

# FACTORS AFFECTING THE CAREER ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN ACCOUNTANTS IN KATHMANDU VALLEY, NEPAL

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**ABSTRACT**

A combination of family and household responsibilities, access to professional development, gender bias, perceived weakness, organizational culture and attitude, and mentorship, among many others, can influence the women accountants' career advancement. This study aims to identify factors affecting women accountants' career advancement in Kathmandu Valley. The study conducted a questionnaire survey with 288 women accountants working inside the Kathmandu Valley in various institutions, including public and private, and used a correlational research design. The study found that gender discrimination, perceived weaknesses, and organizational culture and attitude negatively correlate with the career

advancement of women accountants. However, access to professional development has significant positive relations with women accountant's career advancement, but household and family responsibility and mentorship do not significantly affect women's career advancement. Hence, organizations must cultivate inclusive cultures, offer flexible work arrangements, create unbiased opportunities among employees, develop positive attitudes toward women, and provide robust mentorship and sponsorship programs to enhance women's career prospects in accounting. Addressing these factors can mitigate the challenges faced by women and promote a more equitable and diverse accounting profession.

## INTRODUCTION

Accounting has traditionally been viewed as a male-dominated profession with few women entering, but research shows that increasingly more women are entering the accounting profession (Hinson et al., 2006; Koshal, 1998). National and international laws have provided men and women with equal opportunities. Women choose accounting because they like to work well and get along with others (AICPA, 2004). Studies have shown that many female graduates enter accounting (Saturnino, 2017). However, the disparity between the number of women accountants graduates and those attaining senior roles in accounting firms is increasing (Kokot, 2015). However, advancement in women's careers could be more satisfactory (Sattar et al., 2013). One reason is that women must juggle work with children (Sahumani et al., 2023). Further, organizational members' beliefs and attitudes and the organization's context also create barriers to women's advancement (Larkin et al., 1997).

Although more women enter the accounting field, they remain underrepresented in senior positions. Working women face numerous challenges in their professional lives. Gender stereotyping persists as a pervasive obstacle, as highlighted by Barnett and Hyde (2001), whose review of empirical studies challenges earlier theories predicting gender differences. Women also experience significant stress from balancing multiple

roles, including work and family obligations, while extended work hours impair the work-life balance dilemma (Piotrkowski et al., 1987). Schumer (2010) identifies specific challenges such as night-time work, frequent travel, and occasional relocation, further complicating women's career paths. Societal norms surrounding marriage, childcare, household responsibilities, and the expectation that women prioritize their husbands' careers continue to impact women's professional trajectories (Dev, 2020). Marriage is often cited as a primary obstacle hindering women's careers (Ahsan & Hussian, 2018), while inflexible work hours are reported as a significant barrier by the AICPA (2004), further impeding women's career advancement.

Research shows that the main barriers to keeping women in the workforce are family responsibility, overtime, high workloads, opportunities for flexible working hours, and a better understanding that people's work requires time to resolve family issues. Buchheit et al. (2016) identified several issues hindering women's progression and retention in public accounting. Reasons for this include parenting and family responsibilities, understanding models of success, awareness of issues, culture, social attitudes towards women, stress, dating and marriage, and participation in professional organizations. Zainal-Abidin et al. (2008) found that the challenges of balancing family life with career in accounting contribute to lower retention rates for women public accounting. For many women, balancing family responsibility with the demands of seeking acceptance in a traditionally male-dominated profession presents significant challenges to their careers. Koshal et al. (1998) identified four reasons female accountants leave their profession: inflexible role, glass ceiling, work environment, and the perception that the job is inflexible.

The connection between gender and other social factors, such as age, class, ethnicity, and education, appears to contribute to inequalities in women's careers (Acker, 2009). The intricate connections between various axes of oppression and their impact on women's careers align with the principles of intersectionality theory. Intersectionality is how identities link to form a new, composite identity (Warner, 2008). Interactions within a specific social context can lead to both opportunities and domination in a career. Thus, understanding how various identities intersect with gender is crucial for comprehending

the process rather than viewing them as separate variables (Connell, 2014). Zainal-Abidin et al. (2006) highlighted the quality, diversity, and duration of job assignments, alongside lack of opportunities or discrimination, as primary factors impacting women's advancement on the career ladder. Similarly, Blau and Varo (2007) find higher promotion rates for men than women, attributing the discrepancy to gender differences and lower wage growth rates. Borazon (2006) emphasizes socio-cultural attitudes, support system barriers, perception issues, and self-imposed barriers as impediments to women's careers in business. Hinson et al. (2006) identified non-supportive work environments as a significant barrier to women's career growth.

