



The Representation and Participation of Marginalized Voices in the Provincial Parliament in Nepal: Exploring Sustainable Development Strategies

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the current practices of representation and participation of women and marginalized groups in the parliamentary processes of Gandaki Province Assembly, Nepal, relating to inclusive democracy, intersectionality theories, and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of United Nations (UN). The study used the explanatory sequential mixed methods, using the parliament members as respondents who are elected from the female and marginalized groups. The primary and secondary data collected are analyzed to explore the findings of the study. The findings demonstrated that systemic inequities, with overrepresentation of privileged groups such as Khas-Arya, limited participation of marginalized groups in leadership roles, and biases in committee assignments and decision-making processes. The barriers such as cultural norms, language, and procedural challenges further limit a meaningful participation of women and marginalized groups. Although the proportional representation system has increased women's presence, dependence on this system emphasizes the inadequacies of the first past the post-system in fostering diversity. Further, the study highlights the perception difference due to intersecting identities of gender and marginalized groups

in the assembly. Finally, the paper recommends the structural reforms, leadership training, financial support, and research-based interventions to enhance equitable representation and participation.

KEYWORDS: Representation, inclusion, development, parliamentary system, marginalized groups

INTRODUCTION

Inclusion is the key to address the diverse need of the people specially in a country like Nepal where a widespread diversity of geography, culture, language, ethnicity, and religion existed. Provisions have been proposed in the constitution, policies, laws, and rules to mainstream the diverse population through inclusion. The Constitution of Nepal (2015) emphasized on the proportional inclusive and participatory principles in order to ensure economic equality, prosperity, and social justice. Through restructuring the system, each state government has its state assembly which is composed of 60 percent of the members elected through the first past the post-electoral system and remaining 40 percent of the members are elected through the proportional electoral system. The Province Assembly Member Election Act (2017) has made the provision of at least one-third of the total members should be the female. The Province Assembly Member Proportional Election Rules (2017) has a provision of having the minimum number of assembly members to participate in assembly considering the obtained votes of political parties. In the case of Gandaki Province Assembly rules, a political party should submit the closed list of proposed members with “the minimum percentage of 42.37 indigenous people, 37.24 Khas Arya, 1.72 Tharu, 17.44 Dalit, 6.02 minorities where fifty percent must be female” (Nepal Law Commission, 2017). These provisions of the constitution of Nepal, related to the acts and rules provide the guidelines for the proportional representation of province assembly members. The representation of them follows the parliamentary process. The parliamentary process basically includes the voices raised on zero-hour, special hour, and bill discussion hour, proposing the proposals and discussion, raising the questions to the executive head of government and line ministry, committee formation, and other parliamentary oversight (Gandaki Province Assembly Secretariat, 2022). These policy guidelines provide the foundation of inclusion through the proportional representation of the voices of the voiceless.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) highlights the importance of gender equality and reduced inequalities in development (United Nations, 2015). The inclusion of women and marginalized groups in parliamentary systems was a key mechanism for achieving these goals, as it ensures diverse voices are represented in decision-making processes (World Bank, 2017). Inclusive governance addresses the systemic barriers and promote social justice by integrating underrepresented groups into political institutions. Societies can create more sustainable and effective development initiatives, ensuring that no one is left behind. Thus, parliamentary inclusion is not only a matter of fairness but also a foundation of sustainable development.

The effectiveness of these policies was only observed if they are implemented honestly as per their proposed intention. The parliament can be a platform to conceptualize the new perspective to claim the right of the women and implement them. The voice of the female in the parliament is so powerful since the women members can induce the male members through the debate of the parliament to address the issues of the establishment of gendered rights (Verge, 2020). The parliaments often face the different issues in incorporating the gender and marginalized groups such as the representation and meaningful participation in the parliamentary process. Kantola and Lombardo (2021) explore the issues of European parliament that some of the parties such as conservative and radical right populist groups are not concerned for the gendered right while left, green, and liberal parties promote the inclusion and participation practices. This study suggested to formulate and implement a new rule to encourage the political parties in promoting the gender equality and to address human right. Similarly, Kalra and Joshi (2023) illustrated that in Indian Upper Chamber Parliament though only few seats

are occupied by the female members are represented more in numbers than the male parliament members. Moreover, the study suggests that the parliamentary rule has to increase a number of female members to address the gender issues. The intersectionality effect of gender and marginalized groups can be different in terms of participation and representation. Using intersectionality, Mugge et al. (2019) explored that in the Dutch parliament the female ethnic minority is more capable to raise a voice of the ethnic minority than their male colleagues from the ethnic group. Gender equality is a core democratic principle and essential for a fair parliamentary representation. Unequal parliamentary workplaces create gender biases and impair the gender participation. Addressing these gendered dynamics is important to understand and improve the democratic functioning of legislative assemblies (Erikson & Verge, 2022). Thus, the issue of the representation and participation of female and marginalized groups in the parliament is essential to promote their right and establish equality.

