

# The Factors Affecting the Decision-making Role of Women in Household Management in Nepal

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## Abstract

*Taking published data from the Nepal Demographic and Health Survey 2006, this study has examined the key demographic, social, and economic factors affecting the role of women in decision making in household management in Nepal. The study confirmed that women's age, religion, relationship to the head of the household, education, working status, and occupation, which were attributed to the women themselves, as well as occupation of husbands/partners and whether the husband had had another wife, which were attributed to the husbands/partners, were the major factors having a significant association with the role of women in decision making in household management. However, other likely factors, such as women's age gap with husbands/partners, place of residence, social class, wealth status, type and level of earning, education of husbands/partners, husband's living status, and sex of the household head were not found to have such a significant relationship. The findings confirmed contemporary thinking and rejected traditional thinking on this well-discussed social issue.*

**Keywords:** Decision Making, Household Management, Role of Women

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## ปัจจัยที่มีผลกระทบต่อการตัดสินใจด้านการจัดการ ครอบครัวของสตรีชาวเนปาล

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### บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษาครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาปัจจัยที่มีผลกระทบต่อการตัดสินใจด้านการจัดการครอบครัวของสตรีชาวเนปาล ซึ่งประกอบด้วย ปัจจัยด้านประชากร เศรษฐกิจ และสังคม โดยใช้แหล่งข้อมูลทุติยภูมิจากการสำรวจด้านประชากรและสาขาวิชานุคคลของกรรยา ซึ่งประกอบด้วย อายุ ศาสนา ความสัมพันธ์กับหัวหน้าครอบครัว การศึกษา สถานภาพการทำงานและการประกอบอาชีพและสถานะการมีภาระทางครอบครัว เป็นปัจจัยหลักที่มีความสัมพันธ์อย่างมีนัยสำคัญ ต่อบทบาทในการตัดสินใจด้านการจัดการครอบครัวของสตรีชาวเนปาล อย่างไรก็ตาม ปัจจัยด้านอื่น ๆ เช่น ส่วนต่างอายุของคู่สมรส สถานที่อยู่อาศัย ชั้นทางสังคม สถานะความมั่งคั่ง ประเพณีและระดับของรายได้ ระดับการศึกษาของคู่สมรส การยังมีชีวิตอยู่ของสามี และเพศของหัวหน้าครอบครัว พบว่า ไม่มีความสัมพันธ์อย่างมีนัยสำคัญ นอกจากนี้ ผลการศึกษา ยังยืนยันว่า การมีความคิดแบบร่วมสมัยและการมีแนวคิดต่อต้านความคิดดั้งเดิมมีประโยชน์อย่างยิ่งสำหรับการอภิปรายในประเด็นด้านสังคม

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## Introduction

Along with feminists, contemporary mainstream development activists and progressive men and women are strong in their view that women should be incorporated in all decision-making processes if nations, societies and households are to get peace and thrive with progress. It is not only the connotations of such expressions as “the husband and wife are two wheels of the same cart,” “men and women are the two sides of the same coin,” or “women cover the half sky,” etc., that are important for the issue of women’s participation in the household and national level decision-making processes; the need to incorporate women in all decision making, including households, is becoming a reality. The concepts and behaviours expressed in the ideas that “men take the decisions and women accept them,” “women should be confined to the homestead, particularly regarding the kitchen and family caretaking,” etc., are gradually fading. Women’s participation in the decision making of household management has become one of the major indicators of women’s empowerment. Fair participation and equal authority with equal capacity provide women with a chance to contribute their own efforts to household management.

The concept of confrontation, cooperation, and power, or the roles in decision making, has been the focus of attention by researchers for the last several decades. Game theory, initially invented by John von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern (1944) as a mathematical theory of games, which has been refined and generalized in the succeeding decades, can be considered as one of the most important and useful theories explaining how decisions are made when one confronts situations. According to the game theory, in confronting situations, what counts as the best action for one depends on the expectations about what other will do; and what counts as other’s best actions depends on the expectations about him/her (Ross, 2011). This theory can be also used to explain the decision making activity in the household, as there are different agents in the household, such as the head of the household, the husband, wife, and other members of the family. These members may have different interests which may cause some kind of confrontation in making household management-related decisions. Similarly, if we look at the decision making from the view point of bargaining model

(formulated by Nash), we find that decision making is a concept of cooperative bargaining where the decisions are made when there is potential gain for the parties involved in the process—the household decisions are made through a bargaining process (Mattila-Wiro, 1999). Likewise, resource theory as propagated by Blood & Wolfe (1960) explain much of the family or spousal power in the household. As a special application of exchange theory to the domain of marital power, the basic tenet of resource theory is that the decision-making power of each spouse is directly dependent upon the context to which the spouse attributes the resources valued in the marriage (Hopkins & Webster, 2001). Researchers have attempted to develop some theoretical models in order to explain the division of household labor, and the gender roles and responsibilities in household affairs. The resource/power model, based on exchange theory, suggests that housework is onerous and is the subject of bargaining in relation to the resources, such as earnings, possessed by each party. Similarly, the rational decision-making model suggests a gender-neutral process through which households allocate the labor of household members between market work and housework in a manner that maximizes income for the whole family (Becker, 1981, cited in Spitze and Loscocco, 1999: 650.).

