

**URBANIZATION AND SOCIAL COHESION IN BHARATPUR  
METROPOLITAN CITY OF CHITWAN DISTRICT**



**A Dissertation**

**Submitted to the MPhil Programme in Sociology,  
Central Department of Sociology,  
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**Submitted by**

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**March 2025**

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation entitled “Urbanization and Social Cohesion in Bharatpur Metropolitan City of Chitwan District” submitted by me to the Central Department of Sociology, Tribhuvan University is entirely original work prepared under the guidance and supervision of Associate Professor Dr. Tika Ram Gautam. I have made due acknowledgments of all ideas and information borrowed from different sources in the course of writing this dissertation. The result presented in this study has not been submitted and presented anywhere else for the award of any degree or other reason. I am solely responsible if any evidence is found against my declaration.

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**LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION**

This is to certify that **Mr. Keshab Raj Sapkota** has completed his dissertation entitled “**Urbanization and Social Cohesion in Bharatpur Metropolitan City of Chitwan District**” under my guidance and supervision in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of MPhil in Sociology. I hereby recommend this dissertation for final approval and acceptance.

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**APPROVAL LETTER**

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationship between urbanization and social cohesion in Bharatpur Metropolitan City, which is currently experiencing rapid demographic shifts and extensive infrastructural expansion. As cities grow, they undergo significant social transformations that impact community structures, interpersonal relationships, and trust among residents. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for fostering inclusive and sustainable urban development. The primary objective of this research is to analyze the effects of urbanization on key social cohesion indicators, including trust, participation, mutual tolerance, and social networks. By employing a concurrent mixed-methods approach, this study integrates both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques to provide a comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon.

The research employs a structured household survey and key informant interviews to collect data, ensuring a holistic understanding of how urbanization influences social cohesion. A sample size of 269 households was determined using Cochran's formula to guarantee a broad representation across gender, age, and socio-economic groups. Quantitative data were analyzed using statistical tools to identify patterns and trends, while qualitative insights were derived through thematic analysis of in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, including social leaders, policymakers, and residents. The study explores the extent to which urbanization fosters economic development and infrastructure improvements while simultaneously eroding traditional social bonds and widening disparities in community engagement.

The findings indicate that while urbanization has led to better infrastructure, increased economic opportunities, and modernized living conditions, it has also contributed to the weakening of traditional social ties, reduced community participation, and heightened socio-economic inequalities. The study highlights that newer urban settlements exhibit lower levels of trust and engagement compared to older, more established communities, where social networks remain relatively intact. The increasing diversity of the population, driven by migration, has further complicated the cohesion of urban communities, leading to fragmented social interactions and a diminished sense of collective identity.

Moreover, disparities in access to resources and economic opportunities have exacerbated social inequalities, affecting trust and participation among residents. Many individuals in newly developed areas feel disconnected from decision-making processes, leading to lower levels of civic engagement and reduced trust in institutions. This trend is particularly evident among marginalized and economically disadvantaged groups, who often experience social exclusion in rapidly urbanizing environments.

The research concludes that while urbanization is an inevitable aspect of modern development, its impact on social cohesion must be carefully managed to prevent fragmentation within urban communities. Strengthening local networks, fostering inclusive urban planning, and encouraging active community participation are crucial strategies for mitigating social fragmentation and enhancing collective well-being. Policymakers must prioritize social integration measures, such as community-driven initiatives, participatory urban governance, and equitable access to urban resources, to build resilient and cohesive urban societies. This study provides valuable insights for urban planners and policymakers in Bharatpur and beyond, emphasizing the need for proactive strategies to balance urban growth with social sustainability.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Understanding Urbanization

Urbanization refers to the growing concentration of people in relatively small areas, primarily engaging in non-agricultural activities. This process is closely linked to the development of industrialization, infrastructure, and urban facilities within cities, towns, and their surrounding areas. As a result, urbanization is often regarded as an indicator of modernization (Basyal & Khanal, 2001). A nation's economic system plays a crucial role in driving urbanization by creating migration opportunities to specific regions. In simple terms, urbanization has a dual meaning: it is both the process of population movement from rural to urban areas and the subsequent expansion and transformation of cities and towns (Subedi, 2014). Multiple factors drive this trend, such as industrialization, globalization, and demographic changes. Urban centers attract people seeking enhanced job prospects, higher living standards, and better access to essential services.

Consequently, cities experience rapid population growth and physical expansion. However, urbanization is not just about higher population density; it also brings significant transformations to social, economic, and environmental structures. This shift requires the development of infrastructure, including housing, transportation, and public utilities, to support the expanding urban population. Urbanization is, therefore, a multifaceted and evolving process that profoundly affects societies, economies, and the environment. It shapes how individuals live, work, and engage within urban settings. On a global scale, urbanization is marked by a growing share of urban residents within a country, alongside the increasing economic, political, and cultural dominance of cities over rural areas

Dociu and Dunarintu (2012) define urbanization as the movement of populations into urban areas, which are often perceived as hubs of progress, offering varied opportunities. Schnore (1964) described it as a cultural transformation, altering traditional lifestyles and shifting from agriculture-based livelihoods to urban labor markets. This shift results in population growth in cities and the expansion of urban

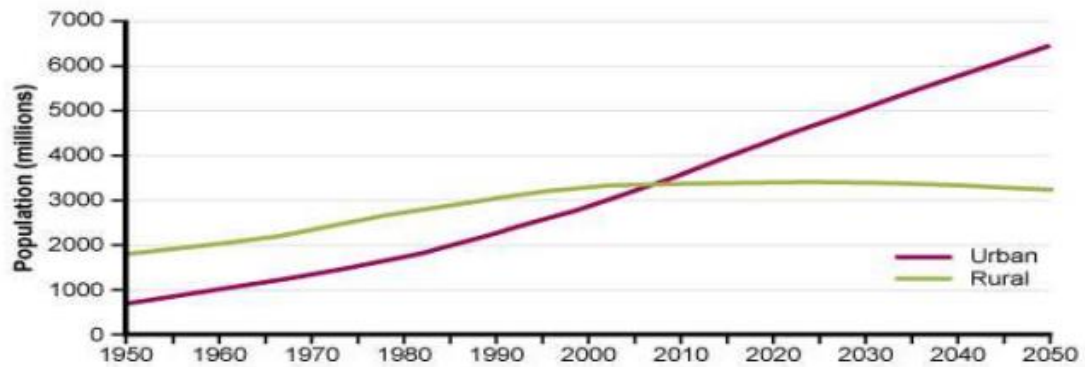
spaces. Urbanization is not solely about the population's migration to cities but also encompasses formal and informal land acquisition by state, private, or civil actors to meet changing economic or lifestyle demands (Gross, 2014). With cities becoming increasingly congested and facing developmental pressures, urban growth often extends into adjacent rural areas, where land is more affordable and less developed, making it easier for urban sprawl to occur (Bakrania, 2015).

In the 21st century, marked by hyper-globalization, urbanization, migration, industrialization, economic liberalization, and technological advancements have emerged as major forces driving development at both local and global scales. Nepal, influenced by these global dynamics, is also experiencing rapid urbanization. Urbanization has become a critical force driving development worldwide. Today, it continues to expand significantly, with over half of the global population residing in cities (MoUD, 2017). Cities have become central to global development discussions and are seen as crucial arenas for socio-economic and cultural transformation, particularly in emerging economies (Gu, 2019).

Urbanization, though not a novel phenomenon, has witnessed an unprecedented surge since the onset of the Industrial Revolution. In the early 19th century, merely 3% of the global populace resided in urban areas, a figure that expanded to 13% by the turn of the 20th century (Smart & Smart, 2003). Frequently regarded as a catalyst for modernization and societal transformation, urbanization is seen as emerging from rural traditions and playing a pivotal role in fostering economic growth and development (Devkota, 2012). Projections indicate that by 2050, the combined effects of urbanization and population growth will contribute an additional 2.5 billion individuals to urban centers, with nearly 90% of this expansion concentrated in Asia and Africa. Consequently, the proportion of the global population residing in urban areas is expected to escalate to 66% (ADB, 2010). Figure 1 illustrates the historical and projected shifts in global rural and urban populations from 1950 to 2050.

**Figure 1**

*Urban and rural population of the world, 1950-2050*



Wan et al. (2022) categorized countries according to their level of urbanization into three groups: highly urbanized (over 50%), moderately urbanized (35%–50%), and low urbanized (below 35%). This classification was used to investigate the potential varying impacts of urbanization on social cohesion.

Nepal is among the least urbanized countries in Asia; however, due to various socio-economic, geographical, political, and demographic factors, the rate of urbanization has rapidly increased in recent decades and is likely to persist. Urbanization entails. The conversion of villages into towns and towns into cities is frequently regarded as an indicator of modern development (Subedi, 2014). The migration of people to urban areas, along with substantial demographic, economic, and structural transformations (Chapagain, 2018), indicates the extent of urbanization and impacts established urban centers (Smart & Smart, 2003). From this viewpoint, urbanization is seen as the structural transformation of a region where essential services are accessible, and employment shifts from agriculture to industrial sectors. Historically, urbanization has been associated with development, specialization, industrial growth, and greater demographic awareness (Sharma, 2003).

According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA, 2017), urbanization is the process through which towns and cities emerge and expand as an increasing number of people settle and work in central locations.. Economically and demographically, urbanization represents a gradual shift from rural to urban living, driven by population size, income growth, and the development of basic infrastructure. In today's age of hyper-globalization and neoliberalism, the world is experiencing swift urbanization, with over half of the global population residing in urban areas. The effects of

globalization and urbanization are felt globally, and Nepal is no exception. The concept of urbanization in Nepal has evolved significantly, shaped by the country's socio-political and economic landscape. Definitions and classifications of urban areas have undergone several revisions, reflecting Nepal's developmental journey and shifting priorities.

The first attempt to scientifically define and document urban areas in Nepal began with the 1952/54 national census. This census formally recognized settlements with a population of 5,000 or more as urban areas, marking the first step in distinguishing rural and urban spaces. At the time, ten major settlements were designated as "Sahar" or cities. This early criterion was primarily based on population size, aligning with global trends but lacking detailed consideration of infrastructure or economic activity.

By the 1961 census, the criteria for defining urban areas were expanded beyond just population size. While settlements with more than 5,000 residents still qualified, those equipped with key urban facilities were also recognized as urban. These facilities included educational institutions like high schools and colleges, judicial and administrative offices, marketplaces, communication services, as well as industrial establishments such as mills and factories (CBS, 1995). This revised definition acknowledged that urbanization is not solely determined by population density but also by the availability of essential services and economic activities.

A major shift occurred with the enactment of the Nagar Panchayat Act in 1962. This legislation introduced the designation of "Nagar," creating a formal administrative distinction between urban and rural areas. Under this Act, a settlement required a minimum population of 10,000 to qualify for municipal status. However, population size alone was insufficient. Additional factors, such as the presence of markets, educational institutions, health facilities, and economic activity, played a crucial role in granting municipal status (Sharma, 2022). This period marked the beginning of structured urban governance in Nepal.

The Municipality Act of 1992 further refined the criteria for urban areas. This Act stipulated that municipalities must have a population of at least 20,000, basic urban infrastructure, an annual revenue of one million Nepali rupees, and exhibit characteristics of a semi-urban environment. The inclusion of revenue as a criterion underscored the economic factor of urbanization, highlighting the need for financial

sustainability and administrative capacity in urban governance. This redefinition reflected Nepal's efforts to modernize its urban landscape in response to increasing rural-to-urban migration and the growth of economic activities in towns and cities.

The enactment of the Local Self-Government Act in 1999 introduced a more nuanced classification of urban areas. Urban areas were divided into three categories: Mahanagarपालिका (Metropolitan City), Upa-Mahanagarपालिका (Sub-metropolitan City), and Nagarपालिका (Municipality). This hierarchical classification recognized differences in population size, revenue generation, and the level of infrastructure development. Metropolitan cities represented the largest and most developed urban centers, while sub-metropolitan cities and municipalities served as intermediate and smaller urban units, respectively (LGOA, 1999). This tiered approach facilitated more targeted urban planning and resource allocation, reflecting the diverse nature of urban growth across the country.

The most recent and comprehensive redefinition of urban areas occurred with the Local Government Operation Act of 2017. This Act maintained the three-tier urban classification but introduced more rigorous criteria. The definition of a metropolis required a large population base, significant average income over five years, and advanced urban facilities. Sub-metropolitan cities and municipalities were similarly defined but with lower thresholds. Importantly, the 2017 Act acknowledged the geographical and economic disparities between different regions of Nepal, allowing for flexibility in urban classification based on local conditions (MoFALD, 2017). This recognition of inequality marked a progressive step towards inclusive urban development.

Urbanization is widely recognized as a significant indicator of modernization and an essential component of the development process. The relationship between urbanization and development is often seen as closely linked, as higher levels of urbanization are generally associated with enhanced development. The economic transformation that occurs alongside urbanization brings significant structural changes to the economy. In 1952/54, Nepal had only 10 municipalities, accommodating 2.9 percent of the total population (Basyal & Khanal, 2001).

However, this situation has changed significantly over time. By 2017, the number of urban administrative units, including metropolitan cities, sub-metropolitan cities, and municipalities, had risen to 293, housing nearly two-thirds (66.08%) of the country's population (CBS, 2021). The connection between urbanization and development brings forth various issues, challenges, and perspectives. In this study, researcher try to assess relationship between urbanization and social cohesion.

**Table 2**

*Urbanization Trend in Nepal*

Description	Census Year				
	1981	1991	2001	2011	2021
Number of municipality	1981	1991	2001	2011	2021
Total population (Million)	23	33	58	58	293
Urban Population (Million)	15	18.5	23.15	26.49	29.19
Level of urbanization (%)	6.3	9.11	14	17	66.08

*Source: CBS,2021*

The researcher investigates urbanization by examining demographic and structural transformations within the study area. From a demographic perspective, urbanization is assessed based on the proportion of the population residing in urban regions and population density, which represents the average number of individuals per unit of land. The United Nations defines this concept as "urban agglomeration population density" (UNDP, 2010; World Bank, 2021).

In this study, the primary measure of urbanization is the percentage of people living in urban areas. Since the researcher aims to explore the link between urbanization and social cohesion, special emphasis is placed on how urban settlements, their population sizes, and spatial distribution impact social interactions, collaboration, and trust within communities and institutions. Urbanization is analyzed through three key dimensions: economic opportunities, infrastructure, and social networks and interactions, each of which is examined using specific indicators.

Urbanization plays a vital role in shaping economic opportunities, infrastructure, and social networks within a city. The economic opportunities factor highlights access to jobs, income, and markets. It is measured through indicators such as income levels,

job diversity, entrepreneurial activities, and market services. Urbanization fosters economic growth by creating employment opportunities and expanding access to resources, ultimately improving people's livelihoods.

Infrastructure is another key factor, focusing on the development of essential physical and social facilities. This includes access to basic services like clean water, electricity, transportation, healthcare, education, and sanitation. As cities grow, well-developed infrastructure ensures that residents can meet their daily needs, enhancing their overall quality of life.

Social networks and interactions are equally important in an urban setting. This factor examines interpersonal engagement, community ties, and cultural exchange. Indicators include participation in social activities, use of technology for communication, representation of different cultures, and the strength of support networks. Urbanization influences how people interact, build trust, and maintain social bonds within diverse communities.

These three factors provide a comprehensive framework for analyzing the multifaceted impacts of urbanization. By studying these aspects, the research explores how urbanization transforms economic opportunities, infrastructure, and social relationships, offering insights into its broader societal implications.

## **1.2 Conceptualizing Social Cohesion**

The concept of social cohesion has gained growing significance in both academic research and policy discourse. However, it is by no means a new "problem"; indeed, one might argue that it is one factor of an issue that has long been the focus of attention: the problem of order in modern societies. One can trace this issue back to at least the mid-seventeenth century and the work of Hobbes as expressed in his classic text *Leviathan*. It was also an important issue for other theorists of the "social contract," including Locke and Rousseau. Although, these authors may not have explicitly used the term "social cohesion," they focused on the factors that unify individuals and strengthen social bonds. In the later nineteenth century, under the twin pressures of industrialization and urbanization, and the massive social, economic, and demographic changes they ushered in, social theorists once again turn their attention to this issue.

The idea of social cohesion is not a recent development; it has long been a central theme in theoretical discussions on the factors that uphold societal stability and ensure its continuity, even amid periods of change (Green & Janmaat, 2011; Green et al., 2009). Discussions on social cohesion, both past and present, have often emerged in response to social changes that appeared to weaken established structures and challenge social harmony (Schiefer & van der Noll, 2016). The initial contributors to this discussion emerged from fields like sociology, political science, and political philosophy.

Various early schools of thought have presented different perspectives on what constitutes social cohesion. The British liberalism movement, which originated in the seventeenth century and remains influential today, particularly within the framework of the market economy, regarded society as an aggregate of individual actions. According to this perspective, individual interests and ambitions take precedence over collective societal goals, with the state's primary function being the protection of individual rights and freedoms. Social cohesion is seen as an unintended consequence of individual behaviors, as people naturally engage in exchanges and cooperation, ultimately benefiting all (Green & Janmaat, 2011; Green et al., 2009; Jenson, 1998).

In contrast, French sociologists and political philosophers, notably Emile Durkheim (1893), advocated for a view of society as an integrated system grounded in shared values and solidarity. They emphasized that social cohesion arises not from individual actions but from collective loyalties, cooperation, and mutual responsibility (Schiefer & van der Noll, 2016). Durkheim identified two forms of solidarity: mechanical solidarity, which is rooted in shared traditions, values, and lifestyles prevalent in traditional societies, and organic solidarity, which emerges in industrialized societies where individuals become interdependent due to specialized roles in the division of labor. Similarly, Ferdinand Tönnies (1887) critiqued modernity and individualism by distinguishing between *Gemeinschaft* (close-knit communities bound by social connections) and *Gesellschaft* (loosely connected individuals interacting primarily for instrumental purposes).

Another school of thought, romantic conservatism, developed in late eighteenth-century Germany, viewed cohesive societies as structured hierarchies maintained through cultural traditions and individuals' deference to social order. This perspective

saw individuals and society as inseparable, bound together by a shared language, culture, and traditions (Green & Janmaat, 2011; Green et al., 2009). These foundational theories have significantly influenced later sociologists and political scientists, including functionalists such as Talcott Parsons and Robert Merton. The ideological differences among these early scholars still shape modern political viewpoints on social cohesion, including liberal, republican, and social-democratic perspectives (Green & Janmaat, 2011; Green et al., 2009).

In the twentieth century, sociological discussions on social cohesion increasingly focused on social integration. A society is considered cohesive when individuals and groups from diverse cultural, economic, and social backgrounds can access societal resources equitably and coexist without conflict. Schiefer and van der Noll (2016) contributed to this discourse by differentiating between social integration, Social cohesion encompasses both the interpersonal connections among individuals or groups and the integration of systems, which pertains to the functional linkages between various elements of society. In this regard, social cohesion involves the robustness of social networks as well as the institutional structures that facilitate civic participation (Berman & Phillips, 2004; Giardiello, 2014). The social capital approach further highlights the role of social networks in enhancing societal functionality and problem-solving capacity (Schiefer & van der Noll, 2016).