However, these studies have primarily been conducted in developed countries, highlighting the need to research women's workplace experience with work and family life in developing countries, including Nepal. The current research on women accountants and career mobility needs to be enhanced. Much of the research focuses on women's challenges and career mobility, specifically, women's advancement in foreign countries. Recent studies are necessary to validate findings and, more importantly, to raise awareness that gender roles persist in the workplace. In this context, it is essential to fill the knowledge gap of career-oriented accountant women and the factors hindering their career advancement in accounting. Therefore, this study examines the factors affecting women's career advancement in accounting.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Literature has explored the various factors influencing the career advancement of women accountants, including organizational culture, work-life balance, mentorship opportunities, and gender biases. Organizational culture significantly impacts the career development of women accountants. Studies have shown that a male-dominated culture can hinder women's progress by fostering environments that are less supportive of women's career progression. Albrecht et al. (2018) argued that traditional gender roles and labels within organizations often marginalize women, limiting their access to high-profile projects and

leadership roles. Moreover, organizational policies and practices that do not support gender diversity can perpetuate gender biases, affecting women's career growth. Acker (2006) discusses how gendered organizational structures often marginalize women by valuing traditionally male attributes and behaviors.

Moreover, Hunt et al. (2018) report that firms with inclusive cultures and diverse leadership teams are likelier to promote women to higher positions. Another factor is work-life balance, a critical factor affecting women's career trajectories. The demanding nature of the accounting profession, with its long hours and frequent travel, often clashes with family responsibilities. According to Windsor and Auyeung (2006), women in accounting face significant challenges in balancing work and family commitments, which can lead to career stagnation. Flexible working arrangements, such as working from home and flexible hours, support women's career progression (Adams & Ferreira, 2009). Cimirotić et al. (2017) analyzed the factors contributing to women management accountants reaching leadership positions in business organizations. The study employed semi-structured interviews and utilized the general inductive approach. It revealed that women identified their skill, professional expertise, and spousal support as key factors in their successful career progression. Also, they responded that ambition and their luck play an essential role. However, the study found working time, work-life balance, and motherhood to be the career-hindering factors. Cullen and Darnell (2012) explored the relationship between career anchors and work-related barriers affecting the careers of female CPAs in NSW and WA states of Australia. The study found that technical competencies, managerial competence, security, and pure challenge career anchors play a key role in career progression of female CPAs in WA. In contrast, security and lifestyle career anchors were more influential in NSW. Additionally, work-related barriers were found to have a significant impact on career progression of female CPAs in NSW.

The presence of mentorship and sponsorship programs is vital for the career development of women accountants. Mentorship provides guidance, advice, and support, crucial for navigating career paths and overcoming obstacles. Tharenou (2005) indicates that women with mentors are more likely to achieve higher career success than those

without mentors. Additionally, sponsorship, where senior leaders actively advocate for protégés, is essential for career progression. Research indicates that women are less likely than men to have sponsors, which can impede their progression (Hewlett et al., 2011). Darnell (2023) examined the perceived barriers to upward mobility among middle and senior-level professional women in San Diego, California. The study identified six factors limiting women's career advancement: family responsibilities, gender stereotypes, lack of mentoring, educational requirements, organizational culture, and gender bias. Dorcas et al. (2014) investigated the factors influencing the career advancement of female accountants in Nigeria. The study revealed that family responsibilities and gender do not impede the career progression of female accountants. However, gender affects the choices of continuity of the accounting profession.

Gender bias and discrimination remain pervasive issues influencing the career advancement of women accountants for a long. Subtle biases, such as stereotypes and microaggressions, contribute to a work environment that can be discouraging for women. Anderson-Gough et al. (2005) noted that women accountants frequently encounter assumptions that their career commitment is diminished because of their family responsibilities. This bias can result in fewer promotions and career development opportunities. Furthermore, the presence of a "glass ceiling" restricts women from reaching top executive positions (Eagly & Carli, 2018). Muthui (2018) examined the factors contributing to women's career progression in Kenya. The study identified education, training and development opportunities, mentorship, gender balance, an individual's internal locus of control, and social and interpersonal skills as key supportive factors for women's career progression. Conversely, it highlighted unfavorable work-life balance, male dominance, unrealistic key performance indicators, the absence of mentorship programs, a lack of a clear progression plan, organizational politics, stress and workload, gender conflicts, insufficient networking opportunities, and intense competition as significant barriers to women's career advancement.

