

*Original Article*

# Evaluation of Gender Equality at Workplace in Chit wan & Nawalparasi (East) District, Nepal

Prabha Wagle <sup>1\*</sup>

1. Tribhuvan University, Nepal.

\* Correspondence: [wagleprabha01@gmail.com](mailto:wagleprabha01@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** Gender Inequality at Workplace or organizations is itself a multidimensional phenomenon that can mostly be prevailed in institutional structures, processes and human resources (hrs) practices. Different societal aspects and dimensions can create such inequalities at different levels. Gender inequalities are enacted in some of the most influenced practices (i.e. Policies formulation, leadership, decision making and their enactment) and they affect the hiring/recruitment, trainings, participation, payments, rewards and promotion of women for their career advancement. This study has emphasized on the issues and challenges women have faced in their workplace. I suggest the gender related decisions processes, and policies to enact from the broader level of management streams to encounter the inequalities issues within the organization. This includes the participation of working women in vital roles like decision making, formulations of act and regulations, strategy, HR Policies, HR Team and structure. Additional to the study, the level of sexism of high management level team can affect their likelihood of making gender biased policies, prioritized favoritism and can act in a bossism manner while implementing the decisions. Importantly, gender discrimination within workplace in several aspect like pay, reward, promotion, participation and work life balance play significant role in maintaining gender friendly environment, but also effect on the overall institutional practices and processes, resulting to provide socialized context for decision makers. Although I framed gender inequality as a self-reinforcing system that can perpetuate differences and partialities, significant factors for reducing such discrimination are mapped and studied from the eye of working women in selected study area.

**Keywords:** gender equality, workplace, chit wan & nawalparasi, Nepal

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The terms, 'gender' and 'sex' are used synonymously by many people, but these terms have the distinct meanings. 'Sex' is used to refer biological and reproductive characteristics whereas 'Gender' is a pattern of behaviours recognized as 'feminine' or 'masculine'. Acker defines gender as the social dimension of biological sex that refers to patterned, socially produced distinctions between feminine and masculine [1]. It covers a wide concept of sex and related feelings and behaviours including the physical structure and inequalities generated by those structural differences Gender refers not to male and female, but to masculine and feminine i.e. To qualities or characteristics that society attributes to each sex [2]. It refers to the roles and responsibilities, attributes and power relations that are socially constructed by and assigned to men and women of a given society or community. But in social contexts like Nepal, traditional and religious values are dominant in shaping the attitudes and behaviour [3]. So, the perceptions of gender are deeply rooted in Nepal both within and between the cultures and societies. Thus, it determines power and resources for males and females. In general, gender inequality is defined

