

**Role of Working and Non-working Women in Household Decision Making  
(A Case of Kohalpur Municipality-10, Banke)**

Sabitra Basnet Pokhrel<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Tribhuvan University, Mahendra Multiple Campus, Nepalgunj

<sup>1</sup>Corresponding Author: sabitra24255@gmail.com

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**Abstract**

The objective of the study is to discover the socioeconomic position of women in Kohalpur Municipality Ward No. 10 in order to determine the variations between the roles played by working and non-working women in household decision-making, as well as the factors that influence women's decision-making ability. This study uses both primary and secondary data in accordance with its needs. During the field survey, the sampled unit's primary data is chosen using a structured questionnaire and an interview. In this study, both quantitative and qualitative data have been gathered and employed. Secondary information is gathered from the Kohalpur Municipality ward number 10 survey 2078. Judgment/deliberate non-random sampling have been used to choose the research households. There are 950 houses and 5148 people in total among these wards. Only 50 of the total number of households were chosen by me among them. They range in age from 16 to 59, with 25 of them employed and 25 not. The study's conclusion is that the majority of Nepalese women reside in rural areas where their options for employment are confined to agricultural work on farms, many of which are held by their father, spouse, landowners, or siblings. Women in Nepal aren't allowed to own property, so they must work on men's land from dawn till sunset to support themselves and their families. Therefore, males are responsible for ensuring that women have the means to survive not only in external affairs but also in their own domestic issues, which are an essential component of their life.

*Keywords:* gender, household decision, socio-economic status, discrimination, property right

**Introduction**

A household is defined as a group of persons related by blood or adoption sharing the same kitchen and whole income is pooled jointly (Keynes, 1961). Head of the household is a person who takes the responsibilities for the maintenance of the household activities and is the main decision-maker in the family. Usually, the chief earner or the oldest family member is regarded as the head of a household. Numerous variables affect how women participate in home decision-making and how resources are distributed. These variables include the kind of home, its members, their ages and lifestyles, as well as the proportion of men living in the household who are not present in the village. In Nepal, half the population constitutes women and ninety percent of them are engaged in agriculture and related activities. They work approximately four percent of the total land area, while average size of land holdings owned by women is only 0.65 hours.

Studies have revealed that women play a major role in Nepalese household and agricultural activities both as laborers on the family farm and in the wage labor not to mention decision-making.

One of the few nations in the world where women's life expectancies are lower than men's is Nepal. There are numerous causes for this. However, the matrilineal social structure that governs all facets of Nepalese society is the most important one of them. Women experience discrimination in employment, healthcare, and other areas. Personal movement is severely constrained, which is necessary among other things for skill development and independent decision-making. Although Nepalese women work longer hours than males, they are denied the right to own property and have considerably lower chances of finding profitable employment.

Women in Nepal put in between 10 and 13 hours a day compared to men's 7.51 hours (CEDA 1981), hence there is an increasing need to give them enough power to influence decisions pertaining to or unrelated to the home. In addition, the impact that women's involvement in household administration plays in improving their status in society cannot be overstated. The goal of this study is to highlight the current roles played in household decision-making by working women (women who are economically active, have a reliable source of income, and support their families financially) and non-working women (housewives).

In Nepal, little is known about how socio-demographic factors affect women's autonomy in making decisions about their own health care, including buying things and visiting family and relatives. This study intends to investigate the relationships between women's status in the household and their autonomy in making decisions.

### **Statement of the Problems**

In Kohalpur Municipality, Banke in the Mid-Western region of Nepal, this study aims to determine the socioeconomic position of women and to discover the factors influencing women's role in decision-making authority. The research sought answers to the following questions:

- What are the main variables influencing how women make decisions?
- How economically and socially situated are women in the research area?
- How do working and non-working women differ in terms of their influence on home decisions?
- How do women factor into decisions about receiving medical care?
- What part do women play in making decisions about children's education?

### **Objectives of the Research**

The major objective of this research is to investigate the role of women in decision-making process in Kohalpur Municipality of Banke district.

### **Review of Literature and Research Gap**

Women participate very little in decision-making; male household members make all exterior and 70 percent of internal decisions (Acharya, 1995). The empowerment of women

through employment and education has always had a favorable influence on decision-making, including a reduction in the disparities between men and women.

