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# The Crisis of Political Leadership in Nepal: Causes and Contemporary Implications

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## Abstract

This study explores leadership aspects within the framework of Nepal's political landscape, development initiatives, and crisis management. A systematic review of the literature elucidates both the theoretical and empirical dimensions of the leadership styles. To comprehend empirical reality, in-depth interviews were conducted with elected leaders of the two local governments and three national leaders as key informants. A survey of 434 household respondents from two local governments was conducted to assess people's perceptions of the leadership working styles. Leadership typically arises following the successful development or crisis management of a region or nation. True leaders are those capable of effectively preventing issues and guiding the country towards economic growth and stability. The successful development initiatives might stem from an effective leadership approach that cultivates a positive institutional environment. Nevertheless, Nepal continues to face challenges in socio-economic development. The inadequate management of natural disasters, including earthquakes, floods, and pandemics in Nepal, prompts inquiries regarding the effectiveness of the leadership's role. The frequent social movements and political instability serve as indicators associated with leadership styles. Furthermore, Nepal's track record concerning developmental expenditures is unsatisfactory. These observations indicate that Nepal is facing a crisis in leadership.

## Introduction

A country's economic prosperity and crisis management are associated with the effective role of leadership. However, there is no uniformity in the definition of leadership. Burns (1978) mentioned that leadership has been the most observed but least understood in the world. Leadership usually involves dynamic interactions between multiple individuals to achieve their goals. Leadership can be understood by various theories, such as traits, behavior, charismatic, transactional, and transformational. Transformational leadership styles consider leaders as change agents in society, also emphasizing the charismatic style. Transformational leadership has become more pronounced in the political leadership context, which brings colleagues together to achieve its goals. Lux(2024) emphasizes that 'authenticity' is central to leadership effectiveness; remaining true to oneself, along with one's experiences and identities, instead of conforming to fixed formulas, is essential for effective leadership. In this context, the aspect of leadership in Nepal has faced many inquiries and brings into question the effectiveness of leadership.


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In terms of Nepal's development, multidimensional poverty remains high at 17.5 % (UNDP, 2023). Similarly, the E-Governmental Development Index (EGDI) of Nepal in 2022 was 0.51, ranking 125 out of 193 in the world (UN, 2022). Likewise, Nepal's GDP per capita is still 1486 US Dollars (WB, 2025), which represents a lower rank. Public service delivery is neither effective nor efficient. The reconstruction of earthquake damage in 2015 has not yet been completed. Moreover, Nepal has faced various social and political movements since the 1950s, playing a significant role in the evolution of different political systems from a one-party autocratic monarch (1960-1990) to a multiparty democracy with a symbolic monarch (1990-2008) to the federal republic (2009 till now). After the 1990 change, various social and political movements, such as the Maoist People's War, the Second People's Movement (2006), the Madhesh Movement (2007), minority movements (2006-2017), and the Zen-Z movement (2025), have erupted.

These occurrences illustrate that the current leadership in Nepal has failed to adequately tackle the challenges. It also assists in elucidating the styles of leadership concerning political and developmental aspects. The topic of leadership remains a pressing issue in Nepal concerning socio-economic development. This research explores the gap by concentrating on leadership and its various aspects in institutional success and socio-economic development. This study explores the crisis of political leadership, linking it to economic development, polity, crisis management, the emergence of social movements, and trust in leadership, and subsequently discusses the implications.

## Literature Review

The concept of leadership in Nepal can be analyzed through elite theory, great-man theory, patrimonialism, charismatic, transformational, and democratic leadership theory. Historically, the leadership in Nepal was influenced by a traditional and elite-centric perspective in terms of royal, aristocratic, and subsequently party elites. With the reinstatement of democracy and the shift towards federalism, democratic leadership and transformational theory have been formally integrated through constitutional mandates, electoral processes, inclusiveness and decentralization efforts. Nevertheless, in practice, leadership has persisted in demonstrating a centralized tendency, resulting in a problem in the institutionalization of democracy.

