

WOMEN IN FARM, HOUSEHOLD CHORES AND DECISION MAKING IN FARMING FAMILIES: CASE OF THE PERI-URBAN AREAS OF KATHMANDU NEPAL.

Benju Dhakal¹, Milan Subedi² and Kunju Dhakal³

¹ MS scholar Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Sociology, Tribhuvan University.

² Assistant Prof. Institute of agriculture and animal science, Tribhuvan University.

³ MS scholar Institute of forestry, Pokhara Campus, Nepal.

The Constitution of Nepal preserves equal rights for men and women which is in line with SDG regarding gender equality. Where rural areas might be deprived of provisions for equality due to multiple factors including lack of awareness and unsettled infrastructures, peri-urban areas of Nepal are not unaffected by the traditional patriarchal mindset. As the multidimensional roles of women in agriculture have been disregarded in “economically active” sections of former statistical survey collections for an agriculture-based economy like Nepal, this study was conducted to understand factors affecting gender-based contribution in the farm, household chores, and decision-making in case of farming families of peri-urban areas in Nepal. Purposive selection of the biggest peri-urban area of Nepal, near the capital city, was done to study 121 households selected randomly from four peri-urban locations of Kathmandu using a semi-structured questionnaire. Results showed women contributed more than half of the duties and responsibilities of the family and most of the household chores contributing 58.95% of the time as compared to men i.e. 1.47%. Only 39.58% of household chores and the farm were shared among men and women. The heavy workload was born by women in the household chores but decision-making for household management was found to be taken by men. Factors like education level of women, age gap to husband, years spend after marriage, and expenditure on oneself showed a significant effect on the involvement of women in household decision making. However, the education level of a husband in a household was found to have no significant effect on gender-based division of roles and responsibilities, but significant relation to women’s involvement in household decision-making. It suggests blaming rural areas for not having the infrastructure or educational exposure might not be correct in all cases, as peri-urban areas of Kathmandu have an access to education and are not very far from basic facilities. This also points out towards severe workload situation that might arise if gender stereotypes and pre-existing roles continue along with increased expectations from “educated women” in farming families of peri-urban areas which need further study in upcoming days.

Keywords: Peri-urban, gender roles, SDG, household contribution, farming families

Introduction

Gender is widely acknowledged as a basis of most elementary social stratification throughout the world.¹ The culturally constructed and accepted behaviors,^{2 3} and stereotypes created based on gender that differ according to society have been altering the participation of women in the cosmopolitan range.⁴ This change in participation has been playing an important role in the economic development of nations. Due to their huge contribution to the household and society, the empowerment of women is important, however, undermined as their participation in decision-making is nominal⁵.

The Constitution of Nepal preserves equal rights for men and women which is in line with SDG regarding gender equality^{6 7}. But the presence of women in actual decision-making is ceremonial in Nepal. It is only to match the proportion mandated by the constitution⁸. The priorities of education, job, and inclusion in every governmental body have been popular in the past decade, which is an initial phase⁹.

ADB suggested the provisions for gender-based violence were addressed after the gender equality act passed on 2006. This suggests a late response to the fact by the government of Nepal. The representation of women in governance-related sectors has been very low in the past couple of decades. Those who were present were only present at local grass root levels and only to fulfill the proportionate quota. This trend is more prevalent in rural areas as there has been lesser awareness and resources to protect women¹⁰.

The scenario is no different in farming households. There has been a massive feminization of agriculture in rural Nepal in the past decade, however, the decision-making has not yet altered¹¹. Where rural areas have been repeatedly reported to be deprived of provisions for equality due to multiple factors including lack of awareness, access to education, low growth index, and unsettled infrastructures^{12 13}, peri-urban areas of Nepal¹⁴ are not unaffected by the traditional patriarchal mindset as peri-urban areas mostly have urban access with a rural pursuit as reported in many cases^{15 16}.