Acharya and Bennett provide a more comprehensive assessment of women's standing and their ability to make decisions in the home. According to Acharya and Bennett, economic factors have a direct and indirect impact on how women make decisions. Women have more decision-making authority if they participate more economically. Similar to this, social and demographic characteristics have an impact on how decisions are made, for example, tiny children indicate higher economic participation and, as a result, better decision-making power. Regarding the social status of women, especially the widow, Adhikary (2020) states that:

The most sacred of Aryan scriptures are the Vedas, and the Rig Veda, the oldest Veda, explicitly sanctions the custom of sati for widow. The following famous 'Sati Hymn' of the Rig Veda was (and still is) recited during the actual immolation of the widow (Jamison & Joel, 2014). Rig Veda X.18.7 "Let these women, whose husbands are worthy and are living, enter the house with ghee (applied) as corrylium (to their eyes). Let these wives first step into the pyre, tearless without any affliction and well adorned. (

The Majority of women in Nepal live in rural areas. Rural women, as elsewhere play multiple roles. In the domestic sphere they are household managers, mothers and wives, in community they maintain social and cultural services, pre dominantly on a voluntary basis and in economy, if they are not formally engaged as employees or entrepreneurs; they are active in family business and farms. But they have low access to income, wealth and employment, which are the main causes of their low economic status. It directly and indirectly affects their decision making power (Subedi, 1993).

When daughter grow up, they will become wives. In other words, a labourer for another family sooner or later, moreover, if girls is not good at household and farm work owing to exposure to education, she might be looked down up in her husband's family when she gets married. So, investment in a girl's education is discouraged. Generally, there has been more girls' dropout than boys at the primary level (Gurung, 1999).

Women have low Degree of opportunity for their education and have hardly any access to employment. There is lack of women participation in decision making from house to the executive level. There is no positive attitude towards women's health and they do not get appropriation nutrition even in the period of pregnancy (UNICEF, 1996).

Women in Nepal, as elsewhere, hold the triple work responsibilities of reproduction, house holding and farm work. However, reproduction is not treated as work by and house holding is not considered as productive work by the government system. Women also suffer from discriminatory practices in opportunities for education, personal mobility, which is required among other for skill development and independent decision making (UNDP, 1995).

The afro-mentioned researchers have addressed various issues of decision making and the role of women but neither a single researcher has studied the case of Kohalpur Municipality Ward No. 10 regarding the role of woman in household decision making. To fulfill the research

gap, this researcher has investigated the issue of working and nonworking women's role in the process of household decision making.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This research is based on both exploratory and descriptive research design. Exploratory research design has been applied because I like to study women's role in household decision making in the area (Kohalpur Municipality). Descriptive research describes phenomena as they exist. Such studies involve a systematic collection and presentation of data to give a clear picture of a particular situation. These studies attempt to obtain a complete and accurate description of a situation.

### **Nature and Sources of data**

Both primary and secondary data are used in this study as per the requirement. Primary data is selected from the sampled unit during the field survey by structured questionnaire. Both quantitative as well as qualitative data have been collected and used in this study. While secondary data are collected from the Kohalpur Municipality survey 2075.

### **Universe and Sample Size**

Kohalpur Municipality, Banke district has been divided in to several (19) wards. But the present study has been concentrated only on ward 10 of this study area. These wards are purposively selected for the research study. There are total 950 households with 5148 populations. Among them, I have taken the sample size of only 50 households from the total number. This sample is based on women aged 16-59, among them 25 are non-working and 25 are working. The selection of the study households has been done by using judgement/deliberate non-random sampling.

### **Sampling Procedure**

Total 950 households in the study area with 5148 populations, among them, the researcher have taken the sampling of only 50 households from the total number. This sample is based on women aged 16-59, among them 25 are non-working and 25 are working. The selection of the study households has been done by using judgement/deliberate non-random sampling.

### **Tools and Techniques of Data Collection**

The following tools have been used for the collection of primary data:

#### ***Questionnaire***

Structured questionnaire has used to get the detailed information regarding the participation level of women in household decision making. The researcher gathered information related to socio-economic profile of the respondents with the help of questionnaire.

### ***Interview***

The researcher used interview method also to have face to face interaction with the respondents. Informal interviews were also conducted with the family members of the selected women to know their perception regarding various issues like property, education and decision making.

### ***Observation***

It was used to verify information that was gathered by means of other methodologies. Informal interactions were carried out with local people during the study in the village.

### **Data Processing, Analysis and Presentation**

Through the available data from the primary and secondary sources, basically following steps have been adopted for processing and analyzing of the data. The data has been analyzed utilizing simple statistical method. Necessary table and chart have been developed for the effective description and analysis of data.

### **Presentation and Analysis of Data**

Out of total households, 50 households are taken as sample. In this chapter age composition, ethnic composition, marital status educational status, family structure, occupation, and ownership of Property are included.

### **Age Composition**

Total 950 households in the study area with 5148 populations, among them, the researcher have taken the sampling of only 50 households from the total number. This sample is based on women aged 16-59, among them 25 are non-working and 25 are working. The selection of the study households has been done by using judgement/deliberate non-random sampling.