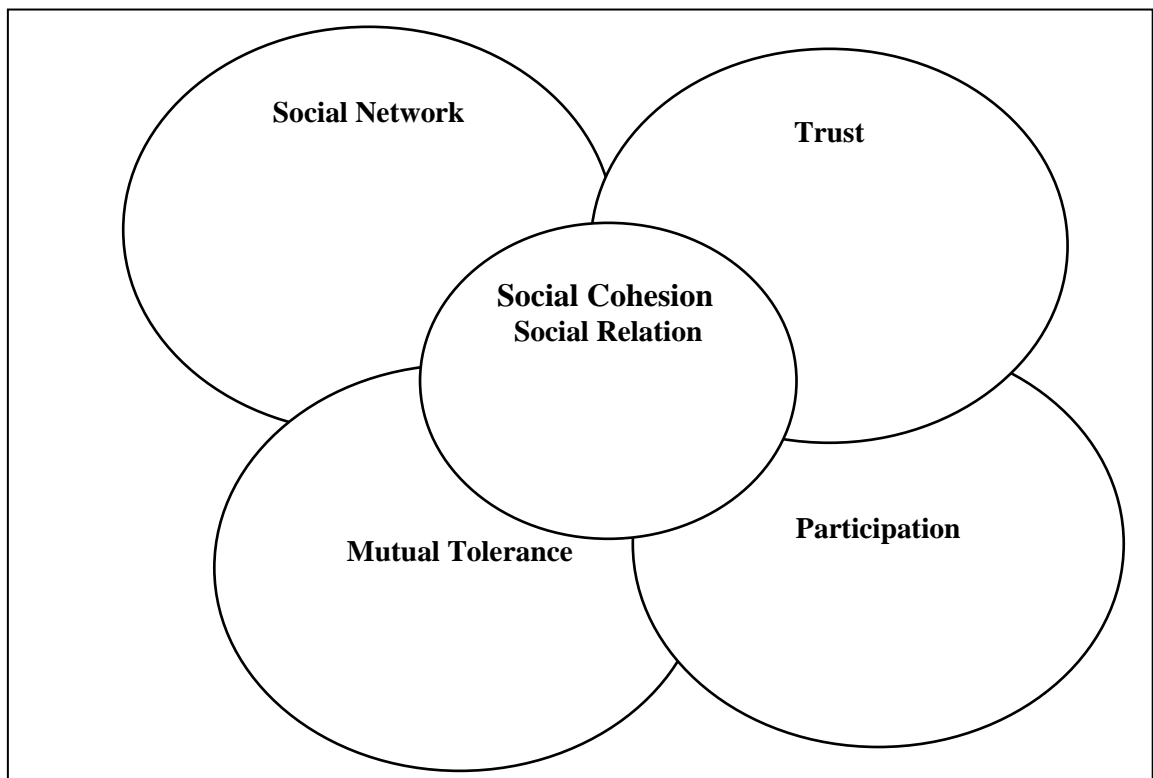
Over the past two decades, social cohesion has gained significant attention in academic and political discussions worldwide (Friedkin, 2004; Chan et al., 2006; Delhey et al., 2018; Boehnke et al., 2019; Bekalu et al., 2021). At its core, social cohesion signifies a society's ability to function in a unified manner, where different elements integrate harmoniously, contribute to collective well-being, and experience minimal conflict or disruptive behavior (Kearns & Forrest, 2000, as cited in Liu et al., 2016). Moreover, social cohesion plays a crucial role in ensuring social sustainability (Burton & Mitchell, 2006). In contrast, the absence of social cohesion can result in instability, inequality, conflicting moral values, diminished social connections, and a weak sense of attachment to place (Forrest & Kearns, 2001, as cited in Lloyd et al., 2016).

Modern perspectives on social cohesion underscore its significance for policymakers, emphasizing its practical applications in governance and social development. A

prominent framework proposed by the Canadian Policy Research Networks (Jenson, 1998) identifies five fundamental dimensions of social cohesion: (1) an individual's sense of belonging or social isolation, (2) economic inclusion or exclusion, particularly in relation to labor market participation, (3) civic engagement and public participation, (4) the recognition and acceptance of diversity as opposed to exclusion and discrimination, and (5) the perceived legitimacy of institutions. Building on this foundation, Bernard (1999) further refined the concept by classifying these dimensions into three overarching domains—economic, political, and socio-cultural—while also differentiating between attitudinal and behavioral aspects of social involvement (Acket et al., 2011). These conceptual advancements have contributed to a more nuanced understanding of social cohesion, which is now often delineated into six core elements: social relations, shared identity, orientation toward the common good, collective values, quality of life, and equality.

Social cohesion is often compared to social capital, as both emphasize social bonds and collective well-being (Kawachi & Berkman, 2014; Putnam, 1993; Kearns & Forrest, 2001). While Chipkin and Ngulunga (2008) define social cohesion as an emotional connection among individuals in a community, social capital is more focused on shared resources, such as trust, networks, and norms, that facilitate cooperation (Putnam, 1993). Elements of social capital, including civic participation, perceptions of safety, and community belonging, contribute significantly to social cohesion (Kearns & Forrest, 2001).

In this study, social cohesion is conceptualized as the ongoing integration of individual behaviors within a social environment, particularly at the neighborhood level (Dempsey, 2008). Instead of being seen as a fixed outcome, it is understood as a continuous process reflecting social interactions and engagements within a given area (Amin, 2002; Han et al., 2017; Muhuri & Basu, 2018). This understanding is rooted in the theoretical framework developed by Jary and Jary (1991) and later expanded by Forrest and Kearns (2001), which underscores the multifaceted character of social cohesion. Kellerman (1981, as cited in Dempsey, 2008) also emphasizes the complicated nature of this concept. This study focuses on key dimensions of social cohesion, including social networks, participation, trust, and mutual tolerance, while excluding operational norms due to measurement challenges.

**Figure 3***Concept of Social Cohesion*

*Source:* Author's Own Conceptualization

The Venn diagram (Figure 3) illustrates the interplay between social networks, trust, mutual tolerance, and participation in fostering social cohesion.

**Social Cohesion (Social Relation) = Sub-set (Social Networks + Trust + Mutual Tolerance + Participation)**

Social relations among individuals and groups are a fundamental aspect of social cohesion. From a classical social psychological perspective, a group retains its members through the strength of internal relationships, as these social bonds create a sense of belonging and attachment (Friedkin, 2004). Social cohesion, in terms of connections, reflects the depth and significance of people's relationships with family, friends, and the broader community. These interpersonal ties contribute to the overall level of social cohesion (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006).

Additionally, social cohesion can be understood as the extent to which various segments of society—individuals, groups, organizations, and regions—are interconnected (Berger-Schmitt, 2000, citing McCracken, 1998). It also encompasses the nature of both vertical and horizontal interactions within society, illustrating the ways people engage across different social levels (Chan et al., 2006). A highly cohesive society is characterized by strong, inclusive relationships that foster trust, cooperation, and a sense of unity, reinforcing both social stability and collective well-being.

Social networks play a crucial role in social relationships, influencing both the depth and breadth of connections with family, friends, and acquaintances. These relationships can be evaluated based on interaction frequency, such as neighborhood visits or phone conversations (Villarreal & Silva, 2006). This concept closely relates to social capital, first introduced by Bourdieu (1986) and later expanded by Putnam (2000). Putnam (2000) defines social capital as the relationships between individuals, highlighting the norms of trust and mutual support that develop within these connections. Berger-Schmitt (2000) identifies social capital as a key element of social cohesion. Similarly, institutions like the World Bank often use social capital and social cohesion interchangeably (Schiefer & van der Noll, 2016). Ritzen (2001) also supports this perspective, highlighting the interconnectedness between these concepts in fostering strong, cooperative societies.

Trust is fundamentally defined as the expectation that individuals will act in a consistent manner and with good intentions (Morrone et al., 2009). It functions as a crucial moral resource that strengthens social solidarity (Delhey, 2007) while promoting cooperation, unity, and a sense of belonging. The stability of a cohesive society is contingent upon a certain level of trust, extending beyond interpersonal relationships to include confidence in institutions (Chan et al., 2006; Dickes et al., 2010).

Interpersonal trust transcends close social networks, shaping broader community interactions, while institutional trust pertains to confidence in organizations, governance systems, and public institutions. Both dimensions of trust are integral to fostering a well-integrated and functional society, wherein individuals actively

engage, collaborate, and uphold shared values. The presence of trust cultivates a sense of security and collective purpose, reinforcing social cohesion and contributing to the long-term stability and advancement of society.

Mutual tolerance refers to how various social groups—whether cultural, ethnic, or based on lifestyle interact and treat one another. It is a crucial component of social cohesion, as a society can only achieve true unity when its diverse groups practice tolerance and respect. The inclusion and acceptance of minority groups are particularly important in fostering a cohesive environment.

Scholars such as Jenson (2010) and Bernard (1999) have emphasized the role of mutual tolerance in their research on social cohesion, highlighting the delicate balance between acceptance and exclusion. Their studies suggest that societies function best when individuals and groups are not only acknowledged but also integrated into the broader social fabric. A cohesive society promotes mutual respect, ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their backgrounds or identities, feel valued and supported. By encouraging inclusivity and understanding, social cohesion strengthens collective identity, reduces conflict, and creates a sense of belonging for all members of a community, ultimately contributing to long-term social stability.

Participation in public life signifies a sense of belonging, solidarity, and a collective commitment to achieving shared objectives (Berger-Schmitt, 2000; European Commission, 2001). Active engagement strengthens social connections and reinforces common values within a community. Involvement in diverse social activities, including membership in associations, political parties, labor unions, or non-governmental organizations, plays a crucial role in fostering trust and enhancing social bonds (European Commission, 2001; Jeannotte et al., 2002).

Participation is a key element of social cohesion and can be measured in multiple ways. Social engagement may involve joining sports or cultural groups, volunteering, or contributing to community projects. Political participation is another important indicator, encompassing activities such as voting, signing petitions, attending demonstrations, supporting political campaigns, or voicing concerns to elected officials. These forms of involvement create a sense of connection among individuals and promote civic engagement. This study will specifically examine these types of participation at the community level, analyzing how individuals interact, collaborate, and contribute to strengthening local social ties.

### 1.3 Urbanization and Social Cohesion

In urban settings, social cohesion serves as a foundational element that upholds the structure of society. It acts as the unifying force that connects individuals and communities, fostering a sense of belonging, mutual trust, and solidarity within the dynamic and diverse urban landscape. Social cohesion is crucial for promoting inclusive development, ensuring equitable access to resources, and enhancing overall well-being. When individuals feel integrated into their communities, they are more inclined to engage in civic participation, support local initiatives, and collaborate in solving shared challenges.

Furthermore, strong social cohesion strengthens community resilience against urban pressures such as rapid population expansion, economic disparities, and cultural diversity. As cities continue to grow, fostering social cohesion becomes increasingly vital for ensuring sustainable and just urban development. Strengthening social ties, encouraging inclusivity, and enhancing community resilience contribute to social stability and collective well-being, enabling cities to navigate demographic shifts and socio-economic changes while preserving social harmony. Empirical research examining the relationship between urbanization and social cohesion presents mixed results, reflecting the varying contexts in which urbanization occurs. Some studies suggest that urban expansion fosters social interactions and cultural exchange, thereby reinforcing social cohesion (McKenna et al., 2018).

Conversely, other research highlights the adverse effects of urbanization, such as heightened inequality, spatial segregation, and social fragmentation, which may weaken social cohesion (Arant et al., 2021). The impact of urbanization on social cohesion is not uniform and is influenced by factors such as demographic composition, economic conditions, and governance structures, underscoring the need for localized and context-sensitive analyses (Bai et al., 2021). Despite the complexities surrounding the urbanization-social cohesion relationship, key themes emerge from scholarly discussions. Demographic factors—including migration trends, population density, and cultural diversity—significantly influence social cohesion in urban environments. Economic inequalities, particularly disparities in access to resources and opportunities, can deepen social divisions and hinder

collective efforts. Although cultural diversity enriches urban life, it can also challenge social cohesion, as differences in values, traditions, and lifestyles may contribute to social tensions and conflicts (Lupton & Power, 2023).

Additionally, Community engagement and social capital are vital in reinforcing social cohesion within urban environments. Active participation in community events, volunteering, and involvement in civic organizations foster interpersonal connections and trust among residents, nurturing a sense of solidarity and belonging. Recent studies further highlight the significance of inclusive urban policies and participatory governance in strengthening social cohesion while mitigating the adverse effects of urbanization (Cheshire et al., 2022). Overall, the literature underscores the multifaceted relationship between urbanization and social cohesion, emphasizing the need for interdisciplinary approaches to effectively address the complexities of urban life (Sakketa, 2023).

#### **1.4 Statement of the Problem**

Urbanization is a multifaceted socio-economic process that changes rural areas into urban communities, altering demographic, economic, cultural, and social frameworks. This rapid urban growth brings economic opportunities and improved access to services such as healthcare, education, and employment. However, it also disrupts traditional community networks, weakening social ties and contributing to social fragmentation. As cities expand, maintaining social cohesion becomes increasingly challenging, particularly in developing countries like Nepal, where urbanization is progressing rapidly

By the middle of the 21st century, an estimated 68% of the global population is expected to reside in urban areas. Between 2018 and 2050, the urban population is projected to expand by 2.5 billion, with nearly 90% of this growth concentrated in Asia and Africa. This rapid urban expansion reflects profound demographic transformations, particularly in developing regions, necessitating sustainable urban planning and policy measures to accommodate increasing populations while ensuring equitable access to resources and infrastructure (United Nations, 2024).

Across various regions, both the proportion of urban dwellers and the number and size of urban centers are anticipated to grow. This expansion is driven by multiple factors, including natural population increases within cities, rural-to-urban migration, international migration (Lerch, 2017), and the conversion of rural areas into urban settlements. Currently, approximately 3.3 billion people live in urban areas, highlighting the accelerated pace of global urbanization. Each day, an estimated 180,000 individuals migrate to cities, with around 60 million people relocating to urban centers annually in developing countries. This trend underscores the pronounced nature of urbanization in developing nations compared to developed ones. Given the rapid rate of urban population growth, addressing the challenges and opportunities associated with this shift remains a critical priority (World Bank, 2021).

Urbanization is also reshaping the lives of individuals residing in rural areas surrounding cities. As primary entry points and destinations for both internal and international migrants, cities play a crucial role in migration dynamics. Consequently, integrating migration into the strategic planning and governance of urban areas is imperative for achieving sustainable urban development. This ongoing transformation is driving significant changes in the spatial distribution of human populations, positioning cities as central hubs for migration. While urbanization presents numerous economic opportunities, it also introduces complex challenges regarding its impact on the social fabric of communities.

Despite extensive research on the economic and infrastructural dimensions of urbanization, a critical gap remains in understanding its social consequences, particularly in relation to community cohesion, social networks, and trust. Urbanization can facilitate cultural exchange, economic integration, and social interaction, which are often seen as positive outcomes. However, it can also contribute to social isolation, weakened interpersonal relationships, and diminished neighborhood solidarity. In cities, elements like population concentration, infrastructure expansion, cultural variety, and socio-economic inequalities make it challenging to sustain unified communities. These dynamics can exacerbate social

inequalities, leading to a fragmented social landscape, where certain groups face marginalization and exclusion (Friedrichs & Heinelt, 2022; Ratcliffe & Newman, 2011).

The impact of urbanization on social cohesion is increasingly becoming a subject of concern. However, most existing literature has focused primarily on the economic and infrastructural aspects of urbanization, leaving the social dimensions underexplored. While the economic and infrastructural benefits of urbanization are well documented, the effects on community bonds and social networks have received less attention. In particular, the social implications of urbanization in rapidly growing cities in developing countries remain largely under-researched. Cities like Bharatpur Metropolitan City, where urbanization is occurring at a fast pace, provide a valuable context for understanding the social consequences of urban growth and its impact on social cohesion.

Bharatpur Metropolitan City, located in Chitwan District, Nepal, is experiencing significant urbanization driven by internal migration and natural population growth. The city's rapid expansion has brought changes to its social fabric, with new settlers from diverse backgrounds integrating into the urban environment. This urban growth has resulted in increased population density, infrastructure development, and cultural diversity, all of which are reshaping community dynamics. These factors present challenges for maintaining strong social networks, trust, and shared values—elements that are essential for fostering social cohesion.

Empirical research on the social implications of urbanization in developing countries, particularly in Nepal, is limited. Existing studies tend to focus more on the economic and infrastructural aspects, leaving the social dimensions largely unexplored. Given the rapid pace of urbanization in Bharatpur, it is crucial to investigate how these changes influence social cohesion within the city. Understanding the relationship between urbanization and social cohesion in Bharatpur is vital for developing effective urban policies that can foster inclusive, resilient communities.

The study will explore how urbanization impacts the social fabric of the city and how it shapes community interactions, networks, and trust. The research will focus on three primary questions:

1. What is the degree of urbanization in Bharatpur Metropolitan City of Chitwan District?
2. How is social cohesion evolving during the process of urbanization in the study area?
3. What role does urbanization play in shaping social cohesion in Bharatpur Metropolitan City?

### **1.5 Objectives of the Study**

This study aims to investigate the relationship between urbanization and social cohesion. The specific objectives are as follows:

- I. To explore the degree of urbanization in terms of urban indicators in Bharatpur Metropolitan City of Chitwan district
- II. To examine the degree of social cohesion in Bharatpur Metropolitan City during the process of urbanization.
- III. To analyze the role of urbanization in shaping social cohesion in Bharatpur Metropolitan City.

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

In urban settings, social cohesion is a vital element that binds diverse individuals and communities, creating a unifying framework within society. It cultivates a sense of belonging, mutual trust, and solidarity, which are crucial for maintaining stability in rapidly growing urban environments. The importance of social cohesion in cities cannot be overlooked, as it plays a key role in fostering inclusive development, ensuring fair access to resources, and improving overall well-being. A socially cohesive community promotes civic engagement, supports local initiatives, and encourages cooperation in addressing common urban challenges. Furthermore, strong social cohesion strengthens resilience against urban pressures such as rapid population expansion, economic disparities, and cultural diversity. As cities continue to grow and evolve, nurturing social cohesion becomes essential for building sustainable and balanced urban societies.

This study aims to bridge existing knowledge gaps by exploring the relationship between urbanization and social cohesion across diverse cultural and socio-economic contexts. Specifically, it seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of the social impacts of urbanization, identifying both the challenges and opportunities associated with fostering resilient and cohesive urban communities (Tacoli et al., 2015). By emphasizing the socio-spatial dimensions of urbanization—particularly in rapidly urbanizing developing countries—this research will contribute to the growing body of literature on urbanization and social cohesion.

