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The Role of Senior Citizens in Indigenous Knowledge Transmission in Surkhet, Nepal

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Abstract

Senior citizens possess the traditional knowledge of cultural values and skills, and they are instrumental in transferring them to the youth. However, modernization, migration and strict government rules are making it increasingly difficult to preserve knowledge of the ancient practices. This paper examines the life and lived experiences of five elderly (participants) from five different communities (Brahmin, Lama, Muslim, Tharu and Gurung) in Surkhet District Nepal. The rationale of the study is based on Cultural Transmission theory. The findings demonstrate that migration, non-supportive attitude of the institutions and the rules such as Samudayik Ban (Community Forest law) have made it difficult to conserve this knowledge. On the other hand, community activities such as homestays and cultural events help to keep the knowledge alive. Valuing the elders in school and building strong social connections are immensely essential to transfer their knowledge to younger ones in Nepal. The study also emphasizes the importance of policy change and official recognition of elders as culture bearers in line with the Constitution of Nepal and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's guidelines to protect cultural heritage.

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Introduction

Indigenous knowledge is considered dynamic and accumulative by nature, produced over generations. It arises from an intimate contact with the local environment (Grenier 1998). Globally, this knowledge informs sustainable management of natural resources and contributes to cultural resilience (Battiste, 2002; King, 2011). In Nepal, Indigenous knowledge has traditionally been

transmitted orally through generations by the elderly healers, ritual leaders and artisan who contributed to transmission culture (Rai Yamphu, 2025; Subedi, 2020). Unfortunately, Nepal's contemporary education system does not recognize indigenous wisdom as a medium for learning and transformation. This is why, learning and living in this knowledge are gradually declining (Rai & Rai, 2021).

According to 2021 Nepal Population and Housing Census the population of the country is 29,164,578. The growth rate is low with 0.92 percent, which Chalise (2023) underlines is lowest in seven decades. In the last few years, a lot of youth from Nepal are going abroad. The share of the population living abroad is 3.3% in 2001 and rises up to be 7.5% in 2021 (National Statistics Office, 2025). Every single day close to 2000 young leave the country for foreign employment (Shrestha & Raya, 2024). As a result, many villages now count mostly older people and fewer young ones to learn and carry on the traditions of their ancestors. These people have a wealth of traditional knowledge, skills and social values (Sigdel et al., 2023). In Nepal, there are opportunities and challenges of transferring indigenous knowledge from old generation to the young one.

The old-age population is growing even faster in Nepal, 3.29 per percent. The percentage of elderly people has now reached 10.21% in Nepal (Chalise, 2023). Nepal's laws and policies see culture as something to be preserved. The Constitution of Nepal (2015) under Article 32 enshrines the right to culture and obligates to protect the diversity in culture according to article 51 (Ministry of Law, 2015). The Senior Citizens Act of 2006 refers to people ages 60 years and older as valuable members of society, emphasizing their pivotal contributions in families and communities (Nepal Law Commission, 2006). The Sixteenth Periodic Plan on of Nepal also supports indigenous knowledge systems as part of sustainable development goals (National Planning Commission, 2024). Despite the laws, implementation has proved challenging in Nepal. There is no enough evidence on what knowledge senior citizens have and how it can be harnessed in the national policies and practices towards the country's development.

This research paper examines the life experiences of elderly people in Birendranagar, Surkhhet District, a culturally diverse region of Karnali Province. Based on a phenomenological approach, the research is concerned with how elders perceive their roles, the challenges they have from disseminating their worldview and social and structural factors that influence indigenous knowledge transfer. The study provides significant insights on how to integrate indigenous knowledge into contemporary development programs.

Objectives

The aim of this study is to explore the role of senior citizens in preserving and transmitting indigenous knowledge (IK) to the new generation. Their experiences and the factors that contributes to knowledge transfer are important for continuing cultural heritage across generations. The objectives of this study are:

- To explore the roles of senior citizens in transmitting IK
- To understand the experiences and challenges faced by senior citizens in the knowledge transfer process
- To investigate the factors influencing the transfer of IK across generations

By addressing these objectives, the study examines senior citizens' roles in indigenous knowledge transmission in Surkhhet, Nepal.