Great efforts have been made in the study of the role of women in decision making in the last five decades (e.g. Blood and Wolfe (1960); Davis and Rigaux (1974); Green & Cunningham (1975); Davis (1976); Scanzoni (1977); Qualls (1982); Jin (1995); Sathar (1997); Adair, Gultiano & Avila (1998); Mason (1998); Kritz & Makinwa-Adebusoye (1999), Spitze & Loscocco (1999); Hopkins & Webster (2001); Furuta & Salway (2006); Tareque, Mostofa, Haque & Islam (n.d.); Sparks (n.d.), & so on). Empirical studies on women's decision-making authority suggest that women's participation in decision making is closely related to their characteristics, types of decisions to be made, and the social and economic settings in which they live. Formal education, age, family structure, ethnicity, and work for pay outside the home are the main factors which increase women's authority in decision making; particularly women's employment status and financial contributions to the family income are important contributors to authority (Kritz & Makinwa, 1999; Sathar & Shahnaz, 1997). In some cases ethnicity is even

more important than the wife's individual-level characteristics as a determinant of authority (Kritz & Makinwa, 1999). Regarding household structure, nuclear households are more likely to participate than other households in family decisions (Sathar & Shahnaz, 1997). If seen more closely, the high education of women, particularly higher than the husband's education, provides a higher level of participation in decision-making authority (Jin, 1995).

On the other hand, studies have observed that the majority of women in many societies, particularly the patriarchic ones, have no say at all in major household decisions—buying major appliances, purchase of land, working outside the home, hiring household help, children's education, and arranging for their marriage—though some decisions may be made jointly in some cases. In many cases, women do not even have any say in minor decisions in the household related to the purchase of clothing or gift giving (Adair, Gultiano & Avila, 1998). In this regard, community factors underpin the level of gender inequity in the people's participation and decision-making process (Deji, 2007).

In Nepali societies, where under the patriarchic system of the family traditional norms and values are highly practiced, the participation of women in the overall decision making of household management is very limited. The strength of the role of women in household decision making varies with the type of decisions as well with the demographic status of women, particularly age, social status, and economic status, including employment and earning status, and the nature of the residence (Ministry of Health and Population (MOHP), New Era, and Macro International Inc., 2007). Generally women are understood as having an important role in the decision making in household management, such as the purchase of needed daily household items and so on, even though only 36.3 percent of the Nepali women make sole decisions on the purchase of daily household items, the highest among various kinds of decisions made by Nepali women (MOHP et al., 2007).

In the above context, this study investigated the key demographic, social, and economic factors affecting the decision-making role of Nepali women in household management.

## Data and Methods

### Data Access and Management

This study is based on the large, national-level dataset of the Nepal Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) 2006, a part of the worldwide MEASURE DHS project, which was conducted under the aegis of the Population Division, Ministry of Health and Population of the Government of Nepal. The NDHS data were derived from a total of 15,190 respondents, which included 10,793 women and 4,397 men across the country by cross-dividing the five development regions and the three ecological zones, i.e. from 15 to 13, where the mountain zones of the West, Mid-West, and Far-west development regions were combined<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> “The 2006 NDHS used the sampling frame provided by the list of census enumeration areas with population and household information from the 2001 Population Census. Administratively Nepal is divided into five development regions, 75 districts and the districts are subdivided into Village Development Committees (VDCs) and municipalities. Each VDC is divided into 9 wards but municipalities into various wards, from 9 to 35 wards. The primary sampling unit (PSU) for the 2006 NDHS was a ward in rural areas, and a sub-ward in urban areas. The sample for the survey was based on a two-stage, stratified, nationally representative sample of households from 13 area domains identified by cross-dividing the five development regions and the three ecological zones, where the mountain zones of the West, Mid-West and Far-west development regions were combined. At the first stage of sampling, a total of 260 PSUs incorporating 82 from urban areas and 178 from rural areas were selected using systematic sampling with probability proportional to size. A complete household listing operation was then carried out in all the selected PSUs to provide a sampling frame for the second stage selection of households. At the second stage of sampling, systematic samples of about 30 households per PSU on average in urban areas and about 36 households per PSU on average in rural areas were selected in all the regions, in order to provide statistically reliable estimates of key demographic and health variables thereby adjusted to properly represent urban areas and the final estimates of samples were derived for rural and urban areas for the country as a whole. Finally, the survey was designed to obtain completed interviews of 8,600 women age 15-49 and 4,300 men age 15-59, surveyed in every second household of the total sample household.” (MOHP et al. 2007; edited to fit this study).

