

**WOMEN AND DECISION MAKING: A HOUSEHOLD LEVEL
STUDY OF MUSHAR COMMUNITY, JANA KOPURDHAM SUB
METROPOLITAN CITY-1, DHANUSHA**

A Thesis

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August, 2024

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this master degree thesis entitled “Women and Decision Making: A Household Level Study of Mushar Community, Janakpurdham Sub-metropolitan city-1, Dhanusha”, submitted to the Central Department of Sociology Tribhuvan University is an entirely original work prepared under the supervision of my supervisor. I have made due acknowledgment to all the sources and information borrowed from different sources in the course of writing this thesis. The result presented in this thesis had not been presented in this thesis has not been presented or submitted anywhere else for the award of any degree or for any other reasons. Not part of the content of this thesis has ever been published in any form before. I shall be solely responsible if any evidence is found against my declaration.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis entitled "Women and Decision Making: A Household Level Study of Mushar Community, Janakpurdham Sub metropolitan city-1, Dhanusha. Although females cover more than half of the country's population, the patriarchal ideology holds a rigid and discriminated concept about the roles of women in decision making. The women are confined to the secondary role and are not liberal in terms of the mobility and their access to decision making even within their households. So, this topic was selected to analyze the role of women in household decision making in the Janakpurdham Sub metropolitan city-1, Dhanusha.

The specific objective of the study was to examine the existing socio-economic status of women in the study area and to realize the role of women in household decision making. Descriptive research design was used in this study. 87 respondents were selected, all female were chosen by the use of purposive sampling method. The extent of Mushar women's participation in household decision-making is significantly influenced by a combination of factors including their literacy levels, early marriage, experiences of food scarcity, malnutrition, and the heavy domestic responsibility on their shoulder. The study was basically based on field survey. Method of primary data collection was household survey, observation and key information interview. Simple statistical tools like percentage were used for quantitative data analysis. It was found in the study that women are not involved in decision making in household and those who participate said that their participation is only moderate. Male have control over all the important matters within and outside the household. Women are only involved in such decisions which have no economic values and assigned as their role within the household. On the basis of the finding of the study, different recommendations have been suggested to government, political parties, NGOs/ INGOs/ CBOs and local people to increase women's participation in household decision making process. The educational status of respondents is not good. Property rights for women are limited, especially among the Mushar community. Due to a lack of higher education, Mushar women predominantly engage in agriculture, and they possess less decision-making authority compared to their male counterparts. While Mushar women exhibit significant decision-making power in certain activities, men generally hold superior roles in most variables. Household decision-

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Decision-making occurs within a complex process, which is influenced by the form and content of gender role relations. These decisions take into consideration women's different needs, relative to their reproductive roles, in addition to their political and economic productive roles. Simultaneously, it aims to alter gender roles to foster equality, ensuring a supportive environment for all genders to an equal degree (Subedi, 1997).

Nepal, a developing country in Southeast Asia, has a patriarchal society. Today, women in Nepal face depression, underselling, and exploitation in all areas of society, from domestic affairs to the governmental discussions. This is because of the socio cultural views held by the major portion of the Nepalese population, political forces that maintain these views, economic constraints placed upon women, and limited educational opportunities. These factors, combined, force women to live in continuous suppression to men. In some rural communities, women are not even allowed to move freely outside the household. Additionally, in all communities in Nepal, heredity is traced through the father, and inheritance is passed strictly to son from father. Nepal is a land of diversity, which is marked by its multiethnic, multi-religious, and multilingual nature. The 2078 census listed 123 different languages and 125 castes. According to the 2021 census, women make up 53.91 percent of the total population (CBS, 2024).

In the Janakpurdhham Submetro politancity-1, socio-economic status of females significantly affects their participation in society. However, despite their capability and potential, they are not respected if they have a low socio-economic status. As females are less educated, they possess low decision-making power. Those women who have higher education and a sound economic background have greater chances in decision-making. It is essential for development that everyone enjoy equal opportunities in policy-making, plan formulation, program employment, as well as in monitoring and evaluation regardless of their gender. But women are typically excluded from the decision-making process in development participation. Women suffer from exploitation and injustice. To empower women, socio-cultural values, norms, and practices must be positively changed. Additionally, the decision-

making process should be addressed to launch various formal as well as informal programs. Policies and programs should be properly formulated and applied to address the problems of women. This study will highlight the situation of married women's participation in household decision-making.

In most of the Nepalese families, compared to men women have significantly less control over family resources. Many women spend their time on non-remunerative tasks such as washing, cooking, cleaning, and childcare. These activities, though crucial, are not valued economically and are often regarded merely as the obligatory duties of women (Gurung, 2018).

The word participation means to take part in activity or to be participated in any activities in the same way decision means to reach in the conclusion before doing anything. House-hold decision means to reach in the conclusion to do any work for the welfare and the progress of the family members. The society is made by the combination of different numbers of houses. Every house-hold decision making makes great impact in the society (Nayak, 2017).

Socio-cultural, political, economic, and educational factors have led to the suppression of women by men. Despite performing multiple roles in reproduction, household chores, and other productive work, women remain marginalized in many aspects of society. They are often regarded merely as instruments of reproduction.(Pradhan, 2016).

Taking a broader perspective on women's status in household decision-making, it is argued that economic factors directly and indirectly impact their role. Greater economic participation correlates with increased decision-making power for women. Additionally, social and demographic factors, such as having small number of childrens, can lead to higher economic engagement and, consequently, greater decision-making authority for women. (Acharya & Bennett, 1981).

In Nepal, women generally have limited decision-making power, a crucial factor in assessing the relative status of household members. In many households, women remain excluded from the decision-making process. The country continues to grapple with gender-based suppression. For instance, the birth of a daughter is often seen as a bad omen, while the birth of a son is celebrated. There is a prevailing belief that a man who does not have a son will not attain spiritual fulfillment. The saying, “let it take time but let a son be born,” reflects

this sentiment. Despite men's daily worship of goddesses in temples, respect for women within their own homes remains lacking (Shrestha, 2017).

In the Nepali context, despite women comprising over 50% of the population, their roles are largely confined to domestic chores. They bear the brunt of household management, performing more than 50% of the household work. However, their decision-making authority remains significantly limited compared to their male counterparts (Gurung, 2018).

In agriculture and related occupations, females (17.7%) outnumber males (10.4%). However, there are not significant sex differences in other occupations, with 62.9% of females compared to 63.8% of males in paid employment. Nepalese women have limited decision-making power in many aspects of their own lives. About two thirds of women reported having sole or joint decision-making authority over their own healthcare, and just over 60% have input into visits to family or relatives. Only 57% participate in decisions regarding major household purchases. Nearly a quarter (24%) of married women do not participate in any of these three types of decisions. Older women and those from wealthier families are more likely to be involved in all three types of decisions. Compared to less than 30% in Far Western Hill, more than half of women in Mid-western Hill, Central Hill, and Eastern Terai are engaged in all three decision types. (Limbu, 2018).

In Nepal, the number of women engaged in professional fields is quite limited. Although many women study law, few manage to enter the profession. Representation of women in bureaucracy is similarly low; only one woman has ever served as an ambassador, and none have been appointed to the diplomatic corps since 1991. Despite this limited participation in politics, bureaucracy, and the judiciary, women continue to play a significant role in decision-making at the household level. They are involved in decisions related to farm management, domestic expenditures (including food, clothing, and other expenses), children's education, religious and social travel, household maintenance, and capital transactions. Nonetheless, women's decision-making roles appear to have diminished in recent years (Gurung, 2018).

For Nepalese women, independent decision -making is highly restricted. Lack of decision making power has deprived women of the basic elements of a decent life such as food and nutrition, education, skill development, health and family planning. This has ultimately

undermined their access to gainful employment opportunities and participation in professional jobs (DFID, 2016).

Since 1950, Nepal has been implementing five-year development plans. Unfortunately, half of the population—women—were largely ignored in these plans. Only from the sixth plan onward were women considered as partners in development. However, by the end of the eighth plan, the condition and position of women remained unfavorable, and they were still marginalized. In decision-making levels, such as the planning commission and the Government of Nepal, women were completely neglected. As the saying goes, "the wearer knows where the shoe pinches." According to the fifteenth plan, women's issues were given priority, in line with the objectives of the international women's conference (Beijing +5) to create practical plans, increase economic growth, alleviate poverty, and more. Similarly, the three-year plan (2067/68-2069/70) aimed to uplift the status of women, emphasizing that equal participation of women is essential for national development by focusing on their past situations and improving their socio-economic status (www.fesnepal.org).

In accordance with its international commitments, Nepal has enacted laws guaranteeing equal rights for women. All forms of exploitation and discrimination against women have been constitutionally and legally prohibited. However, the problem lies in the implementation of these laws. The crux of the problem is mass ignorance; most people, especially in rural areas, are unaware of their rights due to a lack of education. As a result, many women in Nepal continue to suffer exploitation and discrimination. A handful of educated women have benefited in the name of empowerment and rights of Nepalese women, but the majority remain disadvantaged.

The socially/culturally set son preference and dowry system contribute to the marginalization of women. The belief that women can attain salvation only through sons leads to early marriages and pressures couples to have multiple sons. This results in high rates of child marriage and adolescent pregnancies. The heavy burden of early pregnancy and childcare severely restricts women's access to education and confines their roles to those of wives and mothers. Additionally, these factors impede women's participation in decision-making processes.

Women in Nepal face exclusion socially, economically, and politically. While a few women hold high-profile positions, their voices are rarely heard, and their numbers remain minimal.

Despite their significant participation in the 2006 people's movement and other freedom movements, women's involvement in decision-making across all sectors remains low. Historically, women leaders in Nepal have made substantial contributions to establishing democratic processes. Notable women leaders who have challenged conventional traditions include Mangaladevi Singh, Sailaja Acharya, Sahana Pradhan, and Asta Laxmi Shakya. During the People's Movement II, leaders like Chhaya Devi Parajuli and others also played important roles (CEDAW, 2017).

Women's participation in the April 2006 people's movement was notably high and very encouraging. Although the interim constitution ensured 33% participation of women, this mandate was not upheld during the candidacy process, despite the constitution's emphasis on proportional representation. Political parties largely overlooked women's contributions during the movement when forming the constitution. The current representation reflects this oversight, with male ministers dominating at 83.33% compared to just 16.67% female representation. Out of the six parties in the government, none have achieved equal representation of women ministers. (Pandit, 2017).

To address these issues, women and women's organizations have been strongly advocating for maximum participation at all levels of state mechanisms. As a result, the recent constitution of Nepal has legally ensured almost 33% representation for women. This is a significant achievement in the history of Nepal and the entire South Asian region. However, considering that Nepalese women make up more than 50% of the population, this result should not be seen as the ultimate goal. Women must continue to strive and fight for 50% proportional and meaningful representation at all levels.

There is a need for women to struggle to break the patriarchal mindset. The concept of women as the weaker sex and subordinate to men can be changed through their involvement in decision-making levels and working in areas traditionally dominated by men (Saith, 2018).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The condition of women in Mushar is more critical. In general, they are housewives. Few women help their husbands as laborers, and a few work as maid servants in the house of their landlords. The condition of Mushar women in Nepal can vary, but generally, they face some

social, economic and cultural challenges, such as poor access to education and employment opportunities, and traditional gender roles.

However, there have been efforts to improve their status through education and awareness programs.

The extent of Mushar women's involvement in household decision-making is notably affected by several factors, including their literacy levels, early marriages, experiences of food scarcity, malnutrition, and the extensive domestic duties they manage. These duties includes a range of activities, from crafting cow dung cakes and planting paddy to harvesting crops and engaging in threshing and other agricultural tasks. (Verma, 1991).

The role of Mushar women in household decision-making is highly affected by their literacy, early marriage, food deficiency, malnutrition and other various domestic works, as making cow dung cake, planting paddy, harvesting crops and threshing and so forth. The condition of Mushar women are more critical.

With modernization and urbanization, the traditional joint family system is increasingly shifting towards the nuclear family model. As lineage, family, and ancestral ties give way to professions as key identifiers, life is becoming more complex. Men's income alone is often insufficient to meet all needs. In this context, women's involvement in economic activities has become crucial. Their increased social participation is not just a trend but a necessity for national development. Greater involvement of women in both economic and social sectors will accelerate development efforts and improve the overall standard of living for everyone (Pradhan, 2016).

In Nepal, the lower socio-economic status of women correlates with limited access to household decision-making (Gurung, 2018). This study aims to highlight the current situation of married women in household decision-making, offering guidelines for other researchers to conduct further studies on this issue and contribute to enhancing women's participation in the decision-making process.

Many researchers have researched on women status of different community of Nepal. Similarly, study on gender perspective in Janakpurdham Submetropolitancity-1 has been done. But the study on the women and decision making in Mushar community in

Janakpurdham Submetropolitancy-1 is less conducted from socio-economic perspective. Though women's role in decision making play vital role in every community and society but they are not given that much importance in Mushar community as other community get. Keeping this in mind researcher has decided to study on women and decision in household level of Mushar community in Janakpurdham Submetropolitancy-1 in order to find out the actual socio-economic status and to find out the actual situation of decision making condition such as their need and difficulties. So, this study will be fruitful to those interested person parties scholars, professor, students, and government for academically as well as policy perspective.

In male-dominated communities like Mushar, women face socioeconomic disadvantages. Nepal, with a large number of villages, often sees Nepalese women deprived of their rights to education, health, and economic opportunities, especially in rural and marginalized communities like Mushar. Women bear the brunt of age-old oppression entrenched in customs, social norms, and discriminatory practices. The situation for women in this area is dire, as they lack autonomy even in personal matters. Women's decision-making is marginalized within the Mushar community, leaving them excluded from crucial decision-making processes. Given opportunities, women could contribute significantly to the nation's development.

Most Nepalese women experience exploitation, domination, suppression, and discrimination by their male counterparts. Although men and women are legally equal under the constitution, women continue to face increasing instances of injustice in real life (Dhital, 2017). Women engage in a range of activities, including productive, reproductive, and community roles. The reproductive role encompasses childbearing, child-rearing, and domestic tasks. The productive role involves work that is compensated in cash or kind (Gurung, 2018).

