



Performance in Nepali Bureaucracy: What does Matter?

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Abstract

Performance of the Bureaucratic system itself is a fundamental issue for the quality governance and delivery mechanism of the government in any political and administrative system. Whole bureaucratic system is known as the permanent government of a nation. Bureaucratic organizations, in general, want to ensure a higher level of performance. However, in the working style, bureaucrats' performance, feelings and dealings are heavily criticized in many contexts and respects. Nepal is not exceptional in these blurs. In this background, we examine the determinants of performance in the Nepali Bureaucracy using the primary data from 213 bureaucrats working in the federal Ministry of Education of Nepal. For the econometric analysis, we employ widely accepted framework as proposed by Yamane and logistic regression analysis. The results suggest that the performance widely depends on sex, age, education level of bureaucrats, and on the monitoring and motivating mechanism of the bureaucratic system. The analysis shows that the executing defined duties, meeting timeline, efficiency and effectiveness to solve the assigned responsibility seem to be good. This study did not produce significant effects of demographic features on the overall performance of Nepali bureaucrats.

Keywords

Performance; Bureaucrats; Demographics

Introduction

Improvement in the overall performance of bureaucracy is a central concern for every government of the world and Nepal is not exceptional. Success and failure of any government largely depends on the delivery mechanism lead by the bureaucracy. Nepali bureaucracy is recruiting every year, highly competent manpower though merit based for ensuring higher level performance in bureaucratic organizations. However, bureaucracy is continuously blamed for being inefficient, ineffectiveness, buck-passing, delaying, having self-seeking behaviors, corruption, and failure in delivering quality public services to people in an efficient and effective way [1].

Paudel and Shrestha suggest the labour force has not meaningfully contributed in the Nepalese economy [2]. Similar feeling is found in the context of the bureaucratic system assuming that Nepali bureaucracy has increasingly become dysfunctional, fragmented, poorly organized, and incapable of performing at a level acceptable to the public [3]. For this evidence, it can be said that the

performance of Nepali bureaucracy is not performing as expected. It looks like all the efforts taken by the Government of Nepal are becoming wastage. The Governments of Nepal is under pressure to improve bureaucratic performance. In this regard, we examine the determinants of performance of bureaucrats working in the central level organizations of the Ministry of Education so that focus in the policy inference can be given correctly. To achieve this, we focus on the following research questions: i) what is the level of performance of bureaucrats and are the major determinants of the performance of the Nepali bureaucracy? ii) to what extent do performances differ based on demographics of bureaucrats?

Issue of performance

Doubtlessly, the issue of performance has gained popularity in the world [4]. Kearns [5] defines performance in terms of results/outcomes. The author argues that performance is the record of outcomes achieved in carrying out a specified job aspect during a certain period. Similarly, in the view of Brewer and Selden [6], performance is defined as whether resources have been used in an intended way in order to achieve efficiency, effectiveness, and fairness. However, O'Toole Jr. and Meier [7] see performance as the achievements of public programs and organizations in terms of the outputs and outcomes that they produce. Iqbal et al. [8] suggest that performance includes executing defined duties, meeting deadlines, employee competency, effectiveness, and efficiency in doing work.

It can be said that work output, timeline, efficiency, and effectiveness are the central terms used in assessing and measuring performance. Executing defined duties within a given timeline is directly and indirectly associated with efficiency and effectiveness. Efficiency usually means input and output relations. Effectiveness refers to a level of service goal achievement [9]. In other words, efficiency is doing things rightly and effectively to accomplish the desired goals [10]. Efficiency is concerned with minimizing costs and deals with the allocation of resources across alternative uses, while effectiveness assesses the ability of organizations or individuals to attain pre-determined goals and objectives [11]. Ozcan (2008) argues that effectiveness can be affected by efficiency and vice versa. For instance, an individual may be efficient in utilizing the inputs, but not effective; he or she can also be effective, but not efficient. Considering these ideas, it can be said that efficiency and effectiveness are not separate but mutually exclusive components, which are influenced when executing defined duties in a given timeline. Considering the literature reviewed, for us, bureaucrats' performance relates to executing defined duties, meeting deadlines and performing effective and efficient work, as suggested by Iqbal et al. [8].