as unequal treatment and opportunities due to perceived differences based solely on the issue of gender or sex. Men usually experience better opportunities, more freedom and higher social regard than women who share the same social characteristics (such as class, origin, race nationality and age). Also, males hold power in marriages and social positions that possess significant political, economic, legal or cultural power [4]. Gender inequalities exist because of both outright discrimination in society and gender stereotypes, difficulties with regulating the private sphere, the segregation of labour market etc. [5]. Primarily, gender inequalities get nurtured in families and grow as the institutional structures and in most cases, they dominate the labour market for example, because of the difficulty in balancing work and family life, which continues to be seen as the woman's responsibility in most of the household chores and also faced low waged grade in working [6]. Gender inequalities means not only discriminations among females but also males and third genders, biasness in utilizations of time, resources and opportunities .Before I represent the research question of the study, I will briefly introduce the general status of women in Nepal [7]. The total population of Nepal is 29,192,480 in which 51.04 percent are women. Despite being half of the national population, their role and participation are placed in background and are expected to perform household chores in most of the Nepalese communities. Women's representation is severely limited in the formal sector of Nepalese economy [8]. This discrimination has established the hierarchical relationship between men and women in the society and also helped to create many rigid gender norms that restrict women's opportunities and stifle their representation in health, education, political and labour market. According to the UN's Human Development Report, Gender Inequality Index (GII) is a composite measure to quantify the loss of achievement within a country due to gender inequality [9]. It uses three dimensions to measure opportunity cost: reproductive health, empowerment, and labour market participation. Nepal ranks 118 with 0.480 value in GII. However, major challenges remain, Nepal ranked 106 out of 156 countries in Gender Inequality Index [10]. This statistic shows that Nepal is progressing the countering gender issues, but on the other hand, fact cannot be ignored that girls and young women face numerous challenges in their everyday life, ranging from the ill effects of early marriage to psychological and sexual violence, fewer opportunities in the workspace and societal traditions that always seem to place women on a lower rank. According to the Nepal Living Standards Survey (2010/11) Nepal has an adult literacy rate of 56.6%. However, the male and female literacy rates stand at 71.6% and 44.5% respectively, pointing to a huge disparity between the two genders [11]. It is then no surprise that women have less education, information, and opportunities for self-enhancement at home, let alone in the professional world. On this scenario, I will explore the gender inequality in Nepal with the focus on how man and women treated differently in workplace, challenges experienced by working women particularly regarding their career development in this study, which is studied from the perception of working women in Chit wan and Nawalparasi (East) districts. The concept of gender equality at workplace is a complex to state in a single definition. Mostly, in case of females/women, inequalities at workplace can be predominantly seen in institutional structure, Human Resource (HR) process and practices. HR Practices like recruitment, training, payment, promotions and rewards are enacted into action by mostly high level management and women participation is minimal. Additionally, workplace discrimination contributes to women socio-economic status and can significantly affect the HR policies and related decision making [12]. Workplace discrimination can harm women performance and competency in multiple forms [13]. Such disparity and ignorance in factors like pay gap, women's participation in leadership, decision making can negatively affect women's earnings, opportunities to move forward, resulting the longer time requirement for women to advance their careers (Belau and Deveron,. Consequently, confidence lower down and interest to participate may get declined [14].

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Based on the nature of the study, Chit wan and Nawalparasi (East) Districts have been selected for the study. This study is trying to analyze the gender inequalities at workplace. There are numbers of reasons behind the selection of this area. My familiarity with the circumstances and the environment in the area can be helpful for choosing the most appropriate informants and conducting interviews. Similarly, another aspect for determine to select this area is because of accessibility, which makes possible to collect primary data for research. In addition, with this, women are involved in different professions that supports to easy access to the informants. The inequalities in workplaces can be widely seen even if there are educated people in this site so that I can explore the challenges faced by women in their professional career. Moreover, no other researchers have conducted any research about inequality in workplaces with gender perspective in this region. The study is conducted fully from the perspective/eye of working women based on their feelings and experiences on inequalities issues at their workplace. As the purpose of the study is to explore the gender equality experienced by women at their workplace which is difficult to elaborate the study through statistics only. The research is carried out using mixed methods of explanatory sequential design; quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative survey was done using systematic sampling approach to reach the objective of the study. As part of qualitative survey, convenient sampling carried out using Interview, Case Studies and Observations were done in the selected areas. This research is based on both primary and secondary sources of data. The research design of this study is based on descriptive analysis to discover detail insight on gender balance or imbalance of the study area. The study basically relies upon the primary data as well as secondary data. The primary data has been collected from the field survey through questionnaire, key information's interview, and field observation. Secondary data were collected through the report of different offices, CBS Report and other available sources such as: books, literature, and journals. The universe of the study comprises all the working women of Chit wan and Nawalparasi (East) districts. In this case, size of the universe of study is quite unknown and indefinite. The survey population of study consists of women working in different organizations in Chit wan and Nawalparasi (East) districts. The organizations covered by the study include Local Government Offices i.e. Madhyabindu Municipality, Nawalparasi, Gaidakot Municipality Nawalparasi and Bhagalpur Metropolitan City, Chit wan. Similarly, the study covers the private and corporate sectors like Banks i.e. Kumara Bank, Chennault Branch and Mega Bank, Narayangadh Branch from Chit wan district, Business, Non-government organization (NGO) and Daily wages based study was conducted in Kawasaki, Nawalparasi. Similarly, Nepal Green Valley English Boarding School and Shree Nawajagaran Higher Secondary School, Charmer, Nawalparasi were chosen as a part of study for survey and data collection. The study from different professions was done with the belief that diversified employee experience separate gender perspectives, and inequality issues in their workplace. For practical reasons, total number of women working in these organizations/offices are unknown to the researcher. Hence, the size of the survey population of the study is also unknown. As the size of the survey population was unknown, sample selection by using probability sampling design was virtually impossible. Thus, the sample from the women working in the above mentioned organizations was selected by using non-random sampling design. Convenience method of sample selection was used to include the women whoever were available and approachable to the researcher. Thus, the sample unit was determined by availability and willingness of the working women covered by the study area. The informants were from above mentioned diverse organization with different professions like teaching, civil service, NGO, business, private and corporate sector and daily wages. Therefore, the study has diverse participants for the sources of data. The rationale in doing so is that a conveniently selected diverse sample offers the high possibility of identifying the full range of factors connected with this research. For practical reasons, size of the total sample cases was confined to 50 (N=50) for this study, equally distributed from Chit wan and Nawalparasi (East) districts i.e. 25 from each district. The sample size has no theoretical, methodological/statistical justification as the population size was unknown, non-probability sampling design used applying convenient sampling

