

Impact of Rural Municipality Program on Women Empowerment in Surkhet

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Abstract

Women empowerment is the process of generating a building capability of women to exercise control over their own life. Women play active roles in household and community decision-making, and families are better able to address the difficulties of poverty, enhance family health and well-being, and boost income. Therefore, this article aims to analyze the impact of rural municipality programs on women's empowerment activities and discover how this empowerment activity of women is making an impact on poverty reduction. This study adopts cross-sectional survey research methods and a quantitative study design. To achieve the goals of the study, both primary and secondary data were utilized. Data from

the research region was gathered using a standardized questionnaire. Sample size for this study comprises 265 from four rural municipalities of the Surkhet district. The results showed that increasing income can be achieved by empowering women. Income and empowerment are positively correlated. In contrast, $r=0.431$ and $p=.000$. Further empowerment and poverty also have a significant relationship which is $r=0.509$ and $p\text{-value}.000$. Further, it was also found that rural municipality programs and empowerment were correlated. Programs run from rural municipalities and poverty had a significant result. The family, society, and nation must all support them in their position. To do this, the local government should create gender-inclusive policies and programs.

Keywords: Women empowerment, rural municipality, domestic violence, economic empowerment, poverty reduction

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Introduction

Empowerment refers to the transformation of current power relations in favor of people who suffered numerous restrictions on their ability to exercise power and make independent decisions (Avelino, 2017; Lawson, 2010). It deals with the transformative use of power, in which a dominating agent uses his/her authority in such a way that the subordinate agent picks up specific abilities that undermine the power gap between people and the dominant agent (Wieringa, 1994). In this sense, the idea of empowerment is intimately connected to the state of disempowerment and refers to the methods by which persons who have been denied the capacity to make decisions come to possess it (Pandey & Zheng, 2019). Women empowerment is the process of generating a building capability of women to exercise control over their own life (Cornwall, 2016). Women play active roles in household and community decision-making, and families are better able to address the difficulties of poverty, enhance family health and well-being, and boost income. Hence, women's empowerment is helpful to reduce the current issues of poverty (Trommlerová et al. , 2015).

The cultures of Nepalese villages vary greatly, and women are economically dependent on their families, husbands, and other community members. Women have fewer opportunities to develop their own abilities, and only large-scale strategies can truly empower women (Aziz et

al. , 2020). Empower process of women for one community may not be applicable to other community (Wallerstein & Bernstein, 1994). The breaking barriers towards empowering women can't be possible with one single approach. The empowerment of community women is a complex process it needs a holistic approach to measure the desired level of empowerment from the specified climate (Bank, 2016). Women possess a variety of the abilities needed to understand, effectively manage, implement, and assess the social changes (Jewkes et al. , 2015). Our civilizations assign men and women certain rigid gender roles, which causes discrimination against women in particular. Studies have shown that Nepalese women are predominantly engaged in the professional, technical and managerial fields (Adhikary, 2016). According to statistics from Nepal, women have lower rates of literacy, higher education enrolment, and participation in technical and vocational education than men, which is a result of societal norms and culture. However, the number of women participating in decision-making is rising annually (Gautam, 2020).

Most women are deprived of the decision-making authority which is the major and critical part of women's empowerment (Kato & Kratzer, 2013). The fact that a daughter still cannot choose her life partner, even in a family that prides itself on being educated, is an important truth. In Nepal, 26. 6 percent of women are the head of family, and 29. 5 percent are represented in

parliament, according to the 2015 Human Development Report. 17. 7% of women have completed at least a secondary education, 79. 9% of women are in the labor force, 25.9% of women have a human inequality coefficient, 41. 4 % of women have educational inequality, and 15. 1 % of women have economic inequality (UNDP, 2010). It reveals Nepalese women's genuine social position. As a result, gender discrimination and how it influences how society develops are easily understood. Due to this, gender inequality as it currently exists represents a significant threat to society and the state.

