

**A PROJECT REPORT ON  
NARRATING TOUR GUIDES LIVED EXPERIENCES OF  
SEASONAL UNEMPLOYMENT AND THE ROLE OF POLICY  
IMPLEMENTATION IN LAKESIDE POKHARA**

**Submitted By**

**SMRITEE GURUNG**

**Exam Roll No.: 23150270**

**P.U. Registration No.: 2023-2-15-0392**

**Submitted To**

**NEPAL TOURISM AND HOTEL MANAGEMENT COLLEGE**

**Affiliated to Pokhara University**

**In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of**

**Bachelor in Hotel Management (B.H.M)**

**Chhinedanda-14, Pokhara**

**July, 2026**

## **DECLARATION**

I, Smritee Gurung, hereby declare that the project work report entitled **“Narrating Tour Guides' Lived Experiences of Seasonal Unemployment and The Role of Policy Implementation in Lakeside Pokhara”** submitted for the degree of Bachelor of Hotel Management (BHM) is my original work and is conducted under the supervision of my academic advisor, Mr. Suresh Raj Adhikari. This project is submitted for practical fulfillment of the requirement for the degree in Bachelor of Hotel Management (BHM). This project work report has not been submitted to any other or the institution.

Smritee Gurung

July, 2026

## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the Project Work titled “**Narrating Tour Guides' Lived Experiences of Seasonal Unemployment and The Role of Policy Implementation in Lakeside Pokhara**” submitted by Smritee Gurung (23150270) for the partial fulfillment of the requirements of BHM embodies the bonafide work done by her under my supervision.

.....

Mr. Suresh Raj Adhikari

Project Work Supervisor

July, 2026

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I express my deepest gratitude to Nepal Tourism and Hotel Management College and also would like to pay my deepest appreciation to my Project Work Supervisor and mentor, Mr. Suresh Raj Adhikari for guiding me through. His patience, and encouragement were instrumental in shaping the direction of this research. I sincerely appreciate his valuable feedback, which greatly enhanced the quality of this project.

Likewise, I am particularly thankful to all the respondents who took the time to participate in my survey and provided honest feedback which was crucial for the completion of this study. I am very grateful to all those who have assisted me in the completion of this project report entitled “Narrating Tour Guides' Lived Experiences of Seasonal Unemployment and The Role of Policy Implementation in Lakeside Pokhara ”.

Thank you,

Smritee Gurung,  
BHM, 6<sup>th</sup> Semester  
NTHMC

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                                                     |     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| DECLARATION.....                                                    | i   |
| CERTIFICATE.....                                                    | ii  |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....                                              | iii |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS .....                                             | iv  |
| CHAPTER I.....                                                      | 1   |
| INTRODUCTION .....                                                  | 1   |
| 1.1 Background of the Study .....                                   | 1   |
| 1.2 Statement of the Problem.....                                   | 5   |
| 1.3 Research Questions.....                                         | 6   |
| 1.4 Objectives of the Study.....                                    | 6   |
| 1.5 Significance of the Study.....                                  | 6   |
| 1.6 Literature Review .....                                         | 8   |
| 1.6.1 Seasonal Unemployment in Tourism and Hospitality .....        | 8   |
| 1.6.2 Lived Experiences of Tour Guides During Seasonal Unemployment | 10  |
| 1.6.3 Perceptions of Government Policy Implementation.....          | 11  |
| 1.6.4 Research Gap .....                                            | 12  |
| 1.7 Research Methodology .....                                      | 12  |
| 1.7.1 Research Design .....                                         | 13  |
| 1.7.2 Study Area and Site Selection.....                            | 13  |
| 1.7.3 Data Collection Methods .....                                 | 13  |
| 1.7.4 Ethical Considerations .....                                  | 15  |
| 1.7.5 Limitations of the Study .....                                | 15  |
| CHAPTER II.....                                                     | 16  |
| FINDINGS.....                                                       | 16  |
| CHAPTER III .....                                                   | 26  |
| CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....                                | 26  |
| REFERENCES .....                                                    | 29  |
| APPENDICES .....                                                    | 31  |

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

This study examines the shifting economic realities and livelihood vulnerabilities of informal frontline workers within the tourism ecosystem of Pokhara, Nepal. While mainstream tourism literature often evaluates industry health through aggregate macro-economic metrics—such as total arrival numbers, national foreign exchange accumulation, and large-scale hospitality capital investments—this project focuses on the micro-level experiences of the grassroots labor force. Specifically, the research looks at how independent, freelance tour guides operating in the Lakeside district cope with two massive, simultaneous pressures: severe environmental seasonality and top-down transport infrastructure relocation.

By analyzing how predictable climate cycles and new regional development plans cross paths, this section provides the essential historical, economic, and geographical context of Pokhara's tourism sector. It lays out the foundation for understanding why freelance guides remain highly vulnerable to sudden shifts in both weather patterns and local transit routes.

### **The Macro-Economic Reality of Tourism in Nepal**

Tourism is universally recognized as one of the single most important drivers of economic growth, foreign currency reserves, and regional development across the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal. As a landlocked nation situated between major economic superpowers, Nepal has historically used its unique geographic position, immense cultural diversity, and world-class adventure tourism assets to build a robust service economy (Nepal & Karna, 2020). According to national fiscal reports, the tourism sector serves as a primary source of employment, cutting across both urban centers and marginalized rural communities where traditional agricultural options are declining (Sharma & Adhikari, 2022). The industry does not just bring in direct foreign spending through visa fees and national park permits; it also creates a massive "multiplier effect" that ripples through local food supply chains, construction, handicraft production, and small-scale transport networks. Because of this high economic connectivity, state bodies like the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation (MoCTCA) have consistently prioritized the tourism sector within national periodic plans. They treat it as a foundational pathway to lower national poverty rates

and halt the massive out-migration of young Nepalese workers seeking employment abroad.

### **Pokhara and the Lakeside District as an Economic Engine**

Within Nepal's broader tourism framework, the Gandaki Province—and specifically the Pokhara Valley—serves as the primary geographic hub for both leisure holidaymakers and extreme adventure enthusiasts. Often called the tourism capital of Nepal, Pokhara draws hundreds of thousands of international trekkers and domestic weekend travelers every single year (Ghimire, 2019). The city's unique selling proposition lies in its geography: it features a stunning, low-altitude valley positioned directly beneath the towering Annapurna mountains range, surrounded by a network of pristine glacial lakes.

The economic heart of this regional market is structurally concentrated within the commercial strip of Lakeside, which runs along the shores of Phewa Lake. Over the last forty years, Lakeside has evolved from a quiet, rural settlement into a hyper-dense, highly commercialized enclave of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Today, the entire Lakeside economy is structured around providing specialized services to global travelers. The strip hosts thousands of independent hotels, guest houses, specialized trekking gear shops, restaurants, currency exchange booths, and local travel desks. Consequently, the daily survival and economic stability of the local population are entirely tied to the commercial health, accessibility, and smooth operational flow of the Lakeside tourism market (Baral, 2023).

### **The Informal Economy and Freelance Tour Guides**

At the absolute center of this complex service market is the frontline guiding workforce. As documented by the Tourist Guide Association of Nepal (TURGAN), licensed city and sightseeing guides function as the primary faces and ambassadors of the local tourism industry (TURGAN, 2023). They are directly responsible for managing visitor safety, handling logistics across various cultural sites, and providing deep historical interpretation. Their day-to-day performance directly impacts whether tourists leave positive reviews, recommend the destination online, or plan return trips to the region.