The findings of this study will offer valuable insights for policymakers, urban planners, and community organizations. For policymakers, the research will inform the development of inclusive policies that address the diverse needs of urban residents, ensuring that urbanization fosters social cohesion rather than exacerbating socio-economic disparities. Urban planners can utilize these insights to design urban spaces that encourage social interaction and community engagement, thereby reinforcing social bonds. Additionally, community organizations will gain a deeper understanding of evolving community dynamics, enabling them to tailor their interventions to better support urban populations.

This research seeks to address a critical gap in the literature by examining the key factors that influence social cohesion in urban settings. Employing a deductive approach, it will investigate how network diversity, economic opportunities, and infrastructural development collectively shape social bonds and community trust. By analyzing these interconnections, the study will contribute to a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding social cohesion in the context of urbanization. The findings will offer valuable insights for evidence-based strategies aimed at strengthening social cohesion, ultimately fostering more resilient, inclusive, and supportive urban communities.

Given the multifaceted relationship of urbanization on social cohesion, understanding these dynamics is essential for the formulation of effective policies and urban planning strategies that promote inclusive and resilient urban environments (Fiorina, 2018; UN-Habitat, 2022). By addressing these critical issues, this study will make a meaningful contribution to the discourse on sustainable urban development in an increasingly interconnected world.

## **1.7 Organization of the Dissertation**

This dissertation is structured into five chapters, each encompassing distinct sub-topics. The organization is as follows:

Chapter One: Provides a comprehensive introduction to the study, including an overview of urbanization and the conceptualization of social cohesion. It also outlines the statement of the problem, research questions, objectives, significance of the study, and the overall structure of the dissertation.

Chapter Two: Presents a critical review of relevant theoretical and empirical literature on urbanization and social cohesion. It also includes the conceptual framework and identifies the research gap, highlighting the contributions of the study to existing scholarship.

Chapter Three: Details the philosophical foundation of the research, the rationale for selecting the study site, research design, nature and sources of data, universe and sampling design, and data collection methods. It also discusses the approaches to data analysis and interpretation, ethical considerations, and the limitations of the study.

Chapter Four: Examines the relationship between urbanization and social cohesion within the study context. It provides an in-depth analysis of the study population, identifying key factors that influence urbanization and social cohesion. Empirical findings are systematically presented and interpreted.

Chapter Five: Synthesizes the overall findings of the study, drawing conclusions based on empirical evidence. It also includes theoretical reflections that contextualize the findings within broader academic debates.

Additionally, the dissertation includes references and appendices, comprising all cited sources and supplementary materials relevant to the study.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The scholarly literature on urbanization and social cohesion encompasses a broad spectrum of theoretical frameworks and empirical research, providing valuable insights into the intricate relationship between these two phenomena.

#### **2.1 Theories on Urbanization and Social Cohesion**

Different theoretical perspectives, such as social capital theory, social disorganization theory and community cohesion models, have played a key role in understanding the impact of urbanization on social cohesion. Social capital theory is reflected in different forms of social interactions, mutual trust, and reciprocal relationships among community members, which help cultivate a sense of belonging and shared identity. Nevertheless, rapid urbanization can weaken these connections, resulting in social fragmentation and a decline in social capital. The social disorganization theory offers how structural factors affect community cohesion. This theory suggests that factors such as economic inequality, frequent residential movement, and diverse community compositions can erode social connections and heighten the risk of social disorder in urban areas. As urban centers expand and become more diverse, sustaining social cohesion becomes increasingly challenging, especially in neighborhoods marked by widespread poverty and inequality. In contrast, community cohesion models highlight the significance of shared values, common norms, and a collective identity in promoting a sense of belonging and unity within a community.

#### **Social Capital Theory**

Social Capital Theory, originated by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and later expanded by James Coleman and Robert Putnam, is instrumental in understanding the effects of urbanization on community social networks and support systems. Bourdieu introduced the concept in the 1980s, describing social capital as the aggregate of actual or potential resources linked to possession of a durable network of institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition (Bourdieu, 1986). Coleman (1988) expanded this by emphasizing the role of social structures in facilitating certain actions within the structure, while Putnam (1995) popularized it in

the context of civic engagement and community building. In urbanized settings, traditional social structures often fragment, potentially reducing social capital. This theory helps to analyze how urbanization impacts the density, trust, and reciprocity within social networks, which are crucial for effective support systems. The decline in social capital can manifest as decreased community engagement, trust, and cooperation, which are essential for robust support systems (Putnam, 1995).

In the Nepalese context, Social Capital Theory provides a critical framework for analyzing the impact of urbanization on social cohesion. Historically, Nepalese society has been deeply rooted in strong social structures, including family ties, caste-based affiliations, and communal relationships that have facilitated trust, reciprocity, and cooperation. These traditional networks have played a crucial role in fostering social cohesion by ensuring mutual support, shared responsibilities, and collective decision-making. However, with the rapid expansion of urbanization, these social structures have undergone significant transformations, leading to the fragmentation of traditional social bonds.

As cities grow and attract diverse populations from different ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, social capital is increasingly eroded. The displacement of close-knit rural communities and the rise of nuclear families in urban areas weaken long-standing relationships built on trust and mutual dependence. In urban settings, people often engage in transient and individualistic lifestyles, reducing opportunities for meaningful social interactions and collective engagement. This decline in social capital can negatively affect trust among society's members, participation in civic activities, and the ability to mobilize for collective action.

Understanding these shifts in social capital is essential for addressing the socio-cultural challenges of urbanization in Nepal. By examining these dynamics, policymakers and researchers can identify strategies to rebuild social capital in urban areas. Strengthening neighborhood networks, promoting inclusive social programs, and fostering shared spaces for social interactions can help restore trust and social cohesion. Developing such interventions will be crucial in ensuring that urbanization leads to resilient and supportive society rather than social fragmentation.

## **Social Disorganization Theory**

Social Disorganization Theory, formulated by Clifford R. Shaw and Henry D. McKay in the 1940s as part of the Chicago School of Sociology, provides a foundational framework for understanding the interplay between urbanization, economic opportunities, infrastructure development, social network interactions, and social cohesion. Rooted in ecological and structural perspectives, the theory argues that rapid urban growth particularly in socioeconomically disadvantaged and ethnically diverse areas disrupts traditional social structures, weakening informal social control mechanisms that sustain trust, participation, and mutual tolerance within communities.

Shaw and McKay's (1942) research emphasized that urbanization-induced structural changes erode shared norms and values, diminishing social networks and reducing collective efficacy. Economic opportunities, while a key driver of urbanization, may not always translate into equitable social development, especially when disparities persist. Unequal access to economic resources can exacerbate social divisions, leading to reduced participation and trust among residents. Similarly, inadequate infrastructure development such as the lack of accessible public spaces, schools, and community institutions—can weaken social interactions, limiting opportunities for engagement and fostering social fragmentation.

In the context of Bharatpur Metropolitan City, rapid urbanization presents both opportunities and challenges for social cohesion. Expanding economic opportunities attract a diverse population, but disparities in employment and income levels can strain social networks. The development of infrastructure, while essential for urban growth, must be inclusive and supportive of community interactions to strengthen trust and participation. If institutional presence weakens and neighborhood interactions decline, mutual tolerance among different social groups may erode, reducing overall social cohesion.

## **Community Cohesion Models**

Community cohesion models highlight the critical role of shared values, common norms, and collective identity in fostering a sense of unity and belonging within communities. These models are grounded in sociological theories that examine how social bonds are created and maintained, particularly in the context of diverse and

rapidly evolving environments, such as urban areas. Urbanization plays a significant role in shaping social cohesion by transforming traditional structures, social values, norms, and the collective identity that bind communities together. As urban populations grow and become more diverse, encompassing a range of cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds, both opportunities and challenges for community cohesion arise.

On one hand, urbanization can enhance social cohesion by promoting increased interaction, exposure to diverse perspectives, and the development of shared urban identities. The availability of public spaces, community programs, and inclusive urban policies can cultivate a sense of belonging, encouraging individuals to connect with the broader urban community. In such environments, opportunities for dialogue and engagement can foster mutual understanding and social solidarity.

On the other hand, rapid urbanization may undermine social cohesion by disrupting traditional social networks and family structures. The influx of diverse groups may lead to cultural fragmentation, social isolation, and the weakening of community ties if not effectively managed. Economic inequalities, unequal access to resources, and competition for opportunities can strain social relations, erode trust, and diminish mutual support within communities, further exacerbating social divisions.

To maintain social cohesion in urban settings, it is essential to implement targeted efforts to strengthen shared values, promote common norms, and build a cohesive collective identity. Inclusive urban planning, community engagement initiatives, and policies addressing social and economic disparities are vital in fostering social bonds, trust, and active participation. Such measures can ensure that urbanization contributes positively to social cohesion, creating a more harmonious and resilient urban society.

## **2.2 Empirical Reviews**

Empirical research on the link between urbanization and social cohesion has yielded mixed findings, highlighting the diverse contexts in which urbanization occurs. Some studies suggest that urbanization fosters social cohesion by encouraging social interactions and embracing cultural diversity within urban settings

Contrary to the optimistic view of urbanization fostering social integration, several studies underscore its detrimental consequences, including growing inequality, spatial segregation, and social isolation, all of which can erode social cohesion. Empirical evidence from the United States highlights a notable decline in trust among neighbors over the past decade. According to surveys conducted by the Pew Research Center, only 33% of Americans in 2021 reported trusting most or all of their neighbors, a significant decline from 41% in 2009 (Pew Research Center, 2021). Similarly, in the United Kingdom, data from the Office for National Statistics reveal a decrease in the percentage of individuals who feel a strong sense of connection to their neighborhood, dropping from 68% in 2012-2013 to 64% in 2018-2019 (Office for National Statistics, 2020).

The complex relationship between urbanization and social cohesion is mediated by a range of factors, including demographic composition, economic conditions, and governance structures. This highlights the necessity of context-specific analyses to fully comprehend the nuances of this interaction. While systematic empirical evidence directly linking urbanization to social cohesion remains scarce, emerging research suggests that this relationship is both intricate and multidimensional.

Ratcliffe and Newman (2011) posit that urbanization can enhance social cohesion by promoting cultural diversity, cross-cultural interactions, and economic integration. Cities function as focal points where individuals from diverse backgrounds engage with one another, facilitating mutual understanding and appreciation of different cultural traditions. Furthermore, the integration of urban and rural markets enables the flow of agricultural products to urban centers while facilitating the distribution of industrial goods and services to rural areas, fostering economic interdependence.

Conversely, several studies indicate that urbanization can weaken social networks and diminish social cohesion. Aldrich and Meyer (2015) found that rapid urban expansion contributes to the erosion of traditional social networks, while Wang, Chen, and Pan (2019) demonstrated that urbanization disrupts established community ties, resulting in increased social isolation and a weakening of informal support systems. De Bruin et al. (2021) argue that

improved connectivity to urban centers enhances access to critical resources such as financial services, employment opportunities, and information, which can ultimately benefit rural populations. This economic interdependence is expected to drive positive transformations in social interactions, potentially reinforcing social cohesion.

However, urbanization can also exacerbate social fragmentation and alienation. Gizelis, Pickering, and Urdal (2021) highlight that rapid urban growth often leads to overcrowding, poverty, and inadequate housing, intensifying social inequalities and fostering a sense of exclusion among urban residents. Fischer (1982) similarly notes that displacement due to urban expansion can disrupt livelihoods and weaken individuals' sense of belonging while also posing risks to cultural heritage (World Bank, 2021).

The physical and social divide between different economic groups is another critical aspect of urbanization's impact on social cohesion. Lipton (1977) and Pilehvar (2021) argue that urban-centered policies can exacerbate rural-urban disparities, leading to social instability and increased tensions. Additionally, the rapid influx of people into urban areas places pressure on public services, exacerbates competition for resources such as land and water, and heightens social tensions, all of which may weaken social cohesion (Gizelis et al., 2021).

Coleman and Kearns (2015) found that high population density in urban areas often correlates with reduced social interactions and weaker community bonds, as the urban environment does not always encourage resident engagement. Despite the economic and social opportunities cities offer, sustaining strong social networks within them remains a challenge. Smith (2019) underscores the paradox of urbanization, wherein increased diversity and economic potential are accompanied by declining neighborhood trust and weakened social connections. Similarly, Chen, Wu, and Li (2020) examined the factors affecting civic participation in rapidly growing urban areas, revealing that higher mobility, shifting social norms, and the breakdown of traditional community structures contribute to declining community engagement.

Lall, Timmins, and Yu (2017) further demonstrated that while urbanization generates economic opportunities, it also disrupts established social relationships. Many urban dwellers reported experiencing weakened family ties and diminished community support due to the rapid pace of urban expansion. Similarly, Kafewo (2018) found that urbanization frequently undermines traditional support systems, leaving many urban residents without adequate social structures to rely upon.

Despite these challenges, some studies highlight the resilience of urban communities in maintaining social cohesion. Garcia and Nguyen (2018) explored residents' experiences in rapidly urbanizing areas and found that, while social isolation was a prevalent issue, community-led initiatives and cultural traditions played a crucial role in fostering social bonds. Baker and O'Brien (2020) emphasized that while urban density can contribute to social isolation, participatory planning and well-designed urban spaces can counteract these effects by promoting social interactions and community engagement.

Patel and Singh (2021) provide a nuanced perspective, illustrating how urbanization generates economic opportunities while simultaneously exacerbating social inequalities and diminishing social capital, particularly among marginalized communities. Wang (2018) identified that urban design and inclusive planning play an essential role in enhancing social interactions, emphasizing the significance of accessible public spaces, green infrastructure, and community-driven initiatives. Likewise, Rodriguez and Garcia (2019) argue that inclusive urban planning contributes to stronger social cohesion by providing communal spaces that encourage interactions and a shared sense of identity.

Adeyemi (2019) highlights that although urbanization disrupts traditional social structures, grassroots initiatives and social networks play a crucial role in sustaining social cohesion in urban settings. Similarly, Hernandez (2020) asserts that inclusive, community-led programs significantly contribute to fostering trust and strengthening social relationships among urban residents.

Li and Wu (2023) examined the evolution of social networks and family structures in response to urbanization, underscoring the importance of community-based organizations in providing social support and enhancing community resilience. These discussions suggest that urbanization's impact on social cohesion is highly variable, contingent upon numerous factors such as governance quality, urban planning policies, land management, and the ability to monitor and address social changes (Sakketa, 2023).

Ultimately, the extent to which urbanization drives socioeconomic transformations and reshapes human settlements and its subsequent effects on social cohesion remains an empirical question central to this study. By investigating this complex relationship, this research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the mechanisms through which urbanization influences social cohesion, thereby addressing key gaps in the existing literature.

### **2.3 Conceptual Framework**

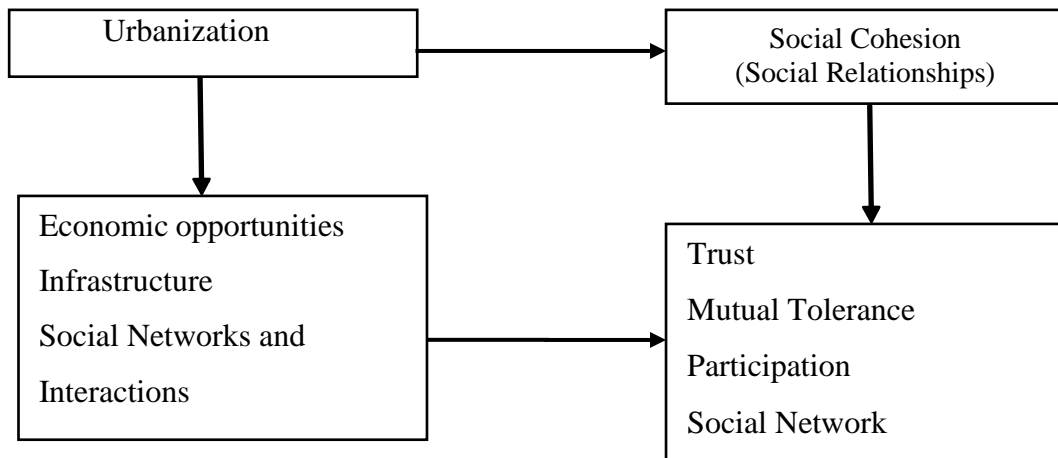
The conceptual framework on urbanization and social cohesion offer valuable insights into the interplay between urbanization and societal bonds, with social capital theory and community cohesion models providing essential lenses. Social capital theory emphasizes how social networks, trust, participation and mutual tolerance foster cohesion, while, Community cohesion models emphasize the significance of shared values, common norms, and a collective identity in promoting social unity and a sense of belonging. These models highlight how cohesive communities are built on mutual trust, social inclusion, and active participation, fostering positive relationships among diverse groups. A strong sense of community emerges when individuals feel connected through common values and collective goals, reducing social fragmentation. This cohesion is reinforced through inclusive institutions, equitable opportunities, and cultural integration, ensuring that all members feel valued and engaged.

Additionally, social stability is strengthened when individuals recognize their shared responsibilities and contributions to the community. By fostering cooperation and understanding, community cohesion models help mitigate social divisions and promote harmonious interactions, ultimately enhancing overall social well-being and resilience in urban settings.

Researchers propose two key hypotheses on the urbanization-social cohesion nexus. First, urbanization alters social cohesion by increasing diversity, potentially enhancing social networks and interactions, or conversely, leading to social isolation and a loss of social capital, weakening cohesion. Second, urbanization drives economic, social, and cultural transformations that reshape social networks and the structure of relationships, affecting social cohesion. These shifts are analytically complex, as urbanization's indirect effects on social cohesion vary with context. Linking social capital and social network theories underscores the dynamic role of networks in facilitating or hindering social cohesion within rapidly urbanizing environments.

A study by Sakketa et al. (2023) found that urbanization and its associated structural changes are expected to impact social cohesion through several mechanisms. First, urbanization-induced structural transformation can lead to changes in attitudes and values within society. Second, economic mechanisms, including increased employment opportunities, improved infrastructure, and enhanced services, play a crucial role in this process. Lastly, changes in the social structure can affect the overall well-being of societies, which subsequently influences social cohesion. These mechanisms highlight the complex interplay between urbanization and the dynamics of social bonds and community trust.

While, urbanization could drive or impede sustainable economic development, the direct and indirect effects of urbanization and the accompanying socioeconomic changes to social cohesion are a priori unclear. Figure 2 summarizes the theoretical link and potential pathways discussed earlier. Therefore, it is important to the empirical evidence across a variety of urban contexts.

