Factors Influencing Collaboration Among Public Organizations in Bhutan

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Collaboration has been a longstanding issue in Bhutan's public sector since its inception in the 1960s. Common themes such as red-tapism, fragmented organizations, and duplication of efforts have been widely reported by media, public sector organizations, civil society organizations (CSOs), and international organizations. Limited guidelines on implementation and a lack of applied research exacerbate the difficulty of realizing collaboration.

This study aims to understand the key factors that influence interagency collaboration in Bhutan. To this end, a quantitative design was used to test the perceptions of respondents using a 17-item survey questionnaire. The questionnaire measured constructs of relevant concepts in interagency literature under three independent variables (organizational characteristics, perceived environmental pressures, and employees' attitudes towards collaboration) and a dependent variable (extent of interagency activity).

Spearman's correlation test results indicate a slight negative link ($r = -0.24$) between organizational characteristics and the extent of interagency activity, while perceived environmental pressures ($r = 0.31$) and employees' attitudes towards collaboration ($r = 0.27$) show a slight positive link with the extent of interagency activity.

The study recommends drawing interagency guidelines from local research and identifies future research opportunities in the field.

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INTRODUCTION

Rittel and Weber's (1973) concept of "wicked problems" accurately portrays the difficult tasks that public policy planners, implementers, and managers face. Modern-day problems often present themselves with no clear solutions and are self-replicating. This presents an obstacle for managers and decision-makers in the public sector as traditional modes of problem-solving, planning, and coordination are becoming obsolete. Bhutan, in particular, faces a myriad of issues that hinder effective problem-solving, planning, and coordination in its public sector.

Issues such as red tape, fragmented organisations, and duplication of efforts have been widely reported by various media groups, public sector organisations, non-governmental organisations, and reputable international organisations. For instance, in the Royal Civil Service Commission annual report of 2019, a lack of cooperation from regional offices of agencies was recorded due to their line of accountability falling under the purview of central ministries, rather than Dzongkhag administration (Royal Civil Service Commission, 2019).

One potential solution to this conundrum can be found in the scholarly literature of interagency collaboration, which emphasises the importance of public organisations working together. Collaboration, as defined by Bardach (1998, p. 8), is "any joint activity by two or more agencies working together that is intended to increase public value by their working together rather than separately."

The current state of the public sector may have roots in New Public Management (NPM). When Bhutan opened itself up from its self-imposed isolation in 1960, its public sector was modelled after Western and Indian bureaucracies. By the 1980s and 1990s, NPM principles had gained popularity in the public sector in the West. It is challenging to succinctly describe the tenets of NPM, but some common themes

emerge, such as performance-based budgeting, pay, and a "result-oriented" focus. Christensen and Lægreid (2007) propose that it is these quantitatively defined metrics that created single-purpose, fragmented organisations with self-centred authority. Organisations and employees began to view one another through the lens of competition rather than synergy. This competitive mindset has hindered collaboration and coordination within the public sector, which has contributed to the difficulties faced by public policy planners, implementers, and managers in Bhutan.

Previous research on interagency collaboration has explored how organisational characteristics can impact collaboration (Meyers, 1993; Ntale, 2020). This research demonstrates the role of organisational dynamics and its impact on the success or failure of interagency alliances. Incentive structures, such as the supply of information, resources, services, and clientele, play a crucial role in collaboration. Generally, organisations tend to collaborate more if they perceive more benefits than drawbacks. Second, the social and political milieu can generate pressures that affect collaboration. Foster and Meinhard (2003) examined the state of women's voluntary organisations in the context of reduced funding due to state withdrawal from service provision and found that collaboration increases under such conditions. Thirdly, successful interagency collaboration can be influenced by the characteristics of the employees involved since organisations are comprised of individuals. According to a systemic literature review conducted by Kożuch and Sienkiewicz-Małyjurek (2016), people's characteristics have a significant impact on the effectiveness of interagency alliances. Specifically, factors such as employees' experience in inter-organisational settings, professional competencies, and commitment (i.e., willingness to cooperate) are essential in promoting successful interagency collaboration.

