independence. Nepal began its democratic journey only after the fall of the Rana autocracy in 1951. Since then, Nepal has made significant strides in establishing formal democratic institutions, including a written constitution, elected legislatures, federal structures, and bureaucratic frameworks. (Malagodi, 2023). However, the effectiveness of these institutions has often been undermined by weak implementation, political instability, and deeply entrenched traditional practices (Al-Jundi et al, 2025: Panday, 2011).The coexistence of modern administrative frameworks with informal and conventional societal norms has created a hybrid system of governance, where the formal structures exist on paper but are frequently compromised by personal influence, patronage networks, and socio-cultural expectations (Bhul, 2023; Gautam, 2008). This gap between institutional design and practical governance highlights the need for a theoretical framework that can explain the transitional nature of Nepalese administration and the persistent challenges in achieving efficiency, accountability, and citizen-centered governance (Dhungana, 2019).

Fred W. Riggs, a renowned scholar in public administration, developed the Fused–Prismatic–Diffracted model to analyses the evolution of administrative systems in developing countries. Riggs conceptualized "prismatic societies" as transitional systems in which traditional and modern institutions coexist, producing structural overlap, inefficiency, and administrative contradictions (Basu, 2021). His framework offers critical insights into the dynamics of countries like Nepal, where formal rules, modern bureaucratic practices, and democratic principles exist alongside traditional norms, hierarchical loyalty, and informal networks of influence (Chaudhary et al., 2023). In such societies, administrative positions are often influenced by nepotism, favoritism, and social hierarchies rather than merit-based criteria, weakening institutional efficiency and public trust. Riggs' model also emphasizes that administrative behavior cannot be understood in isolation from social, cultural, and economic contexts, making it particularly relevant for analyzing Nepal's hybrid governance system (Thapa, 2023). By applying Riggs' Prismatic Model, researchers can identify the underlying reasons for policy inconsistencies, overlapping responsibilities among institutions, and the challenges in fully institutionalizing democratic governance (Basu, 2021).

Statement of the problem

Nepal started its democratic journey only after the end of the Rana rule, much later than many other countries. Even though democratic institutions were established, people have not fully benefited from the real advantages of democracy. Civil society has faced difficulties in practicing democratic values, and development goals are still far from being achieved (Al-Jundi et al, 2025: Panday, 2011). Problems such as weak transparency, low accountability, and poor public participation continue to exist due to unstable political leadership. Riggs noted that while Nepal has formal administrative structures, they are not used effectively (Basu, 2021). Traditional practices, along with issues like nepotism and favoritism, further weaken governance. This study focuses on using Riggs' Prismatic Model to understand Nepal's political and administrative challenges (Irfan & Lamichhane, 2019).

Research Questions:

- How does Riggs' Prismatic Model explain the characteristics and challenges of public administration in Nepal?

- In what ways do traditional practices and political influences affect governance in Nepal?

Objectives of the Study

- To examine the applicability of Riggs' Prismatic Model in Nepal's public administration.

- To explore how traditional practices and political influences shape governance in Nepal.

Research Methodology

This study analyses the Riggs prismatic model and its application in Nepal, utilizing a qualitative approach based on secondary data sources such as scholarly articles and intellectual frameworks without engaging primary data collection. The research process involves a systematic and organized review of both national and international literature, which helps establish a strong academic foundation for the study (Misra, 1989; Tisdell, et al., 2025).

Theoretical Framework

This study draws on the structural-functional approach, a perspective popularized by Fred W. Riggs to explain how administrative systems operate in less-

developed and developing countries (Basu, 2021). The approach views society as a system where different parts like politics, the economy, culture, and social life work together much like the organs of a body (Almond & Powell, 1966). For stability and progress, these parts must remain coordinated and balanced (Easton, 1965). In many developing nations, modern bureaucratic structures have been adopted from industrialized countries, but their effectiveness is often constrained by social, economic, and political challenges (Riggs, 1962, Panday, 2011). Within this system, key institutions such as the family, education, and judiciary are central to maintaining order and trust. Families pass on values and traditions, schools prepare the next generation with skills and civic responsibility, and the judiciary safeguards justice and fairness. Similarly, social organizations whether local groups or national bodies help meet community needs and sustain balance. The economy manages resources and distribution to avoid instability, while formal and informal socialization nurtures shared identity, discipline, and values. Ultimately, the stability of society depends on how well all these interconnected parts cooperate (Almond & Powell, 1966; Baral, 2023; Easton, 1965)

Results and Discussion

In 1962, Riggs conducted a comparative analysis of political-administrative systems in developing countries, conceptualizing them as a prismatic model. He classified societies into three distinct models (Riggs, 1962).