**Figure 2***Conceptual Framework of the Study**Sources:* Adopted from (Sakketa, 2023)

## 2.4 Research Gap

Despite extensive research on urbanization, its impact on social cohesion remains underexplored, particularly in rapidly urbanizing cities of developing nations like Nepal. Prevailing theoretical frameworks, such as social capital theory and community cohesion models, provide insights into trust, social networks, and civic participation but do not fully account for how urbanization reshapes these elements in diverse and evolving urban settings. The transformation of traditional social structures, community interactions, and collective identity due to urban expansion requires further theoretical refinement. Additionally, the indirect and context-specific effects of urbanization on social cohesion remain inadequately addressed, necessitating a more nuanced theoretical approach. Empirically, most studies on urbanization focus on economic and infrastructural aspects, with limited attention to its social consequences, particularly in developing urban contexts.

In Nepal, there is a notable lack of research examining how urbanization affects community cohesion, social trust, and neighborhood solidarity, especially in rapidly expanding cities like Bharatpur Metropolitan City. Existing studies often overlook variations in socio-economic transformations within these urban areas, failing to capture localized social dynamics. The absence of empirical studies that specifically analyze the role of urbanization in shaping social cohesion in Nepalese cities underscores the need for further research to bridge this gap.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Philosophical Views

In academic research, philosophical assumptions represent a fundamental set of beliefs that shape and direct inquiries (Cresswell & Clark, 2011). Although these philosophical perspectives often remain implicit in the research process, they still significantly influence the approach to and conduct of research and must be recognized. The term "worldview" refers to a foundational collection of beliefs that guide actions (Guba, 1990). "Paradigm" is often used interchangeably with worldview (Cresswell & Clark, 2011), an idea popularized by Thomas Kuhn (1970) (Neuman, 2014). Worldviews encompass a researcher's fundamental perspective on the nature of reality and research. These perspectives are shaped by the researcher's academic discipline, the theoretical orientations of advisors and faculty, and prior research experiences. Researchers' philosophical assumptions typically affect their decision to adopt qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods approaches in their studies. While an extensive exploration of these philosophical assumptions is not always necessary to conduct research, it is important to note that researchers often make implicit choices between them when designing and carrying out their studies (Neuman, 2014).

This study explores the relationship between urbanization and social cohesion in Bharatpur City, grounded in a positivist philosophical framework. This paradigm posits that both urbanization and social cohesion are real, measurable phenomena with objective existence. Utilizing a structured, empirical approach, the research seeks to identify and quantify the connections between urban growth and the community's social fabric. By focusing on measurable data, the study aims to provide objective insights that can be generalized across similar contexts, enhancing our understanding of how urbanization influences social cohesion. This approach emphasizes the importance of empirical evidence in examining complex social dynamics within rapidly urbanizing environments.

#### ***Ontology (Nature of Reality)***

Ontology is a philosophical domain that examines the nature of existence and reality, addressing fundamental questions regarding what constitutes being and the foundational categories that define reality (Neuman, 2014). Here, the realist

ontological stance asserts that urbanization and social cohesion exist as tangible, observable phenomena. From this perspective, urban growth marked by factors like increasing population density, infrastructure development, and changing settlement patterns can be objectively measured. Similarly, social cohesion indicators such as trust, community involvement, and social networks are real entities that can be quantified through empirical data.

By grounding this research in realism, the study recognizes urbanization in the study area as both a physical and social phenomenon with tangible impacts on social cohesion. The interaction between expanding urban environments and their influence on communal structures such as shared values, community trust, and patterns of social interaction—reflects observable changes that can be assessed through statistical analysis. As urbanization progresses, measurable factors including access to infrastructure, demographic shifts, and evolving patterns of community engagement can be examined to evaluate their direct influence on social cohesion. Consequently, this research seeks to elucidate the objective relationships between urbanization and social cohesion, offering insights into the ways in which urbanization is reshaping the social fabric of this diverse urban setting.

### **Epistemology (*Theory of Knowledge*)**

Epistemology explores the relationship between the knower and the known, emphasizing the processes through which knowledge is acquired and understood. It critically examines the scope, sources, limitations, and validity of knowledge within a given field of study. As Neuman (2014) defines it, epistemology is a branch of philosophy concerned with the construction of knowledge, addressing the fundamental question of how we come to know what we know and identifying the most reliable methods for uncovering truth. Here, the positivist epistemological foundation frames urbanization and social cohesion as phenomena that can be systematically observed and measured through empirical methods. Positivism's focus on objectivity aligns well with the study of urbanization in Bharatpur, where measurable elements such as population growth, infrastructure development, and migration patterns are shaping the urban landscape. The study seeks to uncover statistical relationships between these urbanization factors and social cohesion indicators, such as community trust, participation in social networks, and collective values.

### **Axiology (*Role of Values*)**

Axiology focuses on the study of values, value judgments, and the varying degrees of worth assigned to different entities. Traditionally, the notion of "value" was closely linked to the evaluation of an entity's significance or merit, reflecting broader philosophical inquiries into ethics and aesthetics. In research, values play a crucial role in shaping the interpretation of findings, as researchers engage with both objective and subjective perspectives. Furthermore, Axiology is recognized as the influence of values in the research process (Creswell & Clark, 2011). In this study, objectivity and neutrality guide the analysis of urbanization and social cohesion in Bharatpur City, reflecting a positivist approach. This research acknowledged the influence of socio-cultural values in shaping community interactions and trust, recognizing that urbanization impacts social cohesion in complex ways. By valuing fairness, inclusivity, and respect for diverse perspectives, the study sought to represent the voices of all community members accurately.

By applying a positivist approach, the study is positioned to reveal generalizable patterns regarding how Bharatpur's rapid urbanization influences its social fabric. Such as, as new settlements emerge and population density increases, the study can empirically assess whether this urban growth fosters stronger or weaker community bonds and trust. Rigorous data collection, such as surveys measuring social cohesion or urban growth metrics, allows the researcher to quantify the impact of urbanization on both established and new communities.

This empirical foundation enables the research to objectively explore how the urban reality of Bharatpur marked by diverse ethnicities, languages, and cultural practices affects social cohesion. Through statistical analysis, the study aims to reveal causal links and patterns, providing insights that contribute to a broader understanding of effects of urbanization on social cohesion in both Bharatpur and similar urban environments.

### **3.2 Rationale of the Site Selection**

Bharatpur, one of Nepal's fastest-growing urban centers, has been selected as the research site due to its unique combination of rapid urbanization and diverse settlements. The city's shift from a predominantly agrarian society to a thriving urban

center provides a valuable case for analyzing the connection between urbanization and social cohesion. As the administrative center of the Chitwan District and a key transit point between eastern and western Nepal, Bharatpur hosts a diverse population representing various ethnicities, languages, religions, and cultures. This diversity offers a rich context for exploring how urban expansion influences social cohesion across different demographic groups.

Bharatpur is experiencing the emergence of new settlements alongside established ones, leading to a dynamic social landscape where traditional forms of social cohesion are evolving. Moreover, the city's expanding infrastructure and growing investments in education, healthcare, and industry, coupled with its changing economic environment, offer further factors for exploring how urban development affects social cohesion.

This study aims to analyze the complex interplay between urban growth and social cohesion in a diverse and changing context. By focusing on Bharatpur, the research seeks to generate context-specific insights into the city's evolving social fabric. These findings will not only deepen understanding of the impacts of urbanization on social cohesion within Bharatpur but also contribute to broader knowledge of urbanization processes in other developing regions undergoing similar transitions.

### **3.3 Research Design**

The research design constitutes the overarching framework, structure, and methodological approach utilized to investigate a research question and minimize potential variations within the study (Kerlinger, 2010). This study explores the relationship between urbanization and social cohesion in Bharatpur Metropolitan City by employing both descriptive and explanatory research designs to provide a thorough analysis.. The descriptive design helps identify and outline key variables related to urbanization, such as infrastructure development, economic opportunities, and the availability of public services. It also measures indicators of social cohesion, such as trust, community participation, and mutual support among residents. This design helps to establish a foundational understanding of the current urban landscape and the state of social cohesion. The explanatory design, on the other hand, delves deeper by exploring the cause-and-effect relationships between urbanization and social

cohesion. Together, these research designs offer a comprehensive examination of the relationship between urbanization and social cohesion in Bharatpur., offering insights into both the current situation and underlying causal processes.

### **3.4 Nature and Sources of Data**

In this research, both quantitative and qualitative data were used to obtain results. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires using a field survey method. These surveys captured numerical measures related to urbanization, such as social networks, opportunities, and infrastructure development, as well as social cohesion indicators, including trust, social networks, and community involvement. Qualitative data were gathered through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with community leaders and residents, offering detailed insights into community dynamics.

The study utilized both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were collected through surveys and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) conducted in specific urban areas, while secondary data were obtained from existing literature, government reports, and statistical databases to offer contextual and historical insights. By combining these approaches, the research sought to gain a well-rounded understanding of how urbanization influences social cohesion in Bharatpur.

### **3.5 Universe, Population and Sample Size**

This study focused on Bharatpur Metropolitan City, selected due to its status as one of the most rapidly urbanizing cities in Nepal. The study population encompassed all residents of Bharatpur Metropolitan, which is divided into 29 wards and consists of a diverse population, including migrants. According to the 2021 population census, Bharatpur Metropolitan City had a total population of 369,377, comprising 134,001 males and 146,501 females. Among the wards, ward number 10 had the largest population, with 21,844 residents. In terms of households, Bharatpur Metropolitan City had a total of 69,035 households, with ward number 10 having the highest number at 6,477. This ward, also known as the city center, was selected for the study due to its high population density and extensive infrastructure, characterized by significant commercial and residential development. The sample size for the study was determined using the formulas provided by Cochran (1977) and Yamane (1967).

$$\text{Preliminary sample size } (n_0) = \left[ \frac{Z_{\alpha}}{E} \right]^2 \times PQ$$

Where  $Z_{\alpha}$  = Critical value of a Z at  $\alpha$  level of significance, considering 5.% level of significance, critical value is 1.96. Also, taking desired error (E) as 5.97% and population proportion of people experienced urbanization in inner Terai of Nepal as 41.97% (Joshi, 2023), then preliminary sample size ( $n_0$ ) is. The desired error (E) is taken as 5.97%, since there is a practice of using desired error from 5% to 8% in social sciences (Springate, 2012).

Where,  $P=41.97=0.4197$ ,  $Q=0.5803$ ,  $E= 0.0597$ ,  $Z_{\alpha}= 1.96$

Thus

$$\begin{aligned} n_0 &= \left[ \frac{1.96}{0.0597} \right]^2 \times 0.4197 \times 0.5803 \\ &= 290 \end{aligned}$$

Also, Population size (N) as the number of household in the study area is 6477, then the final sample size (n) is determined as below:

$$n = \frac{n_0}{1 + \frac{n_0}{N}} = \frac{290}{1 + \frac{290}{6477}} = 269$$

Hence, 269 household were taken for the final sample size of respondents.

### **Selection of Respondents and Its Justification**

Respondents for the study were selected using simple random sampling from adults aged 20 years and older in the identified ward to ensure a diverse representation of the population. The sample included individuals with varying characteristics such as gender, age, length of residence, education, and income, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of different perspectives. Priority was given to household heads or those with significant responsibilities in managing household and social functions, as their experience, knowledge, and practices in these roles were deemed crucial for providing valuable insights.

Mature respondents were specifically selected, as their insights into the connection between urbanization and social cohesion were anticipated to be more detailed and well-informed. This approach ensured that the quantitative data collected reflected diverse and meaningful perspectives.

For qualitative data collection, key informants were purposively selected based on their expertise and societal roles. These included senior citizens, social leaders, urban residents and individuals with in-depth knowledge of urbanization and social cohesion. The selection of these respondents was grounded in the necessity for well-informed and contextually pertinent perspectives, which were deemed essential for enriching the study's exploration of the relationship between urbanization and social cohesion.

### **3.6 Methods of Data Collection**

The study employed a mixed-methods research approach, which combines both quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study. According to Tashakkori and Creswell (2007) and Creswell and Clark (2011), this approach involves collecting, analyzing, and integrating data from both methods to draw comprehensive conclusions. By leveraging the strengths of both approaches, mixed-methods research provides a richer and more in-depth understanding of research issues (Neuman, 2014).

Mixed-methods research goes beyond simply collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data separately; it involves using these methods together in a complementary way to enhance the overall robustness of the study (Creswell, 2009). Quantitative research systematically collects data from a large number of respondents by asking standardized questions and recording their answers (Neuman, 2014). It represents human experiences in numerical categories, allowing for statistical analysis. On the other hand, qualitative research focuses on detailed descriptions and analyses of the quality and substance of human experiences.

This study adopted a concurrent mixed-methods design, where both quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously. This approach enables the researcher to synthesize and combine data throughout the analysis, offering a more thorough and holistic understanding of the research issue. By converging the findings from both methods, the study aimed to draw more robust and holistic conclusions (Creswell, 2009). The following tools and techniques were utilized:

## **Survey Methods**

In this study, a key method for collecting quantitative data was an interview schedule using a structured questionnaire. The field survey included closed-ended questions designed to systematically examine the research problem. Random sampling was employed to select participants from households for the interviews. The researcher conducted these interviews, asking pre-designed questions and directly recording participants' responses on the questionnaire. This approach ensured consistency in data collection, allowing for reliable and comparable results across the sample. By focusing on closed-ended questions, the study facilitated the quantification of responses, enabling efficient data analysis and enhancing the accuracy of conclusions drawn from the findings.

## **Survey Questionnaire**

The questionnaire consisted of three sections. The first section captured demographic variables such as age, caste, occupation, gender, and education. The second section assessed urbanization indicators, including infrastructure, social interaction, and economic opportunities. The third section measured social cohesion, focusing on trust, mutual tolerance, social networks, and participation. Each indicator was addressed through a set of questions rated on a five-point Likert scale. This approach enabled the collection of standardized data, facilitating statistical analysis of the impact of urbanization on social cohesion.

## **Key Informants Interviews (KII)**

To further understand how urbanization affects social cohesiveness, qualitative data were obtained via Key Informant Interviews (KII) with older citizens, community leaders, and urban residents. The interviews were guided by a semi-structured and open-ended checklist, which allowed for a thorough examination of the factors influencing social dynamics in the city. The data from these interviews were integrated with the quantitative results to make the study's conclusions more reliable and comprehensive.

Researcher conducted 14 Key Informant Interviews (KII) with local residents of ward number 10 of Bharatpur Metropolitan City, comprising seven male and seven female participants. These interviewees possess in-depth knowledge of the city's development over the years and provided valuable insights into the current state of social cohesion.

### **Language of Questionnaire**

The questionnaire was initially developed in English and then translated into Nepali, followed by a re-translation into English for accuracy. During the data collection phase, both English and Nepali were used to gather responses. The researcher, along with the enumerators, possessed proficiency in both languages. The team consisted of four enumerators (2 males and 2 females), all of whom were graduate students with strong language skills. They underwent a two-day training session to ensure proper data collection.

On the initial day, the enumerators received an orientation covering the study's objectives, the questionnaire structure, interview methods, and strategies for effective communication, with a particular focus on rapport-building skills. While on the second day, they received practical training on research ethics and data collection methods, with an emphasis on conducting interviews. The enumerators practiced how to engage respondents, encourage participation, use appropriate language, and ask probing questions to obtain relevant answers.

Each enumerator was equipped with a set of materials, including a notebook, pencil, eraser, sharpener, and bag, individual consent forms for participants, questionnaires, and checklists. Throughout the fieldwork, the researcher regularly monitored the enumerators to ensure data quality. Additionally, the researcher personally conducted in-depth interviews with key informants. The data collected in Nepali was later translated into English by a freelance translator. To ensure the reliability of the primary data, a combination of interviews, questionnaires, and field surveys was used. The researcher closely supervised the data collection process to maintain the accuracy and integrity of the information.

### **3.7 Methods of Data Analysis**

The statistical analysis was carried out using applied statistical methods and the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), a software tool specifically designed for the analysis of quantitative data. Descriptive, illustrative, and inferential statistical approaches were employed in this study for data analysis. The analysis was conducted in two stages: quantitative analysis followed by qualitative analysis. Quantitative data from the survey were analyzed using statistical tools, with demographic patterns presented through frequency and percentage distributions. Correlation and regression analyses were performed to examine the relationship and impact of urbanization on social cohesion.

Furthermore, to the quantitative findings, data from Key Informant Interviews (KII) provided detailed insights into urban inhabitants' experiences and perceptions. These qualitative data were evaluated using narrative analysis, with a focus on the social processes and cultural dynamics that influence social cohesiveness in metropolitan settings.

The Concurrent Triangulation Strategy compares and supports the conclusions of quantitative data with qualitative results. The study aims to provide a thorough knowledge of the relationship between urbanization and social cohesion by combining quantitative and qualitative data sources.

### **3.8 Ethical Considerations**

The researcher followed ethical guidelines to maintain respondent privacy and ensure the reliability and validity of the data in the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring they were fully aware of the study's purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits, and allowing them the freedom to withdraw at any stage without penalty. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained by removing personal identifiers and securely storing data accessible only to the research team.

Participation was entirely voluntary, with no coercion or undue influence, and individuals' decisions to participate did not affect their access to services or benefits. The study respected the autonomy and dignity of all participants, particularly those

from vulnerable groups, by safeguarding against exploitation. Efforts were made to minimize potential harm, with an emphasis on the research's benefits in contributing to knowledge and informing policy. Cultural sensitivity guided interactions, ensuring respect for local customs and norms. Transparency and honesty underpinned all communication with participants and stakeholders, including clear explanations of the research objectives and data usage. Prior to data collection, the research proposal was submitted for ethical approval to ensure compliance with established ethical standards.

### **3.9 Limitations of the Study**

This study focused exclusively on Bharatpur Metropolitan City in the Chitwan District, concentrating specifically on urbanization and social cohesion within the selected ward. While many factors could potentially influence urbanization and social cohesion, only a limited number of factors were considered, with an emphasis on horizontal factors, as the study was entirely community-based. Despite these limitations, the study's conclusions provided valuable insights into the targeted topics.

## CHAPTER IV

### URBANIZATION AND SOCIAL COHESION IN BHARATPUR CITY

#### 4.1 Descriptive Features of Respondents

The descriptive study\analysis of respondents presents a comprehensive overview of the demographic characteristics that may shape their experiences with urbanization and social cohesion in Bharatpur Metropolitan City. The key variables examined in this section include age, gender, and educational background, duration of residence, income levels, and type of housing. These demographic attributes are crucial for understanding the diverse perspectives of the study population and how they may influence individuals' social interactions, integration, and perceptions of urban life.

- 1. Age:** The respondents' age distribution reveals generational disparities in their experiences and interactions with urbanization and social cohesiveness in Bharatpur Metropolitan City. Age influences community engagement, social integration, and views of urban evolution. Younger respondents may navigate urban surroundings differently, influenced by changing expectations and adaptability, whereas older generations may view urbanization through the prism of long-term experience and stability. This variance sheds light on how different age groups contribute to and are affected by the changing social and infrastructure context, hence shaping overall patterns of social cohesiveness.

