



GENDER EMPOWERMENT AND EQUALITY IN NEPAL: CURRENT ANALYSIS

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Abstract:

This research has explored the roles, opportunities, decision-making processes, responsibilities, and various issues related to gender and the status of women in society. It compares women with their male counterparts across several areas, including household duties, economic conditions, education, health, political engagement, and community decision-making. The main aim has been to perform a contemporary situational analysis of women's empowerment and rural development, utilizing both primary and secondary data. The focus is on gender inequality, socio-economic factors, political involvement, and demographic trends. The main findings have highlighted that those women, in their journey towards empowerment, require substantial support from their families, communities, and the nation. They have faced significant barriers to accessing opportunities for income generation, employment, decision-making roles, property ownership, and participation in political processes. The majority of women have been primarily engaged in household duties, contributing to their lower socio-economic status. This research seeks to improve the status of women in the study area by highlighting the importance of government policies and programs that include women in development efforts. Addressing these challenges through empowerment has become crucial not only for improving women's lives but also for fostering economic

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development within the community and the country at large. Apart from the aforementioned suggestions, Constitutional and Legal Framework, National Plan and Policies, Quotas and Representation, Education and Health, Economic Empowerment, Combatting Gender-Based Violence, and Cultural and Social Change, Education and Awareness have been found the policies to be adopted for the gender empowerment and equality in the present condition of Nepal. Despite these policies, challenges such as patriarchal norms, economic disparities, and implementation gaps persist. Continued efforts are needed to ensure effective enforcement of laws, address cultural barriers, and achieve substantive gender equality in Nepal. Likewise, Legal and Policy Framework, Economic Empowerment, Political Participation, Healthcare and Reproductive Rights, Combat Gender-Based Violence, Media and Communication, Community Engagement and Partnerships, Data Collection and Research, and Monitoring and Evaluation have been identified as the ways of gender empowerment and equality in the present context of Nepal. Implementing these strategies requires commitment and collaboration across government, civil society, the private sector, and international partners. Achieving gender equality is a long-term endeavor that necessitates ongoing effort and investment across various sectors simultaneously.

Keywords: disparity, empowerment, equality, gender, multidimensional

1. Introduction

Women's empowerment refers to the process of enhancing women's influence and capabilities within society. Academic advancement, economic independence, and the elimination of discriminatory laws are fundamental factors in this process, contributing significantly to the enhancement of women's status. Ultimately, these advancements lead to greater human prosperity and dignity, thereby accelerating the overall development of civilized societies (UN Women, n.d.).

Women's empowerment is essential for accelerating development in a progressive society. It highlights the need to support women through education, economic opportunities, and legal reforms to guarantee their full involvement and equality in every aspect of life (UN Women, n.d.).

A significant portion of women's labor continues to be overlooked as economic activity. Women are increasingly involved in the informal sector, engaging in activities such as vending, petty trade, liquor production, and vegetable selling, both in urban and rural settings. These ventures are typical forms of employment for women. In rural areas, opportunities for employment beyond household tasks are typically restricted to agricultural activities like planting, weeding, and harvesting. Conversely, in urban areas, women often find employment in domestic and traditional roles, and in the public sector, they are predominantly employed in lower-level positions (UN Women, n.d.).

In summary, women's participation in the informal economy remains substantial, encompassing various roles and responsibilities that are often not recognized as formal economic activities. This underscores the diverse contributions of women to both urban

and rural economies, reflecting the need for policies that acknowledge and support their economic roles and contributions (UN Women, n.d.). Nepal has endorsed several national and international agreements, including the first World Conference on Women held in Mexico in 1975, the second in Copenhagen in 1980, and the long-term action plan in Nairobi in 1985. Additionally, Nepal committed to the Beijing Declaration in 1995, which originally outlined and there are 12 critical areas of concern for women, although Nepal has condensed these into seven (Bhattarai, 2004). Additionally, Nepal has adhered to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set in 2000 and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) since 1978, all of which aim to promote women's empowerment (Bhattarai, 2004).