The NDHS developed and administered three types of questionnaires: the Household Questionnaire, the Women's Questionnaire, and the Men's Questionnaire. For this study, the demographic, social, and economic variables which were directly associated with the role of women in decision making in household management and widely dealt with in related literature, were selected from the Women's Questionnaire of the NDHS 2006 dataset<sup>2</sup>. From the large set of variables, the relevant variables were filtered, scrutinized, and recoded in SPSS Software. When consistency of the data was ensured by eliminating the missing values, particularly those regarding the set of parameters used for the dependent variable, a total of 2,191 cases emerged as the final valid cases to be included in this study.

### Key Parameters and Variables of the Study

The role of women in decision making in household management is the key parameter in the study. This has been used as dependent variable in the study. This is a dichotomous variable referring to the high involvement or low involvement of women in decision making in household management. This parameter was computed incorporating four sets of indicators—(i) women's participation in making decisions related to their own healthcare; (ii) major household purchases; (iii) purchase of needed daily household items; and (iv) visits to her family or relatives—regarding the role of women in household decision making.

A number of demographic, social, and economic parameters have been taken as the independent variables for analysis in this study.

The demographic parameter includes age of the women, age gap between women and their husbands/partners, and the sex of the household heads as the major independent variables for analysis.

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<sup>2</sup> The full dataset from Women's Questionnaire includes data on the women's background, reproduction, marriage and cohabitation, contraception, pregnancy and postnatal care, child immunization and health and child's and woman's nutrition, sexual life, fertility preference, husband's background and woman's work, HIV/AIDS, and other health related issues and maternal mortality.

The social parameter includes a range of key qualitative variables and includes the relationship of women with the household head, social class, religion, level of women's education, level of education of husbands/partners, state of living with the husband, and state of husband having another wife (wives).

Similarly, the working state of women, working station, type of earning, level of earning compared to the husband/partner, type of women's occupation, and type of occupation of husbands/partners were incorporated in the economic parameter.

A complete schema of parameters, variables, and corresponding qualitative and quantitative values, along with the four dependent dummy variables, are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Parameters, Related Variables, and Corresponding Values that Determine the Role of Women in the Decision-making Process at the Household Level**

Parameters	Variables	Values for Analysis
Role of women in decision making in household management	Women's participation in making decisions related to their own health care	Yes/no
	Major household purchases	Yes/no
	Purchase of needed daily household items	Yes/no
	Visits to her family or relatives	Yes/no
Demographic	Age	Real value (age)
	Age gap between women and their husband/partner	Same age/younger/older
	Sex of the household head	Male/female
Social	Place of residence	Rural/urban areas
	Relationship of women with household head	Head/wife, daughter-in-law/other
	Social class (caste/ethnicity)	<i>Brahmin/Cbhetri/Janajati/Dalit/Others</i>
	Religion	Hindu/Buddhist/Islam/Others
	Level of education	No education/primary/secondary/higher
	Level of husband's/partner's education	No education/primary/secondary/higher
	State of husband's living	Living with her/staying elsewhere
	State of husband having other wives	Yes/no

Table 1: Parameters, Related Variables, and Corresponding Values that Determine the Role of Women in the Decision-making Process at the Household Level (continued)

Parameters	Variables	Values for Analysis
Economic	Working state	Yes/no
	Working station	Home/away
	Status of wealth	
	Type of earning	Cash only/cash and kind
	Level of earning compared to the husband/partner	Same/more/less
	Type of occupation	Professional/technical/managerial/sales/clerical/agric-self-employed/agric-employee/services/skilled manual/unskilled manual
	Type of husband/partner's occupation	Professional/technical/managerial/sales/clerical/agric-self-employed/agric-employee/services/skilled manual/unskilled manual

## Method of Analysis

To achieve the research objectives of this study, data have been analyzed in two stages: the preliminary descriptive analysis stage and the regression analysis stage. In the preliminary descriptive analysis, frequency, percentage, cross tables, and chi-square statistics were used to describe the interrelationships of the variables.

In the second stage, a binary logistic regression model has been used for the further inferential analysis, where the variables explained in the descriptive analysis have been inserted into the regression model as independent variables. The regression equation would therefore be read as the following:

For calculating the binary logistic regression, a median value for each variable has been considered as the marking line to categorize the dependent variable as the dichotomous variable, and a score more than or equal to the median value has been considered as an indication of women's high role in household decision making and the other as a low role in household decision making. A high role in decision making refers to the woman's "involvement in relatively greater

amount of decision makings” in the household management, and/or the low role refers to the women’s “involvement in relatively less number of decision makings” in the household management. The categorical independent demographic, social, and economic variables have been converted into dummy variables.

## Descriptive Analysis

### Demographic Characteristics:

The demographic characteristics of a person, particularly age, age gap between a woman and her husband/partner, and the sex of the household heads, who basically make decisions on household matters, are likely to influence the behavior and role of a person in the household. This study has observed that the age factor of women has a positive association with high participation in household decision making. This study has also observed that women older than their husband/partner (71.2%), followed by younger women (66.5%) and women of the same age (61.3%), and the women in female-headed households compared to male-headed households, are more likely to have a high role in household decision making (82.9% vs. 63%). Nonetheless, the study did not find sufficient evidence to claim the dependence of the role of women in decision making with their age gap with husband/partners (see annex 1).