In the context of South Asian countries' parliaments, there is diversity in views of gender. Joshi and Echle (2023) concluded by studying a substantive representation of women in the Asian parliaments that

... efforts by MPs to target particular groups of women with benefits appeared to be higher in the Philippines, Malaysia, and Nepal whereas in some countries, like Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Taiwan, women MPs reported supporting 'women in general' or 'all women' which suggests a feeling of solidarity and not leaving any single woman behind. (p. 253).

Thus, as compared to the parliaments of other continents, the Asian parliaments include higher number of the marginalized groups. For instance, in the Nepali parliament, Pandeya and Oyama (2019) further illustrates that due to institutional designs and financial gaps, privileged groups continue to dominate Nepal's legislature, while women and disadvantaged identities continue to be underrepresented. However, in Nepali politics, the contribution of women is notable. Women have been active in the political movements, breaking down the institutional and societal barriers to promote gender equality, drive social change, and make a substantial contribution to Nepal's democratic development (Phuyal & Ghimire, 2024). Despite such efforts from women in democracy of Nepal, a substantial representation and participation has not been noticed.

Despite the constitutional and legal provision of Nepal, ensuring the representation of gender and marginalized groups in Gandaki Province Assembly, no study has been yet conducted the effectiveness of the parliamentary process. Since Gandaki Province Assembly is designed to ensure accountability and transparency in the province through the parliamentary processes throughout the province, the effectiveness can be accessed from the evaluation of ease and effectiveness of the process to raise voices of women and the marginalized groups. A deeper understanding of these issues is crucial to address the democratic deficits and to ensure that the assembly reflects the diverse needs and perspectives of its members. In this regard, this study aims to explore the importance of inclusive governance, focusing on gender and marginalized groups to enhance the overall effectiveness of the Gandaki Province Assembly and to answer the question of how the women members and marginalized groups participate in the parliamentary activities from the perspective of their respective inclusion.

To find the current status of representation and participation of women and marginalized groups, this study mainly examined the role of gender and marginalized voices in the parliamentary process of the assembly. Thus, this study firstly analyzed the representation of women and marginalized groups in the parliament and assess their participation in the parliamentary processes. Secondly, it explored the possible barriers

of representation and participation of gender and marginalized voices on the effectiveness of parliamentary process. Finally, this study accessed the strategies of promoting the representation and influence of gender and marginalized groups in the parliamentary process of the assembly.

The findings of this study can help the policymakers, researchers, advocacy groups, academicians, and the general public in Nepal and abroad since this study explored the importance of inclusive governance to enhance the democratic processes. Promoting a greater participation of underrepresented groups in legislative activities was essential for effective democracy in Nepal.

This study was limited to the attitude of women and marginalized parliamentary members of the parliament only and the results were based on the answer of the questions they provided on the closed ended questions and the views collected from the interview of selected members for the open ended questions.

The plan of this paper is as follows. The first section introduces this study that includes the review of past studies. The second section describes the detail methodology of the study. The third section presents the results of the study and provides discussion of the results. The last section concludes the study and provides the recommendations.

RESEARCH METHODS

This paper aims to explore the participation and representation of gender and marginalized voices in the parliamentary process of Gandaki Province Assembly from the perspective of inclusion. The study is based on the theory of inclusive democracy and the theory of intersectionality. Fotopoulos (1997) first proposed the inclusive democracy theory that advocates the participation of all individuals in politics through a continuous participation in the decision making process, emphasizing on the equitable distribution of resources, and opposing the marginalization of minority groups based on race, gender or ethnicity, and values both diversity and pluralism. Similarly, the intersectionality theory proposed by Crenshaw (1991) provides a critical framework for understanding how intersecting identities such as race, gender, class, and ethnicity interact to nurture the experiences of individuals, particularly those from marginalized groups. This theory also emphasizes that the systems of domination are interconnected and cannot be understood in isolation since they create unique and compounded experiences. Additionally, the gender equality and goals related to reducing inequality from development of SDGs were also included in the analysis of the study (United Nation, 2015). These three were the theoretical foundation of this study.

