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Citizen Charter in Nepali Public Sector Organizations: Does it Really Work?

Abstract

Citizen Charter is an instrument of citizen-centric governance that confirms quality in public service delivery by holding public sector organizations directly accountable, responsive, and transparent. In this regard, this study aimed to disclose the current picture of Citizen Charter in Nepali public sector organizations from service users' perspectives. For this, the survey was conducted in key six public sector organizations of Lalitpur Metropolitan City by using the client exit interview method, with the help of a semi-structured interview schedule. The study result indicates that the use of the Citizen Charter is extensively low. Service users are not fully aware and well informed about it, and its values. Service users prefer to receive services by asking from duty holders, intermediates (agents), and previous service users than the Citizen Charter. Service users believe that the promises of the Citizen Charter and the behavior of duty holders are inconsistent. However, some service users are demanding services as per the Citizen Charter.

Keywords :

citizen charter; duty holder; service user

Introduction

At present, almost all countries in the world, including Nepal, have implemented the New Public Management (NPM) principles to make public sector governance competent, effective, efficient, responsive, prompt, transparent, and accountable at all levels. Within the principle of NPM, public sector governance shifts the focus of duty holders to service users (Mang'era & Bichanga, 2013). Previously, the

public service was dominated by duty holders, but now the service users are put in priority. Many public sector organizations have, therefore, adopted a service user's slant to improving the quality of services to achieve the citizen's satisfaction. In this backdrop, Citizen Charter has become one of the noticeable quality assurance strategies (Acharya, 2010). Citizen Charter is viewed as a public document setting out standards to which

the customers are entitled (Nikos, 2000). In the same vein as Nikos, it can be argued that the Citizen Charter is a written public document which shows the commitment of the duty holders to the service users concerning quality and service standards. It consists of what the institution does, types of services it provides, obligations and responsibilities of service users and duty holders, required documents, timeframe, service charges, input options, complaint, and redress mechanisms, and how the service user may pursue redress if they are dissatisfied with the services. Citizen Charter is, therefore, the most accessible way for service users to find information about the services provided by the organizations.

The idea of the Citizen Charter evolved to meet the needs of service users that they are entitled to. Citizen Charter believes that service users are the primary consumers (Taylor, 1999). It confirms the quality, reduces red tape, and delays in public service delivery. That is why Garg (2006) argued that the use of Citizen Charter is reflected as citizen-centric governance. It helps service users to get quality service without delay or obstruction. It can, therefore, be argued that the successful implementation of the Citizen Charter has several advantages in the context of developing countries. It empowers clients/citizens; equips clients with their entitlement to quality services; bridges the gap between the policy, vision, and mission of the organization and its implementation; outlines the responsibilities of the organization and its clients; delivers transparency and accountability; and is a hallmark of responsive and citizen-friendly governance (Malik & Meena, 2004). If the Citizen Charter is correctly designed and implemented, it not only makes public service prompt, transparent, responsive, accountable, and accessible but also reduces red tape and delays in public service. However, the Citizen Charter faces several challenges due to failure to include internationally accepted standards, lack of sufficient discussion during formulation and

implementation, lack of training, orientation and awareness among duty holders, lack of awareness among citizens, lack of regular, active, and effective publicity and communication.

Citizen satisfaction from public service is crucial for every government in the world, and Nepal is not exceptional. The Government of Nepal has made numerous attempts to make public sector governance more effective and efficient. The Citizens' Charter was adopted alike in the style of the British model in 1998. Thenceforth, all organizations displayed the Citizen Charter, and are subsequently conducting their activities (Tamarakar, 2010). The Nepali Citizen Charter labels services, means of delivery, service fees, required time, concerned authorized person, and section/unit that performs the actions and the process for the expression of the grievances. Although this whole concept and process are clearly stated in the Citizen Charter, many service users still do not use it for a variety of reasons. As per Central Bureau Statistics (2012), 123 languages are spoken in Nepal, but the majority of Citizen Charter written in the Nepali language, which is not understood by all service users. Nepal is a country with a 67 percent literacy rate (Central Bureau Statistics, 2011). This indicates that the Citizen Charter written in the Nepali language is not understood by service users who do not understand the Nepali language. Similarly, Citizen Charter in the Nepali language also does not convey any information to visually impaired service users. As a result, service users do not receive services on time, face irritation, feel disappointed, and become victims of corruption. Efforts have been made to create a convenient environment for citizens so that they can receive services without any difficulties (National Planning Commission, 2019).

