

STORIES OF WOMEN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS: A NARRATIVE
INQUIRY

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AN ABSTRACT

of the dissertation of *Devi Bhatta* for the degree of *Master of Philosophy in English Language Education* presented on November 07, 2023. Entitled *Stories of Women English Language Teachers: A Narrative Inquiry*.

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This research explores the stories of women English language teachers in the context of Far-western Nepal. The main objectives of my study were to narrate the struggles of women teachers in learning English and see how English language proficiency helped them to be empowered.

I used narrative inquiry as a research method. These women teachers shared their stories of their struggles in learning English as data for this study. My research participants were women teachers who have taught English in public and private schools for over five years and pursued their schooling in public schools. The stories reflect the women teachers' struggles faced in their families, society, school and workplace. These struggles have helped them to empower themselves and learn the English language. Their English language proficiency has helped them to empower themselves in the Nepali socio-cultural context. The English language has allowed them to get job opportunities and made them capable. I used the empowerment and capability approach as theories, which helped to empower the women teachers and made them proficient in English, making them capable of new job opportunities.

From the women teachers' stories, I found that they could empower and make them capable in their professional careers because of English language education. I also learned that girls perform better than boys in acquiring the English language.

The research has concluded that women teachers could fulfil their basic needs, achieve economic stability, pursue higher education through their efforts, and create a democratic environment in their workplace. The English language has empowered women teachers and developed capabilities to find suitable job opportunities.

यो अनुसन्धानले सुदूरपश्चिमका अङ्ग्रेजी विषयका शिक्षिकाहरूको कथाहरूलाई अन्वेषण गर्दछ। यो अनुसन्धानको मुख्य उद्देश्य भनेको महिला शिक्षिकाहरूको अङ्ग्रेजी भाषा सिक्दा भोगेका कठिनाइहरू लाई कथाका माध्यमबाट प्रस्तुत गर्नु र अङ्ग्रेजी भाषाका माध्यमबाट कसरी दक्षता हासिल गरी सशक्त भए भनी जान्नु हो ।

मैले मेरो अनुसन्धानमा सोधपुछको माध्यम प्रयोग गरे । मेरो अनुसन्धानमा सहभागी महिला शिक्षकहरूले आफूले अङ्ग्रेजी अध्ययन गर्दा गर्नुपरेका संघर्षका कथाहरू सुनाए। मेरो अनुसन्धानका लागी सहभागी महिला शिक्षिकाहरू थिए जसले पछिल्लो पाँच वर्ष देखी सरकारी वा निजी विद्यालयमा अङ्ग्रेजी विषय अध्यापन गर्दै आएका थिए। यी महिला शिक्षिकाहरूको संघर्षका कथाले संघर्षका प्रतिबिम्ब दर्सायो जुन उनीहरूले आफ्नो घरपरिवार, समाज, विद्यालय र काम गर्ने ठाउँमा सामना गर्नु परेको सङ्घर्षलाई झल्काउँछ यी सङ्घर्षहरूले शिक्षिकाहरूलाई सशक्त बनाएको देखिन्छ । अङ्ग्रेजी विषयको दक्षताले शिक्षिकाहरूलाई रोजगारीका अवसर प्रदान गरी आर्थिक र सामाजिक रूपमा सशक्त बनाएको छ । मेरो अध्ययनमा क्षमता दृष्टिकोण र सशक्तीकरण लाई सिद्धान्त को रूपमा प्रयोग गरे ।

यी महिला शिक्षिकाहरू का कथाबाट मैले अङ्ग्रेजी भाषाले गर्दा उनीहरूले आफूलाई सशक्त बनाइ व्यवसायीक भविष्य सक्षम बनाएको पाएँ । अङ्ग्रेजी भाषाले महिला शिक्षिकाहरू लाई सशक्त बनाएको र रोजगारीका अवसरहरू पनि प्रशस्तै प्रदान गरेको पाइयो।

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This dissertation entitled *Stories of Women English Language Teachers: A Narrative Inquiry* presented by *Devi Bhatta* on November 07, 2023.

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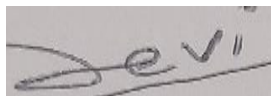
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work, and it has not been submitted for candidature for any other degree at any other university.



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November 07, 2023

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all the Women Teachers who struggle for Professional growth.

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ABBREVIATIONS

LTE	Language Teacher Education
SSDP	School Sector Development Plan
CERID	Centre for Educational Research Innovation and Development
EIL	English as an International Language
PWUP	President Women Upliftment Program
SLC	School Leaving Certificate
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PDM	Participative Decision-Making
TEP	Teacher Education Program
B. ED	Bachelor in Education
ELE	English Language Education
KUSOED	Kathmandu University School of Education
M Phil	Master of Philosophy
Ph.D.	Doctor of Philosophy
T.U	Tribhuvan University
M. Ed	Master of Education

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study is about the stories of women teachers with their struggles in their personal and professional lives. As I have observed in my locality, women teachers are found to be hard-working and struggling for their professional identity. I have seen women teachers working from sunrise to sunset to prove themselves in different professional sectors. I have observed that the women teachers involved in teaching are more engaged in household work and their professional duties. I wanted to study the women English language teachers' stories of success, failure, and struggle to understand their level of struggle and success.