Methodology

We adopt a quantitative approach to meet the purpose and research question. We assume reality about performance in Nepali bureaucracy is single and objective as argued by Castellan [12]. To discover this reality, we adopted a deductive tactic and survey was used as a strategy of inquiry. In this study, we adopted a descriptive and explanatory research design. A descriptive design was used to disclose the level of performance and explanatory design was

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used to examine to what extent do the performance of bureaucrats differ by their demographic's attributes.

Nepali bureaucrats are working in the different organizations and sectors. However, in this study, we delimited the bureaucrats working in central level organizations of the Ministry of Education. As per record (dated 2017/08/31) of Ministry of Education, total 459 bureaucrats (except rank-less employees and vacant post) were working different central level organizations of Ministry of Education. We selected 213 bureaucrats by assuming 95% confidence level and maximum 5% interval/margin of errors using the most popular and widely accepted formula of Yamane [13]. The calculation procedure is as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N * e^2}$$

Where, n=sample size; N=total number of populations; e = standard error (sometimes also called interval/margin of errors or level of significance/precision)

$$n = \frac{459}{1 + 459 * (0.05)^2}; n = \frac{459}{1 + 459 * 0.0025}; n = \frac{459}{1 + 1.1475}; n = 213$$

We designed self-administered structured questionnaire (5 points Likert scale) in English language that covers information of performance relates to executing defined duties, meeting deadlines and performing effective and efficient work, as suggested by Iqbal et al. [8]. Then, we translated into Nepali language and a reverse translation was done to ensure consistency of language and conducted a pre-test to check the reliability of the questionnaire. Finally, we collected the data using the pre-tested questionnaire during the office hours. We simultaneously involved in data cleaning process. Those data are used in the statistical tests and descriptive and inferential statistics were used. We calculated frequency, percentages, crosstab and mean in descriptive statistics and rank-correlation, chi-square, and logistic regression in inferential statistics.

We calculated the descriptive statistics disclose the level of performance and inferential statistics used to check the association and independence between variables. To estimate the probability of the event occurring and variation in the dependent variable (performance) with or without statistically significant, we used binary logistic regression. We categorized dependent variable (performance) in two different forms; being a performer (coded as '1') and not being

a performer (coded as '0'). We considered demographics attributes (gender, age, education, service year, and position) of bureaucrats as independent variables. The Logistic Regression Equation: $\ln [P/(1-P)] = \alpha + \beta X + \epsilon$. Where, P is the probability that an event Y occurs; (1-P) is the probability that an event does not occur; α =the constant of the equation; β =the coefficient of the predictor variables; $P/(1-P)$ is the "Odds Ratio"; $\ln [p/(1-p)]$ is the log odds ratio, or "logit". In this study, P is the probability of being performer and βX is the demographics—gender, age, education, service year and position of bureaucrats. We can write the model in terms of odds as: $P/(1-P) = \exp(\alpha + \beta X)$. Probability of the outcome (e.g. being performer) occurring is $P = \exp(\alpha + \beta X) / (1 + \exp(\alpha + \beta X))$. Conversely, the probability of the outcome not occurring (e.g. not being performer) is $1-P = 1 / (1 + \exp(\alpha + \beta X))$. The slope represents the ratio of the probability of being a performer to the probability of not being performer compared against each reference category of each background characteristic of bureaucrats.

Results

Nepali bureaucracy is demographically diverse. Different age, gender, work experience and position bureaucrats are working together to meet their goal and delivery quality of public service to people. To examine the level of performance of bureaucrats by their demographic's attributes, we calculated mean by adopted four indicators—executing defined duties, meeting deadlines and performing effective and efficient work, as suggested by Iqbal, et al. [8], which are as follows:

Performance and gender

Performance and gender at workplace have gained prime attention in academia. The mean value of performance by gender is presented in Figure 1. The mean value of performance is 4.6, which indicates that there is a higher level of performance of bureaucrats. By gender, male bureaucrats have a slightly higher level of performance than female. If data is segregated by performance indicators, the value of execution of defined duties is slightly lower than other indicators. By gender, it is interesting to note that female bureaucrats have a slightly higher value of timeline and execution of duties than males. However, male bureaucrats have a slightly higher value of effectiveness and efficiency than female bureaucrats. This indicates that performance and its indicators differ by gender of bureaucrats.