Literature Review

This section reviews existing research to show what is already known and what is missing about the roles and experiences of senior citizens in passing on indigenous knowledge. The section is divided into two parts: Global Perspective on Indigenous Knowledge and Nepal's Policies and Practices.

Global perspective on Indigenous Knowledge Transmission the right of indigenous communities are recognized internationally through the Indigenous and Tribal people Convention, 1989, No 19 (International Labor Organization, 1989). This convention supports protecting indigenous knowledge and culture by creating respect and empowerment. Many other studies also highlight the importance of traditional knowledge and skills, which have been developed over many years by ancestors through regular practice. Grenier (1998) emphasizes that indigenous knowledge systems are total, changes and based on community action are usually passed down through stories and through learning by doing. When new knowledge collides with old ways of thinking, winning respect for it is difficult because attitudes must be changed. Battiste (2002) states that indigenous knowledge is a crucial part of cultural identity, sustainability and ecological balance in the world. It institutes the protection of indigenous knowledge and culture, as well as images with respect and empowerment. King (2011) devotes whole chapters to stress the importance of storytelling and rituals for keeping community values and identity strong. Dei (2000) points out that today's younger generations have come to recognize the role and value of traditional knowledge in shaping the world's future. This shows that today's generations have recognized the role and value of traditional knowledge in shaping the world's future.

Elderly people are the world's global "libraries of knowledge," and they pass on stories, skills, medicines and spiritual beliefs vital for the continuation of a given culture (McGregor, 2004). They carry indigenous knowledge that can be highly beneficial for whole new generation. In recent years indigenous knowledge has maintained oral traditions like this in the First Nations of Canada and also through ceremonial activities led by elders on the land (Battiste, 2002). In Australia, Aboriginal elders keep their lore alive by passing down myths, family connections and knowledge of the land through creative expression or mentoring (Yunkaporta & McGinty, 2009). Maori elders instruct younger generations in New Zealand about their own genealogy, customs and language (Smith 2012). In Africa, the elderly keep on alive their traditional indigenous knowledge through rituals, and as well proverbs, dances and farming methods to hand it down to both preserve identity supply essential survival skills (Hountondji, 2002). The Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) spoke of the need to urgently protect oral traditions, rituals as well knowledge systems and support 'elders' groups within communities (UNESCO, 2003). Importantly, the Sustainable Development Goals and other worldwide programs also want older people to be happy and healthy. To defend human rights, promote health and wealth, and cut down on inequality, they say phrases like "leaving no one behind" (United Nations, 2024). This is commendable. We should also think about how older people's abilities and knowledge may assist everyone have a better future.

Nepalese Context: Indigenous Practices and Policies

There are more than 142 ethnic groups in Nepal, each with its indigenous knowledge and customs. This results in an abundance of indigenous practices regarding natural medicine, traditional healing, forest husbandry and agriculture (Upriety et al., 2012). For instance, in Mustang, elders rely on rules of thumb from traditions past to steward forests that protect nature (Acharya et al., 2016). In the Tharu community, elders play advisory roles on climate change, farm practices and traditional rituals

(Chaudhary et al., 2022). These examples provide evidence that the IK carried by senior citizens in Nepal contains valuable insights on natural resource management, retaining cultural practices, and strengthening community resilience.

While Nepal's formal education and modernization are turning young people's attention away from traditional practices, it seems essential to maintain the ancient wisdom (Devkota & Hanemann, 2023; Pokharel, 2012). Despite these problems, senior citizens remain crucial for preserving indigenous knowledge, especially in rural areas where access to formal education and technology is limited (Niure, 2024). Knowledge passes informally down the generations in Nepal. So, elders have an enormous role to play in protecting its cultural property (Devkota & Hanemann, 2023; Uprety et al., 2012). This is an important research gap: how to apply the wisdom of senior citizens to Nepal's development, because many of its young people prefer working abroad.

