

# GENDER INEQUALITY: A CASE STUDY OF WARD-16 BHARATPUR METROPOLITAN CITY

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## Abstract

*The main reason behind inequality is access to less power which is a byproduct of illiteracy and less income. An illiterate female cannot counter for herself neither can she counter for her offspring (mostly girls). To find out the gender inequality, this study has been conducted in Ward-16 of Bharatpur metropolitan city. With the use of census method, this study primarily focuses on the primary data taken in whole ward and the secondary data collected from other sources. In the total population of 17546, 9197 are female and remaining 8349 are male. The survey research design was used whereas purposive and simple random sampling was followed to select the respondents. The study was conducted in Chitwan district. The finding of the research is that there is inequality in male and female population in ward 16 of Bharatpur Metropolitan City. This inequality can only be broken if the sphere of planning is strengthened so as to uproot the root of inequality. Equality measure being one of the most important indicator of development, the only way to achieve the sustainable development goal is to empower all the population present inside nation.*

**Keywords:** Case Study, Gender Inequality

## Introduction

In 1988, several hundred women in a village in Chitwan District held meetings, rallies and demonstrations to demand a piece of former pasture land on which to establish a women's center. They had begun discussing their need for a place to meet in 1987 in literacy classes organized by local activists. These discussions gradually extended into the wider community. Women marked the beginning of their struggle on International Women's Day, March 8, 1988, when for the first time, they publicly articulated their demand for land for establishing a Mahila Jagaran Kendra (Women's Social Action Center) (Enslin, 1992). After village officials refused their demands, women organized a more far-reaching campaign not only to establish their center, but also to reclaim other common spaces to which they had gradually been losing access. They also brought women's personal problems into community discourse. As women began taking over community spaces, they confronted opposition from conservative, high caste men. Women did eventually win control over four Gutthas (0.13 hectares) of community land next to the compound which encloses

the village panchayat office and Siva temple. They built a two-room brick building and are using it as a center for expanding literacy classes, establishing tree nurseries, and for planning maternal health care, legal aid, and cooperative production programs reflecting the cultural diversity of Gunjanagar village and Chitwan District (Enslin, 1992). After 32 years in Chitwan the status of gender equality is significantly low.

**Gender inequality** refers to unequal treatment or perceptions of individuals based on their gender. It arises from differences in socially constructed gender roles. Gender systems are often dichotomous and hierarchical; gender binary systems may reflect the inequalities that manifest in numerous dimensions of daily life. Gender inequality stems from distinctions, whether empirically grounded or socially constructed (Bagale & Devkota, 2015). The men and women are not equal and that gender affects an individual's living experience. These differences arise from distinctions in biology, psychology, and cultural norms. Some of these types of distinctions are empirically grounded while others appear to be socially constructed.

Increased competition and need to outperform others in the present world has changed the face of world. In this dire situation of capacity building and outperforming, females are still under discrimination. The type of discrimination that can't be observed. It can only be felt; the discrimination of rights. This is called as inequality where a female can't pursue her happiness without the consent of another individual (generally male) (Bagale & Devkota, 2015). Despite the continuous effort of government on tackling this situation, the inability to identify the root cause, its strength, and inability to use targeted approach has made this inequality stronger overtime (Badal, 2018). In presence of this level of inequality, it is impossible to outperform the downtrend in development to get to the track of prosperity. Increased competitiveness in the world has developed a situation to outreach and outperform one another to sustain. Considering this struggle, education is the best path that anyone can endeavor. In this struggle, irrational behavior and mindset of people towards one sub-species of human kind i.e. female is widely observed in Nepal. "Females are treated as a thing and as a means rather than a person in Nepalese society because; gender inequality starts here in the womb and remains up to the tomb" (Adhikari, 2013). The inequality among these two strata of population is higher as compared to other nations. Inequality is high in Nepal: it ranks 81st out of 152 countries in terms of economic inequality (Oxfam International and HAMI, 2019). Comparing their educational attainment level, female population lag behind in each and every part. Their net enrollment rate is less than that of males, their dropout rate is more than that of males and most of their age at marriage is also less than prescribed by government. Not only the education, their employment rate is miserable as only around 6% of females are engaged in some sorts of occupations. Comparing it with the male population, they take over all the decisions of family and

their net employment rate outside home is around 30%. Most of the female population are home-bound and are not provided with equitable facilities.

