



**Examining the Societal Impact on Women Involved in Income
Generation**
SABITA KARKI

*Author affiliations can be found in the back matter of this article

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR

Sabita Karki

savykarki@gmail.com

KEYWORDS

Humility
Virtue
Empathy
Openness
Compassion
Self-awareness

ABSTRACT

Nepal has taken significant steps towards gender equality in recent years and has a relatively high percentage of women participating in the labor force. However, a study has found that a large number of economically active women in Nepal do not have access to economic resources, with three-quarters of the unpaid family labor force being women. This study aims to examine how societal factors influence women's participation on income-generating activities and identify with a sample of 50 women selected from Kathmandu valley through a convenience sampling technique. The data were collected through survey methods using questionnaires. Data analysis was done using "SPSS" and Ms-Excel software, with correlation and regression analyses being conducted to determine the relationship between variables and the percentage change in one variable due to the change in another variable. The study concludes that societal factors have a positive impact on women's involvement in income-generating activities in the Kathmandu area. The R and R square were .83 and .68, respectively. The research offers insights into the transformation of societal attitudes and norms. It enriches the academic discourse by supplying empirical data on how societal influences affect women's economic engagement, contextualized within a distinct cultural and geographical setting.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Nepal has made a great positive move regarding gender equality in recent years and has relatively elevated levels of women participation in labor force. Nepal has been categorized by the World Bank as one of the poorest countries in the world. It was ranked 143 in the 2023 Human Development Index, out of 187 countries.

(United Nations, n.d.). As Women's access to education, economic, and political resources is severely limited. The Global Gender Gap report 2022, compiled by the World Economic Forum, ranks Nepal 113 amongst 136 countries. The issues faced by Nepalese women, and their social and economic situations, vary depending upon caste, religion, region, ethnicity, etc

(Schwab et al., 2013). A study shows that there is a huge number of economically active women in Nepal without any access to economic resources. Three quarters of the unpaid family labor force is comprised of women. A larger proportion of women (76 percent) than men (50 percent) are engaged in agricultural work, household based extended economic activities and household maintenance work. A lack of formal employment or alternative livelihood opportunities restrains women's participation in the country's economic growth, as well as discounting their contributions to it. Gender norms mean that women continue to undertake a disproportionate level of unpaid care tasks which in turn constrains their choice including type and location of paid work. Patriarchal attitudes are also reflected at the level of the state and the legal system. Women lack access to and control over productive resources, such as land, forest, credit, technology and enterprises. The right to property is fragile and temporary, despite the guarantee of the fundamental 'right to equality' in the country's constitution, regardless of race, caste, and sex. Legally, a daughter is not entitled to familial property and a woman is entitled to her husband's property not as an independent co-partner, but because she is his wife. There has, however, been significant work to reduce gender inequality. The Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare has a strong women development program focused on encouraging the agency of hundreds of thousands of women in rural Nepal. It represents a focused, nationwide anti-poverty intervention (Chopra et al., n.d.). Although there has been so much development regarding women empowerment many people consider that women should be confined to household only. In many remote areas as well as in town areas, people are still in traditional belief to confine women in the premises of their home. Also, the society sees those employed women negatively. So, this study will tell us about the real situation regarding Kathmandu.

1.1 SOCIETY

Society means the environment where the aggregate of people lives together. Women empowerment is a global issue, and uplifting women to mainstream is not only a right issue but also a humanitarian issue. In the report of United Nations Population Information Network, Women empowerment is defined as having five components:

women's sense of self-worth; their right to have and to determine choices; their right to have access to opportunities and resources; their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally. (Sadik, 1997).

This study examines the condition of society's influence on women involve in income generating activities. Here in our country, we can mostly find patriarchal society, where men are the head of the family.

1.2 WOMEN INVOLVEMENT IN INCOME GENERATING ACTIVITIES

There are very few women in our country to have been working professionally. National statistics shows that only 59.72% of female are literate. Women involvement in technical and vocational education is extremely low; this is due to the social norms and culture we follow. A study conducted in the Jammu region of India has explained the socio-economic impact of self-help-group (SHG) upon the members of the society. It claims that the social impact of SHGs includes the positive change in the communication pattern of the members, and development in self-confidence, decrease in domestic violence, and increase in frequency of interaction with outsiders. Similarly, an economic impact includes positive change in saving pattern of members, less dependency and initiation and expansion of income generation activities (Gaikwad &

Reddy, 2013). The added income of the women can help the families to meet family expenses, and save some money for future investment or incidents as well (Dangol, 2010). The reason behind choosing this topic is that the women involvement in income generating activities is slowly increasing; however the society influence doesn't seem to be welcoming. This research will help us to know about the situation of women in the Kathmandu area.