Nepal has a long history of leadership and governance (Khanal, 2004). Historically, Nepalese society has largely been influenced by Vedic-Hindu and Buddhist values. Almost all civilizations outside the West have been pervaded and submerged by religion (Braudel, 1987, p.23). Hindu philosophy emphasizes 'high-quality leadership', committing to' dharma, which relates to governing. Similarly, the Buddhist theory of leadership advocates authentic, value-based, and servant leadership (Dhiman & Kriger, 2018). It is an organizational leadership typology in which individuals and organizations can effectively adjust to change at the individual, group, and organizational levels. Assuming that power is a dominant reality, Kautilya advocates for strong leadership (Kissinger, 2014, p.195). And, more generally, the upper castes and noble families are to be privileged in both political and economic spheres. Hachhethu (2007) mentions that Nepal long ruled under the traditional authority system based on religion, i.e., the caste system, which is an influential source of leadership. After the unification of Nepal in 1768, the Shah and Rana families became influential in Nepal. Muluki Ain (the Constitution), based on the caste system implemented in 1854 by Prime Minister Jung Bahadur Rana, contributed to shaping a form of leadership in favor of the Rana families. Leaders had been linked to a more elevated caste, as well as a superior social and political standing.


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Regmi (1995) analyzed the Nepalese "political elite" and found that the prominent families (elites) from whom the king recruited state officials had influential powers. Likewise, leadership typology has long been linked with the utopian idea and the great-man leadership typology. After 1950, Nepal introduced a democratic system, along with the monarch, and political and economic reforms began. Leadership effectiveness in modern history has been analyzed since 1950. The impact of colonial history in terms of fighting for freedom for the country against the colony (especially in the Indian context) cannot be forgotten. Numerous leaders in Nepal played a significant role in the Indian independence movement, opposing British rule, alongside Indian leaders. Between 1950 and 1960, the country faced a political transitional period.

However, in 1960, a king took power, a one-party political system was introduced by political parties, named the Panchayat system, and modernization was introduced on a planned basis. As Rana and Mohasin (1967) note, the emergence of leadership in Panchayat (1960-1990) has been influenced by caste (the so-called higher caste) and age (elder), economic power, and land. Later, a succession of ministerial and administrative elites formed the political elite. However, modernization could not take a huge pace because of the dominant cultural values (Bista, 1991). The output of developmental activities was less satisfactory, and people benefited less from development. Malla (2015) also mentions the elite or established version of social, cultural, and political values because they were pious deeds and panegyrics of the ruling class. According to Baral (2012), Brahmans, Kshatriyas, and Newars families (which are higher castes in the Hindu caste system) have traditionally formed a core elite contingent around the central power in Kathmandu through the extended family or kinship system. Following the restoration of democracy in 1990, inclusiveness in leadership(gender and Dalit) was given some priority. After the second movement in 2006, an inclusiveness policy was ensured by the Constitution, and many marginalized, indigenous people, and gender came into the members of parliament. Zeneration Z movement of 2025 succeeded in changing the government by expressing dissatisfaction with the traditional leadership style, and exerted pressure to eliminate corruption. However, leadership is a hot issue for development and crisis management aspects in Nepal.

There is a long history of leadership practices in Nepal, and charismatic typology has long been dominant. Nevertheless, leadership development has also been predominantly influenced by caste, noble lineage, and elite status (Chaudhary et al., 2023). Protecting the community and upholding social order were the leaders' main responsibilities in the past. Along with modernization, leadership styles have become more important for the region or country's development. Developmental data provides insights into the significance of leadership and its effective contribution to organizational success in fostering economic development and enhancing people's well-being. However, there have been inquiries regarding the initiation of leadership for development initiatives in Nepal. Baral (2012) notes that political party leaders, whether in power or in opposition, did not pay attention to institutions or promote transparency. Since 1990, there has been a deficiency in effective leadership and governance, as leaders became preoccupied with power struggles rather than advancing the country (Kumar, 1995 & Khanal, 2004). Likewise, Chaudhary (2019) points out leadership ineffectiveness at the local level in Nepal, as the effectiveness of leadership seems to be important in coping with local governance for local development and grassroots

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democracies. Nonetheless, leadership continues to be a critical concern in Nepal regarding the nation's socioeconomic advancement (Baral et al., 2001). Political figures in Nepal have initiated numerous social movements and reinstated democracy, although the process of its institutionalization has faced questions. The Zen Z movement in 2025 exposed the effective leadership crisis.