Zainal-Abidin et al. (2008) examined barriers to women accountants' career advancement in Malaysia. The study found that the five primary factors- structure, task,

commitment, social, and cultural- affect women accountants' career progression. Of these, organizational governance (structure) is the most influencing factor in women accountants' career progression. Similarly, continuous education and professional development are critical for career progression in accounting. Women accountants who obtain additional certifications, such as the Certified Public Accountant (CPA) designation, are more likely to advance in their careers. However, access to these opportunities can be unequal. Dambrin and Lambert (2008) found that women often face more obstacles in accessing professional development programs, which can hinder their career growth. Hinson, Otiyeku, and Amidu (2006) investigated the reasons for women's low status in the profession and the challenges women accountants face in climbing the corporate ladder. The study found that unfavorable work environments, differences seen as weaknesses, exclusion from group activities, and lack of knowledge within the organization hindered female accountants' development. The study also showed that women's success depends on early careers, good mentors, supportive families, and the absence of priorities and conflicts.

Kalinka (2023) explored whether female accountants anticipate having the same career opportunities as their male counterparts by conducting in-depth interviews with 20 accounting students and found that women perform recruitment roles in accounting firms, whereas men typically perform decision-maker roles. Although there are no severe differences in the perception of men and women, gender was seen as a barrier for women. Sheridan and Adapa (2022) explored women's career progression in Malaysian SME accounting firms. The study identified gendered work practices, competitive pressure, ethnic influence, and family business dynamics as the key factors impacting women's career advancement. Ogunniyi et al. (2019) examined the effects of gender inequality on the career progression of female accounts in Nigeria. The findings revealed that gender inequality continues to influence their career advancement significantly. The study recommended that appointments be based on relevant competencies rather than gender discrimination.

Ramdhony et al. (2013) examined the career progression of women accountants in



Mauritius. The study identified that features, high salaries, strong social skills, and job satisfaction had drawn women to the accounting profession. The study also revealed that the glass ceiling and conflicts between professional demands and personal lives hinder women's progress. Mzenzi (2023) examined the career development of female auditors working in Tanzanian audit firms using semi-structured, in-depth interviews of existing and semi-structured, in-depth interviews with current and ex-female and male auditors. The study revealed that gender barriers, including motherhood, pregnancy, maternity leave, limited access to education and networking opportunities, and household and caregiving responsibilities, obstructed the career progression of the female auditors surveyed. These challenges are perpetuated by patriarchal systems that prioritize women's roles as wives and mothers over their professional identities. Cohen et al. (2020) examined perceptions of the glass ceiling among many female accountants employed in both public and private organizations. The study found several obstacles hindering women in the accounting profession, including bias (e.g., reluctance to promote women to senior roles), structural barriers (e.g., limited mentoring and networking opportunities), and cultural challenges (e.g., insufficient social support from male managers).

Ebirim et al. (2024) examined the status of women in accounting and auditing, highlighting the progress achieved, the ongoing challenges encountered, and the promising prospects ahead. The study found that mentorship programs, diversity and inclusion initiatives, and educational outreach efforts have significantly advanced women in the field. Sahumani et al. (2023) examined the organizational cultural factors and barriers influencing women's career success at the University of Limpopo in South Africa. The study found cultural factors has a significant relationship with women's career success. However, no correlation was found between career barriers and career success. Despite this, the study found that women continue to face obstacles such as the glass ceiling and gender stereotyping in their career advancement. Kunze (2011) used longitudinal data on white-collar workers in the private sector and analyzed gender differences in the probability of moving up the job ladder and its relation to the number of children. The study found that gender differences in the probability of climbing the ladder appear negligible. However,