As social aspirations and complex problems continue to rise, it is crucial to explore and understand new modes of joint work in the public sector. This requires close study of the underlying factors that induce the preconditions of success. Therefore, this research represents a first-

of-its-kind attempt in Bhutan to understand the factors associated with collaboration activity.

<center>LITERATURE REVIEW</center>

The term *interagency* working refers to "more than one agency working together in a planned and formal way" (Warmington, et al., 2004, p. 17). On a practical level, one issue with the current state of interagency coordination is the lack of guidelines on how to actualize coordination and collaboration. This is exacerbated by factors such as reduced incentives, lack of ownership, and prevalence of high anxiety or uncertainty to establish interagency alliances.

Since optimization and modernization efforts in the public sector began, reform measures, at its core, have sought to address and adopt the core tenets of New Public Management (NPM) – the idea of delivering maximum benefits using optimal resources and inputs while being customer-led. Under this logic, customers, who are taxpayers and public service users, have a right to fast and good quality services from the public sector. However, abiding by New Public Management principles has produced unintended side-effects. Most NPM literature extols scientific management of organisations. Experts opine that NPM reforms have led to "pillarization of public sector" or fragmentation among public sector organisations (Pollitt, 2003). This is because it viewed organisations as single-purpose entities and focused on metrics such as performance management, often emphasizing vertical coordination at the expense of horizontal coordination (Fimreite et al., 2005). Specialized functions assigned to organisations caused further fragmentation (Boston & Eichbaum, 2005). Therefore, it has also undermined the very principles, such as efficiency, which it originally extolled.

Organisational Characteristics

Organisational factors are those attributes and processes that characterize the way an organisation functions such as its structure, communication mechanism, power-sharing and decision-making modality and so on. Hage and Aiken (1967) formulated two

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components of organisational structure namely organisational centralization and formalization. Organisational centralization has two sub-constructs: decision-making and hierarchy of authority. While formalization deals with job codification and rule observation.

Decision-making Styles

Decision-making refers to choosing the best option out of all the alternatives and the cognitive component associated with it. Ntale et al. (2020) argues that decision-making process needs to be fast in the current demands characterised by volatility. The goal of decision-making in the context of interorganisational collaboration is that it should not only lead to faster decision-making but also increase the quality of decision-making and be inclusive. Inclusivity means that all organisational members should be part of the decision-making process. Faraci et al. (2013) typified four types of decision-making styles namely authoritative, consultative, participatory and delegated decision-making.

Authoritative decision-making is characterised by those at the top of the hierarchy making all the decisions for its organisational members without including them in the process (Ntale et al., 2020). Ciulla (2009) argues that such centralized decision-making leads to fear, disharmony and internal conflicts which puts collaborative arrangements at risk. A consultative decision-making occurs when the views of employees are sought but the top managers or leaders make the final decision. When and if the views of the employees are not considered while making decisions, it can lead to poor relationships between subordinates and supervisors and among organisations (Siddique & Siddique, 2019). Participatory decision-making is a "consensus-based, inclusive, and highly democratic" practice which aims to find common ground and decisions that are acceptable to everyone in the organisation. According to Huxham et al. (2000), such decision-making model is marked by trust-strengthening which facilitates collaboration between agencies. Lastly, delegated decision-making entails subordinates assuming decision-making authority and acting on behalf of the leaders. Booher (2005) posited that participatory and delegated decision-making

increases feelings of ownership and empowerment of employees which induces interorganisational collaboration.

Hierarchy of Authority

The hierarchy of authority influences organisational collaboration based on power distance between different organisational layers. Organisations with higher power distance tend to be less effective in building organisational relationships and therefore engage in less collaboration (Tata & Prasad, 2004). They are also characterised by organisational cynicism (a feeling that organisations do not have integrity), employee alienation, and selfish leadership which comes at the expense of broader social goals. Hofstede (2011) attributes such a situation to lack of engagement from all people. The author provides an explanation based on societal change. When societies fail to consider the views of its stakeholders, it cannot affect and actualize the change that it desires.