In essence, the political leadership crisis in Nepal can be understood as a result of interrelated factors, including institutional issues, developmental issues, crisis management approaches, and working styles, all of which collectively influence leadership performance and results. This framework explains the political leadership crisis as both a cause and its implications.

## Method

This research investigates leadership practices and styles as they pertain to institutional competency for socio-economic development and crisis management. It offers a conceptual framework for understanding leadership and includes an empirical analysis that aids in comprehending the context of Nepal. The opinions of individuals are crucial in evaluating leadership. A survey was carried out among 434 household respondents from two local governments, like Katahari rural municipality in Koshi Province and the Godavari municipality in Bagmati Province, Nepal, through a structured questionnaire in 2021. The sample frame of the survey was obtained from the Census Bureau of Statistics (CBS). As per the CBS (2011) census, there were altogether 25771 households in both local levels, and 379 as the sample size was calculated using the sample size determination formula. However, considering around 15 percent of non-response households, the sample size became 434 (in round figures and an even number). To make more representative of the population households more representative, wards were further stratified into clusters based on the scattered settlements/villages, and randomly, households were selected within wards. The systematic random sampling was adopted for the household survey within the clusters; the information on households within the clusters was identified from the wards and peers.

To assess leadership style and effectiveness, the Multiple Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-5X) is also carried out. Similarly, elected leaders of these municipalities/rural municipalities were interviewed to explore leadership challenges using a semi-structured questionnaire. In addition, three national-level leaders(Bishwa, Sarita, Khem-these are fictitious names, real names are not given) from different national political parties were interviewed through mail questionnaires to understand the current political leadership practices and working styles in relation to the country's polity and development. The quantitative data is analyzed through statistical methods (descriptive analysis), whereas qualitative data is assessed through content analysis. Both types of data were integrated using statistical patterns along with contextual explanations. This methodology improves validity, minimizes bias, and yields conclusions that are relevant to policy. This study contributes to understanding the shortcomings in leadership related to political and governance issues within the framework of economic development.

### Economic development and the Leadership's role

Nepal initiated modernization after the 1950s revolution, opening the door to the international community. The revolution was principally inspired by Marxist and socialist ideologies; however, democracy was a common goal. Many national leaders outside of the monarch-Shah-Rana families came to power after the revolution.


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However, in 1960, a king took power, banning political parties and ruling by creating a partyless panchayat political system. Some political party leaders came to the Panchayat. The Panchayat (1960-1990) regime under the Monarch attempted to modernize the country by implementing decentralization approaches. New land and educational policies were introduced. However, it could not meticulously address inequality, poverty, diversity, or development. In the Panchayat era, a small number of expenditure and revenue authorities were transferred to local bodies, but progress was low due to politicization (Sharma, 2014). The Panchayat, under centralized bureaucracy and public institutions, was less accountable to the populace (Gautam, 2004).

Bista (1991) noted that Nepal encountered obstacles in its modernization efforts; the prevailing sociocultural value system, which had traditionally held sway, was responsible for the slowing of the modernization process. The data reveal that modernization in Nepal could not make a huge pace in comparison to countries whose socio-economic conditions were in the same position in the 1950s. For instance, the per capita income of Indonesia was similar to Nepal in the 1960s, at around 50 US Dollars, while it increased by 70 times, and now it has reached 5248.00 US Dollars in 2025. In South Asia, Bhutan (4495.00 US Dollar) surprisingly increased its GDP per capita by approximately three times more than Nepal (1486.00 US Dollar) through hydropower development. Similarly, Bangladesh has a higher GDP than Nepal in South Asia. Nepal's GDP per capita in 2025 is found at 1486.00 US dollars (WB, 2025). However, these countries were dominated by rural characteristics during the 1960s.