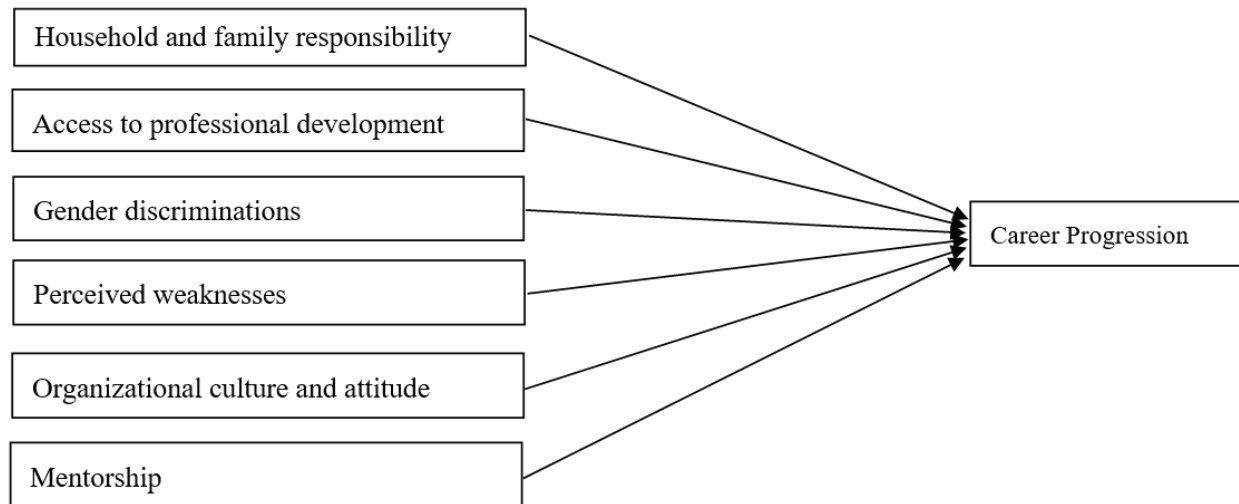


the gender differences evolved early in their careers, and the gender differences related to children were particularly significant at middle and higher ranks.

Recently, Sichamba, Matafwali, and Kawimbe (2024) explored the factors influencing career advancement among accountants and found that factors such as sponsorship for training, lack of opportunity for salary upgrades, recognition of study leave, salary scales upgrades, and promotion based on higher qualifications significantly influence the career growth of accountants. Similarly, Galizzi, McBride, and Benderdetta (2024) examined the challenges faced by Italian women in accounting academia and identified factors such as patriarchal culture in the workplace and society, difficulties in maintaining work-life balance, and gender roles within the workplace as a significant barrier to their career progression. Rufino (2024) examined the differences in the gender roles of professional accountants in public-sector accounting practices in the Philippines. The study took a survey of 280 professional accountants who have more than ten years of experience in the field. The study found no discrimination at work between the genders. Specifically, there is no gender discrimination regarding promotion, salary, leadership and supervision, experience and training opportunities, and work-life balance-related enhancement to personal lives. Ayoola-akingobi (2024) examined the influence of cultural factors on the career advancement of female accountants in South-West Nigeria and revealed that many social factors, including mentors and role models, gender discrimination, and family obligations, hampered female accountants' career progression.

As the literature suggests, the dependent variable, the 'career advancement' of female accountants, is affected by different factors. The study has identified six significant independent variables affecting women's career advancement. Figure 1 presents the theoretical framework illustrating the relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

**Figure 1. Theoretical framework of the study**



**Career advancement:** Career advancement refers to a woman accountant's ability to advance to a level with increasing responsibility. The potential for career advancement within an organization is a potent factor in employee retention.

**Household and family responsibility:** Family responsibility refers to the obligations and activities stemming from shared goals, values, and long-term commitments among individuals connected by common ancestry, adoption, marriage, or other legally or socially recognized unions. Taking household and family responsibility means giving time to the family or engaging in family and household activities.

**Access to professional development:** The availability and extent of opportunities provided to employees for career growth and skill enhancement through training programs, workshops, conferences, and other educational resources.

**Gender discrimination:** Gender discrimination is any biased actions or attitudes towards employees based on gender, resulting in unequal treatment or opportunities in the workplace. Women are frequently perceived as emotionally and physically frail, with

their dual responsibilities of managing both family and work often labeled as neglectful towards their professional duties.

Perceived weaknesses: Women are different from men both physically and emotionally. Although women are physically weaker than men, they are emotionally stronger. While men express their hostility through physical violence, women tend to express themselves more verbally. They cannot endure harsh and long working hours and conditions—the existence of these cultures, perceived as norms, directly causes differences understood as perceived weaknesses.

Organizational culture and attitude: The shared values, beliefs, norms, and practices within an organization shape the behavior and attitudes of its members. Working conditions for harmony between work and family life have become essential for professional women. Therefore, the workplace culture and attitude must support women, and a lack of support can lead to work-life conflict.

Mentorship is the guidance and support from a more experienced individual (mentor) to a less experienced person (mentee) within the organization, aimed at personal and professional development. The mentorship of women accountants here indicates the encouragement, guidance, and teaching ideas to grow in the profession by seniors, guardians, or friends.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The research adopted a correlational research design. This fact-based research involves collecting data using a questionnaire to obtain the participants' feelings and experiences. The survey collected information on factors that directly influence women's advancement in accounting. The sample was selected from female accountants working with private and public organizations in Kathmandu Valley. The private organizations are in education, production, trading, communication, and financial institutions.

Thus, all the female accountants in the Kathmandu Valley are the population, of which 388 were conveniently met and asked to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire is divided into demographic characteristics and measures independence and success. All items are measured using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). One question about working hours is evaluated as yes or no. The study used Mann-Whitney tests and Pearson correlation coefficients to identify the significant relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

The study performed a reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha analysis. The results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Reliability test results**

SN	Variables	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Household and family responsibility	0.771
2	Access to professional development	0.897
3	Gender discrimination	0.833
4	Perceived weakness	0.792
5	Unfriendly Organizational Culture	0.885
6	Mentorship	0.894
7	Currier advancement	0.781

Table 1 shows that each variable demonstrates Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of at least 0.771, which is a satisfactory level of internal consistency.

