

# Role of Women in Decision Making in Household Chores

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## Abstract

*The paper aims to explore decision making role of women in household chores that is cooking, dressing and caring of the children and other household activities. This study applied the semi-structured interview with case studies and observation method for the exploration of grounded realities of decision-making practices at household chores. Upon examination of everyday work situation, it becomes clear that the status of women in household chores is meaningful in Nepalese society; however there have been tremendous changes over the generations due to the several socio-political and economic shifts. Empirical observation and informations from the field study prevailed that role of decision making of women seems to be dominant in cooking, washing and cleaning at the same time their roles in political participation, income and purchasing activities also to be peripheral. The role of women in the household's level have been transforming along with their age and marital status; for instance, teenager women prefer official jobs whereas, mature women discourage official jobs and public activities. The women, who engaged in the public jobs equally contributes in the household chores. The concerned authorities have not paid due attention to the plight of these simple hard working labourers who has made significant contribution towards increasing gross national product and also earning for their family.*

**Key Words:** Decision making, Household Chores, Rites and Rituals.

## INTRODUCTION

The cultural diversity of Nepal has enriched by the caste, ethnicity, language and religion. However; such diversity equally foster the inequality, deprivation and excluded the one group of people to another over the many generations. This paper charted the views on gender based differences in terms of access and ownership with particular emphasis on decision-making practices at the household level. Nepal government were formulated several policies since 1950 to empower the Women in order to includ Women in the

main stream of development, such policies brings the minimal changes in the decision-making process both in private and public spheres. This study was designed to explore Women's role in the household chores in Nepalese society. The dominance of male upon the female in the decision-making process in the major household's activities such as purchasing land and houses and decision of marriage of their children. Nepalese society looks at the Women from working outside and high pitch voice of decision with the pale eyes. But this social tradition is gradually changing in the present time due to education, Women's empowerment projects and inclusiveness of Women in the different areas. Women have broken the shackle of household works with appropriate decision making role and have taken up job outside the boundaries of their houses. The main goal of the paper is to explore the decision-making practices of Women in the household chores and changing status in the same area.

Nepal is a country with poor economy and even the country is underdeveloped in its every sector. To fulfill the goals of development, a country requires adequate mobilization of its Human resources. Human resources refer to skill, knowledge and capabilities of the people in increasing the Production of goods and services. Thus, the country requires proper planning and Utilization of Human resources for its Economic development. The thrust of development in Nepal is the Elimination of poverty and the fulfillment of basic minimum needs (Shrestha; 1983:7).

It is evident that development of a country could not be possible without the equal participation of men and women. It is, therefore, accepted that women's socio-economic status equally plays a vital role in the development activities of a nation. It is generally accepted view among development Workers today, both at governmental and nongovernmental levels that development cannot be defined merely in terms of Economic growth and a rise in the gross national Products (Mokopadhays; 1984:8)

Women and their needs are desirable to be the parts of development in order to have positive effects in the community. Both men and women share equal rights relating to all stages of marriage and family in Nepal, including guardianship and property, tradition gender roles still apply, with Women in the role of housekeeper and caretaker of the children (CEDAW, 2010). There are no provisions for a woman to require obeying her husband (World

Bank, 2015). Similarly, there are no provisions about discriminating against a Women's right to be recognized as head of the household, and regarding a woman's right to choose where to live (Word Bank 2015). Traditionally, the women leave their family home when they are married, and live under the authority of their in laws (SAATHI, 2011). Thirty years old Sharmila Shahi (pseudonym) said;

*The life of Nepali Women confined within the four walls of house. They have marginal role in the decision-making process mainly to choose the school for the children, purchasing and selling physical family assets like land and houses. Women have painful and hard life. They have multiple roles at home like cooking, feeding, gardening and caring their children. However, they do not have authorities even to choose their life partner and career. The female members like mother, mother-in-law and sister-in-law nurture them mainly to perform households' responsibilities in their everyday life.*

In Nepal, Women constitute 51% of the Total population (CBS 2011). They have low level of living standards in terms of education, health and life expectancy due to the problem of proper mobilization of Human resources, access and ownership over the resources. Having self-standing of their own they even can't go on with their own decision. Every family are usually guided by male members. Even some educated women can't perform their duties without the permission of their husbands and male members of their families due to the hegemony and dominance of the male members in their family. Employment of women is essential to attain equality of sexes and also to make life easier and smoother and also to excel development of every sector. Women have job inside the home and other different sectors in governmental and nongovernmental organization.

The study found that there is an improvement in gender relations and poverty alleviation and there is increased women involvement in decision making, control over household resources and have freedom to use their spare time (Makombe et. al., 1999). Underdeveloped countries like Nepal face various problems like political instability, corruptions, lack of accountability and gender inequality; which often been segregated and deprived the minority groups in terms of caste, class and gender. Such a problem effects on gender biasness which make gender discrimination

as well. They are radically suffered from the changes occur in society. Now a day, certain form of social transformation has been seen in the life of women; for instance, women participation in the politics, government jobs, business and teaching field. Political transformation in the state also broaden the responsibilities of women is the constitutions of 1990 ensure the reservation seats for women, The constitution 2015, inserted the inclusion policies for women beside the right to women in the article 38 that insure equal right to lineage, right to safe motherhood and re Productive health, right to participate in the state structure and protect them from physical, mental, sexual and psychological violence. Aftermath of political shift in 1950, there would be little change in the decision-making power of women and their participation in the public sectors. Women's involvement has seen in both public and private sectors with different capacities such as businessman, teacher, government officer and bankers. Thirty years old Sita Tamang (pseudonym) shared her story of social change as;

