

Research

Changing Role of Dalit Women at the Community Level

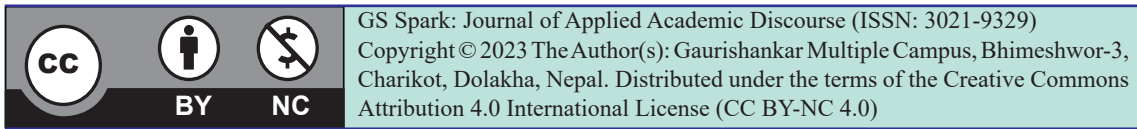
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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the changing role of Dalit women at the community level, particularly in Shikhar Municipality of Doti, far west region. The study collected data from 132 respondents selected randomly using the quantitative case study method. The study found that the awareness level of Dalit women has increased, motivating them to improve their socio-economic status in the community. They are becoming skillful, independent, and change agents, working against social stigma, and playing decision-making roles in the household and community levels. They are gaining power, advancing capacity, and influencing social practices that advance the interests of other Dalit and Non-Dalit women such as empathy, collaboration, open-mindedness, fairness, and kindness. Additionally, Dalit women are playing economic, socio-cultural, and leadership roles against paradox due to the implementation of a target budget program that offers technical/financial support to them. The study recommends increasing the size of the target budget for Dalit women's entrepreneurship development throughout the country.

Key words: Dalit women, changing role, socio-economic role, community level

Introduction

The Manusmriti has institutionalized women's criticism in Hindu ceremonies, systematically undermining their self-worth (Jain, 1994). According to the Manusmriti, a woman's primary duty should be to serve and obey her father, brothers, and other male family members. After marriage, she should continue to serve her husband, fathers-in-law, mothers-in-law, and other senior male and female family members (Jain, 1994). This conditioning leads women to obey male family members throughout their lives. This incident made people understand that under the law, women are not equal to men and are economically and socially dependent on men holding a greater social rank than women (Bennett, Sijapati & Thapa, 2013). Women have a low socio-economic standing and a limited ability to perform transformative roles in a patriarchal gender-biased social system defined by male dominance over women (Acharya, 2001). The Sudra caste, commonly known as Dalits, is regarded as the lowest and untouchable caste (Nepal Academy, 2010). The term 'Dalit' is a socially restructured verse of the Vedic term 'Sudra' Bishwakarma (2020). The Sudra caste, the untouchable, was created from the feet of a cosmic being (Brahma) assigned to the lowest rank in the value hierarchy.

Dalits are a group of people who have experienced oppression, crushing, stepping up, kneading, grinding down, humiliation by kneeling at someone else's feet, or silence by repression (Nepal Academy, 2010).

The word currently refers to a group of towns and cities whose citizens have historically been politically helpless, economically backward, and socially backward (Tiwary, 2007).

For Pasa and Bishwakarma (2020), Dalits are theologically unholy, historically uncivilized, socio-culturally untouchable, economically poor, educationally ignorant (illiterate), politically unheard, and socially excluded group of people

According to the National Dalit Commission (NDC), a "Dalit" is a member of a community

that has experienced untouchability and is thus considered to be the most backward in terms of social, economic, educational, political, and religious sectors (NDC, 2008).

Similarly, Kisan (2013) argues that the term 'Dalit' stands for four aspects in general: i) social, cultural, economic, and political deprivation, exploitation, and exclusion ii) rejection of the concept of purity-pollution and caste-based hierarchy, iii) historically untouchables and discriminated iv) unity, change, and revolution.

Nevertheless, ongoing debates attempt to define and analyze the term Dalit on three distinct premises: communal analysis, class-based analysis, and caste-based analysis. The person and institutions, whose analysis is based on class, argue that Dalit includes a group of people who represent the lower class in terms of economic, educational, and political ability.

The National Dalit Commission has listed 671 surnames out of 21 Dalit caste groups (5 castes known as Hill and 16 castes known as Madeshi Dalit). Dalits are scattered across Nepal. Madhesi Dalits are primarily located in Central and Eastern regions, while Hill Dalit are primarily found in the Mid-western and Far-western regions. Although Dalits have been increasingly changing their faith in recent years, they have rarely been able to escape the stigma and obtain a formal status in the Hindu caste order (Bennett et al., 2013).

Dalits are not a homogenous group of people. In different regions of Nepal, they wear different dress-codes, celebrate different festivals, and speak different languages.