Nepalese women are disadvantaged and underprivileged in terms of their socioeconomic standing compared to male. However, the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" has celebrated over half a century, alongside the global push for "Gender Equity." Despite this, Nepalese women, who make up more than half of the population, remain largely confined within their homes. For example, women's life expectancy increased from 61.5 years in 2001 to 69.5 years in 2011, eventually surpassing the life expectancy of men, which

stands at 60.5 years. This trend reflects a broader global pattern where women tend to live longer than men.(CBS, 2021).

Numerous studies have explored women's status, their involvement in development efforts, and income-generating activities. However, there is a significant gap in reporting the impact of household burdens on women. Women work nearly 25 percent more hours than men, yet their constant workload is not reflected in National Account Estimates. This oversight is largely due to the perception that household work falls outside the economic activity framework, leading to the undervaluation of women's contributions (Limbu, 2018).

There is an urgent need to study women's social, domestic, and national contributions to fully understand their economic impact. A progressive approach advocates for identifying and addressing all forms of women's deprivation in society. Equal decision-making authority, both within and outside the home, is essential. Unfortunately, Nepalese women continue to be marginalized in this regard. This study aims to integrate the significant burden of women's household work into national valuation and recognize it as economic work. Addressing the plight of this substantial segment of the population should be a primary concern (Pandit, 2017).

The condition of women in Janakpurdhham Submetropolitancy-1 is also similar to most of the women in the country. They are lagging behind in every aspect of their lives. Their socio-economic status is sorrowful and miserable because of their low social, economic and legal status. The study on gender role in household decision making activities is very necessary.

Conclusively, socio-economic status of women is taken as the most important indicator for the overall development of nation. To determine the socio-economic status, different writers, scholars and the concerned stakeholders towards the subject matter use different variables. Among them, education, employment status, health status, occupation, involvement in politics and social organizations are the major indicators which reflect the status of women in the society. Reviewing all concerned literature, it was found that more better the indication of above variables the more improved the status of women. In this study, efforts have been made to identify the socio-economic status of women in Janakpurdhham Submetropolitancy-1 using the determinant variables as used by former writer, researchers and scholars. It can be very fruitful to those interested persons, parties, scholars, professors,

students, businessman and government for academic as well as policy perspective. Hope this study will help to others in future in the related field. This study attempts to solve the following problems:

- What is the socio-economic status of women in Mushar Community of Janakpurdham Submetropolitancity-1?
- What is the women's participation in decision making activities in Mushar Community of Janakpurdham Submetropolitancity-1?

1.3 Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to analyze the participation of women of Mushar Community in house-hold decision making of Janakpurdham Submetropolitancity-1, Dhanusha district. The specific objectives are as follows:

- To identify the socio-economic status of women in Mushar Community of Janakpurdham Submetropolitancity-1.
- To find out the women's participation in decision making activities in Mushar Community of Janakpurdham Submetropolitancity-1.

1.4 Significance of the study

This study focuses on women's participation in household decision-making. It aims to explore the socio-economic conditions and decision-making power of women, providing valuable insights for organizations working in this field to assess and enhance women's status in household decision-making through welfare programs. Additionally, it serves as a resource for other researchers interested in further investigating women's roles in household decision-making. This study tries to portray women's decision-making power within households and to uncover their socio-economic status and roles in decision-making within the study area. It promises to be particularly beneficial for individuals and institutions keen on understanding women's influence in household decision-making, as well as for students of research and gender studies.

Women remain a disadvantaged group in our society. A closer examination of daily life reveals the stark disparity between the two pillars of development—men and women—with the latter often rated as weaker, highlighting a deeply unbalanced structure. Evaluating

women's socio-economic characteristics is therefore crucial. Understanding the prospects and challenges related to women is a pressing need, and this study aims to address that need. By identifying real problems and proposing appropriate solutions, this research seeks to contribute meaningfully to the discourse.

Furthermore, this study aims to serve as a reference for national and international economists and sociologists interested in similar research on women. It also provides valuable insights for governmental and non-governmental organizations and agencies, offering a clear understanding of the socio-economic conditions faced by Nepalese women.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

This study is limited only to the selected area i.e. ward no. 1 of JanakpurdhamSub metropolitan city. The study is based on only socio-economic & demographic status and role of women in house-hold decision making. The study is limited due to the barriers of limited time, sufficient data, limited cost and information.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter focuses on the review of available literature regarding the decision-making roles of women and men. Efforts have been made to review past research, publications, and related documents specific to the study area. This part of the research is particularly important because it enriches the researcher's knowledge of the topic, thereby enhancing their ability to conduct comprehensive research..

2.1 Theoretical Review

Feminist theory stands as a prominent sociological theory, that analyzes the status of men and women in society with aim of using that knowledge to enhance women's lives. Feminist theorists also critically examine the diversity among women, exploring intersections of race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality, and age with gender. Patricia Hill Collins, a contemporary sociologist, is renowned throughout the social science field for developing, deploying, and popularizing the concept of intersectionality in her research and theory. At its core, feminist theory prioritizes amplifying women's voices and showcasing the diverse ways in which women have contributed to society. (Silver, 2018).

There are four main types of feminist theory that seek to explain the social differences between men and women:

Gender Differences: This perspective examines how women's positions in, and experiences of, social situations differ from men's. For instance, cultural feminists argue that the distinct values associated with womanhood and femininity as reasons why men and women perceive the social world differently. Other feminist scholars argue that the varying roles assigned to women and men within institutions, including the sexual division of labor within households, explain gender differences. Existential and phenomenological feminists emphasize how women have been marginalized and defined as the "other" in patriarchal societies. Consequently, women are often perceived as objects and are denied opportunities for self-actualization (Nayak, 2017).

Gender Inequality: Gender-inequality theories acknowledge that women's positions in, and experiences of, social situations are different and unequal to men's. Liberal feminists argue that women possess the same capacity as men for moral reasoning and agency, but that patriarchy, particularly the sexist division of labor, has historically prevented women from expressing and practicing this reasoning (Lerner, 2018). Women have been confined to the private sphere of the household and, consequently, have been left without a voice in the public sphere. Even when women enter the public sphere, they are still expected to manage the private sphere, child rearing and taking care of household duties. Liberal feminists highlight that marriage is a site of gender inequality. Married women experience higher levels of stress than both unmarried women and married men as they do not benefit from marriage as men do. According to liberal feminists, the sexual division of labor in both private and public spheres needs to be restructured for women to achieve equality (Saith, 2018).

Gender Oppression: Gender oppression theories go beyond theories of gender inequality and difference by arguing that women are not only different from or unequal to men but are actively subordinated, oppressed, and even abused by men. Power is the central variable in the two main theories of gender oppression: radical feminism and psychoanalytic feminism. Psychoanalytic feminists seek to explain power dynamics between men and women by reformulating Sigmund Freud's theories of the subconscious and unconscious, childhood development and human emotions. These theorists believe that conscious calculation can not fully explain the production and reproduction of patriarchy. On the other hand, radical feminists believe that being a woman is inherently positive, but this is not recognized in patriarchal societies where women are oppressed. They identify physical violence as the foundation of patriarchy but believe that patriarchy can be overthrown if women recognize their own value and strength, confront oppression critically, establish a sisterhood of trust with other women, and form female separatist networks in both public and private spheres (Bennett, 2005).

Structural Oppression: Structural oppression theories argue that women's oppression and inequality stem from capitalism, racism, and patriarchy. Socialist feminists agree with Marx and Engels that due to the capitalist mode of production working class is exploited, but they extend this exploitation to include gender. Intersectionality theorists try to explain oppression and inequality across various factors, including class, race, gender, ethnicity, and age. They emphasize that not all women experience oppression in the same way. For

example, white women and black women face different forms of discrimination in workplace. As a result, different groups of women develop a shared perspective based on "heterogeneous commonality."

For Marxist feminists, social class holds more significance than patriarchy, which they see as an ideology rooted in class exploitation. Women are not considered a "sex class" because the only thing they share is their sex. For example, an upper-class woman has little, if anything, in common with a working-class woman.(Bennett, 2005).

The Mushar community, residing in the Terai region of Nepal, is recognized as the lowest untouchable caste. Their name is derived from a combination of two words, meaning "rat catcher," likely reflecting their historical practice of consuming rodents during times of extreme necessity. Mushars are typically characterized by a shorter stature, with a long, narrow head and prominent nasal features. They believe they are descendants of revered saints and sages known as "Rishis." Although the exact time of their arrival in Nepal is unknown, it is believed that some Mushars migrated from Magadh in India, while others came from Tirhut (Mithila), a region partly in Bihar, India. Consequently, Mushars are divided into two subgroups: "Magadhia Mushar" and "Tirhutiya Mushar." Many within this community bear the surname "Sada."

The plight of Mushar women in Nepal has been a longstanding concern due to their historical marginalization and social exclusion. Predominantly residing in the Terai region, the Mushar community has faced various forms of discrimination, including economic deprivation, limited educational opportunities, and social stigma. The intersection of caste, poverty, and gender exacerbates their vulnerability, making Mushar women among the most disadvantaged groups in society. Historically, Mushars have been relegated to the lowest rungs of the caste hierarchy, leading to systemic discrimination and exclusion. Mushar women frequently find themselves in a cycle of poverty, with restricted access to quality education and healthcare. This lack of education perpetuates their economic dependence and hampers their ability to escape poverty. Additionally, the social stigma associated with being Mushar further complicates their challenges, as they often face discrimination and violence, including sexual exploitation. Consequently, Mushar women are not only economically disadvantaged but also face significant threats to their safety and well-being. Although efforts by the Nepalese government and various non-governmental organizations aim to improve the situation of Mushar women by enhancing access to education, healthcare, and

economic opportunities, much work remains to address the entrenched issues of caste-based discrimination and gender inequality affecting them (Ojha and Phuyal, 2019).

The role of women in various farming activities is crucial not only because of the number engaged but also because of the variety of agricultural activities they perform. Women participated in all farm activities required to grow food grain, vegetables, fruits and live stock farming. The role played by women is significant in the development of the nation, but all these workers by women are considered voluntary (Gautam, 1998). Gender inequality still permeates Nepalese life whereby women lag far behind than men in economic, social and political positions. Women's traditionally disadvantaged status in the areas of education, health and economic participation has restricted their mobility and divide them the basic needs/tools necessary for political participation (Upadhyaya, 1999).

In determining the status of women, several factors are considered, including their educational status, participation in political, social, and economic activities, their position in various professions, and the legal provisions in place. These factors play a crucial role in ensuring women's decision-making power within the family. The more women practice and participate in these sectors, the more they gain their share in the formal working sphere, thereby increasing their influence over society. Unfortunately, Nepalese women have lagged behind in accessing such opportunities, making them a vulnerable section of the population. They often have little or no role in decision-making or consulting processes, whether within the household or in the broader society, as their input is either neglected or deemed unnecessary, a sentiment encapsulated in the Nepali phrase "PothiBaseko."(Uprety, 1999).

Feminism in Nepal is primarily concerned with equity and equality of opportunity. Nepali society is traditionally patriarchal. Feminists in Nepal seek to address this situation. Most women in Nepal are placed below to their husbands and fathers in a social hierarchy.

Feminist theory often focuses on analyzing gender inequality. Themes often explored in feminist theory include discrimination, objectification (especially sexual objectification), oppression, patriarchy, stereotyping, art history and contemporary art, and aesthetics.

In the 1970s feminist standpoint theory emerged. As a feminist critical theory, it focuses on the relationship between the production of knowledge and practices of power. It can be seen as a blend of Marxist feminism, critical theory, and various social scientific disciplines. It

helps to understand and explain the world from the perspectives of marginalized, subordinated, and oppressed women, recognizing them as knowledgeable. It aims to mainstream their knowledge, skills, and experiences. Feminist standpoint theory emphasizes power relations, which are broadly shaped by cultural values and assigned gender roles. In this context, feminist standpoint theory provides a theoretical basis for prioritizing women's knowledge, skills, and experiences over conventional approaches that rely on the perspectives of dominant groups..

2.1.1 Factor Influencing Decision Making in Household

The participation of men and women in household decision-making varies with ethnicity, gender, and country context (Varma, 1992). When discussing decision-making in rural households, both decisions related to home management and those concerning on-farm and off-farm work are considered. Influencing factors include household structure, family size, economic status, education level, gender, ethnicity, culture, and religion. For the purpose of this study, gender and ethnicity have been chosen for closer examination. Education plays a crucial role in the decision-making process within households. In households where women are uneducated, men tend to dominate the decision-making process. Education also contributes to delaying childbearing. Research has shown that in households with illiterate women, men are less likely to share information (Varma, 1992).

In the household structure also influence on decision making process. Decision making process influenced by family size, family number, health condition, family composition, their interest and need, knowledge and skill of the members. Men are generally considered as breadwinner and main decision maker. Sometimes senior women especially mother in-laws can dominate their junior female counterparts (Cleves Mosse, 1993).

2.1.2 Women and Development (WAD)

The WAD (Women and Development) approach to development emerged in the second half of the 1970s. It began with the recognition that most women, about 70-80%, live in rural areas and are involved in subsistence work and self-sustaining farming rather than cash-oriented work. Therefore, the focus should be on recognizing women's current productivity rather than pushing them into the market economy. WAD emphasized the relationship between women and development processes, rather than solely on strategies for their

integration into development. It highlighted that women have always been important economic actors in their societies, and the work they do, both inside and outside the household, is central to the maintenance of those societies. (Moser, 1993).

Assumption of WAD is struggle against the structure of the system in equality between man and women cannot be separate from the struggle of those who are poor and powerless. Women position will only improve, if and when international and national structure becomes more equitable. WID and WAD both tended to focus on the development of income generating activities without taking much into account time burden that such strategies place on women. The labor invested family maintenance, including child bearing and rearing of all the ill and elderly and the like has been considered to belong to the private domain and outside the purview of development. Project aimed at enhancing income generating activities.

Gender and Development (GAD) emerged as an alternative approach in the 1980s, evolving from the earlier approaches to development. The term "gender" was coined by psychologists and adopted by feminists to move away from the biological implications of the word "sex." Gender is a shorthand term that encodes the crucial point that our basic social identities as men and women are socially constructed rather than based on fixed biological characteristics. GAD focuses on the socially constructed differences between men and women and emphasizes the need to address the power dynamics and inequalities that exist in these social constructs. (Moser, 1993).