**Case studies** are based on an in-depth investigation of a single individual, group or event to explore the causes of underlying principles. A case study is a descriptive and exploratory analysis of a person, group or event. It is study research can be single or multiple case studies, includes quantitative evidence, relies on multiple sources of evidence and benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions. It is an analysis of persons, groups, events, decisions, periods, policies, institutions or other systems that are studied holistically by one or more methods. In the social and life sciences, a **case study** is a research method involving an up-close, in-depth, and detailed examination of a particular case.

Constituting of more than half of the population of Nepal, their status is rather disappointing as compared to male. The female population is restricted culturally, socially, economically and physically. They are constantly put under the hood of male population creating a condition of total or partial dependency. The majority of communities in Nepal are patriarchal, and for women and girls, life is strongly influenced by their fathers, husbands and sons (Oxfam International and HAMI, 2019). Nepal also stands on a position where the natural calamities and disasters strike time and again. The disasters continuously affect the livelihood of most of the population. In this effect, the relative analysis shows that the girls and women are the most affected among all the population. It is observed that in the aftermath of disasters, the household workload increases substantially leading to drop-out of girls affecting their long-term economic prospects and life opportunities whereas the boys and male receive preferential treatment in rescue effort (Oxfam International and HAMI, 2019).

The Nepalese culture is bound to a social practice that is symbol of culture. The people following this practice are supposed to restrain girls and women of their freedom so there is an overarching situation of social phenomena that restricts women and girls from attaining their attainable. Different barriers present in society are key factors in stopping and restraining girls and women from their best livelihood approach. The reasons for girls' school dropout is a complex phenomenon and a result of interplay of structural, cultural, religious, social and economic factors (Adhikari, 2013).

In Nepalese context, there is overarching feeling of patriarchal system which develops the feeling of immense power among males. These feelings act as a "*superstring*" in their mental spheres to suppress the full rights of female population to study. The symbolic idea of patriarchal system lead to a situation of suppression of female counterparts. These are the complex phenomena, and have the internal relation to each other as described above by showing how gender determines the girls leading out of school in Nepalese context (Adhikari, 2013). As seen in the Nepalese society, the

rural areas are more bound to culture and traditions than the urban area. The people in rural areas tend to follow the cultural practices more than the people of urban areas thus effecting the relative level of attainment of education in these two parts. The urban–rural divide also has an impact at all levels of education, with a gender gap of 23% for rural areas and 19% for urban areas; only 51 women per 100 men in the rural areas had a school leaving certificate, compared to 70 women per 100 men in urban areas (Asian Development Bank, 2010). Not just the disasters, the poverty engulfed society is also a restrictor for female population to uplift their status. The poverty leads to inability to sustain in education and the first to be withdrawn are female population. Gender disparity in education also widens as poverty increases, which means that girls from the poorest families face a greater disadvantage than those from wealthier families. The survey found that the gender gap in school enrolment is widest in the poorest and second poorest wealth quintiles, and is non-existent in the richest quintile (Oxfam International and HAMI, 2019).

### **Problem Statement**

It has been surveyed all around the globe that there is considerable difference between educational attainment of women of poor society and women of rich society. As per a study, least percentage of girls involved in education don't complete their nominal level of education due to different factors. Only 6% of the poorest girls complete primary school (Oxfam International and HAMI, 2019).