Traditionally, in Chadani, (untouchable) Damai, Luhar, Badi, Sunar, Paudel, Kami, Nepali, Sarki, Bishwakarma, Dholi, Koli, and Bhul are considered Dalit. The National Dalit Commission (NDC) has identified different caste groups as untouchable choichito halnuparne (caste from whom water is not accepted) including Kalar Kakihawa, Kori, Khatik, Khatwe (Mandl, Khang), Chamar (Ram, Mochi, Harijan, Ravidas), Chidimar, Dom (Marik),

Tatma (Tati, Das), Dhusad (Paswan, Hajara), Dhobi (Rajak), Patharkatta, Pasi, Batar, Mushar, and Mehtar, which are found in the Tarai region. Non-Dalit refers to the opposite of Dalit, those who are touchable or Pani chalne/chhoichhitto halnunaparne (water is accepted, traditional bathing or sprinkling water drops is not required). Although caste-based discrimination is prohibited by the Constitution of Nepal 2072, it is still being practiced throughout the country.

In Nepal, women (Dalit and non-Dalit) have limited room to assert their uniqueness in a male-dominated family system. Factors such as illiteracy, poverty, stereotypical female perspective, and insufficient legal protection are regarded as major affecting factors. For these reasons, women are excluded from economic and social prospects, which makes their lives miserable. Dalits are one of the historically oppressed groups and are still living in a vulnerable context throughout the country. For example, of the total 2,000,000 Dalit population, only 40 percent are literate, and more than 48 percent are living below the poverty line (NDC, 2021).

After the 1990s, policymakers began to place a greater emphasis on improving women's position. In 1995, the World Women's Conference was held in Beijing, which emphasized the issue of women's empowerment. Since then, Nepalese women have significantly participated in socio-cultural, economic, and political developmental initiatives differently. Nepal has also been undergoing economic transformation from a relatively stable reproduction based on the feudal and caste-based system. Sharma (2021) asserted that women's awareness and consciousness of political and gender issues have rapidly increased. Despite this, inclusivity to ensure women's participation in elections from different backgrounds: caste, ethnic groups, cultures, and languages has not been demonstrated in the election results. Local governments have been allocating a fifteen percent target budget program for empowering marginalized communities, including Dalit and non-Dalit women, since 2013 (MoFALD, 2013).

Problem Statement

It is urgent to consider the changing role of Dalit women as a crucial factor that helps achieve the targeted goal of the development program, including the target budget program. Human resources (both men and women) are historically responsible as creative forces of progressive development throughout human civilizations. In the course of human civilization and propelling social development, women have played a great role. Due to the implementation of the target budget program at the local level, for the last few years, Dalit women have become aware, skillful, independent, and played economic, socio-cultural, and leadership roles at the community level. Beyond caste-based discrimination, such a changing role of Dalit women drags the interests such as empathy, collaboration, open-mindedness, fairness, and kindness of other women (Dalit and non-Dalit).

Research Objective

This study aims to analyze the changing role of Dalit women at the community level, particularly in the Shikhar municipality of Doti located in the far-western region of the country.

Literature Review

To internalise the context from eastern approach of management must be perceived (Mishra, 2022; Mishra, 2020). Social exclusion is the root cause of women's disempowerment. A procession of 'Civic rights movements' held in 1947 in Padmodaya High School was an initial stage of a women empowerment campaign in which many women took part (Acharya, 1997). Then, a women's delegation met the Prime Minister, Padma Shamsher, with a demand to ensure their rights to education, rights to employment, and voting rights (Acharya, 1997). Similarly, there was another movement known as National Congress that took place in 1948 for Nepalese women's empowerment (Pokherel & Mishra, 2001)

Kamal Bhasin, an Indian sociologist, defines empowerment as a process of augmenting social aspects, self-dignity, self-reliance, and going control over resources (Chaulagai et al., 2003).

The government, including many INGOs, is working to empower women. Since the government established the Ministry for Women and Social Welfare following the Beijing conference, several groups have also notably been playing a crucial role in boosting the participation of women in social, economic, and political spheres (Ojha, 1992). Although women still rely on men for financial support, having a job helps a person rise in social standing; people value salaried women more highly than those without jobs (Gurung, 1999).

