

# Factors Associated with Household Headship in Nepal. Does Policy Matter in Female Household Headship?

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## Abstract

*This study entitled 'Factors associated with household headship in Nepal. Does policy matter in female household headship?' It aims to find out the association between household headship and socio-demographic characteristics. While, household head/headship allows for socio-economic mobility that results in economic growth, leadership ability, socially, politically and economically productive life, and ultimately satisfaction. We used a cross-sectional design using secondary data from Nepal Demographic and Health Survey 2016. We considered household headship as the dependent variable and socio-demographic characteristics such as age, occupation, residence setting, and provinces as the independent variables. Descriptive, bivariate, and multivariate analyses were performed to find out the association between the independent variables and the dependent variable. It was observed that nearly one-fourth of the respondents were household heads. Of the respondents, more than half were from male-headed households while less than half were females. It was noticed that, the higher the educational achievement the lower the chances of being in household headship concerning females. It can be concluded that higher educational attainment was not a predictor for household headship, but female-headed households were observed as prosperous households. These facts could be considered account by policymakers while planning.*

**Keywords:** Female headship; household; education; power.

## Introduction

Headship is one of the symbols of autonomy, even in prosperity in some contexts. In analogy, headship is the head or dominant role in the household and is considered a chief breadwinner (Srivastava et al., 2021). It indicates access to political, social, and economic that ultimately leads to the power which empowers household decision-making. Household head/headship allows for socio-economic mobility (Guzel et al., 2021) that results in economic growth, leadership ability, socially and economically productive life, and ultimately satisfaction. Different studies show that women's headship is positively associated with socio-economic prosperity (Srivastava et al., 2021). Households led by women, known as Female-Headed Households (FHHs), tend to experience higher poverty rates compared to those led by men, known as Male-Headed Households (MHHs)

(Goldberg, 1990). In FHHs, it is anticipated that women will serve as the main breadwinners, but they typically earn considerably less and have limited access to economic opportunities compared to men in MHHs (Nwosu et al., 2018).

Women with HH generally have a higher dependency ratio than men. Moreover, female HH usually has less time for market work and faces discrimination in accessing jobs and/or social welfare. Among several causes of female HH teen pregnancy, early parenthood, family instability, unmarried, widow, divorced, and separated factors are usually positively correlated with poverty (Khaliq et al., 2017).

Several governments have made several efforts to ensure women's empowerment; however, they still suffer from unequal access to education besides several illnesses contributing to chronic disease development (Alagarsamy, 2014). There is a global trend in increasing female household headships. A reasonable number of women are widowed each day, and the number of families struggling to cope without a wage earner is starting to overwhelm local social services (Carr & Bodnar-Deren, 2009). The rate of household headship has also risen among unmarried, widowed, separated, and divorced women. Furthermore, advancements have been made globally in attaining gender equality and empowering women as part of the Millennium Development Goals, with notable achievements in providing equal access to primary education for both girls and boys (Joshi, 2020). Nevertheless, discrimination and violence against women and girls persist across all regions of the world (Mangai et al., 2019). It is a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world, not just fundamental human rights. Ensuring that women and girls have equitable access to education, healthcare, suitable employment, and representation in political and economic decision-making contributes to sustainable economic growth and enhance the overall well-being of society.

This study explores the patterns of household headships in Nepal and their possible predictors among various socio-demographic characteristics. Furthermore, This research aims to apprise policymakers, experts, and relevant authorities about the key factors influencing Household

Headships (HH) in Nepal and their potential impact on the socio-demographic characteristics associated with household ownership in Nepalese communities.

## Methods and Procedures

### Research Design

We used a cross-sectional survey design using secondary data. Data were extracted from Nepal Demographic and Health Survey [NDHS] 2016. The NDHS 2016 was an extensive survey that used six different questionnaires (Nepal Demographic and Health Survey, 2017). In this paper, we assessed the data only from the household questionnaire (Ministry of Health Nepal et al., 2017).

### Study Participants

Household heads from the selected sample were the participants of the study. There was no discrimination in choosing the study participants based on caste, sex, religion, and eco-belt.