Rule Observation

Rule observation refers to the extent to which rules of an organisation are observed, and the impact it has on its employees. Zhang et al. (2019) notes that organisations that have stringent rules tend to have negative impact on employee motivation, while promoting organisational cynicism and increasing tension among its employees. These in turn negatively impact collaboration. Daugherty et al. (2006) contests this view that rules have a negative impact on collaboration. The authors argue that formalized relationships, guided by rules and regulations, increase the chances of organisations engaging in collaboration.

Job Codification

Job codification refers to specifying job descriptions and standardizing work (Hage & Aiken, 1967). Organisations should ideally ensure that there is no ambiguity on the part of their employees when it pertains to job descriptions and work standards. According to Audenaert et al (2019), organisations that clearly delineate job expectations from their employees enhance collaboration among them. Such organisations become less susceptible to mistrust and internal conflicts.

Perceived Environmental Pressures

The onset of COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted the ability of governments around the world to generate revenue and fund all its programs. Incidents such as these demonstrate volatility and uncertainty. Additionally, growing calls for public sector reform, and an emphasis on quantitative performance management system, means that governments are expected to deliver optimal output with certain input of resources (Blair, 2000). Due to constraints in funding and increasingly sophisticated social demands, organisations are forced to adapt to these changes by collaborating with others. These are pressures generated by the changing environment or ethos of society. An area where budget constraint is demonstrable is in the downsizing of government, where there is a reduction in the size or number of employees. During such times, study of external factors is warranted to understand its influence on interagency collaboration. When the government significantly reduces its size and operations, there is an ensuing decrease in the budget earmarked for a financial year.

Resource dependence theory also says that to mitigate the 'vacuum' left by government rollbacks, organisations collaborate with one another to achieve organisational goals and outcome because there is incentive to reduce costs. Closely related to this is the ever-growing call for accountability as a canon of public sector reform. In a climate of retrenchment, there is more pressure to find creative alternatives to its tasks as public service delivery. Foster and Meinhard (2003) speak to this by concluding that non-profit organisations faced increased pressure to be accountable and efficient during resource deficiency, as donors seek more control over the use of their funds. Extrapolating this to the domain of public sector, the public, taxpayers and aid donors can be viewed as stakeholders in governance who demand accountability and efficiency in the use of public resources. This point was echoed by Jilke et al. (2016, p. 77) who stated that there has been an emphasis on "managerial outcomes and results, collaboration between public sector actors, and public sector downsizing" in the Netherlands in the previous ten years.

Kożuch & Sienkiewicz-Małyjurek (2016) identified several factors generated by the external environment which can impact interorganisational collaboration and its effectiveness. Government policy; development of social problems and needs; social conditions of the region; laws; national culture; and economic conditions (such as inflation, recession, budget deficit, employment rate) played a major role in determining collaboration among organisations.

Employees' Attitudes Towards Collaboration

Employees' attitudes towards collaboration deal with attitudes of organisation employees towards factors of collaboration.

Compromise (Versus Competition)

Since organisations are a collective of its employees, their attitudes can influence if and how collaborative arrangements are established. For instance, if employees feel that the cost arising from collaborating with other organisations outweighs the benefits, then employees tend to negatively view collaboration (Foster & Meinhard, 2002). Organisations with employees who view competition as advantageous reduce the organisational propensity to collaborate across organisations. Conversely, if employees of an organisation recognize the advantages of collaborating, organisations put more effort into setting up collaborative arrangements (Human & Provan, 1997). Closely related to this is the idea of collectivism and individualism, if employees view their co-workers as individualists, then collaboration may suffer. On the other hand, collectivism ensures teamwork and trust-building, which is a powerful determiner of collaboration, according to Kożuch and Sienkiewicz-Małyjurek (2016).