method and small sample size was taken for the study. This study is based on the primary data i.e. The firsthand information were collected from the participants.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Chit wan District lies in Teri region and takes up the south-western corner of Baghmati Province. Bhagalpur city is its administrative centre. It covers 2,238.39 km<sup>2</sup>. It had a population of 722,168 (354,071 male and 368,097 female) people (CBS). Bhagalpur is the commercial and service hub of South Central Nepal. It is a major destination for higher education, health care and transportation in the region. Chit wan is situated in the Basin of Narayan River which is roughly triangular. The river takes as its meandering north-western border, and a modest watershed border, with India, as the basis of its southern limit. Chit wan consist of six Local government namely: Bhagalpur Metropolitan, Rapt Municipality, Ratnanagar Municipality, Kalka Municipality, Madi Municipality, and Ikshyakamana Rural Municipality. The district runs in between the Mahabharata and Siwalik ranges, both considered foothills of the Himalayas. The Rapti River flows east to the southwest in the south of Bhagalpur and forms the northern border of the Chit wan National Park. The Narayan River flows north to south to the west of Bhagalpur. It is the deepest river in Nepal. The Narayan Bridge over the river connects Chit wan District with Nawalparasi District of Nepal. Chit wan is one of the few remaining undisturbed vestiges of the Teri region, which formerly extended over the foothills of Nepal with dense forest and wild animals like rhinos and Bengal tigers. The people inhabiting the Chit wan District are predominantly peasant farmers cultivating mainly food and cash crops such as rice, maize, wheat, beans, lentils, mustard, etc. Poultry, floriculture, bee-keeping, mushroom cultivation and vegetables are also a significant income source of farmers residing in Chit wan. Poultry is growing industry in the district. The district is the major maize-producing area in Nepal, with an area under maize cultivation was 9, 57,650 ha with the production of 28, 35,674 MT and productivity of 2.96 MT/Ha (MOAD, 2020). The land of Chit wan is also spotted with clay and silt, resulting from the flooding of the Narayan River and its tributaries which is very good for growing rice, wheat, mustard and different vegetables. Chit wan has adopting the South Korean New Community Movement model of development. One of the biggest rice mills in Nepal, Agama Food Industry, is situated in Bhagalpur and a source of local employment. People residing in Jabalpur district are mostly engaged in agriculture. Food and cash crops like rice, lentil, vegetables, and sugarcane are the major crops cultivated and are source of income for local farmers. Shasta Dam and Duane devil temple is famous tourism and religious site for Hindu pilgrims. The highest peak in Nepal's Curia range, Mt. Devchuli 1,937 meters (6,355 ft), is in this district.