Likewise, with 28.6% of the people living in poverty, Nepal has a higher proportion than other countries. Even Cambodia, a nation ravaged by conflict, managed to keep its poverty index below Nepal's, at 17.7%(WB, 1985-2019). Despite some progress in poverty reduction, the below-poverty-line population of Nepal was reduced to 15 % in 2019. The NLSS report(2022) reveals that 20.6% of the population is below the poverty line. Likewise, as per the ADB (2023), the proportion of the employed population below $1.90 purchasing power parity/day in 2022 is 5.1%. Similarly, Nepal's unemployment rate remained at 10.7% in 2017. Furthermore, the World Bank (2019) reports that FDI only contributes 0.6% of the country's GDP, compared to 13.5% in Cambodia. Low levels of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) indicate an unfavorable investment climate, which also reflects the leadership's approach to fostering a conducive environment for investment. Following the restoration of democracy in 1989, Nepal has embraced a liberal economic model, encouraging Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and placing significant emphasis on the private sector. The country witnessed the acute crisis of power energy for more than two decades (1997-2017) despite the richness in water resources. It impacted both social and economic development.

Likewise, there is a huge gap between the center (Kathmandu) and the periphery (outside of Kathmandu) in terms of power and economy (Seddon, 2014). Unemployment in the country was high. Foreign remittances form the backbone of a country's GDP. Remittance is a major source of GDP, as it supported 25.4% of the GDP in 2019. As reported by the WB(2024), Nepal's governance effectiveness percentile rate for the year 2022 stands at 16.04%, which is notably low. In contrast, Singapore achieved the highest level of government effectiveness, scoring 2.23. This reflects the public perceptions regarding the quality of public services, the formulation and execution of policies, the government's dedication, and ultimately, the role of leadership.

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At the same time, most governments failed to complete their full terms between 1990 and 2025, resulting in a pattern of frequent political turnovers. A total of twenty-two governments were observed over a span of 20 years, from 1990 to 2025. It is a harsh reality that the unsuccessful institutionalization of the changes made in 1990 has been disappointing and has contributed to the emergence of political complexities. Consequently, the Maoist insurgency erupted in 1996, and the country sank into a civil war between 1996 and 2006. Parliamentary and local elections were halted, and the king took power by sidelining democratic forces. Subsequently, political parties initiated a campaign opposing the king's oppressive measures; however, as the influence of political leaders waned, the populace became reluctant to protest. At the same time, political parties and Maoists came to a point against the king, and the second people's movement took place in 2006, which dismantled the monarchy and paved the way for inclusiveness, federalism and a republican nation.

The concept of an inclusive constitution through a constitutional assembly was initiated. The Maoists' agendas, such as republicanism, federalism, and secularism, became national agendas. However, major political parties abandoned federalism for incorporation into the Interim Constitution in 2007. Consequently, the Madhesh Movement erupted and pressed for federalism and inclusiveness. To address this, federalism and proportional inclusion were included in the Interim Constitution. Regrettably, the Constitution Assembly was unable to enact the Constitution due to a dispute regarding the federal structure within the designated timeframe, resulting in an extended transition period. Additionally, ethnic and regional tensions were evident. During this period, a leadership crisis emerged, which contributed to the emergence of ethnic movements. After the compromise, the Constitution was initiated in 2015 with a new political structure, and some new leaders emerged. However, the Zen-Z movement in 2025 toppled the two-thirds majority government, raising its voice against corruption and lack of responsiveness. The leadership crisis became clearly evident.

## Handling of Earthquake

The country was wreaked havoc from a powerful earthquake in 2015; more than ten thousand people died, and approximately 7 billion dollars of physical property, such as private houses, government buildings, health centers, schools, etc., were damaged by the earthquake (NRA, 2021). The National Reconstruction Authority (NRA) was established in May 2015 for reconstruction purposes. Nonetheless, the organization's capacity was inadequate to accomplish its objectives within the designated timeframe, despite receiving substantial financial contributions. This scenario underscores a significant institutional deficiency, characterized by the lack of a functional local government, insufficient coordination among sub-national governmental bodies, bureaucratic impediments, political instability, weakened governance structures, as well as pervasive issues such as accessibility challenges, workforce deficiencies, gaps in knowledge, and various socio-cultural considerations. (Sharma et al., 2018). Deficits in administration and leadership were demonstrated by the poor handling of earthquake reconstruction.