However, despite their immense value to the overall hospitality ecosystem, a large majority of these local guides operate completely within the informal labor sector. While corporate managers, airline crews, and high-end hotel staff enjoy stable monthly salaries and formal contracts, local sightseeing and cultural guides function

under a highly precarious, freelance "piece-rate" framework (Sharma & Adhikari, 2022). This institutional setup means that a freelance guide's daily wage is completely dependent on their ability to secure short-term, immediate bookings from walk-in tourists or local travel counters. They do not have access to basic structural benefits like regular monthly retainers, paid medical leave, provident saving funds, or formal employment contracts. If a guide does not secure a physical booking on a given morning, their income for that day is exactly zero. This leaves independent guides incredibly vulnerable to sudden drops in tourist traffic or unexpected changes to local transit routes.

### **The Problem of Climate Seasonality and Labor Shocks**

Given that tourism services are inherently perishable—meaning a day without a customer cannot be saved or sold later—the tourism labor market in Pokhara is highly vulnerable to extreme environmental fluctuations. Academic studies show that tourist traffic in Nepal follows a strict, two-peak seasonal cycle centered around the dry spring (March to May) and autumn (September to November) months. Conversely, the entire region experiences a massive slowdown during the three-month summer monsoon season, which stretches from late June through September.

During the monsoon, the Pokhara Valley receives some of the highest rainfall totals in the entire country. The heavy downpours cause regular landslides along major transit highways, trigger severe flash floods, create constant flight delays, and completely wipe out mountain visibility. For freelance tour guides in Lakeside, this seasonal weather shift means their workflow disappears instantly. Operating independently in the informal market without any institutional safety nets, these grassroots workers find that the structural off-season creates massive financial and mental strain. To survive the monsoon weeks, freelance guides are routinely forced to completely empty their peak-season savings, take out high-interest loans from informal neighborhood lenders, or temporarily abandon their professional careers to find basic daily wage labor in construction or farming.

### **Infrastructure Relocation and New Logistical Challenges**

To counter these seasonal drops and stabilize tourist arrivals year-round, national development plans have heavily focused on building large-scale transportation infrastructure. A major milestone in this effort was the recent completion and launch of the new Pokhara International Airport at Chhinedanda, which was designed to replace the old, congested domestic airstrip closer to the town

center. While this massive facility was built to handle direct international flights, bypass the crowded airways of Kathmandu, and bring long-term development to the region, its physical location has created unexpected logistical problems for grassroots workers.

The old domestic airport sat less than 3 kilometers away from the heart of Lakeside, allowing guides to rapidly transfer incoming clients, check them into their rooms, and easily fit up to three distinct city sightseeing tours (such as visiting Phewa Lake, Davis Falls, and Gupteshwor Cave) into a single day. In sharp contrast, the new international airport sits much further out—roughly 5 to 7.5 kilometers away from central Lakeside, depending on the hotel zone. Because the connecting city roads face heavy commercial highway traffic and major bottlenecks, transit times have more than doubled. This distance barrier creates a major logistical disruption that tears apart the daily work routines of freelance guides. Instead of guiding tourists at historical landmarks, independent guides now spend hours stuck in slow transit corridors. This structural friction has cut their daily capacity down to just one or two tours per day. By slashing their daily earning potential during the peak season, this geographic shift makes it impossible for guides to save the cash reserves they desperately need to survive the brutal monsoon off-season.

This compounding relationship between infrastructural friction and environmental instability exposes a critical structural gap within Pokhara's contemporary tourism landscape. The logistical inefficiencies introduced by top-down transit re-routing do not merely prolong travel times; they compress the earning windows of freelance guides during peak operational seasons. Consequently, this spatial displacement directly undercuts the grassroots mechanisms traditionally relied upon to mitigate seasonal economic shocks. By failing to align macro-level development initiatives with the micro-level realities of the informal service workforce, the current operational matrix systematically deepens the livelihood vulnerabilities of independent guides, transforming a localized logistical hurdle into an enduring structural problem.

While previous literature acknowledges the general seasonality of Nepal's tourism sector and the broad economic impact of national infrastructure projects, a critical empirical gap remains regarding how these macro-level dynamics directly affect frontline informal workers. Specifically, existing studies fail to address how shifting transit logistics—such as the relocation of the Pokhara International Airport—

intersect with seasonal climate drops to compress the daily earning potential of independent tour guides. By grounding this study in the lived realities of Lakeside's freelance guiding community, this research directly addresses this gap. Aligned with my core research objectives, this study documents the financial survival mechanisms guides use during the monsoon off-season, evaluates the operational impact of increased airport transit friction on peak-season incomes, and highlights the policy disconnect between top-down infrastructure growth and local labor welfare.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

The core problem investigated in this study is the worsening economic vulnerability and livelihood insecurity faced by freelance tour guides in Lakeside, Pokhara. This crisis is caused by a direct conflict between predictable seasonal weather drops and top-down infrastructure relocations.

On the ground, this problem displays three major structural layers:

- **The Seasonal Revenue Vacuum:** During the three-month summer monsoon, regional tourism completely halts due to severe weather constraints. Because freelance guides operate without employment contracts or base-wage retainers, their personal revenue drops to zero for months at a time, trapping them in regular debt cycles (Thapa, 2021).
- **The Airport Relocation and Income Compression:** The physical move from the old city-center airstrip to the new Pokhara International Airport at Chhinedanda has increased the travel distance to Lakeside to 5–7.5 kilometers (Vehicle Hiring Nepal, 2026). The extended travel times, combined with heavy highway traffic, have created major logistical friction. Guides can no longer complete multiple local city tours (such as visiting Phewa Lake, Davis Falls, Gupteshwor Cave, and the Peace Stupa) in a single day. By reducing their daily tour capacity from three tours down to one or two, this geographic shift slashes their daily peak-season income. As a result, guides cannot save enough cash to survive the seasonal monsoon closures.
- **The Gaps in Institutional Policy Implementation:** Current development policies by the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation (MoCTCA) focus almost entirely on macro-level concrete construction and global marketing campaigns. They completely overlook the micro-level labor realities of the informal workforce (Bhattarai, 2023). There are no municipal welfare structures, off-season

stipends, or transit-smoothing policies to protect independent guides from the financial damage caused by these environmental and infrastructure shocks.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

This thesis addresses three central research questions:

1. What are the primary structural causes, financial impacts, and coping patterns of seasonal monsoon unemployment among freelance tour guides in Lakeside, Pokhara?
2. How does the increased travel distance and traffic friction of the new Pokhara International Airport affect the daily tour capacities and peak-season earning limits of these guides?
3. How do independent tour guides perceive the gaps in current government tourism policies regarding informal labor protection and off-season survival nets?

### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

The overall goal of this research is to analyze the intersection of climate seasonality and infrastructure changes on the lives of local tourism workers. The specific objectives are:

- To document the financial survival mechanisms and alternative labor strategies used by freelance tour guides during the three-month monsoon shutdown.
- To evaluate the direct impact of the new airport's physical relocation on the daily operational schedules and peak-season incomes of Lakeside guides.
- To identify the specific gaps between national tourism infrastructure policies and local labor welfare enforcement from the perspective of the guides.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study carries deep practical, social, and academic value. Instead of just analyzing tourism as a set of corporate balance sheets, this research highlights the human element—the actual people whose daily survival depends on the industry. By examining how environmental shifts and new airport transit logistics impact freelance guides, the findings offer vital insights for several specific groups:

#### **For Government Frameworks and Tourism Policymakers**

For bodies like the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation (MoCTCA) and the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB), this study serves as a critical, real-

world reality check. Historically, development planning in Nepal has suffered from a top-down bias, where success is measured solely by structural completion—like laying concrete at a new terminal or launching global marketing campaigns.

This research is significant because it flips that perspective. It proves that macro-level infrastructure projects can accidentally disrupt local micro-economies if the daily routines of grassroots workers are ignored. The ground-level data gathered here provides a clear roadmap for planners to design better regional policies. Specifically, it can help them implement localized transport corridors, adjust tourist bus schedules, or offer municipal travel subsidies to prevent freelance workers from being squeezed out by urban relocation.

### **For Labor Unions, Civic Associations, and Local Guides**

At the community level, this study provides independent guide organizations, such as the Tourist Guide Association of Nepal (TURGAN), with solid field evidence. When unions advocate for worker protections, they are often dismissed because they lack concrete data documenting their struggles.

This research bridges that gap by directly detailing the financial realities of guides—showing exactly how many tours are lost to highway traffic and how severe the income drop is during the monsoon. Local associations can use these findings as a formal tool to negotiate updated, mandatory day-tour base rates with travel agencies. It also gives them the data needed to lobby municipal offices for the creation of emergency, community-funded welfare pools to support freelance guides during the off-season.

### **For Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Development Partners**

International and local development organizations operating in the Gandaki Province frequently run programs aimed at economic empowerment and poverty reduction. This study is highly significant for them because it identifies a specific, highly vulnerable group within the urban labor market.

By detailing the coping mechanisms guides use to survive the monsoon—such as taking high-interest loans or migrating for temporary manual work—this paper allows NGOs to create highly targeted interventions. Instead of launching generic training programs, development partners can use this data to design off-season financial literacy workshops, micro-saving loops, or alternative winter/monsoon skill-building tracks that match the actual needs of freelance guides.

## **For Academic Literature and Future Researchers**

Within the academic community, this study addresses a major gap in Nepalese tourism literature. The vast majority of existing national research focuses heavily on quantitative economics—tracking total tourist arrivals, average tourist expenditure, or corporate hotel investments. Very few papers look at the informal labor force that actually keeps the industry running on the ground.

This study stands out by using a clean qualitative approach to document the lived experiences of frontline workers. It sets a new baseline for future researchers looking at how climate changes and infrastructure updates impact informal economies across South Asia, shifting the focus of tourism research from abstract corporate metrics back to human livelihoods.

### **1.6 Literature Review**

The purpose of this literature review is to thoroughly ground the empirical investigation of Pokhara's guiding workforce within established global and national academic debates. Rather than analyzing tourism through a single, isolated economic lens, this review synthesizes existing research across three distinct but deeply interconnected thematic pillars, beginning with the systemic realities of seasonal unemployment in tourism and hospitality. The analysis then expands into the deeply personal lived experiences of tour guides during seasonal shifts, mapping out how environmental dependencies create predictable but unmitigated contractions in household welfare. Finally, the review evaluates worker perceptions of government policy implementation, examining the historical gaps between macro-level state development priorities—such as massive infrastructure installations like the new Pokhara International Airport—and the micro-level welfare needs of the informal service workforce. By structuring the review around these three specific dimensions, the study builds a coherent academic foundation to analyze how top-down policies and natural weather patterns intersect to shape the daily vulnerability of frontline tourism laborers.

#### **1.6.1 Seasonal Unemployment in Tourism and Hospitality**

Baum and Lundtorp (2001) utilized a conceptual framework analysis to investigate the structural dynamics of tourism seasonality across global destinations. Their study found that because tourism services cannot be inventoried or stored, the labor market must adapt dynamically. This shifts the entire weight of market volatility onto the labor force, directly forcing independent and freelance operators into short-

term, unstable arrangements and predictable cyclic layoffs during off-peak periods. Expanding on these global dynamics within a localized framework, Karki (2021) deployed a qualitative case study report methodology to examine working conditions and labor protections within the trekking and tourism sector of Nepal. The study revealed that structural seasonality forces a massive portion of the frontline workforce into informal agreements without baseline protections. Despite the introduction of progressive national labor updates, the seasonal nature of the industry means independent contractors operate entirely without safety nets, absorbing the full force of off-season market drops. Furthermore, Pokharel and Subedi (2024) applied a quantitative time-series analysis to evaluate the contribution of sustainable tourism to Nepal's economic growth and labor trends. The researchers revealed a sharp operational paradox: while extended tourist stays boost hotel capacities and aggregate macroeconomic metrics, they simultaneously cause a severe contraction in seasonal field employment on the ground, reducing active mountain and trail labor opportunities and leaving independent contractors to face rapid underemployment.

A critical review of this literature shows that current research heavily favors macro-economic modeling, treating "the tourism worker" as a single, uniform group. While Baum and Lundtorp (2001) establish that volatility is transferred to the labor force, their global framework lacks the geographic specificity needed to capture localized South Asian informal sectors. Similarly, Karki's (2021) analysis of baseline protection gaps remain focused on trekking corridors, leaving the distinct city-sightseeing workforce unexamined. While Pokharel and Subedi (2024) identify the paradox of aggregate growth versus micro-level labor contraction, their quantitative model treats field employment as a statistical unit rather than a lived reality. This creates a significant empirical gap: existing literature fails to capture how structural seasonality converts directly into chronic underemployment for specialized, independent micro-economies on the ground, such as freelance tour guides operating in the localized hub of Lakeside, Pokhara. Seasonal unemployment cannot be written off as an unavoidable natural cycle. It is a structural design choice where commercial tourism models shift systemic financial risks away from formal businesses and directly onto individual freelance workers. As Baum and Lundtorp (2001) argue, the labor market adapts dynamically, but my view is that this "adaptation" is fundamentally predatory for the informal sector. Karki (2021) correctly identifies the failure of safety nets, but I contend that these safety nets fail precisely because they

are designed for formal employment, rendering them useless for freelance guides. Finally, matching Pokharel and Subedi's (2024) paradox, I believe that tracking national GDP or seasonal arrival fluctuations completely ignores the deep financial strain placed on the independent individuals who must find a way to survive the slow monsoon months with zero steady income.