This study used the explanatory sequential research design and Gandaki Province Assembly is selected for the study as it is the formal institution of the government that incorporates the representation proposed by the constitution of Nepal. Moreover, the ease to access is another reason to select this site as a study area. The qualitative data are collected through direct interview and quantitative data are collected through the survey questionnaires. In addition, five points Likert scale is used to explore the attitude of the province assembly members towards the current representation and participation practices of assembly (Likert, 1932). The primary data were collected through the questionnaire survey of the respondents and the secondary data were collected through the published sources and Gandaki Province Assembly Secretariat. For the survey, all twenty-one respondents who represent women and marginalized were taken into account. The data collected are analyzed using the frequency analysis, and descriptive and statistical analysis to get the desired results. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before survey and interview. Lastly, the finding of this

The Representation and Participation of Marginalized Voices in the Provincial Parliament study was limited to the perception of the respondents towards the representation and participation practices of the study area.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The result of the research was mainly aimed to illustrate the representation and participation of women and marginalized group members in the assembly. The results presented here revealed the perception of respondents on the current representation and participation status, the current situations of barriers to participation and representation, and the strategies for enhancing the representation and participation of gender and marginalized groups. The presentation of results contained the findings of five-point Likert scale to show the attitude of respondents, respondent-response close-ended questions, and the frequency of response in the multiple response questionnaires. Similarly, the views of the respondents collected through interviews by means of the open-ended questions were present as the qualitative data results.

Results

Table 1 shows a number of male and female parliamentarians in Gandaki Province Assembly who represented from all three inclusion groups indigenous nationalities, Khas Arya and marginalized groups. As it was seen the members representing the marginalized group is very low as compared to the other groups. The higher representation was from the Khas Arya group which was followed by indigenous nationalities. The representation of the females just crosses the one-third standard set by the laws. Almost all of the female members were elected from the proportional representation (PR) system. Similarly, none of the members from the marginalized groups are elected from the first pass the post (FPTP) system. However, a larger number of the parliamentarians from the indigenous and Khas Arya groups were elected from the FPTP system.

Table 1

Diversified Representation of the Parliamentarians in Gandaki Province Assembly

Group	Female			Male			Total
	FPTP	PR	Total	FPTP	PR	Total	
Indigenous	1	8	9	12	2	14	23
Khas Arya	0	7	7	22	2	24	31
Marginalized	1	4	5	0	1	1	6
Total	2	19	21	34	5	39	60

Note. Data were collected from the website of Gandaki Province Parliament Secretariat. <https://pradeshsabha.gandaki.gov.np/pages/introduction>

Table 2 shows the attitude of female and marginalized groups towards the representation and participation practice in the assembly, which was found by using the five-point Likert scale with the value ranging from 1 for strongly agree to 5 for strongly disagree. The data reveal that with the total mean of 2.55, the female and marginalized groups were satisfied to some extent by the current practice of representation and participation. The respondent parliamentarians agreed that there were sufficient opportunities provided to speak during the special hour, bill discussion, and other sessions representing from the political parties. However, the parliamentarians disagree that they were equally involved in high-stakes decision-making processes, the overall inclusiveness with respect to gender and marginalized groups is sufficient and the

The Representation and Participation of Marginalized Voices in the Provincial Parliament selection procedure of executive members and officials of the parliament is fair and follows the democratic processes with a proper representation.

Table 2

Attitude of Women and Marginalized Group Parliamentarians towards the Representation and Participation in the Decision Making Process

Statements	Mean	Variance	Skewness	
			Statistic	Std. Error
The opportunities provided to speak during parliament sessions is Sufficient.	2.05	.848	1.174	.501
Equal involvement in high-stakes decision-making processes.	3.19	1.762	-.101	.501
Equal access to resources for their parliamentary work.	2.33	1.033	.503	.501
The committee structures accommodate the unique needs of women and marginalized groups.	2.86	1.329	.521	.501
The diversity of representation improves the overall quality of policy debates in the assembly.	1.76	.390	.195	.501
Presence of inclusion groups contributed to more comprehensive policy evaluations to address cross cutting issues.	1.76	.290	-.200	.501
The inclusion of marginalized groups has led to a broader range of issues being scrutinized.	2.00	1.300	1.342	.501
The overall inclusiveness of the assembly is Sufficient.	3.38	1.248	-.622	.501
The selection procedure of Executive members follows fair and the democratic processes.	3.62	1.448	-1.071	.501
Total Mean	2.55			