To get services on time, some service users seek the help of intermediate rather than using the Citizen Charter. Although service users are well known about the procedures, they are unable

to receive a quality of service as mentioned in the Citizen Charter. Transport Office, Land Revenue Office, District Administration Office, Inland Revenue Office, Metropolitan City, and the Court are the key Nepali public sector organizations that deliver various services to the citizens. Service users have desire for quick services from these organizations, but many of them are unable. Service users don't know the procedures of getting services viz. required documents, where to go, to whom to talk, and so on. That may be the reason Beniwal (2005) argued that the Citizen Charter is nothing, but it is a simple document that is hanged/ painted on the wall and get dust. In this backdrop, after the implementation of the Citizens' Charter in all Nepali public sector organizations, it is very important to know whether it is just a simple document that is hung/ painted on the wall and gets dust or does it work actually? This is the main concern of the study. In the Nepali context, very few studies on the Citizen Charter exist. The views of service users on the Citizen Charter have yet to be explored and discussed. Understanding how service users perceive the Citizen Charter is essential for public sector organizations. It succours public sector organizations to understand, and identify functional and practical gaps in the successful implementation of the Citizen Charter. This study can be significant in the reform of the current practices of the Citizen Charter.

The central purpose of this study was to reveal the current picture of Citizen Charter in Nepali public sector organizations from the service user's perspective. For achieving this purpose, the following specific research questions were formulated:

- a) What is the status of the Citizen Charter in Nepali public sector organizations?
- b) What are the enabling and hindering factors for using Citizen Charter in the service receiving process?

Literature Review

Overview of Citizen Charter

Intending to improve the quality of public service based on the needs and expectations of service users, the idea of the Citizen Charter began in the UK in 1991 by the Conservative Government of John Major as a national program (Sharma & Agnihotri, 2001). This program was repackaged and re-launched by Tony Blair's new Labor Government in the summer of 1998. Later, Citizen Charter adopted in several countries of the world under various titles, namely Belgium (La Charte des utilisateurs des Services publics, 1992), France (Charte des services publics, 1992), Spain (The Quality Observatory, 1992), Hong Kong (Performance Pledge, 1992), Portugal (The Quality Charter in Public Service, 1993), Malaysia (Client Charter, 1993), Jamaica (Citizen's Charter, 1994), US (Customers First, 1994), Canada (Service Standards Initiative, 1995), Australia (Service Charter, 1997), India (Citizen's Charter, 1997), South Africa (People First, 1997), Sweden (Citizens' Service, 1998), Namibia (Public Service Charter, 1999), Argentina (Cartas Compromiso, 2000), Tanzania (Customer Service Charter, 2001), Sweden (Service dialogue, 2001), Somalia (Service Charter, 2002), Bangladesh (Citizen's Charter, 2007), Ethiopia (Citizens' Charter, 2012 (OECD, 1996; Toress, 2003; Drewry, 2005; CGG, 2008; MoCS, 2012 cited in Nigussa, 2014) and Nepal (Citizens' Charter, 1998) (Dhakal & Ghimire, 2009).

Principle of Citizen Charter

The first report of the charter introduced six principles of public service, namely standards, openness, information, choice, non-discrimination, and accessibility (Major, 1991). The second report revised these principles (Major, 1994). Information and openness have been combined, while choice has become a choice and consultation. Non-discrimination and accessibility have been eliminated, and standards have been maintained. Courtesy and helpfulness, putting things right and

value for money have been introduced (Falconer & Ross, 1999). Furthermore, in 1998, the Labor Government re-launched the Charter, which introduced nine new principles viz. set service standards, be open and provide full information, consult and involve, encourage access and promotion of choice, treat everyone fairly, put things right when they go wrong, use resources effectively, innovate and improve, and work with other providers. Public service should be delivered to service users within these nine principles.

Citizen Charter and Good Governance

Good Governance is the practice and exercise of authority which is based on accountability, transparency, responsiveness, equity and inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, rule of law, participation, and consensus-building (United Nations Development Programme, 2000). It is indicated as efficient public service, a reliable judicial system, and an administration that is accountable to the public (World Bank, 1989). It is, therefore, something that the citizen can feel good with the public service. Service users who are faced with unnecessary difficulties in accessing services are labeled poor or bad governance. Many of the principles of good governance are, therefore, identical to those of public services. In public service, the Citizen Charter is a means of translating the principles of good governance into practice. The main driving force for different countries to formulate and implement the Citizen Charter is the pursuit of transparency, accountability, and responsiveness (Torres, 2006). The Citizen Charter is, therefore, an instrument of good governance that imparts the principles of openness, accountability, and responsiveness in public service by providing all relevant facts to the service users.

Citizen Charter and NPM

In 1989, Christopher Hood launched NPM intending to reform the public sector. It is

based on market ideas, competition, contracting, transparency, results, efficiency, effectiveness, and quality of public service delivery (Nigussa, 2014). NPM focused on better delivery of public service (Hood, 1991). Since the beginning of the NPM principle, a variety of approaches have been used in public sector governance. Among them, Citizen Charter is one that clearly support NPM principles. As part of the NPM, it is initiated to encourage duty holders to be responsive and inform citizens about service entitlements, standards, and rights (Drewry, 2005). Therefore, it is a tactic of the NPM that improves the standard of public service. It can be seen as just one aspect of NPM's sprawling agenda and modernization of the public sector (Drewry, 2005). Promptness, accessibility, transparency, accountability, responsiveness, efficiency, and effectiveness of public service can be ensured directly or indirectly through the Citizen Charter, which is the main agenda of NPM. Therefore, the Citizen Charter is a tool that implemented the value of NPM in public service.