The gender approach hold that "Gender differences and the experience of difference, are socially and psychologically created and situated they are created relationally and we can not understand the difference apart from these relational construction". Gender is not a simple or single process but highly complex involving both psychological events and socialization, starting almost at birth all discriminatory performance from birth to death are example of gendering people who are born without gendering but sex.

A very simple is of dressing a child, we dress up girl babies with fancy skirts and frock, bangles and ear ring where as for boy babies pant and shirt no ring no bangles, no control over mobility is instead upon. Then we tend to say that they girl by nature love fancy things which are absolutely wrong. People in this society make them love such thing through persistent effort by offering, by dictating, by complementing falsely trading through media.

GAD approach began from a holistic perspective looking at the totality of social organization, economic and political life in order to understand the shaping the particular aspect of society.

GAD is not concerned with only women but with the social construction and social structure of gender and the assignment of specific roles, responsibility and expectation men and to women. GAD does not examine not only sexual division of labor “who has what” and recognize the burden and psychological stress of women and men. It is dynamic approach. It believes that there are always shift in gender relation as men and women bargain, negotiate, act, pullback. It does not focus singularly on the productive or reproductive aspects of women’s and men’s lives to the exclusion of the others. It does focus on productive, reproductive and community aspects of the both gender. Harmonization of social life without domesticating subordinating or marginalizing either gender is the mission of GAD approach. An approach which seek to empower and transform unequal relation between men and women. Unequal relation (rich and poor, men and women) that prevent equitable development and identity and full participation.

2.1.3 Gender Roles

Gender roles arise from social factors that influence or allocate activities, responsibilities, and decision-making authority to groups of people. These roles can change, sometimes spontaneously and quickly, as underlying social, economic, and technological conditions evolve. Social factors that underlie and sometimes reinforce gender differences include religious practices, ethnic or cultural attitudes, class or caste, the formal legal system, and institutional arrangements. Gender roles vary between cultures and social groups. According to Whitehead (1981), the gender division of labor is complex. Although tasks are clearly gender-differentiated, women generally have triple roles: (i) productive, (ii) reproductive, and (iii) community roles (William, 1994).

Productive roles encompass responsibilities for producing goods and services for consumption and sale, including market production with exchange value and subsistence production with actual use value, such as agricultural labor and decision-making (William, 1994). Reproductive roles involve activities like childbearing and rearing responsibilities, primary domestic tasks (cleaning, washing, food preparation, water and fuel fetching), and biological reproductive work. They also include the maintenance of the workforce, which

involves caring for male partners and working children, feeding infants, and school-going children—essential for family survival. Community roles refer to work undertaken at the community level, including relationships not only among household members but also with neighbors. This includes the collective organization of social events and services by community members, such as celebrations, community improvement activities, groups, and organizations (Moser, 1993).

2.2 Empirical Review

Based on the Hindu caste system, the so-called low caste Bajis include Mushar, Phattik, Dusad, Machicada, Chamar, or the Harijan. Among these, the Mushar people are considered a particularly low caste group, often regarded with disdain by some higher caste groups. The Mushar people claim to have ventured into the Terai region, which was once a vast jungle rich with fruits, tubers, and roots. In those days, these edible treasures were readily accessible to the nomads who roamed the jungles of what is now present-day Nepal. The argument that the Mushar were ancient nomadic or hunting and gathering people holds considerable merit. However, over the past two centuries, they have shifted away from foraging for wild fruits and roots, embracing food grains. It was during this time that land clearing and cultivation for grains had already commenced. It is believed that they established permanent settlements in the region four centuries ago (Gautam and Thapa, 1994).

Nandini Sundar (2016) theory of decision-making emphasizes the intricate interplay between institutional structures, social norms, and individual agency in shaping how decisions are formulated and executed. Sundar argues that decisions are not merely the result of rational calculation or individual preferences but are deeply embedded within broader social contexts. Her work highlights the influence of power dynamics, historical legacies, and cultural factors on decision-making processes, illustrating how these factors can either constrain or enable individuals and institutions in making choices that impact society. Sundar's approach underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of decision-making that incorporates both structural constraints and human agency, offering insights into how policies and practices emerge and evolve within complex social systems.

Bina Agarwal (1994) theory of decision-making roles challenges conventional economic models by highlighting the intricate dynamics within households, particularly in agrarian

societies. She argues that decision-making power is not solely determined by income or formal indicators of status, but also by the social relationships and hierarchies that shape household interactions. Agarwal's work emphasizes the agency of women in these settings, demonstrating how their roles in agricultural production and domestic management significantly influence household decisions despite often being marginalized in formal economic analyses. Her research underscores the need for nuanced understandings of power and decision-making processes within households, pointing towards more inclusive and accurate economic frameworks.

Maitree Chaudhary (2023) theory emphasizes the pivotal role of women in decision-making, highlighting their unique perspectives and contributions. She argues that women bring diverse viewpoints, empathy, and a holistic approach to decision-making processes, which can lead to more inclusive and effective outcomes in various spheres of life, from business to governance. Chaudhary's framework underscores the importance of recognizing and leveraging women's leadership for achieving balanced and sustainable development.

Nanditha Sharma(2023) theory on the decision-making role of women emphasizes their central position within familial and household decisions. She highlights that women often influence and control decisions related to household expenditures, children's education, and daily operations. Sharma argues that understanding and acknowledging women's decision-making power is crucial for more accurate market segmentation and effective marketing strategies. Her research underscores the significant role women play in shaping consumption patterns and family welfare.

Juyal and Singh (2009) explored the role of women in family buying decision-making in Uttara khand. This study highlighted the significant impact females have in shaping choices of household purchasing. The research paper, published in "Vision: The Journal of Business Perspective," shows how women's decisions and preferences are pivotal across various product categories, from expensive items to daily necessity. By exploring the dynamics of familial decision-making processes, the study showed the evolving power dynamics in households. It also shows the crucial part female play in directing the family's economic decisions and consumption patterns.

In their book "Tribal Ethnography of Nepal," Gautam and Thapa (1992) shed light on the Mushar community. Nevertheless, there is a lack of comprehensive research on the overall

health status of the Mushar, particularly focusing on Mushar women. However, a study addressing the current socio-economic conditions of the most marginalized, which included the Mushar as an untouchable caste group, found that education, economic factors, health and caste-based discrimination are interconnected variables that significantly contribute to the social exclusion of lower-caste individuals, preventing them from attaining a higher social status.

Dhakal's (1995) study "Fertility and the Status of Women in Baijnathpur VDC of Morang District," highlighted the pivotal role of female education in reducing fertility rates. However, it was notably disconcerting that the VDC in question exhibited an alarmingly low literacy rate, particularly among the Mushar community, where a staggering 92.6% of women were found to be illiterate. This lack of education among Mushar women was associated with higher childbirth rates and a lack of awareness regarding family planning methods, accentuating a pressing need for educational interventions. The Mushar community, it appeared, lacked awareness about the crucial interplay between education and fertility. Furthermore, their socio-economic status was notably precarious when compared to other ethnic groups, compounding the challenges they faced. Dhakal's research underscored several key factors contributing to elevated fertility levels among the women in this region. These included early marriages, engagement in agricultural occupations, and a strong cultural preference for male offspring. These elements collectively heightened the fertility rates, posing significant challenges to population control efforts in this community. Additionally, it's worth noting that Gautam and Thapa, in their 1992 book "Tribal Ethnography of Nepal," likely delved further into the complexities of this region and its various ethnic groups, offering additional insights into the intricate dynamics of fertility, education, and socioeconomic disparities in this context.

Bennett's study, based on data from approximately 2,000 men and women across 60 villages nationwide, revealed that women today have greater empowerment than they did in 1978 concerning their mobility and influence in household decision-making. However, compared to men, women exhibited less confidence in using government/NGO services, police, and courts, despite a higher proportion of women being members of groups compared to men. Women from Brahmin/Chhetri castes demonstrated significantly greater empowerment in terms of service access and confidence in interactions with law enforcement and service

providers than women and men from other ethnicities and castes. Dalits were the most disadvantaged in these aspects.(Bennett, 2005).

Acharya's study aimed to measure attitudes towards sociopolitical changes. In spite of ongoing discriminatory behaviors towards girls, the study identified noticeable shifts in attitudes. When questioned about their aspirations for their children's education, a significant majority of men and women factory workers, as well as many parents in rural areas, expressed a desire to educate both their sons and daughters as much as they desired or could afford. In both urban and rural settings, education was prioritized as the foremost quality desired for both sons and daughters. The ability to earn a living and work hard ranked second in priority for both factory workers and the rural population in the Hill region, whereas in Maithili communities, physical attractiveness remained a prominent second preference for daughters. In 1978, physical attractiveness had ranked as the top desired quality for brides in Terai villages, whereas hard work was most valued among Hill villagers. For grooms, wealth was the most desired quality, followed by education, in both communities. (Acharya, 2004).

In general, husbands were the primary decision-makers regarding whether to proceed with an unintended pregnancy. The study revealed that if a husband decided to continue the unintended pregnancy, his wife had limited or no options to influence the decision. The study did not explore whether women with unintended pregnancies sought abortions without informing their husbands. However, the findings highlight discrepancies in responses between husbands and wives regarding pregnancy outcomes. For instance, among the 12 husbands who reported successful abortions by their wives, two wives' responses did not align with their husbands'. Similarly, of the seven husbands who reported abortion failures, only four wives' responses matched their husbands' (Gurung, 2007).

Decision-making power is closely tied to family norms and values, where discrimination between males and females often begins within the family unit. Females are frequently excluded from the decision-making process, while opportunities and benefits in society are predominantly monopolized by males. Women's engagement in socio-cultural and political activities hinges on the attitudes of their male counterparts. The majority of women in Nepal reside in rural areas where they play multifaceted roles. In the domestic sphere, they serve as household managers, mothers, and wives, while in the community, they sustain social and cultural services primarily on a voluntary basis. Economically, if not formally employed or engaged as entrepreneurs, they actively participate in family businesses and farms. However,

they face limited access to income, wealth, and employment, which significantly impacts their economic status and, consequently, their decision-making power. Regarding participation in decision-making, approximately half of women are involved in decisions about their own healthcare, major household purchases, daily household expenditures, and visits to family and friends. However, one-third of women do not participate in any of these decisions at all (NDHS, 2016).

According to The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has the right to participate in the government of their country. Empowering women and improving their social, economic, and political status are crucial for achieving transparent and accountable governance and sustainable development. To address the inequality between men and women in power-sharing and decision-making at all levels, governments and other authorities should actively and visibly promote the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in all policies and programs. This ensures that, before taking decisive actions, an analysis of their effects on both women and men is conducted. (ILO, 2002).

When the male head of the household faces a decision (often brought to his attention by his wife), he first leads an open discussion, seeking consensus, and then announces a decision that reflects that consensus. Other family members actively participate in this process. The wife defers to him as the one whose role is to make and announce the decision, thus mirroring this dynamic in both public and private spheres. This approach reveals Nepalese village life as dynamic and can ultimately benefit the decision-making processes in village communities of Nepal (Casper and Miller, 2002).

In another study, Gautam (2006) found that girls' enrollment in primary education, despite having equal population levels, was lower than that of boys in the study area. The main causes were identified as negative parental attitudes, girls' involvement in farming and household work, and a lack of educational awareness among parents. He also observed a decreasing trend in girls' enrollment from primary to secondary levels in the study areas. Although the primary level had high enrollment rates, the proportion of girls' enrollment was only 38 percent compared to 62 percent for boys.

A study (Limbu, 2007) was conducted on the impact of occupational and educational status of married women in household decision-making found following major findings:

A large number of women in the study area are engaged in agricultural work. Out of 108 respondents, 84.3 percent are involved in agriculture, either in self-agriculture or working on other farms. A significant number of women in the study area are literate. Of the 108 respondents, 65 percent are literate, but their education is primarily at the secondary and primary levels. A considerable proportion of the literate respondents are concentrated in the secondary level and the 25-39 age group. Brahmin women are more literate compared to other caste groups. It was found that as the level of education increases, the number of females attaining higher education (secondary and above) decreases.

Women's autonomy in decision-making is positively associated with their age, employment, and the number of living children. Women from rural areas and the Terai region have less autonomy in decision-making across all four types of outcome measures. There is a mixed variation in women's autonomy in the development region across all outcome measures. Women from the Western region are more likely to make decisions regarding their own health care (1.2-1.6 times more likely), while they are less likely to make decisions about purchasing daily household needs (0.6-0.9 times less likely). Increased education for women is positively associated with autonomy in their own health care decision-making ($p < 0.01$); however, higher levels of schooling (SLC and above) do not show significance with other outcome measures. Interestingly, wealthier women are less likely to have autonomy in making decisions regarding their own health care. (Acharya et.al, 2010).

The socioeconomic status of women in Nepal is very poor, with discrimination pervasive in all aspects of society. These factors, among others, have contributed to Nepal being classified as a lower human development state. Despite this, the participation of women in the April Movement of 2006 was notably high and encouraging. Both men and women contributed equally to the movement and to the protection and promotion of human rights, good governance, and sustainable peace. However, men predominantly occupy state positions. Nepali women have made significant contributions to the democratic processes in Nepal, yet discrimination persists within politics. Women face hegemonic attitudes from their male counterparts and are often excluded from decision-making roles.

Referenced studies show that decision-making power is influenced by various factors. In Nepal, women constitute more than half of the total population but hold a poor status. Many women are engaged in household activities without having decision-making power and must follow their male partners in most cases.

Nepalese women gained the right to vote and stand for election in 1951, yet their representation in government remains significantly limited, with only 7.4 percent of ministerial positions occupied by women (UNDP, 2021). Women's presence in political and administrative offices is notably inadequate. Political parties often adhere strictly to the constitutional minimum of 5% female candidates during elections. In the judiciary, women constitute just 1.3 percent of the total number of judges, with only one female judge serving in the Supreme Court. In various constitutional bodies, women hold some middle management positions but are generally excluded from key decision-making roles. The Public Service Commission includes only one female member, and the National Planning Commission has never had a female member. This poor representation extends to the cabinet as well (CEDAW, 2017).