### Social Characteristics:

As with the demographic characteristics, the social characteristics of a person are vital in determining the role of a person in decision making. This study has taken eight variables—place of residence, relationship of women with household head, social class, religion, level of women’s education, level of husband’s/partner’s education, state of husband’s living, and state of husband having other wives (i.e. more than one wife)—and explored their status in terms of women’s household decision making in Nepal. The study has observed that the women who themselves are the head of the household have an extremely high role (92.7%) in household decision making; the wives of the household heads occupy the second position (66.8%), while the daughter-in-laws have the least role (36.7%); this indicates that the role of women in decision making in household management is highly

dependent on the type of their relationship to the head of the household (see annex 2).

Similarly, this study has also found that the role of women in household decision making in urban areas (68.2%) compared to rural areas (65.7%), and compared to women from the *Dalit* caste (61.1%), the *Janajati* women (69.3%), *Chhetri* women (67.1%), *Brahmin* women (64.5%) and *Other* women (Muslim and other caste/ethnic groups), have a relatively higher role in household decision making, which indicates that there is considerable influence of caste/ethnicity (social group) on the women's role in household decision making.

Likewise, religion is also a social factor which is likely to have an effect on the culture of a family, thereby influencing the role of the family members in household decision making. The study has observed that the women's role in decision making is significantly dependent on the religion of the women. For instance, the study has found that compared to the Muslim women, the Buddhist women (81.0%), followed by *Others* (such as Kirat, Christian, etc.) and Hindu women (65.3%), have a relatively higher role in household decision making (see annex 2).

The role of a person in decision making is also likely to be dependent on the level of education obtained by the person. This study has observed that the women that have completed higher education have higher participation in household decision making (70.9%) compared to lower levels of education. However, after higher education, the women's role in household decision making was found to be comparatively higher among the women that had completed only primary level (67.9%), followed by no education (66.7%). Very surprisingly, the women that have completed a secondary level of education have a lower role in household decision making (63.4%) compared to other levels. Similarly, women whose husbands/partners have completed higher education have a comparatively higher role in household decision making, followed by the husbands/partners completing no education (68.6%) and primary level (67.4%), respectively (see annex 2).

In societies such as Nepali, where patriarchy norms and values as well as the tradition of polygyny are strong, the husbands' presence at home and the

number of their wives affect the women's role in decision making at home. This study has observed that the role of women in household decision making is affected by the presence of husbands/partners at home, state of husbands having other wives, and women whose husbands/partners live away from home (staying elsewhere); they have a higher role in household decision making (77.4%) compared to the husbands living at home (64.0%). Likewise, women whose husbands/partners do not have other wives have a higher role in household decision making (66.6%) compared to women whose husbands have other wives (64.2%) (see annex 2).

#### **Economic Characteristics:**

Wealth is an economic factor that is normally considered to have very high influence on the activities of a person. In this study, the role of women in household decision making has revealed significant dependence on the different levels of wealth status. For example, the women in poorer families have the highest role (70.3%) in household decision making, followed by the women in the richest and middle-level families at 68.6 percent and 66.7 percent participation, respectively (see annex 2).

Generally in developing as well as developed societies, earning is considered as a kind of power of a person. The state of employment and its type indicate the state of earning and its level, which influences the activities of a person. The people that have cash-earning tend to have more roles in decision making. This tendency is reflected in Nepal as well. This study has found that women working compared to non-working women (67.9% vs. 55.0%), women working away from home compared to those working at home (67.1% vs. 63.9%), cash-earning women compared to cash and kind earning (69.0% vs. 64.7%), women earning more than the husband and the same as the husband compared to earning less than husbands 75.7%, 66.7%, and 65.9% respectively), have a relatively higher role in household decision making (annex 2).

The study has also found that women's role in household decision making tends to depend on their occupations. Women in clerical occupations have a higher role in the household decision making (81.5%), followed by unskilled

manual (78.1%) and service sector (74.6%) occupations whereas women who are wage laborers in agriculture have comparatively lower participation (61.9%) than others in household decision-making. Although women's role is not significantly dependent on the kinds of husband's/partners' occupation, a slightly varying women's role in household decision making was observed. Among the different kinds of occupations of husbands/partners, women whose husbands/partners are engaged in professional, technical or managerial occupations are likely to be involved more in household decision making (74.5%), followed by unskilled manual occupations (69.5%) and services sector occupations (67.9%), while women whose husbands/partners are involved in skilled manual occupations have lower participation in household decision making (see annex 2).

## **Binary Logistic Regression Analysis for Determining the Decision-making Role of Women in Household Management**

Taking all 18 demographic (3), social (8) and economic (7) variables into consideration, as discussed in the previous section, a binary logistic regression was run to analyze the relative association of each value assigned to each variable with the role of women in decision making in household management (see Table 1 for all of the variables in the analysis and their corresponding values). The regression analysis confirmed that half of the variables had a significant association with women's decision making in household management. The regression analysis recognized that women's age, relation with the household head, religion, education, state of husband/partner having other wives, state of working, working station, occupation, and occupation of husbands/partners, had a significant effect on the women's role in decision making in household management. The other nine variables, which also were considered to have a similar effect on the women's role in decision making in household management, were not recognized by the regression analysis. A brief summary of the regression analysis is presented in Table 2, and explanations concerning demographic, social and economic parameters are given under the respective sections below. Since the binary regression analysis was computed incorporating all 18 variables under the demographic, social, and economic parameters, the constant and other model-generated values are common to the demographic, social, and economic factors.