### **1.6.2 Lived Experiences of Tour Guides During Seasonal Unemployment**

Getz and Nilsson (2004) employed a qualitative, phenomenological methodology to examine the livelihood strategies of independent workers in seasonal tourism markets. Their findings revealed that off-season revenue vacuums cause intense psychological and financial stress within household units. Freelance workers are routinely forced to use extreme, defensive coping mechanisms—such as cutting down on daily food spending, delaying medical care, and drawing down their core personal savings—which leaves them highly vulnerable to long-term asset depletion. Likewise, Baral (2023) utilized a mixed-methods approach anchored in the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework to analyze how environmental dependencies and structural cycles impact local livelihood assets in Nepal. This research proved that seasonal drops directly erode an informal worker's financial and social capitals. Because independent operators lack baseline security, they are forced to rely heavily on informal community debt networks during off-peak seasons, trapping households in recurring cycles of borrowing that exhaust their peak-season earnings before the next tourist wave arrives. While Getz and Nilsson (2004) successfully document that low-season drops cause severe financial hardship and asset depletion, their study focuses on European models, which benefit from stronger baseline state infrastructure than developing nations. Baral (2023) contextualizes these debt traps within Nepal, but analyzes the off-season as a static, isolated block of time. There is a glaring lack of research showing how the inability to save money during the peak season—due to shifting city transit logistics or airport travel delays—directly cripples a guide's ability to survive the subsequent off-season. The literature treats peak-season earnings as a guaranteed constant, ignoring how daily operational changes reduce a worker's capacity to build up a survival fund.

The lived experience of a freelance guide during the monsoon cannot be separated from their working conditions during the peak season. If a guide is structurally blocked from maximizing their income when tourists are plentiful—a reality overlooked by both Getz and Nilsson (2004) and Baral (2023)—they are

effectively being set up for financial failure when the rains arrive. The psychological anxiety and debt trap these workers face during the monsoon are direct consequences of a system that extracts their labor during high season without ensuring their survival during the low season.

### **1.6.3 Perceptions of Government Policy Implementation**

According to Bhattarai (2023), a socio-legal policy review framework was used to assess the execution of the Labour Act 2017 and the Contribution-Based Social Security Act 2017 in Nepal's informal sector. The findings indicated a massive execution gap on the ground. Freelance guides perceive government mandates as empty promises, noting that regulatory enforcement completely vanishes when applied to decentralized, independent workers, leaving them completely unprotected during seasonal closures or sudden economic shifts. Similarly, Paudel and Khatri (2024) conducted a qualitative sociological analysis to explore tourism expansion, socio-economic inequalities, and spatial displacements in Pokhara. Their study found that local frontline tourism workers perceive top-down urban development policies as deeply exclusionary. Rapid infrastructure projects and major municipal shifts are frequently executed without grassroots consultation, causing spatial disruptions that actively harm informal livelihoods, widen local inequalities, and leave marginalized service operators highly vulnerable to environmental and policy shocks.

Bhattarai (2023) provides an excellent breakdown of national legislative failures, yet the analysis remains confined to legal texts rather than spatial adjustments. Paudel and Khatri (2024) bridge this by highlighting how exclusionary urban expansion creates spatial displacement in Pokhara. However, a major research gap still exists regarding how frontline workers perceive these specific physical infrastructural shifts over time. Specifically, the literature has completely overlooked how moving the old city airstrip to the new Pokhara International Airport at Chhinedanda has created a physical barrier that cuts into the daily incomes and tour capacities of independent guides in Lakeside.

Policy implementation in Nepal is deeply broken because it prioritizes grand concrete structures while ignoring the human element required to run them. The insights of Bhattarai (2023) regarding execution gaps support my view that government frameworks exist primarily on paper. Furthermore, extending Paudel and Khatri's (2024) critique of spatial exclusion, the new Pokhara International Airport may look like a national achievement on television, but if its location doubles transit

times and cuts a freelance guide's daily capacity from three tours down to one, it acts as an economic penalty for the grassroots workforce. Policies must be evaluated based on how they impact local livelihoods, not just how they look in government press releases.

#### **1.6.4 Research Gap**

While existing studies offer valuable insights into tourism seasonality (Baum & Lundtorp, 2001) and general labor precarity in Nepal (Karki, 2021), the current literature suffers from two primary blind spots.

First, most national research treats seasonal unemployment as a static macroeconomic variable, focusing on aggregate arrival figures rather than the lived, day-to-day realities of frontline workers (Pokharel & Subedi, 2024). There is a noticeable lack of empirical work examining how independent, freelance city tour guides—who operate entirely outside formal payroll structures—navigate the three-month monsoon shutdown in localized hubs like Pokhara.

Second, while scholars have critiques of top-down urban development policies in Nepal (Bhattarai, 2023; Paudel & Khatri, 2024), no study has empirically investigated the spatial friction caused by the opening of the new Pokhara International Airport at Chhinedanda on local labor productivity. The existing literature completely overlooks how shifting transit hubs and highway bottlenecks compress the daily tour capacity of independent guides during peak seasons, directly undercutting their ability to save money for the slow monsoon months.

This study addresses these gaps by exploring how physical infrastructure shifts and climate seasonality intersect to impact the livelihoods of freelance tour guides in Lakeside, Pokhara.

#### **1.7 Research Methodology**

This study will adopt a qualitative research approach to explore and understand the experiences, opinions, perceptions, and practices of individuals working in the tourism sector of Pokhara. A qualitative approach is appropriate for this study because it helps the researcher obtain detailed information about participants' views and provides a deeper understanding of the research issue within its real-life context. The qualitative approach allows participants to express their experiences and perspectives freely, which helps the researcher identify important factors, challenges, and opportunities related to tourism operation and services.

### **1.7.1 Research Design**

This study employs an exploratory, qualitative research design to examine how intersecting structural factors—specifically seasonal monsoon closures and shifting tourism infrastructure policies—affect the livelihoods and socio-economic resilience of independent tour guides in Pokhara. A qualitative framework is selected because the core phenomenon under investigation is deeply tied to human experience, financial vulnerability, and occupational identity.

Quantitative metrics, such as standardized surveys or rigid income tallies, fail to capture the nuanced psychological, household, and systemic pressures experienced by these frontline workers. By adopting a qualitative lens, this research privileges the lived experiences of freelance tour guides, allowing for an in-depth exploration of their individual coping strategies, hidden debt cycles, and the subjective meanings they assign to regulatory and spatial exclusion (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

### **1.7.2 Study Area and Site Selection**

The geographical focus of this research is Pokhara, the primary gateway for adventure and cultural tourism in Western Nepal. While the broader Pokhara Metropolitan City serves as the economic backdrop, the empirical heart of this study is situated within the Lakeside precinct, which features the highest density of freelance guides, travel bureaus, and independent tourism operators.

Data collection is strategically localized around historical guide congregation points, transport terminals, and local tourist hubs within Lakeside. These locations are highly purposive; following the inauguration of the new Pokhara International Airport at Chhinedanda, the physical center of tourist transit shifted away from the old city-center airstrip. This infrastructure relocation introduced severe transit bottlenecks, increased travel distances for standard city tours, and drastically altered daily itinerary logistics (Paudel & Khatri, 2024). By embedding the study within these specific lakeside meeting hubs and transit points, the researcher captures guides in the immediate environment where the operational and economic consequences of these policy-driven spatial shifts are directly felt.

### **1.7.3 Data Collection Methods**

To gather authentic primary data that reflects the true realities of the guides' lives, a multi-faceted qualitative approach was designed:

- **Semi-Structured Interviews:** Primary data is generated through face-to-face, semi-structured interviews. This format provides a conversational yet focused

framework, allowing participants to speak openly while ensuring the dialogue remains anchored to the core research questions.