¹ Lucy Mair, *Social anthropology*, 1999

² Binod Pokharel, *Gender roles*, 2001

³ Barbara Rogers, *domestication*, 1981

⁴ PK Roy, Sadika Haque, Arifa Jannat, Mohammad Ali and Md. Sahed Khan, *Progressive*, 2017

⁵ Titus, Sengupta, & Madan, *The qualitative report*, 2017

⁶ Rita Rai, *Idea*, 2019

⁷ Monika Queisser, *Debate*, 2016

⁸ Rita Rai, *Idea*, 2019

⁹ ADB, *Overview of gender*, 2010

¹⁰ ADB, *Overview of gender*, 2010

¹¹ Kaitlyn and Maria, *Renegotiating*, 2019

¹² ADB, *Overview of gender*, 2010

¹³ Bala Ram Acharya, *Dhaulagiri journal*, 2008

¹⁴ Rana, Rijanta and Rachmawati, *Romanian review of regional studies*, 2017

¹⁵ Angela Catherine Castles, *A new identity peri-urban* 2014

¹⁶ Le, Tu, Vansintjan, Nga and Nam, *ASEAN*, 2017

As the multidimensional roles of women in agriculture¹⁷ have been disregarded in “economically active” sections of former statistical survey collections for an agriculture-based economy like Nepal, this study was conducted to understand factors affecting gender-based contribution in the farm, household chores, and decision making¹⁸ and¹⁹ in case of farming families of peri-urban areas in Nepal.

Methodology:

This study follows the case study research method. The major domain of this study is farming families in the peri-urban area of Nepal. This study was conducted in the four biggest peri-urban areas of Nepal near the capital city Kathmandu. Goldhunga near Sundarijal, Machhegaun near Balambu, Chalnakhel, and Kritipur near Sitapaila were considered for the study purposively because these are the suggested peri-urban hubs around²⁰. One hundred and twenty-one farming households selected using a simple random selection from the voter’s list from these areas were studied which consists of agriculture groups and beneficiary groups of former district agriculture development offices (DADO) of Nepal. This area is responsible to supply perishable vegetables and dairy products to Kathmandu city. A cross-sectional study was conducted, using a non-intervention method of interview schedule using a semi-structured questionnaire²¹. Questionnaire preparation and data collection were done through the use of a mobile m-water surveyor application, and data thus obtained was tabulated and analyzed using Ms- excel and STATA v.13. Secondary information collection was done through literature review among published blogs, journal articles, and organizational reports.

Results and discussion

The households under survey as shown in Table 1 were mostly registered under men's household head. Despite the government’s efforts of increasing access to women by decreasing taxation, and the majority of respondent households having at least intermediate level qualification of women head (38.2%), this phenomenon does not seem to have affected farming families of the peri-urban. The majority of men 62.8% also spent more on themselves. The price is high due to the costs of having to go out of the house and in refreshments. The majority of the families had an arranged marriage set up where apart from collective decisions, the majority of decisions for household management are led by men (19.8%). One-third (32.2%) of women household heads have been engaged in an executive position of a group or an organization. However, the majority of them (39.7%) receive help from the men household heads only weekly despite 38.8% of men household heads being self-employed.

Table 1: Information on sample population regarding significant variables under study, Kathmandu 2018.

S.N	Variables	Respondents percentage
1.	Level of education obtained by Women	
1.1	Graduation	15.7%
1.2	Intermediate	38.8%

¹⁷ Samantha, R. K., *they reap less than they sow*, 1994

¹⁸ Janelid, *the role of women*, 1975

¹⁹ Khurana and Lal, *Gender issues*, 2011

²⁰ Rana, Rijanta and Rachmawati, *Romanian review of regional studies*,2017

²¹ Kabir, *Basic Guidelines*, 2016

1.3	Primary	22.3%
1.4	Secondary	23.1%
2.	Household property holding	
2.1	Men	76.9%
2.2	Women	14.9%
2.3	Both	8.3%
3.	Individual Expenditure (on oneself)	
3.1	Men	62.8%
3.2	Women	37.2%
4.	Decision-making regarding household management	
4.1	Men	19.8%
4.2	Women	14.0%
4.3	Collective	66.2%
5.	Women Respondents being Executive members of Group	32.2%
6.	Type of Marriage	
6.1	Arrange	73.6%
6.2	Love	26.4%
7.	Frequency of men of the household (husband) helping in household activities	
7.1	Every works	10.7%
7.2	Daily	25.6%
7.3	Weekly	39.7%
7.4	Never	24%
8	Occupation of men of the household	
8.1	Farmer	35.5%
8.2	Foreign Job	3.3%
8.3	Self employed	38.8%
8.4	Service(I/N/GOs, Teaching)	22.3%

Table 2: Factors contributing to Women's involvement in Household decision- making, Kathmandu, 2018.