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 3

Response of Women and Marginalized Group Parliamentarians on the Process of Selecting Parliamentarians from by Women and Marginalized Groups for Committee Assignments

Questions	Responses	Representation Category			Total
		Female Only	Female and Marginalized	Marginalized only	
The process of selecting women and marginalized group members for committee	Transparent and Merit-Based	7	1	0	8
	Biased but Functional	0	1	1	2

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assignments	Lacks Transparency and Fairness	5	3	0	8
	Completely Opaque and exclusive	2	1	0	3

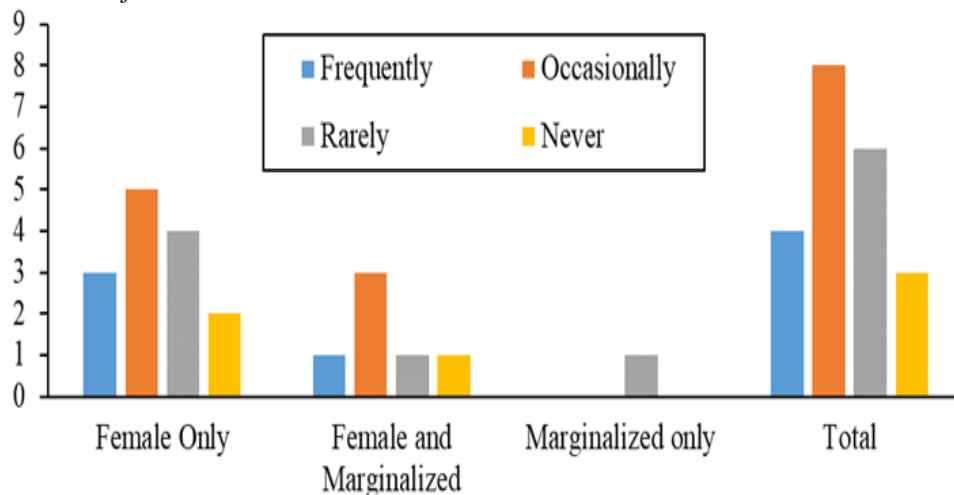
Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 3 shows the response of members about the process of selecting members for the committee assignments. Contrarily, equal responses are found in the opposing issues that the selecting process was transparent and merit based, and lacked transparency and fairness. However, half of the parliamentarians who represent both female and marginalized groups responded the selection process that lacks transparency and fairness. However, very few members found the selection process biased but it was completely opaque and exclusive.

Figure 1 illustrates the frequency of the response of women and marginalized groups serving as chairs or key decision-makers in the parliamentary process. It is evident from the data that most of the responses showed that they got occasional opportunities to chair or serve as the key decision makers in the parliamentary process. This data indicate that the participation is limited with women and marginalized groups in the key decision making roles. A few responses on the category “frequently” suggests that the process lacked the meaningful representations.

Figure 1

Response of Women and Marginalized Group Parliamentarians on the Decision Making Process of the Parliament



Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 4 shows the frequency of responses on the specific forms of bias and discrimination faced by women and marginalized groups in the parliamentary processes. The data show that gender bias is the most prevalent form of bias with 15 responses followed by overlooked for the oversight roles with 13 responses. However, most of the respondents who represent both female and marginalized groups identified the prevalence of ethnic or caste-based discrimination in contrast to the female only identified gender bias, lack of respect, and being overlooked as the bias that they faced rather than facing ethnic or caste-based discrimination.

Table 4
Frequency of Responses on the Discrimination in the Parliamentary Process

Questions	Responses	Representation Category			Total
		Female Only	Female and Marginalized	Marginalized only	
Specific forms of bias or discrimination do women and marginalized groups face in parliamentary processes	Gender bias	11	3	1	15
	Ethnic/Caste based discrimination	4	5	1	10
	Lack of Respect or Recognition	6	1	0	7
	Being Overlooked for Oversight Role	9	3	1	13
	Limited Access to Information	7	3	0	10
Total		14	6	1	21

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 5
Attitude of Female and Marginalized Group Parliamentarians towards Their Participation in the Parliament Process

Statements	Mean	Variance	Skewness	
			Statistic	Std. Error
Marginalized groups are able to influence the assembly's budgetary oversight.	2.71	1.414	.616	.501
Cultural or societal norms outside the assembly influence the level of participation.	2.29	1.014	.656	.501
Language barriers impacts on the participation in parliamentary discussions.	2.81	1.962	.253	.501
Women and marginalized members face additional scrutiny or higher expectations compared to their male or more privileged counterparts.	2.14	1.329	.561	.501
Mean	2.48			