**Table 2: Factors and Their Association with Women's Role in Decision Making in Household Management**

Factors with a Significant Association	Factors with no Significant Association
<i>Demographic</i>	<i>Demographic</i>
• Age	• Age gap between women and their husband/partner
<i>Social</i>	• Sex of the household head
• Women's relationship to the head of the household	<i>Social</i>
• Religion	• Place of residence
• Education	• Social class
• State of husband/partner having other wives	• Husband's/partner's education
<i>Economic</i>	• State of living with husband/partner
• Working state	<i>Economic</i>
• Working station	• Status of wealth
• Occupation	• Type of earning
• Occupation of husband/partner	• Level of earning compared to husband/partner

Note: Variables are significant at 0.1 or higher level of significance.

## **Demographic Factors and Women's Role in Decision Making in Household Management**

The descriptive statistics in the preliminary analysis have revealed that the age factor of women and the sex of the head of the household have an association with women's participation in household decision making. However, among the three demographic variables—age, age gap between women and their husbands/partners, and sex of the household head—only the age factor has a significant association with women's decision making in household management.

The regression analysis shows a kind of positive association between the regression estimation and women's age. The women of the 45-49 year age group compared to the 15-19 year age group are likely to have over a five times higher role in household decision making (Exp (B): 5.319), followed by the 40-44 year age group of over four times a higher role (Exp (B): 4.680) and the 30-34 year age group have about a four times higher role (Exp (B): 3.929) respectively (see

Table 3 for details). It is obvious that as a person matures and gains more experience in the life, he/she has more roles in decision making. Consequently, the role of women aged between 35-39 years in decision making is around three times higher compared to the 15-19 year age group, which is slightly lower than even younger women of the 30-34 year age group. It is because during this age, the women tend to have children of around 15-19 year age group, who are also in a position at home to share some roles in household decision making. For example, in the Nepali context, basically in the rural setting, children of the 15-19 year age group are highly involved in household work, and they also make some minor decisions such as purchasing goods that are daily needed at home on their own, while their mothers, elder sisters, and/or sister-in-laws do work on the farms for the livelihood of their family.

**Table 3: Demographic Factors Regarding Women's Role in Decision Making in Household Management**

	Factors	B	S.E.	Exp(B)
Women's age	15-19 <sup>RF</sup>			
	20-24	.618	.310	1.855*
	25-29	1.179	.304	3.253***
	30-34	1.368	.312	3.929***
	35-39	1.270	.318	3.562***
	40-44	1.543	.326	4.680***
	45-49	1.671	.339	5.319***
Age gap between women and husband/partner	Same age <sup>RF</sup>			
	Younger than husband/partner	.272	.219	1.313
	Older than husband/partner	.188	.296	1.207
Sex of the household head	Male <sup>RF</sup>			
	Female	-.181	.301	.835
	Constant	.561	.742	1.752

Note: -2 Log likelihood: 2369.123; Cox & Snell R Square: .144; Nagelkerke R Square: .200

\*\*\*p<.000; \*\*p<.01; \*p<.05; <sup>RF</sup> Reference Category

Two other demographic variables, age gap between women and their husbands/partners and the sex of household heads, which were described as the

impact variables on women's role in household decision making, however, have no statistically-significant role to play. As husband and wife have to manage living, working and socializing on the closest possible co-work, the age factor is not a significant intervening element, though some indications were observed during the preliminary analysis. Regarding the not-significant influence of the sex of household heads as a determining factor on the role of women in decision making in household management, it is because of women's multiple roles in the household, such as wife, daughter-in-law, daughter, mother, co-wife, and so on; and even if a female is the head of the household, the other women such as daughter-in-law, daughter, co-wives, etc., have no say in the family. Therefore, simply who is the head of the household matters less than what the relationship of the women is with the head of the household. Since the "relationship of women to household heads" has also been included in the regression model as an independent factor, it might have caused the effect of the sex of the household head to be insignificant.

## **Social Factors Determining Women's Role in Decision Making in Household Management**

Several studies have claimed that a person as a part of the society is highly influenced by social and economic factors. Countries like Nepal, which are very rich in culture and traditions, have their own specific cultural values and norms, which strongly contribute to determining the roles and responsibilities of the members of the household. Descriptive analysis has revealed the association of several socio-economic factors, such as women's relationship to the household, ethnicity, religion, husband's presence at home, etc. Among a range of social factors, the regression analysis has confirmed a significant association of only four factors. They include women's relationship to the head of the household, religion, women's education, and the number of wives in the women's role in decision making regarding household management (see Tables 2 and 4).

