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e-Journal Site: <https://www.dsmc.edu.np/journal/>**Awareness of the Citizen Charter and Perceptions of Public Service Delivery: A Client-Centric Analysis****Lokendra Woli¹**
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Creative Commons Attribution-Non
Commercial 4.0 International License**Abstract**

The citizen charter is a formal commitment by a governmental office to the public, outlining services, standards, and institutional responsibilities to promote transparency, accountability, and responsiveness. Its effectiveness depends on public awareness and institutional compliance. This study examines citizens' awareness of the citizen charter and the quality of service delivery at the District Administration Office (DAO), Surkhet. Grounded in principles of good governance and public service effectiveness, the study employed a qualitative design. Data were collected through interviews and observations involving selected service users and providers. The findings reveal that the citizen charter is visibly displayed and systematically practiced at the DAO.

Services were generally perceived as timely, procedurally clear, and of satisfactory quality. However, political, administrative, and personal factors occasionally affected service outcomes. Awareness was comparatively low among uneducated and marginalized groups. The study contributes to the literature on public service governance by providing empirical evidence on the implementation effectiveness, citizen awareness, and

service delivery performance of the citizen charter. It highlights both institutional strengths and inclusivity gaps that inform policy improvement and accountability reforms.

Keywords: *Good governance, information, practice, public service*

Introduction

A citizen charter is a formal document that outlines a service provider's commitment to addressing the needs of the public, emphasizing transparency, accountability, and quality service delivery (Aminudin, 2018). Typically, it is implemented by governmental or non-governmental organizations. It provides and serves as a framework for ensuring citizen engagement and improving service standards (Danhouno et al., 2018). Citizen charter is a practice to improve the quality of service being offered to the citizens and ensure better citizen satisfaction (Drewry, 2005). It is the first and simplest way for them to receive information about the services of a particular agency (Marcella & Baxter, 2000). Worldwide, the provision of a citizen charter was first introduced in 1991 in the UK (Kisby & Sloam, 2012). In the context of Nepal, the citizen charter was practiced and implemented in Nepal for the first time in 2000 AD (Paudel, 2016). All the ministries, government institutions, and their units have developed their citizen charter and tried to carry out their activities accordingly. Citizen charter represents the organization's dedication to accountability, transparency, grievance redress mechanisms, service delivery standards, quality, and timeliness (Deep, 2021). Citizen charter promotes transparency, accountability, and efficiency in public service delivery, as well as to give citizens the tools they need to demand better services, it outlines the different services that the organization offers, the fees that the organization charges for those services, the accountable party for the service, the length of time the service is provided, the terms and conditions of service delivery, and the services that are offered (Joshi, 2007). The concept of the citizen charter represents the belief between service providers and service users (Clifton et al., 2005). The citizen charter can be used to assess if an organization is responsible and welfare-focused towards its residents. Shankar Nag (2018) stated that "citizen charter is one of the key tools for ensuring good governance in all kinds of organization".

The citizen charter is essential in all government agencies. In the context of Nepal, there are 753 local levels and 6,742 wards (6 metropolitan cities, 11 sub-metropolitan cities, 276 municipalities, and 460 rural municipalities), 7 provinces, and 77 districts under units (Shrestha & Ghimire, 2020). The following details must be included: what paperwork needs to be submitted for specific work; which branch or division is available; how much time, fees, and service charges are involved; how to get in touch with the person in charge of reviewing complaints; and what the next steps are. The authority person is to receive services after completion

(Woli, 2023), the citizen charter should also be readable and understandable to all citizens (Clarke & Margetts, 2014). In case of the client (service users), any loss or damage due to non-receipt of service by any service recipient, even after completing all the procedures, the office should provide information on how to compensate these persons (Brimblecombe et al., 2018). The good governance rules 2065 BS states that in such a situation, the citizen receiving the service is entitled to a maximum of rupees 5,000/- in compensation, but not apply in the context of our situation (Otubu, 2012).