Source: Field Survey, 2025

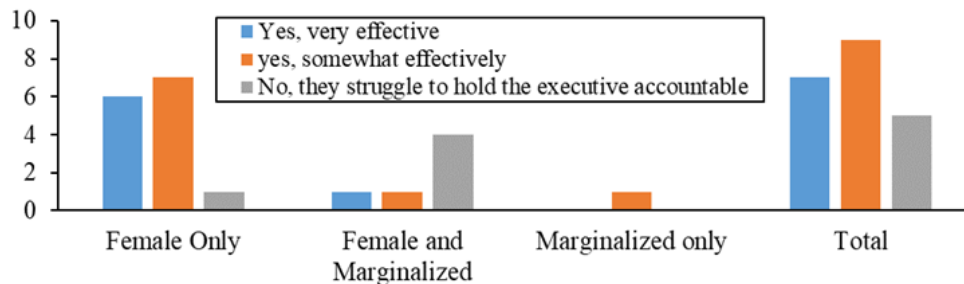
The results on the different aspects of barriers to participation such as budget allocation, cultural norms, language barriers, and scrutiny are presented in this section. Table 5 shows the attitude of female and marginalized group parliamentarians about the barriers of participation in the parliament process. As it was seen, the parliamentarians agreed that they were able to influence the assembly's budgetary oversights, the cultural norms outside the assembly, and the language barriers, influencing the level of participation from the women and marginalized groups who faced additional scrutiny compared to their male counterparts. With the total mean value of 2.48, the

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parliamentarians representing female and marginalized groups identified these barriers restricting the meaningful participation in the parliamentary processes.

Figure 2

Responses of Parliamentarians on the Surveillance Effectiveness



Source: Field Survey, 2025

Figure 2 shows the response of women and marginalized group parliamentarians on the surveillance effectiveness in holding the executive accountable through the parliamentary oversight. The data demonstrate that the majority female members excluding the marginalized groups are somehow effective for making the executive accountable followed by they are very effective to do so. However, the parliamentarians who are female and marginalized responded differently arguing that they have difficulty in holding the executive accountable through the parliamentary process.

Table 6

Frequency of Responses of Women and Marginalized Group Parliamentarians on the Procedural Challenges

Questions	Responses	Representation Category			Total
		Female Only	Female and Marginalized	Marginalized only	
The most significant procedural challenges faced by women and marginalized representatives in parliamentary process	Lack of Training or Capacity Building	7	5	1	13
	Inflexible Parliamentary Schedules	4	2	0	6
	Lack of Access to Decision Making committees	9	4	1	14
	Limited time for debate or discussion	7	3	0	10
Total		14	6	1	21

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 6 shows the frequency of the procedural challenges encountered by women and marginalized representatives in the parliamentary processes. The data illustrate that the most procedural challenges have lack of access to decision making committees with 14 responses followed by lack of training or capacity building with 13 responses. Almost all of the parliamentarians who are both female and marginalized

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respond that they have lack of training or capacity building is the prominent procedural challenge. However, most of the parliamentarians do not accept the inflexible parliamentary schedule as the procedural challenge for a meaningful participation.

Table 7

Frequency of Responses of Women and Marginalized Group Parliamentarians on the Reason for Giving Low Priority

Questions	Responses	Representation Category			Total
		Female Only	Female and Marginalized	Marginalized only	
The reason for giving lower priority on selecting women and marginalized group members as key decision-makers	Lower Academic Qualification	1	1	0	2
	Poor Leadership Quality	3	0	1	4
	They Prefer direct elected members rather that proportional	13	6	1	20
	They Promote Nepotism and favoritism	8	5	0	13
Total		14	6	1	21

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 7 shows the perceived reasons why women and marginalized groups are given lower priority in the key decision-making roles. As it was seen, almost all respondent members agreed that the political parties prefer the FPTP system elected members rather than the PR system elected members for the selection of key decision makers or executive heads. Likewise, many of the respondents believe that there is a presence of nepotism and favoritism practice in the selection process. However, respondents poorly believe that the poor leadership quality and lower academic qualification as the main reason of low priority in the selection process.