In essence, Nepal has affirmed its commitment to various international and national frameworks aimed at promoting gender equality and empowering women, highlighting the country's dedication to addressing key issues affecting women's rights and opportunities (Bhattarai, 2004). Despite an annual increase in women's participation in decision-making roles, achieving significant representation and contribution remains a challenge. According to the Nepal Human Development Report of 2015, 26.6 percent of households are headed by women. Only 17.7 percent of women have attained at least a secondary education, while 79.9 percent participate in the labor force. The report also highlights that 25.9 percent of women experience human inequality, and there is a 41.4 percent disparity in educational opportunities for women. Additionally, 15.1 percent of women face new inequalities in income (UNDP, 2015). Gender inequality persists as a significant issue both within Nepal and globally. Developing countries, in particular, face greater challenges compared to their developed counterparts concerning gender issues. Efforts to address these disparities are ongoing, emphasizing the need for continued focus on enhancing women's participation and opportunities across various sectors (UNDP, 2015). Gender equality has become as hard as Adhikari *et al.* (2020) have claimed in keeping the ecology and the environment of the world in a balanced form for the security of humanity, and it is as complex as Adhikari *et al.* (2022) have discussed about the global condition of the system of the government and it has turned out as beyond the control as Adhikari (2020) has analyzed about the existing condition of the world's deteriorating system of the environment and ecology due to the governments of the world. However, gender equality has to be enhanced and managed in the legal provision, and it has to be brought into the practical affairs of life in each and every sector. However, the researchers have not yet brought a way of enhancing gender equality and the mechanism of strengthening the legal provision to include women in every task in the country properly and effectively for the overall development of administrative reformation. It has become one of the most complicated tasks in enhancing gender equality as Adhikari, (Academia. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.25058/179400x.1709>) has discussed the difficulties of transforming from one religion to another in his "Fear in Religion." But it has become essential to generate gender equality by exploring the facts of the lapses that have been taking place in the country and in the entire globe.

The researches of various researchers conducted till now has not addressed the issue of gender empowerment and equality in the present situation, and hence, the research has filled the gap by answering the following research questions:

2. Research Questions

- 1) What are the policies of gender empowerment and equality in the current situation in Nepal?
- 2) How can gender empowerment and equality be carried out in the context of Nepal?

2.1 The Objectives of the Research

The objectives of the research have been based on the exploration of the existing policies of the empowerment of women and bringing them to equal positions to men in Nepal for the advancement of the nation and also the ways of empowering women and drawing them into equal conditions to men in the context of Nepal. The specific objectives of the research are:

- 1) To explore the policies of gender empowerment and equality in the current situation in Nepal.
- 2) To investigate the ways how the gender empowerment and equality can be carried out in the context of Nepal.

3. Methodology of the Research

The study was conducted in Dukuchhap, Godawari Municipality of Lalitpur district, and employed an exploratory research design. The research has utilized both primary and secondary data as the main sources of analysis. Participatory methods have been employed, and households have been selected using a simple random snowball sampling technique. Data have been gathered through household questionnaires, Key Informant Interviews (KII), and Focus Group Discussions (FGD), which have been applied to collect the primary data. Analysis of the data has been conducted in alignment with the mitigating objectives of the research. It has adopted the critical and descriptive method of primary data analysis, and it has even taken the related research articles, reports, and other documents of various organizations to support the research.

4. Findings

The findings have been explored with various thematic subtopics as:

- 1) Women's Educational Attainment,
- 2) Women's Employment Status,
- 3) Accessibility of Healthcare Services,
- 4) Property Ownership Rights for Women,
- 5) Equal Pay Advocacy,

- 6) Gender Empowerment Initiatives,
- 7) Women's Educational Attainment and Health Outcomes,
- 8) Gender Disparities in Economic Participation,
- 9) Legal Reforms and Women's Property Rights, and
- 10) Women in Decision Making.

4.1 Women's Educational Attainment

Education is widely recognized as a critical factor for the holistic development and empowerment of individuals. It plays a pivotal role in influencing behavioral changes, enhancing knowledge, and impacting various social aspects. For women, education significantly correlates with their social status, children's prospects, and the maintenance of a cultured family environment (UNESCO, n.d.). Moreover, the level of education is intricately linked with awareness, social values, knowledge acquisition, and skill development, underscoring its multifaceted importance in personal and societal advancement (UNESCO, n.d.). In essence, education serves as a cornerstone for personal growth and societal progress, fostering informed decision-making, enhancing capabilities, and promoting overall well-being (UNESCO, n.d.).