Nepal being an underdeveloped country is still lacking behind in attaining the goals of sustainable development as education. Literacy rate in Nepal in 2011 was 71.6% for male and 44.5% for female making total of 65.9% which was 54.1% in 2001 (Dhakal, 2018). This shows the increase in the literacy rate but comparing it with the literacy rate of world, the status is rather disappointing. Out of the 129 countries across the globe, Nepal stands at the 111th position in terms of education, which reflects Nepal government gives low strategic priority to develop the education sector (Dhakal, 2018). Poverty is one of the biggest constrains for Nepalese development. Nepal still faces a significant poverty challenge (Oxfam International and HAMI, 2019). The poverty leads directly to hindrance in indicators of development as education, income, employment, etc. This poverty has deprived people (especially women and more specifically marginalized women) to attain their educational requirement. A rich woman is four times more likely to have gone to school than a poor woman, while a rich man is fifty times more likely to have gone to school (Oxfam International and HAMI, 2019). Based on 2017 data, more than 8.1 million people are living in poverty, and 28.6% of Nepali face multi-dimensional poverty, which means they also lack access to essential services (Oxfam International and HAMI, 2019).

In Nepal, there has been persistent inequality among male and female from history. Males are supposed to be '*face lifters*' in a family whereas females are the backbone of the family. This ill

tradition has strengthened the inequality among the people. Nepal ranks 138th out of 157 countries in Reducing Inequality Index (Oxfam International and HAMI, 2019). This shows the futility of efforts to minimize the inequality. The poverty and inequality that persist in Nepalese society has deprived women of education. Half of the poorest women in Nepal have no education at all, compared with 1 in 100 of the richest men (Oxfam International and HAMI, 2019).

As the symbolic interactionism refers, there is more hegemonic thought in the people of rural areas. In some cases, the rural people are found to be more obsessed with their cultural practices than with the practicality. According to the NLSS (2011), the literacy rate is 20% lower for females than for males, and these gender differences are even more pronounced in rural areas (Oxfam International and HAMI, 2019). This leads to the social restrain in the freedom of women. They can't work outside and earn for their living making them vulnerable. According to the national population census, 2011, participation of women, despite their larger share in population, is found to be minimal compared to men in various areas of development including economic, social, political, and administrative and policy making areas (Election Commission, Nepal, 2013).

In case of Nepal, the literacy rates have been continuously increasing. Despite the increasing rate of literacy, inequality can be perfectly seen by these figures. It is found that the rate of increase of literacy is 10.64% in each census year over the last 70 years where as male literacy is increased as 11.27% and female literacy is increased as 8.09 % at the same time duration (Dhakal, 2018). More specifically, in case of educational status in the field area, the total literacy rate in Bharatpur metropolitan city was 84.93% composing of literacy rate of females 79.24% and literacy rate of males was 90.42% (Ministry of Physical Planning and Works, 2008). Alike the educational attainment, 97.48% women were involved in household activities in Bharatpur metropolitan city (Ministry of Physical Planning and Works, 2008). This are the direct implication of persistent inequality in this study area as well. To dig out the real facts the following study has been carried out.

## **Objectives**

The general objective of this research is to identify the gender equality status among 17546 population of ward 16 of Bharatpur Metropolitan City. The specific objectives prepared to work out on the general objectives are:

1. To dig out the educational inequality among male and female population of this ward.
2. To find out the work status of both male and female population and identify the level of inequality.
3. To explore the freedom and decision making power of female population.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Universe, sample and sampling frame**

In this study, Bharatpur Metropolitan City has been considered as the Universe of study where all the wards has been taken into sampling frame. One ward with total population of 17546 is the main sample. Inside the sample, census method has been used so as to study the whole population residing in ward 16. Total of 17546 populations has been used for research purpose.

### **Data Collection method and type**

In this research, both qualitative as well as quantitative data has been gathered. Qualitative data is to verify the status and quantitative data is to figure out the number of respondents and their classification. As for the source both primary as well as secondary source has been used. Primary source has been used in the field i.e. in data collection whereas secondary source has been used for literature review and for collection of enrollment of students in schools. In this study household survey has been conducted with the help of questionnaires developed as tools to counter the need. Moreover, KII has also be conducted with the help of KII guidelines to dig out on the enrollment and drop-outs and the presence of inequality. Interview has also been taken with the help of interview questionnaires.