Nepal lacks policies and programmes to back up its senior citizens' social security. Nepal's laws remember to preserve culture. The 2015 Constitution guarantees cultural rights under Article 32, and says that the state should protect cultural diversity (Article 51) (Ministry of Law, 2015). The Senior Citizens Act (2006) registers people aged 60 and upwards, and the indigenous knowledge holds a priority for culture development in the Sixteenth Periodic Plan of Nepal (National Planning Commission, 2024). Nepal has also signed UNESCO conventions to protect intangible cultural heritage. Recent government measures such as community cultural centers and local education programs aim to help old people share their knowledge. But these are limited in application, and generally lack funds or organizations of their own (Malla, 2025).

Research Gap

Two main gaps exist in the current literature that are open for investigation. First, more academic research is needed into applying older people's wisdom to Nepal's national development. It also demands that young people be encouraged to remain in the country and develop intergenerational relationships with them. There needs to identify gaps that hinder the preservation, promotion, and transmission of senior citizens' in Nepal. Second, in the context of Nepal, the theory of cultural transmission needs further exploration to explain how older people pass on social and cultural knowledge to younger generations. It also looks at the obstacles that could get in the way of this transfer and the things that could aid or impede the dissemination of information (Whitaker, 2016).

Methodology

Research Design

A qualitative phenomenological research design was employed in the present study to explore real-life experiences of indigenous knowledge transmission with elderly. The research follows the interpretivist worldview, which respects the local meanings, voices and knowledge that participants share from their own experiences. (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022) because phenomenology is helpful for understanding how people interpret and find meaning in their lives (Creswell, 2013). Situated in Birendranagar, Surkhet District, Nepal's Karnali Province. Surkhet is a region of social and cultural mixing, where diverse ethnic groups live harmoniously (Dhakal & Devkota, 2025). As a local, the first author has already noticed that this area is being affected by migration and modernization. It will thus serve as a good place to conduct research on how traditional knowledge is passed down from one generation to another.

The main study group consisted of elderly people aged 60 years or older who hold and use indigenous knowledge. Through purposive sampling we selected five participants from different ethnicities: [P1] (Brahmin community, male, 68), [P2] (Lama Community, male, 62), [P3] (Muslim

community, female, 60), [P4] (Tharu community, female, 73), and [P5] (Gurung community, male, 62 years old). The participants were chosen for their active participation in certain cultural practices, rites, or traditional knowledge systems, as this phenomenon is essential in qualitative research (Taherdoost, 2016). Five participants were sufficient for this research, as no new information emerged from additional interviews and the study had reached the stage of data saturation (Saunders et al., 2017). Semi-structured interview guides were used to open discussions before participants (Ruslin et al., 2022). The research relies on data from just five respondents, which constitutes a limitation (Vasileiou et al., 2018).

We obtained ethical approval by seeking consents from the participants. We gained verbal informed consent and used their pseudonyms in this article. They had the right to withdraw from the research at any time (Mirza et al., 2023). We "bracketed" our own beliefs and preconceptions to genuinely reflect the participants' perceptions (Tufford & Newman, 2010). Data suffice for a Braun and Clarke (2006) six-step thematic analysis: reading through transcripts again and again until familiarizing yourself with the data; generating initial codes by identifying large sections of text; looking for themes through regularities across stories; viewing those themes against all previous samples averaging them over time so that commonality reigns supreme; defining theme, naming what to do now (fit out study objectives in full); writing assessment whose results weaves together themes alongside respondents' words and related materials. Table 1 shows how themes have been developed from quotes and codes. It also includes participants' demographics.

Table 1: *Participants' Demographics and Themes Development*

Participant	Gender	Age	Major Quote 1	Major Quote 2	Codes	Theme
[P1]	Male	68	"I treat more than 15 people a day."	"Anyone who is serious can learn, but it takes years or even generations."	Healing practice, Knowledge transmission, Dedication, Spiritual healing	A Traditional Shaman and Herbalist
[P2]	Male	62	"We don't do the family business anymore, but we keep our cultural practices like going to Gumbas."	"I am sad that our traditional business is ending. But I feel good knowing my children and grandchildren respect our culture and religion."	Cultural preservation, Family values, Loss of livelihood, Intergenerational knowledge	Knowledge Transmission: Experience and Challenges
[P3]	Female	60	"I cannot force my children to follow old jobs because"	"I try hard to teach my children about our religion and"	Modernization impact, Intergenerational teaching,	Intergenerational Knowledge Transmission