Table 1 indicates the literacy rates disaggregated by gender. Among the total population, 98.1 percent of males and 94.8 percent of females were literate. The proportion of illiterate individuals in the study area was 5.4 percent, with 1 percent being male and 4.5 percent female. Additionally, 49.9 percent of males and 44.9 percent of females were classified as literate. Out of the literate population (94.8 percent), 21.6 percent had attained literacy without formal schooling. Moreover, 5.8 percent of males and 7.9 percent of females had completed primary education.

At the lower secondary level, 96 percent of males and 8.9 percent of females had received an education. For secondary education, the figures were 13.5 percent for males and 8.3 percent for females. At the higher secondary level higher education 8.7 percent of males and 9.1 percent of females had completed their education. Bachelor's level education was attained by 4.1 percent of males and 2.7 percent of females. Finally, only 0.5 percent of males had education at the master's level or higher, while females in this category did not attend further education.

In summary, the data underscores disparities in educational attainment between genders and across different levels of schooling, highlighting areas where efforts can be directed to improve educational outcomes and gender parity in the study area.

Table 1: The Study of Population Over the Age of 6 Years and Above Engaged in School Education

Literacy	Men		Women		Total	
	Number of respondents	%	Number of respondents	%	Number of respondents	%
Educated	6	1	24	5.4	30	6.4
Uneducated	265	50	238	45	503	94.8
Total	271	51	252	50	523	100

Education Status	Men		Women		Total	
	Number of respondents	%	Number of respondents	%	Number of respondents	%
Educated outside schooling	56	11.1	55	10.9	111	21.9
Elementary	30	5.9	40	7.9	70	13.7
Middle	48	9.5	45	8.8	93	18.3
Secondary	68	13.5	42	8.3	110	21.7
Higher secondary	44	8.7	46	9.1	90	17.7
Graduation	21	4.1	14	2.5	35	6.8
Postgraduation	3	0.5	0.1	3	3.1	0.7
Total	521	54.7	494.1	47.3	1032	100

Source: Ministry of Education Science and Technology (2022).

4.2 Women's Employment Status

Occupation is a critical factor influencing women's empowerment and significantly shapes the socio-economic status of households. The household survey includes inquiries about the involvement of individuals aged 10 years and older in various occupations. The distribution of the household population by employment status is detailed in the table. Occupational engagement serves as a pivotal variable affecting the empowerment of women, impacting both their economic independence and overall socio-economic conditions within households. The data collected through the household questionnaire provides insights into the diverse employment statuses within the community, shedding light on the dynamics of workforce participation and its implications for household welfare and women's empowerment efforts.

Table 2: The Study of Population within the Age of 10 and Above

Profession	Men		Women		Total	
	Number of respondents	%	Number of respondents	%	Number of respondents	%
Farming	54	10.7	65	13.3	118	23.9
Jobs	42	8.6	17	3.4	57	11.9
Trades	24	4.8	23	4.6	45	9.4
Workers in abroad	45	8.4	7	1.3	46	9.6
Domestic workers	3	0.5	45	9.2	46	9.6
Regular wages	17	3.4	28	5.7	43	8.9
Jobless	74	15.2	72	14.8	144	29.9
Total	259	50.2	257	49.8	499	100

Source: Ministry of Education Science and Technology (2022).

Agriculture is the primary occupation for the largest portion of Nepal's population, encompassing 23.9%. The service sector employs 11.9% of the population in the surveyed region. Foreign employment and household work each account for 9.6% of the population. Business activities engage 19.4% of the population, while daily wage labor involves 8.9%. Moreover, a substantial segment of the population, 29.8%, remains unemployed (World Bank, n.d.).

4.3 Accessibility of Healthcare Services

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as a state of complete well-being that includes physical, mental, and social aspects, rather than merely the absence of illness or disease. This comprehensive view emphasizes the essential role of health, particularly in reproductive health and its systems, as a key indicator of the quality of life for populations in any country.

Table 3: The Study of Population in Health Facilities

Health services	Number of respondents	%
The hospitals in the local area	3	1.7
The health posts of the local area	85	65.7
Non-governmental health clinics	43	32.9
Total	131	100

Source: Field Survey Report of Ministry of Health and Population (2022).

According to Table 3, a significant majority of respondents, specifically 65.7% of women, indicated that a health post is accessible in their locality. In contrast, 32.9% of women mentioned the availability of private clinics, while only 1.7% reported the presence of hospitals in their area of research.