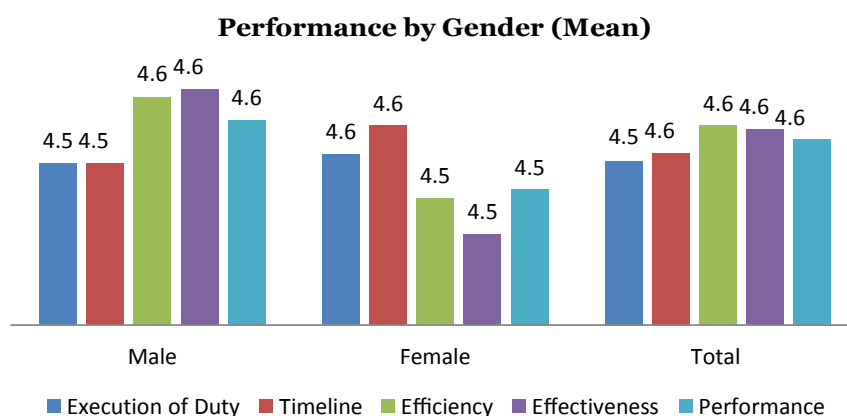


Figure 1: Level of Performance by Gender.

Performance and age

Employees of different age groups differ in skills, attitudes and abilities and that these differing characteristics have different effects on productivity [14]. In this regard, we assumed that performance and its indicators also differ by age of bureaucrats. To confirm this, we calculated a crosstab, which is presented in Figure 2. Data shows that age group 21-30 and 31-40 has a slightly lower level of performance than age group 41-50 and 51-58. If data are segregated by performance indicators, the mean value of executing defined duties is higher in the age group 41-50 and 51-58 and lower in 21-30. However, the mean value of the timeline is higher in the age group 21-30 than others. This scenario is completely different in the case of efficiency and effectiveness. Age group 41-50 and 51-58 has a higher level of effectiveness while age group 21-30 has a value of efficiency than others. It is remarkable to note that age group 31-40 has the same level of executing of defined duties, meeting timeline, efficiency, effectiveness and performance. This evidence clearly indicates that performance and its indicators differ by age of bureaucrats.

Performance and education

Performance exhibited by the employees varies according to their educational qualifications [15]. To confirm this, we calculated a crosstab, which is presented in Figure 3. It is clear from the table that a higher level of performance is observed for intermediate and MPhil+ than Bachelor and Master's Degrees. By performance indicators, the value of execution duties is higher for MPhil+ and

lowers for a bachelor. It is remarkable to note that all indicators of performance-executing defined duties, timeline, effectiveness and efficiency appears good for MPhil +and intermediate than others. Hence, it can be said that performance and its indicators differed by education level of bureaucrats.

Performance and position

The role of position in performance cannot be ignored. In this regard, we calculated a crosstab, which is presented in Figure 4. It is clear from the figure that a higher mean value of performance is observed for Non-gazetted second and is found to gradually decrease by increasing position. It is exciting to note that higher level of performance is observed for Non-officer than an officer. By indicators, the Non-gazetted second appears good in all indicators of performance than other. It is amazing to note that class three bureaucrats have a same level of executing of defined duties, meeting timeline, efficiency, effectiveness and performance. First class bureaucrats have higher effectiveness (except Non-gazetted second) and lowest in efficiency. Second class bureaucrats have the more or less same level in all indicators of performance. From this, it can be said that performance and its indicators slightly differ by the position of bureaucrats.

Accountability and service year

Work experience is a better predictor of performance than age [16]. Hence, the performance of the employees is dependent on their work experience [15]. To verify this argument, we calculated crosstab,

Performance by Age Group (Mean)

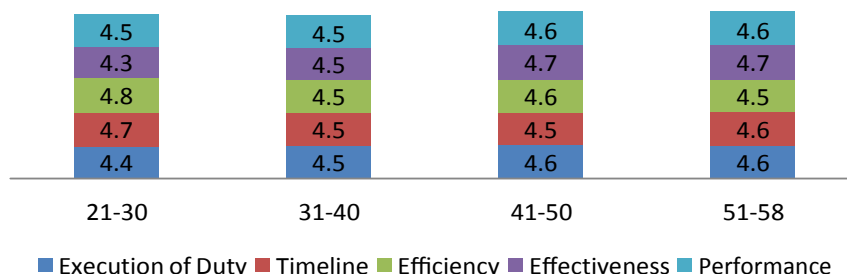


Figure 2: Level of Performance by Age Group.