Table 4: Social Factors Affecting Women's Role in Decision Making in Household Management

	Factors	B	S.E.	Exp(B)
	<u>Head</u> <sup>RF</sup>			
Women's relationship to household head	Wife	-1.899	.433	.150***
	Daughter-in-law	-3.057	.397	.047***
	Others (daughter, co-wife, mother, etc.)	-2.359	.388	.095***
	<u>Hindu</u> <sup>RF</sup>			
Religion	Buddhist	.764	.249	2.148**
	Muslim	-.233	.571	.792
	Others (Kirat, Christian, etc.)	.144	.330	1.155
	<u>No education</u> <sup>RF</sup>			
Women's education	Primary	.520	.158	1.681**
	Secondary	.413	.188	1.511*
	Higher	.704	.359	2.023+
State of husband/partner having other wives	No <sup>RF</sup>			
	Yes	-.423	.210	.655*
Place of residence	<u>Urban</u> <sup>RF</sup>			
	Rural	-.049	.129	.952
	<u>Brabhamin</u> <sup>RF</sup>			
Social class	<i>Chhetri</i>	.168	.172	1.182
	<i>Janajati</i>	.218	.171	1.244
	<i>Dalit</i>	.091	.204	1.095
	Others	.336	.517	1.399
	<u>No education</u> <sup>RF</sup>			
Husband's/partner's education	Primary	-.096	.143	.909
	Secondary	-.247	.153	.781
	Higher	-.248	.264	.780
State of living with husband/partner	<u>Living with her</u> <sup>RF</sup>			
	Staying elsewhere	.249	.240	1.283
	Constant	.561	.742	1.752

Note: -2 Log likelihood: 2369.123; Cox & Snell R Square: .144; Nagelkerke R Square: .200

\*\*\*p<.000; \*\*p<.01; \*p<.05; <sup>+</sup>p<0.10 ; <sup>RF</sup>Reference Category

The descriptive analysis has confirmed a highly dependent relationship with the head of the household, which was also accepted by the regression analysis. The regression analysis shows that the daughter-in-laws compared to the women as the head of the household were the least (95.3 % less) likely to have a high role in the

household decision making (Exp (B): .047), while the wives were 85 percent less likely to have a high role in household decision making. Similarly, the other women, such as mother, co-wives, grand-daughters, etc., were 90.5 percent less likely to have a high role in household decision making (Exp (B): 0.095) (see Table 4 for detailed statistics).

A second social determinant confirmed by the regression analysis is religion, which has revealed that Buddhist women compared to Hindu were around two times more likely to have a high role in household decision making (Exp (B): 2.148), while other religions do not have such a significant association (Table 4). In the Nepali context, the *Janajati* basically practice Buddhism and most of the *Janajati* males join services such as the army/security in the country or abroad as well, including the famous British Gurkhas, and it is therefore obvious that the women's role among the Buddhists in household decision making higher than the women of other religions.

A third social determinant has emerged, as the education of women and the study have brought forward a significant positive effect of education over no education. The regression analysis has confirmed that women having primary, secondary and higher education compared to the women having no education were likely to have around a 1.7 times, 1.5 times, and 2 times greater role in household decision making, respectively (Exp (B): 1.681; Exp (B): 1.511; Exp (B): 2.023 respectively) (see Table 4 for detailed statistics).

The fourth and final social determinant having a significant association with the role of women in decision making in household management has been derived as the husbands having other wives. The regression analysis has postulated that women whose husbands have other wives are likely to have around 34 percent less role in household decision making compared to women having husbands with no other wives (Exp (B) .655) (see Table 4 for detailed statistics). The simple reason is because in patriarchal societies like Nepali, after a second marriage, among others the new wives generally have a greater decision-making role in household management.

Four social indicators which were considered to have an association with the women's role in household decision making have emerged as not significant when binary regression analysis was conducted. They include place of residence in urban or rural areas, social class, education of husbands/partners, and state of living with husbands/partners. It is obvious that the first three variables would not have a significant association with the women's role in household decision making. In the case of state of living with husbands/partners, a significant influence was expected in determining the role of women in household decision making. However, the study did not find sufficient evidences to support the influence of the state of living with husband/partner; therefore confirmed a deep rooted patriarchic tradition in place.

### **Economic Factors Determining Women's Role in Decision Making in Household Management**

As with demographic and social factors, economic factors also tend to determine the role of women in decision making in household management. Sometimes, economic factors are considered even stronger than the other factors. As discussed in the preliminary analysis, this study identified seven variables as the likely key economic factors of the role of women in decision making in household management and presented their strength and weakness. The binary regression analysis, however, depicted only four variables—state of work of women, working station, occupation of women, and occupation of husbands/partners—as statistically significant (see Table 5).