4.4 Property Rights for Women

Property ownership is also crucial for women's empowerment within society.

Table 4: The Views of Women's Respondents about the Property Right

Views	Number of respondents	%
Positive	218	100
Negative	0	0
Total	218	100
If positive, what can be the reason?	Number of respondents	%
Caring the child	20	14.9
Fulfilling the needs	27	20.4
Keeping the community position	27	20.4
Delight about the future	57	43.9
And others	2	0.9
Total	351	100

Source: Field Survey Report of Legal Research (2022).

Table 4 illustrates that all respondents, representing a significant majority of women, consider female property rights to be crucial in the research area. The primary reason cited for the importance of female property rights was expressed by 43.9% of women as ensuring happiness for the future. Likewise, 20.4% mentioned maintaining social status, while a minimal 0.9% cited other reasons in the study area.

4.5 Equal Pay Advocacy

Equal pay is a critical factor in enhancing the status of women in society. It directly influences how women are perceived and valued within a society, country, or nation. In Nepal, a significant number of women are employed in low-paying jobs compared to their male counterparts. Many women also face hazardous working conditions that directly impact their health and that of their children. The Nepalese government has been criticized for discriminating against laborers, leading many young men and women to seek employment in Arab countries, where they contribute significantly to the national GDP. Given these realities, providing higher wages would significantly improve the status of women in Nepalese society.

Table 5: The Views of the Respondents on Equality of Wages

Views	Number of respondents	%
Positive	17	12.6
Negative	113	87.4
Total	129	100

Source: Field Survey Report (2022).

Table 5 reveals that a significant maximum number of women, specifically 87.4%, do not receive equal wages compared to men, while only 12.6% of women reported receiving equal pay. This data underscores the discrimination women face in labor-related roles. In this community, men hold a dominant position, resulting in lower status and pay for women in salaried employment.

4.6 Women's Engagement in Decision-Making

The involvement of women in development programs is crucial for enhancing their socio-economic and political status, as well as raising awareness on various issues. The active participation of both men and women in development initiatives is a key agenda of the Millennium Declaration. Encouraging women's involvement in household decision-making, political participation, and policymaking is strongly endorsed in UN conventions and declarations. Nepal has ratified several international agreements promoting women's participation and development (UN Women, n.d.). According to Table 1, a significant majority of women, amounting to 52%, are actively engaged and have their opinions considered in household decision-making processes. Additionally, 45% of women participate in decision-making on household issues only occasionally (UN Women, n.d.).

4.7 Gender Empowerment Initiatives

Empowerment is a multifaceted social and political process through which individuals gain control over their lives by acquiring knowledge, skills, and other capabilities. It involves enhancing the capacity of people, communities, and society, contributing to national advancement. Empowerment can be likened to a journey where individuals forge their own path toward achieving their goals. In the context of women, empowerment takes on a distinct and specific significance. Moreover, empowerment signifies a deep connection between individuals and their communities (UN Women, n.d.). According to Figure 2, a significant majority of women, totaling 91%, are familiar with the concept of women empowerment, while only 9% have not heard about it. The survey offered respondents several choices regarding Key elements of women's empowerment, including various factors, with education being the most vital for empowering women in society (UN Women, n.d.).

5. Discussion

5.1 Women's Educational Attainment and Health Outcomes

Education is paramount for both personal development and national progress. It equips individuals, including women, with the necessary tools to solve life's challenges and leads to a better quality of life. Education serves as a powerful catalyst for societal change, particularly crucial for rural women, enabling them to become more productive and valuable citizens. It fosters self-reliance, enhances productivity, nurtures skills and creativity, and empowers women and girls to assert their rightful place in society and actively participate in national development. Emphasizing women's education and educational achievements serves as significant indicators of women's social status within society (UNESCO, n.d.). Education is a crucial element, both in generating job opportunities through modernization and in enabling communication with the broader world, especially in contrast to the growing number of educated men. Thus, education is a key driver of women's empowerment (UNESCO, n.d.). Nepalese women face severe health challenges from early childhood due to societal neglect influenced by cultural norms, economic disparities, and biased attitudes favoring boys. Factors such as high population growth, low literacy rates, elevated infant mortality, socio-economic traditions favoring sons, widespread poverty, and prevalent child marriage exacerbate their vulnerable health status. The majority of contraceptive efforts, including sterilization, focus primarily on women, with female sterilization rates significantly surpassing those of males. This disparity reflects a systemic gender bias, where men enjoy greater control over resources, higher education levels, increased mobility, and independent status (Acharya, 1994). Rural women's health is particularly dire as they are burdened with cultural duties like collecting firewood and water, further complicating their access to adequate healthcare. Nutritional anemia is a major factor contributing to the high maternal mortality rates in Nepal. The increased iron demands during pregnancy, combined with blood loss during childbirth, heighten the need for iron supplementation. Post-delivery, women must quickly restore their iron levels, especially