### Population and Sample

The survey used a multi-stage sampling procedure using an upgraded sampling cluster made by the National Population and Housing Census 2011 (Ministry of Health Nepal et al., 2017). A total of 30 samples were selected from every 383 wards (sampling strata) made by population proportionate to size. Therefore, 11473 households were selected as a sample; however, only 11040 household heads were interviewed. Details of the sampling procedure can be obtained from the report of NDHS 2016 publicly available from the DHS Program.

### Data Collection

A comprehensive training was given to the field enumerators and their supervisors. Data collection started in June 2016 and ended in January 2017. There were 16 teams with one supervisor in each group. The supervisor principally engaged/ deployed to maintain the quality of data by ensuring consistency, and accuracy (Ministry of Health et al., 2017).

## Variables and Measures

As per our prime interest, household headship was the dependent variable (DV), and socio-demographic characteristics such as age, occupation, residence setting, and provinces were the independent variables (IV). Descriptive (frequencies and percentage), bivariate (chi-square test), and multivariate (binary logistic regression) analyses were performed to find out the association and predictors between the IV and the DV; all variables were entered into the multivariate analysis due they all are essential in the study (Sharma & Adhikari, 2022). We used IBM SPSS Statistics 25.00 to analyze the data (Landau & Everitt, 2004; Marques & Jullamon, 2019).

This section outlines the study's key results, including general characteristics of the respondents, association among HH and background characteristics of respondents, and predictors for being HH with references to background characteristics.

## Characteristics of the Household Head

Female-headed households in developing countries require special attention as they are said to be disadvantaged in accessing land, labor, credit and insurance markets (World Bank, 2011). Female-headed households are sometimes seen as disadvantaged in terms of consumption, exposure to shocks and vulnerability. Despite such claims, research on the relative poverty status of female-headed households is inconclusive, and there is little empirical evidence of familiarity.

## Results

*Table 1*

*Background Characteristics of Household Head*

Variables	Category	Number	Percent
Sex of the head of household	Male	7581	68.7
	Female	3459	31.3
Highest educational level attained	No education, preschool	4329	39.2
	Primary	2492	22.6
	Secondary	2947	26.7
	Higher	1272	11.5
Age of household head	15-24	625	5.7
	25-34	2240	20.3
	35-44	2562	23.2
	45-54	2358	21.4
	55-64	1810	16.4
Place of residence	65 and above	1445	13.1
	Urban	6781	61.4
	Rural	4259	38.6
Ecological zone	Hill	5134	46.5
	Mountain	781	7.1
	Terai	5125	46.4
Province	Bagmati	2521	22.8
	Koshi	2004	18.2
	Madhesh	2014	18.2
	Gandaki	1173	10.6
	Lumbini	1793	16.2
	Karnali	619	5.6
	Sudoorpaschim	915	8.3

Wealth status	Poorest	2234	20.2
	Poor	2225	20.2
	Middle	2065	18.7
	Rich	2240	20.3
	Richest	2276	20.6
Migrated within 10 years	No	5911	53.5
	Yes	5129	46.5
Total		11040	100.0

Of the total respondents, more than two-thirds (69%) were male and more than one-third (39%) of the respondents were illiterate or had only preschool education followed by secondary education (27%). Nearly one-fourth (23%) of the respondents were household heads from 35 to 44 years. A good majority (61%) of the respondents were from urban areas, and rest of the respondents (47%) and (46%) were from Hill and Terai areas, respectively. About one-fourth (23%) of respondents were from Bagmati Province, followed by (18%) from Province One and Madhesh Province. Of the total respondents one fifth (21%) were from the richest, almost the same (20%) from the wealthy, poor, and the poorest

and nearly the same ration (19%) from the middle wealth. About half (47%) of the households were found to have migrated within the past 10 years.

### Association with Household Headship and Background Characteristics

An overview of the relationship between women's educational level and their background characteristics are provided in Table 2. This result is somewhat unexpected because it presents the distribution of women by education level, age, place of residence, ecological zone, province, and wealth quintile.