### **Discussion and Analysis**

There is a wide gender disparity in the literacy in developing countries, even if the female literacy in the countries has gone up (Adhikari, 2013). The hegemonic culture of Nepal is acts as blinkers of community to prevent either directly or indirectly for their utmost development and growth. The traditional system of early marriage, child marriage, etc. acts as barrier in maintaining the equitable level in the two genders. Cultural norms that prescribe early marriage (by 19 years of age), early childbirth, and higher fertility inhibit women's educational and other opportunity (Rajbhandari, 2005). With the continuous effort of the government in balancing this inequality scenario, the effects are mere futile against the strong social bounder. These social norms and values directly catch the policies into its grasp and skew its direction in its favors. Although gender inequality is often cited as a barrier to the girls' school attendance in Nepal, practically little attention has been directed at understanding how patriarchal socio-cultural practices influence the girls' attendance and why they don't complete their education in secondary education (Adhikari, 2013). There is a dire need to target the main root of inequality i.e. the socio-cultural and economic barrier present in our society.

With the multi-culture and diverse ethnicity, there exist a complex web of social system in Nepal. This complex web is very hard to understand and tackle. General methodology as solution of any problems active in this society is almost impossible. Effective targeting remains challenging within

the complex socioeconomic environment (Asian Development Bank, 2010). Furthermore, until and unless this barrier is broken and the gender differences is identified and tackled development of nation is hard to imagine. Unless these disparities between women and men and different social groups are recognized and addressed, there is no way that Nepal can achieve its goal of inclusive growth, or reach Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 1 (elimination of absolute poverty and reduction of poverty by half) or SDG 5 (gender equality and empowerment of women and girls) by 2030” (Rajbhandari, 2005).

In present context, there has been many activities to make men and women equal. These actions have brought a slight change in number but still the same attribute remains. Health and education indicators particularly of women are discouraging (Rajbhandari, 2005). The girls and women are found to be enrolled in school in their childhood but due to different ill-perspectives presented by society their journey can’t walk further and they get de-tracked. In Nepal, yet the girls start primary school in greater numbers, the rate at which they leave school is very high (Adhikari, 2013). Continuous effort to bring equality among men and women has tried its best in achieving its goals but the social system has played the policy makers and monitors by hiding the actuality and showing the false context i.e. superficial reality only. The educational attainment of females is lower than that of males even if the gender gap has narrowed in recent years (UN Women, 2017). The girls and women’s net enrollment is incomparable with the male counterparts as in the 15-49 age group, over 40% of women versus 14% of men have never been to school (UN Women, 2017). Taking about the literacy rate, there is considerable gap between the literacy rate of male and female population in the society and data presented by municipality and field. This gap has been in continuous trend since long time. The literacy rate of Nepal in different years can be seen below:

**Table No 1 Literacy Rate in Nepal in Different Census Years**

Literacy Rate in Nepal in Different Census Years						
Sex	1952/54	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001
Male	9.5	16.3	24.7	34.9	54.5	63.85
Female	0.7	1.8	3.7	11.5	25.0	38.7
Total	5.3	8.9	14.3	23.5	39.6	51.27
(Census Reports, Bureau of Statistics, 2002-Kathmandu, Nepal)						

(Adhikari, 2013)

To tackle the existing difference in the rate of educational attainment, government as well as non-government sector has been playing a formidable role. Different organization has been established and different policies has been brought to tackle this situation. The national mechanisms made to tackle this gap in educational attainment can be tabulated as:

**Table No 2 National Mechanism to tackle women's issues**

National Machineries and Governmental Organizations Machineries/ Organizations	Year of Establishment
Ministry of Women, Children & Social Welfare	1995
National Commission for Women	2002

(Bhadra & Shah, 2007).

Moreover, there are policies that has been prepared since the sixth five-year plan to tackle this situation. The policies made by 6<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> five-year plan for fighting the inequality can be shown as in the table:

**Table No 3 Gender Policy and Approach of Nepal**

<b>National Policy on WID/ GAD Five Year Plan</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Policy Approach</b>
Sixth Five Year Plan	1980-85	The Sixth Plan adopts the policy of enhancing the efficiency of women recognizing the role of women in development.
Seventh Five Year Plan	1985-90	The Seventh Plan adopts the policy of enhancing efficiency and productivity of women through participatory approach.
Eighth Five Year Plan	1992-97	The Eighth Plan adopts the policy of ensuring equitable distribution of development benefits by bringing women into the mainstream of development.
Ninth Five Year Plan	1997-2002	The Ninth Plan adopts the policy of mainstreaming gender, reducing gender inequality, and empowerment of women
Tenth Five Year Plan	2003-2008	The Tenth Plan adopts the policy of mainstreaming gender, reducing gender inequality and empowerment of women; and recognizing gender equality as a key indicator of poverty analysis.