**Table 01:** Age distribution of Respondents

S.N.	Age Group	No. Of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	20-40	31	62.0
2.	40-60	15	30.0
3.	60+	4	8.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100.0</b>

According to the table, out of total 50 respondents, 62 percent of the total respondent are between the age of 20-40 and 30 percent are between the age of 40-60 and the rest 8 percent are above age 60 years. The majority of the sampled respondents are youth employees. The respondent chosen mostly from youth group being active working age group. The given variable (age) is also a factor of gender inequality. Because generally it is considered that lower the age lower the maturity in work and decision making due to less experience. In the same hand, youth age group can resist more work pressure and active in given work. So there would be high possibility of gender inequality.

**Table 02:** Cast/Ethnicity

S.N.	Caste Ethnicity	No. Of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	Brahmin/Cheri	21	42.0
2.	Janajati	10	20.0
3.	Madhesi	2	4.0
4.	Dalit	7	14.0
5.	Thru	9	18.0
6.	Muslim	1	2.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100.0</b>

As shown in above table it seems that, 42 percent of the respondents belongs to Brahmin/Chhetri, 20 percent belongs to Janajati, 4 percent from Mahesh community, 14 represent Dalit, 18 percent from Tharu community and only 2 percent were Muslim respondents. Caste is one of the prominent factors of equality/inequality. Because, there is prevalence of caste based discrimination everywhere in Nepal. A foremost, the lower caste women were highly exploited or given lower space in the workplace. However, government of Nepal has given privileged to the women and people from socially backward community in the reservation seat to bring inclusive workplace to create equalities in work force diversity. Also Constitution of Nepal 2072 clearly stated that the act of discriminating people in regards to their caste and ethnic background as a crime, and has provisioned the penalties and prison for maximum 3 years. Education is one of the most important characteristics for empowerment process of human beings. It is the vital indicator of respondent's gender equality. The educational status of the respondents is shown in table below.

**Table 03:** Marital Status of Respondents

S.N.	Marital Status	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	Unmarried	15	30.0
2.	Married	33	66.0
3.	Widow	2	4.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The above table shows that out of 50 sample respondents, 30 percent were unmarried 66 were married and 4 percent of total respondents are widowed. Married and widowed females are determined to perform more responsibilities in the family and society. The conditions of widowed females are even worse, if they are not financially settled. They have to face the curse and blames of the society. Comparatively, unmarried women have less family burden and social responsibilities that is directly connected with their sovereignty and the work life balance. Majority of the respondents were married, they are having the multiple responsibilities as wife, mother or daughter at home and the employee at workplace such as office works and household chores together with.

**Table 04:** Family Structure of the Respondents

S.N.	Family Type	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	Joint	21	42.0
2.	Nuclear	29	58.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The above table shows that 58 percent of the respondents reported that they live in nuclear family and the remaining 42 percent of the households were represented joint family. This variable is directly related with the work/life balance of an employee. If s/he lives in joint family might have less household chores. But a person who lives in nuclear family have multiple household chores, taking care of child, preparing their husband for work and at the same time they have to meet their office in time. Because they never get excuse of being multi-task women which may affect their professional performance.

**Table 05:** Occupation of the Respondents' Household

S.N.	Occupation	No. Of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	Agriculture	15	30.0
2.	Daily wages	7	14.0
3.	Business	3	6.0
4.	Jobs and Service	25	50.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The above table shows the distribution of respondents' household with respect to their `occupational status, 30 percent of the total respondents' household are engaged in agriculture. Similarly, 14 percent are daily wages and 6 percent of the respondents are engaged in business and majority i.e. 50 percent respondent are from jobs and service. The above data shows that the women in the working areas are mostly rely on agriculture and service. Some of the respondents are depending upon daily wages it shows they have less access on land or physical assets. However, few respondents were engaged in business mainly on, own cosmetic shop/grocery shop, boutique and designing, Fruit shop, Dairy etc.