Table 8

Attitude of Women and Marginalized Group Parliamentarians on the Promotional Measures of Participation

Statements	Mean	Variance	Skewness	
			Statistic	Std. Error
Establishment of special oversight committees focusing specifically on gender and marginalized communities would be effective.	1.29	.314	1.920	.501
Specific leadership training for women and marginalized group members would increase their effectiveness in parliamentary process.	1.43	.257	.311	.501

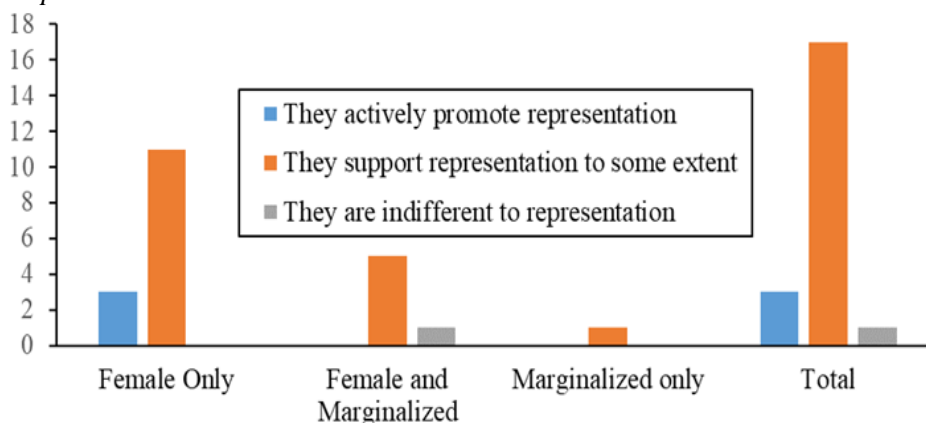
Financial support or allowances specifically targeted at marginalized groups create positive impact in their participation and other parliamentary process	1.81	.462	.251	.501
Mean	1.5			

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The response of the parliamentarians of Gandaki Province Assembly representing the female and marginalized groups on the strategies needed to enhance the representation and participation were presented in this section. Table 8 shows the response of the parliamentarians surveyed in respect to the promotional measure of the participation in the parliamentary process. As can be seen, the respondents strongly agree that the establishment of special oversight committees, specific leadership training, and targeted financial support would help for the meaningful participation of parliamentarians belonging to the female and marginalized groups in the parliament processes. Members from female and marginalized group strongly agreed with the mean score 1.5 that they need some promotional measures for the effective participation.

Figure 3

Responses of Women and Marginalized Group Parliamentarians on the Promotion of Representation



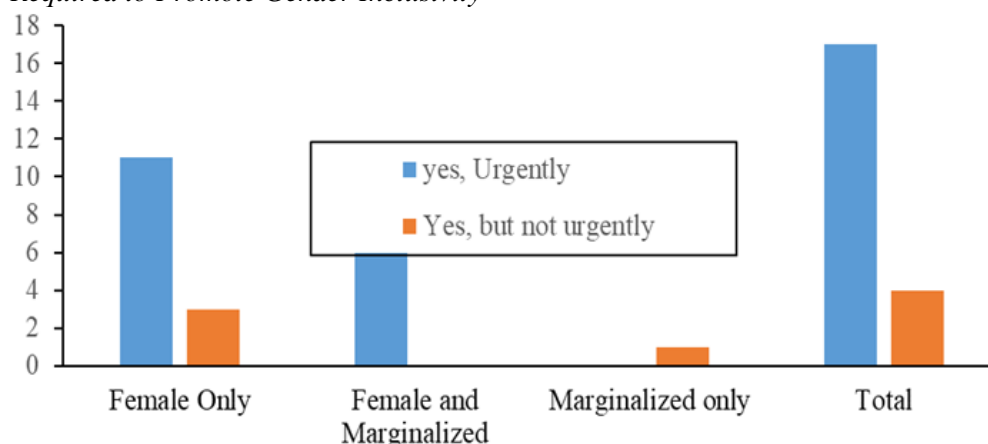
Source: Field Survey, 2025

Figure 3 illustrates the parliamentarians' perceptions of the political parties' roles in promoting the representation of women and marginalized groups. As it is evident from the data that the majority of the respondents (17 parliamentarians) believe that the political parties support the representation to some extent while a few females only respondents believe that the political parties play an active role in promoting the representation. However, only one respondent believes that the political parties are indifferent to representations.

Figure 4 shows the urgency of reforms needed to promote inclusivity in Gandaki Province Assembly. The data demonstrate that most respondents (17 parliamentarians) expressed that reforms are urgently needed, while only 4 respondents indicated reforms are necessary but not urgent. The data indicate that there is urgent need of reform for meaningful and effective representation and participation of female and marginalized group parliamentarians in Gandaki Province Assembly.