**Table 2**

#### *Background Traits and Household Leadership*

Variables	Category	Sex of the head of household (%)		Total Number
		Male	Female	
The highest educational level attained ***	No education,	55.2	44.8	4329
	preschool			
	Primary	76.8	23.2	2492
	Secondary	76.3	23.7	2947
	Higher	80.9	19.1	1272
Age of household head***	15-24	45.9	54.1	625
	25-34	52.6	47.4	2240
	35-44	65.6	34.4	2562
	45-54	79.0	21.0	2358
	55-64	79.9	20.1	1810
	65 and above	78.0	22.0	1445
Place of residence	Urban	68.3	31.7	6781
	Rural	69.3	30.7	4259
Ecological zone ***	Hill	66.2	33.8	5134
	Mountain	70.0	30.0	781
	Terai	70.9	29.1	5125

Province ***	Bagmati	70.1	29.9	2521
	Koshi	70.7	29.3	2004
	Madhesh	73.9	26.1	2014
	Gandaki	60.2	39.8	1173
	Lumbini	66.6	33.4	1793
	Karnali	68.8	31.2	619
	Sudoorpaschim	63.6	36.4	915
	Wealth status***	Poorest	66.1	33.9
	Poor	67.9	32.1	2225
	Middle	69.1	30.9	2065
	Rich	66.7	33.3	2240
	Richest	73.5	26.5	2276
Migrated within	No	75.3	24.7	5911
	Yes	61.0	39.0	5129
10 years***				
Total		68.7	31.3	11040

Note \*\*\* Chi square test significant at  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* =  $p < 0.01$  and \* =  $p < 0.05$

Table 2 shows that forty-five percent of the respondents having no education or preschool education were household heads compared to (19%) the respondents having higher education (Bachelor or higher) ( $p < 0.001$ ). Simultaneously, more than half (54%) of the female respondents aged 15 to 24 years were household heads compared to (20%) the female from the age of 55 to 64 years ( $p < 0.001$ ). However, there were no statistically significant household heads between males and females in rural and urban areas. One-third (34%) of the female from the Hill area were household heads compared to (30%), (29%) Mountain and Terai, respectively ( $p < 0.001$ ). Comparatively, Gandaki province had more (40%) female household heads than other provinces that accounted for Sudoorpaschim (36%), followed by Lumbini (33%), Karnali (31%), Bagmati (30%), Province one (29%), and just 26% in Madhesh province ( $p < 0.001$ ). Interestingly, two-fifth (43%) of the poorest female were household

heads compared to (27%) the wealthiest female ( $p < 0.001$ ). More than one-third (39%) of the female were household heads compared to (25%) the female who was not migrated within 10 years ( $p < 0.001$ )

#### Predictors for being Household Headship with Reference to Background Characteristics

In the first model, we presented binary logistic regression for household headship concerning educational level, which was our prime interest. In contrast, in model II we adjusted other variables for adjusted odds ratio (AOR) that were found to have significant differences in the chi-square test. The odds ratio (OR) showed that model I and model II present almost the same results: the female with secondary or higher education levels had a comparatively lower chance of being household heads than those with no education or just pre-school education.

Table 3

Adjusted Odd Ratio (AOR) and 95% Confidence Interval (CI) for having female headship in households in Nepal

Variables	Category	Model I			Model II		
		AOR	95% CI		COR	95% CI	
			Lower	Upper		Lower	Upper
Highest educational level attained	No education, preschool (ref.)						
	Primary	0.373***	0.334	0.417	0.173***	0.151	0.198
	Secondary	0.384***	0.346	0.426	0.116***	0.100	0.134
	Higher	0.292***	0.250	0.339	0.064***	0.052	0.078
Age of household	15-24 (ref.)						
	25-34				0.526***	0.433	0.640
	35-44				0.199***	0.162	0.244
	45-54				0.059***	0.047	0.074
	55-64				0.043***	0.034	0.054
	65 and above				0.043***	0.033	0.054
Place of residence	Urban (ref.)						
	Rural				0.826***	0.744	0.917
Ecological zone	Hill (ref.)				1.00		
	Mountain				0.849	0.697	1.033
	Terai				0.645***	0.563	0.738
Province	Bagmati (ref.)						
	Koshi				1.274**	1.082	1.500
	Madhesh				0.843	0.689	1.031
	Gandaki				1.861***	1.574	2.200
	Lumbini				1.392***	1.173	1.652
	Karnali				1.145		1.439
						0.911	
Wealth status	Sudoorpaschim				1.520***	1.245	1.856
	Poorest (ref.)						
	Poor				1.213*	1.043	1.411
	Middle				1.227*	1.042	1.445
	Rich				1.795***	1.522	2.117
	Richest				2.180**	1.815	2.619
Migrated within 10 years	No (ref.)						
	Yes				2.685***	2.434	2.962
Constant		0.810***			4.952***		
-2 Log likelihood		13125.9			10969.08		
Cox & Snell R Square		0.053			0.221		