Client Engagement

Whether collaborative arrangements happen can also depend upon the emphasis placed on community or client engagement by the members of its organisation. Since modern public sector reform efforts are often guided by the tenets of New Public Management, public organisations are increasingly expected to engage with customers, clients and communities that they are responsible for serving. In an investigation

of public sector reforms in the European Union countries, Marten (1997) found that an overwhelming number of public organisation managers had changed their organisational objectives in order to align them with customer or client needs. Another batch of organisations were in the process of consultation with their customers or clients. These two reform behaviours were the strongest out of the 15 factors that were under study for 'objectives' category of public sector reform.

Integrated Services

Public sector organisations are responsible for providing services for the public. There is a growing consensus in the literature of interorganisational study that collaboration must be more than just mere sharing of information. Organisations need to set up mutual obligation mechanisms of sharing organisational resources and coordinating services (Snavely & Tracy, 2000). Such mechanisms lead to the creation of integrated services, where work in public service delivery spans across multiple organisational and professional boundaries (Hughes, 2011). Conventionally, services have been provided in silos. As previously mentioned, a personal residence building project may permeate into the jurisdiction of an organisation that deals with environmental safety. Therefore, services such as obtaining a license for a building house will potentially need to be merged with inputs from organisations that also handle environmental integrity. Otherwise, services will be "segregated" which lacks the efficiency and dynamism of integrated services.

Engeström (2004) takes integrated services a step further with 'activity theory.' It emphasizes the direct involvement of client input in the formulation of interagency products and services. Activity theory posits conflict as a precondition of change and growth (Engeström et al., 1999). "Multi-voicedness" and "dialogue" are crucial components under assumptions of activity theory in an interagency setting. Not only are professionals from multiple backgrounds and agencies bound to have different "voices" but the inclusion of clients makes the process of interagency design even more dialogic compared to traditionally modelled services and products.

Sharing Authority and Risks

In the context of organisational behaviour, authority is defined as the right to assign tasks to employees, make decisions and enforce compliance. It is a legitimate form of power wielded by managers or top leaders, contingent upon the existence of shared authority and risks. Research shows that – along with other conditions such as shared mission and values, communication, relationship-building, trust, feelings of mutual benefit – shared power and authority determine the success of collaboration (2002). Employees who view risk and authority-sharing positively will likely increase the likelihood of interagency collaboration.

<div align="center">METHODOLOGY</div>

Variables

This quantitative study used ordinal data to test the relationship between independent and dependent variables. The independent variables under study were organisational characteristics, perceived environmental pressures, and employees' attitudes towards collaboration and the dependent variable extent of interorganisational activity. Organisational characteristics refers to the organisation's management model embodied through its structure, culture, member relationship pattern, knowledge diffusion pattern, and knowledge implementation (Said et al., 2014). Perceived environmental pressures explores the changes in the environment as an external motivator of collaboration (Foster & Meinhard, 2002). Employees' attitudes toward collaboration refer to the attitudes of employees towards factors of collaboration.

Data Collection and Sampling Technique

Two stage non-probabilistic sampling technique was used to collect the data. Firstly, using purposive sampling, the two organisations that had to closely work towards various public service delivery and other project initiatives related to the environment was sampled. Followed with selection of respondents, using convenience sampling where

respondents meet certain criteria such as accessibility and willingness to participate (Etikan et al., 2016) was applied from the sampled organisations. Data was collected using a 17-itemed survey questionnaire. A total of 106 respondents responded to the survey. During publication, organisations were pseudonymized as organisation A and B. This was done considering standard research ethics guidelines such as 'do no harm.'

Analysis

Data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) 25. To answer the research questions, a correlation coefficient test was done to check the strength of relationship between the variables. This research project elected to use Spearman's rank correlation for correlation analysis. Altman (1991) recommends the use of Spearman's rank correlation for ordinal data, as it presents the same information as Pearson's coefficient but also has wider validity. There was no need to check for normal distribution since the correlation test used ranked data.