Citizen Charter in Nepal: Policies and Practices

The Government of Nepal implemented the Citizen Charter in 1998 by passing a special guideline called 'Guidelines for the Effectiveness of Government Services, 1998.' This directive made it clear that the content of the Citizen Charter should be written in the Nepali language, and should be in a simple and concise manner. It was designed to improve the service delivery system in the form of booklets and wall painting. At that time, however, it was not implemented in all sectors. Similarly, with the view of establishing the culture of the Citizen Charter in all public sector organizations, the Government of Nepal has again passed the act called 'Good Governance (Management and Operation) Act, 2008'. This act made it mandatory to place publically within the office premises, to be visible to all, and to carry out activities/providing services as per its standard. As per this act, the Citizen Charter shall contain a detailed statement

of the service offered by the Office and its nature, the procedure to be followed by the service users for obtaining the service, the estimated time for providing the service, the description of the officer responsible for providing the service and his/her chamber, the details of the fees to be charged or any other amount to be paid, if any, for receiving the service. Departmental action may be taken against them in charge of the office concerned and its responsible staff if the service user does not receive the service due to the failure of the office to perform the work referred to in the Citizen Charter without a reasonable cause. Likewise, the Government of Nepal has also passed an act called the 'Right to Information Act 2007'. This act guaranteed the information as a fundamental right of the citizen. Every public sector organization must respect and protect the citizen's right to information. The act also made it clear that every public sector should perform its functions openly and transparently. It also emphasized the arrangement of the information officer to disseminate the information held in the office. Similarly, the Constitution of Nepal (2015) also stressed the right to information for the citizen. As per this constitution, every citizen shall have the right to demand and receive information on any matter of his or her interest or of public interest. The Constitution of Nepal 2015 and the Right to Information Act 2007 do not directly discuss the Citizen Charter, but emphasize the proactive or reactive disclosure of information that is the main agenda of the Citizen Charter. Nowadays, all Nepali public sector organizations are displaying the Citizen Charter as a condition laid down by the government, and are trying to carry out their activities accordingly.

Citizen Charter: India, Bangladesh, and Malaysia

Following the advent of the Citizens' Charter in the United Kingdom in 1991 by John Major, it was adopted in many countries around the

world. In India, the Consumer rights advocates first proposed a Citizen Charter for providers of health services in 1994 at a meeting of the Central Consumer Protection Council in Delhi (Nigussa, 2014). The formal decision to implement the Citizen Charter was first made at Chief Minister's Conference held in New Delhi on May 24, 1997. The Citizen Charter and Grievance Redress Bill 2011, Chapter III, Article 4(1), stipulates that every public authority shall publish the Citizen Charter within six months of the commencement of the act. Similarly, in Bangladesh, the Commission for the Reform of Public Administration report (2000) recommended the implementation of the Citizen Charter in three ministries and five essential organizations (Jahan, 2006). Recognizing the importance of the Citizen Charter in pro-public governance, the Citizen Charter was highlighted in 2005 through the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (International Monetary Fund, 2005). Far ahead, the Caretaker Government took the initiative in 2007 to introduce the Citizen Charter, and stated that all institutions should be required to formulate and publish within the office premises and websites. Similarly, in 1993, the Government of Malaysia established a "Best Client Charter Award" based on the UK model. In the same year, the Government of Malaysia issued guidelines called 'Administrative Development Circular, No. 3' by Chief Secretary for the development and implementation of Client Charters in all government institutions of the federal government. Since 1993, the Client Charter has been transformed as an emerging consumer orientation in all of Malaysia's public sector institutions.

Methods

In several areas of public administration and governance research, a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches is commonly used. However, this study used a quantitative approach, which is based on positivism (Akbar, 2011).

The ontological position of positivism is that there is a single and objective reality (Castellan, 2010). A reality of the Citizen Charter in the Nepali public sector organizations is single and objective for this study. Scientific techniques, including sampling, structured protocols, and written questionnaires with a limited range of pre-determined responses were used to reveal this reality. All these techniques were employed via the survey method. Within this method, a descriptive research design was used. The reason behind the use of a descriptive design for this study was to reveal a current picture of Citizen Charter in Nepali public sector organizations based on the service user's perspective. Randomly 200 service users were selected from six public sector organizations (see Table 1). These six public sector organizations are pioneer organizations that provide a wide range of services, and a large number of citizens frequently visit there for a variety of purposes.