Age is an important demographic characteristic. It determines the social status of people and it makes difference in working hours, types of work, decision making roles, social relation and responsibilities. Therefore it may influence the decision making capabilities of women. For the purpose of analysis the age of the sampled respondents are categorized into four groups which is presented in the following table:

**Table 1**

*Age Distribution of the Sampled Respondents*

Age	Working women	Non-working women	Total
16-25	6	10	16
26-46	14	5	19
46-59	5	10	15
Total	25	25	50

Source: Field survey, 2022

Table 1 shows the age distribution of the sampled respondents selected for this study 6 working women are between 16-25 years of age. 10 non-working women belong to this group. Similarly 14 working women and 5 non-working women belong to 26-46 years of age. 5 working women and 10 non-working women belong to age group 46-59 years. It shows that most of respondents belong to age group 26-46.

**Ethnic Composition**

The area of study has very cultural and ethnic background. Brahman /Chhetri are the dominant caste in this area. The following table shows the caste/ ethnicity of the sampled respondents and their household:

**Table 2**

*Distribution of sampled household by ethnic composition*

S.N.	Ethnic Groups	No. of Households
1.	Brahmin	20
2.	Chhetri	15
3.	Tharu	5
4.	Other	10
	Total	50

Source: Field survey, 2022

Table 2 shows that the majority of the households are Brahmans. According to the table 20 women of the respondent's households are Brahmans. Similarly, Chhetri is in second majority comprising 15 women are Chhetri, 5 women are Tharu followed by 10 women are other ethnic groups Tharu, kami, Gurung who were settled later in this area.

**Educational Status**

Education is an important element of life. It plays an important role for the development of people, nation and economy as a whole.

**Table 3***Educational Level of the Sample Respondents*

Educational level	Working women	Non-working women	Total
Illiterate	-	5	5
Literate	-	6	6
Secondary level	-	3	3
SLC passed	10	9	19
Intermediate	10	2	12
Graduate	5	-	5
Total	25	25	50

Source: Field survey, 2022

Table 3 shows that the women in the working category are more educated than non-working women. 10 of working women are SLC passed, 10 of working are intermediate, 5 women are graduate and whereas 5 of non-working women are illiterate, 6 of non-working are literate, 3 of women are educated till secondary level, 9 of them are SLC passed, 2 of them are intermediate and no non-working women are graduate. It shows from the above table that working women are more qualified in terms of education than non-working women.

**Occupation**

Occupation or source of income is a vital factor influencing household activities. Household in which both the members earn income tend to be more affluent than the household where earning the bread for the family rests on one person.

**Table 4***Distribution of the Working Women According to Their Occupation*

Occupation	Number
Service (Government job holders)	10
Private companies	15
Total	25

Source: Field survey, 2022

Table 4 shows that 10 women are government job holders while 15 women are engaged in Private sector. It is found that most of the women work in private sector as school, co-operatives and finance and NGO. They enjoy more freedom than non-working women in household decision making because they earn money and have more information about using the fund in related aspects.

## Participation Level in Household Decision Making

The women's status within the household specially emphasised on their decision-making powers as compared to working and non-working women.

### *Possession of Household Income*

Higher the participation of women for economic activities, higher will be the decision making power of women (Acharya, 1997). This study also supports this face as mentioned in the following table. The husbands of the respondents make almost all the household decisions inside the house as well as outside if they are present in the houses. Only those females, who are head of the family, decide in most of the cases especially in economic decision. But at all time, they do not decide and they consult with husbands and other family members. Sometimes, other housewives decide about the family in the absence of male guardian of the family.

**Table 5**

*Distribution of Sampled Household by Possession of Household Income*

Household members	Working women	Non-working women	Total
	Number	Number	Number
Male	6	16	22
Female(sampled respondents)	4	3	7
Both	15	6	21
Total	25	25	50

Source: Field survey, 2022

Table 5 shows that most of the household income is possessed by both members in working women that is 15 in number. But 16 males possessed household income in nonworking women. It shows working women have higher decision making power than nonworking in economic activities. It is because of their earning capacity and direct involvement in financial concerns of the family.

### *Household Expenditure*

It has been found out that all the household activities like Food, Clothing, and Bazaar Purchase etc considered as unproductive in our society and are mostly done by female in both working and nonworking women.



**Table 6***Decision Maker of Small Household Expenditure (Food, Clothing, and Bazaar Purchase etc)*

Household decision maker	Working women	Non-working women	Total
	Number	Number	Number
Male	5	8	13
Female(Sample respondents)	15	11	26
Both	5	6	11
Total	25	25	50

Source: Field survey, 2022

Table 6 shows that out of 50 respondents in 15 of working and 11 of non-working women made decision of small household expenditure, however in 5 males in working and 8 males are involved of small household expenditure. This shows women have dominant role in small household expenditure. The women have a major role in purchasing those household goods because men mostly are not interested and are less familiar of purchasing such household goods.