Pareek & Sole (2022) stated that the commitment to the services that public entities will deliver is provided by the citizen charter, which informs the public on the process, money, and duration associated with making a service available to them in any government institution (Pasian & Ghimire, 2022). The citizen charter reduces the possibility that service providers will mislead clients about their offerings and cause needless difficulties for those seeking to use them (Dunleavy et al., 2005). The citizen charter, those who wish to receive services can be well-prepared in advance. If an employee requests a bribe, the citizen has the right to inquire why and for what. Irvin & Stansbury (2004) stated in some circumstances, citizens may request compensation if prompt service is delayed. The citizen charter is not an overall information chart; it is a description of the general activities of any agencies or organizations, and there is no restriction on what can be included in it (Bardoel & Haenens, 2004). Citizens may seek compensation if timely service is delayed in certain circumstances. It can be taken as a mirror of the overall activities of the agencies or organizations and contributes to providing quality service to the government & other offices (Andrews & Walle, 2013) but it has been extensively and costly promoted by the government and has now been heard of by a sizeable majority of the population (Goodman, 2013). However, it remains a cumbersome package that is far more intricate than what the common citizen would understand (Woli, 2023). It indicates that the additional changes brought about by the charter program have frequently been little (Eastman et al., 2017).

The UK has long benefited from the citizen charter, but in the wake of the current turbulence throughout the world, there have been significant administrative challenges related to civil rights and other legal complications (Korishi et al., 2022). Thus, the administration must be flexible and focused on the needs of the people. Since its implementation in 2008, Bangladesh's citizen charter has proven to be a valuable tool for resolving public issues in the public domain (Huque & Ahsan, 2016). However, the charter appears to have been overlooked in certain significant administrative domains, including local administration, land reform administration, and public bodies (Walker, 2005). The citizen charter is also being implemented by many countries to enhance the delivery of public sector services (Ahsan et al., 2024). As a result, India has begun to use citizen charters to improve the flow of public sector services. In India, customer-choice-based service quality, speed, transparency, and delivery have been used to address grievances and

improve service quality. However, only a few upper and educated classes have benefited from this. It has not been able to play an important role in public services due to a lack of access to civil liberties among people (Haque, 2005). As a result, the Citizen's Charter should only be considered as a supplement to the effectiveness of the service flow. Sharma (2012) studied to evaluate the effective the implementation the Chandigarh (India) citizen's charter in local government and evaluate the effective implementation of municipal government should increase good relations with the people, and make people aware of the citizen charter. There is an emphasis on professionalism among employees. However, only a limited educated and superior-class people have benefited from the citizen charter. In the context of Nepal, it has not been able to take a significant place in public services due to people's lack of access to civil liberties (Gupta & Shrestha, 2021). As a result, to ensure the effectiveness of service flow, the citizen charter must only be considered an addition (Mudassir & Rifdan, 2023). From the above-mentioned literature reviews, it is clear that the citizen charter, which enumerates all of the office's operations and makes it simple for service users to receive efficient assistance, is essential information for any office (Neb, 2017). The primary causes of ineffective service in any capacity are a lack of political will, a lack of civic awareness, and a barrier to entry for the poor government administration (Haque, 2001).

The success or failure of an office depends on the use of a citizen charter, which is used and regulated depending on the related offices

The success or failure of an office depends on the use of a citizen charter, which is used and regulated depending on the related offices (Bhuiyan et al., 2022). The citizen charter serves as a crucial element of social accountability within public service offices (Korishi et al., 2022). However, Panday & Chowdhury (2023) state that "citizen charter should not be regarded as the sole indicator of the success or failure of office services". In Nepal, it has been observed that many educated clients often bypass the citizen charter, opting instead to approach service counters directly without consulting the charter (Beniwal, 2005). As a result, in academic writing, such claims must be backed up by evidence. Gupta et al. (2023) state the context of Nepal, it has been observed that many educated clients often bypass the citizen charter, opting instead to approach service counters directly without consulting the charter. Hood et al. (2000) state that the welfares of the citizen charter are most perceptible among educated, prosperous, and well-informed individuals; in contrast, the full and effective application of the charter is not observed in nations such as our own, where lack and low consciousness are prevalent.