Dependent Variable	Independent variable	df	Pearson's χ^2 value (95% level of significance)	p-value
Decision-making regarding household management	Household Head	1	1.749	0.186
	Household property holding	2	4.19	0.123
	Level of education obtained by women in the household	3	13.56 *	0.04*
	Age gap between men and women in household head	15	27.673	0.24
	Education level of men	3	8.104	0.44
	Type of Marriage	1	5.04	0.25
	Years spend after Marriage	41	65.139	0.10
	Regularity of help by men	3	7.433	0.59

	Executive membership of women in any Group/organization	1	0.017	0.897
	Individual Expenditure (on oneself)	1	17.727 *	0.00*

*indicating value significant relation to the involvement of women in HH decision making at 0.05 level of significance.

Relationship of various factors to Involvement of women in household decision making.

Table 2 indicates the level of education of women in the household and expenditure on oneself to have a significant impact on whether or not women are involved in the household decision. While Group executive membership, regularity of help by men, years after marriage, age gap, husband education, household head, and property ownership are not related to the involvement of women in household decision making, where we considered collective decision making as women's involvement in Household decision making. Similar results have been reported by multiple pieces of literature as factors like economic status, education level, age, Illiteracy, lack of knowledge, and awareness are mainly considered to have an impact on decision-making among women²². Here, the only significant results are shown by expenditure on oneself, which is mainly on the men's side. More men are engaged in services and self-employment that demands more expenditure on their personal needs. This empowers men more, due to already prevalent gender stereotypical prioritization and economic leadership is taken by men in those households. The level of education by women affects the decision-making mostly in households that have foreign jobs and need to work at home and farm themselves.

Table 3: Factors influencing decision maker in Household management, Kathmandu, 2018.

Dependent variable	Independent variables	Pearson's χ^2 value	P- value
Decision-making regarding household management	Education level of your husband	9.8854	0.130
	Highest level of study of Women of the household	14.9462	0.021*
	Age gap with men	48.9015	0.016*
	Years spend after marriage	104.5826	0.047*

*indicating value significant at 0.05 level of significance.

Factors like education level of women, age gap to husband, years spend after marriage, and expenditure on oneself showed a significant effect on the involvement of women in household decision making as shown in Table 3. However, the education level of a men household head in the household was found to have no significant effect on women's involvement in household decision-making. Similar results have been reported in former papers that suggest the hierarchy of authority in the household is governed by age and sex, with the older over the younger, and men over women. Significant results in women's study level may be due to the reason of

²² Lal and kumar, *Gender issues*, 2007

education enhance autonomy, confidence, and capability to provide decision-making power ²³as it increases the husband's confidence to involve women in the household decisions.