In Nepal, only a few women (14%) are household heads, and only 17% own either a house, land, or livestock (CBS, 2022). A large proportion of women are engaged in agriculture (49.3%), and 43.6% are involved in elementary work (Pradhan, 2016). The adult female literacy rate (15 years and older) is only 34.9% (CBS, 2022), highlighting the poor social conditions for women. Women's participation in local elections (19.33%), professional jobs (18.75%), their share in income (0.302%), and GDI and GEM of 0.452 and 0.391 respectively, further illustrate the low social standing of women in Nepal (UNDP, 2021).

Women's political participation remains minimal, even in highly developed countries like the United States and those in Europe. Despite the United States advocating for democracy, equality, and human rights globally, it remains conservative regarding women's involvement in politics. Globally, women's participation in politics is only 13.7 percent. According to UNDP statistics, the political participation of women is 43 percent in Sweden, 37 percent in the Netherlands, 35.8 percent in Norway, and 30.4 percent in Finland. The issue of women's political participation has been a significant topic of discussion since the UN World Conferences on Women and Development in 1975, culminating in the Fourth World Women's Conference in Beijing, China, in 1995 (Dhital, 2017).

Men and women are situated in society not only differently but also unequally – women get less of the material resources, social status power and opportunity for self actualization and this inequality results from organization of the society not from any biological or personality differences between men and women. The subordinated status of women in the context of Nepal can be viewed from the study on women and poverty, education and training status,

women and health, violence against women, women and economy, women in power and decision making, and institutional arrangement of women. The other areas of concern should be women and media, the human rights of women, and inclusion of women in the sectors, which necessarily would result in empowerment of women in private and public life as well.

In recent times, the social and political participation of women has slightly been increased when the state formed a policy of positive discrimination but which is not in a satisfactory condition. The interim constitution of Nepal 2007 has provided 33 percent reservation in all mechanism based on the caste/ethnic composition of women through the amendment of relevant laws and policies. It has also repealed of all discriminatory laws as according to the Nepalese international commitments. The state has taken the policy of increasing the access to and control over natural resources, making National Women Commission (NWC) autonomous, eliminating all discriminatory social norms to women and building women's capacity by providing modern skills and training are some positive actions to improve the condition of women in Nepal. Furthermore, property rights, sexuality rights, abortion rights and marriage and family laws after the 11th amendment of Civil Code in 2002 and further improvisation by Constitution 2015 are important benchmarks in the process of women empowerment.

Women in Nepal, as elsewhere, hold the triple work responsibilities of reproduction, house holding and farm work. However, reproduction is not treated as work and house holding is not considered as productive work by government system. Women also suffer from discriminatory practices in opportunities for education, personal mobility, which is required among other for skill development and independent decision making (UNDP, 2007).

In general, women are more likely to be unpaid family worker than men and less likely to be employees or own account workers. This indicates a fundamental social discrimination against women and their being ostracized from the identification as a labor force account. Evidences from national surveys revealed pervasive wage difference between male and female workers in every country.

In some country, unpaid family workers, especially females in agriculture, are systematically discounted as the economically active population which means agricultural workers, who are women, are underestimated and undervalued. Ambiguities are also found in artificial distinction between "economic" and "noneconomic" activities of the adults. Women's

involvement in household chores and agricultural production is often traditionally rated as non-economic activity, however the reality is that the extent of their economic gains from their domestic involvement, whether that be of children or women, has continued to make a paramount support to their families. A notable economic contribution from this “non-economic” groups remains outside the National Income Account and the story becomes even pathetic when more than fifty percent of women’s back breaking work secures have no place in such economic activity account.

This gives rise to the problem of ranking the non-economic activity account. This gives rise to the problem of ranking the non-economic activities, which becomes more difficult to define.

The referenced studies indicate that the decision making power is influenced by various factors. Women constitute more than half of the total population in Nepal but they generally have a poor status. Many families engage in household activities without granting decision-making power to women, who often must follow the decisions of their male partners. A review of the available literature reveals a persisting controversy regarding women's input in the decision-making process. These studies conclude that women have low decision-making power due to inadequate socio-economic and demographic status. Although women's access to resources has increased in recent times, their overall status has been slow to improve.

Women bear more responsibilities in household chores, agricultural activities, and other tasks but have fewer opportunities to make independent decisions. It is crucial to recognize that without equal participation of both men and women in all household and societal activities, there is little chance for societal development. Therefore, women should be integrated into the mainstream of development activities, not just through their physical presence but by being given full decision-making power.

The Mushar community, residing in the Terai region, holds the distinction of being the lowest untouchable caste. Their name originates from the combination of two words, signifying “rat catcher”, likely attributed to their historical practice of consuming rodents in times of extreme necessity. Mushars typically exhibit a shorter stature, characterized by a long, narrow head shape and prominent nasal features. They maintain a belief in their lineage as descendants of revered saints and sages known as “Rishis.” While the exact time of their arrival in Nepal remains unknown, it is believed that a portion of the Mushar population

migrated from Magadh in India, while others came from Tirhut (Mithila), a region partly in Bihar, India. Consequently, Mushars are categorized into two subgroups: “MagadhiaMushar” and “TirhutiyaMushars.” Many members of this community share the surname “Sada.”

In his 1992 book titled “Caste and Race in India,” Grurey asserted that the ancestral tradition of the Mushars suggests that they are the descendants of the renowned sage Valmiki, who authored the religious epic Ramayana.

In 1998, Pokhrel conducted a study on the Mushar community in Paklihawa village, Nawalparasi district. Her findings indicated that the Mushar people had a patriarchal family structure and faced educational disadvantages, remaining largely excluded from the benefits of modern development.

Dhakal (1995), in his dissertation examined the fertility and status of Mushar women in the JhapaBajjnathpur village of Morang district. His findings indicate that illiteracy is the primary factor contributing to higher fertility rates, and that the status of women in this community is significantly disadvantaged.

Sharma (1999), conducted a study focusing on fertility among Mushar women in Siraha. The primary objectives of the research were to pinpoint the factors influencing fertility within the Mushar community. Sharma employed purposive sampling, surveying 100 households representing the Mushar ethnic group. His findings revealed that educated Mushar women tend to have fewer children compared to their illiterate counterparts. Additionally, as household income increases, the fertility of women decreases. The prevalence of a preference for sons significantly affects women’s decision-making power and contributes to reduced fertility.

The condition of Mushar women in Nepal has long been a subject of concern due to their historical marginalization and social exclusion. The Mushar community, predominantly residing in the Terai region of Nepal, has faced various forms of discrimination, including economic deprivation, limited access to education, and social stigma. Their plight is exacerbated by the intersection of caste, poverty, and gender, making Mushar women one of the most vulnerable groups in the society (Sijapati, 2008).

Historically, Mushars have been relegated to the lowest rungs of the caste hierarchy in Nepal, leading to systemic discrimination and exclusion. Mushar women often find themselves trapped in a cycle of poverty, with limited access to quality education and healthcare facilities. This lack of education perpetuates their economic dependence and hinders their ability to break free from the shackles of poverty. The social stigma associated with being Mushar further compounds the challenges faced by Mushar women. They are often subject to discrimination and violence, including sexual exploitation. As a result, Mushar women are not only economically disadvantaged but also face significant threats to their personal safety and well-being (Khatri, 2016).

Efforts have been made by the Nepalese government and various non-governmental organizations to uplift the condition of Mushar women, with a focus on providing access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. However, much work remains to be done to address the deep-rooted issues of caste-based discrimination and gender inequality that continue to affect Mushar women in Nepal (Ojha and Phuyal, 2019).

2.3 Policy Review

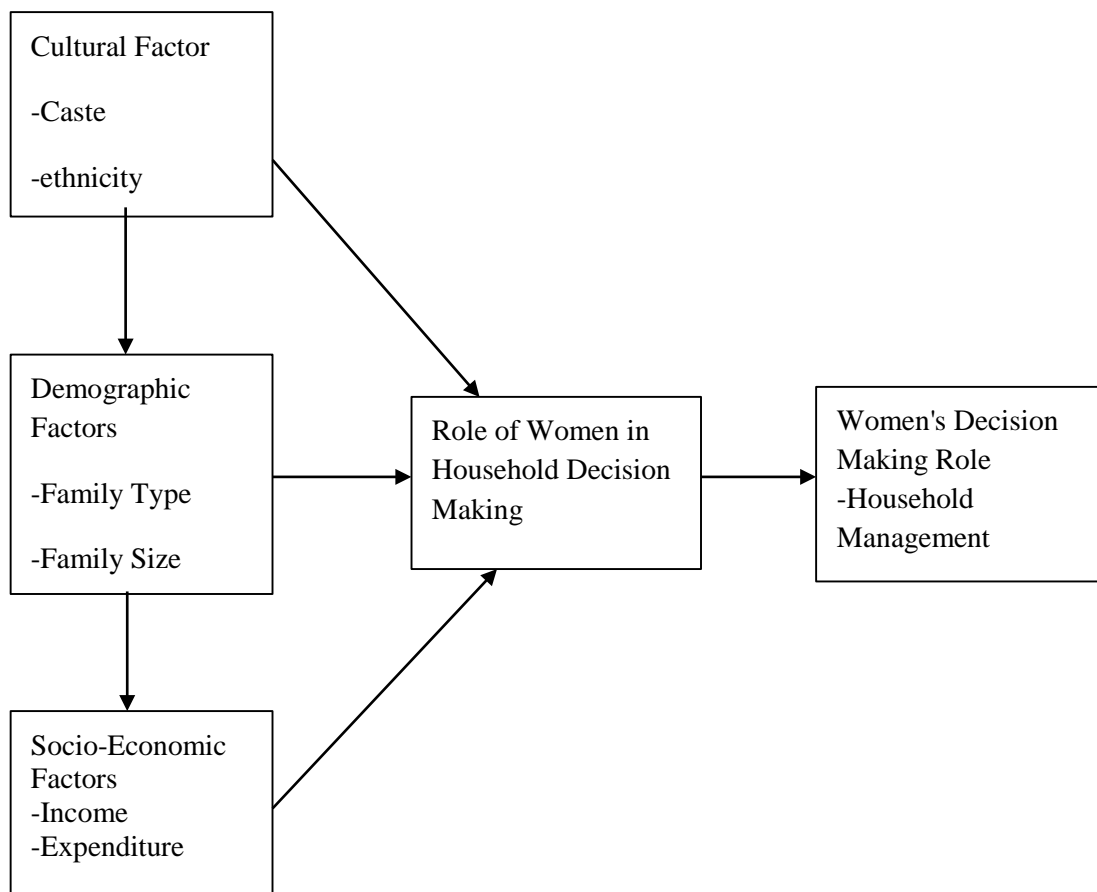
The Constitution of Nepal 2015 guarantees non-discrimination against any citizen concerning general laws, political and civil rights, and on grounds of religion, race, sex, or caste. Additionally, the National Code (Muluki Ain) of 1963 introduced significant reforms in family land property laws and the legal status of women, promoting gender equality. The legislation on minimum wage for industrial workers reflects a move towards equal work. Recent policy directives from the interim government have aimed to protect women's rights and amend discriminatory laws and regulations. However, enforcement of these policies often falters due to a lack of resources, information, and skills (MOPE, 2018).

Since the International Women's Year, Nepal has responded to the UN call to improve women's health and socio-economic conditions. A national focus on women's roles in development was established through the Ministry of Local Development, and in 1987, the Women's Development Division was created under the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare. This division serves as the national focal point for women in development and for SAARC.

The Fifteenth Five-Year Plan (2019-2024) incorporates policy directives aimed at increasing women's participation in development, addressing women's issues in a dedicated policy chapter. A national work plan for women was also formulated; however, it lacked concrete provisions for ensuring greater female participation in the development sector. Current efforts are being made to rectify these gaps through a task force focused on women's needs in the Fifteenth Five-Year Plan (2019-2024).

2.4 Conceptual Framework of the Study

Based on review of the available literature, an attempt has been made to develop a conceptual framework for the present study by identifying possible factors affecting decision making power of women of Janakpurdham Submetropolitancity-1. The framework includes cultural factor like caste and ethnicity, demographic factors like family type and family size, socio-economic status of households, women's education and occupation, etc. This has been taken as independent variables which directly influence the dependent variable. Thus, the review of the variables suggests the factors that affect women's decision making power at households. Role of women in household decision making is mainly affected by cultural factors, caste and ethnicity, family type, family size, and socio-economic factors, which ultimately have positive impact on women's decision making role in household management. Caste and ethnicity discourage in lower caste household and encourage in higher caste household for women's household decision making. Similarly socio-economic factor like income and expenditure promote household decision making in high income household and demotes in lower income household. Likewise joint family type and large family size discourage household decision making and nuclear family and small size family encourage household decision making. Thus, the demographic, socio-economic and cultural factors influence women's decision making role in household management.



Women take part in taking decision on important family matters, viz., settlement of marriage, purchasing and selling of land, improvement and construction of house etc., though the decision of the elderly male members is accepted in most cases, in selecting job for women themselves or for other members of the family. Role of different family members can be different in family purchase decision making, different roles can be undertaken: they can be Initiators, Decision makers, Users, Gatekeepers, Buyers.

Summary

The active participation of women in decision-making is a key indicator of their empowerment. Women hold pivotal roles in domestic and subsistence sectors, offering primary support in decision-making. The Mushar community, residing in the Terai region, holds the distinction of being the lowest untouchable caste. Their name originates from the combination of two words, signifying “rat catcher”, likely attributed to their historical practice of consuming rodents in times of extreme necessity. Mushars typically exhibit a shorter stature, characterized by a long, narrow head shape and prominent nasal features. They maintain a belief in their lineage as descendants of revered saints and sages known as

“Rishis.” While the exact time of their arrival in Nepal remains unknown, it is believed that a portion of the Mushar population migrated from Magadh in India, while others came from Tirhut (Mithila), a region partly in Bihar, India. Consequently, Mushars are categorized into two subgroups: “Magadhia Mushar” and “Tirhutiya Mushars.” Many members of this community share the surname “Sada.”