(Bhadra & Shah, 2007)

In 14<sup>th</sup> periodic plan of Nepal, there is an agenda to empower women of all social and cultural background economically, socially and politically. The educational attainment level of women is also increasing in the present time scenario (National Planning Commission, 2073). Despite the fact that the educational status of women is improving as compared to previous years more

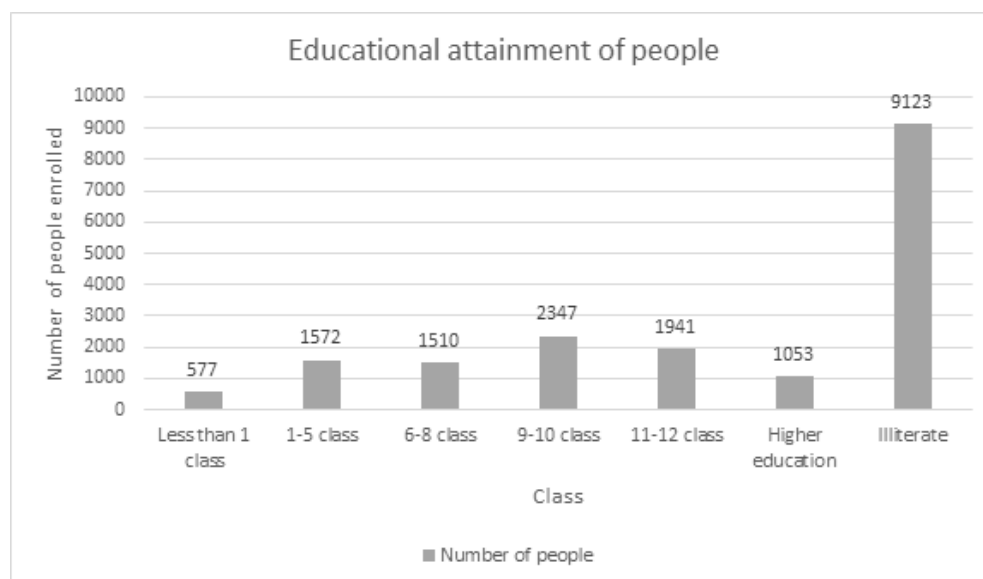


programs and struggle is required to bring equitable educational attainment in this sector. Article 13 of our constitution ensures the right to equality and also provides for formulating laws to make special provisions for protection, empowerment or advancement of backward persons or community including women, Dalit, indigenous peoples and Madhesi from economic, social or cultural perspectives (Election Commission, Nepal, 2013).

### Educational status of study area

The study area is relatively larger with total of 17546 populations. The male population comprise of less than half of the female population where male population is 8349 and female population is 9197. Out of these population, total of 9012 people are illiterate who can't read and write. This make the literacy percentage of this ward to be 48.64% which is considerably less as compared to the literacy of the metropolitan city that it lies in. In terms of population with study above plus 2 there are total of 1053 people who have studied bachelors, masters and PhD in this whole ward which is considerably less.