			times have changed. This is the era of science and globalization."	culture to keep them alive."	Cultural adaptation	
[P4]	Female	73	"I feel proud when my granddaughter sings the songs I taught her or when my grandson uses herbs instead of rushing to the clinic."	"I can't read or write well, but I carry generations of wisdom in my hands and memory. We are living libraries."	Cultural custodian, Teaching, Knowledge preservation, Pride, Challenges with youth	The Living Library
[P5]	Male	62	"Being involved in the homestay shows my effort to preserve our heritage."	"Community forests and the arrival of plastic baskets, tin roofs, and tractors have replaced traditional tools and homes."	Cultural preservation, Knowledge sharing, Modernization impact, Heritage promotion	The Role of a Cultural Custodian

Findings

After listening to the lived stories of with five senior citizens, indicated in Table 1, we found five main themes: a traditional shaman and herbalist, knowledge transmission: experience and challenges, intergenerational knowledge transmission, the living library, and the role of cultural institutions.

A Traditional Shaman and Herbalist

The 68-year-old resident of Birendranagar-8, Surkhet, Nepal is a fully fledged traditional shaman. He learned his skills from his grandfather and father, three generations of transmission excellence. For him, this knowledge is not just a craft but also carries sacred responsibility that he must perform tirelessly every day. Every day he takes more than 15 patients, treated illnesses such as jaundice, eczema, and epilepsy; besides curing people he teaches them about herbal remedies. His healing links herbal medicine and spiritual practice, such as by chanting mantras from the Vedas. He thinks this will make the healing more efficient.

He felt the government had not acknowledged or supported healers like himself. "The government has put no genuine effort into supporting traditional knowledge to date. We are not regarded as people who transmit knowledge." But if asked by the government, he would be ready to cooperate. Asked who could learn this knowledge, he said that real interest and patience were

necessary. "Those who are sincere can learn. But it takes years or even generations. You have to be persevering," he said. "This profession gives me great pride, and I feel much fulfilled," he said. "I treat more than 15 people every day. Many come out better. I don't ask for fixed fees; people pay me what they feel they can afford." Naturally, today's young people mostly do not want to undertake this deep kind of learning, but there are some who like herbal remedies. He said: "Nowadays, young people think my knowledge is old-fashioned. That is largely because things have become modern." These experiences of [P1] shows his commitment towards to preserving IK and the challenges posed by modernity.

Knowledge Transmission: Experience and Challenges

[P2], 62, is a Buddhist from Humla, a remote mountainous location in northeastern Nepal. His family lived by doing salt trading, bringing salt from Tibet to southern Nepal. They also raised sheep and made readymade products such as carpets, blankets, and shawls.'

When asked if these enterprises still exist today, He Liangyong replied: "No. The market is gone. Now people who buy imported machine-made goods don't want hand-crafted products. Although my father taught me, my children and I could not keep up this business. It had to be abandoned because of migration, poor marketing channels and low prices" His sons and grandchildren have moved from Humla to Surkhet and abroad to the USA, Australia, and Japan and now work in modern jobs.

Although the business is finished, the Buddhist cultural and religious traditions of this family linger on. He remarked: "Even though we've stopped doing the family business ourselves, old practices of our culture—such as going to the Gumbas continue every year, and so forth in weddings, funerals carry on. We often sit together as a family to pass on our values and faith to younger generations. This is an excellent example of modern conditions, economic globalism making traditional livelihoods lose. This indicates the family is still retain its culture through its rites and its values.

[P2] expressed concern for the future, but also gave testament to hope: "I feel so bad that our traditional businesses will be ended. I feel good because it is now in my heart that children and grandchildren like their cultures, religions." He reported that traditional livelihoods are being devolved and destroyed under the onslaught of man-made environmental changes, migration, economic shifts described above. This shows that people can change and grow with the times.

Intergenerational Knowledge Transmission

[P3] is from the Muslim community in Nepal. They are from a crafts family that used to make bangles. Her grandfather and father each had their own specialty in the bangle-making line by producing different size bangles which they then sold around Dailekh, where his people originated. Later, they relocated to Pipira, Surkhet, where they farmed and kept animals.