Figure 4

Responses of Women and Marginalized Group Parliamentarians on the Reform Required to Promote Gender Inclusivity



Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 9 illustrates the responses from *women and marginalized group parliamentarians* on the types of gender and inclusion reforms that they propose to ensure a meaningful participation of women and marginalized groups in the assembly. As can be seen, higher responses were obtained on the gender responsive budgetary practices followed by the mandatory gender and inclusion quota. However, the percentage of the response to propose the mandatory gender and inclusion quota was higher from the parliamentarians who represent both female and marginalized group as compared to the female only. The study also showed that very few parliamentarians proposed the flexible working hour for reforms.

Table 9

Frequency of Responses of Women and Marginalized Group Parliamentarians on the Inclusion Reform

Questions	Responses	Representation Category			Total
		Female Only	Female and Marginalized	Marginalized only	
Types of gender and inclusion reforms would you propose to ensure more active and meaningful participation of women and marginalized groups.	Mandatory gender and inclusion quotas	6	5	1	12
	Comprehensive gender sensitivity training for all members	8	2	1	11
	Flexible working hours to accommodate personal obligations	5	1	0	6
	Gender sensitive budgeting practices	11	6	0	17

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Strengthened anti-discrimination policies within the assembly	7	2	0	9
Total	14	6	1	21

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 10 shows the types of resources or support that the parliamentarians believe are essential for women and marginalized representatives to perform effectively in their roles. The data illustrate that better access to data and information was the most frequently mentioned need, with 18 respondents highlighting its significance followed by research and policy support with 16 respondents. The data suggest that access to information and research support are essential to overcoming the barriers and enhancing the impact of marginalized members in the parliamentary processes.

Table 10

Frequency of Responses of Women and Marginalized Group Parliamentarians on the Resources or Support Needed for the Effective Role

Questions	Responses	Representation Category			Total
		Female Only	Female and Marginalized	Marginalized only	
Types of resources or support do women and marginalized members need to be more effective in their roles	Research and policy support	10	5	1	16
	Networking and mentorship opportunities	6	2	0	8
	Better access to data and information	12	5	1	18
	Increased financial resources for constituency work	8	1	0	9
Total		14	6	1	21

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The interview was conducted to collect the qualitative data. The interview was focused to collect the responses on the current representation practices. The included the leadership role, the role of political party for a meaningful participation, the forms of discrimination, and the policy suggestions and strategies to implement policy, enhancing the participation and representation of female and marginalized groups in the assembly. Most of the members find the representation and participation in the assembly just to fulfil the constitutional mandate which lacks the meaningful participation. Most respondents revealed that their roles in the leadership are limited by the dominant groups in the parliamentary parties. The political parties should give priority to the female and marginalized groups while selecting the candidate for election and implement zero-tolerance strategy on discrimination. Most of the respondents demonstrated that the male colleague bears the traditional taboos that females were not able to do the sensitive and decision-making job. The respondents suggested the inclusive leadership development program with participation as per the population share, capacity enhancement policies,

transformation of traditional styles to modern one, and information access as the reform policies and strategies to promote a meaningful representation and participation within the assembly.

Discussion

The representation and participation of representatives in Gandaki Province Assembly parliamentary process faces some issues though they are partially satisfied with the current representation and participation practices. The theory of inclusive democracy by Fotopoulos (1997) emphasizes for the equitable representation and participatory governance. In contrast to this theory, the results showed the overrepresentation of Khas-Arya and indigenous groups and the marginalized groups, which reflects a failure to achieve inclusive governance in the assembly. Higher number of representations of female from the PR election system emphasized the structural inadequacies of the FPTP system in promoting diversity. Pandeya and Oyama (2019) noted similar trends in Nepal, where the privileged groups dominate due to the institutional designs. This finding matched with Kalra and Joshi (2023), who highlighted the need for reforms in the South Asian parliaments to ensure a fair representation of women and marginalized groups. Moreover, the partial satisfaction about the meaningful participation and representation shows the provisional deficit in the parliamentary process. In addition, the perception of bias and lack of fairness in committee assignments indicates a gap in the principles of inclusive governance. Further, the meaningful representation requires the marginalized voices in the leadership roles; however, the data showed a failure to integrate these voices into the decision-making processes, undermining the democratic ideals. The ethnic or caste-based biases and gender biases that existed undermined the principles of equity and participation. Verge (2020) also highlighted the importance of ensuring women's voices in the parliamentary debates to influence male counterparts and to shape the policy outcomes similar to the findings of this study. However, the limited involvement in decision-making shown in the study underscores the need for the systemic reforms.