since iron is crucial for breastfeeding. The risk of maternal mortality is further elevated with subsequent pregnancies. Adequate iron and folate supplementation is vital for improving hemoglobin levels and reducing childbirth-related risks. Even minor blood loss during delivery can significantly raise the risk of maternal death. Additionally, high rates of infant and maternal mortality are linked to unsanitary traditional birthing practices and a healthcare system that serves only a small segment of the population (UNICEF, n.d.).

5.2 Gender Disparities in Economic Participation

From an economic perspective, Nepal remains significantly underdeveloped. Sixty percent of people reside in the villages, where agriculture forms the cornerstone of the economy alongside manufacturing, trade, commerce, and services. The agricultural sector is paramount, with approximately 90% of the population dependent on it, and it contributes over 60% to the national income. Although agriculture accounts for more than 70% of exportable goods, its reliance on monsoon rains and traditional methods of production pose major challenges. Despite being the predominant sector, agricultural output struggles to meet the demands of a growing population each year (World Bank, n.d.). Historically, women have been primarily confined to domestic roles such as homemaking, childcare, and household management. In situations where their male partners are absent due to employment, women's workload and responsibilities typically increase. Compared to men, women face more significant disadvantages, including limited access to technology, credit, and opportunities in their environment. The economic activities of women are closely tied to their socio-economic status. Educated women from urban areas and higher economic backgrounds are more likely to engage in works, plans, and activities. Conversely, females from marginalized levels, often illiterate, tend to be confined to domestic duties and lack involvement in profitable economic activities. Rural women supplement their income through crop sales and, during leisure time, engage in activities such as weaving hay mats, baskets, and ropes to earn additional money. Women who contribute economically to household enterprises are generally perceived to hold a higher status within their households (UN Women, n.d.).

5.3 Legal Reforms and Women's Property Rights

According to Bennett (1980), men inherit property automatically through birth, while women's access to property primarily hinges on their marital status and adherence to societal expectations as wives. As a result, women's economic stability is largely contingent upon their compliance with rigid social norms regarding marital roles (Bennett, 1980). Even though Nepal's 1990 Constitution promises equal rights, women still face various injustices, including social, economic, religious, legal, and political discrimination. The current property laws fail to uphold the constitutional commitment to gender equality (Shrestha, 1996).

The lack of explicit provisions in existing laws to ensure equal property rights for women contributes significantly to their socioeconomic disadvantage, particularly

concerning inheritance rights. Hindu law, which governs property rights differently compared to Western legal systems, is adaptable and can accommodate amendments to address contemporary social issues effectively (Shrestha, 1996). To overcome the negative impact of religious and cultural values, which often perpetuate detrimental social norms, a thorough and objective legal analysis is necessary (Sangroula, 1996). Women experience deprivation in socio-cultural, economic, legal, and political areas. Economic inequality against women remains prevalent and serves as a fundamental cause of their overall backwardness, encompassing socio-cultural, legal, educational, and political dimensions. Current laws exhibit gender bias and fail to address women's property rights adequately. Concerning personal property ownership among women, few possess independent assets. For many, their personal property consists mainly of dowry received during marriage from their maternal home. Some women own livestock such as cows, goats, hens, and ducks, as well as small plots of land referred to as "pewa," which they can freely utilize (Thapaliya, 1996).