Through animal husbandry at home her father owned farmland where they raised all their own food, it was self-sufficient in those days.

[P3] for example now works as a health volunteer. When we asked what caused her generation to abandon the old jobs, she replied "modernization, the expansion of cities, and government regulations made us feel we could not continue with these works. To make a bangle one needed much firewood: but now it is forbidden even to enter forests for use by others. Land that was previously for agriculture was built over. Forest resources are necessary for livestock and then our safety as a result became increasingly limited".

She says that in today's era of science and globalization, parents cannot force their children to stick to the old jobs. But she makes an all-out effort to impart religious belief and cultural traditions into her children. [P3] even in this impersonal time, encourages their children and grandchildren to hold moral methods and religious beliefs. There is a common worry that younger generations will not

maintain traditional arts or knowledge. In general, she tries to carry on through teaching skillfully and family ceremonies of her own invention.

The Living Library

[P4], 73, lives at Latikoili-9, Tharu Gaun, Surkhet. She shared with us the excitement and hardships of keeping alive indigenous knowledge. She is a well-trained custodian of Tharu culture-prescription formulas and traditional cultivation are part the heritage her whole family has passed down for generations.

[P4] knows more than anyone. A “living library,” she says with a smile. Using only her memory and practice of daily life, she has learned numerous ritual performances of Gidi Puja and Maghi festivals, as well as ways to welcome childbirth, wedding and funeral seasons too. When her granddaughter learns traditional songs and her grandson how to make herbal medicine, it makes her happy to think they have absorbed something of her culture. She thinks old people like her should be included in schools and community programs so that the young can learn about value systems too. [P4] also can collect useful herbal cultivation techniques from regional plants, engage in simple land management methods etc. She [P4] believes should be involved in schools and community programs to teach young people and save culture.

“When my granddaughter sings the songs I have taught her, or when my grandson does not rush off to the dispensary and instead uses herbs, I am proud. But it is difficult. Young people now go mostly to the cities or abroad. Those who stay back are nothing but mobile phones, modern life. They say, ‘Grandma, these are old ways. We want to learn new things.’ That hurts. Sometimes I feel like a living library full of stories no one wants to read.”

She also shared about her family life: “My children work in cities and come home tired. They don’t always follow all rituals. Still, I organize Gidi Puja and invite them. Sometimes they listen, sometimes they don’t, but I hope they will value these customs someday.”

[P4] made a heartfelt request: There is a lot of wisdom in the hands and minds of our older generations, even though they cannot read or write well. We do not want money or fame as long as there is respect. Elderly people should be brought into the policy-making, school and community development processes. We are libraries worthy of life. Or if all our knowledge is lost when we die, then the forests and our fledglings that go with them will both forget about us!

She also firmly said, “Why is school or organization not for elders invited too? We don’t want the young to learn from a distance. We wish to pass on and be remembered.”

[P4] has played the role of a “living library” that keeps and passes on the culture to others. She maintained that it is vitally important to bring the elderly into schools and programmes if such transfer of knowledge is to be sustained. This role is key for preserving cultural identity and practices.

The Role of a Cultural Custodian

[P5], 62, is a retired teacher from the Gurung community in Birendranagar-6, Surkhet. He is currently the owner of a Gurung homestay. His family used to farm cotton and raise sheep. They manufactured clothing out of wool and cotton and sold them to generate money. He shared about his family background: “Our ancestors were originally from eastern Nepal when they started to settle down in Surkhet. Later my father moved down the Birendranagar valley”. He is a leader because he protects his people’s culture and shares information with them. He has lived in the past and has seen things change. He is now the president of a homestay and a retired teacher. To help keep the culture alive, he prioritizes Gurung food, dances like Sorathi and Rodhi, and wears traditional clothes with guests.

He said, "My involvement in the homestay is an attempt to transfer our history and intellectual heritage." I want to make sure that our knowledge is shared and honored, even when things are changing and people are departing.

[P5] remembers when his ancestors manufactured tools, wove baskets, and farmed with what they had. But then things changed. He stated, "The local forests became government property; plastic buckets replaced traditional ones and roofs thatch-tiled flooring redone in tin; tractors done for plowing." Community leaders and cultural custodians help keep heritage alive by teaching others about traditions, festivals, and skills. [P5] said that modernization and changes in how people live threaten traditional knowledge. Their work shows how important it is for leaders to keep and promote cultural continuity.