The condition of Mushar women in Nepal has long been a subject of concern due to their historical marginalization and social exclusion. The Mushar community, predominantly residing in the Terai region of Nepal, has faced various forms of discrimination, including economic deprivation, limited access to education, and social stigma. Their plight is exacerbated by the intersection of caste, poverty, and gender, making Mushar women one of the most vulnerable groups in the society. Historically, Mushars have been relegated to the lowest rungs of the caste hierarchy in Nepal, leading to systemic discrimination and exclusion. Mushar women often find themselves trapped in a cycle of poverty, with limited access to quality education and healthcare facilities. This lack of education perpetuates their economic dependence and hinders their ability to break free from the shackles of poverty. The social stigma associated with being Mushar further compounds the challenges faced by Mushar women. They are often subject to discrimination and violence, including sexual exploitation. As a result, Mushar women are not only economically disadvantaged but also face significant threats to their personal safety and well-being. Efforts have been made by the Nepalese government and various non-governmental organizations to uplift the condition of Mushar women, with a focus on providing access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. However, much work remains to be done to address the deep-rooted issues of caste-based discrimination and gender inequality that continue to affect Mushar women in Nepal.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology describes methods and process that is applied in the study. This study based on the study of gender role in household decision making process. The study has recommended some measures and policies to increase women's participation at house hold decision making process to the study area. Research methodology is a systematic approach to solving research problems. It encompasses the methods and processes used in a study, including the research design, selection of the study area, nature and sources of data, methods of data collection, sample size, as well as data processing and analysis.

3.1 Research Design

A descriptive research design has been adopted to analyze and interpret the qualitative data collected by field survey. It is descriptive because it describes the socio-economic and women's participation in household decision making of those respondents such as age, family type, family size, occupation, income, expenditure and land ownership etc. This research design aims to achieve the specified objectives by exploring and investigating the socio-economic status and women's participation in decision-making activities within the study area. It specifically focuses on comparing the decision-making processes of women with those of their male counterparts.

3.2 Population and Sample

The universe of this study is the women of Mushar Community of Janakpurdham Submetropolitancity-1. The universe is composed of different characteristics of women of Mushar Community such as age, religion and occupation. The total numbers of Mushar households are 435 in study areas which are considered as universe. Since it is near impossible to include all women from the study area, a purposive sampling method was employed. There are total 435 households, out of them 87 household were selected purposively, which is 20 percent of the total household. These selected households comprises of different characteristics such as ethnicity, age, social and economic background. In purposive sampling, researcher set out to identify members of the population who are likely to possess certain characteristics or experiences (and to be willing to share

them with researcher). In this way, researcher selected the individuals or cases that fit the study, focusing on a relatively small sample. Among them 87 women respondents has been selected through purposive sampling method in Janakpurdham Submetropolitancity-1. Because random sampling may have chances of including men and time consuming process if other than women is included in sample.

3.3 Nature and Source of Data

The study is based primarily on primary data, which was gathered through field surveys using questionnaires and observations. Additionally, secondary data was used to supplement the study, sourced from recent CBS district profiles, various books, journals, research reports, and relevant documents.

3.4 Rationale of the Selection of Study Area

As mentioned earlier main objectives of the present study is to describe the decision making power of women of Mushar Community at micro level. For this purpose, Janakpurdham Submetropolitancity-1 of Dhanusha district is selected as the case for the study site. The women living in this area are deeply traditional and hold their cultural values in high regard. At the same time, many of them work outside the home and contribute economically to their households. Therefore, it seemed appropriate to conduct a comparative study between working and non-working women in this region.

3.5 Method of Data Collection

Every successful result of a study invariably depends on the methods employed for data collection. Therefore, the data collection methods always play a crucial role in obtaining reliable information. This study adopted the fieldwork method to gather data. For this purpose, interview and observation techniques and tools were utilized. The process of data collection is as follows:

3.5.1 Interview Schedule

For the information collection structured interview schedule was prepared, which was semi-structured in nature. Both open and close ended questions were included in the schedule.

Open questions were employed to gather detailed information about women's participation in the household decision-making process. The questions included in the schedule were aligned with the study's objectives. Interviews were conducted in the morning and evening for working women and during the day for non-working women in the study area.

3.5.2 Observation

During the field visit, the observation technique of data collection was used to collect qualitative information such as behavior of women in their own household activities. Taking help by the observation technique, researcher had gathered the relevant information regarding the role of women in household decision making and problems of women in the study area. In this study, the researcher personally visited the women in study area at morning and evening time for working women and day time for non-working women and observed their daily way of life, residence, food habit and mannerism, their inter-personal relationship. The time taken for observation for each respondents took half an hour. After a close study of their total economic and social conditions, information was recorded in a diary. The decision making process in the household has been observed to find out the women's role in the household decision making. The data has been collected through observations has been cross-checked with the information collected through semi-structured interview.

3.5.3 Case Study

In order to gather information about the actual involvement on decision making of women at household management, case studies have done with three respondents. It is believed that these case studies were proper representative of the whole community. Such case study techniques of the data collection could be appropriate for researcher to take and actual picture of the respondents.

3.6 Data Presentation and Analysis

The data collected from the field study are edited and coded in tabular form. They are analyzed and interpreted presenting in data as far as possible and necessary, simple statistical tools like average and percentage are also used during the analysis. The entire procedure for this data generation and its analysis is related to the formation of structured interview

schedule. It is comprised of the all-relevant interview schedule concerning the decision making in household were included. Therefore, the interview schedule has been designed in household affairs such as economic sector, social sector, education has been included. Therefore, the interview schedule has been designed in such a manner so as to give an overall picture of the relative status to the female in term of household decision making of the selected households within this study area.

Analysis involves a careful examination of available facts to understand and draw conclusions based on established principles and sound logic. Both quantitative and qualitative tools and techniques were employed to analyze the data. Firstly, quantitative data collected through structured questionnaires were processed and presented in tabular form. After that, data are interpreted with supplementary information. Simple statistical tools, such as percentages and averages, are used to present the findings.

CHAPTER IV

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF MARRIED WOMEN

4.1 Introduction of Janakpurdham Sub-Metropolitan City

Janakpurdham, also known as Janakpur, is a sub-metropolitan city located in the Dhanusha district of Madhesh Province, Nepal. As a prominent hub for religious and cultural tourism, it serves as the district headquarters and the capital of Madhesh Province. Founded in the early 12th century, Janakpur is traditionally recognized as the capital of the Videha dynasty that once ruled the Mithila region.

Situated about 225 km southeast of Kathmandu, Janakpur had a population of 195,438 as of 2021, with a density of 2,125 people per square kilometer. This makes it the fourth most densely populated city in Nepal. The city is approximately 23 km from the Bhitthamore border with India and is connected to Jainagar in India by Nepal Railways. As of June 2011, the municipality had 19,195 households and a population of 98,446, with a density of 4,000 people per square kilometer. In 2015, Janakpur was upgraded to a sub-metropolitan city, incorporating 11 surrounding villages. The current population stands at 173,924, making it the sixth largest city in Nepal.

Maithili is the predominant language spoken in Janakpur, serving as both a first language and a lingua franca. Nepali, Hindi, Marwari, and English are also widely understood, while Bhojpuri and Awadhi are less commonly used. More than 90 percent of the population practices Hinduism, with the remainder being Muslims and Buddhists.

4.2 Socio-Economic Status of the Respondents

A way of describing people based on their education, income, and type of job. Socioeconomic status is usually described as low, medium, and high. People with a lower socioeconomic status usually have less access to financial, educational, social, and health resources than those with a higher socioeconomic status. Musahar or Mushahar are a Dalit community found in the eastern Gangetic plain and the Terai.

4.2.1 Distribution of Respondent by Age

Age is a crucial factor in demographic studies, impacting working hours, types of work, decision-making roles, social relationships, and responsibilities. It shapes individuals' social status and influences their participation in decision-making and social activities. In following table age of respondents is divided into 3 categories. They are adult (18-34), middle age (35-59) and old age (60 years and above).

Table 1: Age structure of Sampled Respondents

| Age Group | No. of Respondents | Percent |
|----------------------|--------------------|---------|
| Adult (18-34) | 36 | 41.38 |
| Middle (35-59) | 45 | 51.72 |
| Old age (60 & above) | 6 | 6.90 |
| Total | 87 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Out of the 87 respondents, 41.38 percent of them were adult, 51.72 percent were middle aged and the remaining 6.90 percent were old aged. The data revealed that most of the respondents were of the middle aged as the respondents who were under this category spent their most time in household activities.

4.2.2 Distribution of Respondent by Education

According to UNESCO estimates, approximately 129 million girls globally are out of school, including 32 million at the primary level and 97 million at the secondary level. Enrollment rates for primary and secondary education are nearing equality between girls and boys, with 90% of males and 89% of females enrolled.

In the table no. 2, the educational status of the respondents has been shown. Hence the level of the education has been divided into 7 categories which were Degree, Diploma, Certificate, under SLC, Literate and illiterate

Table 2: Educational Status of Research Participants

| Level of Education | No. of Respondents | Percent |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| Cannot read and write | 22 | 25.28 |
| Can read and write | 25 | 28.75 |
| under SLC | 18 | 20.69 |
| SLC | 22 | 25.28 |
| Total | 87 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

It is found that out of total respondent, 25.28 percent were illiterate i.e. cannot read and write 28.75 percent were literature i.e. can not read and write, 20.69 percent were under SLC, followed by those who passed SLC were 25.28 percent. The data shows that although majority of women were literate, there was not satisfactory number of respondents attending higher level of education.

4.2.3 Marital Status of Respondents

In this study, the material status of respondents was categorized into three groups. They are single, married and widow.

Table 3: Marital Status of the Respondents

| Marital status | No. of Respondents | Percent |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| Married | 80 | 91.96 |
| Widow | 7 | 8.04 |
| Total | 87 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Out of the total 87 respondents, 91.96 percent were married whereas remaining 8.04 percent of the respondents were widows.

4.2.4 Distributions of Respondents by Family Size

The family size was categorized into three different groups, which were large, medium and small, if the numbers of family members were greater than 8, between 4 and 8 and less than 4 respectively.

Table 4: Family Size of Respondents

| Family Size | No. of Respondents | Percent |
|-------------|--------------------|---------|
| Small | 31 | 35.62 |
| Medium | 41 | 47.30 |
| Large | 15 | 17.24 |
| Total | 87 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

According to the study, it is found that 35.62 percent, 47.30 Percent and 17.24 percent of the respondents had small, medium and large family size respectively. According to the data revealed in the above table, majority had medium of small size of family. But it was found that the women with a large number of children and elderly person has to devote their time in most of the reproductive work and may have fewer time for productive or community work where as in a nuclear family, women are relatively free from these obligations as husband is an only means of control of her freedom.

4.2.5 Distribution of Respondents by Occupation

In the below table, the occupation of the respondents has categorized into four parts, which were agriculture with household, agriculture with service, agriculture with business and others. The study area is one of the renowned places Janakpurdham Submetropolitancity-1 for animal husbandry. So, it can be said that most of the locals were involved in farming.

Table 5: Occupational Status of the Respondents

| Occupation | No. of Respondents | Percent |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| Agriculture + household | 35 | 40.23 |
| Agriculture + service | 43 | 49.43 |
| Agriculture + Business | 7 | 8.05 |
| Others | 2 | 2.30 |
| Total | 87 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Out of the total 87 respondents, 40.23 percent were engaged in agriculture with household works, 49.43 percent of the respondents were engaged in agriculture and service 8.05 percent of the respondents were engaged in agriculture with business and the remaining 2.30 percent were engaged in other sectors.

4.2.6 Land Ownership

In the table no. 6 the land ownership of the respondents has been shown. Land holding size category has been divided into three groups which included high, middle and low if the respondent constituted above 2543. 2 squire meter (5 Katha), between 508. 64 to 2543. 2 squire meter and less than 508. 64 meter respectively. As the almost all the locals were involved in agriculture, they had their own land for farming.

Table 6: Landholding Size of the Sampled Households

| Land Holding Size | No. of Respondents | Percent |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| Above 5 Katha | 26 | 29.89 |
| Middle (1-5 Katha) | 53 | 60.91 |
| Low (Below 1 Katha) | 8 | 9.20 |
| Total | 87 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

According to the study, 29.89 percent, 60.91 percent and 9.20 percent had high, middle and low land holding respectively. But it was found that the ownership of land holding of the

respondents were under the male members of the family i. e. father, father - inlaws, bother, bother-in-law.

4.2.7 House Ownership

In this study, the house ownership of the respondents were asked.

Table7: House Ownership

| House Ownership | No. of Respondents | Percent |
|-----------------|--------------------|---------|
| Own house | 81 | 93.10 |
| Renting house | 6 | 6.90 |
| Total | 87 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table In this study, the house ownership of the respondents were also asked in which 93.10 percent said that they had their own house, rent house and rent free house respectively. As in the land holding, all the own house were under the name of the male members of the household.

4.2.8 Household Head Status of Respondents

Household head plays an important factor in the household decision making. Generally, s/he is has been that those who have household head status have more dominance in the household decision making.

Table 8: Structure of the Household Head among Respondents

| Household Head | No. of Respondents | Percent |
|----------------|--------------------|---------|
| Female | 11 | 12.64 |
| Male | 76 | 87.36 |
| Total | 87 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

According to the study, 87.36 percent of the male had the household head status where as 12.64 percent of female had household head status. It was found that in case of female

household headship, it was either the husband was dead or the male member was out of the village for study or any kind profession.

4.3 Role of Respondents in Household Level

In this study role of respondents in household level and division of labor of the respondents were asked.

4.3.1 Role Division in Domestic Work by Sex

The sexual division of labor is the separation of different tasks between females and males. Among human foragers, males and females target different types of foods and share them with each other for a mutual or familial benefit.

The table no. 10 shows the role division in different domestic works in household, fetching of water, cooking, cleaning utensils, sweeping clothes, baby care, adult care and worshipping according to sex. In fetching of water, 51.72 percent, 29.89 percent and 6.90 percent said that only female, both and only male used to go to fetch water.

Table 9: Role Division in Domestic Work by Sex

| Activities | Female only | | Male only | | Both | |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|
| | No. of Respondent | % | No. of Respondent | % | No. of Respondent | % |
| Fetching of water | 45 | 51.72 | 6 | 6.90 | 26 | 29.89 |
| Cooking | 80 | 91.95 | 7 | 8.05 | 0 | 0 |
| Cleaning Utensils | 87 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Sweeping | 83 | 95.40 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 4.60 |
| Washing Clothes | 71 | 81.61 | 5 | 5.75 | 10 | 11.49 |
| Baby care | 79 | 90.80 | 2 | 3.30 | 6 | 6.90 |
| Adult care | 35 | 40.23 | 19 | 21.83 | 33 | 37.93 |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

In cooking, majority (91.95 percent) said that only female were involved in cooking and remaining 8.05 percent said that men were involved in cooking. In cleaning utensils, all respondents agreed that it was the work of only females. For sweeping and washing clothes,

95.40 percent and 81.61 said that it was the work of female where as 4.60 percent and 11.49 percent said that it was work of both respectively.