Note: ref = reference category, \*\*\* Significant at  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ ; and \* =  $p < 0.05$

Table 3 shows that, females having higher educational status (bachelor or above) appeared less likely to be a household head compared to those females who had no formal education (AOR=0.06, 95%CI: 0.05-0.08). In the same way, it was noticed that higher the age lowers the chances of being to be household headship. Female having age more than 25 years and above

were appeared almost 53 percent to 96% percent less likely to be household headship compare to female age less than 25 years. Lower odds noticed among female resided at rural areas compared to urban setting (AOR=0.83, 95%CI: 0.74-0.92). Similarly, females from Terai areas were less likely to be household headship compared to female who lived in hill areas (AOR=0.65, 95%CI: 0.56-0.74).

However, higher odds were noticed among the females who lived in Koshi, Gandaki, Lumbini, and Sudoorpaschim province compared to the females lived in Bagmati Province. Similarly, the richest women appeared almost 2.2 times more likely to be a household head (AOR=2.18, 95%CI: 1.82-2.62) compared to those who belonged to the poorest wealth status. Interestingly, female who migrated within a decade appeared almost three time more likely to be household headship compared to those females who did not migrate within a decade (AOR=2.69, 95%CI: 2.43-2.96).

## **Discussion**

Female-headed households face heightened vulnerability and exposure to shocks (Mba et al., 2021). Without a male breadwinner, these households often lack a stable source of income and have limited social support networks, making them more susceptible to economic downturns, natural disasters, and other unforeseen emergencies (Sear, 2021). As a result, female-headed households may struggle to maintain consistent levels of consumption, provide for their families' basic needs, and recover from adverse events.

Based on the data of NDHS 2016, it was noticed that level of education, age group, residence setting in terms of eco-belt and province, wealth status and history of migration were significantly associated with Household Headship [HH]. Interestingly, all these variables were also significant predictors for being HH. However, variable-wise magnitude of association was different between bivariate and multivariate analyses.

### **Key Factors and Insights of the Respondents**

The survey data reveals several key demographic characteristics of the respondents. The gender distribution among the respondents indicates a significant gender imbalance, with males comprising more than two-thirds (69%) of the total respondents. This skew in the gender ratio may reflect societal factors that influence the participation of women in surveys or possibly the underrepresentation of female-headed households in the study.

Educational attainment is another crucial aspect highlighted in the survey findings. More than

one-third (39%) of the respondents reported being illiterate or having only preschool education. This suggests a significant portion of the population lacks formal education, which can impact their ability to access higher-paying job opportunities and contribute to socioeconomic disparities (Alagarsamy, 2014). Regarding age, the survey indicates that nearly one-fourth (23%) of the respondents were household heads within the 35 to 44-year-old range. This age group often represents individuals in their prime working years, responsible for supporting their families and making crucial decisions regarding household finances and well-being. In the context of Nepal, females with a lower educational level have higher chances of being household heads. Forty-five percent of the respondents having no education or pre-school education.

The present study from Nepal interestingly illustrated that more women with lower or pre-primary educational level and 15-24 years of age had a household head, where the household head women were middle-aged and high school education. On the other hand, migration accounts for only a small number of married couples. The economic vulnerability of female-headed households is frequently observed, and such situations are commonly attributed to the breakdown of the marriage institution in Western countries (Nwosu & Ndinda, 2018). Furthermore, married couples < 25 years of age who migrated were found to be household heads than non-migrated couples (Carliner et al., 2016). So, the study indicated that educational status and age are not significant factors in determining the household ships of women. In Southeast Asia, female headship are diverse (Dommaraju & Tan, 2014; Rimaz et al., 2014). The increased prevalence of female headship in Thailand and Cambodia is indicative of the adaptable nature of family structures in these societies, rather than pointing to any specific disadvantage (Klasen et al., 2015).