Fused model

It can be understood as an early form of socio-political organization in which traditional values, customary practices, and deeply rooted cultural patterns strongly shape governance and administration (Riggs, 1964).

In such contexts, the leading institutions of economic, social, political, and administrative life remain underdeveloped, unspecialized, and interconnected, meaning that the functions of these institutions are not clearly separated as they are in more advanced societies. Governance is not primarily based on codified laws, legal accountability, or democratic principles; instead, it depends on personal authority, coercive power, and traditional sources of legitimacy (Riggs & MacKean, 1964; Riggs, 1978). Power is usually concentrated in the hands of a monarch, feudal elite, or a small ruling group, resulting in centralized and top-down decision-making. At the same time, the participation of ordinary people in political life is extremely limited or symbolic at best. In such systems, compliance with authority is not derived from modern legal frameworks, but rather from social hierarchies, inherited obligations, and historical

loyalty, which create a culture of obedience and discourage the growth of civic freedoms and political rights. Unlike differentiated societies where well-structured and specialized bureaucratic institutions carry out governance, fused societies are marked by overlapping roles in political, administrative, and social life, which makes governance more personalized and less rule-based (Riggs, 1964).

A clear example of fused model societal characteristics can be observed in the Nepali context during the Panchayat era, before 1990. During this period, political power was heavily centralized under the monarchy, and the administrative system was still weak and straightforward. Governance relied more on traditional loyalty to the king, cultural authority, and hierarchical obedience than on institutionalized democratic norms (Panday, 2011). The Panchayat system prohibited political parties, restricted political pluralism, and concentrated all real power in the hands of the monarchy and its close circle of decision-makers, while allowing the people only limited or symbolic participation in governance (Bhusal, 2023). This form of rule clearly reflected the key features of a fused society where modern democratic accountability had not yet developed, and traditional authority remained the primary source of legitimacy. Therefore, fused societies represent a less differentiated and transitional stage of political development, where the dominance of tradition, the concentration of power, and the lack of public participation make the shift towards more modern, democratic, and institutionalized governance a gradual and challenging process (Al-Jundi et al, 2025:Panday, 2011).

Diffracted model

It represents the most advanced stage of socio-political and administrative development within Riggs' model of comparative public administration. In these societies, modern democratic values, institutional maturity, and legal rationality form the foundation of governance (Basu, 2021). Political, economic, and administrative institutions are highly specialized, clearly separated, and functionally coordinated, which allows them to carry out their responsibilities with efficiency and transparency (Almond & Powell, 1966). Governance in such contexts is citizen-centered, meaning that policies and decisions are guided by the needs and interests of the people rather than the preferences of the ruling elite (Riggs, 1964). Laws are not just symbolic; they are respected in both form and practice, with strong enforcement mechanisms that uphold justice, fairness, and equality. Institutional arrangements ensure political stability, accountability, and public trust, while an active civil society, free media, and participatory mechanisms promote civic engagement and make governments more responsive to their citizens (Basu, 2021; Almond & Powell, 1966). The administrative

system of diffracted societies is marked by specialization, professionalism, and efficiency, where public officials operate according to clearly defined rules and procedures rather than personal influence or traditional authority (Dusza, 1989).

In such contexts, governance is also characterized by the effective separation of powers, the presence of an independent judiciary, and a robust system of checks and balances, which collectively limit the concentration of authority and reduce the risk of power abuse (Abdullah, 2023). Social equality and inclusiveness are actively promoted through welfare policies, human rights protection, and equitable access to public resources. Examples of diffracted societies can be observed in many developed nations such as the United States, Denmark, and the United Kingdom, where strong institutional frameworks, high levels of civic participation, and effective service delivery demonstrate the maturity of democratic governance (Almond & Powell, 1966). These societies illustrate the successful transition from fused and prismatic stages towards a fully differentiated and modern political-administrative order (Basu, 2021).