### Class wise enrollment:

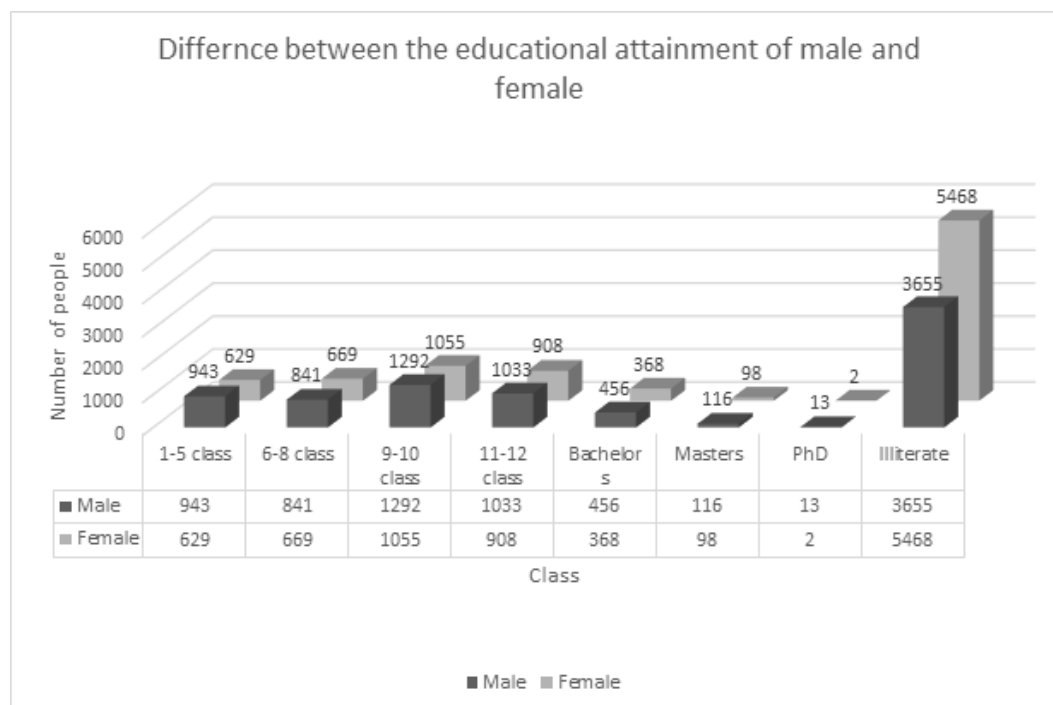


Source: (Research Nepal and Ward-16 Bharatpur Metropolitan City, 2076)

*Note: Educational attainment of people of study are different in field and Bharatpur metropolitan city has published the municipal report with municipal literacy percentage of 98.5% with 99.1% male literacy and 97.8% female literacy. Here Illiterate is categorized with people who haven't joined formal education and don't have basic idea on reading and writing, 577 population categorized in illiterate group has just joined the class or are in nursery level)*

The above table presents the figurative view on the present status of education in this ward. The status shows more number of illiterate people. This illiteracy among the community members prepare further chain of gender inequality in educational as well as other sector as the pre-existing culture takes over their intellectuality.

Comparing the educational attainment of both male and female population, a major difference can be encountered as shown in the figure below:



Source: (Research Nepal and Ward-16 Bharatpur Metropolitan City, 2076)

*Note: Educational attainment of people of study are different in field and Bharatpur metropolitan city has published the municipal report with municipal literacy percentage of 98.5% with 99.1% male literacy and 97.8% female literacy. Here Illiterate is categorized with people who haven't joined formal education and don't have basic idea on reading and writing, 577 population categorized in illiterate group has just joined the class or are in nursery level)*