Geographically, the survey captures the distribution of respondents across different areas. The majority (61%) of the respondents were from urban areas, indicating the concentration of the surveyed population in more developed regions with potentially better access to resources and services. Additionally, 47 percent and 46

percent of the respondents came from Hill and Terai areas, respectively, representing a mix of rural and semi-urban populations. The data also provides insights into the regional distribution of respondents across provinces. Bagmati Province had the highest representation, with approximately one-fourth (23%) of the respondents hailing from this region. Province One and Madhesh Province followed closely with 18 percent each. These regional variations highlight the need for targeted policies and interventions that consider the specific challenges and opportunities faced by different provinces (Petrov, 2021). Likewise, socioeconomic status, as measured by wealth, is another significant aspect covered in the survey. The data indicates that respondents were distributed across different wealth categories. Approximately one-fifth (21%) of the respondents were classified as the richest, while the wealthy, poor, and poorest categories each accounted for around 20 percent of the respondents. The middle wealth category represented nearly the same proportion (19%). This distribution highlights the economic diversity within the surveyed population, with varying levels of income and access to resources.

Lastly, migration patterns emerged as an important finding, with approximately half (47%) of the households having migrated within the past 10 years. This suggests a significant level of internal mobility within the country, potentially driven by factors such as employment opportunities, seeking better living conditions, or displacement due to natural disasters or conflicts. Understanding the dynamics of migration can help policymakers address the specific needs and challenges faced by migrant households, ensuring their successful integration into new communities.

### **Household Headship in Diverse Contexts**

The survey data provides interesting insights into the relationship between various demographic factors and household headship. The analysis reveals significant disparities in education levels among household heads. Forty-five percent of respondents who had no education or preschool education held the position of household heads, in contrast to only 19 percent of respondents with higher education (Bachelor's degree or higher). This statistically significant difference highlights the impact of education on household leadership

roles, indicating that individuals with higher educational attainment are more likely to assume the role of household heads.

Another notable finding is the higher prevalence of female household heads among younger age groups. The data shows that 54 percent of female respondents aged 15 to 24 years were household heads, whereas only 20 percent of females aged 55 to 64 years held the same position. This significant difference emphasizes the greater responsibility and burden placed on younger females in terms of household leadership. It suggests that young females may be thrust into household headship roles due to various factors such as early marriage, widowhood, or the absence of male household members. Female headship is predominantly identified in households where no spouse is present (Edith et al., 2020). In nations characterized by low rates of separation, such as the Philippines, the incidence of female headship is also relatively low (Abalos, 2017). However, in the Philippines, the rise in marital separations and non-marital births may contribute to the increasing prevalence of female-headed households (Abalos, 2017). It is worth noting that the reluctance of separated women to establish independent households, often choosing to live with parents or relatives due to societal stigma attached to being single mothers, could explain the relatively lower rates of female headship (Alvarado & Vilchez, 2015).

Interestingly, the analysis does not indicate any statistically significant differences between males and females in rural and urban areas regarding household headship. This implies that gender plays a similar role in determining household headship in both rural and urban contexts, suggesting that gender norms and expectations regarding household leadership may be consistent across these areas.

In terms of regional variations, the data reveals differences in the prevalence of female household heads across different areas. Thirty-four percent of females from the Hill area were household heads, compared to 30 percent in the Mountain region and 29 percent in the Terai region. This statistically significant difference highlights the influence of geographic location on female household headship. It suggests that factors such as cultural norms, economic opportunities, and



social dynamics specific to each region may contribute to variations in household headship patterns among females. This study indicated that the ecological zone significantly effects the household's headships, which is consistent with this study. In Nepal, Hill and Mountain zone, the relative price of housing is lower than in Terai, so women's household headship in Terai found less than Hill and Mountain zone. Female from Terai areas were less likely to be household headship compared to female who lived in hill areas.