Chowdhury & Panday, (2018) states the citizen charter maintained by a district administration office has to include details like; what kinds of documentation (letters of recommendation), supporting documentation, and proof needed to obtain the certificate (citizenship, passport, national identity card and other), registration of organization (CBOs, NGOs, newspaper), marriage

registration, providing relief services during natural disasters and fire, control of corruption and punishment, administrative function relating to prison and its protection, to represent the government of Nepal within the district, where the location and cost of the application forms the procedures that must be followed the personnel staff to be contacted in which section; how the duration of the documentation (certificate, application) process, etc. A citizen has the right to quickly obtain the previously listed basic information (Desouza & Bhagwatwar, 2012). Citizens can obtain the information contained in the citizens charter by using a browser, pamphlets, toll-free numbers, radio, TV, social media (SMS, Facebook), newspapers and different related websites (Kuteesa et al., 2021).

Surkhet district, known as Bahra Bandal, Athara Khandal, in 2016 B.S it was formerly a part of the Dailekh district before gaining its separation (Khadka et al., 2019). Surkhet district is one of the ten (10) districts that make up the province of Karnali, and is situated about 600 kilometers (373 miles) west of Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal (Khanal et al., 2020). With an area of 2,488.64 square kilometers (960.87 square miles), the district is the largest in Nepal. Surkhet district, center of administration headquarters, Birendranagar valley, is one of Nepal's inner terai valleys, it is a beautiful valley surrounded by hills and has an adequate climate (Wasti et al., 2023). It serves as both the commercial center and district headquarters of the Karnali state under the new federal republic. Its borders are as follows: to the north are the Dailekh and Jajarkot districts, to the south are the districts of Banke, Bardiya, and Kailali, to the west are the districts of Doti, Achham, and to the east are the Salyan district. The Bheri and Karnali rivers form the Surkhet district's whole riverine perimeter (Badal, 2022). Surkhet has five (5) municipalities, namely Birendranagar, Lekbesi, Bheriganga, Gurbhakot, Panchapuri, and four (4) rural municipalities, namely Chingad, Simta, Barahatal, and Chaukune (Acharya & Chandrika, 2021).

The DAO is headed by a chief district officer (CDO), who is supported by two assistant chief district officers and additional staff members (Tandukar et al., 2016). The CDO should receive reports from all district government offices regarding their activities (Malla et al., 2020). To keep peace, harmony and order in the district level, to provide immediate relief to natural disaster and fire victims, to manage with political parties, to coordinate security agencies and stakeholders, to register and renew organizations, to monitor, and suggest the development work, to controls delays, corruption and gives a sense of good governance, to hear and take action on issues within its jurisdiction (Bisri & Beniya, 2016). The DAO serves as the central administrative body of the districts; it is the main duty of this office to ensure that the services rendered to the public are efficient (Goodnow, 2017). In addition, DAO is responsible for organizing, coordinating, managing, controlling, monitoring, and keeping the status of available services between various government organizations and departments within the district (Comfort, 2007). It performs the crucial tasks such as provisioning, & issuing the citizenship

certificates, arranging & issuing passports certificates, maintaining records, distributing national identity cards, preserving records of official citizen information, and upholding law enforcement, and complaints act order in the area (Kloot & Martin, 2000). Some of the major activities of the DAO Surkhet are provisions related to arrangements, organization registration and renewal, including registration of printing press and newspapers, arms registration, arm name transfer and renewal, functions related to marriage registration, peace keeping and grievance related work and regarding conflict victims (DAO Surkhet, 2080). Acharya (2018) states the government of Nepal has introduced the good governance concept to establish and create welfare state system that will be carried out by the line agencies. As a line agency, the DAO Surkhet has set up the citizen charter to offer the general public high-quality services, announced a service delivery plan aimed at empowering the citizenry; however, the technical mechanism and implementation aspects are not up to standard. Tamang & Malena (2011) stated that the government of Nepal has introduced the good governance concept to establish and create welfare state system that will be carried out by the line agencies. As a line agency, the DAO, Surkhet, has set up the citizen charter to offer the general public high-quality services. It has declared a service delivery plan aimed at empowering the citizenry; however, the technical mechanism and implementation aspects are not up to standard (DAO Surkhet, 2081).