The constitution of Nepal has made some provisions about the female rights and duties. In part 3, article 18, (2) it has been quoted that “No discrimination will be made in the application of general laws on sex.” In article 18, (3) it has been quoted that the state will not discriminate citizens’ sex. In article 18, (4) it has been quoted that the state discrimination will be made on the ground of gender with regard to remuneration and social security for the same work. In article 18, (5) it has been quoted that the state's all offsprings have the equal right to the ancestral property without discrimination on the ground of gender. In article 38, it has been quoted the rights of women; according to article (1) every woman will have equal lineage right without gender based discrimination. According to article (2) every woman will have the right to safe motherhood and reproductive health. According to article (3) no woman will be subjected to physical,

mental, sexual, and psychological or other form of violence or exploitation on grounds of religion, social, cultural tradition, practice or on any other grounds, such act shall be punishable by law, and the victim will have the right to obtain compensation in accordance with law. According to article (4) women will have the right to participate in all bodies of the State on the basis of the principle of proportional inclusion. According to article (5) Women will have the right to obtain special opportunity in education, health, employment and social security, on the basis of positive discrimination. According to article (6) the spouse will have the equal right to property and family affairs (Government of Nepal, 2015). Since a very long time, there have been many legal provisions implemented to empower women, yet the general situation has not yet significantly improved.

Economic sector is taken as a key indicator of development but until the social infrastructures are not effectively established, we can't create a harmonious, peaceful, progressive and advanced society. Hence, the social substructures should give top priority (Manupati et al. , 2018). Some of the key social indicators of the qualitative development of society are gender equality and equity, the granting of equal rights to sons and daughters in parental property, equal opportunity for males and females in education and employment, and freedom in decision-making (Kabeer, 2020). Nepal is considered as a poor

country not only in economic viewpoint but also in socio-cultural development (Bhushal, 2008). The recent state of domestic violence against women, gender discrimination, and deprivation from decision-making authority may evidence this actual fact. This ailment occurs in almost parts and each class of the state is the research area. The government and private sectors have made number of efforts to enhance the speed of women's empowerment since long time but until haven't got the remarkable achievement. In fact it doesn't concern how much the programs are implemented but it concerns the achievements and its contribution to transform the society towards the modernity. Therefore, a policy to increase empowerment can be guided by knowing the empirical determinants of it. Indeed, numerous theoretical and empirical research that concentrate on the empowerment of women and the poverty have discovered favorable well-being effects of increases in agency (e. g. , Allendorf, 2007; Hindin, 2000; Kim et al. , 2007).

This study focuses on rural municipality program centered on empowerment of women in Surkhet district; yet, there is relatively little literature that examines empowerment outside of this setting. In these contexts, this article aims to analyze the impact of rural municipality program on women's empowerment activities and determine how the empowerment of women contributes to efforts to reduce poverty.

Methodology

Descriptive research questions, questions about the relationship between variables, and inquiries about the predictive relationship between variables over time can all be investigated using a quantitative research approach (Creswell, 2014). Hence, this study adopts cross-sectional survey research design and quantitative approach. To achieve the goals of the study, both primary and secondary data were utilized. Data from the research region was gathered using a standardized questionnaire 265 people made up the sample. For each respondent, the researcher created a separate question sheet. As a result, all questionnaires were distributed to the respondents. Through the use of a standardized questionnaire, data was gathered. The questionnaire concentrated on factors including mobility, financial security, participation in significant choices, political knowledge, income-generating activities, poverty-reduction initiatives and program run by rural municipality especially for women etc. The gender of each sample was determined at random.

Result and Discussion

1. 1 Characteristics of Respondents

The characteristics of the respondents are 39. 62% of them belong to the age group of 26-35 and 32. 45% belong to the age group of 36-45. 18. 49% of respondents are 46-55 age groups where 9. 43% are in 20-25 age groups. Among respondents, 72. 07% of them were literate, 10. 56% of respondents illiterate, 11. 69% had the education level

below SEE, 5. 67% had +2 and above level of education. The Majority of the respondents were housewife with 81. 88% of total respondents. It is seen that 11. 32% of respondents are self-employed. 4. 9% respondents were busy in office works and 1. 88% respondents are doing day labor. Moreover, according marital status all respondents had married. Also data shows that 69. 81% respondents had 5-10

members in family where 16. 98% had 10 and more than 10 members. Income is the most important in terms of poverty reduction. It's tried to know respondents present monthly income by this survey. It is found that 64. 15% respondents' income between 10000-20000 Rs. per month whereas 1. 88% respondent had below 10000 Rs. per month.