*The alternative hypotheses tested in this study are:*

H1: Household and family responsibilities significantly and negatively impact women accountants' career advancement prospects.

- H2: Access to professional development significantly and positively impacts women accountants' career advancement prospects.
- H3: Gender discrimination significantly and negatively impacts women accountants' career advancement prospects.
- H4: Perceived weaknesses significantly and negatively impact women accountants' career advancement prospects.
- H5: Unfriendly organizational culture and attitude significantly and negatively impact women accountants' career advancement prospects.
- H6: Mentorship opportunities significantly and positively impact career advancement prospects for women accountants.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents**

Four hundred questionnaires were distributed to the women accountants who were approached randomly, and only 388 responses were received. Table 1 shows the respondents' profile.

**Table 1: Descriptions of Respondents' Profile**

Age Composition			Work Experience		
Age Groups	Frequency	Percentage	Work Experience	Frequency	Percentage
Below 25	74	26%	Less than 5 years	117	41%
Between 25-35	84	29%	5 to 10 years	87	30%
Between 35-45	78	27%	10 to 15 years	46	16%
Above 45	52	18%	More than 15 years	38	13%
<b>Total</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>100%</b>

Educational Qualification			Job Position		
Education	Frequency	Percentage	Job Position	Frequency	Percentage
Up to Bachelor	112	39%	Assistant	138	48%
Masters Level	148	51%	Officer	102	35%
Chart. Accountant	28	10%	Manager	48	17%
<b>Total</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Survey 2024

Table 1 shows that the respondents of age between 25 and 35, with 29 percent, were the highest, and respondents of age above 45, with 18 percent, were the lowest. Of the 288 women accountants, 41 percent had less than five years of work experience, 30, 16, and 13 percent had 5-10, 10-15, and above 15 years of work experience, respectively.

Similarly, 49% of the respondents were qualified for the bachelor level. However, the majority of respondents, 51 percent, completed their Master Level, and minimal, i.e., only 10%, were chartered accountants. The job level of female accountants was divided into three categories. Out of the 288 respondents, the highest frequency was at the assistant level, 48%. Likely, officer and manager levels were 35 and 17 percent, respectively.

## 4.2 Analysis of Lump Sum Holiday Taken

The study aimed to identify lump sum holidays taken by women accountants during their careers in their current workplace for family responsibilities like childbearing, child raising, parental care, etc. Table 2 presents the likely response in frequencies.

**Table 2: Respondents took a lump-sum holiday**

Duration	Frequency	Percentage
None	133	46%
1 - 2 months	98	34%
2 - 4 months	46	16%
4 months and above	11	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source: Survey 2024*

Table 2 shows that 46 percent responded that they have yet to take long holidays, 34 percent responded less than two months, followed by 16 percent in 2-4 months, and only 4 percent have taken more than four months of lump sum holiday.

## 4.3 Analyzing the influence of lump sum holidays on career growth

For the question, "If you have taken lump sum holidays for family responsibilities, to what degree do you feel it has harmed your chances of career advancement (Promotion)?" Table 3 presents the survey results regarding the impact of lump sum holidays on career growth:



**Table 3: Degree of harmed career advancement due to lump sum holidays**

Degree of Influence	Frequency	Percentage
No effect	153	53%
Slight effect	127	44%
Significant effect	8	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source: Survey 2024*

Table 3 shows that 53 percent responded that their lump sum holidays taken for family responsibility had not harmed their career advancement, 44 percent responded that it had harmed slightly, and 3 percent responded that such holidays had affected their career advancement significantly. Overall, it shows that organizations have considered women accountants' holidays taken for family responsibility as a gender necessity phenomenon.

#### 4.4 Analyzing Overtime Work

Further, for the question: "Do you work during office hours?" the answer was in the "Never," "Sometimes," and "Most of the time" patterns. The responses found are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: Overtime load of women accountants**

Overtime load	Frequency	Percentage
Never	137	48%
Sometimes	98	34%
Most of the time	53	18%
<b>Total</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source: Survey 2024*

Table 4 indicates that out of 288 respondents, 137 (48%) responded that they had not worked overtime, 98 (34%) responded that they have to work overtime sometimes, and 53 (18%) responded that they have to work overtime most of the time.

#### 4.5 Analyzing Household and Family Responsibility

Five statements were used to measure household and family responsibility. All participants rated the questions on a five-point Likert scale as appropriate for their organization. The Likert scale is Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). Table 5 presents the mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum values calculated from the rates given by the respondents.