Discussion

Roles of Senior Citizens in Transmitting Indigenous Knowledge

Old people contain a huge amount of useful information (Ho & Shirahada, 2023). [P1] has local knowledge through this investigation. The three generations of his family have inherited this secret. He doesn't simply regard this knowledge as his trade, but a sacred duty that he is sworn to. They, treat many sicknesses and teach some of it, themselves others, too about the healing work such as use herbs for infertility and common diseases. His healing practice employs herbs as well as spiritual elements. The family of [P2] does the same as well; they continue to maintain their cultural and religious traditions. They impart their values, beliefs and family traditions onto future generations. [P3] also educates her children on her religious and cultural rituals and prepares them to pass on the same. These instances show, however, that knowledge is not something that simply can be saved. It takes deliberate change, and it means facing current challenges.

[P4], a 73 years old senior citizen has extensive knowledge regarding Tharu cultural practices, herbal medication and conventional farming. It has been knowledge handed through generations. The benefits of such natural practices are now being recognized globally, particularly after COVID-19 outbreak (Kohli & Kohli, 2014; Venugopal et al., 2022). Our ancestors found out these things a long time ago. Our religion and our culture, founded on East philosophy have influenced values and customs of our society (Melikov, 2021). Senior citizens feed these. A participant, [P5], contributes to the preservation and dissemination of Gurung culture. Through home stay programs, he informs about Gurung food, dances like Sorathi and Rodhi as well as traditional clothes. Social or cultural continuity and preservation are facilitated by the homestay programme in Nepal (Kafle, 2023). Rodhi is important because it is not only a social event with dance and celebration but also a place where the community plans and works together. While according to Panta (2024) Rodhi has lost part of its traditional meaning, nevertheless local activities to keep it alive and used as a source of income give hope for the survival of Gurung cultural transmission. The participation of elders in this research is a testimony that they are the keepers of knowledge. They play an active role in the continuity and resilience of culture against modernization. This demonstrates that cultural practices can evolve and be turned to economic and social advantage.

Observations by informants, such as [P1], [P4], and [P5], show that elders do not merely conserve traditional knowledge; they also modify it to suit current needs. Based on these findings, policies should recognize and support elders as cultural educators. The National Education Policy of Nepal for 2019 aims for "educated, civilized, healthy, and capable human resources, social justice, transformation, and prosperity" (Ministry of Education, 2019, p. 6). Integrating indigenous knowledge from elders can aid in achieving these objectives. In developing countries like Nepal, where tourism helps people get out of poverty (Tiwari, 2025), it makes sense to turn cultural practices into business

opportunities. Importantly, this demonstrate that incorporating cultural knowledge into formal education and local economics can both serve to conserve heritage. It can also help deliver on sustainable development goals.

Challenges Faced by Senior Citizens in Knowledge Transmission

Many obstacles prevent elderly people from passing on their ancient wisdom to younger generations. In this study, [P1] stated that the government has not taken sufficient actions in identifying and promoting this traditional knowledge. Young people are also losing interest because, with the spread of modern values and life increasingly centered on cities and many working overseas. [P2] feels sad that the salt trade along with sheep farming are no more common in his family. This drop has been a result of heavy market competition and cheaper imports as well. Youth migration limits the pool of young people who might eventually succeed a family member in business. [P3]'s previous customs are also threatened by rapid modernization like bangle-making and farming. Government regulations that restrict the use of forest and changing the land itself have also made these jobs more difficult to hold. [P4] fears that the youth has been gravitating towards urban locales or foreign lands, and have begun to disproportionately prioritize mobile phones and modern life over traditional skills and knowledge. [P5] added, as youth are increasingly migrating away from villages, elders remain behind and are tasked with preserving culture. It demonstrates that even if elders wish to pass it on, knowledge of cultural importance can be lost where society offers no support or recognition.