Table 1: Characteristics of Respondents

Status	Characteristics	Total	Percentage
Gender	Male	0	-
	Female	265	100%
Age	20-25	25	9. 43%
	26-35	105	39. 62%
	36-45	86	32. 45%
	46-55	49	18. 49%
	>55	-	-
	Illiterate	28	10. 56%
Education/Employment	Literate	191	72. 07%
	Below SLC	31	11. 69%
	+2 and above	15	5. 67%
	Housewife	217	81. 88%
	Office work	13	4. 9%
	Self-employed business	30	11. 32%
	labor work	5	1. 88%
Monthly Income	below 10000	5	1. 88%
	10000-20000	170	64. 15%
	20000-30000	62	23. 39%
	30000 and above	28	10. 56%
No. of family	less than 5	35	13. 2%
	5-10	185	69. 81%
	10 and above	45	16. 98%

Source: Field survey, 2022

1. 2 Knowledge about women empowerment

In order to gather information about knowledge about women's empowerment, the researcher employed a 5-point Likert scale in this section. Frequency analysis was employed to determine the degree of women empowerment.

1. 2. 1 Knowledge about women empowerment from different sources

To know the knowledge about women empowerment the researcher had tried and following results found. Table showed that 36. 98% heard about women empowerment from media 24. 52% had known from NGO, 12. 07% from family member, 13. 2% from school/college and 6. 41% heard from Tole meeting.

Table 2: Knowledge about women empowerment from different sources

Sources	Number of respondents	Frequencies (%)
School/college	35	13. 2
Tole meeting	17	6. 41
NGO	65	24. 52
Family	32	12. 07
Training	18	6. 79
Media (T. V, newspaper, Facebook, social media)	98	36. 98

Source: Field survey, 2022

1. 2. 3 Income generating activities

Activities that generate income are crucial to reduce poverty. In this regard, respondents were questioned about their involvement in income-generating activities. There are 18 percent of respondents who don't have any income-generating activities, compared to 82 percent of respondents who do. 82 percent of respondent who are engaged in income generating work they are shown in table.

Table 4: Income generating activities

Activities	Number of respondents	Frequencies (%)
Official work	13	4. 91
Self-employment	35	13. 21

	Goat farming	61	23. 01
	Soap making	15	5. 6
	Dhaka webbing	7	2. 64
Program run by	sewing and tailoring	30	11. 32
rural municipality	Vegetable production	59	22. 26
	Mushroom	7	2. 64
	Chura /mala	28	10. 56
	Sandle and shoes making	10	3. 77

Source: Field survey, 2022

1. 2. 4 Support by male member of family

During the study, participants were questioned about whether they received help from their husbands or other male family members. 92 percent of respondents agreed, while only 8 percent disagreed, indicating that men can play a big role in empowering women in society. Support may be provided in a variety of ways. The respondents were questioned about how the male members assist them in becoming more powerful. The data shows that 13. 2 percent of respondents receive motivation and support from a male family member. 58. 86 percent of respondents also say they receive financial assistance. Additionally, 14. 71 percent of the respondents claimed that the male members of their family assist them with home tasks like cooking, child care, etc.

Table 5: Support by male member of family

Activities	Number of respondent	Frequencies (%)
motivation	35	13. 2
economic support	156	58. 86
supported by home activity	39	14. 71
Other	35	13. 2

1. 2. 5 Decision making in household

The capacity for household decision-making is a reliable sign of women's empowerment. The Family is seen as the foundational institution of women's empowerment. The poll asks participants to rate their family's capacity for decision-making. It can be shown that 58. 87% of all respondents have extremely strong decision-making skills, and 21. 51% of respondents say their families also have very strong decision-making skills. Additionally, 5. 28% of people discovered that they have very little influence over family decisions.

Table 6: Decision making in household

	Types	No. of respondent	Frequencies (%)
Level of decision making in household	very strong	57	21. 51
	Strong	156	58. 87
	Neutral	7	2. 64
	Normal	31	11. 69
	very little	14	5. 28

Source: Field survey, 2022

1. 2. 6 Participation of women in women empowerment activities

Now a days, most of the women attended village meetings in urban and rural areas, joined mothers' clubs, cooperative, etc. In this regard, the respondents were questioned about whether they had participated in any community-building activities such as women's club, village meetings, etc. 20. 75% of respondents participate in mother's group , 24. 52 percent of respondents participate on cooperative. In relation to the regional development program, it has made an effort to learn what kinds of social gatherings they typically participate in. With 24. 52% of all respondents, it can be seen that most respondents participate in NGOs' activities. 27. 16 percent of respondents said they frequently participate in Tole meeting. Additionally, level of participation of women was very actively 35. 84% and never participated 5. 67%. Similarly, level of expression of opinion in groups found was of 35. 84% frequently and 9. 43% often.