Reliability

To assess the reliability of the instrument, Cronbach's alpha test was done. This is a measure of internal consistency of the items under a group or variable. According to Kline (2011), Cronbach's alpha value of 0.7 is recommended for an adequate internal consistency. The results demonstrated that the instrument of the research project was viable in measuring the intended variables, as shown in Table 1. There were zero missing values for all items.

Table 1

Cronbach Alpha Test Result

Variable	Cronbach alpha	Included (%) a
Organisational Characteristics	0.706	100%
Perceived Environmental Pressures	0.707	100%
Employees' Attitudes	0.740	100%

a. Responses included while testing Cronbach alpha

Research Validity

Validity was a critical element of research instrument because many items had to be tailored to be specific to developing countries and Bhutan. Validity refers to the extent to which valid data can be obtained by the instrument (Whiston, 2017). Efforts to ensure content and construct validity were made. Content validity checks if the instrument adequately measures all the components that it should with respect to the variable. To ensure that all grounds were covered, a thorough literature review was conducted, which looked at various behaviours and theories in interagency literature. The pertinent variables were drawn and consisted of relevant researched behaviours and theories in existence. Heale and Twycross (2015) states that theory can be used as an evidence of construct validity "...when behaviour is similar to theoretical propositions of the construct measured in the instrument." (p.66) In line with this, if theory described a construct a certain way (for example, undemocratic decision-making styles reducing interagency collaboration), then corresponding statements were administered as Likert items.

<div align="center">FINDINGS</div>

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of all the variables under study.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of the Variables

Variables	Items	N	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)
Organisational Characteristics	Q1	106	3.72	0.71
	Q2	106	3.42	0.65
	Q3	106	3.03	0.80
	Q4	106	2.90	0.82

	Q5	106	3.56	1.02
	Q6	106	3.87	0.81
Perceived Environmental Pressures	Q7	106	3.84	0.73
	Q8	106	3.76	0.71
	Q9	106	3.76	0.89
	Q10	106	3.83	0.81
	Q11	106	3.86	0.82
	Q12	106	3.88	0.78
Employees Attitudes	Q13	106	4.10	0.74
	Q14	106	4.11	0.71
	Q15	106	3.79	0.80
	Q16	106	2.38	0.88
Extent of Interorganisational Activity	Q17	106	2.79	0.80

Organisational Characteristics

The mean value of Item Q1, 'I would describe my organisation as hierarchical', is 3.72 (SD = 0.71). This shows that the two organisations under study are viewed as hierarchical. Item Q2, 'decisions at my organisations are made more often by top leaders than employees', has a mean value of 3.42 (SD = 0.65). This means that organisational decisions are made more often by bosses rather than their employees. Rule observation (Item Q3, Rules at my organisation is strictly observed) in organisation is moderate as indicated by a mean value of 3.03 (SD = 0.80). Employees think that the rules of the organisation are neither too strictly nor laxly observed. Lastly, it is more the case that job expectations are not clearly delineated by organisations for their employees, as shown by a value of 2.90 (SD = 0.82) under Item Q4 (My

job expectations defined my organisation is unclear.) However, this value does inch closer towards 'Neither Disagree nor Agree' (3).

Perceived Environmental Pressures

Item Q5 ('There is an increased sense of vulnerability/uncertainty of my job in civil service') shows that there is a growing consensus that jobs in the public service are increasingly becoming more vulnerable and uncertain, as indicated by a mean value of 3.56 (SD = 1.02). There is an increased demand to be accountable in their jobs as indicated by Item Q6 (there is an increased demand to be accountable in my duty) and its mean value of 3.87 (SD = 0.81) which is the highest under the 'perceived environmental pressure' variable. There is also increasing demand to be efficient at public organisations as indicated as Item Q7 (There is an increased expectation to be efficient in my work) mean of 3.84 (SD = 0.73). Item Q8 (There is an increased requirement to be public-oriented or customer-oriented in my work) shows that the pressure to be customer-oriented is growing, with a mean value of 3.76 (SD = 0.71). Lastly, Item Q9 (There is an increased demand to use ICT in service delivery)'s mean value is at 3.76 (SD = 0.89). This also demonstrates that the pressure to be efficient in organisational work is increasing as ICT is a medium to achieve efficiency in work through digitization.