5.4 Participation of Females in Decision Making

In Nepal, women's participation in family decision-making is restricted largely because of limited educational opportunities and low engagement in income-earning activities. The predominantly patriarchal nature of Nepalese society also means that women have little authority in making decisions and rank lower than men. Women typically assume decision-making responsibilities only when men are absent from home or away from their village. Similarly, in agricultural decision-making, women's roles are restricted mainly to selecting seeds and manure. Around 18.5% of decisions are made solely by women, while 12.5% are made jointly with men (Nepal Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens, n.d.). Religious beliefs, customs, historical norms, and social attitudes rooted in patriarchal and patrimonial structures restrict women's involvement in public life. It is a stark reality that less than 1% of women hold professional, managerial, or decision-making positions in households, with major decisions predominantly controlled by men (Shtri, 1995). Data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), as detailed in "The Status of Women in Nepal" (Volume II, Chapter 7), indicate that several factors affect women's involvement in household decision-making and their access to household resources. These factors encompass the household's structure, the age and lifestyle of the women, and whether male members are present in the household or are away from the village (Bennatt, 1983). In Nepal, women typically lead decision-making processes related to selecting staple food grains and making small-scale gifts and loans to neighbors and relatives. However, decisions concerning medical treatment, education, travel, purchasing small household items, food, clothing, durable goods, and major financial transactions such as large-scale credit, buying or selling animals and other property, or starting business ventures are predominantly made without significant female input. Despite women gaining the right to vote in 1947, as stipulated in the 2004 B.S. (Bhattarai, 2004), their representation in elected bodies like the Rastriya Panchayat, town and village Panchayats remains minimal. Reserved seats for women's organizations and appointed female members have not substantially increased the number of women representatives

(Bhattarai, 2004). Similarly, there is a strikingly low representation of women in the country's policymaking bodies. Despite women's unequal status within the family—the fundamental unit of society—across various sectors of national life, the movement advocating for women's rights must primarily focus on achieving economic equality. It is clear that women can only attain true freedom in society when they enjoy complete economic rights (Majupuria, 2007).

6. Overall Findings

As of the last update in January 2022, Nepal has made significant strides in gender empowerment and equality, although challenges persist. Some key policies and initiatives that have been listed:

6.1 Constitutional and Legal Framework

Nepal's Constitution, adopted in 2015, guarantees gender equality and prohibits discrimination based on gender. It ensures equal rights and opportunities for women in all spheres of life.

6.2 National Plan and Policies

Nepal has various national policies and plans aimed at promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. These include the National Women's Commission Act (2002) and the National Strategy and Action Plan on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (2019).

6.3 Quotas and Representation

Nepal has implemented quotas to ensure women's representation in political bodies. For instance, there is a requirement for one-third of the representation of women in Parliament and other elected bodies.

6.4 Education and Health

Efforts have been made to improve access to education and healthcare for women and girls. Initiatives focus on reducing maternal mortality rates, improving reproductive health services, and increasing female literacy rates.

6.5 Economic Empowerment

Programs aim to enhance women's economic opportunities through skills training, microfinance, and entrepreneurship support. The government promotes women's participation in economic activities to reduce poverty and enhance household incomes.

6.6 Combatting Gender-Based Violence

Nepal has laws addressing gender-based violence (GBV), including the Domestic Violence (Crime and Punishment) Act. Efforts continue to strengthen implementation, support survivors, and raise awareness.

6.7 Cultural and Social Change

Various campaigns and initiatives aim to change societal attitudes towards gender roles and stereotypes. These efforts are crucial for promoting a more inclusive and equitable society. Despite these policies, challenges such as patriarchal norms, economic disparities, and implementation gaps persist. Continued efforts are needed to ensure effective enforcement of laws, address cultural barriers, and achieve substantive gender equality in Nepal.

7. Promoting Gender Empowerment and Equality

Promoting gender empowerment and equality in Nepal requires a comprehensive approach that addresses multiple facets of society. Some key strategies and actions that can contribute to achieving these goals are:

7.1 Legal and Policy Framework

Strengthen and enforce existing laws and policies that promote gender equality. This includes ensuring the effective implementation of constitutional provisions, such as equal rights and non-discrimination clauses.

7.2 Education and Awareness

Promote education and awareness programs that challenge gender stereotypes, promote women's rights, and emphasize the importance of gender equality from an early age. This includes integrating gender-sensitive curricula in schools and conducting awareness campaigns in communities.

7.3 Economic Empowerment

Enhance women's economic opportunities through skills training, vocational education, access to finance (microcredit programs), and support for women entrepreneurs. This can help reduce economic disparities and empower women economically.

7.4 Political Participation

Increase women's representation in decision-making bodies through quotas and affirmative action policies. Encourage political parties to nominate and support women candidates and ensure that women have meaningful participation in political processes.