## COVID-19 pandemic and crisis

The COVID-19 crisis is remembered as a great tragedy of human life that has disrupted social mobility and economic activities, and challenged public life in Nepal, which has troubled socioeconomic activities, resulting in a health crisis and millions of jobless people (Chaudhary et al., 2021). Nonetheless, poor management of COVID-19 has led to youth unrest in the streets

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opposing the government. While the pandemic continues to escalate, the ongoing struggle among politicians for control has driven the nation into uncertainty(The Kathmandu Post, 2021). The political scene in Nepal has been deeply affected by the egos of a few influential leaders; factionalism has prevailed, often ignoring the needs of the people. In 2020, the Prime Minister dissolved Parliament to call for new elections, yet the court overturned this decision. The proportion of political parties continues to linger in political crises. The Coronavirus pandemic severely impacted public life, leading to an exacerbation of the country's economic decline. Instances of corruption and irregularities surfaced. The infighting within the ruling party and the lack of action from the opposition worsened the ongoing political crisis and hindered the effective handling of the COVID pandemic.

## Zen-Z(Zeneration Z) Movement

Following the decision of the Nepal government's banning on 26 social media platforms on 4 September 2025, Zen-Z came to the street on September 8 against the ban on 8 September. Unfortunately, more than two dozens youth was killed by security forces. Public anger intensified. By September 9, spontaneous demonstrations had erupted across the streets. The protests quickly turned violent—police stations were set ablaze, the homes of prominent leaders were vandalized, and some leaders were even attacked(AP News, 2025 September 9). Amid this turmoil, Prime Minister Oli resigned and fled. Ministers were moved to secure locations by the army. This marked the collapse of the two-thirds majority government and exposed the leadership crisis. Actually, this movement has highlighted the demand for accountability and meaningful development, which is linked to the aspect of leadership. The legal system had failed. The interim government was formed under a former Chief Justice and the first lady prime minister, Sushila Karki. This movement is known as the Zen-Z movement. The youth of Nepal saw no change in their own lives, and Zen Z believed that the elites had used corruption to lure them into living lavishly abroad (Pathak, 2025). The leadership issue in Nepal was made public by the Zeneration Z movement.

## People's Perception towards Leadership in Nepal

According to Stogdill (1974), leadership is defined by people. For a leader, there must be people, and people choose their leaders. Thus, leadership cannot be imagined without people's perceptions. Perceptions are an indicator of leadership effectiveness(Yukl, 2010). People's perception towards leadership was assessed in the Katahari rural municipality and Godavari municipality among the 434 sampled households through a structured questionnaire. They were asked whether they liked politics. In response, 80.6 percent of the respondents did not like it, and they did not have good vibes towards leaders. At the same time, the respondents were asked why they did not like politics. In response, the majority of respondents (54.1 percent) said they do not 'like' politics, followed by 'straightforwards cannot do politics'(20.5 percent) as reasons. Similarly, 4.1 percent of respondents assumed that politics is not 'decent work.' Regarding the statement "trust in leaders", 59.05 percent of respondents said they had "trust in leaders". This data indicates that there is no overwhelming support for the trust statement. This finding indicates a moderate yet delicate degree of public confidence.

An average MLQ-5X score of 33.6 out of 60 suggests a moderate degree of leadership effectiveness, indicating that transformational and transactional leadership behaviors are occasionally demonstrated, though not consistently.


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This implies scopes for leadership development and capacity-building initiatives. The literature suggests that leaders in Nepal cannot fulfill their desires and forgotten promises. However, 94.7 percent of respondents agreed that a leadership role is important in development, but their roles were not effective.

### *National Leaders' view towards polity and development:*

Five nationals, including one regional leader, were approached to complete the open-ended questionnaire, although only three leaders from different political parties, namely Bishwa of Nepali Congress, Khem of Nepal Communist Party, and Sarita of Regional Party (these names are fictitious), filled out a mail questionnaire about the leadership and polity of Nepal in April and May 2020. They all accepted that Nepal is still facing a leadership crisis and pointed out the scarcity of transformational leadership. Interestingly, they were not satisfied with the leadership practices within their own parties. As for them, ethics and moral values were major problems faced by the Nepalese leadership. While they were asked about the country's polity, two leaders did not respond, and only one was satisfied with the present polity. It can be interpreted that the country's governance system was not going well. Regarding a crisis of leadership, the two leaders agreed in part that Nepal continues to experience a crisis of effective leadership. The two leaders emphasized that democratic leadership techniques were lacking. In this sense, elitism, nepotism, and favoritism might have made leadership practices less equitable. It was discovered that a primary issue with Nepalese leadership was the traditional feudal mindset, which involved personal/family privileges and a lack of vision. In essence, not all leaders were found to be "fully optimistic" about the current "status quo" leadership practice for the growth of the nation.