**Table 2**

*Age of Respondents*

Age Group	Number of Respondents	Percent
	<b>52.65±9.98</b>	
Below 40 yrs	27	10.00
40 to 59 yrs	200	74.30
60 yrs and above	42	15.60
<b>Total</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>100%</b>

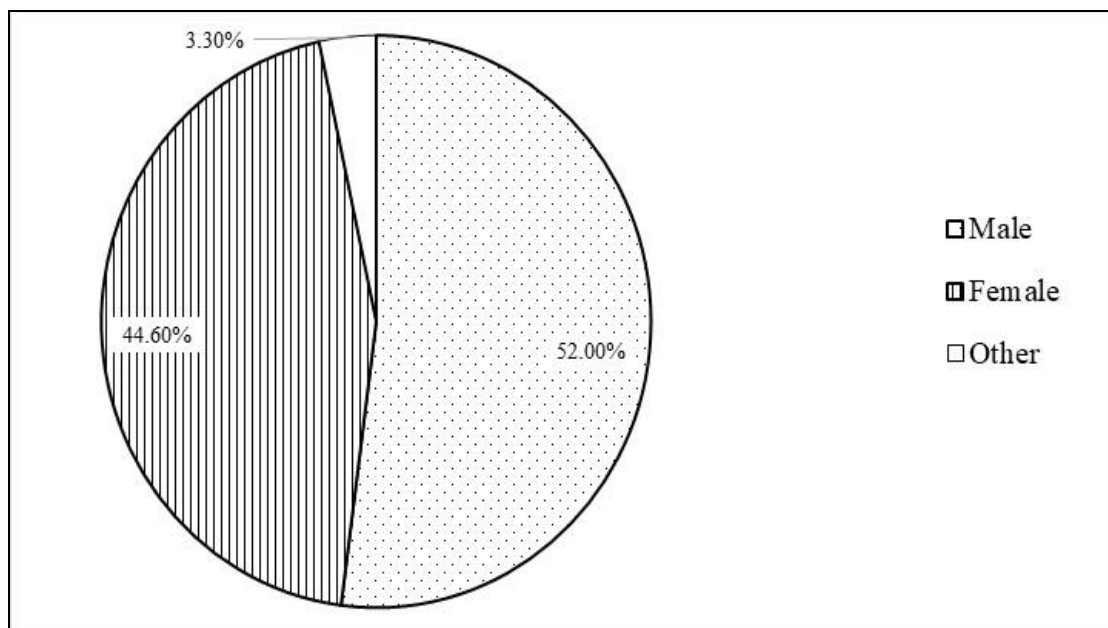
*Source:* Field Survey, 2024

The table 2 shows that, 74.3% of respondents are between the ages of 40 and 60, indicating that this cohort plays a considerable role in community life and urban transformation processes in study area. The fact that only 10% of respondents are under 40, on the other hand, suggests that younger populations and their views on urbanization are not well represented. According to the opinions of long-term residents with established social networks, the majority of participants are middle-aged and older, as evidenced by the mean age of 52.65 years ( $\pm 9.98$ ). This distribution emphasizes how senior age groups dominate the formation of urban cohesion and the experiences of urban growth.

**2. Gender:** Gender is an important aspect in determining involvement in social, economic, and political sectors in urban contexts. It influences access to resources, the establishment of social networks, and levels of community engagement, all of which lead to different perceptions of social cohesiveness. This study takes a gender-sensitive approach, including male, female, and gender-diverse respondents, allowing for a more nuanced investigation of how urbanization affects people with varied gender identities. Understanding these processes is critical to alleviating inequities and promoting equitable urban development.

**Figure 4**

*Gender of Respondents*



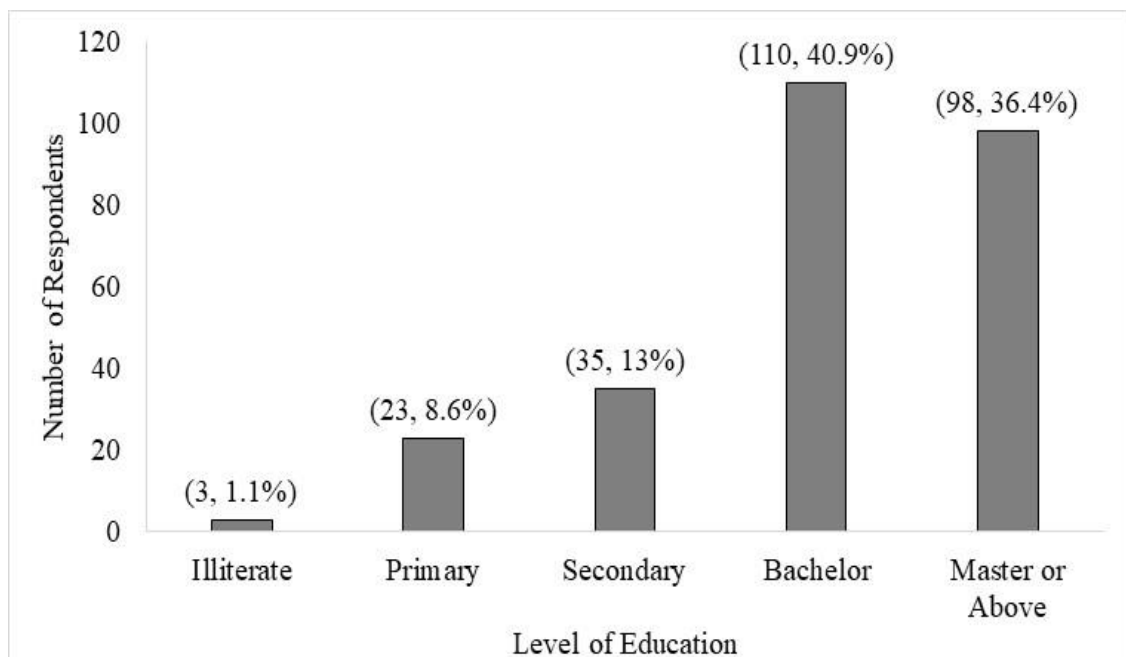
*Source:* Field Survey, 2024

The figure 4 shows gender distribution indicates that 52% of respondents are male, 44.6% are female, and 3.3% identify as "third gender." This near-balance of male and female participants allows for a more comparative investigation of the effects of urbanization on various genders. The inclusion of gender-diverse persons illustrates the study's inclusive approach, which encompasses a wide range of viewpoints. This distribution improves our understanding of how urbanization influences social involvement and integration across gender identities in the research area.

**3. Education:** Education is a significant factor determining social mobility, economic participation, and community engagement in metropolitan areas. Higher educational attainment is frequently associated with higher access to economic opportunities, social capital, and a greater sense of belonging in metropolitan settings which promotes trust, mutual support, and collaborative partnerships that boost social cohesiveness. Education also improves people's sense of belonging by providing them with the skills and knowledge they need to participate in civic and cultural activities, which contribute to the vibrancy and inclusion of urban environments.

**Figure 5**

*Level of Education Attained*



Source: Field Survey, 2024

The figure 5 displays the educational attainment of respondents in Bharatpur Metropolitan City, highlighting the role of education in shaping urban social cohesion. The data reveals that the majority of respondents have attained a higher level of education, with 40.9% (110) holding a Bachelor's degree and 36.4% (98) having completed a Master's degree or higher. This indicates that a substantial portion of the population possesses advanced educational qualifications, which can significantly contribute to economic participation and social engagement. Conversely, lower levels of education are less prevalent, with 13% (35) of respondents having completed secondary education, 8.6% (23) reaching primary education, and only 1.1% (3) identified as illiterate. This suggests that while there is a small segment of the population with limited educational attainment, the overall educational landscape reflects a trend toward higher education. The high proportion of respondents with Bachelor's and Master's degrees suggests that urbanization in Bharatpur may be fostering an environment conducive to educational advancement, which in turn enhances social cohesion by promoting trust, mutual support, and inclusive participation in community and civic life. The presence of educated individuals is likely to strengthen economic opportunities and drive collaborative efforts to build resilient and vibrant urban communities

**4. Living Period:** The length of residence in Bharatpur Metropolitan City serves as a key indicator of residents' familiarity with and adaptation to the city's evolving urban landscape. Long-term residents often possess a deeper understanding of infrastructural transformations, shifts in social networks, and the overall dynamics of community life. Their experiences provide valuable insights into the historical trajectory of urbanization and its impact on social cohesion. In contrast, newer residents may encounter challenges in integrating into established communities, navigating social norms, and forming meaningful connections. This disparity in experience can influence levels of trust, participation, and mutual support within the urban fabric. Analyzing the duration of residence helps to capture the varying degrees of social integration and engagement, shedding light on how urbanization shapes social cohesion across different population groups in Bharatpur.

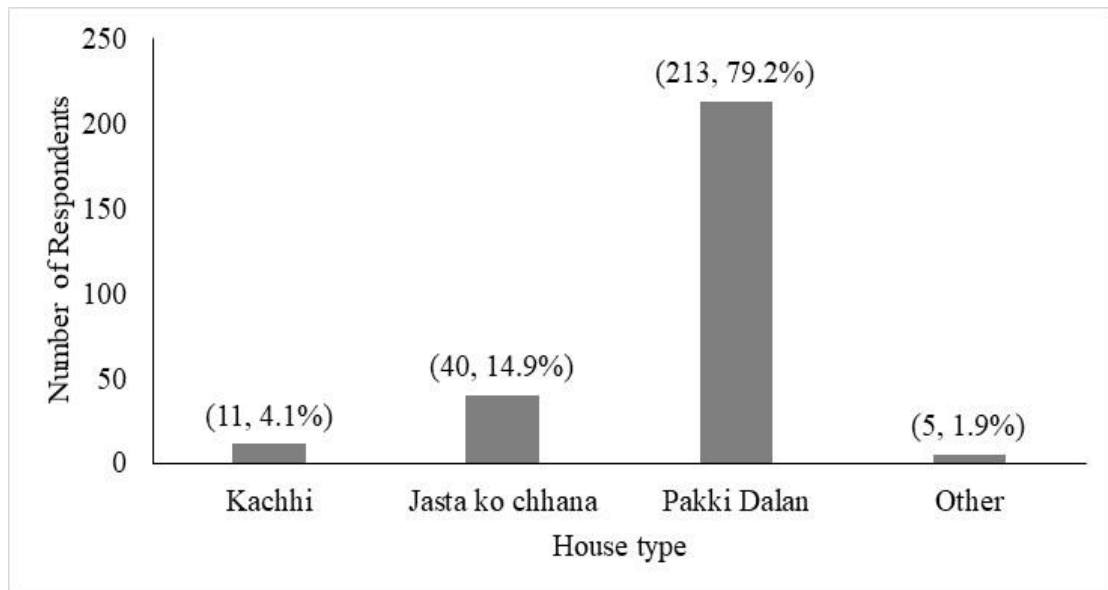
**Table 3***Living Period of Respondents*

<b>Living Period</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percent</b>
	<b>20.56±6.76</b>	
Below 15 yrs	67	24.90
15 to 30 yrs	188	69.90
30 yrs and above	14	5.20
<b>Total</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Field Survey, 2024*

The distribution of respondents' length of residence in Bharatpur Metropolitan City highlights varying degrees of social integration and familiarity with the city's urban transformation. As shown in Table 3, the majority (69.9%) have resided in the city for 15 to 30 years, suggesting significant exposure to infrastructural and social changes. This group likely plays a key role in fostering social cohesion through established networks and community participation. Approximately 24.9% of respondents have lived in the city for less than 15 years, representing newer residents who may face challenges in social integration and community engagement. A smaller segment (5.2%) has resided in Bharatpur for over 30 years, reflecting long-term residents with deep-rooted connections and a significant role in maintaining social bonds and local traditions. The mean residence duration of 20.56 years ( $\pm 6.76$ ) indicates a relatively stable population, with a blend of long-standing and newer residents. This dynamic underscores the need to address the experiences of both groups to enhance social cohesion and ensure inclusive urban development in Bharatpur Metropolitan City.

**5. House type:** Housing style reflects socioeconomic level and local dynamics, influencing people's sense of belonging, resource availability, and community participation. Formal housing is frequently associated with greater stability, improved infrastructure, and stronger social networks, all of which promote social cohesiveness. Informal or temporary housing, on the other hand, may signify economic insecurity, a lack of services, and low community participation. Studying housing diversity in Bharatpur Metropolitan City reveals differences in urban experiences, providing insights into how urbanization impacts various social groups and guiding policies for equitable urban development.

**Figure 6***Style of Houses*

*Source:* Field Survey, 2024

The figure 6 shows, housing styles in Bharatpur Metropolitan City reflects socioeconomic disparities and varying levels of urban development. The majority of respondents (79.2 %) reside in *Pakki Dalan* (permanent concrete houses), indicating stability, improved infrastructure, and stronger social networks that contribute to social cohesion. In contrast, 14.9% live in *Jasta ko chhana* (corrugated sheet houses), suggesting semi-permanent housing linked to moderate economic stability and limited infrastructure. A smaller portion (4.1%) resides in *Kachhi* (temporary or mud houses), reflecting economic insecurity and potential exclusion from urban services. Moreover, 1.9% reported residing in different types of housing. The prevalence of permanent housing emphasizes the benefits of formal infrastructure, whereas the presence of temporary and semi-permanent housing emphasizes the necessity for policies addressing housing inequality in order to ensure inclusive urban development and social cohesiveness.

**6. Income:** Income is a key indicator of socioeconomic position, influencing individuals' access to resources, services, and opportunities in the urban environment. This study divides respondents into socioeconomic groups to determine how financial stability affects their interactions with and views of urbanization and social cohesion. Higher-income groups are more likely to have

access to decent housing, education, and large social networks, which promotes stronger community engagement and social integration. Lower-income respondents may face challenges to participation and resource allocation, reflecting economic inequities that influence urban experiences. Analyzing income distribution sheds light on the socioeconomic diversity of Bharatpur Metropolitan City and its implications for equitable urban development.

**Table 4**

*Income Group of Respondents*

<b>Income(Monthly) Group</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percent</b>
	<b>61228.63±20362.93</b>	
Below Rs. 50000	51	19.00
Rs. 50000 to Rs. 100000	208	77.30
Rs. 100000 and above	10	3.70
<b>Total</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>100</b>

*Sources:* Field Survey, 2024

The income distribution of Table 4 highlights the significant socioeconomic disparities among respondents in Bharatpur Metropolitan City, which plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' interactions with urbanization and social cohesion. A substantial portion of respondents, 19.00%, fall into the low-income category, earning below Rs. 50,000. These individuals are likely to encounter barriers in accessing essential resources, such as quality housing, education, and healthcare, which may limit their social integration and participation in community activities. As a result, they may experience social exclusion or isolation, contributing to weakened social cohesion. The majority of respondents, 77.30%, belong to the middle-income group, earning between Rs. 50,000 and Rs. 100,000. This group tends to have better access to urban resources and services, fostering stronger social ties, greater community engagement, and better opportunities for upward mobility. In contrast, the high-income group, comprising only 3.70% of respondents earning Rs. 100,000 or more, enjoys considerable access to premium services and benefits from larger social networks, which further enhances their ability to contribute to urban integration and community development. The income distribution analysis reveals that urbanization in Bharatpur Metropolitan City is likely to have disparate impacts on different

socioeconomic groups, with higher-income individuals benefiting from more opportunities and lower-income groups facing challenges in achieving social integration. These findings underscore the importance of addressing economic disparities in urban development policies, ensuring that all income groups have equitable access to resources and opportunities, thereby promoting social cohesion and inclusive growth within the city.

## **4.2 Urbanization through Key Factors**

The degree of urbanization in Bharatpur Metropolitan City is assessed through three key factors: economic opportunities, infrastructure, and social networks and interactions. Economic opportunities are measured by income levels, job diversity, entrepreneurial activity, and access to markets. Infrastructure development is evaluated through access to essential services such as water, electricity, transportation, healthcare, education, and sanitation. Social networks and interactions are analyzed by examining the frequency of social activities, technological engagement, cultural diversity, and community support networks. Together, these factors offer a holistic view of urbanization in the study area. Researcher preferred to summate score is calculated for each of these factors, allowing for the identification of urbanization. Urbanization levels are categorized based on these scores, with values below 50% classified as low, between 50% and 70% as average, and above 70% as high. This categorization facilitates the preparation and analysis of frequency distributions, providing insights into the patterns and extent of urbanization across the study area.

### **4.2.1 Infrastructure Development**

Infrastructure development is an essential component of urbanization, representing the increase of physical and social facilities required for urban growth. It encompasses access to water, energy, transportation, healthcare, education, and sanitation. In Bharatpur Metropolitan City, infrastructure is a crucial indicator of urbanization, driving economic growth and developing social networks. Urbanization, as expressed in infrastructure, represents both physical transformation and increases in living standards, hence promoting economic and social activity. Total ratings for

infrastructure, economic possibilities, and social networks provide a comprehensive measure of urbanization levels, capturing the multifactorial impact on urban development and societal transformation.

**Table 5**

*Infrastructure Development*

<b>Infrastructure development</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Low	5	1.9
Average	140	52
High	124	46.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Field Survey, 2024*

Regarding the table 5 shows that majority of the respondents agreed that there is average infrastructure development in the study area, where as a significant number of respondents which are nearly the half of the total sample respondents (46.1%) said that their area has high degree of infrastructure development. Only a few (1.9%) responded that there are is poorly developed in infrastructure. This result underscores that while most residents experience moderate infrastructural growth, a substantial portion acknowledges advanced development, reflecting ongoing urbanization efforts in the region. The minimal percentage of low scores points to limited dissatisfaction, indicating that infrastructure development is broadly perceived as progressing, with room for further enhancement to address the needs of all community members.

#### **4.2.2 Social Networks and Interaction**

Social networks and interactions are important aspects of urbanization, indicating community engagement and connection. Expanding social networks in Bharatpur Metropolitan City promotes trust, cultural exchange, and collective engagement, all of which build social cohesion. Urbanization improves interactions by providing common areas, technology, and community events, fostering mutual support and collaboration. This study examines social networks and interactions using factors like social activity frequency, communication technology use, cultural variety, and community support. These parameters capture the social fabric of cities and indicate how urbanization effects cohesion, providing insights into community dynamics in Bharatpur.

**Table 6***Social Networks, Interaction in Society*

<b>Social Networks and Interaction</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Low	4	1.5
Average	42	15.6
High	223	82.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Field Survey.2024*

The frequency distribution in table 6 indicates that an overwhelming majority of respondents (82.9%) perceive the level of social networks and interactions in their community as high. This suggests that urbanization has positively influenced interpersonal relationships and strengthened community bonds. A smaller proportion of respondents (15.6%) rated social networks and interactions at an average level, reflecting moderate engagement within certain areas or demographic groups. Notably, only 1.5% of respondents reported low levels of social interaction, indicating that social isolation or disconnection is minimal within the study area. These findings highlight the critical role of strong social networks in fostering trust, cooperation, and social cohesion, underscoring the importance of maintaining and enhancing communal spaces and social initiatives as urbanization progresses.