The client exist interview method was used as a means of data collection. For this, a semi-structured interview schedule was designed in the English language based on purpose, research questions, and issues raised in previous research work. Similarly, consultations and a series of meetings were held with peers, examiners, and subject experts in the field of Citizen Charter. Before finalizing the interview schedule, suggestions, feedback, and comments made by peers, examiners, and experts were considered

and addressed accordingly. After that, an interview schedule was translated into the Nepali language, and reverse translation was done to ensure the consistency of the language. The interview schedule was pre-tested to remove redundant elements from the interview schedule. Finally, data was collected from selected organizations using the pre-tested questionnaire during office hours. Before administrating the interview schedule, respondents were carefully informed of the study objective, and assured that information would only be used for this purpose. Privacy was also ensured, and information was neither manipulated nor criticized in any way whatsoever. The data collection and cleaning process was carried out simultaneously. Throughout this process, each interview schedule was reviewed manually, and open responses were recoded. After this, the data was entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software to obtain the required information. Based on the intent and research questions; frequency, percentages, cross-tab, and the mean were calculated. Finally, the data was described, analyzed, compared, and finally generated meaning from them.

Results

The result of this paper presents basic demographic information of the respondents, information on services, and Citizen Charter. The issues discussed here are all data based. The results are described as follows:

Table 1.
Respondents by Organizations and Gender

Organizations	Male		Female		Total	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Transport Office	25	20.7	12	15.2	37	18.5
Land Revenue Office	17	14	18	22.8	35	17.5
District Administration Office	23	19	17	21.5	40	20
Inland Revenue Office	21	17.4	6	7.6	27	13.5
Metropolitan City	17	14	16	20.3	33	16.5
Court	18	14.9	10	12.7	28	14
Total	121	100	79	100	200	100

Source: obtained from primary data

Background Characteristics

The demographic characteristics of respondent's/service users are categorized into three different categories, namely gender, age, and education, as presented in Table 3. It is clearly seen that the total numbers of male service users are higher than females. The age of service users is broadly classified into five groups' viz. 20 years and below, 21-30, 31-40, 41-50, and 51-60 years. Thirty-seven percent of service users were to 31-41 years' age group followed by 41-50 years (26.5%), 51-60 years (7%), and 20 years and below (6.5%). The average age of service users is 35.99 years; while the lowest is 18 years and the highest is 57 years. Almost all of the service users are literate. More than half (56.5 %) completed secondary education followed by higher secondary education (30%).

Level of Service

The satisfaction of the service users from public service is a key goal of every government in the world, including Nepal. The regulation concerning the conduct of employees of the civil service (2009) clearly mentioned that service user's satisfaction as its measure of success. In this regard, this study had also collected information

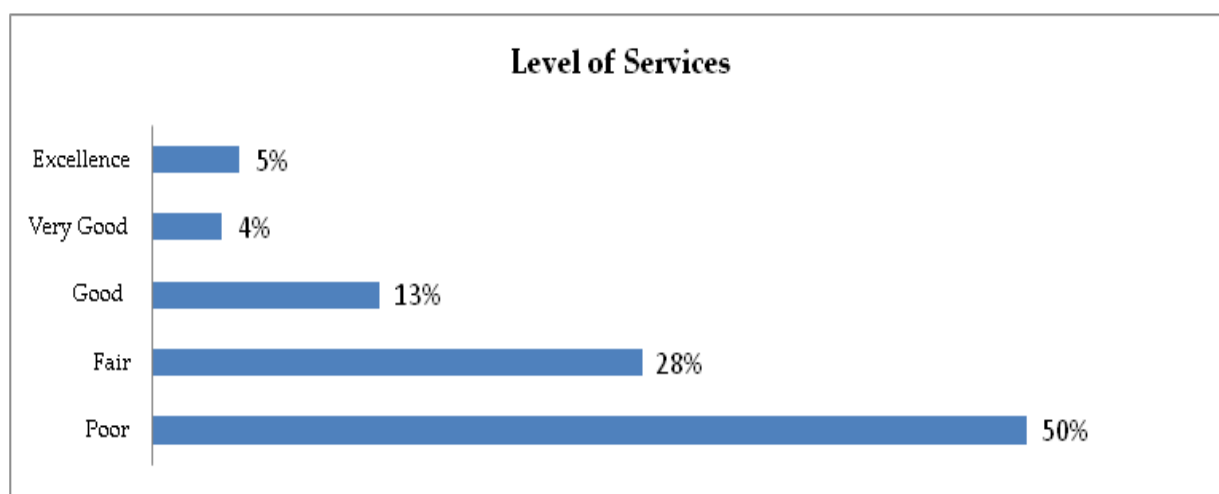
about it. Half of the service users reported that services rendered by the offices are poor, followed by fair (28%) and good (13%). Only 5 percent of the service users reported that services rendered by the offices are excellent (see Figure1). This indicates that the services rendered by these offices are not reported as expected by service users. It failed to satisfy the growing aspirations