**Table 5: Descriptive statistics on access to professional development (N=288)**

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
1. Sometimes, I have left work responsibility for my household responsibilities.	3.87	1.13	1	5
2. I have only sometimes gone to the workplace to do my household work.	4.09	0.92	2	5
3. I am the owner who must take responsibility for my family.	4.37	0.86	3	5
4. I have been unable to take responsibility at my workstation due to my overloaded family responsibilities.	3.41	1.02	1	5
5. For me, balancing work with my life is challenging.	3.53	1.31	1	5
<b>Aggregate</b>	<b>3.85</b>	<b>0.96</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>

*Source: Survey 2024 and authors' calculation.*

Table 5 shows that the respondents have taken their household and family responsibilities seriously, as the mean is higher than 3 (average) in each statement. The average household and family responsibility value is 3.85, meaning the participants have taken a high degree of family and household responsibility.

4.6 Analyzing Access to Professional Development

Five statements were used to measure access to professional development. These five statements relate to decision-making authority, equal opportunity, access to high and challenging work, skill development opportunities, and other professional development opportunities. All participants rated the questions on a five-point Likert scale as appropriate for their organization. The Likert scale is Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). Table 5 shows the mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum values calculated from the rates given by the respondents.

Table 5: Descriptive statistics on access to professional development (N=288)

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
1. I am provided with decision-making authority in my organization.	3.68	1.04	1	5
2. I am assigned all jobs equal to a male colleague.	3.19	1.09	1	5
3. I have access to high-profile and challenging work.	3.56	1.16	1	5
4. I get access to learn all sorts of skills available in the field.	3.82	1.07	1	5
5. The organization provides ample opportunity for my professional development	3.25	1.21	1	5
Aggregate	3.58	0.93	1	5

Source: Survey 2024 and authors' calculation.

Table 5 shows that the respondents have decision-making power, have been assigned all jobs equal to male colleagues, and have access to high-profile and challenging work, as the mean is higher than 3 (average) in each statement. The average access to professional development value is 3.48, meaning the participants have moderate access to professional development.

#### 4.7 Analyzing Gender Discrimination

To measure organizational culture and attitude, the five statements related to respect and equal pay, favor in the work environment, underestimating the women's movement, and understanding the importance of women accountants' working lives. All participants rated the questions on a five-point Likert scale as appropriate for their organization. The Likert scale is Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1): the mean, standard deviation, and minimum and maximum values calculated from the rates given by the respondents. Table 6 shows discrimination against female accountants in their organizations.

**Table 6: Descriptive statistics on gender discrimination (N=288)**

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min.	Max.
1. Women and men do not receive equal respect in my organization.	4.14	1.02	1	5
2. There is pay inequality between male and female accountants holding the same position.	2.43	0.95	1	5
3. The organization does not favor female employees in the work environment.	3.33	1.01	1	5
4. There is a perception in the organization that women should be in a lower position.	3.29	1.26	1	5
5. It is perceived that women might leave the workplace to focus on raising a family.	3.48	1.08	1	5
<b>Aggregate discrimination</b>	<b>3.29</b>	<b>0.87</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>

*Source: Survey 2024 and authors' calculation.*

Table 6 shows that the responses on perceived weakness are neutral, as the aggregate discrimination score is 3.29. However, female respondents felt respect for discrimination in the organization, with a respondent score of 4.14. There is no discrimination between male and female accountants regarding the pay scale (the average score is 2.43). Regarding the favoring of women, the unfavorable perception towards women in higher positions and the perception that women do not care about their jobs to take care of their families have an average score of neutral responses.

#### 4.8 Analyzing Perceived Weakness

Five statements on a five-point Likert scale were used to identify women's perceived weaknesses. Table 7 shows descriptive statistics that treat women differently as weaknesses.

**Table 7: Descriptive statistics on perceived weakness (N = 288)**

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min	Max
1. My employer assumes that women are less inclined to take on challenging responsibilities.	2.4	1.16	1	5
2. My employer believes women lack the strength and rationality to be effective leaders.	2.31	0.96	1	5
3. My employer views women as emotionally and intellectually unfit for higher positions.	2.35	0.85	1	5
4. My employer perceives that women's careers are not essential as they are not the primary family provider	2.13	0.91	1	5
5. There is an old belief in my organization that women lack self-confidence.	2.48	0.99	1	5
<b>Aggregate</b>	<b>2.33</b>	<b>0.81</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>

*Source: Survey 2024 and authors' calculation.*

Table 7 shows that the difference in women is not considered a weakness since the aggregate mean is less than 3 (average value).