Table 5: Economic Factors Affecting Women's Role in Decision Making in Household Management

	Factors	B	S.E.	Exp(B)
Working state of women	No <sup>RF</sup>			
	Yes	.379	.159	1.460*
Working station of women	At home <sup>RF</sup>			
	Away	.393	.153	1.481*
Women's occupation	Professional, Technical, Managerial <sup>RF</sup>			
	Clerical	.561	.580	1.752
	Sales	.044	.311	1.046
	Agric-self employed	.106	.344	1.112
	Agric-employee	.023	.344	1.023
	Services	.700	.375	2.014 <sup>+</sup>
	Skilled manual	.335	.354	1.397
	Unskilled manual	.829	.453	2.290 <sup>+</sup>
Husbands'/partners' occupation	Clerical	-.465	.273	.628 <sup>+</sup>
	Sales	-.259	.254	.772
	Agric-self-employed	-.269	.246	.764
	Services	-.595	.318	.551 <sup>+</sup>
	Skilled manual	-.433	.273	.648
	Unskilled manual	-.370	.287	.691
Wealth status of women	Poorest <sup>RF</sup>			
	Poorer	.239	.182	1.270
	Middle	.163	.185	1.176
	Richer	-.076	.183	.927
	Richest	.000	.220	1.000
Type of earning	Cash only <sup>RF</sup>			
	Cash and kind	-.271	.201	.763
Level of earning compared to husband/partner	About the same <sup>RF</sup>			
	Less than	-.056	.126	.945
	More than	.226	.266	1.254
	Constant	.561	.742	1.752

Note: -2 Log likelihood: 2369.123; Cox &amp; Snell R Square: .144; Nagelkerke R Square: .200

\*\*\*p<.000; \*\*p<.01; \*p<.05; <sup>+</sup>p<0.10 ; <sup>RF</sup> Reference Category

As universally accepted, this study confirmed that working women have strong decision making authority in household management. The binary regression analysis result confirmed that women that are currently working are likely to have around a 1.5 times higher role in household decision making than those that are currently not working. This is simply because the working status of women enhances their economic power and they need not be dependent on husbands/partners for the money that they need to buy their daily household items. This plays a very crucial role in making decisions in the household. In this regard, it was also confirmed by the regression analysis that the women working away from their homes are more likely to have around a 1.5 times high role in household decision making (Exp (B): 1.481) than women working at home. This is due to the exposure and confidence that women working away gain from the outside world than working in the home itself.

Among economic factors, they are not only the state of work and place of work, but the nature of the job of women also significantly influences their role in household decision making. This study observed a significant effect of the type of occupation on decision making, though the significance was marginal. The regression analysis showed that compared to the women involved in a professional, technical, or managerial occupation, the women involved in services and unskilled manual types of occupation are more likely to have around a two times higher role in household decision making (Exp (B): 2.014; Exp (B): 2.290) (see Table 5 for detailed statistics). This might be because the professional, technical, and managerial types of occupations are generally much busier and offer less time to become involved in household work, and due to the nature of their jobs, the women involved in these sectors have lower roles in household decision making. However, the study does not establish any significant association with other kinds of occupations. Similarly, in the case of the relation of the occupations of husbands/partners, the regression statistics also illustrate that compared to the women whose husbands are involved in professional, technical, and managerial occupations, the women whose husbands are involved in clerical and service occupations are likely to have 37 and 45 percent less role, respectively, in household decision making (Exp (B): .628; Exp (B): .551)

(see Table 5 for detailed statistics). Contrary to the women's cases, this is because the husbands or the partners that are involved in professional, technical, or managerial occupations are busy in their work, and therefore their wives are more active in making decisions in the household. Additionally, those husbands also might be more progressive and want to give major roles to their wives in daily household management, though major household decisions might be taken together. However, the study did not find any significant relation with other types of occupations of the husbands.

Despite the recognition of wealth in the society, the status of wealth was seen to not be one of the significant economic factors in the role of women in household decision making. Similarly, unlike the status of work and the nature of the occupation, the type of earning by women as well as their level of earning compared to their husbands/partners did not have any significant impact on the household decision making of women (see Table 5 for detailed statistics).

## Conclusion

This study analyzed 18 demographic, social, and economic factors using descriptive and binary regression analysis and has established an association between some of those factors and women's role in household decision making. The study results, particularly the result of the binary regression analysis, have brought forward, as presented in Table 2, a total of nine variables as significantly determining women's role in household decision making; and the remaining nine variables, though considered likely contributing variables, were not confirmed to be statistically significant. The significant determining factors include women's age, women's relationship to head of the household, religion, education, number of wives of husband/partner, working status and working station of women, women's occupation, and husband's/partner's occupation and had a significant association with the role of women in household decision making. Women's age group was found to have a progressive role in decision making. Similarly, Buddhist women, educated women, and working women were found to have more roles in decision making in household management. Likewise, women involved in unskilled manual and service sectors compared to professional, technical, and managerial

sectors were found to have a high role in decision making. Nonetheless, the factors such as women's age gap with husband/partner, sex of the head of the household, place of residence, social class, wealth status of women, husband's/partner's education, type of earnings, and level of earning compared with husband/partner, and husbands'/partners' living status (living at home or away) had no significantly-determining relationship with the women's role in household decision making. The emergence of women's age, education, working status, working station, and occupation of both the women and their husbands reconfirmed the need for boosting the status of women to be able to equally contribute to the decision making regarding household management. Particularly the rejection of social class, wealth, and place of residence have confirmed the weakening of traditional thinking and the strengthening of contemporary thinking in relation to this important social issue. Hence, the government, non-government organizations, and other concerned actors which are working in the area of strengthening the role of women in decision making and empowering women are suggested to consider these factors while making new policies and programmes in the country.