- **Purposive Sampling:** Participants are chosen based on explicit, criterion-based parameters to ensure depth and relevance. Eligible respondents must be:
  - Licensed tour guides operating independently or on a freelance basis.
  - Reliant on guiding fees and tour tips as their primary source of household income.
  - Veterans of at least three consecutive seasonal cycles in the Pokhara valley, ensuring they possess sufficient baseline experience to contrast historical stability against recent policy upheavals.
- **Interview Guide:** Rather than relying on a restrictive questionnaire, a flexible interview guide featuring open-ended questions was developed. This guide prompts discussions around monsoon income gaps, household survival strategies, interactions with local regulatory bodies, and the logistical impacts of the airport relocation, while granting guides the conversational freedom to introduce unexpected personal struggles.
- **Audio Recording and Note-Taking:** With the explicit verbal and written consent of the participants, interviews are audio-recorded to preserve linguistic nuances. Concurrently, the researcher maintains field notes to document non-verbal cues, emotional expressions, and the contextual atmosphere of the field site during the sessions.
- **Data Transcription and Translation:** Recorded interviews are transcribed verbatim from the spoken native dialect (Nepali) into written text, and subsequently translated into English. Close attention is paid to maintaining the conceptual equivalency of local idioms and guide-specific terminology during the translation process.
- **Thematic Analysis:** The translated corpus is analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework for thematic analysis. The text is subjected to iterative, line-by-line open coding to identify recurring patterns, which are then clustered into broader, conceptually distinct themes: *lived experiences during the monsoon drop*, *systemic vulnerabilities of piece-rate hospitality labor*, and *worker perceptions of infrastructure policy execution*.

#### **1.7.4 Ethical Considerations**

Given that guides are reporting on highly sensitive matters—including private financial distress, informal borrowing habits, and candid critiques of government planning bodies—rigorous ethical guardrails are paramount to protect participants from professional or institutional backlash.

Prior to any data collection, the research objectives, institutional affiliations, and data-handling practices are thoroughly explained. Participation is entirely voluntary, and each guide reviews and executes an informed consent form affirming their right to refuse any specific question or withdraw from the study at any point without penalty. To ensure absolute anonymity, all personally identifiable information, including real names, license numbers, and ties to specific travel desks or associations like the Tourist Guide Association of Nepal (TURGAN), is completely stripped from the transcripts. Participants are assigned alphanumeric pseudonyms (e.g., *Guide A*, *Guide B*). All raw audio files, translated transcripts, and field notes are securely stored on an encrypted, password-protected digital drive accessible exclusively by the primary researcher.

#### **1.7.5 Limitations of the Study**

This study possesses several boundary conditions that must be acknowledged. Geographically and occupationally, the scope is strictly confined to independent, freelance tour guides operating within the immediate urban and sightseeing jurisdictions of Pokhara; consequently, the findings cannot be generalized to alternative tourism sectors (such as hotel management or commercial airlines) or to guiding communities in geographically distinct regions of Nepal.

Methodologically, as a qualitative inquiry, the insights generated reflect the subjective, deeply contextual perspectives of the guides themselves rather than absolute statistical indicators. Furthermore, the analysis focuses tightly on the intersection of micro-climate weather patterns and macro-level municipal transit policies; it does not comprehensively map outer macro-economic variables, such as global fluctuations in travel insurance policies or the individualized long-term health profiles of the workers. Finally, the total sample size is naturally bound by the structural limitations of time, seasonal accessibility, and the field resources available to execute this undergraduate project.

## CHAPTER II

### FINDINGS

This chapter presents the empirical findings of the study titled “**Narrating Tour Guides' Lived Experiences of Seasonal Unemployment and The Role of Policy Implementation in Lakeside Pokhara.**” In alignment with a qualitative research design, this chapter captures the lived experiences, financial realities, and daily operational challenges faced by independent frontline workers. The data presented here was gathered through face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with twelve (N=12) licensed freelance tour guides operating in the Lakeside precinct of Pokhara. To ensure data depth and relevance, all participants met the criterion of having at least three consecutive years of guiding experience in the Pokhara Valley and relying on guiding as their primary source of household income. The thematic analysis produced three main overarching themes:

- 1. The Monsoon Revenue Vacuum and Informal Labor Precariousness**
- 2. Financial Erosion, Defensive Coping, and the Neighborhood Debt Trap**
- 3. Infrastructure Relocation, Spatial Bottlenecks, and Policy Execution Gaps**

To maintain participant confidentiality and satisfy ethical research guidelines, all participant names and license numbers have been replaced with alphanumeric pseudonyms (e.g., Guide A, Guide B).

#### **Data Analysis and Coding Matrix**

Following Braun and Clarke’s (2006) framework for qualitative data analysis, raw verbal audio recordings were transcribed verbatim from spoken Nepali into text and translated into English. The text was read repeatedly to isolate significant statements, repeated ideas, and emotionally charged phrases. Short codes were assigned to meaningful units, which were then grouped into sub-themes and broader thematic categories.

Table 2.1 illustrates the analytical progression from raw participant text to thematic synthesis.

**Table 2.1: Methodological Coding Matrix (Raw Data to Themes)**

| <b>Raw Data / Participant Quote</b>                                                                                      | <b>Qualitative Code</b>   | <b>Sub-Theme</b>                                   | <b>Overarching Theme</b>                       | <b>Meaning / Interpretation</b>                                                                |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>“In June, bookings vanish overnight... if you don’t walk a client... your family doesn’t eat that evening.”</i>       | Immediate income collapse | Piece-rate vulnerability & absolute revenue vacuum | <b>Theme 1: Monsoon Revenue Vacuum</b>         | Independent guides absorb total climate risk due to zero base-salary security.                 |
| <i>“When you are new, you don’t realize how absolute the silence is in July... there isn’t enough left to save.”</i>     | Inadequate cash buffer    | Unpredictable workflow & off-season shock          | <b>Theme 1: Monsoon Revenue Vacuum</b>         | Low baseline piece-rates prevent younger guides from building viable monsoon survival funds.   |
| <i>“I go to the local shopkeeper... first two months of peak earnings go straight back to paying off monsoon debts.”</i> | Predatory borrowing loop  | Neighborhood debt traps & future income erosion    | <b>Theme 2: Financial Erosion &amp; Coping</b> | High-season profits are pre-spent on low-season survival debts, preventing asset accumulation. |

| <b>Raw Data / Participant Quote</b>                                                                                               | <b>Qualitative Code</b>   | <b>Sub-Theme</b>                               | <b>Overarching Theme</b>                       | <b>Meaning / Interpretation</b>                                                                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                   |                           |                                                |                                                |                                                                                                    |
| <i>“It starts with switching from meat to plain lentils... I had to pledge a gold ring to a local lender...”</i>                  | Household asset depletion | Defensive household coping mechanisms          | <b>Theme 2: Financial Erosion &amp; Coping</b> | Families systematically strip personal health and assets to survive the three-month rain shutdown. |
| <i>“The new airport might look grand... but it acts as an economic penalty... slashed my earning potential by forty percent.”</i> | Logistical income penalty | Spatial friction & reduced daily tour velocity | <b>Theme 3: Relocation &amp; Policy Gaps</b>   | Relocated transit hubs create highway bottlenecks that directly cut billable guiding slots.        |
| <i>“The airport moved, but the roads stayed the same size. We are paying for that mistake with our time and tips.”</i>            | Infrastructure bottleneck | Spatial displacement & urban congestion        | <b>Theme 3: Relocation &amp; Policy Gaps</b>   | Top-down development projects transfer traffic inefficiencies onto frontline workers.              |

## **2.1 Theme 1: The Monsoon Revenue Vacuum and Informal Labor**

### **Precariousness**

The first major theme captures how independent tour guides experience the summer monsoon season (late June through September). Rather than experiencing a gentle seasonal slowdown, participants described the monsoon as a total, abrupt economic standstill. Because freelance guides operate within a piece-rate market without employment contracts, base retainers, or corporate benefits, their daily revenue drops to zero the moment tourist traffic stops.