#### **4.2.3 Economic Opportunities**

Economic opportunities are an important aspect of urbanization, affecting job patterns, income distribution, and total economic growth. Urbanization in Bharatpur Metropolitan City promotes job development, entrepreneurship, and market expansion, all of which contribute to economic mobility and a higher standard of living. Economic opportunities expand in proportion to urbanization, altering access to resources and diminishing socioeconomic inequities. This study analyzes economic prospects using measures such as income levels, employment diversity, market accessibility, and entrepreneurial participation. These indicators shed light on how urbanization promotes economic inclusion and social cohesion by reducing inequities and increasing shared prosperity within the community.

**Table 7***Economic Opportunities in Society*

<b>Economic Opportunities</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Low	4	1.5
Average	57	21.2
High	208	77.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>100</b>

*Sources: Field Survey, 2024*

The table 7 shows that a significant majority of respondents (77.3%) perceive economic opportunities in their area as high, indicating that urbanization has contributed to expanding job markets, business growth, and overall economic development. A smaller portion of respondents (21.2%) rated economic opportunities as average, reflecting moderate access to employment and economic resources. Only 1.5% of respondents indicated low economic opportunities, suggesting limited economic stagnation or dissatisfaction among a minimal segment of the population. These findings underscore the transformative role of urbanization in driving economic advancement, while also highlighting the need for continued efforts to ensure equitable access to economic benefits across all demographic groups within the community.

#### **4.2.4 Degree of Urbanization**

The degree of urbanization signifies the level of urban development within a given area and is typically measured through indicators such as population density and infrastructure expansion. UN DESA (2018) categorizes urbanization into four distinct levels: highly urbanized areas, characterized by high population density and advanced infrastructure; moderately urbanized areas, which exhibit medium population density and infrastructure development; semi-urban areas, marked by lower density and limited infrastructure; and rural areas, which have sparse populations and minimal infrastructure.

Beyond physical expansion, urbanization encompasses economic growth, infrastructural advancements, and social integration. In Bharatpur Metropolitan City, the urbanization process has led to significant transformations in spatial structures, economic systems, and social networks. Increased urbanization enhances access to essential services, economic opportunities, and community engagement, thereby contributing to improved living standards and fostering social cohesion.

This study assesses urbanization in Bharatpur through key dimensions, including economic opportunities, infrastructure development, and social networks. To evaluate urbanization levels, it employs indicators such as income diversity, accessibility of services, and community participation. These measures provide insights into urban development patterns and their implications for social cohesion within the city.

**Table 8**

*Degree of Urbanization*

<b>Degree of Urbanization</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Low	1	0.4
Average	79	29.4
High	189	70.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Field Survey, 2024*

The frequency distribution of table 8 reveals that a substantial majority of respondents (70.3%) perceive urbanization in their area as high, indicating significant progress in infrastructure, economic opportunities, and social connectivity. Approximately 29.4% of respondents rated urbanization at an average level, suggesting that while development is evident, certain areas may still be undergoing transformation. Only 0.4% of respondents reported low levels of urbanization, reflecting minimal dissatisfaction or underdevelopment within the community. These findings highlight Bharatpur's rapid urban growth and the broad recognition of urbanization's positive impact on enhancing living standards, fostering economic development, and strengthening social cohesion across the city.

Urbanization in Bharatpur Metropolitan City has significantly influenced infrastructure development, economic opportunities, and social networks. While urban growth has led to notable advancements in various sectors, it has also introduced several challenges that require strategic planning and policy interventions. Residents frequently highlight infrastructure and public services such as roads, water supply, electricity, and social amenities as critical areas affected by rapid urbanization. Although improvements have been made in these sectors, the increasing population density has placed considerable strain on essential services. According to L. Adhikari (personal communication, November 15, 2024), educational institutions in newly developed areas are experiencing overcrowding, while access to clean drinking water remains inconsistent, particularly during peak summer months. Furthermore, housing patterns have shifted towards apartment complexes and newly established residential areas on the outskirts, reflecting the city's efforts to accommodate its growing population. Despite these developments, infrastructure expansion has not been sufficient to meet increasing demands, underscoring the need for sustained investment and long-term urban planning (T. Poudel, personal communication, November 15, 2024).

In addition to infrastructural changes, urbanization has had a profound impact on social networks within the city. While the expansion of urban spaces has created greater opportunities for social engagement through community programs and public spaces, it has also contributed to the weakening of traditional social bonds, particularly in older settlements. M. Basnet (personal communication, November 15, 2024) observed that in long-established neighborhoods, participation in cultural events and festivals has declined as younger generations increasingly relocate to newer residential areas. This shift has led to a reduction in communal interactions that were once central to social cohesion. The influx of diverse populations has further reshaped community dynamics, facilitating multicultural exchanges but also contributing to social fragmentation. Strengthening social cohesion initiatives is essential to counteract the social disruptions caused by rapid urban expansion and ensure that diverse communities are integrated effectively (P. Ghimire, personal communication, November 15, 2024).

Urbanization has also created new economic opportunities, as evidenced by increased access to markets and the establishment of business hubs. Several interviewees emphasized that the city's economic growth has expanded employment prospects for both men and women, particularly through the rise of small enterprises and entrepreneurial ventures. B. Shrestha (personal communication, November 15, 2024) underscored the importance of implementing inclusive economic policies to prevent the marginalization of certain groups and ensure that economic benefits are equitably distributed across all communities. By promoting fair access to economic opportunities, urban development can contribute to broader social and economic stability (N. Karki, personal communication, November 15, 2024).

Despite these economic benefits, challenges related to local infrastructure services remain a pressing concern. According to S. Thapa (personal communication, November 17, 2024), the construction of ring roads has significantly improved connectivity and reduced commuting times across different parts of the city. However, issues such as insufficient street lighting in certain areas continue to pose safety risks, particularly for pedestrians during nighttime hours. Another key informant, Y. Lama (personal communication, November 17, 2024), expressed concerns about rising air pollution levels, attributing them to increased vehicular traffic and industrial expansion. This environmental issue has begun to affect public health, with residents reporting respiratory problems and other pollution-related illnesses. Additionally, noise pollution has emerged as a significant concern, with respondents noting that heightened traffic congestion and urban activities contribute to increased stress levels among the city's population (S. Khadka & R. Tamang, personal communication, November 17, 2024). These environmental and infrastructural challenges highlight the urgent need for effective urban planning and the enforcement of regulatory measures to enhance the overall quality of life in the city.

The expansion of commercial markets has also played a crucial role in shaping economic conditions in Bharatpur Metropolitan City. D. Gurung (personal communication, November 17, 2024) observed that the growth of retail centers and business districts has attracted investment and diversified employment opportunities,

particularly benefiting small businesses and startups. This expansion has contributed to the city's economic dynamism, allowing residents to improve their livelihoods. However, a third gender informant, R. Sharma (personal communication, November 19, 2024), stressed the necessity of implementing regulatory frameworks to maintain fair competition and prevent monopolistic practices that could hinder the equitable distribution of economic opportunities. Ensuring a balanced market structure is essential for sustaining long-term economic growth and preventing the concentration of wealth and power within a limited group of stakeholders (S. Gautam & C. Adhikari, personal communication, November 19, 2024).

Overall, the qualitative and quantitative findings indicate that urbanization in Bharatpur Metropolitan City has led to significant infrastructure development, enhanced economic prospects, and altered social structures. While these changes have introduced numerous opportunities, they have also created challenges, including strained public services, overcrowding, the erosion of traditional social networks, increasing environmental pollution, and inadequate urban infrastructure. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach that integrates strategic investment in urban infrastructure, active community participation, and the implementation of inclusive policies aimed at promoting sustainable urban growth. By adopting a balanced and holistic urban development strategy, policymakers can ensure that the benefits of urbanization are equitably distributed while mitigating its adverse effects on social cohesion and the overall well-being of residents (Multiple respondents, personal communication, November 19, 2024).

### **4.3 Social Cohesion through Key Factors**

Social cohesion underpins inclusive and stable communities, playing a critical role in rapidly urbanizing areas such as Bharatpur Metropolitan City. Urbanization drives shifts in social structures, making it essential to assess social cohesion to ensure collective well-being and community resilience. This study explores social cohesion through key factors; social networks, participation, trust, and mutual tolerance providing a framework to analyze the strength of social ties and community engagement in the context of urban growth.

### 4.3.1 Trust

Trust, understood as the expectation of positive and predictable behavior from third parties (Morrone et al., 2009), forms the moral backbone of solidarity and collective unity (Delhey, 2007). It cultivates cooperation, reinforces social identity, and strengthens the bonds that hold communities together. A cohesive society depends on trust both within interpersonal relationships and toward institutions, ensuring stability and mutual reliance (Chan et al., 2006; Dickes et al., 2010).

In the context of Bharatpur Metropolitan City, trust plays a pivotal role in fostering social cohesion by encouraging collaboration, mitigating conflicts, and reinforcing collective action. This study assesses trust at two levels: interpersonal trust among community members and trust in institutional structures, capturing their combined influence on community resilience and cohesion. By measuring trust as a key factor, the research aims to provide insights into how social bonds and institutional confidence contribute to the overall stability and unity of urban communities in the face of rapid urbanization.

**Table 9**

*Trust in Society*

<b>Trust in Society</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Low	2	0.7
Average	75	27.9
High	192	71.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source:* Field Survey, 2024

The frequency distribution of table 9 indicates that 71.4% of respondents perceive trust and community relations in their area as high, suggesting strong social ties, cooperative relationships, and a shared sense of belonging. A notable portion of respondents (27.9%) reported an average level of trust and community, reflecting moderate but stable social cohesion in certain areas. Only 0.7% of respondents indicated low trust, suggesting that issues of social fragmentation or distrust are minimal within the study area. These findings underscore the critical role of trust in fostering social cohesion, promoting collective action, and enhancing resilience in

urban settings. Strengthening and maintaining high levels of trust and community engagement will be essential for sustaining harmonious urban growth and fostering inclusive development.

### 4.3.2 Participation

Participation in public life reflects a sense of belonging, solidarity, and willingness to cooperate toward shared goals (Berger-Schmitt, 2000; European Commission, 2001). Engagement in community associations, political groups, and non-governmental organizations fosters shared values, strengthens trust, and reinforces social bonds (European Commission, 2001; Jeannotte et al., 2002). Participation serves as a visible indicator of social cohesion, observable through activities such as cultural and sports association membership, volunteerism, voter turnout, and civic engagement. This study measures participation at the community level, emphasizing horizontal factors of social interaction. By examining forms of socio-cultural and political participation, the research explores how active engagement in community life enhances social cohesion and collective identity in Bharatpur Metropolitan City.

**Table 10**

*Participation and Engagement*

<b>Participation and Engagement</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Low	2	0.7
Average	83	30.9
High	184	68.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source:* Field Survey, 2024

The table 10 shows that 68.4% of respondents reported a high level of participation and engagement, indicating that urbanization has fostered greater opportunities for civic involvement and strengthened community bonds. Additionally, 30.9% of respondents rated participation as average, suggesting moderate but consistent involvement across different segments of the population. Only 0.7% of respondents reported low levels of engagement, highlighting minimal disengagement or exclusion within the community. These findings emphasize the importance of participatory

urban development, where inclusive engagement in local governance and social activities plays a vital role in enhancing social cohesion, empowering communities, and promoting sustainable urban growth.

### 4.3.3 Mutual Tolerance

Mutual tolerance reflects the acceptance and inclusion of diverse social, cultural, and ethnic groups, fostering unity and reducing divisions. A cohesive society relies on the integration of marginalized groups and the promotion of social acceptance (Jenson, 1998; Bernard, 1999). This study assesses mutual tolerance through attitudes toward diversity, acceptance of different lifestyles, and the inclusion of minority groups in Bharatpur Metropolitan City. Measuring these interactions provides insights into the role of tolerance in strengthening social cohesion and promoting inclusive urban development.

**Table 11**

*Mutual Tolerance and Support*

<b>Mutual Tolerance and Support</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Low	2	0.7
Average	84	31.2
High	183	68
<b>Total</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source:* Field Survey, 2024

The frequency distribution of table 11 reveals that 68% of respondents perceive a high level of mutual tolerance and support in their area, indicating that urbanization has contributed to fostering inclusive and cohesive social environments. Meanwhile, 31.2% reported average levels, suggesting that while tolerance and support are present, there are areas where further strengthening of intergroup relations may be needed. Only 0.7% of respondents indicated low levels of mutual tolerance, reflecting minimal social division or conflict. These findings underscore the importance of nurturing inclusive urban environments where diversity is embraced, and community support systems are robust, contributing to greater social cohesion and resilience in the face of urban growth and demographic changes.

#### 4.3.4 Social Network

Social networks reflect the strength and regularity of interactions with family, friends, and community members, playing a vital role in fostering social cohesion. These connections contribute to social capital, promoting trust, mutual support, and shared responsibility (Bourdieu, 1986; Putnam, 2000). The extent of social interaction can be gauged through factors such as neighborhood engagement, communication habits, and involvement in local events (Villarreal & Silva, 2006).

This study assesses social networks by analyzing community interactions and interpersonal relationships in Bharatpur Metropolitan City. By exploring the scope and intensity of social ties, the research aims to reveal how networks contribute to building trust and reinforcing social cohesion in urban settings.

**Table 12**

*Social Network and Interaction*

<b>Social Networks</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Low	2	0.7
Average	66	24.5
High	201	74.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source:* Field Survey, 2024

The analysis of social networks in Bharatpur Metropolitan City reveals a high degree of connectivity and interpersonal relationships among respondents, reflecting the strength of social cohesion within the community. The frequency distribution shows that 74.7% of respondents reported high levels of social networks, indicating that urbanization has facilitated greater social interaction and expanded networks beyond immediate circles. This suggests that residents benefit from diverse and supportive social relationships, contributing to community resilience and cooperation. A smaller proportion of respondents (24.5%) rated their social networks as average, reflecting moderate but stable interpersonal connections in certain segments of the population. Only 0.7% of respondents indicated low levels of social networks, suggesting limited

isolation or disconnection within the community. These findings highlight the critical role of strong social networks in reinforcing trust, participation, and collective identity, essential components for fostering sustainable urban development and enhancing overall social cohesion in Bharatpur.

#### 4.3.5 Degree of Social Cohesion

Social cohesion level reflects the degree of connectedness, trust, and solidarity within a community, shaping the overall stability and resilience of society. It highlights the extent to which individuals feel integrated, valued, and willing to cooperate for collective well-being. Key indicators such as social networks, participation, mutual tolerance, and trust provide measurable insights into the strength of social cohesion.

In the context of Bharatpur Metropolitan City, assessing social cohesion is essential to understanding how urbanization influences community bonds and social harmony. By evaluating varying levels of cohesion categorized as low, average, or high, this study aims to capture how social relationships, inclusivity, and engagement evolve in a rapidly urbanizing environment. This analysis informs strategies to foster stronger social ties and reduce fragmentation within urban communities.

**Table 13**

*Degree of Social Cohesion*

<b>Degree of Social Cohesion</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Low	2	0.7
Average	145	53.9
High	122	45.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source:* Field Survey, 2024

The analysis of social cohesion levels in Bharatpur Metropolitan City indicates a balanced yet optimistic outlook on community integration and solidarity. The frequency distribution reveals that 53.9% of respondents perceive social cohesion in their area as average, suggesting that while community bonds and interactions are

present, there is room for further strengthening. A significant portion of respondents (45.4%) reported high levels of social cohesion, indicating that urbanization has positively influenced collective identity, mutual respect, and collaboration within the community. Only 0.7% of respondents rated social cohesion as low, reflecting minimal social fragmentation or exclusion.

These findings suggest that while urbanization has contributed to fostering a sense of community, ongoing efforts to promote inclusive policies, participatory governance, and intergroup interactions are essential to further enhance social cohesion. Strengthening these elements can lead to more resilient communities, ultimately supporting sustainable urban growth and harmonious coexistence in Bharatpur Metropolitan City.

The qualitative findings provide a detailed understanding of the relationship between urbanization and social cohesion in Bharatpur Metropolitan City. These insights are structured around four key factors: trust, participation, mutual tolerance and support, and social networks.

According to R. Sharma (personal communication, November 19, 2024), trust within communities in Bharatpur is fostered by shared cultural practices, neighborhood familiarity, and collective responses to common challenges. Community leaders noted that trust tends to be stronger in older settlements where long-term relationships have been established. However, in newly urbanized areas, trust is still developing and is often facilitated by local events and initiatives that bring residents together. N. Karki (personal communication, November 15, 2024) emphasized:

"Trust grows when people collaborate on local projects or come together to address social issues, creating a sense of unity."

Similarly, S. Gautam (personal communication, November 19, 2024) highlighted that a sense of safety and security in the community further strengthens trust, particularly when residents feel involved in decision-making processes.

Active participation in community affairs also emerged as a significant factor influencing social cohesion. According to S. Thapa (personal communication, November 17, 2024), participatory engagement is particularly evident during festivals, local elections, and awareness programs organized by community

organizations such as Tol Vikash Sanstha. Women's groups, youth clubs, and religious associations were identified as primary platforms encouraging participation. B. Shrestha (personal communication, November 15, 2024) observed:

"Participation in cultural events and public meetings strengthens a sense of belonging and accountability among residents."

However, some informants pointed out that while participation remains strong, engagement levels tend to be higher among older generations, whereas younger populations sometimes exhibit lower levels of involvement. T. Poudel (personal communication, November 15, 2024) also emphasized that participation helps residents navigate challenges and reduces the likelihood of conflicts by fostering mutual understanding.

Mutual tolerance were also identified as central to maintaining social harmony in Bharatpur. C. Adhikari (personal communication, November 19, 2024) emphasized the role of multiculturalism, noting that diverse ethnic and religious groups coexist peacefully. Y. Lama (personal communication, November 17, 2024) stated:

"Despite differences, there is a shared understanding that cooperation benefits everyone."

Additionally, community-driven support mechanisms were widely reported, particularly during times of crisis such as health emergencies or natural disasters. D. Gurung (personal communication, November 17, 2024) noted that such support networks are vital in ensuring residents feel valued and connected.

Social networks also play a significant role in fostering interpersonal connections and collective action. According to R. Tamang (personal communication, November 17, 2024), traditional social structures, such as neighborhood committees and familial networks, continue to provide essential support. However, in newly urbanized areas, social networks are evolving through digital platforms and local community groups. S. Khadka (personal communication, November 17, 2024) emphasized:

"Online platforms are becoming crucial for connecting residents and facilitating communication".

Informants further noted that digital networks play an instrumental role in organizing events and addressing local concerns.