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## Annex 1

### Demographic Characteristics and Women's Role in Household Decision Making

#### Women's age group and the role of women in household decision making\*\*\*

Age group	Low	High
	%	%
15-19	66.2	33.8
20-24	48.7	51.3
25-29	34.3	65.7
30-34	29.6	70.4
35-39	29.3	70.7
40-44	27.0	73.0
45-49	26.6	73.4
Total	33.5	66.5

#### Age gap between women and husband/partner and the role of women in household decision making

Same age	38.7	61.3
Younger than husband/partner	33.5	66.5
Older than husband/partner	28.8	71.2
Total	33.5	66.5

#### Sex of the household head and the role of women in household decision making\*\*\*

Male	37.0	63.0
Female	17.1	82.9
Total	33.5	66.5

N = 2191, Significance of  $\chi^2$ : \*\*\* p<.001; \*\* p<.01; \* p<.05; + p<.10

## Annex 2

### Social and Economic Characteristics and the Role of Women in Household Decision Making

#### Women's relationship to household head and the role of women in household decision making\*\*\* (N = 2191)

Relationship	Low	High
	%	%
Head	7.3	92.7
Wife	33.2	66.8
Daughter-in-law	63.3	36.7
Others (co-wife, mother, etc.)	49.6	50.4
Total	33.5	66.5

#### Type of place of residence and the role of women in household decision making (N = 2191)

Urban	31.8	68.2
Rural	34.3	65.7
Total	33.5	66.5

#### Social groups and the role of women in household decision making<sup>+</sup> (N = 2191)

<i>Brabamin</i>	35.5	64.5
<i>Chhetri</i>	32.9	67.1
<i>Janajati</i>	30.7	69.3
<i>Dalit</i>	38.9	61.1
Others (Muslim and others)	35.6	64.4
Total	33.5	66.5

#### Religion and the role of women in household decision making\*\* (N = 2191)

Hindu	34.7	65.3
Buddhist	19.0	81.0
Muslim	36.5	63.5
Others (Kirat, Christian, etc.)	29.5	70.5
Total	33.5	66.5

#### Wealth status and the role of women in household decision making<sup>+</sup> (N = 2191)

Poorest	36.7	63.3
Poorer	29.7	70.3
Middle	33.3	66.7
Richer	37.6	62.4
Richest	31.4	68.6
Total	33.5	66.5

**Women's education and the role of women in household decision making (N = 2191)**

No education	33.3	66.7
Primary	32.1	67.9
Secondary	36.6	63.4
Higher	29.1	70.9
Total	33.5	66.5

**Husband's/partner's education and the role of women in household decision making (N = 2191)**

No education	31.4	68.6
Primary	32.6	67.4
Secondary	36.1	63.9
Higher	32.0	68.0
Total	33.4	66.6

**Working state of women and the role of women in household decision making\*\*\* (N = 2191)**

No	45.0	55.0
Yes	32.1	67.9
Total	33.5	66.5

**Working station and the role of women in household decision making (N = 2191)**

At home	36.1	63.9
Away	32.9	67.1
Total	33.5	66.5

**Type of women's earning and the role of women in household decision making\* (N = 2191)**

Cash only	31.0	69.0
Cash and kind	35.3	64.7
Total	33.5	66.5

**Level of earning compared to husband/partner and the role of women in household decision making (N = 2133)**

About the same	33.3	66.7
Less than husband/partner	34.1	65.9
More than husband/partner	24.3	75.7
Total	33.4	66.6

**Women's occupation and the role of women in household decision making<sup>+</sup> (N = 2191)**

Professional, Technician, Managerial	31.2	68.8
Clerical	18.5	81.5
Sales	34.2	65.8
Agric-self-employed	33.9	66.1
Agric-employee	38.1	61.9
Services	25.4	74.6
Skilled manual	35.6	64.4
Unskilled manual	21.9	78.1
Total	33.5	66.5

**Husband/partner's occupation and the role of women in household decision making\*\*\* (N = 2179)**

Professional, Technician, Managerial	25.5	74.5
Clerical	32.9	67.1
Sales	34.9	65.1
Agric-self-employed	35.5	64.5
Services	32.1	67.9
Skilled manual	36.2	63.8
Unskilled manual	30.5	69.5
Total	33.5	66.5

**State of living with husband/partner and the role of women in household decision making\*\*\* (N = 2191)**

Living with her	36.0	64.0
Staying elsewhere	22.9	77.1
Total	33.5	66.5

**State of husband/partner having other wives and the role of women in household decision making (N = 2184)**

No	33.4	66.6
Yes	35.8	64.2
Total	33.5	66.5

Significance of  $\chi^2$ : \*\*\*p<.001; \*\*p<.01; \*p<.05; <sup>+</sup>p<.10