Time contribution and Decision making in HH activities

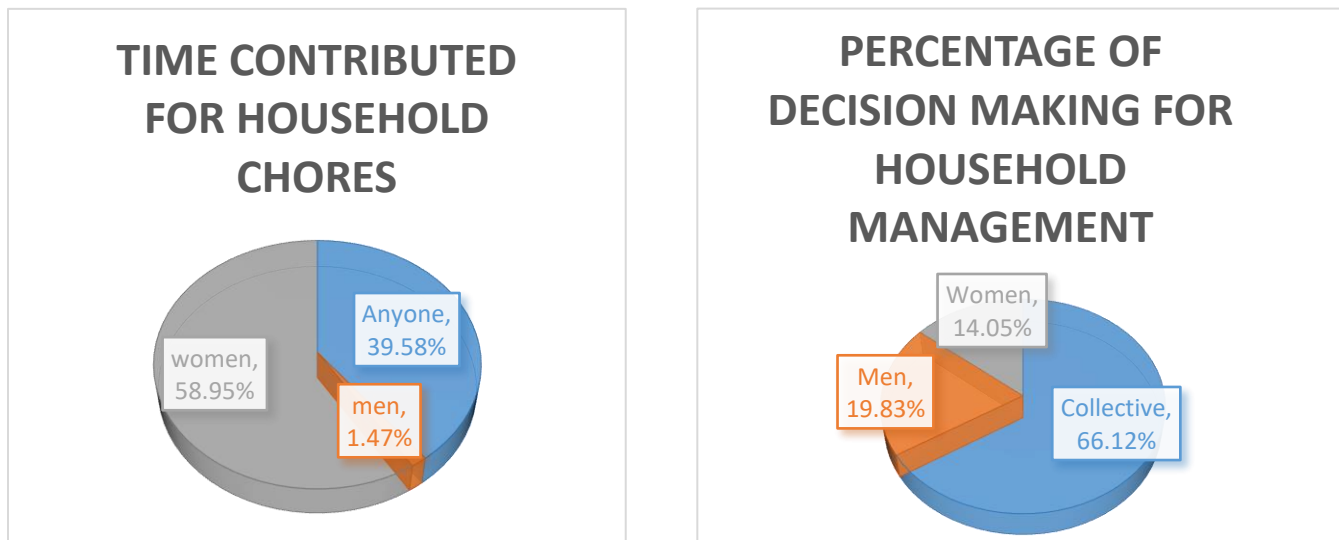


Fig1: Time contributed for household chores on gender basis. Fig2: Access to Decision making for household management.

Results showed women contributed more than half of the duties and responsibilities of the family and most of the household chores contributed 58.95% of the time contribution as compared to men i.e. 1.47% as shown in fig 1. Only 39.58% of household chores and the farm were shared among men and women. The heavy workload was born by women in the household chores but the majority of decision-making for household management was found to be taken by men as shown in fig 2.

Similar results have been reported by The World Bank's study in Bangladesh which highlighted that women have limited role in household decision-making, limited access and control over household resources (physical and financial assets), low level of individual assets, heavy domestic workloads, restricted mobility, and inadequate knowledge and skills that lead to vulnerability²⁴. Indian scholars report minimum participation of women in decision making particularly in matters related to agriculture, financial matters, and development strategies despite performing adequate economic activities and tremendous contribution to food production and family wellbeing in rural setup²⁵.

Women have a significant contribution to agriculture and the overall economy of the Asian region. However, the identified stereotypical division of labor and specific spheres of roles and

²³ Mekonnen and Asrese, *journal of public health*, 2009

²⁴ Sebstad et al., *Microfinance*, 2000

²⁵ Baliyan, *Factors affecting participation*, 2014

responsibilities (and by extension corresponding choices that leads to suppressing women during decision-making) prevail^{26 27} in our farming societies.²⁸; (Pokharel, 2001).

Majority of the households, decision making for farm, input marketing, plowing, land preparation, threshing rice, irrigation, pesticide application, and marketing, roofing, climbing the trees to lop the fodder, threshing rice, sowing, making bamboo baskets and bamboo mattress, manufacturing agricultural implements, etc. are the major tasks decided for men whereas sowing, transplanting, weeding, husking and winnowing of crops, cooking rice, washing clothes, cleaning the house, collecting water, and washing utensils, grinding maize and millet and washing utensils are the women's works. Harvesting, fuel wood collection, taking care of the child, marketing for the house, decision for crops, threshing, etc. are common for both sexes. In households, Digging, weeding, harvesting, and carrying load are common for both sexes²⁹. This scenario is similar to the farming families of peri-urban areas under our study as the one who takes care of the cow is a woman and who goes to sell milk and earn money is men. Women's work includes agriculture, animal husbandry, and industrial and household enterprises all are productive but neither are they adequately paid nor is their contribution accounted for in the national income and considered only supportive^{30 31} and men are supposed to earn money from an outside job.

Feminization of agriculture as termed by³²; Kaitlyn and Maria, 2019), has transferred decision-making power automatically to women in Nepal. In the absence of men, women's roles are changing from unpaid family workers to farm managers. However, where men in the household are present women do most of the household work but the decision is still taken by men and the women's work has been in shadow because of low economic contribution to family members as compared to men's wages and his contribution³³. Seddon³⁴ points out that in Nepal, women play a full and active role in the domestic economy. They were not given any rights, they were supposed to do domestic work and look after children³⁵. Women are more emotionally involved in decision-making, whereas men are involved in assets buying and selling, improvement of harvest, livestock, agricultural implements, etc. Women have been facing less access to empowering resources and sensitive health services than men mainly in areas with rural setups³⁶. Like elsewhere in the world, women's contribution is unacknowledged as their job or duty is considered "natural" towards their family³⁷. There is an impression that unpaid household service

²⁶ PK Roy, Sadika Haque, Arifa Jannat, Mohammad Ali and Md. Sahed Khan, *Progressive*, 2017