#### 4.9 Analyzing Organizational Culture and Attitude

The study measured organizational culture and attitude using six statements. Table 8 presents the results of the responses measured in the Likert scale.

**Table 8: Responses on organizational culture and attitude (N=288)**

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min.	Max.
1. My organization prefers male accountants in a decision-making role.	2.51	1.01	1	5
2. As a woman, I generally encounter challenges in the workplace compared to males.	3.30	1.08	1	5
3. I constantly encounter the perception that women need to be sufficiently competitive and ambitious.	2.63	1.04	1	5
4. Male employees dominate the influential positions in my organization.	2.94	1.11	1	5
5. The organization does not give any preferences on women's specific job nature.	2.80	1.19	1	5
6. My organization prefers male accountants in a decision-making role	2.88	1.25	1	5
<b>Aggregate</b>	<b>2.84</b>	<b>0.69</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>

*Source: Survey 2024 and authors' calculation.*

Table 8 shows that women need to experience a supportive work environment in the Nepalese organization. The aggregate scale score is less than the average value (3), indicating a statement that signifies a non-supportive environment was not agreed upon.

#### 4.10 Measuring Mentorship of Women Accountants

The study assessed the mentorship of women accountants using six statements rated on a Likert scale, with the following options: strongly agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). Table 9 shows the responses of female accountants regarding organizations' exclusion of them from group work.

**Table 9: Descriptive statistics of mentorship (N = 288)**

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min.	Max.
1. I get regular encouragement from my seniors and co-workers.	2.23	1.14	1	5
2. My seniors pay adequate time to share their knowledge with me.	3.13	1.19	1	5
3. My boss believes that I am the most diminutive performer than male accountants.	3.41	1.16	1	5
4. I receive guidelines and feedback on the work.	2.82	1.03	1	5
5. I have received a career council from my seniors.	3.18	1.18	1	5
<b>Aggregate</b>	<b>3.04</b>	<b>0.68</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>

*Source: Survey 2024 and authors' calculation.*

Table 9 shows that the respondents receive an average mentorship from the organization, with a mean of approximately 3 (mid-range value). Analyzing the mean of each question and the average score, it is clear that women responded with neutral opinions on whether they receive mentorship from the organization.



#### 4.11 Measuring Career Advancement of Women Accountants

The study has used five statements to measure the status of women's upward mobility. Respondents graded the statements using a Likert scale: Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). Table 10 describes the movement of women accountants within organizations.

**Table 10: Results of rating career advancement of women accountants**

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min.	Max.
1. There are ample opportunities in my organization for advancement into senior positions.	3.37	1.12	1	5
2. I am in the expected position in the expected period.	3.23	1.16	1	5
3. The number of women advancing through the hierarchy and attaining senior positions in my company is increasing.	3.61	0.87	1	5
4. The performance appraisal and incentive systems are favorable to women in my organization	3.30	1.18	1	5
5. In my organization, women do not sacrifice to get and remain in senior positions.	3.40	1.29	1	5
<b>Aggregate</b>	<b>3.37</b>	<b>0.80</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>

*Source: Survey 2024 and authors 'calculation.*

Table 10 shows that female accountants have mobility opportunities in organizations where respondents rated on average above 3 (mean value). In other words, women have sufficient chances of upward mobility in Nepalese organizations.

#### 4.12 Correlation Test between Dependent and Independent Variable

Table 11 presents the correlations between the career advancement of female accountants and different independent variables. The study used a nonparametric correlation test (Mann-Whitney test) for work hours and a Person Correlation test for other independent variables.

**Table 11: Correlation test between the independent variables and upward mobility of female accountants.**

Pearson correlation parametric test between career advancement and other dependent variables						
	HAFR	APDV	GDCR	WKNS	OCAA	MTRS
Corr. Coef.	-0.24	0.59	-0.63	-0.37	-0.51	0.21
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.172	0.000	0.000	0.041	0.014	0.104
N	288	288	288	288	288	288

HAFR = Household and family responsibility  
 APDV = access to professional development  
 GDCR = Gender discrimination  
 WKNS = Perceived weakness  
 OCAA = Organizational culture and attitude  
 MTRS = Mentorship

*Source: Survey 2024 and authors' calculation.*

Table 11 shows that the relationship between women accountants' career advancement and household and family responsibility is negative but insignificant. Similarly, the relationship between gender discrimination, perceived weaknesses, organizational culture, and attitudes toward women accountant's career advancement is negative and significant. Further, the relationship between access

to professional development and women accountants' career advancement is positive and significant. In contrast, the relationship between mentorship and women accountants' career advancement is positive but insignificant.

#### 4.13 Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis is utilized to assess the influence of various factors on the career advancement of women accountants. Table 12 presents the regression coefficient of the various factors affecting the career advancement of female accountants and different independent variables.