Performance by Education (Mean)

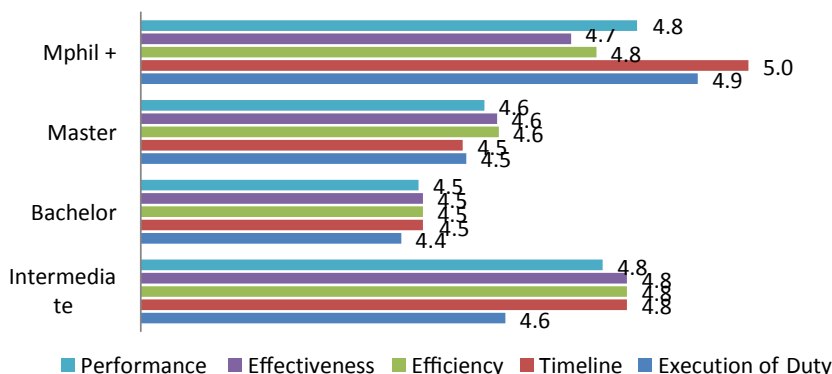


Figure 3: Level of Performance by Education.

which is presented in Figure 5. It is clearly seen that service years between 11-15 and 6-10 have a slightly lower level of performance than 5 years and more than 20 years. By performance indicators, the mean value of execution of duty is higher for service year 16-20 and lowest for 11-15 year. However, this scenario is different for timeline, efficiency and effectiveness. Higher mean value of the timeline and efficiency is observed for less than 5 years whereas higher mean value of effectiveness is observed for 20+ service year than others. It is notable to note that all indicators of performance are lower for service year 11-15 than others. From this all evidence, it can be said that performance and its typologies differed by service year of bureaucrats.

Association and independence analysis

It is not clear at this stage whether performance and demographics of educational bureaucrats are significantly associated or independent to each other. To determine this, we used correlations (Spearman's rho) and Chi-Square test. The Spearman's Correlation Coefficient value of performance and demographics of bureaucrats ranged from

-0.003 to 0.237. This value discloses that there is very weak positive (except service year, $r=0.003$) association between performance and demographics of bureaucrats. We see that correlation is evident as not significant because the value of significance reported was greater than 0.05 (at the 95% level of confidence) in both tests, which is also confirmed by significance value of Chi-Square, except for the position of bureaucrats. This suggests that no significant difference exists between accountability and demographics of educational bureaucrats, except for position. These statistics helped us to conclude that performance and demographic variables of educational bureaucrats are independent except in the case of position (Table 1).

Regression analysis

Table 2 provides the regression coefficient beta (β), the Wald statistic (to test the statistical significance) and the all-important Odds Ratio [Exp (β)] for each variable category. From this evidence, it is remarkable to note that demographics do not significantly contribute to performance because significant values of all demographic