The transmission of knowledge is influenced by the way people live these modern lives. Yes, of course modernization includes social and cultural changes in the society. Nations from the south watch changes in the north as signals of such shifts (Sharma, 2024). Another major issue is the mass exodus of young people out of the country. As reported by [P5], youth migration is a great challenge for those in governance who wish to see youth participation in national development process. About 2,000 young people are estimated to go abroad every day, while over 2.2 million Nepalese youth currently live outside Nepal (Shrestha & Raya, 2024; The World Bank Group, 2024). The 2021 Nepal Population and Housing Census shows that 62% of Nepal's population are youths aged 15-59. This is a period of demographic advantage in Nepal (National Statistics Office, 2023). However, the country is not yet able to fully use this potential. Critically, this shows the challenge of keeping cultural traditions alive while people move away and society modernizes.

Therefore, the effects of modernization can be reduced by promoting our traditional knowledge, skills, and wisdom through policies and actions. Indigenous producers need special protection from the government. This can be done through trade protection and controlling the impact of global economic liberalization (Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies, 2023). This is urgent to ensure that local traditions are not displaced and that society can continue its march towards modernization.

Factors Influencing the Transfer of Indigenous Knowledge across Generations

Several issues that could affect the transmission of indigenous knowledge to future generations are highlighted in this study. [P1], a traditional healer, explained that young people must have dedication and patience, as this is not a one-shot task to transfer years-long wisdom. In the same vein [P2] argued that if young people have travelled to other countries and they involve themselves in modern possession, they will want to understand logic behind those old knowledge and heritage before they decide follow them. [P3] has an interesting idea as she teaches culture and religions to kids. But she does not push them, as they have to organically fit in with a global situation that continues to develop. [P4], for example, called for incorporating the elders as cultural instructors and consultants through a formal process so that information is transmitted to present society. [P5] is worried that

cultural erosion is happening and this must be addressed through structural changes. These changes are such that mentioned in community forestry, priority of imported goods, and youth migration from villages. It is this that suggests that the transfer of knowledge between generations is as much a political and social as a personal issue, requiring supportive policies as well as individual endeavor.

Policy level intervention is necessary to resolve the community forestry problem, as mentioned by [P5]. Nepal Government introduced community forestry program to hand over local management of forests to local people. Locals have rights to use the forest resources properly through collaborative governance (Laudari et al, 2023). However, locals find this policy has restricted collecting medicinal herbs and raw materials from the forest. These resources are essential to the traditional healing practice. In Nepal's case, the Community Forestry Program (Samudayik Ban) was introduced to promote conservation and sustainable forest management. Nonetheless, it has created barriers for indigenous communities to access raw materials. Traditionally they have been using forest resources for crafts, housing, and rituals (such as bamboo, thatch grass, and medicinal herbs). As a result, many traditional healers have given up their profession. Communities are now dependent on allopathic medicine. In addition, older technologies skills can be added some modern values so that their working efficiency and output is increased. In this research, a participant mentioned that, "Our grandparents planted kapas (cotton) and reared sheep for wool. They made clothes by hand. Today, these skills are vanishing because youths no longer learn them." Inclusion of machinery ideas in this skill can help the business to a bigger size and develop it as an enterprise. The traditional business needs transformation through production, promotion, and innovative sales (Sun, 2019), which needs facilitation by the state. This shows that if traditional knowledge is not adapted to today's economic and technological world, indigenous practices may become less valuable and overlooked.

One interesting finding related to [P3] is that she does not or cannot force her children to learn the skills of making bangles and traditional farming. This is a serious issue that needs addressed because these traditional skills may disappear. One possible solution is the adopting of this knowledge in formal education or providing vocational training to the youths. This learning can help them in their social development and economic empowerment (Bhatta, 2020). The 2024-2029 Sixteenth Periodic plan has also priorities to develop human resources through vocational and skill development programs (National Planning Commission, 2024). Therefore, structural barriers regarding the use of forest should be dealt with by effective policy of government. This keeps traditional healers in business. Traditional occupations need new meaning, so they change as time moves. [P4] a contributor, anticipates that younger generations will eventually value ancestral knowledge, even though they are not interested now. This may indicate that sustainable cultural transmission depends not only on individual cooperation. It is predicated on the foundation of support mechanisms and its integration into contemporary systems of education and economics.