As UNDP (1995) reports, women also suffer from discriminatory practices such as less access to educational opportunities and personal mobility, which is required for knowledge and skills development. But the inter-census data collected from 1971 to 2011 showed that women's participation, as employment, in the non-agricultural field has increased. However, there is also an increment of low-level participation of males and females in some selected occupations, a substantial increase, in unstable work, and men's participation has substantially declined compared to other occupations between 1981 and 2011. During the inter-census periods from 1971, 1981, 2001, and 2011, women appear to replace men in labor-intensive and low-paid occupations, while men moved on to dominate technical professional and higher production-oriented occupations (UNDP, 2003).

In Nepal, Dalits are one of the poorest communities, and in the Tarai region, many of them are also known as landless (Dangal, 2005). Sharma et al. (1994) noted that the main occupational activity of Dalits is wage labor. In addition, their survival mainly depended on caste-based traditional work/occupations: blacksmithing, leatherwork, and tailoring. Because of poor financial conditions, they could not offer educational opportunities for their children. Even though they believe that God gave birth to them to serve the higher caste people, that evidences their low level of awareness (Sharma, et al., 1994). Discrimination in the empowerment of economic development is a responsible factor for the socio-culture, legal, educational, and political backwardness of women in Nepal (Pradhan & Shrestha, 2005).

The Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD) of the Government of Nepal has disseminated a blended guideline, known as the 'local bodies' resource mobilization guideline-2013, and many recommendations were released under this provision. Article no. 10 stated that out of the total budget, at least 35 percent must be allocated for designated targeted groups. The recommendations were heavily weighted toward the poor and deprived, including women. Similarly, out of the total budget, at least 10 percent should be given to women's empowerment and capacity enrichment. Moreover, at least 10 percent should be for poor and deprived children, and fifteen percent for socio-economically backward and marginalized people (Senior citizens, Disabled persons, Dalits, ethnics, Madhesi, Muslim, and backward communities). Women were highly prioritized and focused on in all these sectors [Senior, 2013]. Sharma (2001) identified and examined the circumstances of women working in Kathmandu and found that they believe their status has improved as a result of the occupation they had. The sociology of daily life has also hinted in some ways that working women's roles have been recognized and are crucially taken into account when making decisions about domestic matters (Sharma, 2001).

According to Koirala's 2005 study on the workload of working women in the Ilam sub-metropolitan and the working conditions of women in the Pokhara Valley, the employment situation is dire because so few women participate in decision-making, denying men and women the same opportunities. According to national census data taken from 1971 to 2011, women's employment in the non-agricultural sector has grown. However, the rate of female participation in low-wage and insecure work has significantly increased between 1981-2011, whereas men's participation has significantly declined (CBS, 2011).

The majority of women's roles can be divided into three categories: productive, reproductive, and community management. Productive roles relate to the creation of products for consumption or revenue through labor performed inside or outside the home

(relating to tasks and responsibilities carried out for the benefit of the community). Deuba (2004) explained that in order for women to be recognized for their achievements, they must manage the demands of these three diverse positions.

The turning point for Nepalese women's growth was a study Bennett conducted on the status of women in Nepal. The results of a thorough examination in eight villages showed a clear relationship between women's status in the family and community and their capacity to generate income. Additionally, it was shown that it was widespread in the neighborhoods, encouraging female engagement in market activities and women's entrepreneurial skills. The majority of women made stronger statements about how to use and share family resources to boost women's entrepreneurial talents. Instead, these tactics are almost entirely directed at men, which has the tendency to not only fail to unleash the full potential of women's productivity but also to actually degrade their relative status by failing to break down the inside/outside dichotomy and include women in the highly complex and crucial development process as well as wider spheres of society (Acharya & Bennett, 1981). A man does not have to play numerous roles in today's expanding society, but as a result of contemporary civilization, women now have to play both the role of working woman and housewife (Acharya & Bennett, 1982).

The renowned social explorer Acharya (1994) found that less than 1 percent of workers are employers, with the vast majority of people still working for themselves or on their own time. At roughly 56 percent in 1981, the proportion of self-employed people remained largely stable, but it dropped to 75 percent in 1991. Accordingly, UNPEF (1996) reveals that women have less access to educational possibilities, which prevents them from finding jobs in the labor market. The involvement of women in decision-making is also absent, from the household to the executive level. According to the aforementioned study reports, decision-making power and changing role of women.