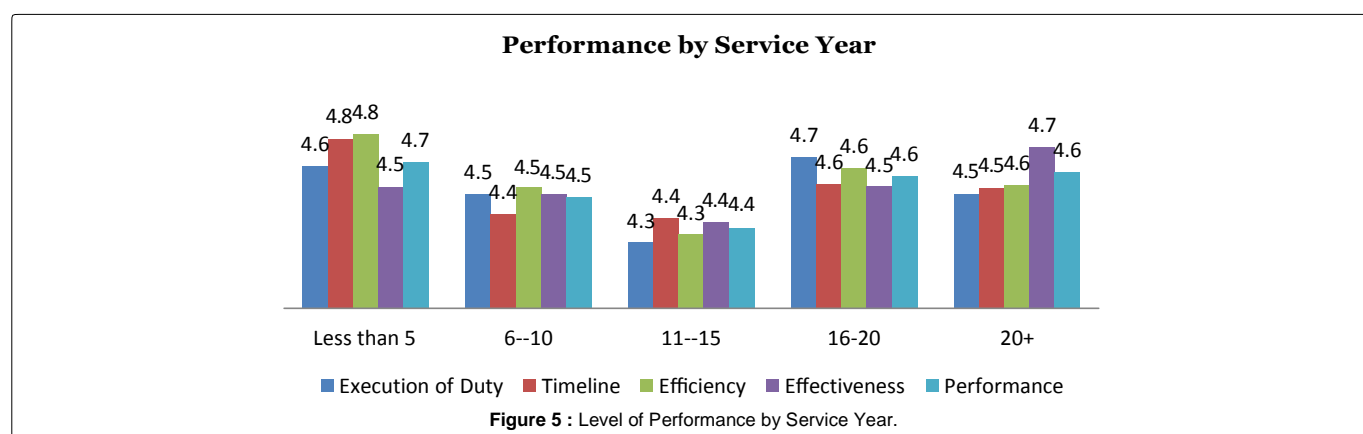
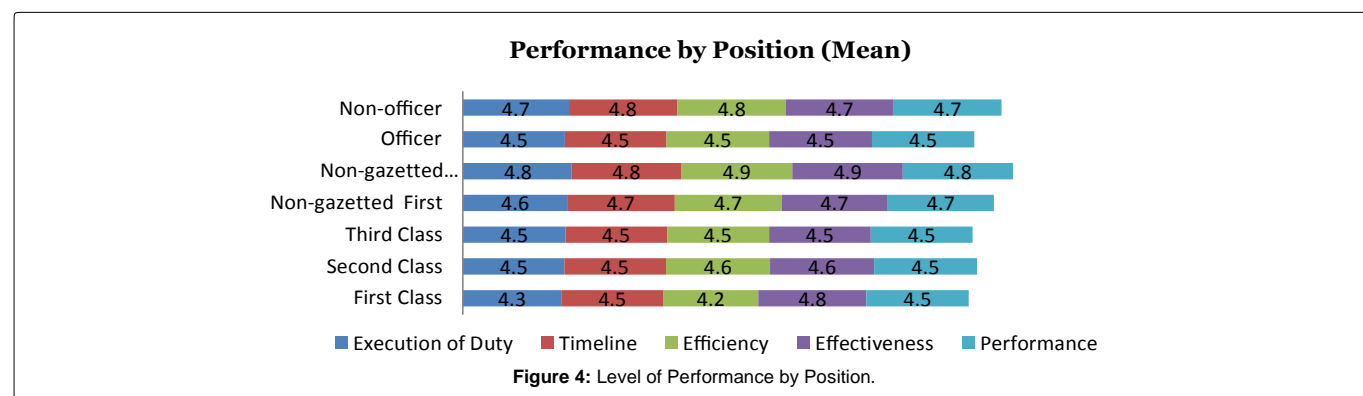


Table 1: Correlation and Chi-Square for performance and Demographics.

Demographics	Performance				
	Correlations (Spearman's rho)		Chi-Square		
	Correlation coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Gender	0.021	0.757	19.152	10	0.038
Age	0.096	0.163	43.878	30	0.049
Education	0.109	0.113	28.983	30	0.519
Position	0.237*	0.000	80.734	40	0.000
Service year	-0.003	0.970	59.047	40	0.027

Table 2: Coefficients of Logistic Regression for Accountability by Demographics.

Demographics	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Gender						
Male (Reference)						
Female	-.950	.519	3.358	1	.067	.387
Age group						
21-30 (Reference)						
31-40	1.138	.807	1.990	1	.158	3.121
41-50	2.374	.928	6.542	1	.011	10.736
51-58	1.570	1.029	2.330	1	.127	4.808
Education						
Intermediate (Reference)			10.316	3	.016	
Bachelor	-.320	1.545	.043	1	.836	.726
Master	1.392	1.517	.843	1	.359	4.025
MPhil+	2.416	1.730	.000	1	.998	7.956
Position						
First Class (Reference)			5.620	4	.229	
Second Class	1.473	1.079	1.865	1	.172	4.363
Third Class	1.095	1.025	1.141	1	.285	2.988
Non Gazetted First	2.337	1.157	4.082	1	.043	10.349
Non Gazetted Second	2.017	4.291	.000	1	.998	6.127
Service year						
Less than 5 (Reference)						
6-10			3.591	4	.464	
11-15	-.359	.855	.177	1	.674	.698
16-20	-1.010	.824	1.503	1	.220	.364
21+	.155	.879	.031	1	.860	1.167

variables are more than 0.05. Based on these results, we can conclude that demographics have less or no effect on accountability.