According to Khem, a leader of the Nepal Communist Party:

"Leadership in Nepal has been criticized as they have indulged in power politics; corruption, nepotism, and favoritism have largely existed. In fact, leaders in Nepal are less worried about the future of the younger generations." (Based on mail conversation on April 8, 2020)

## Discussion and Conclusion

Any nation's or region's progress has been linked to the leadership's role and working styles. Strong political leadership is essential for economic development (Arndt, 1984). For instance, Lee Kuan Yew has been referred to as Singapore's modern architect, and people have taken him as the modern founder of Singapore in terms of social and economic development. The leaders of Nepal dreamed of making Singapore or Switzerland a role model of development, but the Nepali people could not feel such changes.

Instead, Nepal faced various social and political movements and protests in the wake of change and transformation following the 1950 revolution, and between 1990 and 2025. Nepal has witnessed a history of constant struggles for change as it is not effectively being institutionalized; it seems to be putting democracy in further crisis and adding to the complexities (Chaudhary, 2020). There were 28 governments established between 1990 and 2025, with an average tenure of 1.4 years. Government establishment and dissolution followed a similar pattern. There is a common perception that leaders strive desperately for positions and power, instead of people. This resulted in political instability that led to inconsistent policies, frequent changes in administration, and poor achievement of development goals. It signifies an absence of effective leadership, and individuals were observing new leadership.

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For instance, some changes were seen in the 2022 local government election, where a young and independent (not from party cadre) candidate won in local governments like the Mayor of the Kathmandu metropolitan city (Engineer Balen Shah, 34 years). His attraction is still central to Nepali political leadership. He was a key figure in the Zen-Z movement since his call to action helped to overthrow the long-standing political establishment. Balen attracted increased attention following the Zen Z protest and rose to prominence as an unofficial leader among the youth who led the demonstrations in Zen-Z in September (Reuters, 2025 December 29). Similarly, an independent Harka Sampang won the position of Mayor of Dharan municipality. Subsequently, the Rashtriya Swatantra Party (RSP, new party) won more than one dozen seats in the 2022 federal parliamentary election, and Rabi Lamichhane–TV Angor–won a landslide victory in the Chitwan Constituency. The RSP secured the third-largest party in Nepal. Post-Balen Nepali politics may be a part of the discussion in the wake of leadership, as leaders from the new generation and youth have started to emerge in Nepali politics. However, their effectiveness has yet to be fully evaluated. This event examines the emergence of new leadership styles.

The leadership effectiveness has been scrutinized across various sectors, such as resource mobilization and effective governance in contemporary times. For instance, the government's expenditure on development activities is dismal, as only 25% of the total budget is expended. The construction projects in Nepal have been delayed; the two most frequent outcomes of construction project delays were time and cost overruns(Sha et al., 2017). Likewise, corruption, nepotism, favoritism, and so on have been more pronounced regarding leadership. About 84% of the population in Nepal views government corruption as a major issue Transparency International, 2020). The poor performance of public and governmental institutions and corruption scandals raise questions about leadership working styles and the governance system. Coordination, communication, accountability, and enhanced resilience are important factors in tackling crisis management, all of which are largely associated with leadership and their working styles. While moral values are fundamental concepts in leadership, the prevalence of nepotism and favoritism in leadership development often poses significant obstacles to both leadership effectiveness and developmental initiatives. The widespread corruption within political institutions, the overt showing of privileged families, referred to as "nepo kids" massive levels of youth unemployment, and governmental limitations on online freedoms have incited public indignation durinf Zen-Z movement (Timalsina & Shrestha, 2025). In conclusion, the Zeneration Z movement in Nepal emerged due to inadequate leadership, the political parties' disregard for the populace, and corruption.

Pandey (2018) pointed out the fault of political parties' leadership for decades. He argued that Nepal's democracy has its own shape; the only problem is that leaders never seem to retire or improve. Most of the national leaders have been in office since 1990, and no new faces are seen at the top levels. The leadership crisis emerged when the Constitution failed to deliver it, which created uncertainty and chaos after 2012. Similarly, the country was struck by an earthquake in 2015, but the reconstruction progress faced lingering delays. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed poor governance and leadership. During COVID-19, the Prime Minister twice dismissed the parliament, but the Supreme Court reversed this decision. At the same time, the opposition took to the streets against the prime minister's decision. There was a split in Nepal's main party.