In concerned of baby care 90.80 percent said that only female were responsible for it where as 6.90 percent said that both responsible. In adult care, 40.29 percent, 37.93 percent and 21.83 percent said that both female and male were responsible.

4.3.2 Role Division in Animal Husbandry by Sex

This study had tried to find out the role division in the household in sector of animal husbandry like, feeding animals, collecting grass, collecting of manure, milking, making butter and selling milk etc.

Table 10: Role Division in Animal Husbandry by Sex

| Activities | Female only | | Male only | | Both | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|------------------|-------|
| | No of respondent | % | No. of Respondent | % | No of respondent | % |
| Feeding animal | 47 | 54.02 | 22 | 25.29 | 18 | 20.69 |
| Grass collection | 84 | 96.55 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3.45 |
| Collection of Manure | 72 | 82.76 | 0 | 0 | 15 | 17.24 |
| Milking | 15 | 17.24 | 65 | 74.71 | 7 | 8.05 |
| Making butter | 9 | 10.34 | 54 | 62.09 | 24 | 27.59 |
| Selling milk for production | 30 | 34.49 | 32 | 36.78 | 25 | 28.74 |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

According to the study, 54.02 percent, 20.69 percent and 25.29 percent said that only female, both and only male were responsible for feeding animals, in case of grass collection, 96.55 percent, 3.45 percent said that it was work of only female and both respectively.

Majority (82.76 percent) agreed that collection of manure was work of only female where as 17.24 percent said that it was work of both, for milking, making butter and selling milk for production, 17.24, 8.05 percent and 74.71 percent told that it was work of only male, 10.34 percent, 27.59 percent and 62.09. For selling milk for production 34.49 percent, 28.74

percent and 36.78 percent said female only, both male and female and male only. The data clearly showed that the male were more engaged in those work in animal husbandry, which were of economic values outside the household and female for non-economic inside the household.

4.3.3 Role Division in Agricultural Activities by Sex

The study had tried to reveal the roles that male and female members of the household play in different agricultural activities like dig field, plantation drying and storing grains.

Table 11: Role Division in Agricultural Activities by Sex

| Activities | Female only | | Male only | | Both | |
|----------------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|
| | No. of Respondent | % | No. of Respondent | % | No. of Respondent | % |
| Dig field | 0 | 0 | 80 | 91.95 | 18 | 20.69 |
| Plantation | 83 | 95.40 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 4.60 |
| Drying grains | 81 | 93.10 | 6 | 6.90 | 0 | 0 |
| Storing grains | 87 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Out of the total 87 respondents, 91.95 percent said that it was work of male to dig field where as 20.69 percent said that it is work of both. For plantation in field, 95.40 percent, 4.60 percent said that it was work of both male and female.

In drying and storing grains, 93.10 percent and 6.90 percent said that it was work of female and both male and female.

4.4 Controls on Income

In this study, control of income of the respondents were asked.

4.4.1 Major Source of Income for Respondents

In this study the main source of income had been divided into agriculture with livestock, service, business and others.

Table 12: Major Sources of Income for Respondents

| Sources of Income | No. of Respondents | Percent |
|-----------------------|--------------------|---------|
| Agriculture/Livestock | 54 | 62.07 |
| Service | 16 | 18.39 |
| Business | 9 | 10.34 |
| Others | 8 | 9.20 |
| Total | 87 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 12 shows that 62.07 percent have major source of income agriculture with livestock followed by service with 18.39 percent, business with 10.34 percent and others with 9.20 percent respectively. The data revealed that women of the study area were mainly engaged in agriculture so they did not have good source of income.

4.4.2 Average Monthly Income

In the study, the average monthly income of respondents was categorized into 3 parts, more than Rs. 6000, Rs. 6000 & less than Rs. 2000.

Table 13: Average Monthly Income

| Average Income | No. of Respondent | Percent |
|----------------|-------------------|---------|
| More than 6000 | 25 | 28.74 |
| 2000-6000 | 49 | 56.32 |
| Less than 2000 | 13 | 14.94 |
| Total | 87 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 13 shows that 28.74 percent of the respondents had the average income of Rs, more than 6000 per month, 56.32 percent had 2000-6000 and 14.94 percent had less than Rs. 2000

respectively. As most of the works they were engaged in household activities, the average monthly income of respondents was not low.

4.4.3 Submit Detail of Expenditure

In this study, submit detail of expenditure of the respondents were asked.

Table 14: Submit Detail of Expenditure

| Particulars | No. of Respondents | Percent |
|-----------------|--------------------|---------|
| Yes | 43 | 49.43 |
| No | 25 | 28.74 |
| Sometimes | 19 | 21.84 |
| Total | 87 | 100 |
| If Yes, how | | |
| Submit Details | 21 | 48.84 |
| Inform Casually | 22 | 51.16 |
| Total | 43 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

It was found in the study that 49.43 percent used to submit details of expenditure to the male members of the family, 28.74 percent did not used to the details where as 21.84 percent used to submit details sometimes. Out of 43 respondents, who used to submit details of expenditure, 48.84 percent inform casually where as 51.16 percent submit the full details of expenditure.

4.4.4 Control over Household Cash

In this study, the control over household cash of respondents was categorized into three groups. They are male members, female members and jointly.

Table 15: Control over Household Cash

| Control | No. of Respondents | Percent |
|----------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| Male Members | 54 | 62.07 |
| Female Members | 20 | 22.99 |
| Jointly | 13 | 14.94 |
| Total | 87 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table 15 reveals that 62.07 percent of the male members had control over household cash, 22.99 percent said that they had mutual understanding over the control of cash and the remaining 14.94 percent said that female had control over the household cash

4.4.5 Control over Bazaar Purchase

The table No 16 has shown the control over bazaar purchase of the member of family which was divided into male members, female members and jointly.

Table 16: Control over Bazaar Purchase

| Particular | No. of Respondents | Percent |
|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| Male Members | 62 | 71.26 |
| Female Members | 10 | 11.50 |
| Jointly | 15 | 17.24 |
| Total | 87 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Out of the total 87 respondents, 71.26 percent, 11.50 percent and, 17.24 percent said male members, jointly and female members had control over the bazaar purchase. The data showed that male members had not the complete control over the purchase of goods. Some women also have control over the purchase of goods in household.

4.5 Role of Women in Determining Household Activities

In this section involvement of women in different aspects of household decision making such as: determining household expenditure, land ownership status, decision on family size and planning are studied.

4.5.1 Role of Women in Determining Household Expenditures

The no of decisions taken by the men and women to determine household expenditure is shown in table 17.

Table 17: Role of Women in Determining Household Expenditure

| Decision maker | No. of Respondents | Percent |
|----------------|--------------------|---------|
| Men | 17 | 19.53 |
| Women | 20 | 23.0 |
| Both | 50 | 57.47 |
| Total | 87 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 17 illustrates that major decisions regarding household expenditure were made with the involvement of both women and men which is 57.47 percent of the total decisions. After this the involvement of women in determining household expenditure was greater which is 23.0 percent of the total decisions compared to 19.53 percentage of that of men. The reason behind this was women in the study area were more involved in buying groceries products than men. However collective decisions were made for big expenditures such as purchase of electric devices, repair and maintenance activities etc.

4.5.2 Land Ownership Status of Women

In today's Nepalese society along with men women also have the right to inherit wealth from their parents and even on husband's death women have the right to inherit the husband's wealth.

Table 18: Land Ownership Status of Women

| Land ownership status | No. of Respondents | Percent |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| Property legally under women name | 61 | 70.0 |
| No property legally under women name | 26 | 30.0 |
| Total | 87 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

In Nepal many families have their wealth in form of real estate properties and land. Surveying households of 87 respondents it was found that 70 percent of respondents had property legally under their name while 30 percent of respondents had no property legally under their name. Hence, it can be concluded that the land ownership status of women in the study area was promising. On further study, it was found that some land under the legal name of women were purchased under by the women's decision herself while some were purchased under the decision of the family.

Table 19: Decision Makers to Encourage Purchase of Land

| Decision maker | No. of Respondents | Percent |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| Husband | 33 | 38 |
| Self | 29 | 33.33 |
| Others | 25 | 28.57 |
| Total | 87 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

From Table 19 a total 87 respondents had property under their name legally. Out of whom 7 respondents had made the purchase according to their desire which is 33.33 percentage of the respondents. 8 respondents had made purchased land based on their husband's decision which is 38 percentage of the respondents and 6 respondents had purchased property based on advice from other family members and friends. It was found that 21 respondents comprised of all the 18 respondents who generated income on a monthly basis. Respondents who were financially stable were able to accumulate wealth and purchase property and their role and status within the family was also found to be strong. Hence it can be inferred that women who were self-reliant were able to accumulate wealth in any form.

4.5.3 Role of Women in Family Size and Planning Decisions

Since the size of the family highly influence the social and economic status of women. Role of women in family size and planning decisions was also studied. Based on the empirical data collected the results of the survey are presented below:

Table 20: Role of Women in Family Size and Planning Decisions

| Decision maker | No. of Respondents | Percent |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| Husband | 20 | 23.0 |
| Self | 15 | 17.23 |
| Both | 52 | 59.77 |
| Total | 87 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

According to Table 20, it is clear that among the 87 respondents it was found that 52 respondents along with their husband were involved in deciding the size of family which is 59.77 percent of the total respondents. 15 respondents made the decision on family planning by themselves which is 17.23 percent of the total respondents while for 20 respondents their husbands made the decision on family size. Among the respondents it was found that due to: increased living expense and cost of education the ideal number of children were 2. When asked about the gender preference most respondents counted sons and daughters as equals which is contrary to the traditional belief of wanting sons.

CHAPTER V

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING ACTIVITIES

In the study area, almost all important decisions inside as well as outside the house are made by husband of the respondents. Female members also make decisions sometimes but that should be approved by male counterparts. Only those females, who are head of the family, decide in various cases. Nevertheless, they take helps and advice from other family members as well as own family members while making significant decision. And some females make decision on various activities of family in the absence of the male guardian of the family. To provide general understanding of gender differences in household decision-making, several activities are studied in the study area which is explained in this chapter.

5.1 Involvement in Decision Making for Households

In this study, involvement in decision making for households of respondents was asked.

Table 21: Involvement in Decision Making for Households

| Particulars | No. of Respondents | Percent |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|---------|
| Involvement in Decision Making | 33 | 37.93 |
| No Involvement in Decision Making | 52 | 59.77 |
| Don't know | 2 | 2.30 |
| Total | 87 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table no. 21, shows that majority of the respondents (59.77 percent) said that they were not involved in decision making in household followed by 37.93 percent who said that they were involved in household decision making process where as 2.30 percent replied that they did not know about it.

Dependent Women

Uma Devi Soda, who is 53 years, got married with Chotelal Soda of Janakpur Sub-metropolitan city-1, 34 years ago. She was born in Dhanusa. Her marriage was fixed by her parents without her choice. Nowadays, she is living in an extended family and has not been studied any formal education but she has learned from little bit informal tuition called "Praud Shikchya". Her family is totally based on agricultural works. Recently, her second son has been sent abroad for supporting family's economic difficulties. Apart from agricultural and household works, she has not participate in different social work and voluntary services. About main decision maker in her household, she says mostly my husband decides on all kinds of minor daily household activities and financial issue of house. Her husband is always drinking alcohol and she manages outside and inside household needs. In the question of overall women condition in the society, she says that women are not so much controlled and discriminated by family members but women do not want to be active and play decisive role in the family and society. Before she was 20 she had already three children. Her husband sold all the parental property in drinking, gambling and even running after other women. The economic condition of the family got worse day by day. Frustrated, she decided to do something of her own. She moved to Janakpur with her three children and started to work in construction sectors. Slowly and gradually she increased her savings money. Her children worked as a domestic child labor. Her drunkard husband was like an albatross to her. Anyway she started to earn little money day by day. Now she has hired a room of Rs. 4000 in Janakpur area. She works in construction sectors. With the surplus money, she has managed the house with her three children and the drunkard husband. Her bargaining power and resisting voice has increased. She now even complains about the unmanaged rubbish, drainage, road, traffic, electricity. The researcher felt that the social interaction with other workers has increased her potentiality, made independent and empowered. Nevertheless it is really that we women are deprived from parental property right and education and awareness program so we have to face different problem. This case study concluded that dependency is major problem of women. Woman was involved in household decision making process because her husband became unable to take this role. From this study it is concluded that women can play active and decisive role in the family and society.

5.2 Participation of Women in HH Decision Making

Participation of women in household decision making of participants of this study was categorized into four groups. They are high, moderate, less and never.

Table 22: Frequency of Women's Participation

| Particulars | No. of Respondents | Percent |
|-------------|--------------------|---------|
| High | 11 | 12.64 |
| Moderate | 15 | 17.24 |
| Less | 7 | 8.05 |
| Never | 54 | 62.07 |
| Total | 87 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Out of the total 87 respondents, 62.07 percent of the respondents were not participated in the household decision making process, 17.24 percent had moderate participation, 12.64 percent had high participation and the reaming 8.05 percent had less participation in household decision making process. The data presented in the above table revealed the overall situation of women's participation in household decision making process, which was very unsatisfactory.

5.3 Final Decision in Relation to Purchases

The table no 24 shows the final decision in household in relation to purchase of different things as livestock, radio/TV, ornaments and others.

Table 23: Final Decision in Relation to Purchases

| Activities | Female only | | Male only | | Mutual understanding | |
|------------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|
| | No. of respondent | % | No. of Respondent | % | No. of Respondent | % |
| Livestock | 0 | 0 | 77 | 88.51 | 10 | 11.49 |
| Radio/TV | 8 | 9.20 | 54 | 62.07 | 25 | 28.74 |
| Ornaments | 19 | 21.84 | 21 | 24.14 | 47 | 54.02 |
| Others | 9 | 10.34 | 51 | 58.62 | 27 | 31.03 |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Out of the 87 respondents, 88.51 percent of the respondents said that it was the decision of male to purchase livestock while 11.49 percent said that it was based on mutual understanding.