Table 7: Participation of women in women empowerment activities

		Number of respondents	Frequencies (%)
Type of group activities	Mother's Club	55	20. 75
	Cooperative	65	24. 52
	NGO	65	24. 52
	Tole meeting	72	27. 16
	Other	8	3. 01
level of participation	Very actively	95	35. 84
	Actively	92	34. 71
	Neutral	18	6. 79
	Sometimes	45	16. 98
	Never	15	5. 67

	very frequently	45	16.98
	Frequently	95	35.84
level of expression of opinion	Neutral	65	24.52
	Often	25	9.43
	very often	35	13.2

Source: Field survey, 2022

1. 2. 7 Obstacles in mobility

During the study, the respondents were questioned about whether or not they faced any obstacles when leaving their homes. It is evident that 88% of respondents have the freedom to leave their immediate surroundings, which is crucial for empowering women. Only 12% of the respondents in total have impediments to leaving their homes. They were questioned regarding the kind of difficulties they face. Three barriers can be seen to exist between them. Religion is another barrier outside of the family.

Table 8: Obstacles in mobility

Type of obstacles	Number of respondents	Frequencies (%)
Obstacle from Family	21	65.6
Obstacle from society	9	28.12
Religion barriers	2	6.25

Source: Field survey, 2022

1. 2. 8 Participation on political activities

In order to determine the success of women's daily life, political empowerment is crucial. In order to gather information, the respondents were questioned about their political beliefs. It can be shown that 45 percent of respondents Participate in political activities, while 55 percent do not. It was also found that 85% respondent Participated in local election for voting in 2079 Baisakh and 15% were not.

Table 9: Participation on political activities

		Number of respondents	Frequencies (%)
Participation in political activities	Yes	119	45
	No	146	55
Participation in local election for voting	Yes	225	85
	No	40	15

Source: Field survey, 2022

1. 3 Level of poverty reduction

1. 3. 1 Importance of women empowerment

To find the level for importance of women empowerment researcher used likert type question. Result revealed that 64. 15% of respondent strongly agreed about reducing poverty it is necessary women empowerment. Further, it was found that the impact of women empowerment on poverty reduction was very good in society. This was clarified for 66. 41% of respondents.

Table 10: Importance of women empowerment

		Number of respondents	Frequencies (%)
Level for Importance of women empowerment	Strongly agree	170	64. 15
	Agree	84	31. 69
	Neutral	11	4. 15
	Disagree	0	-
	strongly disagree	0	-
Impact of women empowerment on poverty reduction	Excellent	176	66. 41
	Good	89	33. 58
	Fair	-	-
	Poor	-	-
	very poor	-	-

Source: Field survey, 2022

Reasons of the importance of women empowerment

Table 11: Reasons of the importance of women empowerment

Reasons	Number of Respondents	Frequencies (%)
playing role for good family environment	180	67. 92
to make standard social status	167	63. 01
to make economically dependent	149	56. 22
to expand the work area	130	49. 05
playing vital role to society development	165	62. 26
to ensure women right	146	55. 09
to take decision	135	50. 94
to suggest anybody	89	33. 58

to eradicate domestic violence	140	52. 83
working with self-initiation	183	69. 05

Source: Field survey, 2022

The question of whether or not the respondents agreed with this was followed by a request for them to explain their response. In their remarks, they explain why they agreed. Below is an overview of the results.

- a. Of those surveyed, 67. 92% said they could actively contribute to improving their family's environment.
- b. 63. 01% respondents reported that women empowerment is helpful to raise standard social status.
- c. According to 56. 22 percent of the respondents overall, women's empowerment is crucial for their ability to rely on themselves. They argue that women who are empowered develop more capacities for independence, which are necessary for them to achieve a powerful position in society.
- d. 49. 05% respondent reported that women empowerment is helpful to expand the work area.
- e. 62. 26% respondent reported that women empowerment is playing vital role to society's development.
- f. Empowering women is a way to guarantee women's rights. 55. 09% of survey participants believe that.
- g. 50. 94% respondent reported that women empowerment is playing vital

role to take right decision in right time

- h. 33. 58% respondent reported that women empowerment is playing vital role to suggest society's development.
- i. 52. 83% respondent reported that women empowerment is playing vital role to eradicate domestic violence
- j. The focus on self-initiations was highlighted by 20% of respondents. By initiating themselves, they are able to complete tasks.