The qualitative findings align with the quantitative data, reinforcing the perception of moderate to high levels of social cohesion in Bharatpur. Informants acknowledged that while social cohesion remains strong, continuous efforts to engage newer communities and younger demographics are necessary to ensure sustained integration and solidarity. They recommended enhancing inclusive policies, organizing community dialogue forums, and expanding youth engagement programs as potential pathways to further strengthen social cohesion. These suggestions highlight the need for ongoing initiatives to build trust, encourage participation, and support diverse communities as Bharatpur continues to urbanize.

#### 4.4 Relationship between Urbanization and Social Cohesion

The literature and preliminary findings highlight a significant relationship between urbanization and social cohesion. Theoretical frameworks, such as social capital theory and community cohesion models, stress the importance of networks, trust, and shared values in fostering cohesive communities. Empirical studies show both positive and negative effects of urbanization, influenced by factors like demographic composition, economic disparities, and cultural diversity. While urbanization can enhance social interaction, it may also worsen inequality and segregation. In Bharatpur Metropolitan City, Chi-Square analysis confirms a significant link between urbanization levels and social cohesion, with higher urbanization correlating with greater cohesion. These findings call for context-specific strategies to manage urbanization and strengthen social cohesion.

**Table 14**

*Relationship between Urbanization and Social Cohesion*

Degree of Urbanization	Degree Social Cohesion			Chi-Square	P-value
	Low and Average	High	Total		
Low and average	72	8	80		<
High	75	114	189	57.4202	0.00001
<b>Total</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>269</b>		

*Source: Field Survey, 2024*

The data on table 14 highlights a significant relationship between urbanization and social cohesion in Bharatpur Metropolitan City. Among respondents experiencing low and average urbanization, 72 reported low and average social cohesion, while only 8 exhibited high social cohesion. Conversely, within the high urbanization group, 75 respondents demonstrated low and average social cohesion, while 114 reported high levels of social cohesion. The Chi-Square value of 57.4202, with a p-value of less than 0.00001, indicates a statistically significant association between urbanization and social cohesion. This suggests that higher levels of urbanization are more likely to correspond with increased social cohesion. The results reflect the complex interplay between urban development and community dynamics, emphasizing that while urbanization can foster greater social integration and participation, it may also present challenges for less urbanized areas, where social cohesion appears weaker

These findings underscore the need for policies and interventions that enhance social cohesion in areas undergoing rapid urbanization, while addressing the disparities in less developed regions. Understanding this relationship is essential for promoting inclusive urban growth and strengthening community bonds in the face of continued urban expansion in the study area.

The qualitative findings align with the quantitative results, demonstrating a strong association between urbanization and social cohesion in Bharatpur Metropolitan City. Key informants, including community leaders and residents, consistently emphasized that while social cohesion remains robust, ongoing efforts are required to integrate newer communities and engage younger demographics to sustain long-term social unity and inclusivity. According to R. Sharma (personal communication, November 19, 2024), strengthening social cohesion in Bharatpur necessitates the implementation of inclusive policies, the establishment of community dialogue forums, and the promotion of youth engagement programs. These measures are perceived as essential in ensuring that urbanization does not lead to social fragmentation but rather enhances collective solidarity among diverse urban populations.

P. Ghimire (personal communication, November 15, 2024) underscored the significance of community-based activities and grassroots initiatives in fostering social cohesion amid rapid urbanization. she noted that local organizations such as *Tol*

*Vikash Sanstha* have played an instrumental role in organizing events, including street cleaning drives, public awareness programs, and community picnics, which actively encourage social interaction and relationship-building among residents. Furthermore, B. Shrestha (personal communication, November 15, 2024) stated, “Urbanization has improved infrastructure and economic opportunities, but it has weakened traditional neighborhood interactions, increasing individualism”. Other informant, S. Thapa (personal communication, November 17, 2024), elaborated on how such initiatives instill a sense of collective responsibility and shared identity among urban dwellers. This finding suggests that, contrary to conventional social capital theories, which posit that urbanization may lead to weakened trust and diminished social networks, the distinctive socio-cultural context of Bharatpur appears to support a model where urban growth fosters greater participation and communal unity through structured local engagement.

The impact of urbanization on social networks was also a central theme in qualitative interviews. A female informant, N. Karki (personal communication, November 15, 2024), highlighted the shifting nature of social interactions, stating: “Urbanization has expanded opportunities for social interaction through community programs and public spaces, but it has also weakened traditional social bonds, particularly in older neighborhoods where younger generations are moving to newer residential areas.”

T. Poudel (personal communication, November 15, 2024) argued, “Urbanization raises social integration through education, workplaces, and civic activities, but unregulated expansion may cause fragmentation.” He advocated for participatory governance to ensure inclusive urban development. Additionally, informants acknowledged the critical role of urbanization in enhancing economic opportunities and improving overall community connectivity. A male respondent, C. Adhikari (personal communication, November 19, 2024), emphasized the infrastructural improvements in the city, particularly in relation to transportation networks: “The construction of city ring roads has reduced commute times and improved connectivity across the city. This has significantly enhanced access to markets, workplaces, and public services.”

The integration of qualitative and quantitative data in this study provides a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between urbanization and social cohesion. The quantitative analysis indicates a statistically significant association between higher levels of urbanization and stronger social cohesion, as evidenced by a Chi-Square test result. The qualitative findings contextualize these results by illustrating how grassroots community initiatives, infrastructure improvements, and evolving social networks contribute to maintaining and strengthening social cohesion in an urban setting. Furthermore, key informants (R. Sharma, S. Thapa, & N. Karki, personal communication, November 19, 2024) suggested that expanding community-based programs to less urbanized areas could help sustain social cohesion across the city, ensuring a balanced and inclusive urban development process. Thus, the findings underscore the importance of continued investment in community-led initiatives, inclusive urban policies, and participatory governance mechanisms to mitigate potential social disruptions caused by urbanization while fostering long-term community resilience.

#### **4.5 Correlation Analysis**

The correlation analysis seeks to investigate the relationship between important urbanization drivers and several aspects of social cohesion in Bharatpur Metropolitan City. Urbanization is a complex process that affects social structures, economic opportunities, and community dynamics. Understanding how urbanization affects social cohesiveness is critical to creating inclusive and resilient urban settings. The study investigates many urbanization variables, including as infrastructure, social networks, and economic opportunities, to determine their impact on trust, involvement, mutual tolerance, and social interactions within the community. The findings show that improvements in infrastructure, improved social connections, and larger economic possibilities are positively related to higher levels of social cohesiveness, emphasizing the interconnection of various urbanization variables in establishing a cohesive community.

**Table 15***Correlation Analysis*

Urbanization	Social Cohesion			
	Trust and Community	Participation and Engagement	Mutual Tolerance and Support	Social Networks
Infrastructure	0.481**	0.432**	0.397**	0.438**
Social Networks and Interaction	0.628**	0.631**	0.582**	0.567**
Economic Opportunities	0.530**	0.576**	0.457**	0.430**

*Source: Field Survey, 2024*

The correlation analysis reveals significant relationships between the factors of urbanization and social cohesion in Bharatpur Metropolitan City. Among the urbanization factors, infrastructure demonstrates moderate positive correlations with all four social cohesion factors: Trust and Community ( $r = 0.481$ ), Participation and Engagement ( $r = 0.432$ ), Mutual Tolerance and Support ( $r = 0.397$ ), and Social Networks ( $r = 0.438$ ), suggesting that better infrastructure is associated with improved social cohesion. Social Networks and Interaction show stronger correlations, particularly with Trust and Community ( $r = 0.628$ ) and Participation and Engagement ( $r = 0.631$ ), indicating that greater social interaction fosters higher levels of social cohesion. Economic Opportunities also exhibit positive correlations, with Participation and Engagement showing the strongest relationship ( $r = 0.576$ ), followed by Trust and Community ( $r = 0.530$ ), demonstrating that increased economic opportunities are linked to greater social cohesion. All correlations are statistically significant at the 0.01 level, underscoring the importance of these urbanization factors in shaping various factors of social cohesion.

#### 4.6 Regression Analysis

The regression analysis indicates that 57.5% of the variation in social cohesion is explained by the model, as reflected by an R-square value of 0.575. This denotes a

moderately strong relationship between urbanization indicators: infrastructure, social networks and interaction, and economic opportunities and social cohesion. The remaining 42.5% of the variation is attributed to factors not included in the model. The model's statistical significance is confirmed by an F-statistic of 119.461 and a p-value of 0.000, suggesting that urbanization factors collectively influence social cohesion. The low p-value provides strong evidence to reject the null hypothesis, indicating that at least one independent variable significantly explains the variation in social cohesion.

**Table 16**

*Regression Analysis*

	<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Regression	10254.661	3	3418.22	119.461	0.000
Residual	7582.64	265	28.614		
Total	17837.301	268			

P-value for testing the overall fit of the regression model is less than significance level (0.05), so the fitted model is significant.

**Table 17**

*Coefficient Table for a Regression Model*

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	22.445	3.11		7.217	0
Infrastructure	0.467	0.203	0.114	2.297	0.022
Social Networks and Interaction	1.63	0.175	0.498	9.32	0
Economic Opportunities	0.714	0.126	0.274	5.684	0

*Source:* Field Survey, 2024

The regression analysis highlights the significant role of urbanization indicators infrastructure, social networks and interaction, and economic opportunities in shaping social cohesion in Bharatpur Metropolitan City. The constant value of 22.445 represents the baseline level of social cohesion even in the absence of improvements

in these urbanization factors. This suggests that a foundational level of social cohesion exists, driven by underlying social or cultural elements, independent of infrastructure or economic growth. The statistical significance of the constant, with a p-value of 0.000, reinforces the presence of inherent social bonds within the community.

Among the independent variables, social networks and interaction emerge as the most influential predictor of social cohesion. A one-unit increase in social networks leads to a 1.63 unit rise in social cohesion, making it the strongest factor in the model. This is further supported by a high t-value of 9.32 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating the robustness and significance of this relationship. The standardized coefficient (Beta = 0.498) highlights the dominant role of community engagement and interpersonal connections in fostering trust, participation, and mutual support within the city.

Economic opportunities also play a crucial role in enhancing social cohesion, with a one-unit increase in economic opportunities contributing to a 0.714 unit rise in social cohesion. The significance of this relationship is evident from the t-value of 5.684 and a p-value of 0.000. The standardized coefficient (Beta = 0.274) suggests that economic opportunities have a moderate yet meaningful impact, highlighting the importance of job creation and economic growth in strengthening social bonds and reducing disparities within the community.

Infrastructure, while contributing positively to social cohesion, has the least impact among the three variables. A one-unit increase in infrastructure results in a 0.467 unit increase in social cohesion. Although statistically significant with a p-value of 0.022, the standardized coefficient (Beta = 0.114) indicates that infrastructure's influence is relatively modest. This suggests that while investments in infrastructure are beneficial, their effect on social cohesion is less pronounced compared to the role of social networks and economic opportunities.

Overall, the analysis underscores the critical importance of fostering social networks and expanding economic opportunities to enhance social cohesion in Bharatpur. While infrastructure development remains a key component of urbanization, policies that prioritize community engagement and economic inclusivity are likely to yield more substantial improvements in social cohesion across the city.

## CHAPTER V

### FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND THEORETICAL REFLECTION

#### 5.1 Overview

This study investigates the intricate relationship between urbanization and social cohesion in Bharatpur Metropolitan City of Chitwan District, Nepal. It focuses on understanding how urbanization characterized by the development of infrastructure, expansion of social networks, and increasing economic opportunities affects community dynamics, including trust, participation, mutual tolerance, and social interactions. The primary objective of the research is to assess the extent to which urbanization influences social cohesion, identify key urbanization drivers, and analyze their impact on fostering or hindering cohesive society.

To achieve the above mentioned objectives, a mixed-methods research design was employed, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches for a comprehensive understanding. Quantitative data were collected through structured surveys and analyzed using statistical tools such as Chi-Square tests, correlation analysis, and regression models. These methods provided empirical evidence of the statistical relationships between urbanization indicators and various factors of social cohesion. To complement and validate the quantitative findings, qualitative insights were gathered through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with community leaders and residents, offering nuanced perspectives on the lived experiences of urbanization and its social implications.

The findings reveal a significant positive association between urbanization and social cohesion. The Chi-Square analysis (Table14) demonstrates that higher levels of urbanization correspond with greater social cohesion, with a highly significant p-value ( $p < 0.01$ ). Correlation analysis (Table 15) underscores the strong relationship between social networks, economic opportunities, and the core elements of social cohesion, identifying social networks and interactions as the most influential factors. Regression analysis (Table16) further indicates that 57.5% of the variation in social cohesion can be explained by urbanization indicators, particularly social networks and economic opportunities, which emerge as critical components for fostering cohesive communities.

In addition, the qualitative data from KIIs enriches the understanding of how urban growth shapes community trust, participation, and mutual support. Respondents highlighted the dual nature of urbanization while it brings opportunities for greater integration and economic growth, it also presents challenges such as social inequalities and the erosion of traditional networks. These findings collectively emphasize the importance of designing context-specific policies and interventions to harness the positive effects of urbanization while addressing its challenges. This study contributes valuable insights into the dynamics of urbanization and social cohesion, offering guidance for fostering inclusive and resilient communities in rapidly urbanizing contexts.

## **5.2 Findings**

### **Degree of Urbanization**

Urbanization in Bharatpur Metropolitan City signifies a profound transformation characterized by notable economic growth, infrastructure advancements, and evolving patterns of social integration. This transformation, driven by sustained population growth and urban expansion, has significantly reshaped the city's physical landscapes, economic structures, and social networks. Through both quantitative and qualitative analyses, the urbanization process reveals considerable progress in development while also highlighting challenges that necessitate strategic interventions.

Data presented in Table 8 underscores community perceptions regarding urbanization levels within Bharatpur Metropolitan City. A significant majority of respondents (70.3%) identified urbanization in their locality as high, reflecting substantial advancements in infrastructure, economic opportunities, and social connectivity. Furthermore, 29.4% of respondents rated the urbanization level as average, indicating ongoing development in certain areas, while a minimal 0.4% classified urbanization as low, suggesting limited dissatisfaction or under development. These findings illuminate the rapid pace of urban growth in Bharatpur and its multifaceted contributions to improved living standards, economic dynamism, and social cohesion. However, they also stress the need for equitable development across different zones within the city.

The findings align with Ratcliffe and Newman (2011), who posited that urbanization fosters increased diversity, cultural exchange, and economic integration, thereby strengthening community ties and social cohesion. The results indicate that Bharatpur's urban growth has created new economic and social opportunities, enabling greater connectivity. However, as de Bruin et al. (2021) suggest, urbanization also plays a key role in integrating urban markets with rural economies, facilitating the flow of goods, services, and financial resources. In Bharatpur, improved infrastructure and business hubs support such integration, further reinforcing economic interdependence.

However, the study also highlights the challenges associated with rapid urbanization. While urban expansion has facilitated economic opportunities, it has simultaneously contributed to social fragmentation. According to Gizelis, Pickering, and Urdal (2021), rapid urban growth often leads to overcrowding, inadequate housing, and social inequality, all of which can weaken social cohesion. Consistent with this perspective, respondents in Bharatpur reported that increased migration and residential relocation have weakened traditional social bonds (M. Basnet, personal communication, November 15, 2024). Moreover, Fischer (1982) argues that urbanization may lead to a sense of social disconnection, a phenomenon that some respondents acknowledged through declining participation in cultural events.

Economic opportunities in Bharatpur have expanded due to urbanization, with the rise of small enterprises and commercial markets attracting investments and diversifying employment options (B. Shrestha, personal communication, November 15, 2024). These trends support Smith (2019), who highlighted that while urbanization fosters economic diversity, it can also correlate with declining neighborhood trust and weaker social connections. Similarly, Patel and Singh (2021) emphasized that urbanization can exacerbate social inequalities, a concern echoed in Bharatpur regarding the unequal distribution of economic benefits (N. Karki, personal communication, November 15, 2024).

Environmental and infrastructural concerns have also emerged as critical challenges associated with rapid urbanization. Consistent with Wang (2018), who examined the role of urban planning in promoting community cohesion, Bharatpur has seen improvements in road networks and connectivity (S. Thapa, personal communication,

November 17, 2024). However, increasing vehicular traffic, air pollution, and inadequate urban infrastructure remain significant issues (Y. Lama, personal communication, November 17, 2024). These challenges mirror findings from the World Bank (2021), which noted that urban expansion often strains public services and increases competition for limited resources, ultimately affecting social cohesion.

Furthermore, urbanization has reshaped social networks and interactions in Bharatpur. Rodriguez and Garcia (2019) emphasized the positive role of accessible public spaces and community amenities in fostering social interactions. However, Coleman Kearns (2015) argued that high-density urban living can weaken community ties. In Bharatpur, while public spaces have promoted engagement, increased migration has also led to social fragmentation and weakened long-standing community relationships (P. Ghimire, personal communication, November 15, 2024). This aligns with Lall, Timmins, and Yu (2017), who found that urbanization can disrupt traditional support systems and diminish community solidarity.

Overall, the degree of urbanization in Bharatpur Metropolitan City presents a complex interplay of opportunities and challenges. While urbanization has facilitated economic growth, social interactions, and infrastructure development, it has also introduced socio-economic disparities, environmental concerns, and weakened social cohesion in certain areas. As highlighted by Sakketa (2023), the impact of urbanization on social cohesion is context-dependent, influenced by factors such as institutional quality, urban planning, and policy measures. Addressing these challenges through comprehensive urban planning and inclusive policy interventions is crucial to ensuring sustainable and cohesive urban development in Bharatpur.

### **Degree of Social Cohesion**

Social cohesion in Bharatpur is influenced by multiple factors, including trust, participation, mutual tolerance, and social networks. The study found a significant positive relationship between urbanization and social cohesion, with higher urbanization levels associated with stronger community bonds. The survey data from Bharatpur Metropolitan City shows a relatively balanced view of social cohesion among respondents. The results (Table 13) indicate that 53.9% perceive social cohesion as average, which suggests a strong presence of community interactions but

also identifies room for improvement. A significant proportion of respondents, 45.4%, reported high levels of social cohesion, which indicates that urbanization has had a positive impact on community collaboration, mutual respect, and collective identity. Only 0.7% rated social cohesion as low, indicating minimal fragmentation or exclusion within the community. These results imply that while urbanization has contributed positively to a sense of community, there is still a need for continuous efforts to strengthen cohesion through inclusive policies, participatory governance, and fostering intergroup interaction.

The Chi-Square analysis (Table 14) confirms that a significant relationship exists between urbanization and social cohesion. In areas with higher levels of urbanization, 114 respondents reported high social cohesion, compared to only 8 respondents in less urbanized areas. This statistically significant result (Chi-Square value = 57.4202,  $p$ -value < 0.00001) suggests that urbanization, through its role in improving infrastructure, creating economic opportunities, and fostering social interaction, can enhance social bonds.