1.3 RESEARCH GAP

This study explores the societal impacts on women's involvement in income-generating activities in Kathmandu, revealing a complex interplay of social factors that both facilitate and hinder their economic participation. By focusing on Kathmandu, the research identifies specific societal attitudes, norms, and structural barriers affecting women's empowerment and economic independence. It acknowledges a research gap in understanding these dynamics across different Nepalese regions, suggesting a need for broader, comparative studies to capture diverse experiences and identify effective interventions for women's economic empowerment across Nepal.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To identify the society, influence on women participation in income generating activities in the Kathmandu area.
- To examine the societal position of women.

1.5 HYPOTHESIS

- Alternative hypothesis (H1): There exists some impact of society on women participation in income generating activities

1.6 IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The implications of the study highlight the positive impact of societal attitudes on women's involvement in income-generating activities. By recognizing and understanding the societal influences that shape women's economic

engagement, the research contributes to the transformation of societal norms and attitudes towards women's empowerment. The findings provide valuable insights for policymakers, organizations, and communities to support and promote women's economic participation and empowerment in Nepal. The study focuses on women in the Kathmandu area, which may not fully represent the experiences of women in other regions of Nepal or in different cultural contexts.

1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW

Nepal is a country of great geographic, cultural, ethnic, religious diversities. Across the diversity, the majority of communities in Nepal are patriarchal. A women's life is strongly influenced by her father, husband and son. Such patriarchal practices are further reinforced by the legal system. Marriage has a great importance in women's life. The event of marriage determines the way of her life. The early marriage generally depreciates the women's life. A woman's power to accept or reject a marriage partner is an index of the degree of freedom she exercises in the management of her own life, and thus also of her status. The status of women is determined by the patriarchal social system, values, and women right preserved and protected by the state, and state policy for the development of women. Women's relative status, however, varied from one ethnic group to another. The economic contribution of women is substantial, but largely unnoticed because their traditional role was taken as for granted (Acharya et al., 1999). Through the survey and interview in the Bungamati village, an outlook towards women's involvement in some income earning works is noticed. The society is convinced that maintaining household works, the women can work outside for extra income. The added income of the women can help the families to meet family expenses and save some money for future investment or incidents as well (Dangol, 2010). According to UNDP Nepal Human Development Report (2009), women in the mid-western and far western

hill regions compare to other regions in particular face various socio-cultural challenges. The gender related development index in western, mid-western and far-western mountains is below 0.414 which is lower than the national average 0.499. In addition, patriarchal social structure, traditional cultural values and the remoteness of high hill mountains and hilly regions restrict the exposure of women to new systems, ideas, laws and policies and attitudes. Since 1990, women participation in labor market has been gradually increasing. A long effort of government, national and international non-government organizations has contributed to making women aware, organized and skilled (Tiwari et al., 2009). Women empowerment is one of the aims of the millennium development goals is to promote gender equality and empower women.

Women's empowerment is a complex process that occurs on multiple levels and involves enhancing the capabilities of individuals, groups, and communities to help them realize their potential and contribute to the welfare of others. This process involves giving a voice to those who have been silenced for promoting overall well-being. There is a lot of literature on this topic, as it is a frequently discussed goal in development initiatives, and different scholars contextualize it differently. Participating some Western feminists assume a universal framework for women's empowerment, others argue that women's subordination varies in different contexts. In the South Asian context, women's empowerment is seen as a process, where women challenge patriarchal norms and values to improve their overall well-being. This is an ongoing process that involves women being able to make important decisions about their lives and being capable of carrying them out (Ghosh & Gondal, 2010). The three main aspects of women's empowerment are improving their ability to negotiate in the household and community, giving them concrete opportunities to generate income and participate in decision-making at the institutional and policy level. This kind of