²⁷ Bano, *The women and decision*, 2014

²⁸ Bradshaw, *Environment and Urbanization*, 2013

²⁹ Barbara Rogers, *domestication*, 1981

³⁰ Minaxi and Lopamudra, *Role of farm women*, 2000

³¹ WEF, *The global gender gap*, 2015

³² PK Roy, Sadika Haque, Arifa Jannat, Mohammad Ali and Md. Sahed Khan, *Progressive*, 2017

³³ Bradshaw, *Environment and Urbanization*, 2013

³⁴ Seddon, *Nepal*, 1995

³⁵ Baba, Zain, Idris and Sanni, *IOSR*, 2015

³⁶ Caprino, *Forbes*, 2016

³⁷ PK Roy, Sadika Haque, Arifa Jannat, Mohammad Ali and Md. Sahed Khan, *Progressive*, 2017

and lack of participation in decision making is believed to be resolved by working outside the home³⁸ Puri (1971) observed that women played an important role in the decision-making of home aspects while they were consulted by their counterparts in activities related to the farm. Women appeared to be most active in home management and men in money management³⁹. While the majority of household activities are conducted by women, there is a system of collective saving and spending more on individual expenditures of men. This scenario makes the dreadful condition of women as they are hardly empowered in decision making.

Women contribute more than half of the duties and responsibilities of the family but are hardly empowered to participate in decision-making (Mehta & Saraswat, 2014). This scenario becomes more dreadful for that 32.2% of women engaged in organizations, as being an executive member of a group adds further workload on them despite existing household chores. Managing living in this scenario, along with the physical and mental health of women is an upcoming challenge for the women in peri-urban areas of Kathmandu.

We observe more collective decision-making in household activity in this study, which Benjamin⁴⁰ reported as “joint” decision making appeared to be at its peak in the “beginning stage” of the marriage with the largest amount of consultation in decision making.

Bala Ram Acharya, (2008) suggests the system of rain-fed farming in rural Nepal, the immense outgoing migration, less access to minimum requirements like irrigation for agriculture, low productivity, and less access are primary problems faced by the rural population in Nepal. It might be due to these survival-based problems being faced, issues like discrimination have been overlooked for a long period. It, therefore, requires immense care while preparing next

Changing the pace of lifestyle in Kathmandu⁴¹ has caused encroaching urbanization to affect the lifestyle in peri-urban areas. Despite the high educational background of women in the areas, the stereotypical functions of bearing and bringing up children, and household chores were found to be still heavier than regular in the study area⁴². Hye Rin et al., 2021⁴³ suggest having a traditional patriarchal mindset causes cognitive impairment in later life. The lack of access to and control over productive resources is the main factor limiting women’s equal participation in economic activities, thereby hampering the human development process in long run⁴⁴. Thus, finding a solution to this mindset is necessary.

In the context of moving towards SDG, considering gender equity, there are many considerations yet to be made from the government’s side as except for the gender equality act on 2006, not much efforts have been made on this perspective. Apart from enhancing the economic independence of women, better indicators to measure the contribution of women to the household economy needs to be developed to increase the participation of women in decision-making activities.

Conclusion:

³⁸ Gopal and Shobha, *Women in informal* , 2012

³⁹ Sinha and Sinha, *Women empowerment*, 2007

⁴⁰ Benjamin, *The family life coordinator*, 1962

⁴¹ Thapa, *IUHCD Research Proposal*, 2015

⁴² Barbara Rogers, *domestication*, 1981

⁴³ Choi, Ha, Jeon, Kim and Jung, *Epidemiology and Health*, 2021

⁴⁴ Acharya, *Efforts at Promotion* ,2003.

It is difficult to address the solutions to problems created by the cosmopolitan notion of gender inequality boosted by the traditional mindset only through the provisions of the Constitution. Following SDG where not just rural but peri-urban areas have multidimensional roles of women in agriculture disregarded for an agriculture-based economy like Nepal is a challenge. The majority of household work is still handled by women with the most contribution of time, being disregarded and taken for granted. This study suggests blaming rural areas for not having the infrastructure or educational exposure might not be correct in all cases, as peri-urban areas of Kathmandu have an access to education and are not very far from basic facilities. A difference in decision-making scenarios like this in peri-urban areas also points out towards severe workload situation that might arise if gender stereotypes and pre-existing roles continue along with increased expectations from “educated women” in farming families of peri-urban areas which need further study in upcoming days.

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