In the case of Nepal, a diffracted society remains more of an aspiration than a reality. The promulgation of the 2015 Constitution of Nepal, which established a federal democratic republic, decentralization, and expanded civil and political rights, signaled a significant step towards aligning with the devolved model (Panday, 2011). However, the country continues to face structural, cultural, and resource-related challenges that slow down this transition. Persistent issues, such as weak institutional capacity, political instability, corruption, social inequality, and limited resources, hinder the development of an effective and fully accountable administrative system. Moreover, traditional practices, patronage networks, and socio-cultural divisions still influence governance, preventing the full realization of democratic ideals. While Nepal has made progress in expanding representation, decentralizing power, and promoting citizen rights, it has not yet achieved the institutional specialization on efficiency and transparency that defines differentiated societies (Panday, 2011). Therefore, diffracted societies represent not only a theoretical ideal but also a long-term goal for developing nations like Nepal, where the journey towards institutional maturity, citizen-centered governance, and strong accountability remains ongoing and challenging (Riggs, 1964; Basu, 2021).

Prismatic model

Prismatic societies, as described by Fred W. Riggs (Riggs, 1964), exist in a transitional stage between fused and diffracted forms of governance, where features of both tradition and modernity are found side by side. These societies often display the outward structures of modern governance, such as written constitutions, elected legislatures, ministries, courts, and bureaucratic departments. However, these structures

are only partly effective because the process of institutionalization is incomplete (Shrestha, 2013). Unlike diffuse societies, where institutions are well-defined, specialized, and function independently with clear roles, prismatic societies exhibit heterogeneity, overlapping functions, weak coordination, and frequent policy inconsistency (Riggs, 1964; Almond & Powell, 1966). Administrative positions may lack clarity, and public roles often overlap, leading to duplication of responsibilities and inefficiency. Moreover, formal and modern legal frameworks frequently coexist with traditional practices, cultural norms, and informal decision-making networks, creating constant tension and ambiguity in governance. Thus, the formal rules exist on paper, but in practice, personal influence, patronage, and clientelism often dominate (Panday, 2011).

The Nepali public administration system provides a vivid example of a complex and multifaceted society. Nepal has adopted a democratic constitution, established federalism in 2015, and expanded bureaucratic structures to bring governance closer to the people. (Bahl et al., 2022).These reforms, at least formally, show signs of a transition towards a diffracted society. However, the functioning of institutions often reflects prismatic characteristics. Weak institutional capacity remains a significant issue, as administrative agencies are usually under-resourced, poorly trained, and subject to political influence (Al-Jundi et al, 2025; Shrestha, 2013). The civil service in Nepal has been heavily politicized, with appointments and promotions frequently influenced by party loyalty rather than merit, which undermines professionalism and weakens accountability (Basu, 2021). Similarly, resource limitations at the local, provincial, and federal levels hinder the smooth delivery of services. At the same time, overlapping roles between different tiers of government often lead to confusion, duplication, and conflicts of authority (Riggs, 1964). For example, following the establishment of federalism, several responsibilities were delegated to provincial and local governments; however, the central government continues to retain significant influence, resulting in functional overlap and slowing down the delivery of services.

Additionally, traditional practices and clientelism remain deeply ingrained in Nepali governance, which limits the effectiveness of modern administrative reforms. Although laws and regulations provide frameworks for transparency and accountability, decision-making is often influenced by informal networks, social hierarchy, and political patronage, which distort institutional functioning (Riggs, 1962). This coexistence of modern frameworks with traditional practices mirrors the exact condition described by Riggs in his prismatic model (Riggs, 1964). Nepal's governance environment reflects formal modernization that is not yet fully effective, as reforms are

introduced but remain undermined by systemic inefficiencies, cultural norms, and politicization (Shrestha, 2013; Basu, 2021). These challenges are not unique to Nepal but are common across many developing countries, where the aspiration for democratic governance and modern administration is constrained by enduring traditional practices and limited state capacity (Almond & Powell, 1966; Panday, 2011). Therefore, the Nepali case demonstrates that while significant progress has been made in building democratic institutions, the persistence of prismatic characteristics continues to hinder the development of a fully transparent, accountable, and efficient administrative system (Riggs, 1964).