#### **2.1.1 Piece-Rate Volatility and Absolute Income Collapse**

Participants emphasized that their professional status as licensed city guides completely dissolves during the summer rains, leaving them exposed to immediate cash flow starvation.

##### **Guide D (8 years experiences):**

*“During the peak months, you feel like a professional. You wear the license, you guide international clients, you think your business is stable. Then the rains hit in June, and the bookings vanish overnight. In the informal market, if you don’t walk a client through a temple or onto a trail that morning, your family doesn’t eat that evening. There is no backup, no base salary. The system extracts our energy when the weather is clear and forgets we exist when it rains.”*

##### **Guide A (7 years experiences):**

*“As freelance guides, we don’t have monthly paychecks like hotel managers. When monsoon landslides close the highways and cancel flights, our phones stop ringing completely. Zero clients mean zero rupees.”*

These responses demonstrate that informal guiding in Pokhara is characterized by severe structural exploitation. Guide D’s observation that *“the system extracts our energy... and forgets we exist”* underscores how commercial tourism models shift environmental risks entirely onto individual workers. The lack of a baseline salary retainer transforms predictable weather shifts into immediate household crises.

#### **2.1.2 The Illusion of Peak-Season Savings**

A secondary challenge highlighted by participants was the structural inability to save sufficient capital during the busy spring and autumn months to cover the monsoon gap.

**Guide C (2 years experiences):**

*“When you are new, you don’t realize how absolute the silence is in July. You sit at the tea shops in Lakeside waiting for the phone to ring, but days turn into weeks and nothing happens. The senior guides told me to save my spring money, but when you are trying to pay rent and buy food, there isn’t enough left to save for a three-month drought. You feel completely invisible to the city.”*

**Guide G (4 years experiences):**

*“People think we earn huge money in October and April. But after paying back high-season expenses, commissions to travel counters, and basic city rent, the remaining margin is too thin to sustain a family for three solid months of no work.”*

The narratives challenge the common assumption that seasonal workers can simply save their way through off-peak periods. Intense market competition and agency commission cuts compress baseline daily wages, meaning that peak-season earnings are barely sufficient for immediate cost-of-living expenses.

Overall, Theme 1 reveals that monsoon underemployment is a built-in structural design choice within the informal tourism market. Commercial agencies successfully insulate themselves from seasonal downturns by relying on flexible, freelance labor, leaving independent guides to absorb months of total income stagnation without institutional safety nets.

## **2.2 Theme 2: Financial Erosion, Defensive Coping, and the Neighborhood Debt Trap**

The second major theme addresses the defensive survival mechanisms families deploy when cash reserves run out mid-way through the monsoon. The data shows that off-season survival forces households to systematically deplete personal assets and enter high-interest informal debt loops.

### **2.2.1 Household Asset Depletion and Defensive Spending Cuts**

When cash reserves hit zero in July or August, independent guides are forced to reduce basic household consumption and delay essential health decisions.

**Guide E (16 years experiences):**

*“It starts with switching from meat to plain lentils, then you start asking the school principal to give you an extension on the children’s tuition fees. Last year, my mother needed medicine for her breathing trouble in August, and I had to pledge a gold ring*

*to a local lender just to get the cash. You pull apart your life piece by piece just to get through until September.”*

**Guide F (6 years experiences):**

*“You postpone everything. You don't buy new clothes, you cut phone recharges, and if you fall sick, you just take cheap painkillers and wait for the autumn tourist season to arrive.”*

**On the basis of my observation:**

Guide E's account of *"pulling apart your life piece by piece"* illustrates severe physical and emotional asset erosion. Off-season survival comes at the cost of long-term household security, forcing families to liquidate emergency assets (like gold) and sacrifice basic health and educational needs.

### **2.2.2 The Neighborhood Debt Trap**

To keep kitchens running through late August, guides rely heavily on informal loans from local shopkeepers, neighborhood lenders, and informal saving loops.

**Guide B (5 years experiences):**

*“By August, whatever money I saved during the spring is entirely gone. That is when you have to go to the local grocery shopkeeper or a neighborhood lender just to keep the kitchen running. They know we are desperate, so the informal interest rates are high. When the autumn peak season finally arrives in September, my first two months of earnings don't go to my children's future or my savings—they go straight back to paying off the monsoon debts. We are trapped in a wheel where we are always paying for the past instead of building the future.”*

**Guide H (12 years experiences):**

*“The local shops give us groceries on credit during July and August. But once September comes, all your initial tour tips and guiding fees go directly into their hands to clear the account ledger. You never actually get ahead.”*

**Respondents and my observation:**

Guide B's testimony perfectly outlines the structural mechanism of the "neighborhood debt trap". High-season profits are pre-spent on low-season survival debts. Consequently, even during record-breaking tourist arrival years, the actual net financial health of frontline guides remains completely stagnant.

### **2.2.3 Alternative Off-Season Livelihoods and Subsistence Coping**

Beyond liquidating household savings and accumulating debt, participants reported engaging in low-yield, informal subsistence activities to generate basic

household food security during the monsoon drought. Because daily guiding work vanishes, guides temporarily revert to traditional non-tourism livelihoods, including home agriculture, seasonal paddy harvesting, backyard poultry rearing, local fishing in Fewa Lake, and assisting in small family micro-enterprises like neighborhood retail (*kirana*) shops and tea stalls.

**Guide I (10 years experiences):**

*"When the guiding stops in July, you cannot just sit at home watching the rain. I go back to my family's small plot of land to help with the seasonal paddy planting, and my brother and I do some local fishing in Fewa Lake early in the morning to bring back food for the kitchen. My wife runs a small neighborhood kirana shop, so I help manage that during the day. None of this brings in big cash to pay for school fees or rent, but it keeps rice on the table so we don't have to buy everything from the market on credit."*

**Guide C (2 years experiences):**

*"Some of the younger guys try to find daily wage work in construction, but during the heavy rains, building sites stop too. Most of us rely on backyard poultry rearing or helping our families with subsistence farming just to eat day-to-day. It is a survival mode that keeps you fed, but it doesn't generate the cash you need to pay off debts or cover emergency expenses."*

These testimonies illustrate a critical rural-urban livelihood blending strategy. While these secondary subsistence activities successfully cushion families against acute household food insecurity, they generate minimal liquid capital. Consequently, while guides can feed their households through agriculture, fishing, or small retail, they remain structurally dependent on high-interest informal loans to cover non-food cash expenses like tuition, medical care, and rent.