Methodology

This investigation was designed as a case study using a quantitative research method. The case study research method is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context and the boundaries between phenomenon and context (Yin, 1984, p. 23). The study focused on the changing sociocultural and economic role of Dalit women playing an equal role in the household and society. The study used multiple sources of data (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014), including purposive sampling of 132 Dalit females in Shikhar Municipality, which was regarded as a unit of analysis. The required data were collected through self-administered hand-given questionnaires, which were filled up by 132 respondents with close rapport building.

The researcher managed and examined the data using SPSS version 20. Statistical techniques such as frequency tables, central tendency, correlation, and the chi-square test were used (Field, 2009). Similarly, this study also applied description, analysis, and interpretation methods of data analysis (Yin, 2014). The description method helped the researcher to understand the meaning of the data. The analysis method helped the researcher to identify the underlying meanings of data to make a systematic description. Finally, the interpretation method helped the researcher to understand processes and meanings in the theoretical context.

The research field, Shikhar municipality, is an area coordinated at 29.26°N 80.87°E. It occupies 585.37 km² (CBS, 2011). According to CBS (2021), the total population is 31801, including females (18474) population. Among 569 Dalit HHs, 236 HHs were regarded as the sample study population in terms of their role played in the community for social transformation. After that, 132 sample HHs (66 HHs from ward number 1 and another 66 HHs from ward number 6) were randomly selected as sample respondents that are generated with a 95 percent confidence level and 5 percent marginal error by using the sample size determination formula (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970).

Therefore, this study provides a detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events, context and condition, and their relationships, which helped the researchers to explain a better understanding of the changing role of Dalit women at the community level..

Results and Discussion

Background Characteristics of the Respondents

Out of the 132 total samples, the majority (99.2%) of the respondents are Hindu, and only a few (0.8%) follow Christianity. In the study area, Dalits are following Hindu particular ritual practices contrary to a diverse ritual strand of Tamang in western Nepal (Holmberg, 1984). About 12.9 percent of respondents have completed a higher education degree, which was a greater difference compared to the educational status of their husbands. However, the number of SLC-passed husbands was three times the number of females. Almost the majority (51.6%) of the respondents belonged to a joint family system, and 44.7 percent of families have 2-4 children. The average number of family members (5.7) is greater than the 4.32 national average (CBS, 2021). A majority (60%) of the respondents' children go to government schools, and only 13 percent of respondents' children study in private schools. The subject chosen in the higher study showed that the art and education faculty is at the first rank, commerce at second, and JT/JTA is at the third rank, and so on.

Regarding the involvement of respondents and their husbands in six different occupations, most (65.2%) dominant professions among men can clearly be visible to foreign jobs. Pasa and Bishwakarma (2020a) also found that remittance is becoming a prominent source of family income and investment, particularly in the Dalit community of Mulabari, Dhading. The second leading occupation is agriculture, which accounted for 30.3% of women; however, it is 6.1 percent among husbands, which is in the third rank. The least (3.8%) engagement of husbands is in business, and wives are in a government job (1.55%). The job done by wives in business and the job done by husbands in seasonal business and private jobs are equal (6.8%). Besides

agriculture, women are more engaged in private jobs (14.9%), however, a government job is mostly (7.6%) chosen profession by their husbands.

While comparing paddy-land (Khet) and Farmland (Bari), the possession of a share of Bari is 9.4 percent more in <3 Ropani. Likewise, in the 3-6 Ropani classification, the highest share in Bari with 91.7 percent of the distribution. On the other hand, the remaining disaggregated Ropani of land properties ownership is lowest as compared to <3 and 3-6 Ropani land properties. The minimum and maximum values of Khet/Bari were found <5 Ropani and 10-15 Ropani, respectively. Similarly, the minimum and maximum values for food sufficiency were found < 3 months and > 12 months, respectively.

Therefore, this study provides detailed information on the demographic and occupational characteristics of the respondents, which helps to understand the changing role of Dalit women at the community level.