Table 2.
Demographic Characteristics of Service Users

Characteristics	f	%
Gender		
Male	121	60.5
Female	79	39.5
Age		
20 years and below	13	6.5
21-30	46	23
31-40	74	37
41-50	53	26.5
51-60	14	7
Mean age	35.99 (Lowest age 18 and Highest age 57)	
Education Status		
Illiterate	3	1.5
Literate only	8	4.0
Primary	9	4.5
Lower secondary	7	3.5
Secondary	113	56.5
Higher education	60	30.0
Total	200	100

Source: obtained from primary data

Figure 1.
Level of Services Rendered by Organization



Source: obtained from primary data

of the service users, and raised the question of the quality of public service. It does not mean that there is no policy, legal, and institutional arrangements to ensure the quality of public service, of course, there is, but service users are not fully satisfied with services. It seems like all the efforts taken by the government are becoming wastage. The Government, therefore, needs to take concrete steps to ensure positive images. For this, service design, delivery, monitoring, and evaluation mechanism needs to be reconsidered.

Knowledge of Citizen Charter

The use of the Citizen Charter depends on how well the service users are informed. Knowledge of the Citizen Charter is an important prerequisite to its use. It is generally said that knowing about Citizen Charter is positively associated with its use. In this backdrop, the information was collected on knowledge of the Citizen Charter. It was collected by asking the service users 'whether if they have heard about Citizen Charter and if they have, what were the sources of its information'.

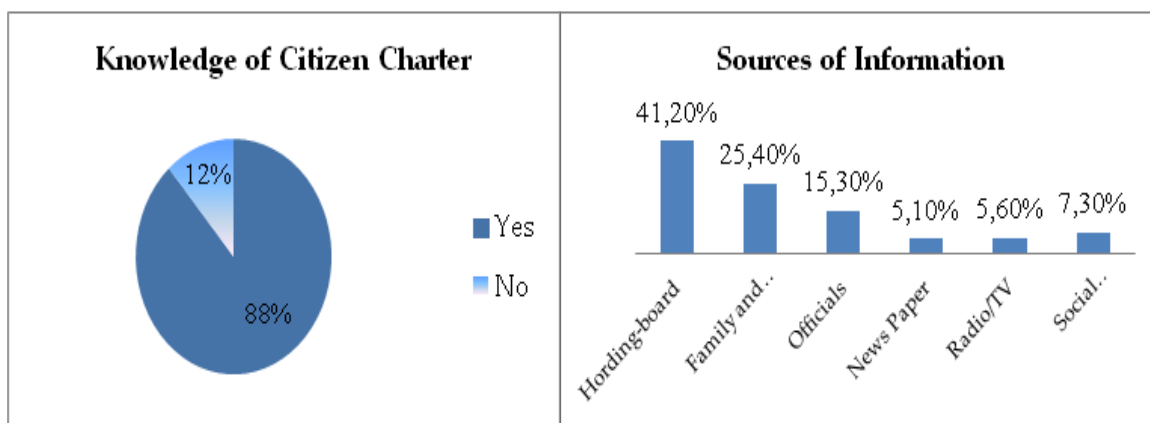
A large proportion (88.5%) of service users reported that they have knowledge on Citizen Charter, whereas 11.5 percent of service users reported that they are unaware, even though almost all service users were literate. Most of the

service users who knew Citizen Charter reported that they get information from hoarding-board (41.2%). Family and friends are the second major sources of information (25%) followed by duty holders (15%), social media/website (7.30%), and radio (5.6%) (see Figure2). Undeniably, the successful use of the Citizen Charter depends on its knowledge, therefore, proper communication and awareness are required to convey the essence and value of the Citizen's Charter. When service users realize the value of the Citizen Charter, they proactively use and demand services as specified therein. The problem is that the duty holders failed to fully convey its importance, and the service users also do not internalize its value.

Elements of Citizen Charter

The use of the Citizen Charter while receiving public service depends on several things, such as knowledge, location, content, language, and so on. In this regard, the study also generated data on the different elements of the Citizen Charter. A significant proportion (83.1%) of service users reported that the Citizen Charter is displayed in a noticeable place. It is also clearly seen that there is a huge gap between knowledge of the Citizen Charter and knowledge of its content. As only 36.2 percent of service users know its contents. It is interesting to note that a large proportion

Figure 2.
Knowledge and Sources of Information of Citizen Charter



Source: obtained from primary data

Table 3.
Service Users Experience on Element of Citizen Charter

Elements	Yes		No	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Location of Citizen Charter easily noticeable	147	83.1	30	16.9
Knowledge of content of Citizen Charter	64	36.2	113	63.8
understandable Language of Citizen Charter	154	87	23	13
Received service as mentioned in Citizen Charter	30	16.9	147	83.1
Received service in time as per mentioned in Citizen Charter	59	33.3	118	66.7
	N=177			