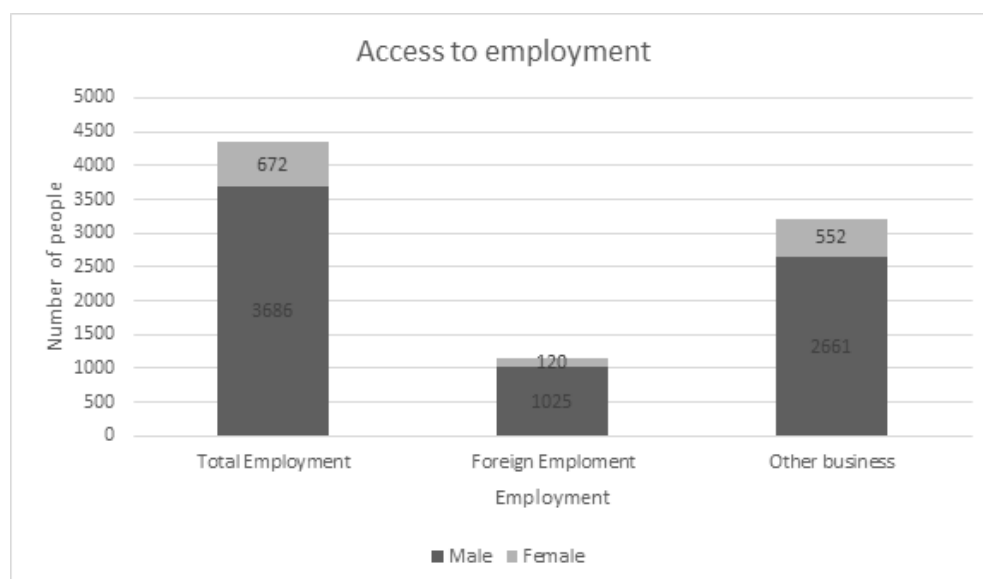
The above table shows the inequality present in the educational attainment of people of ward 16 of Bharatpur metropolitan city. As seen in each and every class level, there are more male population than female population. The female population is high only in the illiterate class which shows the indistinctiveness of the inequality present. The major issues and challenges are lower enrollment rate of girls, low percentage of female teachers, difference in the nature of the ratio

of the existence of male and female teachers, attitude of underestimating the capacity of women working in education, less participation of girls in technical subjects like mathematics and science, elevated dropout rate of girls and so on (Bagale & Devkota, 2015).

### Employment status of study area

Talking about the employment of the people of this area, the situation is more or less same. The total women’s population in employment is 672 whereas at the same time, the total male population in employment is 3686. This indicator also ascertains of the inequality in economic sector in this area. The employment of the people of this area can be shown as:

### Employment status in study area



Source: (Research Nepal and Ward-16 Bharatpur Metropolitan City, 2076)

The above figure shows the access to employment to both males and female population. The males are found to have dominated the employment sector and females are seen to be working in home. Males are almost 10 times more involved in foreign employment as compared to female and 5 times more involved in other businesses as compared to females. This shows the females are more restricted to their home rather than going outside. Out of 9197 females only 672 are employed. This is worst case scenario of gender inequality in the field of employment. Furthermore, the women were also found to be restricted in household activities and act as helpers in agriculture sector.

In the study to find the decision making power embedded, another astonishing fact has been dug up as the households with males in foreign employment had females as substitute decision makers but

in rest of other cases the males were the decision makers specially in economic and social sector. A Study conducted in more than 4284 households showed that in most of the house i.e. 3059 houses had male as main decision makers and remaining 1225 had substitute female decision makers (in absence of male decision makers). This decision making power also shows how the current equality status is in the study area.

Lastly, the analysis on the marriage was also conducted where cases of early marriage was found. Despite the claims of abolishment of early marriage in Nepal, live examples could be seen in the study area where maximum population who were below 18 were married and were settled. Some females were found to have babies of 2 to 3 years of age in their age of 20s. This clearly indicates the presence of early marriage in the study area. Out of the study in 1000 households (sampled), 289 cases of early marriage were found. This indicates that the girls had no rights to decide in their marital age and were forced to marry before they could accomplish their qualification and skills. The implication of early marriage can be related with the gender inequality as male population were married at the age where they could have attained their qualification (fully faired with skills) and the female population were married at young age where they were still dependent thus increasing their dependency towards male counterpart.

### **Conclusion**

With the analysis of the employment status, educational status and power inside and outside family, the status of female population of the study area seems to be relatively poor. The considerable difference in the educational attainment of the male and female population, limited decision making power of women, their total dependence on the male counterparts and their inactiveness in income generation activities shows that there is lack of equality among male and female population of the study area. The literacy rate in Nepal seems to be normally improving but despite the improving literacy rate, there is persistence of gender inequality and thus the educational inequality as well. So, in a nutshell we can state that there exists an unprecedented inequality present in society which has been entangled in our social system. Breaking this attribute of inequality means leading to sustainable and desirable development of nation. The main recommendation to be made after this report is that the women shall have the right to special opportunity in the spheres of education which should be based on positive discrimination

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