Economic Role of Women

Nowadays, Dalits women are becoming economically empowered and supporting their family economy. Economic empowerment simply refers to having access to productive assets, access in physical/financial opportunities to achieve economic benefits (Bhattarai, 2009). The minimum and maximum scores of annual family income were found Rs. 48,000 and 540,000 respectively. Among the different sources of family income (e.g. agriculture, remittance, government job, private job, social security allowance, and business) private job scored the highest \bar{x} 390,000 compared to the minimum \bar{x} 27.27 of social security allowance. Similarly, remittance scored a maximum σ 330,952.38 compared to a minimum σ 26,602.52 of social security allowance. Similarly, the range of minimum family expenditure is 3700 (4,000-300) whereas maximum expenditure is 810,000 (900,000-90,000). Education, health, and food secured the highest expenditures 51,569; 42,376, and 30,335 respectively. Similarly, buying household accessories and meat/chicken secured the lowest \bar{x} expenditure 10292 and 11507

respectively. The fact indicates that Dalit women are improving their family economic status (poor to low and low to medium) in the study (see Table 1). However, Pasa and Bishwakarma (2020b)

developed a 5Es (i.e. envisioning, educating, empowering, ensuring, and encouraging) holistic model to mainstream Dalit communities towards their own community development.

Table 1: Economic Activities Related Variables

Engage in earning activities		Frequency	Percent
	Yes	97	73.50
	No	20	15.20
	On plan	4	3.00
Your monthly income	Missing	11	8.33
	<15,000	62	47.00
	15,000-30,000	51	38.60
Family credit loan	>20000	19	14.40
	100,000-199,000	50	37.90
	200,000-300,000	22	16.70
	>300,000	30	22.70
	No credit loan	27	20.45
Keeping record	Missing	3	2.27
	Yes	10	7.60
	No	112	84.80
	on plan	1	.80
Purpose of investment	Missing	9	6.81
	Commercial farming	1	.80
	Business	5	3.80
	Animal husbandry	3	2.30
	Personal enterprise	92	69.70
	Abroad study	2	1.50
Family economic status	Missing	29	21.96
	Medium	42	31.80
	Low	60	45.45
	Poor	30	22.72
Total		132	100.00

Table 1 implies that with >70 percent most of the female respondents are engaged in earning activities. Approximately 15 percent are not yet engaged in earning activities. Among the involvement in earning activities; 47 percent, 38.6 percent, and 14.4 percent of the respondents have been earning monthly Rs. <15,000; 20,000 to 30,000, and >20,000. The highest number of respondents have loans of 100000 to 199000 and

the second-largest loan possession is 22.7 percent in >300000 categories. However, in the 200000-300000 categories loan receivers are almost 17% with the least share. The purpose of investment data shows that the personal enterprise consists of the utmost investment with almost 70percentof the share. Commercial farming is the least invested of all. The share of record-keeping of family income, expenditure, and credit capital amount is extremely

low (7.6%), while others remain unrecorded. Overall, 42 respondents are belonging to medium economic status in their community/society and the largest portion (45.45%) of the families is low in economic status which is, in fact, upgrading from poor to low status.

Socio-cultural Role

Social empowerment enables women to perform a transformative or altering role in their own households and communities through excellent education and a healthy environment (Bhattarai, 2009). Besides that, they are actively participating in different 5 types of capacity/skill development training organized at the community level. A majority (68.18%) of the respondents expressed that such training has been provided by the local government itself and remaining by I/NGOs such as women empowerment, saving/cooperative, child education/parenting, health/sanitation, and community development. Among these training, the greatest number of females (25%) were engaged in all capacity development training and

the least (1%) were involved with child education/parenting. Accordingly, among the 5 different skill development training; tailoring, embroidery, seed production, food processing, and mushroom cultivation, 22 percent of the respondents have participated in all training programs. Apart from that while analyzed separately, gaining the tailoring training is the utmost with 8.3 percent while the embroidery consists only 0.8 percent with the least involvement. Seed production and mushroom cultivation have gained the same level of participation of 3.8 percent. The training program has not only developed the capacity/skills of the respondents but also motivated them to play a change agent role in the community. Dalit women thus started playing sociocultural roles in society (see Table 2). Garbuja and Pasa (2016) also found that technical and vocational educational training programs conducted at the local level help to nourish knowledge; ability and develop vocational skills of women empowered in Bima village of Myagdi district.