Analyzing the data at the provincial level, it is noteworthy that Gandaki province had the highest proportion of female household heads, accounting for 40 percent of respondents. This was followed by Sudoorpaschim province (36%), Lumbini province (33%), Karnali province (31%), Bagmati province (30%), Province One (29%), and Madhesh province (26%). The statistically significant differences between provinces indicate the role of regional factors and dynamics in shaping female household headship. It suggests that each province may have unique socioeconomic and cultural contexts that influence the prevalence of female household heads.

Examining the relationship between wealth and female household headship, the data reveals that 43 percent of the poorest females were household heads, compared to 27 percent of the wealthiest females. This significant difference highlights the disproportionate burden of household headship among economically disadvantaged females. It suggests that poverty and limited access to resources may contribute to the higher prevalence of female household heads among the poorest segments of the population. Carliner et al., (2016) articulated that the relative price of housing is lower in smaller communities than the larger cities. The author further explained that another reason might have different customs in different regions, discouraging women from living in separate households (Lu et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the data indicates that 39 percent of females who had migrated within the past 10 years were household heads, compared to 25 percent of females who had not migrated. This statistically significant difference suggests that migration plays a role in increasing the likelihood of female household headship. Factors such as

separation from male household members, seeking employment opportunities, or seeking better living conditions through migration may contribute to this pattern.

In the context of Nepal, the poorest female were household head compared to the richest female. As well as, more than one-third of the female were household head compared to the female who were not migrated within 10 years. In comparison to households led by males, those headed by females are typically linked to a higher incidence of poverty. The prevalence of female-headed households has been on the rise in South Africa, as indicated by studies conducted by Nwosu and Ndinda in 2018.

### **Predictors for being Household Headship**

The logistic regression analysis provides additional insights into the factors influencing female household headship. The results indicate that females with higher educational attainment (bachelor's degree or above) were less likely to be household heads compared to those with no formal education. The adjusted odds ratio (AOR) of 0.06 suggests a strong inverse relationship between educational status and female household headship. This indicates that higher education is associated with lower likelihood of assuming household leadership roles, possibly due to increased employment opportunities and economic independence that allow women to delegate household responsibilities.

Age is another important factor influencing female household headship, as indicated by the analysis. The results suggest that as age increases, the chances of being a household head decrease significantly. Females aged 25 years and above were found to be 53 percent to 96 percent less likely to be household heads compared to females below 25 years of age. This age-related pattern may be attributed to various factors such as marriage, starting a family, and cultural expectations that may shift household leadership roles to older individuals within the family structure (Thomas et al., 2017).

Geographical location plays a role in determining female household headship, as evidenced by the analysis (Rajkarnikar & Ramnarain, 2020). Females residing in rural areas were less likely to

be household heads compared to those living in urban settings, with an AOR of 0.83. This suggests that urban areas may provide greater opportunities for female empowerment, including access to education, employment, and social networks that can contribute to a lower likelihood of assuming household leadership roles for women in urban settings. Furthermore, females from Terai areas were less likely to be household heads compared to females from hill areas. The AOR of 0.65 suggests that living in Terai areas is associated with a reduced likelihood of assuming household leadership roles. This could be influenced by cultural and socioeconomic factors specific to the Terai region, such as traditional gender roles and economic opportunities that shape household dynamics.

Examining the provincial variations, the analysis shows that females residing in Koshi, Gandaki, Lumbini, and Sudoorpaschim provinces were more likely to be household heads compared to females in Bagmati Province. This indicates that regional variations exist in terms of female household headship, potentially influenced by economic opportunities, cultural norms, and social dynamics prevalent in each province. Wealth status also emerged as a significant factor in determining female household headship (Joshi Rajkarnikar & Ramnarain, 2020). The analysis indicates that the richest women were 2.18 times more likely to be household heads compared to those in the poorest wealth status. This suggests that financial resources and socioeconomic status contribute to the likelihood of assuming household leadership roles, potentially granting greater decision-making power and autonomy.

Interestingly, the analysis reveals that females who migrated within the past decade were almost three times more likely to be household heads compared to those who did not migrate. This finding highlights the relationship between migration and female household headship, potentially indicating that migration disrupts traditional family structures and roles, leading to increased responsibilities for women who move to new locations.