Features of a Prismatic model

Fred W. Riggs (Riggs, 1964) introduced the concept of a prismatic society to explain countries that are in a transitional stage between fused traditional systems and diffracted modern structures. In such societies, both traditional norms and modern institutions coexist, often in contradiction (Riggs, 1964). The result is a system marked by tensions, inefficiencies, and contradictions, despite the presence of formal democratic frameworks. Still, their effectiveness is compromised by deeply ingrained cultural patterns, informal networks, and structural weaknesses. Nepal provides a clear example of a prismatic society, especially after the 1990 democratic reforms and the adoption of the 2015 Constitution, which declared the country a federal democratic republic. Despite the adoption of federalism, democratic rights, and bureaucratic reforms, the functioning of governance and administration continues to exhibit many complex and multifaceted features (Riggs, 1964). The following characteristics provide a detailed explanation of these realities.

Diversity/Heterogeneity

Diversity/Heterogeneity: A prismatic society is characterized by heterogeneity, where modern, semi-modern, and traditional institutions coexist, often creating contradictions in governance (Riggs, 1964). In Nepal, modern institutions like the parliament, judiciary, ministries, and bureaucracy coexist alongside traditional influences, including caste, kinship, and local patrons. Although Nepal holds multiparty elections under a democratic constitution, rural voting is often shaped by family loyalty and local leaders rather than policy or choice (Panday, 2011). Although democratic institutions exist formally, the culture of governance is shaped by tradition. Local governance also reflects this, as elected representatives may base decisions on personal relationships and patronage rather than legal rules. Even with constitutional guarantees of equality and access to services, citizens often rely on political or social connections

to get benefits. The prismatic model creates a hybrid administration, modern in structure but traditional in practice (Riggs, 1964). Resource allocation, service delivery, and decision-making are often inconsistent and uneven. Despite progress in federalism, democracy, and bureaucracy, traditional norms continue to shape administration, reflecting Nepal's struggle to transition from a conventional, prismatic society to a modern, differentiated system (Panday, 2011).

Formality

Nepal has formal structures, including laws, rules, and regulations, designed to ensure good governance (Riggs, 1964). However, these structures are often weak in practice, and implementation does not match their intended purpose (Basu, 2021). Administrative positions are supposed to be merit-based, but factors such as personal connections, caste, ethnicity, and favoritism often influence appointments (Panday, 2011; Gautam, 2008). Corruption is widespread, which hinders development projects and creates a significant gap between official plans and actual outcomes. Although policies promote transparency, accountability, and good governance, their enforcement is often inconsistent. Many sectors still face inefficiency and mismanagement. The influence of traditional social networks and political pressures undermines formal rules (Shrestha, 2013). Citizens frequently rely on local leaders or patrons to access services or benefits. This combination of formal rules and informal practices creates an uneven and unpredictable governance structure. Overall, Nepal continues to struggle to implement effective and fair administration, despite having laws and policies in place.

Overlapping

In Nepal, both modern and traditional systems coexist in administration, creating overlapping structures that impact how the government operates (Riggs, 1964). Even though formal institutions, such as parliament, constitutional bodies, and government offices, are in place, decisions are often influenced by personal connections, religion, ethnic ties, and local customs (Sharma, 2004; Panday, 2011). This mix of old and new practices leads to incomplete modernization, where official structures do not work as intended. For example, administrative positions may appear to be based on merit, but factors such as caste, ethnicity, and favoritism often play a significant role (Basu, 2021; Gautam, 2008). Corruption is prevalent, which slows down projects and creates a gap between planned outcomes and actual results. Despite policies aimed at promoting good governance, Nepal continues to face inefficiency and corruption in many sectors. This overlap creates a hybrid administrative system, where formal institutions exist in name but are shaped by informal practices. Traditional norms

and social networks often undermine the effectiveness of modern governance, leading to inconsistent and unpredictable outcomes (Shrestha, 2013). To improve governance, Nepal needs to strengthen the implementation of formal rules and reduce the influence of traditional practices in decision-making.

Nepotism

Nepotism, the practice of favoring family, friends, or close associates in appointments and promotions, is prevalent in prismatic societies like Nepal (Riggs, 1964). Nepotism undermines merit-based processes, reduces fairness, and weakens institutional efficiency. In Nepal, nepotism manifests in various forms, including bribery, embezzlement, and abuse of authority, permeating all levels of government (Shrestha, 2013). Despite policy discussions on good governance, systemic inefficiency and corruption persist in multiple sectors (Panday, 2011). These practices erode public trust and hinder the development of a professional and accountable civil service. Addressing nepotism requires comprehensive reforms, including strengthening institutional frameworks, promoting transparency, and fostering a culture of accountability within public administration (Basu, 2021).