Source: obtained from primary data

(87%) of service users reported that the language of Citizen Charter is easy and simple to read and understand. Eighty-three percentage of service users reported that they do not receive services as set out in the Citizen Charter. Citizen Charter also clearly mentions the time taken for receiving services. Two-third of the service users reported that they did not receive services on schedule as set out in the Citizen Charter. These evidences show that public sector organizations are not delivering services on time as mentioned in the Citizen Charter, as stated by Dhakal and Ghimire (2009). From this discussion, we can say that the Citizen Charter failed to meet service users' expectations. It is raised the question of the effective implementation of the Citizen Charter. It indicates that the implementation of the Citizen Charter in public sector organizations does not seem to be very successful.

Assistance to Receive Services

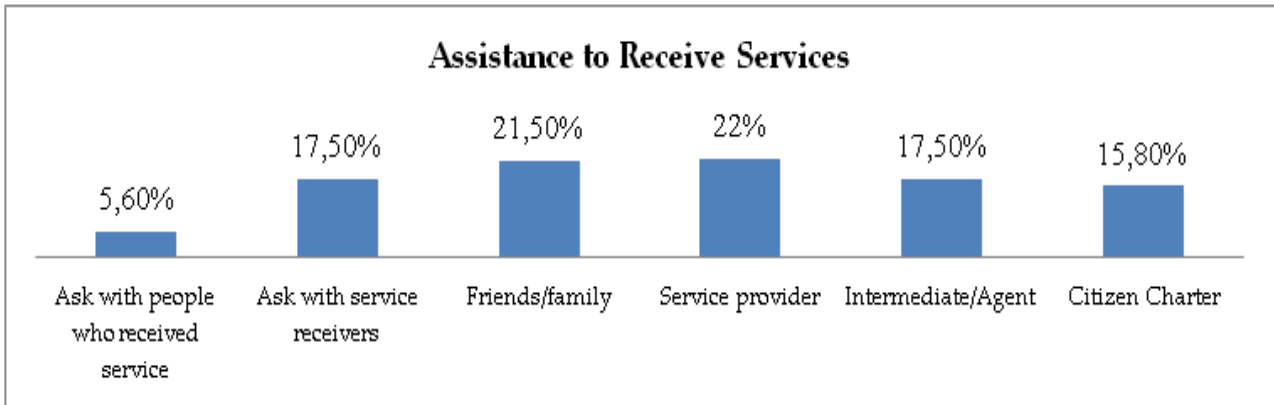
The service users receive public service with the assistance of various people. Bearing such a thing in mind, this study intended to identify the ways the services were received. Twenty-two percent of service users received services by asking duty holders, followed by friends/family (21.5%), asking with other service users (17.5%), and intermediates/agents (17.5%), Citizen Charter (15.8%), and asking with people who received previous service (5.6%) (see Figure 3). It is interesting to note that Pokharel, Dahal, and

Adhikari (2017) have observed similar findings. According to them, only 15 percent of service users received services through the Citizen Charter. Most of them received services by asking with duty holders, previous service users, and intermediate/agent. As per Nepal National Governance Survey (2017/18), only 2.2 percent of citizens are getting information about the procedures for the service from the Citizen Charter. Thirty-six percentages of service users receive assistance from family members/neighbors/relatives/friends. Although the government is attempting to provide quality services according to the needs, interests, and demands of service users, as specified in the Citizen Charter, service users prefer to access services by asking duty holders and others. This scenario reveals that the effectiveness of the Citizen Charter in the Nepali public sector organizations seems poor. The low use of the Citizen Charter provides space and creates a favorable atmosphere for intermediaries. Intermediaries inform and simplify the administrative process, arrange necessary documents, and assist in receiving the service promptly. For this, service users should pay money to intermediaries in return for public service, which they are entitled to free access. It affects the service and raises a big question on the quality of public service.