**Theme 2** demonstrates that off-season survival forces independent guides into a dual coping strategy composed of proactive subsistence labor and defensive financial erosion. While reverting to traditional livelihoods—such as home agriculture, fishing, backyard poultry, and micro-retail—helps families maintain basic food security and limit market grocery expenses, these informal activities yield minimal liquid cash. Consequently, subsistence labor alone cannot cover major non-food overheads like rent, tuition, and medical emergencies. To bridge this structural cash deficit, guides are forced to liquidate personal household assets and rely on high-

interest informal borrowing, ultimately trapping them in a recurring cycle of debt clearance that absorbs their peak-season earnings before the next tourist wave arrives.

### **2.3 Theme 3: Infrastructure Relocation, Spatial Bottlenecks, and Policy**

#### **Execution Gaps**

The final theme examines how top-down infrastructure planning—specifically the opening of the new Pokhara International Airport at Chhinedanda—has directly impacted daily guide productivity and peak-season earning potential.

#### **2.3.1 Increased Distance, Traffic Friction, and Capacity Compression**

The physical move from the old city-center airstrip (<3 km from Lakeside) to Chhinedanda (5–7.5 km away) has introduced severe spatial bottlenecks along commercial highway corridors.

##### **Guide H (12 years experiences):**

*“The new airport might look grand on television, but for an independent guide, it acts as an economic penalty. It takes so long to get a group through the Chhinedanda traffic and back to Lakeside that the whole morning is lost. I used to run three local sightseeing gigs a day during peak season. Now, I am lucky if I finish two. By cutting my daily capacity, the airport relocation has slashed my peak earning potential by nearly forty percent. If I cannot maximize my income when the tourists are actually here, I have no cushion left to survive when the monsoon arrives.”*

##### **Guide F (6 years experiences):**

*“It is a complete bottleneck at the main highway junctions. You arrive at the new terminal, clear the baggage, and then get stuck behind heavy freight trucks moving into the city. By the time you get the guests checked into their hotel in Lakeside, the morning is gone. The guests are tired and dusty from the traffic, so they cancel the afternoon temple tour. The airport moved, but the roads stayed the same size. We are paying for that mistake with our time and our daily tips.”*

##### **On the basis of my observation:**

These accounts reveal that infrastructure relocation acts as an indirect economic penalty. Increased physical distance combined with unmanaged highway congestion doubles transit times. By compressing daily operational capacity from three tours down to one or two, top-down urban development directly undercuts a guide's ability to build a monsoon survival fund during peak months.

### 2.3.2 Institutional Policy Disconnect and Exclusion

Participants expressed deep frustration regarding state tourism bodies (e.g., MoCTCA), viewing national development plans as exclusionary concrete projects that ignore informal labor welfare.

#### **Guide B (5 years experiences):**

*“Government officials talk about 'visit Nepal' campaigns and grand infrastructure on news channels. But they never ask how a freelance guide gets clients from Chhinedanda to Lakeside without losing half a day's income. The Labour Act 2017 exists on paper, but no inspector enforces minimum daily rates for freelance city guides.”*

#### **Guide D (8 years experiences):**

*“Unions like TURGAN publish rate cards, but travel counters easily undercut them because there are so many desperate young guides. The government builds big terminals, but leaves the workers to fight each other in an unregulated street market.”*

#### **Researcher Observation & Interpretation:**

The data highlights a profound institutional policy execution gap. State development frameworks prioritize physical concrete installations over transit logistics and labor protection. Existing labor laws fail to reach decentralized informal markets, leaving independent guides without rate protection or municipal safety nets.

Theme 3 proves that top-down urban development projects produce exclusionary spatial landscapes. Shifting primary transport hubs without smoothing local transit corridors compresses peak-season earning velocity, directly compounding the severity of the subsequent monsoon off-season.

### 2.4 Summary of the Findings

The qualitative findings of this study illustrate that the economic vulnerability of Lakeside's freelance tour guides is not an unavoidable natural accident, but a structurally engineered outcome:

- **Monsoon Downturn:** Operates as an absolute revenue vacuum, dropping daily income to zero due to a lack of employment retainers or base salaries.
- **Debt & Asset Erosion:** Off-season survival forces families to cut food consumption, liquidate household assets, and enter high-interest informal debt loops with local shopkeepers.

- **Infrastructure Friction:** The relocation of the airport to Chhinedanda doubles transit times, compressing daily tour capacity from 3 tours to 1–2 tours and slashing peak-season earning potential by 30% to 40%.
- **Compounded Vulnerability:** By limiting peak-season earnings through traffic bottlenecks, infrastructure relocation directly compromises off-season survival reserves.
- **Policy Disconnect:** Macro-level state policies focus exclusively on grand concrete construction while ignoring micro-level transit flows and informal labor welfare.

## CHAPTER III

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 3.1 Conclusion

This study set out to explore the lived experiences of seasonal monsoon unemployment among freelance tour guides in Lakeside, Pokhara, focusing on the structural causes of their financial precarity, the impact of the Pokhara International Airport relocation, and the gaps in existing government policy implementation. The findings confirm that seasonal unemployment among Pokhara's independent guides is not merely an unavoidable consequence of monsoon weather, but a structurally engineered vulnerability resulting from piece-rate informal labor conditions, top-down infrastructure planning, and institutional neglect.

During the three-month monsoon off-season (late June through September), freelance guides experience an absolute revenue vacuum where daily guiding income drops to zero. In response, guides demonstrate remarkable individual resilience by engaging in a hybrid survival strategy—temporarily reverting to traditional non-tourism livelihoods, including home agriculture, seasonal paddy harvesting, backyard poultry rearing, local fishing in Fewa Lake, and running family micro-enterprises like neighborhood retail (*kirana*) shops and tea stalls. However, while these subsistence activities successfully mitigate household food insecurity, they generate minimal liquid capital. Consequently, guides remain trapped in a recurring "neighborhood debt trap," taking high-interest loans from local lenders and shopkeepers to cover essential non-food expenses like healthcare, rent, and school tuition—debts that consume their peak-season earnings later in the year.

Furthermore, the study reveals that top-down urban infrastructure projects have directly compounded this seasonal vulnerability. The relocation of Pokhara International Airport to Chhinedanda has introduced severe spatial friction and traffic bottlenecks along major highway corridors, doubling transit times between the terminal and Lakeside. This logistical delay compresses guides' daily tour capacity from three tours down to one or two during high-demand spring and autumn months, cutting peak-season earning velocity by 30% to 40%. As a result, guides enter the monsoon shutdown with severely diminished cash reserves, deepening their reliance on informal debt and informal subsistence labor.

Taken together, these findings address the research gap identified in Chapter I by providing localized, qualitative evidence of how spatial friction, seasonal labor precarity, and institutional policy execution gaps intersect within Pokhara's tourism economy. Statutory frameworks, such as the *Labour Act 2017*, and union rate cards published by the Tourist Guide Association of Nepal (TURGAN) exist on paper but lack enforcement in decentralized, piece-rate street markets. The study confirms that frontline guides—who serve as the essential cultural backbone of Pokhara's hospitality industry—are forced to absorb the full burden of seasonal and infrastructural shocks without municipal safety nets, with direct implications for local labor welfare, tourism sustainability, and regional policy reform going forward.

### **3.2 Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed for municipal authorities, tourism policymakers, guide associations, and future researchers.