1. 3. 2 Rural Municipality interventions for empowering women

Types of program of Rural Municipality

The local government is trying to work at the root level to empower women and reduce poverty especially in rural area. By the same ways rural municipality runs different program in Surkhet . They are working to reduce poverty and to improve rural living standards. It is seen that 82% of the total respondents have engaged on program of Rural Municipality. It observed that program of Rural Municipality have been playing an active role to empower women by giving some empowerment training and by providing some credit for improving their life.

Table 12: Types of program of Rural Municipality

Program		Number of respondents	Frequencies (%)
Program run by rural municipality	Goat farming	61	23.01
	Soap making	15	5.67
	Dhaka webbing	7	2.64
	sewing and tailoring	30	11.32
	Vegetable production	59	22.26
	Mushroom	7	2.64
	Chura /mala	28	10.56
	Sandle and shoes making	10	3.78

Source: Field survey, 2022

1. 4 Correlation analysis between women empowerment and poverty reduction

To find the impact of program run by rural municipality for women empowerment on poverty reduction we calculate correlation. The correlation coefficient and p value will be utilized to determine the true impact of women's empowerment on the reduction of poverty. The p value was utilized to determine whether or not it was statistically significant. Education, program run by rural municipality, women association, and participation in political activities, training, income, and poverty were employed as indicators of variable empowerment. The study sought

to establish a link between poverty and income as well as empowerment. Education and poverty, income, and empowerment used to be correlated. Program run by rural municipality was then employed as an independent variable, with poverty, income, and empowerment acting as dependent variables. To determine a relationship between empowerment, income, and poverty, Women association was used as an independent variable. With poverty, income, and empowerment as dependent variables, Participation in political activities serves as an independent variable. In this case, training is an independent variable, and poverty, income, and empowerment are both dependent variables.

		Empowerment	Income	Poverty
Empowerment	Pearson correlation	1	0.431**	0.509**
	P-value		0.000	0.000
Education	Pearson correlation	0.538**	0.288**	0.298**
	P-value	0.000	0.000	0.000
Program run by rural municipality	Pearson correlation	0.283**	0.316**	0.373**
	P-value	0.000	0.000	0.000
Women association	Pearson correlation	0.319*	0.268**	0.253**
	P-value	0.000	0.000	0.000
Participation in political activities	Pearson correlation	0.232**	0.243**	0.254**
	P-value	0.000	0.000	0.000
Training	Pearson correlation	0.278**	0.512**	0.443**
	P-value	0.000	0.000	0.000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed)

Increasing income can be achieved by empowering women. Income and empowerment are positively correlated. In contrast, $r = 0.431$ and $p = .000$. Further Empowerment and poverty also have a significant relationship which is $r = 0.509$ and p value .000. In the above table all independent variable are significant relationship to dependent variable.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that women's empowerment is essential to accelerating the pace of social progress toward justice and culture. Women's empowerment in Nepal contributes to a societal improvement that is well-balanced and richly harmonic. Because of this, empowering women-the foundation of social prosperity-proves essential to accelerating humankind. Of those surveyed, women empowerment could actively contribute to improving their family's environment. It is helpful to raise standard social status. Women's

empowerment is crucial for their ability to rely on themselves. Women who are empowered develop more capacities for independence, which are necessary for them to achieve a powerful position in society. Women empowerment is playing vital role to take right decision in right time and is playing vital role to eradicate domestic violence. It is clear from the aforementioned result and discussions that empowering women has a significant influence on reducing poverty. If women can be given more influence, poverty will progressively decline. According to the majority of respondents, one of the key strategies for reducing poverty is to empower women.

This study was limited on rural municipalities of Surkhet district only, however it is equally applicable other municipalities as well as rural municipalities. The finding of this study is useful to make the policy in the women empowerment sector and can run the program by the local level.

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