SALA Model

The SALA model, introduced by Riggs, describes an administrative system that blends characteristics of both bureaucratic and fused societies. In bureaucratic systems, administration is rule-based, while in fused systems, it is more personalized. In the SALA model, rules exist but are often applied selectively to benefit those in power and their networks (Riggs, 1964). This approach prioritizes personal or family gain over public welfare. In Nepal, such administrative patterns are often observed in government offices. For instance, administrative appointments may appear to be merit-based, but factors such as caste, ethnicity, and favoritism frequently play a decisive role. Corruption is widespread, delaying projects and widening the gap between official plans and actual results (Panday, 2011). Despite policy discussions on good governance, Nepal continues to struggle with systemic inefficiency and corruption in multiple sectors (Basu, 2021). This overlap of traditional and modern systems creates a hybrid administrative structure, where formal institutions exist but are actually influenced by informal practices in their functioning. The persistence of traditional norms and networks undermines the effectiveness of modern governance, leading to inconsistent and unpredictable outcomes. To achieve effective governance, Nepal must address these overlapping structures by strengthening the implementation of formal institutions and

reducing the influence of traditional practices in administrative decision-making (Riggs, 1964).

Multi-sectarianism refers to the significant influence of ethnic, caste, or communal identities on politics and administration in prismatic societies (Riggs, 1964). In such systems, political decisions often favor specific groups rather than serving the interests of the entire population. In Nepal, various ethnic and communal organizations frequently act as pressure groups, seeking benefits for their members while sometimes neglecting the needs of poor and marginalized communities. Political mobilization based on caste, ethnicity, or community identity is frequent, which can affect the neutrality and fairness of governance (Ghai, 2011).

These practices can undermine national unity and create social divisions within the country. Leaders may priorities the interests of their own group, weakening broader policy implementation. These identity-based pressures often influence resource allocation, development projects, and political representation. Such patterns reduce efficiency and equity in administration and public service delivery (Mashiat et al., 2022). Multi-sectarianism also reinforces patronage networks, where loyalty to a group may take precedence over merit or legality. Addressing these challenges requires inclusive governance and policies that strike a balance between group interests and national priorities (Panday, 2011).

Decentralized Market and Bazaar Canteen Model:

In a prismatic society, markets often function under the "bazaar Canteen Model," where economic activities are decentralized and unpredictable (Riggs, 1964; Basu, 2021). In such systems, prices usually fluctuate due to factors such as irregular supply, black market activities, hoarding, and smuggling. Standard economic principles of supply and demand often fail to work effectively, resulting in market inefficiencies. In Nepal, this is evident in local markets, where basic goods such as food, fuel, and medicine can suddenly become scarce or expensive. (Shafir & Mullainathan, 2013) Traders sometimes take advantage of weak regulation to maximize personal gain rather than serve the public. Such practices create instability, affecting both consumers and small businesses. Inefficient markets also make planning and budgeting difficult for the government. These problems highlight the gap between formal economic systems and informal practices in prismatic societies. Market unpredictability reduces equity and fairness in access to goods. Addressing this requires stronger regulation, transparency, and coordination to stabilize prices and ensure a reliable supply (Bonhoure, 2025).

The Application of the Prismatic Model in Public Administration of Nepal

Fred W. Riggs' prismatic model provides a helpful framework for understanding Nepal's administrative system, as it highlights the coexistence of modern institutional structures alongside deeply rooted traditional practices (Riggs, 1964; Basu, 2021). Nepal exhibits many characteristics of a prismatic society, where contemporary legal, political, and bureaucratic norms coexist with longstanding social and cultural traditions (Shrestha, 2013). Despite adopting a democratic constitution and establishing a federal system with clearly defined responsibilities at federal, provincial, and local levels, the actual implementation of governance remains uneven and inconsistent (Panday, 2011). Ministries, independent courts, commissions, and other formal structures exist on paper. However, their operational efficiency and effectiveness are often limited, reflecting the challenge of fully institutionalizing modern administrative practices in a society where informal, traditional, and personal influences still hold significant power.