Table 2: Socio-cultural Role of the Respondents

Category		Frequency	Percent
Different attitude towards female education	Yes	5	3.80
	No	127	96.20
Participate in local level meeting	Yes	77	58.30
	No	54	40.90
	Missing	1	0.75
Decision-making role	Active	92	69.70
	Passive	39	29.50
	Missing	1	0.75
Working hours for empowering women	< 3 hours	90	68.20
	> 3 hours	37	28.00
	Missing	5	3.70
Family social status	Medium	58	43.93
	Low	54	40.90
	Poor	20	15.15
Total		132	100.00

Table 2 depicts that attitude towards female education is mostly favorable where 96.2 percent responded ‘no’ to female education. In contrast, to participation in local-level meetings, most of the respondents are in favor of 58.3 percent and 40.9 percent do not prefer it. Similarly, the decision-making role of 69.7 percent of respondents is active which is higher than the passive role in decision-making which share’s accounts for 29.5 percent. The working hour for empowering women seems sound good where 68.2 percent spend <3 hours and 28 percent spend >3 hours. Comparing the family social status, most (43.93%) respondents’ family social status is medium which is followed by low status (40.90%) and poor status (15.15%) respectively. Contrary to social injustice, women are powerless over their bodies, they are placed in the lowest rank and not allowed to participate in public life (Shrestha, 2002). The change agent Dalit women are not only upgrading their social status but also empowering other Dalit women including non-Dalit women.

Leadership Role

Political empowerment involves capabilities associated with democratic self-governance that ensures freedom to participate in a political party by acquiring knowledge essential to protect one's right and assert them under the law (Bhattarai,

2009). Dalit women are actively involved in different organizations such as political parties, mother groups, saving groups, community forestry, and I/NGOs.

Of the total, 46.2 percent of the respondents are involved in all the institutions. More specifically, the maximum participation of institutional members is in the saving group with 20.5 percent of respondents and lowest in NGOs with <2 percent. In comparison between village assembly and village executive, the participation of the member in village executive is more, belonging to 28.8 percent of respondents and the member that is part of village assembly comprises 8.3 percent. The respondents are more interested in financial leadership securing 32.6 percent while exactly 28 percent are interested in social leadership. However, the involvement of women in both types of leadership seems to be less than 64.4 percent and 70.5 percent simultaneously, showing no engagement at all. Additionally, 1.5 percent of financial leadership and 0.8 percent of social leadership are on plan to join leadership roles. The data indicate that the role of Dalit women has been changed (see Table 3) due to the development interventions and gender-responsive budget implemented by the local government addressing double shocks of Dalits (being Dalit and being women).

Table 3: Changing Role of Dalit Women

Catagory		Frequency	Percent
Mutual relationship among Dalit women	Yes	127	96.20
	No	3	2.30
	Missing	2	1.5
Providing economic supports	Yes	42	31.80
	No	88	66.70
	Missing	2	1.5
Counseling to them	Yes	107	81.10
	No	20	15.20
	Missing	5	3.70

Table 3: Changing Role of Dalit Women

Category		Frequency	Percent
Mutual relationships with other women	Yes	99	75.00
	No	27	20.50
	Missing	6	4.54
Providing economic support to them	Yes	47	35.60
	No	80	60.60
	Missing	5	3.70
Providing social support to them	Yes	103	78.00
	No	19	14.40
	Missing	10	7.57
Total		132	100.00

Table 3 highlights the mutual relationship among Dalit women showing positive responses with 96.2 percent whereas 60.6 percent of respondents are not providing economic support. Furthermore, the greatest number of respondents are encouraging counseling to them and also a mutual relationship with other women. Accordingly, 78 percent of respondents are favorable to providing social support. Almost 87.9 percent of respondents have good relationships with elected representatives and local politicians and 86.4 percent have good relationships with administrative staff. Owing to that elected representative Dalit women are encouraged to involve in economic and social activities so that they can play a change-agent role in their community. Sapkota (2020) reveals rural leaders used to change their policies and strategies to create and sustain power, such as doing multiple professions and building networks other than politics. Overall, regarding the changing role of Dalit women, the denser view of the respondents (78%) falls on the agreed point which indicates the power of paradox for Dalit women for improving the social and economic status of their family in the community/society.

Conclusion

The study shows that Dalit women are becoming more empowered and playing a changing role in their communities. They are actively involved in economic activities, challenging social

stigma, and playing decision-making roles at household and community levels. The study also highlights the importance of increasing the formal educational status of Dalit women, providing social infrastructure, and offering entrepreneurship development training. Local stakeholders and governments must play a supportive role in establishing production collection/distribution centers and making policies operational. The study suggests that capacity development training must be provided to women who are not yet involved in politics and social networking and services. The findings of this study have implications for the broader discourse on gender, class, and caste in India and beyond. Further research is needed to explore the experiences of Dalit women in different regions of Nepal and to identify effective strategies for promoting their empowerment and social inclusion.

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