However, the study also reveals that less urbanized areas experience weaker social cohesion, potentially due to lower levels of social interaction and access to resources. Insights of social cohesion align Bharatpur's experience with global research. The insights are structured around four key themes: trust, participation, mutual tolerance and support, and social networks. Trust within society is nurtured through shared cultural practices, neighborhood familiarity, and collective responses to challenges. According to R. Sharma (personal communication, November 19, 2024), trust is notably stronger in older settlements due to established long-term relationships, whereas newly urbanized areas rely on local events and initiatives to build this trust. N. Karki (personal communication, November 15, 2024) emphasized that trust grows when people collaborate on local projects or come together to address social issues, creating a sense of unity. Similarly, S. Gautam (personal communication, November 19, 2024) highlighted that social involvement in decision-making processes enhances feelings of safety and strengthens trust among residents. These observations align with the broader academic literature on urbanization and social cohesion. Ratcliffe and Newman (2011) argue that urbanization fosters diversity and cultural exchange, enhancing social cohesion through increased trust and intergroup interactions. Fischer (1982) supports this perspective, suggesting that strong social ties are essential for fostering trust and cohesion in urban settings.

Participation in social activities significantly impacts social cohesion. Active involvement during festivals, local elections, and awareness programs, as observed by S. Thapa (personal communication, November 17, 2024), plays a critical role in strengthening social bonds. Organizations like Tol Vikash Sanstha, women's groups, youth clubs, and religious associations serve as key platforms for participation. B. Shrestha (personal communication, November 15, 2024) noted that participation in cultural events and public meetings fosters a sense of belonging and accountability among residents. However, while participation is strong overall, there is a noticeable generational divide, with older generations exhibiting higher engagement levels compared to the youth. T. Poudel (personal communication, November 15, 2024) added that participation fosters mutual understanding and aids in conflict resolution. This generational divide in participation is consistent with Smith (2019), who observed that urbanization can weaken neighborhood trust and social connections, particularly among younger populations. Participation in communal activities is critical for building social capital, which in turn fosters social cohesion.

Mutual tolerance and support emerged as vital factors for maintaining social harmony. The role of multiculturalism in fostering peaceful coexistence among diverse ethnic and religious groups was highlighted by C. Adhikari (personal communication, November 19, 2024). Y. Lama (personal communication, November 17, 2024) emphasized that despite cultural and religious differences, there exists a shared understanding that cooperation benefits everyone. Community-driven support systems were frequently reported, especially during crises such as health emergencies or natural disasters. D. Gurung (personal communication, November 17, 2024) highlighted that these support mechanisms foster a sense of belonging and resilience within society. These findings are supported by Coleman and Kearns (2015), who argue that inclusive urban policies and community-driven support mechanisms are crucial for maintaining social cohesion in urban settings. Garcia and Nguyen (2018) further emphasize the importance of community support networks in enhancing resilience and fostering mutual tolerance.

Social networks play a crucial role in fostering interpersonal connections and promoting collective action. Traditional structures like neighborhood committees and

family networks remain key sources of support, as noted by R. Tamang (personal communication, November 17, 2024). However, social networks in newly urbanized areas are evolving through digital platforms and local groups. S. Khadka (personal communication, November 17, 2024) observed that online platforms are becoming increasingly important for connecting residents and facilitating communication. Informants also acknowledged the role of digital social networks in organizing events and addressing community issues. This observation aligns with Li and Wu (2023), who highlight the growing role of community-based organizations and digital platforms in enhancing social support within urban environments.

This comprehensive analysis underscores the complexity of urbanization's impact on social cohesion in Bharatpur. While urban growth has fostered integration and solidarity, proactive strategies are essential to address emerging challenges. Bharatpur's experience offers valuable lessons for thirdgender rapidly urbanizing regions, emphasizing the importance of balancing growth with community resilience and inclusivity.

In conclusion, urbanization in Bharatpur Metropolitan City plays a significant role in shaping social cohesion. While the expansion of urban areas presents opportunities for greater social integration, it also poses challenges that must be addressed through inclusive policies and community engagement programs. Understanding the dynamics of urbanization and social cohesion is essential for creating resilient, cohesive urban environments in the face of continued urban growth.

### **Urbanization and Social Cohesion**

Urbanization plays a pivotal role in shaping social cohesion in Bharatpur Metropolitan City, influencing the community's dynamics through its impact on infrastructure, social networks, and economic opportunities. The findings from both quantitative and qualitative analyses reveal that urbanization can enhance social cohesion, but its effects vary depending on the level of urbanization and the specific socio-economic context of different neighborhoods. The study highlights a statistically significant relationship between urbanization and social cohesion, where higher levels of urbanization tend to correlate with stronger social bonds and greater community participation.

From a theoretical perspective, social capital theory and community cohesion models underscore the importance of networks, trust, and shared values in fostering cohesive communities. In the case of Bharatpur, The Chi-Square analysis ( $\chi^2 = 57.4202$ ,  $p < 0.00001$ ), (Table 14) confirms a statistically significant relationship between urbanization and social cohesion, demonstrating that higher levels of urbanization correspond with increased social cohesion. This supports social capital theory (Sakketa, 2023; Bandile, 2024), which emphasizes by improving infrastructure and increasing opportunities for social interaction, facilitates stronger social bonds and greater trust among residents. Conversely, in less urbanized areas, where infrastructure and economic opportunities are limited, social cohesion tends to be weaker. This division highlights the complex nature of urbanization's effects, emphasizing the need for policies that address these disparities to promote balanced and inclusive growth.

The role of social networks and trust in fostering cohesion. The field survey results show that among respondents experiencing high urbanization, 114 reported high social cohesion, compared to only 8 in low-urbanized areas, reinforcing the notion that urban environments can facilitate greater participation and integration.

The qualitative data provides additional context to these findings. Key informants emphasized the importance of community-based activities in fostering social cohesion. Initiatives by local organizations, such as Tol Vikash Sanstha, which organize community events like street cleaning, awareness programs, and picnics, play a critical role in strengthening social bonds. These activities create spaces for interaction, build trust, and promote a collective identity among residents. As one informant noted, despite urbanization's challenges in weakening traditional social networks, community-driven initiatives continue to enhance cohesion by fostering a sense of shared responsibility. This suggests that even as urbanization accelerates, active community involvement remains essential in maintaining social cohesion.

The correlation analysis (Table 15) further supports this relationship, indicating that improvements in infrastructure, social networks, and economic opportunities are positively associated with higher levels of social cohesion. Notably, social networks and interactions show the strong correlation with trust and community participation, suggesting that greater social interaction fosters stronger relationships and a more

cohesive community. The presence of better infrastructure, such as the development of city ring roads, improves accessibility and reduces commute times, which in turn enhances community connectivity and social interaction. Economic opportunities also contribute significantly to social cohesion, with higher levels of employment leading to greater engagement and mutual support within the community.

The regression analysis (Table 16) underscores the significant role of urbanization factors in shaping social cohesion. Among the various factors, social networks and interaction emerge as the most influential predictor of social cohesion. The regression model shows that an increase in social networks is strongly associated with higher levels of social cohesion, emphasizing the importance of fostering interpersonal connections within urban communities. Economic opportunities and infrastructure also contribute to social cohesion, albeit to a lesser extent. This suggests that while investments in infrastructure and economic development are important, promoting social interaction and community engagement should be prioritized to ensure the long-term cohesiveness of urban areas.

The study also reveals the downside of urbanization, particularly its tendency to weaken traditional social structures. In older neighborhoods, where younger generations are migrating to more urbanized areas, social bonds appear to fragment. This shift reflects the broader trend of social change driven by urbanization, where established communities may face challenges in maintaining social cohesion as the urban landscape evolves.

However, qualitative data add depth to this finding, highlighting challenges such as the weakening of traditional neighborhood ties, a theme also noted in community cohesion models (Claridge, 2018). Informants like B. Shrestha and N. Karki emphasized that while urbanization improves infrastructure and economic opportunities, it disrupts traditional social interactions, aligning with Arant et al. (2021), who caution that urbanization may also lead to social fragmentation and individualism.

Empirical literature presents mixed perspectives on urbanization's impact on social cohesion, with some studies (McKenna et al., 2018) suggesting it enhances integration, while others (Bai et al., 2021) highlight negative consequences such as

inequality and segregation. Your findings mirror this complexity. Key informants like T. Poudel noted that while urbanization fosters integration through shared spaces and workplaces, unregulated expansion could lead to fragmentation, echoing concerns raised in Lupton & Power (2023) about economic disparities weakening social cohesion. The survey data further validate this by showing that in highly urbanized areas, a significant portion of respondents (75 out of 189) still reported low social cohesion, indicating that urbanization alone does not guarantee strong community ties. Additionally, grassroots initiatives and participatory governance emerged as critical factors in maintaining cohesion, as emphasized by informants like R. Sharma and P. Ghimire, who advocated for inclusive policies and community-based activities to bridge social gaps. This aligns with Cheshire et al. (2022), who stress the importance of governance in fostering urban social cohesion.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings in this study not only aligns with existing literature but also underscores the distinct socio-cultural dynamics of Bharatpur. While conventional theories often associate urbanization with the erosion of social ties, the findings of this study suggest that structured community engagement exemplified by initiatives such as those led by *Tol Vikash Sanstha* can mitigate these effects. The statistical analysis establishes a significant relationship between urbanization and social cohesion, while qualitative insights highlight the necessity of proactive policies, youth engagement, and community-driven initiatives to sustain social cohesion. This nuanced perspective underscores the importance of context-specific strategies for managing urban growth while preserving and strengthening social cohesion, thereby bridging the gap between theoretical discourse and empirical realities.

### **5.3 Conclusions**

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between urbanization and social cohesion in Bharatpur Metropolitan City, highlighting both opportunities and challenges. The findings indicate that urbanization generally strengthens community bonds by improving infrastructure, economic opportunities, and social networks. However, it also presents challenges, such as the fragmentation of traditional social structures and increased social inequality in less urbanized areas.

Quantitative results, particularly from the Chi-Square analysis, reveal that higher levels of urbanization are significantly associated with stronger social cohesion. This underscores the crucial role of infrastructure development, economic opportunities, and social networks in fostering a cohesive community. Despite these positive trends, the study emphasizes the need to address disparities and mitigate the negative consequences of rapid urbanization, including overcrowding and environmental concerns.

Qualitative data further enrich the findings by shedding light on the role of community-based activities and local organizations in strengthening social ties. Community initiatives play a critical role in maintaining a sense of belonging and collective identity, even as traditional networks weaken in newly urbanized areas. Informants highlight the importance of active community involvement in sustaining social cohesion amid rapid urban changes.

In conclusion, while urbanization in Bharatpur presents significant opportunities for economic growth and social integration, the study calls for inclusive policies and proactive strategies to address emerging challenges. Balancing urban development with social cohesion is essential for fostering sustainable and resilient urban communities in Bharatpur and other rapidly growing cities.

#### **5.4 Theoretical Reflection**

This research employed a mixed-methods approach to examine the interplay between urbanization and social cohesion in Bharatpur Metropolitan City. By integrating quantitative and qualitative methods, the study provided a holistic understanding of how urbanization influences community dynamics. Quantitative data collected through structured surveys identified measurable relationships between urbanization indicators such as infrastructure development, economic opportunities, and social networks and social cohesion. Analytical techniques, including Chi-Square tests, correlation analysis, and regression analysis, established significant statistical associations, reinforcing the reliability of the findings. Meanwhile, qualitative data from Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) offered deeper insights into the lived experiences of community leaders and residents, contextualizing and enriching the quantitative results.

The study draws from social capital theory, social disorganization theory, and community cohesion models to interpret its findings. Social capital theory, central to this research, emphasizes the role of networks, trust, and reciprocal relationships in fostering social cohesion. The findings align with this theory, demonstrating that urbanization enhances social networks and economic opportunities, thereby strengthening community ties. However, the study also acknowledges the limitations of social capital theory in the face of rapid urban growth, where increasing diversity and inequality can strain social connections and erode trust.

Social disorganization theory underscores how rapid urbanization can contribute to social fragmentation, inequality, and segregation, challenging community cohesion. The study's results resonate with this perspective, showing that while urbanization fosters economic growth, it also exacerbates social divides and feelings of disconnection among different groups. Lastly, community cohesion models emphasize shared values and collective identity as key to maintaining unity. The research reveals that while urbanization can reinforce community bonds in some areas, it may also create tensions and exclusions in neighborhoods more vulnerable to segregation.

Overall, the findings align with existing literature, affirming that urbanization plays a dual role in both strengthening and hindering social cohesion. While it enhances social networks and economic opportunities, it also introduces disparities that reinforce social divisions. This complex dynamic underscores the need for policies that balance urban development with the promotion of inclusive and cohesive communities.

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## ANNEXES

### **Annex-1: Survey Questionnaire**

Dear Participant

The research study titled “Urbanization and Social Cohesion in Bharatpur Metropolitan City of Chitwan District” aims to examine the relationship between urbanization and social cohesion in the study area. Your participation is highly valued, and I kindly request you to provide honest responses to the questions in this questionnaire. Please be assured that all responses will be kept confidential. Individual responses will not be disclosed or published; the data will be aggregated and reported collectively for the purpose of analysis and publication. Your participation is voluntary, and your privacy will be strictly protected.

#### **Section 1: Demographic Information**

1. Age (In completed year) .....
2. Gender (Male=1, Female=2, Other=3).....
3. Household Income (monthly in NPR): .....
4. Level of Education (grade completed).....
5. Occupation .....
6. Length of Residence in Bharatpur: (in years): .....
7. House Type.....

#### **Section 2: Urbanization Indicators**

On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree, please rate the following statements.

### A. Infrastructure Development

QN	Question	1	2	3	4	5
A1	Roads and public transportation facilities in the city have significantly improved.					
A2	Public services (electricity, water, waste management) are easily accessible.					
A3	Healthcare facilities and sanitation are adequate and within reach.					
A4	Schools and educational institutions have become more accessible due to urbanization.					
A5	Urban infrastructure improvements have positively affected my quality of life.					

### B. Social Networks and Interaction

QN	Question	1	2	3	4	5
B1	My family members interact regularly regarding family matters.					
B2	I interact regularly with my family, friends, and neighbors					
B3	Public spaces like Chautari, Temple and open encourage social interaction.					
B4	I know and Strength of social networks, including family, friends, and neighbors					
B5	I often participate in social gatherings then socializing and building relationships among residents.					

### C. Economic Opportunities

QN	Question	1	2	3	4	5
C1	Urbanization has improved employment opportunities in the city.					
C2	There are more diverse job opportunities available due to the city's growth.					
C3	The expansion of businesses in the city has benefited me economically.					
C4	I have seen an increase in income due to new opportunities brought by urbanization.					
C5	Urbanization has made access to markets and business services easier.					

### Section 3: Social Cohesion-Social Relations

#### A. Trust

QN	Question	1	2	3	4	5
3A1	I trust my neighbors, regardless of their ethnic or religious background.					
3A2	There is a strong sense of community support where I live.					
3A3	I feel safe and secure in my neighborhood.					
3A4	People from different backgrounds cooperate well within the community.					
3A5	I trust local people to work in the best interest of the community.					

#### B. Participation and Engagement

QN	Question	1	2	3	4	5
3B1	I actively participate in community events or local meetings.					
3B2	I feel encouraged to engage in local decision-making processes.					
3B3	I actively participate on socio-cultural activities in my community.					
3B4	My participation in community activities has increased due to urbanization.					
3B5	Urbanization has provided more opportunities for civic engagement and participation.					

### C. Mutual Tolerance and Support

QN	Question	1	2	3	4	5
3C1	Different groups (caste/ethnic/religious) in the community work together to solve common problems.					
3C2	My community provides equal opportunities for all, regardless of background and live harmoniously.					
3C3	Urbanization has strengthened the bond between different groups in my community.					
3C4	I can count on the support of people in my community during times of need.					
3C5	There is a sense of mutual respect among people from different backgrounds in my community.					

### D. Social Networks

QN	Question	1	2	3	4	5
3D1	I have a strong network of friends and family I can rely on.					
3D2	My social network includes people from diverse cultural or ethnic backgrounds.					
3D3	Urbanization has helped me expand my social network beyond my immediate community.					
3D4	My connections with other in the community have improved due to the city's growth.					
3D5	Social media and technology have played a significant role in building my social network.					

## **Annex-2: Interview Checklist**

### **Introduction:**

The research study titled “**Urbanization and Social Cohesion in Bharatpur Metropolitan City of Chitwan District**” is an MPhil thesis conducted by myself, Keshab Raj Sapkota. The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between urbanization and social cohesion in the study area. This Key Informant Interview will collect qualitative data from key informants, including community leaders and local residents. Your participation is highly valued, and I kindly request that you provide honest responses. Rest assured, all responses will remain confidential, and individual responses will not be disclosed or published. Each respondent will be coded and the data analyzed using narrative analysis. Your input will be summarized in the thesis report. Participation is voluntary, and your privacy will be strictly protected.

With all of above mentioned information regarding this data analysis process, do you voluntarily want to participate in this interview?

1. Can you tell me about yourself and your role in the community?
2. How long have you been living in Bharatpur Metropolitan City?
3. What responsibilities do you have in the community?
4. How has urbanization changed infrastructure like roads, water supply, and electricity?
5. How has urbanization improved public facilities such as healthcare, schools, and transportation?
6. What challenges do you see with infrastructure development in urban areas?
7. How has urban growth affected housing and where people live?
8. Do you think the current infrastructure meets the needs of the growing population? Why or why not?
9. How has urbanization affected how people interact with each other in the community?
10. What changes have you seen in relationships between different ethnic, caste, or religious groups?
11. Has urbanization brought people closer together or made them feel more isolated?

12. Are there enough community spaces, like parks or centers, for people to connect?
13. How has urbanization affected the inclusion of diverse social groups in the community?
14. Has urbanization created new job or business opportunities in Bharatpur?
15. What positive changes in the local economy can you link to urbanization?
16. How have job trends or employment opportunities shifted with urban growth?
17. How have local businesses benefited from urbanization in Bharatpur?
18. Has urbanization reduced or increased economic inequality in the community?
19. How has urbanization affected trust among community members?
20. Do you think trust between people of different ethnic, caste, or religious backgrounds has changed?
21. Has urbanization affected how safe and secure people feel in the area?
22. Has urbanization influenced how much people trust local authorities or government?
23. How do long-term residents and newcomers get along as the city grows?
24. Has urbanization encouraged more participation in community events and activities?
25. How has urbanization changed civic engagement, like attending public meetings or joining local governance?
26. Are people more or less involved in making decisions for the community as urbanization continues?
27. How do residents help shape the development and future of the city?
28. What opportunities for community engagement exist, and how have they changed due to urbanization?
29. How has urbanization affected tolerance and understanding between different groups?
30. Have conflicts between ethnic, caste, or religious groups increased or decreased with urban growth?
31. How do people in the community support each other during rapid urbanization?

Thanks the participant for their time and insights. Your responses will contribute to a broader understanding of the effects of urbanization on social cohesion and may influence future community development strategies.