In case of purchase of radio or TV, 62.07 percent thought that it was based on the decision of male in the family followed by understanding 28.74 percent) and 9.20 percent said it depends on the decision of female.

For the purchase of ornaments, majority of the respondents (54.02 percent) agreed that the decision was based on mutual understanding, 21.14 percent said that it was the decision of female and the remaining 21.84 percent thought that it was the decision by male.

In case of purchase of other things, the final decision by female, male and mutual understanding was 10.34 percent, 58.62 percent and 31.03 percent respectively.

5.4 Major Decision in Relation to Investment

In this study, major decision in relation to investment of respondents was categorized into three groups. They are borrow, lending and invest.

Table 24: Major Decision in Relation to Borrowing/ Lending

| Activities | Female only | | Male only | | Mutual understanding | |
|------------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|
| | No. of respondent | % | No. of Respondent | % | No. of Respondent | % |
| Borrow | 11 | 12.64 | 52 | 59.77 | 24 | 27.59 |
| Lending | 0 | 0 | 81 | 93.10 | 6 | 6.90 |
| Invest | 3 | 3.45 | 54 | 62.06 | 30 | 34.49 |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

In the table 24, the major decisions in relation to borrowing/ lending had been shown. According to the data, 59.77 percent told that it was the male figures of the family who decided to borrow money followed by mutual understanding between male and female members (27.59 percent) and female only (16.64 percent). While lending the money, 93.10 percent and 6.90 percent said that it was the decision of male and based on mutual understanding respectively. In the case of investment, 62.06 percent, 34.49 percent and 3.45

percent said that the decision was based on decision of male members, mutual understanding and female members respectively.

5.5 Major Decision in Relation to Medical Treatment

The following table shows the clear picture of major decision in household in relation to medical treatment for children, for old aged people, others and taking family planning measures.

Table 25: Major Decisions in Relation to Medical Treatment

| Activities | Female only | | Male only | | Mutual understanding | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|
| | No. of respondent | % | No. of Respondent | % | No. of Respondent | % |
| For children | 31 | 36.63 | 21 | 24.14 | 35 | 40.23 |
| For old aged people | 17 | 19.64 | 47 | 54.02 | 43 | 49.43 |
| Others | 6 | 6.90 | 52 | 57.47 | 29 | 33.33 |
| Family planning measures | 7 | 8.05 | 13 | 14.94 | 67 | 77.01 |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

According to the table 25, the majority of decision in relation to medical treatment for children was done by the mutual understanding of both (40.23 percent) followed by female (35.63 percent) and male (24.14 percent). In the decision regarding the treatment for old people and others, 54.02 percent and 49.43 percent, 19.54 percent and 57.47 percent & 33.33 percent and 6.90 percent said that it was done by male, mutual understanding and female respectively. In the case of family planning measures, 77.01 percent said that it depended on mutual understanding; percent said that it was the decision of male members while the remaining 8.05 percent said that it was the decision of female.

5.6 Major Decision in Relation to Social/ Religious Ceremonies

The role division of male and female in different social works such as participation in local affairs, municipality meeting, community meeting, marriage, development works and

religious works had already been done in above table but the table no. 26 had tried to show the major decision in household in relation to social and religious ceremonies.

Table 26: Major Decision in Relation to Social/ Religious Ceremonies

| Particulars | Female only | | Male only | | Mutual Understanding | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|
| | No. of Respondent | % | No. of Respondent | % | No. of Respondent | % |
| Participation in Local affairs | 4 | 4.60 | 83 | 95.40 | 0 | 0 |
| Attain in Ward Meeting | 6 | 6.90 | 69 | 80.34 | 12 | 13.79 |
| Attain community Meeting | 13 | 14.94 | 65 | 74.71 | 10 | 11.49 |
| Marriage | 15 | 17.24 | 60 | 68.97 | 12 | 13.79 |
| Participate in Development work | 5 | 5.76 | 74 | 85.06 | 8 | 9.20 |
| Participate in Religious work | 31 | 35.63 | 39 | 44.83 | 17 | 19.54 |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

According to the data shown in the above table 27, 95.40 percent said that it was the decision of male members and mutual understanding to participate in local affairs. For attending the Ward meetings, 80.34 percent said that it was decided by the male members of family while 13.79 percent said that it was based on mutual understanding. In the case of attending the community meetings, 14.94 percent, 74.71 percent and 11.49 percent said that the final decision was of female, male and mutual understanding respectively. For the marriage ceremonies, 68.97 percent said that it depends on the decision of male members followed by mutual understanding (13.79 percent) and female members (17.24 percent). For the participation on development and religious works, 44.83 percent told that the male members decided to participate, followed by mutual understanding (19.54 percent each) and female members of family percent and 35.63 percent respectively.

5.7 Major Decision in Relation to Education

In this study, major decision in relation to education of respondents was asked.

5.7.1 Women's Participation in Enrollment of Children

In this study, women's participation in enrollment of children was asked.

Table 27: Women's Participation in Enrollment of Children

| Particulars | No. of Respondents | Percent |
|-------------|--------------------|---------|
| Yes | 18 | 20.69 |
| No | 69 | 79.31 |
| Total | 87 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Out of the total 87 respondents, majority of the respondents (79.31 percent) told that they were not participated in the decision of enrollment of children while 20.69 percent were participated in the decision making process. The data revealed that only minority of the women were participated in relation to decision about the education of their children.

5.7.2 Expenses of Children in School

In this study, the expenses of children in school of respondents was asked.

Table 28: Children's School Expenses

| Particulars | No. of Respondents | Percent |
|-------------|--------------------|---------|
| Husband | 77 | 88.51 |
| Wife | 3 | 3.45 |
| Jointly | 7 | 8.04 |
| Total | 87 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 28 showed that person who bears the expenses of children in school in which 88.51 percent said that it was the husband of male member of the family who bear the expenses of children in school while 3.45 percent and 8.04 percent said that it was the wife or female member and they jointly used to bear the expenses. It was found in the study that as most of the women were engaged in unproductive works, so they were not able to bear the expenses themselves.

Illiterate Women

Sita Devi Banbasi was born in Dhanusha-1 in 2026 B.S. She got married with Mithilesh Banbasi before 20 years. Her marriage was fixed by her parents. Now she is living with her husband, three daughters and a son. She says though my family has not any financial difficulties, I have to do hard work because most of our cultivated land are far from home. She further says due to this far agricultural land, she has to walk everyday 1.5 hours to reach and return. Beside agricultural work, She has to manage all household chores as well .So her work burden is more than other family members. She wanted to study during her childhood time but her desire couldn't be fulfilled so she is illiterate.

This case study concluded that illiteracy directly affected the living condition of women. So, education play important role for wellbeing of women as well as decision making power for women.

5.7.3 Women's Participation in Adult Literacy

In this study, women's participation in adult literacy of respondents was asked.

Table 29: Women's Participation in Adult Literacy

| Particulars | No. of Respondents | Percent |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|---------|
| Yes | 22 | 25.29 |
| No | 65 | 74.71 |
| Total | 87 | 100 |
| If Yes, Decision for Adult Literacy | | |
| Husband | 13 | 59.10 |
| Wife | 5 | 22.73 |
| Jointly | 4 | 4.62 |
| Total | 22 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

It was found in the study that there was adult literacy class going on for women of the study area. Out of the 87 respondents, 25.29 percent had joined the adult literacy class. Whereas, 74.71 percent had not joined the adult literacy class, Out of the 22 respondents, who had joined the adult literacy class, 59.10 percent said that it was the male figures of the family, husband, who had made the final decision for them to join the class. 4.62 percent said that they had jointly made the decision for attending the adult literacy class where as 22.73 percent said that the females, wife had decided to join the class.

Literate Women

Radha Devi Rajawar is a married woman who had a three son and one daughter. Her husband was a carpenter and he earned fifteen thousand per month. Nowadays, he is unable to do his work due to the health problem. He always dominates his wife particularly in the household chores like child rearing. They did not have sufficient farm except kitchen garden and the volume of production meet the consumption only for a month. Therefore, their family has been facing the different problem of chronic poverty. Since, last seven years she has been selling the vegetables in the local market that helps to meet their family demands like food, clothes, medicine and education. Radha Devi Rajawar usually brings her daughter with her. Therefore she could not attend her class regularly, she is very proud with her work. We can also work like men with strong passion arise. Radha Devi Rajawar recalled the story of past days. She looks as upon suspension when she went out of the selling vegetable.

This case study concluded that literate woman has also suffered from household problem if her husband did support her. From this study it can be concluded that every society, ethnic group, and culture has gender role expectations, but they can be very different from group to group.

5.8 Decision Making Patterns of Women

The pattern of decision making in our society is highly biased. Women work very hard, but when it comes to important decisions, males predominantly take charge, while females are mostly involved in routine household decisions like shopping for daily needs, cooking, etc.

This study aims to analyze the decision-making patterns of job-holding and non-job-holding women. The patterns have been examined under various variables, including children's health, education, personal expenditure, land purchase/sale, asset purchase/sale, agricultural production processes, participation in community groups, and the use of information technology. By studying these factors, the research seeks to understand the differences in decision-making between job-holding and non-job-holding women in both household affairs and economic decision making.

Table 30: Decision Making Pattern of the Respondents in Household Affairs

| Decision making pattern | Job holder women | | | | | | Non-job holder women | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|----|---------|----|------|----|----------------------|----|---------|----|------|----|
| | Self | | Husband | | Both | | Self | | Husband | | Both | |
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Health of the children | 15 | 50 | 10 | 33 | 5 | 17 | 20 | 66 | 7 | 23 | 3 | 11 |
| Education of the children | 10 | 34 | 12 | 40 | 8 | 26 | 15 | 50 | 10 | 34 | 5 | 17 |
| Participation in community group | 13 | 43 | 7 | 23 | 10 | 34 | 18 | 60 | 4 | 13 | 8 | 26 |
| Use of the information technology | 8 | 26 | 12 | 40 | 10 | 34 | 15 | 50 | 10 | 33 | 5 | 17 |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table 30 revealed the decision making pattern of the job holder and Non-job holder women in the household affairs. Regarding health of the children, education of the children, participation of in community and use of the information technology, both (job holder and non-job holder) women are taking self-decisions. And less percent of the decisions are being taken by respondents' husbands and both.

In the case of children's health, 50 percent of job-holding women and 66 percent of non-job-holding women make their own decisions, while 33 percent of job-holding women and 23 percent of non-job-holding women follow their husband's decisions. Here, the percentage of non-job-holding women making decisions about their children's health is greater than that of job-holding women. This is because of the fact that non-job-holding women generally have more time to care for their children compared to job-holding women. Additionally, non-job-holding women's husbands may be away from home for work, placing the responsibility for the children's well-being squarely on the women's shoulders. Consequently, the decision-making power of non-job-holding women regarding children's health is greater than that of job-holding women.

With respect to education of the children, Among them, 43 percent job holder and 63 percent Non-job holder women take self-decision and 57 percent job holder and 37 percent Non-job holder women's husbands take decision in case of children's education. Like the health of the children, the percentage of the Non-job holder women is more than the percentage of job

holder women in the decision of the children’s education. From this, we can analyze that job-holding women have more roles and responsibilities both at home and in the office, which limits the time they can dedicate to their children. On the other hand, non-job-holding women have more time to devote to their children's care and well-being. So, women without jobs can decide about their children’s education comparably more than job-holder women.

In case of the women’s participation in the community group, Out of the respondents, 77 percent job holder and 87 percent Non-job holder women take self-decision. From this data, we can say that the job holder women should responsible in many places in different roles. If there are extra activities like, meeting, documentation etc in the office then they should work till late. Similarly, they should give time for family when they are free from work. So, they could not take self-decision. Another side, Non-job holder women have more time for extra work. They are free in the noon when they send their husband and children for work and study. And they can join this group. So, they take self-decision to participate in community group.

In the case of using information technology, all participants (both job-holding and non-job-holding women) reported using it. Among them, 60 percent of job-holding women and 67 percent of non-job-holding women make the decision themselves to bring information technology into their homes. Meanwhile, 40 percent of job-holding women and 33 percent of non-job-holding women follow their husband's decision in this regard. Here, the percentage of non-job-holding women is higher than that of job-holding women. This could be because non-job-holding women have more leisure time and may feel bored at home, leading them to decide to bring in information technology rather than consuming other goods. In contrast, job-holding women have less time to use information technology, making them less interested in it.

Table 31: Decision Making Pattern of the Respondents in Economic Activities

| S.N | Decision making pattern | Job holder Women | | | | | | Non-job holder Women | | | | | |
|-----|-------------------------|------------------|----|---------|----|------|---|----------------------|----|---------|----|------|----|
| | | Self | | Husband | | Both | | Self | | Husband | | Both | |
| | | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| 1 | Personal expenditure | 20 | 68 | 10 | 32 | 0 | 0 | 19 | 63 | 8 | 27 | 3 | 10 |
| 2 | Land purchase/ sell | 9 | 30 | 19 | 63 | 2 | 7 | 17 | 57 | 13 | 43 | 0 | 0 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|----|----|----|----|---|----|----|----|----|----|---|---|
| 3 | Assets purchase/ sell | 18 | 60 | 12 | 40 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 67 | 10 | 33 | 0 | 0 |
| 4 | Agriculture production process | 7 | 23 | 17 | 57 | 6 | 20 | 18 | 60 | 12 | 40 | 0 | 0 |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table 31 explains pattern of decision making of the respondents in economic activities. Regarding personal expenditure, land buy/sale, assets sale/purchase and agriculture production process, maximum number of the respondents follow husband's decision, less percent of the respondents take self-decision and very less percent of the respondents offer other family members to take decision in above said economic activities.

In the case of personal expenditure, among the participants, 68 percent of job-holding women and 63 percent of non-job-holding women make their own decisions. Meanwhile, 32 percent of job-holding women and 27 percent of non-job-holding women follow decisions made by their husbands. Additionally, in 10 percent of cases, non-job-holding women's family members collectively decide on personal expenditures. This data shows that job-holding women have a higher rate of self-decision-making regarding personal expenditure compared to non-job-holding women. This can be attributed to the financial independence job-holding women gain from their employment, which allows them to spend money without seeking permission. In contrast, non-job-holding women, who typically do not earn their own money and rely on their husbands for financial support, need to ask for money for personal expenses.