**Table 12: The result of regression coefficients of career advancement is based on various factors.**

Variables	Coefficients	Sig.
HAFR	-0.242	0.189
APDV	0.536	0.000
GDCR	-0.593	0.000
WKNS	-0.354	0.047
OCAA	-0.491	0.027
MTRS	0.142	0.163
(Constant)	1.032	0.000
R-square	0.432	
F-values	87.45	
p-values	0.000	

The correlation between household and family responsibility and career advancement is negative but insignificant at a 5 percent level. Therefore, no significant relationship exists between household and family responsibilities and the career advancement of women accountants, which aligns with the findings

of Dorcas et al. (2014). However, this is not consistent with Albrecht et al. (2018), Sheridan and Adapa (2022), Ramdhony et al. (2013), Windsor and Auyeung (2006), Cimirotić et al. (2017), Anderson-Gough et al. (2005), Mzenzi (2023), and Galizzi, McBride and Benderdetta (2024), whose findings were increasing household and family responsibility influence negatively to women accountants' career advancement. Similarly, mentorship has a positive but insignificant relationship with the career advancement of women accountants in Kathmandu. This result also does not match that of many previous studies, such as Cohen et al. (2020), Tharenou (2005), Muthui (2018), Hinson, Otiyeku, and Amidu (2006), Ebirim et al. (2024), and Ayoola-akingobi (2024), whose result suggest that mentorship affect women accountants career advancement positively and significantly.

Unlike this, the relationships of career advancement of women accountants with access to professional development are positive and significant, indicating this finding is similar to Ebirim et al. (2024), Muthui (2018), Zainal-Abidin et al. (2008), Dambrin and Lambert (2008), Sichamba, Matafwali and Kawimbe (2024), but not similar with the result of Sahumani et al. (2023). However, gender discrimination, perceived weakness, and unfavorable organizational culture are negative and significant at a 5 percent significant level. The finding that gender discrimination has a significant negative impact on women accountants' career advancement aligns with the conclusions of Hewlett et al., 2011, Ogunniyi et al. (2019), Cohen et al. (2020), Galizzi, McBride and Benderdetta (2024), Ayoola-akingobi (2024), but not consistent with the findings of Kunze (2011) and Rufino (2024), whose findings was no significant effect of gender discrimination on women accountants' career advancement. The perceived weakness, identified in this study as having a significant negative effect on the career advancement of women accountants, aligns with the findings of Anderson-Gough et al. (2005), Mzenzi (2023), Hinson, Otiyeku, and Amidu (2006). Similarly, another finding of this study that non-supportive organizational culture significantly and negatively influences women accountants' career advancement is similar to the findings of Hunt et al. (2018), Zainal-Abidin et al. (2008), Hinson, Otiyeku, and Amidu (2006), Cohen et al. (2020),

Schumann et al. (2023), Ayoola-akingobi (2024). Hence, access to professional development, gender discrimination, perceived weakness, organizational culture, and attitude negatively correlate with female accountants' career growth in Nepalese organizations.

## **5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

This study investigated the factors affecting the career advancement of women accountants in the Kathmandu Valley through a survey conducted with 288 participants. The study utilized regression analysis to evaluate the influence of six independent variables on career advancement, the dependent variables. The findings reveal that access to professional development (APDV) significantly predicts career advancement, with a coefficient of 0.536, significant at 0.01. This suggests that opportunities for professional development are crucial in advancing the careers of women accountants. Conversely, the study found gender discrimination (GDCR), Perceived weaknesses (WKNS), and organizational culture and attitude (OCAA) to negatively impact career advancement, with coefficients of -0.593, -0.354, and -0.491, respectively, all significant at 0.05 level. However, household and family responsibilities (HAFR) and mentorship (MTRS) did not significantly affect career advancement statistically.

Female accountants can advance in their careers if given higher access to professional development. Gender discrimination challenges women accountants to excel in their career ladder. This means that if women are equally treated as their male co-workers, they can perform better and excel on the career ladder. Similarly, when executives look at women accountants differently, perceive weak, consider them diminutive performers, and give them less responsibility due to their physical and emotional differences, which affects women's career advancement. However, family and household responsibilities do not challenge the women accountants' career growth as women can manage work and family. Hence, the study concludes that female accountants with access to professional development are not judged as weak performers and do not face discrimination.

Moreover, provided a positive organizational culture and attitude and work in mentorship environments, they can excel in their career advancement. Therefore, it is necessary to eliminate gender discrimination, negative attitudes towards women regarding their ability, and a culture that creates obstacles in women's career growth to assist female accountants in fostering their career advancement.

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