The government of Nepal has introduced the concept of good governance to establish a welfare state system, which is to be implemented through the line agencies. DAO Surkhet, as a line agency, has arranged a citizens' charter to provide quality service to the public and declares a service delivery chart to empower citizens, but the implementation and technical mechanisms are inadequate. This research applies to researchers, scholars, and academicians, Additionally, it helps to improve the services of the District Administration Office, Surkhet, and to update and inform the public about the service status. This research aims to explore the level of awareness among clients regarding the Citizen Charter and to analyze their perceptions of the quality of public service delivery in the District Administrative Office, adopting a client-centric perspective.

To fulfill the objectives, this study devised the following research questions:

- What is the level of awareness among clients of the District Administrative Office regarding the citizen charter?
- How do clients perceive the quality of public service delivery at the District Administrative Office?

Research Methodology

The purpose of this study was to determine the level of awareness among the service agencies and clients at DAO Surkhet regarding service delivery. This research is limited to questionnaires given to the agency, and a client is used. It is

limited to the district administration office, Surkhet, which cannot be generalized to the country level. This study used a combination of analytical and descriptive designs and quantitative methods, and primary sources for data collection. The primary data were gathered through observation and an interview questionnaire. To determine the level of knowledge among the agency and clients of service delivery, it mostly relied on its website and unofficial as well as informal interviews before visiting the about the citizen's charter Surkhet DAO. The sampling population was taken from the respondents using the questionnaire method; a total of 213 clients were the respondents, and the data was collected through interviews and observations with the agency of the DAO, Surkhet.

Result

The knowledge of the citizen charter of the service recipient and the service provider, as well as the service delivery from the side of the client (service users) and the service provider (agency) is presented in this section.

Knowledge about the Citizen Charter

Respondent's knowledge about the citizen charter in the Surkhet district administrative office is given in the table below:

Table 1

Information about the citizen charter

Information	Number of respondents	Frequencies (%)
Yes	182	85.45
No	31	14.55
Total	213	100.00

Field Survey, 2024

Table 1 shows that knowledge of the citizen charter is obtained by asking questions about whether the people heard and were informed about the citizen charter or not. On a percentage basis, the number of people who heard about the citizen charter was 85.45, and the percentage of people who hadn't heard about the citizen's charter was 14.55. In this table, the percentage of hearing about the citizen charter was high, 14.55 percent of people in Surkhet district hadn't heard or been informed about the citizen charter. It demonstrated a thorough understanding of the citizen charter in rural and underdeveloped areas. The government has not been informed of the charter's significance, and thus, the people living there have not had the opportunity to hear about or become aware of it.

Table 2*Known about the citizen charter*

Known citizen charter	Number of respondents	Frequencies (%)
Yes	123	57.75
No	90	42.25
Total	213	100.00

Field Survey, 2024

Table 2 indicates that 57.75 percent of the respondents understood the citizen charter, while 42.25 percent did not understand. A high proportion of citizens understood the citizen charter, and then did not; this is because there were insufficient informational opportunities, public awareness campaigns, appropriate orientation, workshops, seminars, training opportunities, and advertisements regarding the citizen charter.

Table 3*Known about the way of the citizen charter*

Known the way of the citizen charter	Number of respondents	Frequencies (%)
Public media (print, radio and TV)	97	45.53
Official communication (staff)	73	34.28
Public announcements	24	11.27
Relatives and colleagues	19	8.92
Other (please specify)	-	-
Total	213	100.00

Field Survey, 2024

Table 3 shows that the respondent recognized the citizen charter, 45.53 percent of public media (print, radio, and TV), while 34.28 percent official communications, 11.27 percent public announcement so on 8.92 percent relatives and colleagues. A proportion of citizen understood the traditional way of citizen charter. Public media (print, radio, and TV) is a way of easily accessing information at the public level, official communication process, public announcements, and relatives/colleagues, known as the way of citizen charter.