7.5 Healthcare and Reproductive Rights

Improve access to healthcare services, particularly reproductive health services, for women and girls. Address issues such as maternal mortality, family planning, and reproductive rights to ensure women's health needs are met.

7.6 Combat Gender-Based Violence

Strengthen mechanisms to prevent and respond to gender-based violence (GBV). This includes legal reforms, the establishment of shelters and support services for survivors, and awareness campaigns to change societal attitudes towards violence against women.

7.7 Media and Communication

Use media and communication channels to promote positive portrayals of women, challenge stereotypes, and highlight stories of gender empowerment and equality. Engage media professionals in promoting gender-sensitive reporting and messaging.

7.8 Community Engagement and Partnerships

Engage community leaders, religious leaders, civil society organizations, and men and boys as allies in promoting gender equality. Foster partnerships that support initiatives aimed at empowering women and challenging harmful practices.

7.9 Data Collection and Research

Improve data collection and research on gender issues to inform evidence-based policies and programs. This includes collecting disaggregated data by sex and age to understand the specific needs and challenges women and girls face.

7.10 Monitoring and Evaluation

Establish mechanisms to monitor progress towards gender equality goals, evaluate the impact of interventions, and hold stakeholders accountable for commitments to gender empowerment.

Implementing these strategies requires commitment and collaboration across government, civil society, the private sector, and international partners. Recognizing that gender equality is a long-term endeavor is crucial; it necessitates ongoing commitment and simultaneous investment across various areas.

8. Conclusion

The primary aim of this research has become to examine gender inequality and women's involvement in household decision-making, which have been found to be closely linked to underdevelopment in our country. The research has revealed that women's circumstances are generally inferior compared to men's. Research has shown that they face lower status across several domains, including education, employment, health, nutrition, political involvement, property ownership, and their role in household decision-making. This research aims to explore and address the disparities in various aspects such as roles, decision-making power, responsibilities, obstacles, and opportunities related to household decisions, educational access, job opportunities, health care, political participation, reproductive rights, economic challenges, leadership roles, and community engagement.

It has also explored women's perspectives on inheritance rights across different sectors. Women have faced significant challenges accessing resources and are often denied their rights, experiencing social, economic, and political disadvantages compared to men in our society. They have been found to be frequently relegated to subordinate roles and have fewer opportunities to participate in the mainstream of development. Social empowerment emerges as a critical factor influencing overall decision-making within families.

Reproductive rights and property rights for women have been found to be crucial for achieving gender equality in Nepal. Without the active participation of both men and women in productive sectors, achieving overall economic development in our country has been found to be unattainable. Unfortunately, Nepalese women have been found to have faced barriers such as illiteracy, poor health status, limited involvement in decision-making processes, lower economic activity compared to men, and minimal participation in politics and overall developmental efforts. It has been found that there is an increasing demand for labor, particularly women, in agriculture, government industries, traditional occupations, and low-wage jobs, both in urban and rural areas. Women have generally been explored as having lower educational attainment than men, underscoring the necessity to enhance their participation in decision-making roles. While empowering women from grassroots levels has seemed challenging, it is essential. Therefore, societal attitudes that hinder women's progress must be replaced with positive support for women's empowerment initiatives.

Apart from the aforementioned findings, Constitutional and Legal Framework, National Plan and Policies, Quotas and Representation, Education and Health, Economic Empowerment, Combatting Gender-Based Violence, and Cultural and Social Change, Education and Awareness have been found the policies to be adopted for the gender empowerment and equality in the present condition of Nepal. Despite these policies, challenges such as patriarchal norms, economic disparities, and implementation gaps persist. Continued efforts are needed to ensure effective enforcement of laws, address cultural barriers, and achieve substantive gender equality in Nepal.

Likewise, Legal and Policy Framework, Economic Empowerment, Political Participation, Healthcare and Reproductive Rights, Combat Gender-Based Violence, Media and Communication, Community Engagement and Partnerships, Data Collection and Research, and Monitoring and Evaluation have been identified as the ways of gender empowerment and equality in the present context of Nepal. Implementing these strategies requires commitment and collaboration across government, civil society, the private sector, and international partners. Achieving gender equality is a complex, ongoing journey that demands persistent effort and comprehensive investment across a range of areas. It involves a continuous commitment to making progress in various facets simultaneously.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

About the Author(s)

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