Unmarried and widowed women often depend on other family members, such as fathers, brothers, mothers, or sons, for financial support, further reducing their autonomy in personal expenditure decisions. This explains why job-holding women have a higher rate of self-decision-making compared to non-job-holding women in this context. In case of the land sale/buy, among the respondents, 30 percent job holder and 57 percent Non-job holder women take self-decision. In the same way, 57 percent non job holder and 63 percent job holder women's families follow husband's decision and 7 percent job holder women's other family members take decision in the land buy/sale. Here, the percentage of the Non-job holder women is higher than job holder women. This can be due to that the Non-job holder women's husband should go to job. It may be out of the village or country. In this situation,

women should do all decisions about the land purchasing and sale. Another side, they have more time for registration, documentation and other activities. So, Non-job holder women's husband gives responsibility to her to do this. But job holder women have lack of the time for thinking about the land and other things except their work and family. Similarly, they cannot give time for registration, documentation. So, they are far from all this things.

In the case of the assets purchase/sale, from the total job holder and Non-job holder women, 60 percent job holder and 67 percent Non-job holder women take self-decision. Similarly, 40 percent job holder women follow decision, taken by their husband. This data shows that the percentage of the job holder women is smaller than the Non-job holder women in the case of assets business. From this we can find that the job holder women are self-capable to earn money, so, they are not interested to play with profit and loss game. Similarly, job holder women are career oriented so they want to invest their time, mind and money in the intellectual things rather than the assets business. So, they want to be free from this business. But Non-job holder women have more time for this business and it should be obligation to do this business because their husbands can be outside home. And Non-job holder women are more interested in the jewels and decoration of the home compared to the job holder women. It can also be cause behind the higher rate of the Non-job holder women.

Lastly, In agriculture, 23 percent of job-holding women and 60 percent of non-job-holding women participate in self-decision making regarding agricultural production. Conversely, 57 percent of job-holding women's husbands and 40 percent of non-job-holding women's husbands make these decisions. Additionally, 20 percent of job-holding women's other family members take part in decision-making.

This data indicates that non-job-holding women are more involved in agricultural decisions than their job-holding counterparts. This difference can be because of limited free time job-holding women have, as they typically have only one day off per week. On their day off, they often spend time doing household chores, entertaining guests, or shopping, leaving them with less time to engage in agricultural decision-making. Consequently, they rely on whatever is available on the farm or purchase food from the market based on their preferences. In contrast, non-job-holding women have more leisure time, allowing them to spend more time on their farms. Moreover, because non-job-holding women typically have less personal income compared to job-holding women, they need to save money on

household purchases. This necessity results in higher participation rates in agricultural production among non-job-holding women compared to job-holding women.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Summary

The first chapter is introduction of study which consists of study's background, problem statement, objective, significance, and limitations are all covered in the first chapter. The review of literature, which encompasses theoretical review, review of prior research, and conceptual framework, was the subject of the second chapter. The study's research methodology is covered in the third chapter. The presentation and analysis of data according to objectives are covered in the fourth chapter, respectively. Analysis also consists of the status, role and participation of respondents in households' level decision. The summary of findings and conclusions are covered in the sixth chapter.

This study is based on primary data collected from a field survey. Out of the 873 households in this ward, 87 households were selected as samples for information collection. Women are extensively engaged on agricultural activities but hold the triple work responsibilities of reproduction, house holding and employment. However, reproduction is not treated as a work and house holding is not considered a productive hob. So, with limited educational skill, lacks of technical knowhow, and few formal opportunities, majority of women don't have significant improvement in their socio-economic condition. So, this study on "Women and Decision Making: A household level study of Mushar community, Janakpurdham Submetropolitancity-1, Dhanusa" was conducted with the objective to analyze the role of gender in household decision, to examine the existing socio-economic status of women in the study area, to analyze the role of women in household decision making and to access the factors which affects women in household decision making power.

The major findings of the study found that 41.38% of them were adults, 51.72% were middle aged and the remaining 6.90% were old aged. 20.69 % were under SLC, followed by those who had passed SLC (25.28 %). 25.28% were illiterate, 28.75% were literate. 91.96% were married whereas remaining 8.04 % of the respondents were widow. 35.62%, 47.30 % and 17.24% of the respondents had small, medium and large family size respectively. 40.23% were engaged in agriculture with household works,

49.32 % of the respondents were engaged in agriculture and service, 8.05% of the respondents were engaged in agriculture with business and the remaining 2.30% were engaged in other sectors. 29.89%, 60.91% and 9.20 % had high (above 5 Katha), middle (1-5 Katha) and low land (below 1 Katha) holding respectively. But it was found that ownership of land holding of respondents were under the male members of family. The study found that 93.10%, 6.90% said that they had their own house and rent house respectively. All the houses were under the name of the male members of respondents.

It was found that in case of female household headship (12.64 %), it was either the husband was dead or the male member was out of the village for study or job. In fetching of water, cooking, cleaning utensils, sweeping and washing clothes, baby care and worshipping majority of respondents said that only female were involved. The data showed those males were more engaged in those works in animal husbandry, which were of economic values outside household and female for non-economic inside household.

The percent of male was in digging the field; the percent of female was high in plantation in field and in drying and storing grain. The participation of male was high in local affairs, ward meeting and community meeting but in religious activities the participation of female was high and marriages and development of the participation of both were high. 62.07% said that their major source of income was agriculture with livestock followed by service with 18.39%, business with 10.34% and others worth 9.20% respectively. The expenditure in agriculture was high while in food, clothing was average and in education, religious activities and medicine was low.

71.5%, 20 % and 8.5 % said that male members, jointly and female members had control over the bazaar purchase. That majority of the respondents (59.77 %) said that they were not involved in decision making in household followed by 37.93 % who said that they were involved in decision making whereas 2.30% replied that they did not know about it.

Out of the total population 62.07% respondents were not participated in household decision, 17.24% had moderate participation, 12.64 % had high participation and the remaining 8.05% had less participation in household decision. Majority of decision for purchase of livestock, radio or TV and other materials was done by male members while in purchase of ornaments; decision was based on mutual understanding. Major decision in relation to borrowing, lending and investment were done by the male members of the family.

The study found that 79.31% told that they were not participated in the decision of enrollment of children while 20.69 % were participated in the decision making. The study found that 88.51 % said that it was male member of the family who bear the expenses of children in school while 3.45% and 8.04% said that it was the wife or female member and they jointly used to bear the expenses. The study found that 25.29% had joined the adult literacy class where as 74.71% had not joined the adult literacy class. Out of the 22 respondents, who had joined adult literacy class, 59.10% said that it was the male figures of the family, who had make the final decision for them to join the class. 4.62% said that they had jointly made the decision for attending the adult literacy class where as 22.73% said that the females, wife had decided to join the class.

6.2 Conclusions

The study aimed to investigate the socio-economic status and participation of women in decision-making activities within the Mushar Community of Janakpurdham Submetropolitancity-1. The findings reveal that women in this community face significant socio-economic challenges, characterized by low levels of education, limited access to healthcare, and inadequate economic opportunities. Additionally, women's participation in decision-making activities is minimal, often restricted by traditional gender roles and societal norms. These insights highlight the need for targeted interventions to enhance the socio-economic conditions of Mushar women and promote their active involvement in community decisions.

The study concluded that women are engaged in non-productive activities within the household where as men in productive activities both in inside and outside the household which make the male members of the household stronger in making the decisions. So, this study had focused upon the status of women in terms of their household decision making activities. As the study area is famous place for Musahar community, all of the respondents were engaged in household activity and outside sector in one way or another which was the main source of income for them as well. It was also concluded in the study that respondent's family had not good amount of land holding but ownership of land holding and houses of the respondents were under the male members of the family i.e. father/father in law, husband, brother/brother in laws. As far as the household headship is concerned, male had the majority of household head status. This data revealed that the women of the study area did not have enough access to property.

The study does not show much improvement towards bringing them into the national progress agenda, in reality. In course of the study, it is found that there is a pressing need of education for the women as education alone can lead them to a new era with abundance of opportunities.

This study concluded that Mushar women play a multifaceted role in their families, bearing a significant workload primarily in household tasks. Despite engaging in agriculture, their efforts are not recognized as income-generating, as it serves the family's needs. Although the literacy rate among Mushar women is improving, their access to higher education remains limited due to various social, personal, and economic factors. The educational status of respondents is not good. Property rights for women are limited, especially among the Mushar community. Due to a lack of higher education, Mushar women predominantly engage in agriculture, yet they possess less decision-making authority compared to their male counterparts. While Mushar women exhibit significant decision-making power in certain activities, men generally hold superior roles in most variables. Household decision-making sees equal contribution from men and women in only a few activities. The prevailing factors contributing to this situation include traditional norms, a male-dominated culture, and educational deficiencies. Women have engaged many times in agricultural activities. Men typically play a dominant role in making decisions for various household activities, resulting in a significant disparity between men and women in the realm of household decision making. Women in household activities have a relatively higher involvement, particularly in tasks like cooking, child care, and fetching water, which are still stereotypically considered female responsibilities. On the other hand, men tend to be more engaged in activities such as crop harvesting and borrowing money. In festivals like marriage and other, woman has major role inside home activities while outside home like in the distribution of invitation male has major role. Sometimes Mushar society values the equal importance of men and women in some cases. Mushar women and men likely exhibit unique characteristics shaped by their cultural context. The roles might be influenced by traditional expectations, with women possibly playing key roles in family and community support, while men may have responsibilities tied to work and societal roles. In the study area majority respondents reported that the main causes of women's being deprived is due to the lack of education, lack of awareness and very less percent of respondents reported that it is due to lack of traditional and culture. Therefore, it can be inferred that Mushar women have limited decision-making authority. The women of Mushar are often neglected in society, leading to their

backwardness. Empowering Mushar's women relies on raising awareness about their economic, social, and political rights.

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APPENDIX

Interview Schedule

1. General overview of the Respondent

i) Name: ii) Age:

iii) Educational status

Level of Education

Illiterate

Literate

Under SLC

SLC

Certificate

Diploma

Degree

v) Marital status: -

(a) Married

(b) Unmarried

(c) Widow

vi) Types of family

(A) Small (B) Medium (C) Large vii) Occupation:

a) Agricultural + household

b) Agriculture + Service

c) Agriculture + Business

d) Others

(Tick on your choice)

2. How much land do you have?

a) Above 5 Katha (b) 1-5 Katha (C) Below 1 Katha

3. Where do you live?

i) Own house ii. Renting house iii. Rent free house

4. Who is the head of your household?

5. Who does the following activities within your household?

| Activities | Female only | Male only | Both |
|---------------------|-------------|-----------|------|
| Collection firewood | | | |
| Fetching water | | | |
| Cooking | | | |
| Cleaning utensils | | | |
| Sweeping | | | |
| Washing clothes | | | |
| Baby care | | | |
| Adult care | | | |
| Worshipping | | | |

6. Who are most engaged in the following animal husbandry work?

| Activities | Female only | Male only | Both |
|----------------------|-------------|-----------|------|
| Feeding animals | | | |
| Grass collection | | | |
| Collection of manure | | | |
| Milking | | | |
| Making butter | | | |
| Selling milk | | | |

7. Who does the following agricultural activities?

| Activities | Female only | Male only | Both |
|---------------------|-------------|-----------|------|
| Dig field | | | |
| Plantation in field | | | |
| Drying grains | | | |
| Storing grains | | | |
| Dig field | | | |
| Plantation in field | | | |

8. What is your main source of income?
 i) Agriculture/livestock ii. Service iii. Business iv. Others

9. What is your average monthly income?

- i) More than 6000 ii. Rs 2000-6000 iii. Less then 2000

10. What is the amount of expenditure in following domestic sectors monthly?

| Particular | Food | Clothing | Education | Social & religious | Agriculture | Medicine |
|-----------------|------|----------|-----------|--------------------|-------------|----------|
| Below 10000 | | | | | | |
| 10000-30000 | | | | | | |
| More than 30000 | | | | | | |

11. Do you have to get permission from the men members to use the money?

- i) Yes ii. No iii. Sometimes

12. Do you have to submit the details of expenditure or inform male members?

- i) Yes ii. No iii. Sometimes

13. If yes, how do you inform them about your expenditure?

- i) Submit details ii. Inform Casually 14. Who has control of household cash?

- i. Male Members ii. Female members' iii jointly iv. Others

15. Who have control over bazaar purchase?

- i. Male Members ii. Female Members iii. Jointly iv Others

16. Are you involved in decision makings in households?

- i. Yes ii. No iii. Don't know

17. If yes, what is the frequency of your participation in household decision making?

- i. High ii. Moderate iii. Less iv. Never

18. Who has the final decision for purchase of the following items?

| Activities | Female only | Male only | Mutual understanding |
|------------|-------------|-----------|----------------------|
| Livestock | | | |
| Radio/TV | | | |
| Ornaments | | | |
| Others | | | |

19. Who does the major decisions in relation to the following monetary activities?

| Activities | Female only | Male only | Mutual understanding |
|------------|-------------|-----------|----------------------|
| Borrowing | | | |
| Lending | | | |
| Invest | | | |

20. Who takes the major decisions for the following medical activities?

| Activities | Female only | Male only | Mutual understanding |
|--------------------------|-------------|-----------|----------------------|
| For Children | | | |
| For Old aged | | | |
| Others | | | |
| Family planning Measures | | | |

21. Who does final decision in relation to participation in social and religious ceremonies?

| Activities | Female only | Male only | Both |
|-------------------|-------------|-----------|------|
| Local Affairs | | | |
| Ward Meeting | | | |
| Community Meeting | | | |
| Marriage | | | |
| Development works | | | |
| Religious Work | | | |

22. Are you involved in the decision for the enrollment of children in schools?

- i. Yes ii. No

23. Who bear the expenses of children in the school?

- i. Husband ii. Wife iii. Jointly

24. Do you participate in adult literacy class?

- i. Yes ii. No

25. If yes, who decided for the adult literacy class?

i. Husband ii. Wife iii. Jointly

26. Lastly what do you think why women are lagging behind than men in decision making? What are the factors behind it?

| | | | |
|--------------------------|--|--|--|
| Others | | | |
| Family planning Measures | | | |

Thank You