**Table 06:** Position Level of the Respondents

S.N.	Position Level	No. Of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	Employee	35	70.0
2.	First-Level Management	11	22.0
3.	Mid-Level Management	3	6.0
4.	High-Level Management	1	2.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The respondents were distributed across various position level. It is found that the majority of the respondents belongs to employee level that is 70 percent. First-Level Management represents 22 percent, Mid-Level Management represents 6 percent and only 2 percent belongs to High Level Management category.

**Table 07:** Length of Service of the Respondents

S.N.	Years of the Service	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	<1 year	12	24.0
2.	1-5 years	28	56.0
3.	5 years and above	10	20.0
<b>Total</b>		<b>50</b>	<b>100.0</b>

As shown in above table, out of the survey, 56 percent of the respondents as indicated in table were experienced between 1-5 years. Whereas 20 percent of the respondents revealed that they have been working since more than 5 years. The remaining 24 percent of the respondent had an experience less than 1 years and are fresher.

### Discussion

To illustrate the present study, topic under the several theoretically evaluation unfolds the vagarious and critical roots of gender equality/inequality at workplace [14]. This chapter attempts to present the theoretical framework for the study of status of equalities to working women in their professional career in Nepal which will be used throughout the analysis [15]. With the application of these theories, the main point here is, to show how gender influence on the professional career and work-family life of working women. So, this study looks upon the concept of these contemporary theories of social science i.e. Doing gender and intersectionality as theoretical framework [16]. This theory is used to explain how the various interactions of gender, age, marital status and class background that constitute inequality in the workplace [17]. The term intersectionality specifically derived from the work of critical legal scholar. She used the concept of intersectionality to grasp the ways in which the interactions of gender and race limit black women's access to the American labor market and how a lack of understanding of this intersection led to the marginalization of black women and black women's experiences [18]. While the theory began as an exploration of the oppression of women of color within society, today, the analysis is potentially applied to catch the relationship between socio-cultural categories and identities. Intersectionality has become the commonly adopted term to capture thinking around interfaces, multiple oppressions, and mutual constitutions that can be in legal, political, and sociological academic scholarship; and the critical feminist streams of these disciplines [19]. It is thus an idea often used in critical theories, the ways in which oppressive institutions (caste, class, religion, ethnicity and gender) are inter-connected and cannot be examined separately from one another that power and oppression rest upon [20]. In addition, the intersectionality concept is specifically used to address the experiences of people who are subjected to multiple forms of subordination within society, where it claims that gender as the primary factor determining a woman's fate [21]. Intersectional thinking has gained increasing prominence in work and organizational studies, primarily utilized as a specific framework for analyzing positions and experiences within the "gendered and ethicized occupational hierarchy" [22].

### 4. CONCLUSION

This study gives an insight on the gender-based inequalities prevailed in the workplaces in Nepal. It indicates that working women encounter multiple challenges in their professional career as well as in work/life balance. Gender wage disparity, fewer options in the career growth, lack of trust in women's ability, harassment both physically and mentally and unequal distribution of family responsibilities are the major hurdles they encounter. The roles and identities of working women are also devalued by men considering them less capable in Nepalese workforce which has made them marginalized. This has a

tremendous impact on their professional career, their family life and ultimately to establish gender equality in socio-economic development. It has been realized that the status of women in Nepal has dramatically changed over time. After the establishment of National Women Commission, Ministry of Women, Nepalese women organization played vital roles to change the condition of women in Nepal but still women empowerment like participation in leadership roles, decision making and other high level management roles are burning issues to address. Nepal Government has contributed gender equality through the strategic approach to strengthen women's voice and their visibility in formal employment sector through workforce diversity and reservation Policy where 33 percent females are reserved in civil service and 40 percent seat allotted in local level government. After the establishment of the Department of Gender Studies at Tribhuvan University different researches have been done in the context of women development in Nepal. Further research is needed to alter the gender friendly workplace and overall status of women in Nepal.

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