*My mother spent hard life in the village. She worked in the farm, collected firewood and fodder, tilled the farm and husked the rice from the early in the morning to late night; besides the rearing and caring us. However, I have several privileges due to the educational opportunities. I am working in the school, participated in the political activities, member of the saving and credit program. In addition, I have major role in the social welfare activities and community development in my own society. There is no obstruction from my husband and other male members of my family particularly in my choices and interest. We have mutual understanding and broad discussion regarding children's education, purchasing goods and physical assets.*

In Nepal there is gender based prejudice in the different walks of their life. Women are supposed to reinforce with patriarchal system and the legal system. They got the marriage which has a great importance in their life. The marriage event determines the way of their life. The early marriage generally depreciates the women's life. There is no provision to select the mate partners by their wish that is less freedom in their life. State policy tries to protect and preserve the women's right for the development of women. Women play the vital roles on the contribution of economic activities which is not measured in the society because of traditional system and role of women. Some data provides us about the poor situation of Nepalese women on various sectors

like in health, education, participation, income generation, self-confidence, decision-making, access to policymaking, and human rights.

### **Objectives**

The objective of this study are:

- To find out the role of women in decision making on household chore.
- To find out the changing status of women in decision making on household chore.

### **Methods and Materials**

The article of role of women in decision making in the household chore is based on explanatory. It uses primary and secondary data. Case studies are employed to explore the empirical informations. This study is based on qualitative nature of data which most of the obtained information are analyzed in text in an organized way.

### **Participation in Decision making in household chores**

In the realization of household chores, the decision making is taken on the basis of number of factors which are, purchasing of different items from the market place of daily needs, such as, toiletries, towels, pillow covers, bed covers, and other items, which are utilized within the household. Another important factor is, purchasing of food items and preparation of meals. With regards to the purchasing of food items and preparation of meals, women need to make decisions in accordance to the needs and requirements of other individuals. Food and nutrition security at the household level is dependent mainly upon the efforts of Women to take care of their health care requirements (Baba, Zain, Idris, & Sanni, 2015).

Financial resources are regarded to be of utmost significance on the basis of which, the implementation of all tasks and activities takes place. These are required in the implementation of household responsibilities, making purchases, travelling, learning and education and in bringing about improvements in the overall livelihoods of the individuals. The participation of women in the making of decisions regarding finances was observed to a lesser extent, primarily within the households, where they are merely home-makers (Baliyan, 2014).

Leadership is regarded as the form of dominance, which is built by personal capability, which is able to invite or encourage the other individuals to perform

something on the basis of the acceptance of the group of individuals. Leadership proposes particular competence for a specific condition (Lantara, 2015).

Multi-roles of women in the domestic sectors and private sectors have had a significant impact upon the behaviour, structure, function and socio-cultural factors upon the household (Rosada, & Nurliani, 2016). Theorists describe the successful performance of the children in the Management of the household. Hence, measures and approaches those women put into practice to provide training to their children has an imperative influence of the multi-roles of women. Furthermore, self-care tasks are regarded as fundamental experiences as building the feelings of competence (Riggio et. al. 2010). This concept, mainly focuses upon the areas, in which children are trained from the childhood. When children are provided adequate knowledge in terms of implementation of household responsibilities, then they are able to alleviate the pressure upon their mothers to some extent.

### **Women's marginality in religious performance**

In Nepali society, male hegemony has seen in the religious performance in their every day practices. Male plays the key role regarding worship and its arrangement items whereas, female members have only supportive role to their male counterparts. Women are prohibited in the different rites and rituals because they have been treated as impure, profane and danger. The cultural faiths and values enforced them to play supportive role in *puja* (worship) in the different rites and rituals i. e. birth, marriage and death. In Hindu society, male have assigned to perform the ritual duties in their everyday life, for instance, male have right to perform *sraadhyā* (a ritual performance to pay homage to the dead ancestors), offering *pinda* (small ball of grinded rice in order to offer the dead ancestors) and worship the *kul deveta* (home deities). They have major role in decision-making regarding the expenditure, fix the ritual calendar, and offering, *daan* (donation) to the Brahmin, poor and destitute people. The cultural notion treated women as impure, which limited their role and responsibilities in the religious activities at home. Women have been prohibited in the auspicious rituals, if they are in menstruated and child delivery period. The household level decision-making practices is not only influenced by the patriarchal structure of the society but also equally influenced by caste based socialization; for instance, male Brahmin have rights to give the decision to fix the date of ritual, role of match maker and items to be needed in the *puja* in the concern home of their clients. The religious values seem to be stronger and powerful

to guide the decision-making practices of Women. The religious values limit the power of women, which unfairly treated to the women in their private domain. Since their early age they have been nurturing in accordance with religious faiths and ideologies that creates the fear from the divine power of god. Women hardly breach the embedded social and cultural rules, which they have been following through the generations.

## Conclusion

In Nepal, whether women are home-makers or self-employed or are employed in organizations and irrespective of their categories and backgrounds, they need to carry out the household chores. Even when they are not educated, still they are trained in the implementation of household responsibilities. In the household responsibilities, they need to participate in decision making process in the different aspects such as domestic affairs, income and expenditure, participate in rites, rituals and community development.

Women of Nepali society gives the major decisions on household chores such as cleaning, washing, preparation of meals, paying bills, purchase of items, health care, caring of siblings and elderly members. This study concluded that women have either peripheral or marginal role in the household level decision-making process. The decision-making role of women gradually changes along with the policy transformation in the state. Their participation is seen in the politics, bureaucracy and community development, which empower them and foster their decision-making power beyond the boundary of households. I have found that people have strong disposition towards socio-cultural tradition, religious faiths and values that hinder the women participation in the different types of the household level decision-making practices. The patriarchal structure creates the male supremacy in the different sectors of decision-making process, which creates the obstacles in the women's engagement in the different fields in their everyday life.

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