#### **For Municipal Authorities and Tourism Policymakers (MoCTCA & Pokhara Metropolitan City)**

**Establish Off-Season Relief and Green Conservation Work Programs:** The local government should establish municipal off-season relief initiatives—such as paid monsoon conservation work (e.g., heritage trail maintenance, environmental cleanup, tree planting)—to provide freelance guides with baseline cash liquidity during months of zero tourism arrivals.

**Provide Targeted Agricultural and Micro-Business Support:** Recognizing that guides revert to subsistence farming, poultry rearing, and small shopkeeping during the off-season, municipal agricultural departments should provide subsidized seeds, livestock feed, and micro-grants to help tourism families maintain household food security without accumulating high-interest debt.

**Create Dedicated Tourist Express Corridors:** To mitigate the spatial bottlenecks caused by the new airport location at Chhinedanda, urban traffic management authorities must implement dedicated traffic bypass corridors or priority lanes along the Prithvi Highway to reduce transit delays and restore guides' daily tour capacity.

**For Tourist Guide Associations and Unions (e.g., TURGAN)**

Enforce Minimum Daily Rate Cards: Guide associations must collaborate with travel agencies and tourism boards to strictly enforce mandatory minimum day-rate cards, preventing undercutting by commission agencies during peak seasons.

Create a Co-Operative Emergency Credit Pool: Establish a member-funded, zero-interest emergency credit pool—subsidized by a micro-fee on peak-season tour bookings—to allow freelance guides to access low-interest emergency loans during the monsoon without falling into predatory neighborhood debt traps.

**For Future Research and Academic Implementation**

Quantitative and Mixed-Methods Validation: Future research could employ a quantitative survey with a larger sample size of freelance guides across Gandaki Province to statistically measure income loss, average debt accumulation, and agricultural yield impacts during the monsoon.

Comparative Studies in Other Tourism Hubs: Future studies could extend this research to other seasonal tourism hubs in Nepal, such as Chitwan, Mustang, or the Everest region, to evaluate whether similar rural-urban livelihood blending occurs during off-peak periods.

Hospitality Curriculum Integration: Academic institutions and hotel management programs (such as BHM curricula) should incorporate modules on informal labor rights, crisis management, and financial literacy to prepare future tourism professionals for the economic realities of seasonal service work.

## REFERENCES

- Baral, P. (2023). Debt cycles and capital erosion: The financial vulnerability of informal tourism workers in Nepal. *Journal of South Asian Economic Studies*, 19(2), 112–131.
- Baum, T., & Lundtorp, S. (Eds.). (2001). *Seasonality in tourism*. Elsevier Science. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780080516806>
- Bhattarai, K. (2023). Tourism policy and planning in Nepal: An evaluation of grassroots implementation gaps. *Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Administration*, 8(2), 45–68.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Getz, D., & Nilsson, P. A. (2004). Responses of family businesses to extreme seasonality in demand: The case of Bornholm. *Tourism Management*, 25(1), 17–30. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177\(03\)00062-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177(03)00062-3)
- Ghimire, S. (2019). Socio-economic transformations in the Lakeside precinct of Pokhara: The cost of rapid tourism expansion. *Nepalese Journal of Development Studies*, 2(1), 89–104.
- Karki, G. (2021). Working together for strong social dialogue in the tourism sector of Nepal (Case Study Report). *Nepal Labor Review Framework*, 14(3), 88–105.
- Nepal, S. K., & Karna, M. (2020). Tourism and geographic transitions in the Nepal Himalaya. *Himalayan Research Journal*, 38(2), 14–32.
- Paudel, M. K., & Khatri, S. K. (2024). A sociological analysis of tourism research in Pokhara, Nepal: Perspectives and key findings. *The Himalayan Geographers*, 14, 57–75.
- Pokharel, S., & Subedi, T. (2024). Sustainable tourism contributions and operational contractions in Nepal's seasonal field employment. *Journal of Mountain Labor Trends*, 12(1), 44–61.
- Sharma, G., & Adhikari, B. (2022). Economic contributions and structural vulnerabilities of piece-rate hospitality labor in tourist hubs. *Nepal Economic Review*, 11(3), 201–218.

- Thapa, B. (2021). Seasonality and labor market fluctuations in developing mountain economies. *Journal of Mountain Science and Development*, 7(1), 33–51.
- Tourist Guide Association of Nepal. (2023). Annual report on the state of the frontline workforce and professional guiding standards. TURGAN Central Office.
- Vehicle Hiring Nepal. (2026). Transport logistics, highway distance charts, and transit metrics for the Pokhara basin. VHN Logistics

## **APPENDICES**

### **Interview Questionnaires**

The following semi-structured interview guide was used to conduct in-depth interviews with twelve (12) participants. Questions were used as a flexible guide rather than a fixed script; follow-up and probing questions were asked as needed depending on participants' responses. Each interview began with a brief introduction of the study's purpose and a request for informed consent, in line with the ethical considerations outlined in Chapter I.

#### **Section A: Background Information**

1. Could you tell me a little about yourself — your age, how many years you have worked as a freelance tour guide, and how many family members depend on your income?
2. Is independent tour guiding your absolute sole source of income throughout the year, or do you have other side jobs?
3. How often or through what channels (walk-ins, local travel desks, personal networks) do you usually secure guiding gigs during the busy peak seasons?

#### **Section B: The Monsoon Revenue Vacuum and Financial Strain**

1. How do you usually manage your daily life and household expenses when the summer monsoon hits in late June and tourist bookings suddenly stop?
2. Can you describe a time when the three-month off-season caused severe financial or personal stress for your household?
3. What kind of coping strategies (cutting food costs, delaying medical care, dipping into savings) do you find yourself relying on most to get through the rains?
4. Has your peak-season money ever run out completely before the monsoon ended? Can you tell me about how you handled that experience?
5. How important are personal cash savings to your off-season survival, and are you actually able to save enough during the high season?

#### **Section C: Shifting Infrastructure Logistics and Trust in Policy**

1. Do you check or keep track of traffic patterns and flight schedules at the new Pokhara International Airport at Chhinedanda? Can you walk me through how you plan a pickup now?

2. What makes a major infrastructure project feel beneficial to a local worker like you? Does the new airport feel that way?
3. How do you feel about top-down government development decisions made by bodies like MoCTCA? Do you trust them to protect informal workers like you?
4. Has a heavy traffic jam or delay along the Prithvi Highway ever forced you to cut a tour short or cancel a booking? Can you describe that experience?
5. Do formal labor protections (like the Labor Act 2017) carry any real weight in your daily freelance work, or do they feel like empty promises?

#### **Section D: The Daily Tour Decision-Making Journey**

1. Could you walk me through the last time you managed a city tour starting from the new airport terminal — from the moment you picked up the guests to when you finally dropped them off at Lakeside?
2. Are there other structural factors, such as the increased physical distance, highway bottlenecks, or fuel costs, that hurt your daily capacity even when you have plenty of clients?
3. Do you ever voice your complaints or share your workplace struggles with local unions like TURGAN? What motivates you to speak up, or stay quiet?
4. Have you ever had trouble matching the expectations of tourists because of transit delays or road conditions? How did that affect your daily tips and income?

#### **Section E: Closing Question**

1. Is there anything else about how seasonal unemployment or the new airport relocation influences your life as a freelance guide in Pokhara that we haven't covered?