Further, the results showed the barriers like cultural norms, language, and additional scrutiny limiting the meaningful participation similar to the study findings by Pandeya and Oyama (2019). Similarly, the marginalized groups struggled to hold the executive accountable aligning to the conclusion of Mugge et al. (2019) that observed the similar issues among the ethnic minority women in the Dutch parliaments. The procedural challenges observed in the study like lack of access to the decision-making committees and the insufficient training highlighted the structural inequities that resembles Kantola and Lombardo's (2021) idea for the institutional reforms. Some promotional measures needed to implement and overcome these barriers such as the leadership training that was also suggested by Joshi and Echle (2023), which includes financial, policy, and research supports. With these supports, such barriers can be reduced to enhance the equitable representation and meaningful participation.

However, the results showed that there was a different perception about the participation and representation women and marginalized group parliamentarians, representing the females only and members representing multiple minority i.e. representing both female and marginalized groups. The results resembled with the intersectionality theory of Crenshaw (1991), which illustrate how the multiple forms of marginalization intersect to the compound exclusion from the political representation and participation. Women from marginalized groups were excessively excluded from the leadership roles and decision-making processes, often encountering the systemic biases

such as caste and ethnicity-based discrimination and gender bias similar to the findings by Mugge et al. (2019) that illustrated women from the ethnic minorities often face the greater barriers than their male counterparts in representing the minority issues. Likewise, a limited access to the decision-making committees and reliance on nepotism or favoritism reflects the global trends revealed by Pandeya and Oyama (2019). Further, the limited role of political parties in actively promoting the representation and participation of women and marginalized groups in the assembly, and lack of adequate resources further reinforce the necessity of intersectional approaches to address these differentiated inequities.

Moreover, comparing the results with SDGs, which highlight that the inclusion of women and marginalized groups in the parliamentary systems was a key mechanism for achieving these goals, as it ensures the diverse voices that are represented in the decision-making processes, the study results show that there was some progress in terms of the representation and participation of women and marginalized groups. However, the meaningful participation was yet to achieve which needed the realization of meaningful participation by the party leaders, capacity building, financial support, gender sensitive budget, and special scrutiny parliament committee.

The face to face interview results showed that there was lack of meaningful representation and participation of female and marginalized groups in the assembly. The responses were similar to the findings of the questionnaire survey in regards to the limited role in decision making, caste and gender-based discrimination, undermining of the capacity of female and marginalized group by dominant group, lack of access in the executive role, unbalanced representation as the population share, and election candidate selection procedure. Most of the respondents suggested to the policy reform together with the implementation of leadership development programs, capacity enhancement programs, and formulation of new standards for meaningful participation. Comparing the interview responses, the respondents with the multiple minority, representing both female and marginalized groups face more difficulty for a meaningful participation compared to their female only colleagues. These results further reinstate the claim of the result of the quantitative analysis that the reform was needed to establish the meaning participation and proportional representation in the assembly.

CONCLUSION

The paper concludes that the Gandaki Province Assembly faces the substantial challenges to achieve the inclusive representation and participation for women and marginalized groups. The results emphasize a systemic overrepresentation of dominant groups and the exclusion of marginalized voices, which undermines the ideals of equitable governance proposed by the theory of inclusive democracy. The procedural barriers, biases, and insufficient support further intensify this disparity, particularly for women from the marginalized groups, supporting the framework of the intersectionality theory. Though the proportional representation has improved gender inclusion, the limitations of the FPTP system and reliance on PR for women's representation indicates the structural inadequacies. Addressing these issues requires urgent reforms, including targeted leadership training, resource allocation, and active political party support. The assembly can reduce these barriers, enhance the meaningful participation, and promote inclusive good governance by adopting these promotional measures. With these improvements, the democratic practice of Nepal would improve as per the constitutional mandate together with the achievement of SDGs mandate. Future research could be the

The Representation and Participation of Marginalized Voices in the Provincial Parliament study of the parliaments of all seven provinces together with the federal system as mentioned in the constitution of Nepal to make more generalized conclusion.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION

I hereby wish to declare that I do not have any conflict of interests to disclose. However, I declare that the manuscript has not been published before and is not being considered for publication elsewhere.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

I declare that this manuscript is originally produced by me.

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