Table 4*Time taken to get services the way of citizen charter*

Time takes the way of citizen's charter	Number of respondents	Frequencies (%)
As stipulated in the charter board	189	88.73
A little more than the stipulated time	13	6.10
Too much time than the stipulated time	11	5.17
Total	213	100.00

Field Survey, 2024

Table 4 indicates that 88.73 percent of respondents expected the charter board, 6.10 percent gave the response a little more than the expected time, and 5.17 percent of respondents exposed the too much time than the allocated time as in the citizen charter. The mentions above table indicate that the citizen charter is being displayed; however, the district administration office is still unable to provide the services mentioned. When asked what could be the cause, the majority of people said it was due to the workload on the staff and the limited number of staff.

Perception of the client on the service delivery system

The views of the service receiver regarding the service delivery of the DAO Surkhet are mentioned below:

Table 5

Quick and easy service

Quick and easy service	Number of respondents	Frequencies (%)
Yes	187	87.79
No	19	8.92
Don't know	7	3.29
Total	213	100.00

Field Survey, 2024

Table 5 shows that 87.79 percent of the respondents stated that they were getting fast and easy service. As stated in the citizen charter, 8.92 percent did not receive the service, and 3.29 percent did not respond about the service being held on time. Because of the traditional documentation system and lack of resources in this office, it showed that 100 percent of people did not get quick and easy service. This is due to the lack of digitalization of every activity. Until now they have been using the traditional system of documentation.

Table 6

A Bribe given for official works

Bribe given	Number of respondents	Frequencies (%)
Yes	-	-
No	213	213
Total	213	100.00

Field Survey, 2024

Table 6 shows that 100% of respondents (service recipients) did not pay additional fees beyond those specified in the citizen charter, and 0% stated having to pay for extra activities beyond those listed in the charter. The data indicated that the office effectively implemented the citizen charter, although none of the employees were required to pay additional fees for their services. Therefore, to prevent bribery in official activities, the public must learn to work by the citizen's charter.

Table 7*The Office staff member wrongly behaved towards the clients (service users)*

Wrongly behaved	Number of respondents	Frequencies (%)
Yes	14	6.58
No	199	93.42
Total	213	100.00

Field Survey, 2024

Table 7 shows the wrong behavior of the office staff member toward the client. 6.58 percent of the clients said that the office staff member misbehaved with the clients and 93.42 percent of clients said that the office staff member didn't misbehave with the clients. It showed that the behavior level of staff was good but not fully satisfactory. Retribution of office staff members who do not treat the public well should be strictly enforced so that office staff members do not misbehave with the public and act responsibly.

Table 8*Level of satisfaction with the service users (client) from the service of DAO Surkhet*

Satisfaction of services	Number of respondents	Frequencies (%)
Satisfy	191	89.67
Dissatisfy	22	10.33
Total	213	100.00

Field Survey, 2024

Table 8 shows the number of satisfied citizens in the District Administrative Office Surkhet about service delivery. Out of 213 respondents, 89.67 percent expressed satisfaction with the service and 10.33 percent expressed dissatisfaction. From this, we can infer that the proportion of satisfied citizens exceeded that of dissatisfied ones. It showed that the office should provide higher-quality services.

Staff's opinion on the service delivery system

The district administration office, Surkhet staff members hold the following opinions about the services provided by this office: the office is currently working to implement the citizen charter. The citizen charter is reviewed occasionally, the needs-based policies are changed and updated, but doing so successfully is still proving to be difficult. For instance, political instability, illiteracy, and public ignorance of the significance of the citizen charter are the reasons behind the administration's higher levels' lack of will. This is not met with resistance from the administration; the work of the people is less important to political leaders and administrators than their financial gain. Not every office will benefit from the same kind of citizen charter due to the differences in the work. The public can view the citizen charter. The citizen charter makes it crystal clear what kind of procedures people must follow when working in offices. To train employees to improve this office's ability to provide services and carry out activities like advertising on TV, radio, newspapers, and the internet, among other things, to raise public awareness

of the citizen charter. Despite the difficulties, this office has made an effort to offer comprehensive, high-quality services following the citizen charter, and it appears that it has done so more successfully than other district offices. The citizen charter is reviewed occasionally, and the needs-based policies are changed and updated.