***Decision Maker of big purchase***

Similarly the following table shows the role of women in the decision making of big expenditure like electronic items, luxury items, furniture, automobile etc.

**Table 7***Decision Maker of Big Purchase*

Household Decision maker	Working women	Non-working women	Total
	Number	Number	Number
Male	14	20	34
Female	6	2	8
Both	5	3	8
Total	25	25	50

Source: Field survey, 2022

Table 7 shows that the role of women in the decision making of big expenditure like electronic items, luxury items, furniture, automobile etc has lower power to decide it. Only 6 women in working and 2 women in nonworking decide it. Women in these matters only play a supportive role. More males are exposed to outside world and take information regarding different activities happening, so they take dominating role in decision making of big purchase.

## Decision making of Investment and selling

**Table 8**

*Decision Making of Investment and Selling*

Household decision maker	Working women's household No.	Non-working women's household No.	Total No.
Male	8	18	26
Female	3	2	5
Both	14	5	19
Total	25	25	50

Source: Field survey, 2022

Table 8 shows in working women 8 males are the final decision maker regarding investment and selling of property while only 3 women has a right to decide. Similarly in 14 of working women's household this decision is made by both male and female equally. Similarly out of total non- working women's household, in 18 male is the final decision maker while in 5, both male and female decide together. Only 2 of non-working women have a right to decide regarding investment and selling in their respective households. Non-working women have less decision making than working women.

### **Factors affecting decision making of women in household activities**

Various factors influence the household decision-making in Kohalpur Municipality like education Socio-economic status, societal structure, demography, social norms, values and traditions, family's role, employment situation, existing caste system, rights to property, economic dependency or independency, family's role, empowerment, opportunity, awareness, participation, legal provision and socio-physical infrastructure are major influencing factors of household decision-making. On the basis of respondents' view and the previous studies, situation of these factors in the study area are discussed below:

#### ***Education***

Out of the total, majority respondents (40) view the education as the main determining factor of women's role in decision-making in Kohalpur Municipality. It shows that the women who are working they are more qualified, more authority to make decision in household .They also shares the economic burder of the family they are more consulted while making monetary decisions and participation more in such decisions than non-working women in this village. Indeed, education is one of the major factors to make capable people. Thus, education is one of the major influencing factors of women's role in decision-making inside as well as outside households.

#### ***Social Status***

30 respondent's view the Social status of the people is reflected in terms of their position, prestige in the society, family background, economic condition, educational level, participation and role in the society. Social status of the family of the working respondents is good than non-working respondents in the study area. In overall, social status of women in this village is not in good position.

### **Caste System**

In the case most of 20 sampled families are Brahmin and Chhetri who live in joint family. The household head male does the main decision making. In joint family female members have low role in the decision making process. There are more restricted social norms and values. The women who live in nuclear family and educated have higher decision making power than joint family. In study area, most of Gurung, Mager and Tharu's male member go out of this area or country and women have more decision making power. In this case, most of sampled families are Brahmin and Chhetri women have no more autonomy and power in decision making power in comparison to the other castes' women.

### **Economic Status**

Economic status of the family as well as the women is also important factor that influences the decision-making. There is positive relationship between the economic level and role in decision-making in this study area. The women who are economically strong they are more consulted and their opinions are more valued than non-working. The women who are in governments services enjoy more freedom and power handling affairs. That's why working women have dominant role than non-working.

### ***Employment Situation***

Level of income depends on kind of employment. The women are employed in this study area respectable and high earning jobs then they become empowered, economically strong and they get more power to make decision in the family.

### ***Structure of the Family***

There are two kinds of family's structure, joint family and nuclear family. The total 23 sampled families of this area are nuclear families and remaining 27 families are joint families. In the joint family, elder members of the family can play the role of guardian and wives of this area may have less responsibility in comparison to the nuclear families. In the nuclear family, and if the husbands are in foreign employment then women as a guardian have more responsibilities and also have more decision-making power. Conclude that the woman who is working and living in nuclear family have greater decision making than joint or non-working. Thus, women's role in household decision-making also depends upon the structure of family.

### **Conclusion**

In the Nepalese context, women's role in decision-making process is very low though their population covers more than half sky of the country. They daily spend their most of the

working time in household activities. The main objective of the present study is to analyze the role of women in the household decision-making in Kohalpur Municipality ward no. 10, Banke in mid-western development of country. Although women are responsible for performing all the household activities, decision making regarding household affairs however is in the hands of male household head of the family. Women have a greater participation in the decision making of only small household purchase like food, clothing, bazaar purchase, general medical treatment which are in most cases of lower expenditure. In these decisions also men play the role of an advisor. Women have the possession of household income but its allocation needs the approval of the male member of the family. To conclude, we can say that though women still suffer from the discriminatory practices in their households and society, if they are educated and economically independent then they can make their position strong in terms of decision making in their household and in the society as a whole.

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