empowerment is about fundamentally transforming power dynamics between individuals and social groups. However, it's a difficult and complex process because it requires challenging deeply ingrained social norms and values. To truly change power relationships, patriarchal ideology must be confronted, as it perpetuates gender discrimination, social inequalities, and unequal access to resources. It also reinforces social structures that perpetuate unequal social relationships (Kabeer, 2012). In Nepal's male-dominated society, women face social, cultural, and political biases that limit their opportunities. Compared to men, women have restricted access to education and employment, less power to initiate activities, and limited authority. Women are economically dependent on men - usually their father, husband, or brother - as men are traditionally seen as assertive breadwinners who focus on material success. Women are often confined to household and farm-related activities, and their role as decision-makers is frequently denied or discouraged by both households and society. Despite making substantial contributions as laborers and mentors both inside and outside the home, women's role is often underestimated and not considered an economic activity. As heads of households, women must carry out traditional roles while also managing household and production responsibilities (Kumar, 2014).

The research carried out in Nigeria investigates the factors that influence women's participation in income-generating activities. To enhance their productivity, the local government should support women by facilitating their access to financial institutions, enabling them to secure loans. Moreover, women should be motivated to establish cooperative groups to make it easier for them to obtain loans (Yusuf et al., 2015). The study conducted in Nigeria explores the elements that impact women's involvement in generating income. To enhance their effectiveness, the government at the local level should assist women by connecting them with financial institutions to obtain loans. Additionally,

women should be encouraged to create cooperative groups to make loan acquisition more accessible (Alemu et al., 2022). Social support and job satisfaction are contributors of work-family balance of working women in Pakistan (Pedraza, 1991).

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS USED

The researcher conducted the study in Kathmandu, Nepal. The study comprises both well-educated and semi-educated families and individuals. The researcher used a survey method to collect data from respondents through Google form to investigate the relationship between society and women's involvement in income-generating activities. The study aimed to check the impact of society on women's income-generating activities in Kathmandu, using a correlation design. A cross-sectional study design was used as the data was collected only once, and a descriptive research design was followed. The

population for the study was all women in the area, but due to time limitations, the researcher selected a sample of 50 through convenience sampling. The researcher used primary and secondary sources of data, and the primary instrument for the research was a set of 14 questions or statements in a questionnaire on the Likert-scale. The researcher conducted data analysis using the software package "SPSS" and Ms-Excel. Correlation analysis was done to identify the relationship between variables and regression analysis to determine the actual percentage change in one variable due to changes in another variable. The researcher used regression analysis to test the H1 hypothesis.

2.1 DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1 shows the mean, standard deviation and result of the variables. The Likert-scale represents 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree.

Table 1: Mean Rating and Std. Deviation of Respondents

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	Result
I am motivated to continue my job/business	3.5200	1.11098	Agree
I am benefited by my job/business	3.4200	.94954	Neutral
My organization has a healthy environment	3.4600	1.01439	Neutral
I set example for women empowerment	3.2400	1.02140	Neutral
I am happy with my earnings	3.5800	.97080	Agree
I am an economically active woman	3.4400	.99304	Neutral
In my society some institutions promote women empowerment	3.5400	1.09190	Agree
My societal values are supportive of women involvement in income generating activities	3.4800	088617	Neutral
Because I am economically actively, I have a good image in my society	3.4200	1.07076	Neutral
My society believes women should be economically active	3.4800	1.05444	Neutral
My society believes women should be only engaged in household work	3.5400	.81341	Agree
My society encourages women empowerment	3.4400	.99304	Neutral
My family supports my involvement in income generating activities	3.2800	.99057	Neutral
My company provides equal opportunities to men and women	2.3000	.81441	Disagree

Table 2 shows there is high positive correlation between impact of society and women involved in income generating activities.

Table 2: Correlation between society impact and women involved in income generating activities

Correlations		MEAN_WOM	MEAN_SOC
Pearson Correlation		1	.829**
SI_TOTAL	N	50	50
Pearson Correlation		.829**	1
WI_TOTAL	N	50	50

Source: IBM SPSS Statistics V25.0

Table 3 showed that the model was significant, accepting alternate hypothesis, stating that societal impact can play a significant role in shaping women empowerment.

The value of R square shows one unit increase in societal impact will lead .681 unit change in the income generating activities of women.

Table 3: Regression Analysis

Hypothesis	Regression Weighs	Beta coefficient	R2	F	p-value	Hypothesis supported
H1	SI → WI	.801	.681	105.726	.000	Yes

Source: IBM SPSS Statistics V25.0

Note: * $P < 0.005$, SI: Society Impact, WI: Women Involvement in income generating activities

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 RESULT

The research in the Kathmandu area uncovered several notable findings. Women in the region were primarily employed in two categories: jobs and businesses, both contributing significantly to income-generating activities. The age distribution showed a majority of respondents falling between 21 to 40 years old, with the fewest respondents being under 20 years old.