Discussion

The citizen charter provides official information about public services, necessary paperwork, the relevant officer, the time and cost of the services, and the compensation plan if the services are not provided at the designated time and cost (Schiavo, 2000). The public will be able to access services without difficulty, won't have to go to the same job repeatedly, and won't be able to defraud service recipients will decrease with the proper implementation of the citizen charter. The office can ensure good governance by offering quality services through the citizen charter (Wambuwa et al., 2020) . All government offices must maintain a public copy of their citizen charter kept somewhere on the office grounds under clause 25 of the Good Governance Act 2064/AD 2007 and rule 14 of the Good Governance Regulation, 2065 BS/2008 AD (Lamichhane, 2021). This research examines how the citizen charter's provisions are implemented to improve local services. Kaphle, (2024) states that the citizens' charter, which has clear regulations and procedures and makes information accessible to the public, reduces the uncertainty associated with the provision of services. An overview of the key findings from the research on people's knowledge of the citizen charter and the District Administration Office Surkhet's service delivery system is provided here.

Despite the officials' claims that they provide services to the public, it appears that the offices that provide official services are still client's (service user) focused and conveniently accessible (Joshi & Moore, 2004). The information can give clients (service users) the information they need to get happening with the citizen's charter. In terms of service delivery, only a few works such as citizenship certificates, passports, different types of recommendations paper, etc. were performed on time. People should repeatedly come for national identity cards, register/renew organizations, control the procrastination and corruption issues addressed, hear and take actions on issues within their jurisdiction, and monitor development work quality performances, and other work (Verdegem & Verleye, 2009).The findings exposed the citizen charter and their perceptions of the public service delivery system. The analysis of responses revealed that citizens know about the way of the citizen charter. Public media (print, radio, and TV) is a way of easily accessing information at the public level, official communication processes, public announcements, and relatives/colleagues who know about the way of the citizen charter.

The study focuses on how the public's perceptions of the citizen charter and the District Administration Office's service delivery methods. The findings of this

study are useful to make the Citizen's Charter service deliver the official information provided to the public, containing the required documents, the specified time, and the compensation arrangement if the service is not received on time and for the stated fee. The precise implementation of the Citizen's Charter will reduce policy corruption; the public will be able to access services without difficulty, will not have to return to the same services multiple times, will be unable to defraud service recipients, and will reduce nepotism. The office can promote good governance by offering high-quality services under the Citizen Charter. However, it is similarly appropriate for other service-providing agencies (offices) and government and non-government organizations.

Conclusion

The Citizen Charter is the commitment of the government to the citizens. Good governance is essential to the sustainable development and efficient operation of any office. The three major components of good governance are accountability, transparency, and the administration's responsiveness of the administration. The Citizens' Charter initiative is a response created in response to the goal of resolving issues that arise when citizens interact with the institutions that deliver public services. In the District Administration Office, Surkhet, a Citizen's Charter has been maintained systematically. The fact that the service recipients were using it and that the majority of them were aware of, accountable for, and more interested in the Citizen Charter was exposed. The majority of the clients were very engaged and prepared, with only a small number not knowing about the citizen charter. It demonstrated effective charter implementation, proper and high-quality service, and effective management of the office's many activities. However, there is an issue with appropriate service delivery because of certain administrative, political, and personal factors. This might be the outcome of people's ignorance of the news, television, newspapers, social media, the internet, etc., as well as a lack of preparation. It also requires a strong will to provide leadership in the political and administrative spheres for it to be fully implemented. Therefore, it is concluded that this study promotes and directs the effective implementation of the Citizen Charter of the District Administrative Office Surkhet.

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