Reasons for not Using Citizen Charter

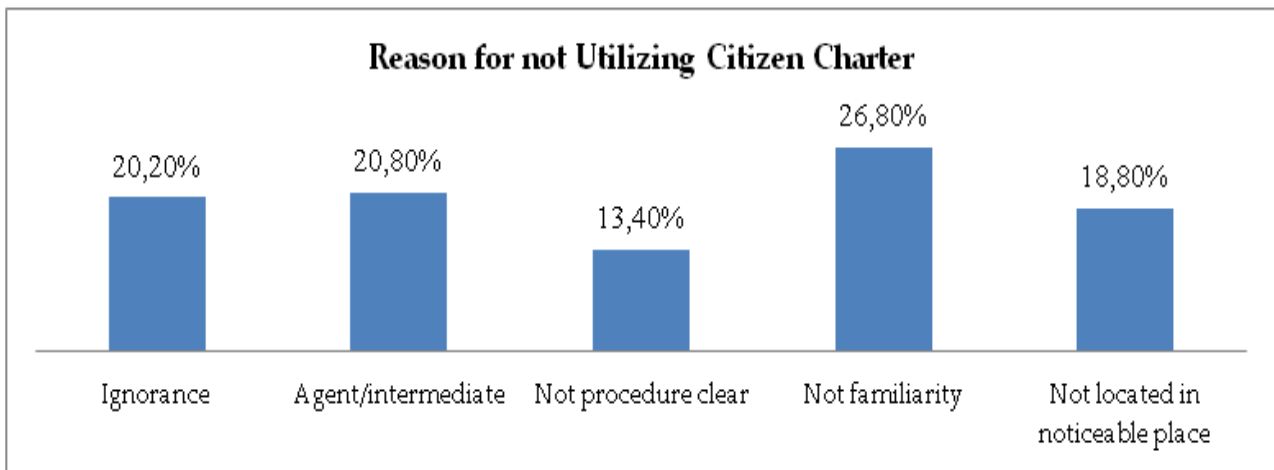
This study has also identified the reasons for not using the Citizen Charter, as presented

Figure 3.
Assistance to Receive Services



Source: obtained from primary data

Figure 4.
Reasons for not Utilizing Citizen Charter



Source: obtained from primary data

in Figure 4. The service user cited several reasons for not using the Citizen Charter. These include ignorance, agent/intermediate, unclear procedure, unfamiliarity, and not located in a noticeable place. One in four service users reported that they are not using Citizen Charter because they are not familiar, followed by agent/intermediate (20.8%), ignorance (20.2%), not located in a noticeable place (18.8%), and unclear procedure (13.4%) (see Figure 4). It is providing a broader view of why service users are not using the Citizen Charter. If issues are unfamiliarity with the Citizen Charter, intermediate existence, ignorance, not situated in a visible location, and unclear/complex procedure; the concerned

stakeholders should, therefore, focused on these issues as earliest to make the Citizen Charter workable.

Importance of Citizen Charter

The use of the Citizen Charter depends upon its importance, and use it when service users perceive its importance in public service. This study also generated information about the importance of the Citizen Charter in the view of service users. Majority of the service users (36%) believed Citizen Charter as quite useful in receiving public service, followed by useful (24.3%), little useful (20.9%), very useful (13%), and not useful/gimmick (5.6%) (see Table 4).

More or less 73.5 percent of service users are accepted that Citizen Charter is important in the service receiving process, but there is a huge gap in its use. Ideally, services users accepted that Citizen Charter is essential; however, in practice use of Citizen Charter is considerably low. Service users believed that the Citizen Charter promises a lot of things, but it is not enforced as specified in it. That is why most of the service users do not use the Citizen Charter in receiving public service.

Table 4.
Important of Citizen Charter

Importance	f	%
Very useful	23	13
Quite useful	64	36.2
Useful	43	24.3
Little useful	37	20.9
Not useful/ gimmick	10	5.6
N=177		

Source: obtained from primary data

Duty Holders Behavior Consistent with Citizen Charter

Citizen Charter is a statutory public document that displays the commitment of the duty holders to service users regarding quality and standards of service. In this note, the service users were asked to be consistent between the information referred to in the Citizen Charter and the way duty holders have dealt with it. Principally, the action and behavior of duty holders should be consistent with the Citizen Charter. Evidence indicates, however, that there is little consistency between the information in the Citizen Charter and the way duty holders have dealt. A little (35%) consistency between the information as set out in the Citizen Charter and the way the duty holders have dealt with it, followed by to some extent (31.1%), to large extent (11.9%) and don't know (4%). Approximately one in five (18.1%) service users experienced that there is not any consistency between the information as set out in the Citizen Charter and the way duty holders have dealt with

it (see Table 5). This reveals that there is a huge gap between the pledge of the Citizen Charter and the behavior of duty holders. Good Governance act and its regulation 2008 have made it explicit that duty holders should provide a standard of service to service users as set out in the Citizen Charter. Service users, conversely, reported that there is little consistency in the behavior of duty holders and standards laid out in the Citizen Charter. Service users equate the duty holders' behavior with the principle set out in the Citizen Charter and, on that basis, decide whether or not there is uniformity between them. Service users encourage using Citizen Charter if duty holders' behavior is aligned with standards layout in the Citizen Charter. On this basis, it can be argued that the use of the Citizen Charter both overtly and circuitously affected by the consistency of duty holders' behavior with the standards set out in the Citizen Charter. Concerned stakeholders should, therefore, give priority to ensure the consistency between duty holders' behavior and standards as set out in the Citizen Charter.