Employee Attitude Towards Collaboration

Item Q10 show that employees view compromise (as opposed to competition) among public agencies as an important component in achieving successful collaboration ('Compromise (as opposed to competition) among public agencies is good for interagency alliances'). This item has a mean value of 3.83 (SD = 0.81). Item Q11 (Engagement with public/clients is important for my organisation) shows that employees think client-engagement as important as indicated by a mean value of 3.86 (SD = 0.82). Employees view integrated services as more important over segregated or siloed services as shown by Item Q12 (Integrated services are better than segregated services) mean value of 3.88 (SD = 0.78). Sharing or risk and authority is viewed as very important for success of interagency alliances because Item 13 and Item

14 resulted in a mean of 4.10 (SD = 0.74) and 4.11 (SD = 0.71) respectively. These two items scored the highest among the items in the 'employees' attitudes towards collaboration' variable. Item 16 tested the general perception about the state of interagency work. This item has a mean value of 3.79 (SD = 0.80) which indicates that despite a low perceived engagement in interagency work (Refer item Q17), there is a general perception that the state of interagency collaboration in Bhutan is viewed optimistically. Lastly, Q16 (Members of my organisation are largely collectivists rather than individualists) tested the perception of employees about the behaviour of their co-workers. Here, it was uncovered that employees perceive their co-workers as more individualists than collectivists. Mean value was 2.38 (SD = 0.88).

Extent of Interagency Collaboration

The mean value of Item Q17 is 2.79 (SD = 0.80) which shows that employees do not generally experience or engage in interagency or collaborative work.

Correlation Test Results

Table 3 shows the values of correlation test (Spearman's Rho) conducted between dependent and independent variables. For organisational characteristics, the items were reverse coded and then computed into a mean using SPSS 25 because the items represented an inverse relationship between the dependent and the independent variable i.e., when the Likert values on the items increases, collaboration activity tends to decrease. The results show that organisational characteristics and extent of interagency collaboration are negatively correlated. This means that interorganisational activity decreases when the measurement on organisational activity increases.

Table 3

Correlation Coefficient Between Dependent and Independent Variable.

Correlation (Spearman's Rho)	Value (R)	Sig. (Two-tailed) C
Organisational Characteristics	-0.24	0.01
Perceived Environmental Pressures	0.31	0.01
Employees' Attitude	0.27	0.05

c. Correlation is significant at 0.05

Perceived environmental pressures and employees' attitude towards collaboration show a slight positive relationship with extent of interorganisational activity. Perceived environmental pressures had relatively stronger relationship with extent of interorganisational activity than the other two components. Employee attitude toward collaboration also showed weak positive link with extent of interorganisational activity.

<div align="center">DISCUSSION</div>

There is a weak negative link between interorganisational activity was organisational characteristics. Despite the perception that organisations are hierarchical and that undemocratic modes of decision-making styles are slightly prevalent, there seems to be negative relationship between organisational characteristics and extent of interorganisational activity. This seems to go against current literature on interagency or interorganisational collaboration. It has been posited by Ntale et al. (2020) that interagency collaboration activity decreases when organisations are hierarchical or undemocratic. This may be explained by social and cultural elements in Bhutan and its role in defying the current trends in interagency literature. Confucian societies tend to value hierarchies, as noted by Liu and Hallinger (2017) in their study of teacher leadership in China. The authors concluded that although China has become Westernized, traditional norms still prevail which inhibit possibilities of collaborative learning among teachers. Similarly, in Bhutan, entrenched ideas of filial piety and *Driglam Namzha* (official code of etiquette in Bhutan) demonstrates emphasis placed upon concepts like hierarchy and respect.