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Leadership development has chiefly been linked with political parties in Nepal. The current top leadership of major political parties has remained in the polity since the emergence of the 1990s. At the same time, most of Nepal's major political parties have been split because of the mismanagement of leadership and power transfers. Bharadwaj (2020) argued that the oldest Nepali Congress(NC) was in a critical period of its history. If it wants to regain its lost political grace, it must reinvent itself as a vibrant political organization equipped with universal democratic principles. The situation of the present largest party, the Nepal Communist Party (NCP), is also not different from that of the NC. In the NCP, senior party leadership has been criticized for the failure of the government's handling (Pokhrel, 2019) and groupism.

Leadership formation is still influenced by elitism, favoritism, and the old caste system (where the high caste-male dominated). In Nepali society, more than half of the population comprises minorities and marginalized people who have long been excluded; hence, leadership matters may be incomplete in the absence of inclusive democracy. At the same time, a famous proverb in the Nepali language, like "Jasko Shakti, Usko Bhakti" (which means those who have power should be obeyed), still dominates Nepali politics. Most national and regional leaders are from elite families of the high caste. The 'ego' and 'vanity' have been the major features of the Nepali political leader. Hachhethu (2004) finds that leaders possess personal integrity, economic discipline, and transparency but lack charisma and broader participation in development. He further emphasized effective and inclusive leadership to strengthen democracy. Bishwo commented on the ineffectiveness of leadership, stating,

"The majority of leaders have prioritized personal, familial, or group interests over the welfare of the people. Their focus on generating income has made corruption apparent. The traditional and feudal mindset continues to prevail. There is an expressive absence of effective leadership."

Even the leaders were not satisfied with the practice of leadership development within their parties. Sarita, a leader of one political party, said, "The process of leadership selection within a party lacks democratic principles, as personal biases and undue influences play a significant role. This undermines the core value of leadership quality." This clearly implies that there is a lack of democratic practices in the wake of leadership selection. The personal interests of leaders and their involvement in factions and corruption are the major factors that have contributed to the reduced effectiveness of leadership. Devkota (2019) argues that Nepal's leaders are always confused, creating a crisis.

Most importantly, leadership has long been dominated by utopian ideas; however, the transformational leadership perspective has received less attention in leadership styles. From the perspective of transformational leadership, the present leadership style has been criticized, as the leader-follower relationship is given less importance in Nepal. Leadership development within political parties and power transfer have been major taboos in Nepali politics. All major leaders were over 65 years old, and youth leaders were not given importance. Similarly, the leader -follower concept of transformational leadership is lacking. The number of people who reach the top position of the parties never decreases. Leadership transfer is a key taboo in Nepal. Foucault's exercise of power and knowledge for the truth (development) is important, although Nepalese leadership may have been questioned regarding the exercise of power to enhance public institutions to generate development smoothly. The perception of people towards leaders in Nepal

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is not supposed to be good, with a few exceptions. It also implies a low level of trust in people. In today's world, new issues have emerged, and leaders should know how to tackle. In today's world, new issues have emerged, and leaders must understand how to address them. Blair (2024) rightly points out that leadership arises when others step back. Leaders need to exhibit positivity among individuals, as they possess the ability to resolve issues.

The political landscape in Nepal, characterized by constant shifts in government resulting in political instability, pervasive corruption, inadequate crisis management, ineffective handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, delays in infrastructure initiatives, and the rise of the Gen-Z movement, indicates a profound leadership crisis. Persistent corruption, lack of accountability, and nepotism among leaders and elites have eroded public confidence. Furthermore, the Zen-Z movement reflects the public insistence on new types of leadership styles characterized by responsiveness, transparency, and people-centricity. These crises reflect a trend of reactive, exclusionary, and myopic leadership that has raised significant concerns about political legitimacy and governance capacity in Nepal. Nepal's leadership dilemma can only be addressed through the emergence of people's centric leaders capable of guiding the nation effectively and averting further instability.

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