Table 5.
Consistency in Behavior of Duty Bearers as per Citizen Charter

Consistency	f	%
Not at all	32	18.1
Little	62	35
To some extent	55	31.1
To a large extent	21	11.9
Don't know	7	4
N= 177		

Source: obtained from primary data

Discussion

Throughout the years, the Government of Nepal has spent tremendous time, resources, and money, as well as various regulations, policies, and directives that have been passed for providing quality and standard of public service. Accordingly, the Government of Nepal, influenced by the international community, has developed and published Citizen Charter in public

sector organizations since 1998 for addressing the difficulties of service users. Nepali Citizen Charter is undoubtedly a means of citizen-centric governance for the delivery of quality public service. It is expected that citizens will be made aware of all the necessary information on service standards that they are entitled to. Successful implementation of the Citizen Charter confirms excellence in service delivery by keeping public sector organizations responsive, accountable, open, and pro-people, which ensure an optimum level of citizen satisfaction from public service. Evidence shows, however, that the usage of the Citizen Charter is not reported as expected during the public service receiving process. Service users have low confidence in Citizen Charter, which requires an urgent need to focus on it. The service users have much faith in asking help from intermediaries, friends, or the previous service users than Citizen Charter. There are various factors for this, among them, one of the important factors is that service users are not fully aware of the essence and necessities of Citizen Charter in public service. The main difficulties of the Citizen Charter are the language, the placement, and the size of the letters. An uneducated and old-aged service user finds problem to understand what it is. This is pretty much obvious because service users do not have much insight on Citizen Charter.

All duty holders as well as service users have not properly grasped the philosophy behind the Citizen Charter. The question arises as to why the Government of Nepal is facing challenges for the effective implementation of the Citizen Charter in public sector organizations. The answer may likely be behavior change of duty holders. The behavior change of duty holders is decisive, which has a continuous impact on the effectiveness of the Citizen Charter. Almost all duty holders are well known about the Citizen Charter. They are well aware of what and how they are required to provide their services as set out in the Citizen Charter. However, duty holders do not ask service

users to comply with the Citizen Charter prior to receiving the service. It indicates that the duty holders have no full sense of ownership in the Charter of Citizens. In fact, the duty holders are a lot lukewarm in their temperament besides the bright side. The behavior of duty holders plays a role in helping service users to meet their needs. A few of the duty holders ask the service users to comply with the Citizen Charter, and provide public service accordingly. From all of these, it can be pointed out that the implementation of the Citizen Charter in public sector organizations in Nepal has minimal impact on public service delivery. It has failed to empower and support the service users to obtain better, transparent, accountable, and citizen-friendly public service as well. In this respect, the study stated that the Citizen Charter in Nepali public sector organizations has not yet been quite successful. Service users are facing challenges, hassle, harassment, annoyance, and dissatisfaction in accessing public service. As Beniwal (2005) said, in Nepal also, the Citizen Charter is nothing, but a simple document that is hanged/ painted on the wall and getting dust. Despite these gloomy picture, Citizen Charter also has some positive impact on public service. It has opened up opportunities to get informed public service that service users are entitled to. As a result, some service users are demanding services in accordance with the Citizen Charter.

Conclusion

Even if the Citizen Charter enforced by the Government of Nepal since 1998, its user rate is very low. Service users have a lack of full knowledge and information about its value. In particular, service users rely on manual communication from duty holders, intermediates, and previous service users than Citizen Charter. Irrespective of these, the Citizen Charter has raised awareness about service entitlements and standards. The use of the Citizen Charter relies on plentitude aspects, therefore, considering

only one aspect is not enough. Citizens should be constantly informed of its essence via various means, such as local FM, newspapers, TV, social media, and so on. Similarly, the role of duty holders cannot be ignored, so that, they should be regularly trained, oriented, and sensitized to make the Citizen Charter workable. Also, service users should be notified and encouraged to use the Citizen Charter via the help desk. The chances of using the written/printed Citizen Charter is very low; thus, the audio-video Citizen Charter can be enforced in the local language, and should be updated, reviewed, monitored, and evaluated regularly. In this way, the usage rate of the Citizen Charter can be increased.

There are extensive areas available for future research as sequel studies. It may be a compliment for understanding more about the Citizen Charter. This study offers several insights that can be used as a guideline for future study. Some of the potential areas, which could not be covered by the present study, but could be more useful for future researchers, are suggested as follows:

- This study is delimited to 200 respondents (service users) and doesn't cover duty holders' perspectives. It would be interesting if the perspectives of both duty holders and service users are integrated into a single study.
- This study is also delimited to central level public sector organizations. Therefore, these types of research could be conducted in local-level public sector organizations for comparative study.
- This study is based on a quantitative approach, and descriptive in nature, which is unable to explore hidden issues of Citizen Charter. Thus, this kind of study can also be done by merging quantitative and qualitative approaches.

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