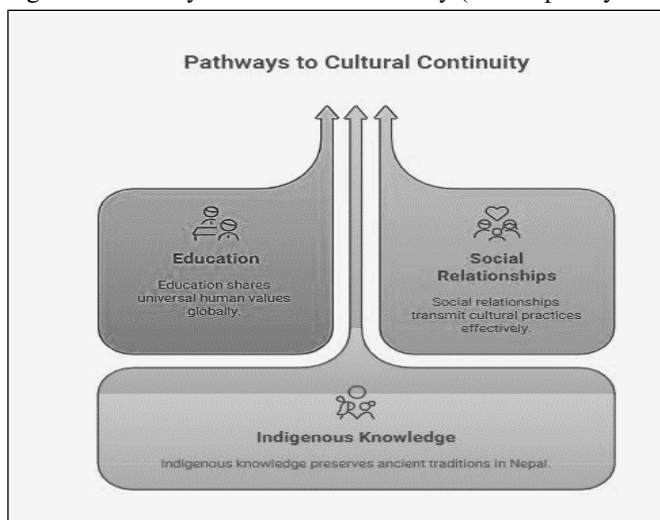
Alongside this, the qualitative research recognizes a number of limitations in the studies (Rahman, 2017). The sample is small (n=5), so the results are not generalizable. The research was conducted in Surkhet, Nepal, and the results may not be wholly applicable to all the indigenous knowledge types in other regions of the country. The data were obtained from interviews. Therefore, some bias may exist in the selection of respondents as well as interpretation of their responses. But, as professional researchers, our aim has been to provide the richest and most varied data that we were able to gather, building narrative with it in publications and through cultural transmission theory – which also portray what participants told us as they did so.

Theoretical Advancement

Cultural transmission theory explains how cultural values, beliefs, and practices are passed down to the next generation through inherited traits and social relationships (Whitaker, 2016). Education plays an important role in sharing human values that are accepted worldwide (Kováts-Németh, 2016). It is also true that when culture is passed on, the younger generation often changes or interprets cultural practices instead of just copying them exactly (Morin, 2018). In this way, passing down old knowledge in traditional societies, like sharing indigenous knowledge from senior citizens in Nepal, partly follows what these scholars say (Kováts-Németh, 2016; Morin, 2018; Whitaker, 2016). In this study, we found reasons behind how indigenous knowledge is passed on in Nepal. This study shows that cultural transmission is not a process of simple imitation. It changes and adapts to both old traditions and today's world.

Elderly Nepalis are important teachers, guides, leaders of ceremonies, and storytellers. They carry and transmit indigenous knowledge to younger generations. They feel proud and happy when they get to give a little bit more of this knowledge away. They also encounter issues such as youth leaving, modernization or lack of interest among young people. There are many social, cultural and individual things that can facilitate or block this knowledge from being shared. But the discussion on cultural transfer in Nepal quite often lacks a consideration of the crucial role of education. It is through education that transmission of indigenous knowledge, skills and thinking from the elderly to the young occurs. Education, along with social relationships, is an important way to transmit cultural practices successfully. Strong social ties and education can help keep old traditions alive and pass them on in Nepal. These are the routes of continuation in the country drawn in Figure 1. It seems, therefore, that cultural preservation is not strictly an issue of individual elders but rather a composite impact of education, social organization and community affirmation.

Figure 1: Pathways to Cultural Continuity (Developed by the authors using napkin.ai)



Conclusion

This study demonstrates the important role of elderly people in conserving and passing down local traditional wisdom in Surkhet, Nepal. Results reveal that older people are the custodians and carriers of knowledge for communities, although the paradigm's cultural values are being eroded by modernization, migration and policy constraints. Effective preservation requires policy and institutional reform to protect elders, along with the establishment of economic incentives that honor cultural

practices. If indigenous-knowledge systems are incorporated into education and strong social networks maintained, it can be preserved for the generations ahead. These findings are also pertinent for advocates for senior citizens, educational policy makers and economic planners in Nepal as well at the international level. Further research may consider how curricula could officially integrate such knowledge of elders for the benefit of young people.

Disclosure Statements

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s). Author(s) read and reviewed the final version and agreed consent for publication. All authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work and approved it for publication.

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