The functioning of governance is frequently compromised by political interference, informal networks, and financial pressures, which undermine the independence and accountability of key institutions (Basu, 2021). Electoral promises related to modernization, equal access to education, employment, and equitable resource distribution often remain unfulfilled, highlighting a persistent gap between policy goals and actual outcomes (Sharma, 2004; Panday, 2011). Overlapping responsibilities among agencies exacerbate administrative inefficiency, unclear task delegation, and irregular economic conditions influenced by supply-demand fluctuations, black market activity, and informal economic practices. Traditional authority, rooted in family lineage, social status, or local influence, continues to shape administrative and political roles, while nepotism, favoritism, and clientelism often determine appointments, promotions, and resource allocation (Tytko et al., 2020).

The coexistence of modern and traditional administrative structures in Nepal yields a hybrid system, where formal institutions appear to exist but are actually influenced by informal and personal practices in their operation (Shrestha, 2013). Although administrative appointments are formally based on merit, they are often shaped by caste, ethnicity, personal connections, and political favoritism. Corruption is widespread, causing delays in projects and creating a gap between planned objectives and actual outcomes (Panday, 2011). The SALA model explains this pattern, in which formal rules exist but are selectively applied to benefit those in power or their networks, prioritizing personal or family gain over public welfare accountability (Riggs, 1964). Multi-sectarianism also plays a key role, with ethnic, caste, or communal interests influencing political and administrative decisions, often sidelining the needs of marginalized groups and weakening national unity (Basu, 2021). In the prismatic

Nepalese markets, the "bazaar Canteen Mode" further illustrates the lack of predictability in economic systems, where decentralization, irregular supply, black-market practices, and hoarding create instability and inefficiency. Nepotism, favoritism, and clientelism continue to erode meritocracy and institutional accountability (Riggs, 1964).

Efforts to strengthen governance must therefore address these overlapping formal and informal structures by promoting merit-based appointments, enhancing transparency, enforcing regulations consistently, and carefully integrating traditional practices into modern administrative frameworks (Wei, 2022). Only through a sustained focus on institutional capacity-building, professional training, and public accountability can Nepal gradually transform its prismatic administrative system into a more efficient, transparent and equitable governance structure, bridging the gap between traditional influences and modern bureaucratic ideals (Shrestha, 2013; Panday, 2011).

Conclusion

Nepalese public administration reflects the prismatic features described by Fred W. Riggs, characterized by the coexistence of modern bureaucratic institutions and entrenched traditional practices, resulting in a complex hybrid governance system. Although formal structures such as ministries, independent courts, commissions, and a federal democratic framework have been established, their functionality is often limited by unclear responsibilities, weak institutional capacity, and inconsistent policy enforcement. Traditional influences, including patronage networks, nepotism, favoritism, and personal connections, often undermine merit-based administrative practices, thereby reducing efficiency and eroding public trust. Political interference and informal networks further exacerbate governance challenges, affecting resource allocation, service delivery, and the overall functioning of government institutions.

The persistence of multi-sectarianism, clientelism, and identity-based pressures highlights the social and cultural complexities that influence decision-making in Nepal. Administrative reforms, including decentralization and federalism, have been implemented with the intention of aligning governance with democratic principles, yet the practical realization of these reforms remains incomplete. Economic irregularities, exemplified by decentralized markets and the "Bazaar Canteen Model", further illustrate the unpredictability and inefficiency inherent in prismatic systems. To move towards a more decentralized and modern administrative structure, Nepal must strengthen its institutional frameworks, promote transparency and accountability, and ensure merit-based appointments in both the bureaucratic and political spheres. Enhancing civic participation, professional expertise, and ethical leadership is crucial to bridging the gap between formal democratic ideals and practical governance outcomes.

Ultimately, Riggs' Prismatic model provides an invaluable lens for understanding the transitional nature of Nepalese public administration. It underscores the need for a nuanced approach to reform that considers historical legacies, social heterogeneity, and cultural norms while promoting modernization, efficiency, and inclusivity. Addressing these structural, political, and cultural challenges is crucial for Nepal to establish a practical, transparent, and citizen-centered governance system that can meet the aspirations of its democratic framework.

Unchecked nepotism, patronage, and corruption within Nepal's administrative system will inevitably exacerbate the nation's crisis by undermining governance effectiveness, weakening institutional integrity, and eroding public confidence. Such systemic malpractices not only obstruct sustainable development initiatives but also diminish Nepal's credibility and standing in the international community, posing long-term socio-political and economic risks.

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