Discussion and Reflections

Performance of bureaucrats is perceived as a central agenda in the bureaucratic structure. It is perceived in terms of results or outcomes. Performance is the record of outcomes achieved in carrying out a specified job aspect during a specified period [5]. Performance includes executing defined duties, meeting deadlines, employee competency, effectiveness, and efficiency in doing work [8]. From this, it can be said that work output, timeline efficiency, and effectiveness are the central terms used in assessing the performance. The result of the study shows that bureaucrats working in the central level organizations of the Ministry of Education have a higher level of performance. As per them, most of the time, they are executing their defined duties within the right time. They are fully devoted to achieving organizational goals and standards. This might be an effect of the performance management system in Nepali bureaucracy. Another reason behind this is that they are working in the central level organization where general people are not visiting to receive public service. In central level organizations, there is a chain of command where subordinates usually report to a superior about their actions and performance. A bureaucrat is a part of a hierarchy where the lower offices and officials performance under the control of higher offices and officials [17].

Nepali bureaucracy is demographically diverse. Different age, gender, work experience and position bureaucrats are working together to meet goal and delivery quality of public service to people. Generally, people believe that the level of performance differs by demographic background, which is also confirmed by the descriptive statistics in this study. By gender, male and female both have the

same levels of performance even though female workers are relatively more productive, as per Kotur and Anbazhagan [15]. This might be because male and female educational bureaucrats are given equal opportunities to work in their organizations. Age diversity has become an inevitable fact of life in many organizations [18]. In the case of age of the employee, Kotur and Anbazhagan [15] argue that employees in the medium range of age perform better compared to those on the extremes. However, this study shows the opposite result. Age groups 51-58 and 21-30 had a slightly higher level of performance than age groups 30-40 and 40-50.

It is also said that performance exhibited by the employees varies according to their educational qualifications [15], something that was also observed in this study. The more education the individual received, the more productive the worker will be (Elsaid, 2012). This study supports as well as rejects the argument of Elsaid (2012) because a higher level of performance was observed for +2 and MPhil+ than Bachelor and master degrees. Generally, performance also varies by position. It is general feeling is that higher level position bureaucrat having a higher level of performance than lower position. However, this study shows a contradictory result. A higher mean value of performance is observed for Non-gazetted second and is found to gradually decrease by increasing position. Performance of the employees is dependent on their work experience as well [15]. Further, the scholars argue that the performance of the employees gradually increases with their experience. However, it starts getting low after 20 years of working experience.

On the contrary, this study showed a different result. Service years between 11-15 and 16-20 had a slightly lower level of performance than 5 years and more than 20 years. One of the reasons is that early carrier bureaucrats are driven by carrier growth, a higher level of

performance higher the changes to get promotion whereas late carrier bureaucrats have maturity skills, attitudes and ability to perform their task better. Experienced workers generally are viewed as dependable, loyal, and dedicated [19]. In the same line Avolio et al. [16] argued that experienced workers can make faster work-related decisions, resolve problems quickly, which lead to more satisfied customers. That might be a reason bureaucrat who has more than 20 years' work experience seems more performer. Despite descriptive statistics showed a performance of bureaucrats is differ by their demographics, inferential statistics did not produce significant effects, except for position (correlation and chi-square produced significance result for position while logistic regression did not produce significance result even for a position). This indicates that demographics of bureaucrats do not significantly contribute to their performance. From this, we can say that the demographics of bureaucrats have less or no effect on performance.

Conclusion

There is not any confusion that bureaucrats are the part of the delivery mechanism of the governments. In the later year in Nepali bureaucracy, performance has become a prime agenda among the policy makers in the country. The Government of Nepal has given more attention, time and effort, and invested in ensuring a higher level of performance in Nepali bureaucracy in the recent years. Bureaucrats' working in central level organizations of the Ministry of Education seems well performer because, in central level organizations, functions and performance is guided by a chain of command where subordinates usually report to a superior about their actions and performance. The major determinants of the performance seem sex, education, age, and monitoring mechanism. Performance of subordinate is controlled by seniors with stronger monitoring mechanism compared to other levels of government and has a performance management system in Nepali bureaucratic structure.

K Performance of bureaucrats differs by their demographics which are supported by descriptive statistics, but inferential statistics did not produce significance result, except position (logistic regression did not produce significance). Hence, demographics of bureaucrats have less or no effect on the performance.

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