Klitgaard (1997) offers an explanation for why civil service reforms can fail in certain situations. According to Klitgaard, one reason for such failures is cultural in nature. Despite the implementation of effective incentives to promote higher performance among civil servants, certain cultural aspects such as "hierarchy" (1997, p. 493) militate against

Weberian bureaucracies – the ideas of informal bureaucracy originating from the Western industrialized countries.

There is a weak positive link between perceived environmental pressures and the extent of interorganisational activity. It is possible that the issuance of *Royal Kasho* (edict) on the Civil Service Reform has induced public servants to be more responsible, accountable, and efficient in their work. One notable issue highlighted in the *Kasho* is the lack of client or customer-orientation among public organisations. For example, the *Kasho* stated that 35 percent of all services from the government are provided to other government agencies instead of the public. Additionally, accountability was another issue highlighted, which is why, we found that, respondents did feel their jobs had become more vulnerable and there was more demand to be accountable.

The above arguments provide a plausible explanation for the positive link between perceived environmental pressures and interorganisational activity because, according to Feldheim (2007), many governments around the world have attempted to transition towards a citizen-oriented organisational culture from a traditional hierarchical model. It may indicate that a politically conscious and educated citizenry is demanding changes from their government. It could also indicate that governments in general are becoming more receptive to citizens as a tool of trust-building (He & Ma, 2021). The literature on public administration shows that pressures from downsizing are also increasing in order to achieve interorganisational efficiency and performance (Kazho & Atan, 2022). The results of the correlation test show congruence, albeit slight congruence, with such trends.

Employees' attitudes towards collaboration show a weak positive link with the extent of interorganisational activity. Factors such as compromise (as opposed to competition), client-engagement, service integration, risk and power sharing, and teamwork (collectivism) are important concepts among organisational employees and their attitudes towards collaboration. Results show that these have weak positive link with collaboration. This is in line with work by Fabbri et al. (2019) on digital collaboration behaviours, where a strong impact on

collaboration was observed. Kanste et al. (2016), in their study of collaboration management in the welfare field, also found that collaboration management is closely related to positive views of work held by organisational employees. Similarly, from Lee et al.'s (2004) study, which looked at employee performance, it was found that employee attitude is a significant predictor of employee performance, which in turn can facilitate collaborative efforts. This finding lend support to the notion that there tends to be a positive correlation between employee attitudes and the frequency or intensity of collaborative activities, at least, for the two organisations under study.

Future Implications

The main implication of this research is that culture may significantly impact the level of collaboration within an organisation. This suggests that Western models of organisational behaviour and collaboration may not be universally applicable across different cultures and contexts. Overreliance on these models in social science research may lead to ineffective or suboptimal results when implementing interagency collaboration policies. Therefore, it is crucial to contextualize policies within the local culture and climate. To achieve this, conducting more localized research and expanding the existing literature on the topic can be immensely helpful. Currently, there is a dearth of published research on interagency activity in Bhutan.

In future research, it would be intriguing to investigate interagency collaboration in Bhutan by incorporating additional factors, such as communication, trust, and other relational factors (Kożuch & Sienkiewicz-Małyjurek, 2016), that were not explored in this study. Furthermore, it is important to consider the potential impact of confounding variables when interpreting the data. For example, as uncovered by this research, cultural constructs could be developed, measured, and tested to accurately determine their influence on interagency collaboration. Further exploration in this area could provide valuable insights into the complexity of cultural factors and their relationship to collaboration.

CONCLUSION

Interagency collaboration is challenging due to the involvement of diverse organisational factors. Public sector organisations are under pressure to enhance interagency collaboration to reform and deliver efficient services. This research found a negative link between organisational characteristics and interagency collaboration. Environmental pressures and employee attitudes showed a slight positive correlation with collaboration. There is a lack of academic discourse and practical guides on interagency collaboration, and policymakers should seek to draw from local literature and experiences for effective implementation.

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