Concerning employment, a substantial proportion of respondents pursued jobs, while others were engaged in their own businesses. Marital status varied among respondents, with the majority being married. Education levels also varied,

with most respondents having attained a bachelor's degree.

Income distribution revealed different brackets, with a significant number of respondents earning in the higher range. The study identified a positive and significant impact of societal activities on women involved in income-generating activities, supporting the acceptance of hypothesis H1 and the rejection of H0. The fitness of the model for the study was confirmed by the ANOVA table result.

3.2 DISCUSSION

The topic of women empowerment is widely discussed worldwide. With the changes in society, women's empowerment has been increasing, and their social status

is becoming stronger. The discussion on women's empowerment in Nepal contrasts findings from various sources, highlighting the nuanced progress and challenges. Acharya et al. (1999) and Dangol (2010) emphasize the unrecognized economic contributions of women due to traditional roles, while Ghosh and Gondal (2010), and Kabeer (2012) discuss empowerment as challenging patriarchal norms. Kumar (2014) focuses on the societal biases limiting women's opportunities, contrasting with positive shifts towards gender equality and empowerment efforts noted by Tiwari et al. (2009) and UNDP (2009). Studies by Yusuf et al. (2015) and Alemu et al. (2022) on financial access for income-generating activities suggest empowerment through economic independence, underscoring the complex interplay of socio-cultural and economic factors in women's empowerment in Nepal.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Nepal is a country that strongly advocates for gender equality, and it is gradually progressing towards equality in all areas. The Nepalese government has declared a 33% quota for women's participation in various sectors and introduced female quotas in several organizations to increase women's participation. In addition, women are now being employed in all sectors, including agriculture, education, industry, service, manufacturing, and government officials. The society is also gradually accepting women's empowerment and education, and there have been various movements and campaigns to support this cause.

Although this study is conducted only in the Kathmandu area, it somewhat represents the overall scenario of the Kathmandu Valley. However, national statistics show that only 57% of women are literate, and women's involvement in technical and vocational education is minimal due to the social norms and culture. Recent data indicate that 51.8% of women are economically active, compared to men at 68.2%. Nonetheless, this data demonstrates how the country is slowly

advancing towards women's empowerment. The aim of this study was to investigate society's perception of women's involvement in income-generating activities. Society is considered a powerful factor that comprises people and the environment, and women's engagement in income-generating activities reflects their level of economic activity. Bivariate correlation analysis, regression, and ANOVA tables were used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. The study's conclusion is viable, as the ANOVA table's f-value is lower than the significance level. Furthermore, the society variable is an appropriate fit for the study, and the results indicate a positive impact of society on women's involvement in income-generating activities in the Kathmandu area. This study mainly tested hypothesis which are: H0: There is no impact of society on women involved in income generating activities. H1: There is some impact of society on women involved in income generating activities. (Accepted) As the model is fit for study, we can conclude that the women involvement in income generating activities is positively affected by the impact of society, so the researcher can take this as a valuable research for related studies.

The study's recommendations focus on enhancing women's empowerment and economic participation in Nepal. It suggests that despite societal support for women's income-generating activities, further efforts are needed to improve women's empowerment comprehensively. Recommendations include establishing new organizations and institutions dedicated to women's empowerment, providing diverse job opportunities, and ensuring fair compensation in line with government regulations. The study emphasizes the importance of women taking proactive steps towards their empowerment by acquiring technical skills, understanding their rights, and actively participating in various fields. These measures aim to create a more inclusive and equitable

environment for women's economic participation in Nepal.

AUTHOR AFFILIATIONS

Sabita Karki

M. Phil in Management
Tribhuvan University

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TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

Karki, S. (2024). Examining the societal impact on women involved in income generation. *International Research Journal of MMC*, 5(1), 121-129. <https://doi.org/10.3126/irjmmc.v5i1.63367>

Submitted: 17 February 2024

Accepted: 27 February 2024

Published: 1 March 2024

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International Research Journal of MMC (IRJMMC) is a peer-reviewed open access journal published by Research Management Cell, Makawanpur Multiple Campus, Hetauda