Female-headed households have, on average, a different demographic composition to their male peers. Specifically, they are smaller and have higher dependency ratios (Edith et al., 2020).

Female having age more than 25 years and above were appeared to be household headship compare to female age less than 25 years. It was noticed that higher the age lowers the chances of being to be household headship in Nepal. The prevalence of female headship varies, with figures ranging from approximately nine percent in rural Laos to as high as 40 percent in urban Vietnam. Generally, urban areas exhibit a higher frequency of female-headed households compared to rural areas, as highlighted in the research by Klasen et al. in 2015. In Cambodia and Thailand, approximately a quarter to a third of households are led by women (Klasen et al., 2015). In the island nations of Indonesia and the Philippines, although less common, female-headed households constitute a noteworthy proportion, ranging between 13 and 17 percent (Pukuh & Widyasthika, 2018). Notably, in Laos and Indonesia, over 95 percent of female-headed households do not have a spouse present in the household, indicating that women assume the role of head only when their spouse is absent (Klasen et al., 2015). Similarly, in Thailand and urban Cambodia, nearly a quarter of households with female heads have their spouse present in the household (Budlender, 2003).

Overall, the logistic regression analysis provides important insights into the determinants of female household headship. Factors such as educational attainment, age, geographical location, provincial variations, wealth status, and migration all influence the likelihood of assuming household leadership roles. Understanding these factors can inform policies and interventions aimed at promoting gender equality, empowering women, and addressing the specific needs and challenges faced by female household heads in different contexts. Ultimately in the context of Nepal, female who migrated within a decade appeared almost three time more likely to be household headship compared to those females who did not migrate. So, it has claimed that household headship is also influence by power and politics while money, education, occupation, reputation etc. as the reflection of power and policy.

## Conclusion

The study delves into the complex dynamics of household headship in developing countries, with a focus on female-headed households in

Nepal. The research reveals critical patterns among the surveyed population. It is evident that educational attainment plays a pivotal role in determining household headship. Females with higher education levels are significantly less likely to be household heads compared to those with limited or no formal education. Furthermore, age is a defining factor, as older females are notably less inclined to be household heads, indicating a generational shift in roles. Urban areas exhibit higher rates of female household heads compared to rural regions, suggesting potential urbanization-related empowerment. The ecological context also influences household headship, with females in Terai areas being less likely to head households compared to those in Hill regions. Economic factors significantly impact household headship, highlighting the influence of wealth disparity. Females from the richest strata are more than twice as likely to be household heads compared to those in the poorest category, underscoring socioeconomic inequalities. Migration emerges as a noteworthy determinant, with females who have migrated within the last decade being three times more likely to head households, reflecting the transformative effects of migration on gender roles. This study emphasizes the multifaceted nature of household headship, shedding light on the intersectionality of education, age, urbanization, wealth, and migration. These findings provide valuable insights for policymakers and social scientists, informing targeted interventions to empower females in diverse contexts and foster gender equity in household structures. Addressing these disparities necessitates comprehensive strategies that consider the interplay of these factors, facilitating a more inclusive and equitable society.

The research encompassed 11,040 households across all seven provinces, with 7,581 being male-headed and 3,459 female-headed, resulting in a response rate of 99 percent, as reported in the Nepal Demographic and Health Survey of 2016 (Nepal Demographic and Health Survey, 2016). The sampling process involved stratification, with each province divided into urban and rural areas, resulting in 14 sampling strata. The study utilized the Household Head Questionnaire (HHQ) to capture information about the household head, encompassing basic demographic details

such as age, gender, marital status, education, and relationships. Additionally, three types of analyses were applied: univariate, bivariate, and multivariate. The univariate analysis was initially employed to outline the percentage and count of respondents based on background characteristics. Both bivariate and multivariate analyses were then conducted to forecast household headship.

This study applied just secondary data from the NDHS 2016 survey of Nepal, considering the age of the HH, educational level, ecological zone, province, and place of residence, wealth status, and migration within 10 years. Of the total households of Nepal, just 11,040 were implied for the sample size from all (7) provinces of Nepal. The survey questionnaire only reflects the household headships as a research tool.

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