This chapter introduces my experiences, which are the basic foundation for my research. I have brought my own story during my teaching career and the difficulties I faced while teaching in a Far-Western province of Nepal. I faced many uncertainties in my professional career as a mother, a housemaker, and a professional. I had to quit my job to be a mother and after being a mother.

In this section, I introduced my research agenda and my story of struggle. I presented the rationale of the study to show its importance, I presented the problem statement, the people in the society admire the women teachers' work but never dare to see the struggle of the women teachers for their professional careers. I thought of listening to the stories of struggle and sacrifice of the women teachers whose stories are inspiring and motivating. I mentioned the purpose of my study to explore the stories of the women English language teachers' struggle. I addressed two research questions: one is to narrate the women teachers' struggles and the other is to see the proficiency of English and its empowerment in Nepali socio-cultural context. I presented the delimitation of the study I could not listen to the stories of all the women teachers of the Far West (Kailali district).

Emerging with Research Agenda

I started my teaching career in my third year of my bachelor's degree. I started teaching to support my studies. I had joined a private boarding school which was a secondary school. I started teaching at the primary level. In this school, no teachers were devoted to their profession as the teachers used to leave the school within a short period. The teachers left the school because of the unusual behaviour of the principal,

who always treated them as his workers but not as professionals, as the former teachers said. After a few months, I also tasted the bitterness of the unprofessional behaviour of the principal, and I couldn't continue my teaching for more than eight months. I left the school, and soon after three months, I was called by another school where I continued my teaching in a good professional environment. In this school, I enjoyed working with my colleagues and the students as I had a horrible experience in the previous one. In the previous school, one day, I mistakenly wrote the caste of one of my students in a small letter, and the principal pointed at me time and again that B. Ed. teachers do not know this much how to write capital letters in the caste and so on. But, in this recent school, everything was fine, and the appreciative team was so good that even a small thing was discussed among the colleagues and the principal. I was happy I got a good environment for learning many things independently. I admit that this institution was very helpful in developing my teaching career.

While studying in my first postgraduate year, I tied the knot and was scared about whether I would continue teaching. By the grace of God, I could continue teaching in the same school. However, I needed a better job for my professional growth as a married woman. Soon, I applied to the government school for the primary teacher's post. The school principal was a professional person who made a teacher selection by written examination, class observation, and interview. After facing all these procedures, I was the one who got the job. Finally, I happily worked in a government school with better pay than a private boarding school. Leaving the previous school was not that easy because it is always hard to say goodbye to the place where you want to be connected and from where you have learned so many things. Saying goodbye to my colleagues and students was very hard; I was hiding my tears. However, I could see the tears in my principal's eyes. By seeing this situation, I felt that I had earned something. After this school, I went to a new environment where the principal was very strict in following rules and regulations but was very helpful to those teachers who were very professional in their work. As I heard that he was a very strict person, hearing these words I never talked to him.

In August 2014, the school organized a student and staff picnic, and we were all supposed to go early in the morning on the bus; no one dared to sit with the principal, but I did as there was no seat left for me. I was quiet, and I did not talk with him. He said that I was sitting with a person who was not talking to me and deliberately I had to talk to him and gradually he asked me about my family, studies,

etc. He was very friendly with me from that day onwards. It was not that easy for me to go to school. I always travelled with one of my neighbours working in the same school. I would have quit my job earlier if he was not there to travel a long distance of 10 kilometres from my home. I struggled with all the hardships as this school is the best place for my career development. I continued teaching in the same school for two years. As I was going through treatment and had many health issues. One day, I fainted on the school grounds and was unconscious for half an hour. Later, I was hospitalized for a few days. In the meantime, I used to go to Kathmandu for my treatment, and I had to ask for leave. I felt very bad when I could not continue my school regularly. Because of me, the student's study was being affected, which I knew deeply but was helpless with my condition.

My health condition was getting worse, and the doctors said I could not travel anymore, so I decided to quit school for my sake and my students who were deprived of regular classes. I do not want their studies to suffer because of me. The principal sir also said, "Your health should be your priority". You can get better job opportunities in the future. This school was the best for my professional development because it was the only model school in the town. I started my treatment for more than three years. The doctor could not diagnose my problem, so I went to Mumbai for treatment. I forcefully had to forget about my teaching career. Being a woman, I had to go for my treatment after some time. I underwent the IVF process, which was difficult because of many painful procedures and injections. Going through all these hardships, I became a mother of a daughter and had all her responsibilities to look after as no one was there to help me. So, I devoted all my time to her, thinking no one and nothing was above her. Being a mother, I could not give importance to anything because I was helpless and desperate to go to school and join the teaching again, but my motherhood did not allow me that freedom. I do not know whether the women only have to sacrifice everything for the child or the men have equal responsibilities to look after the child.

I should join part-time teaching to provide time at home and the workplace. I joined one of the reputed colleges and taught at an intermediate level. I was learning many things at college. In the meantime, there was an announcement from Open University for the entrance examination application. I needed to be academically sound, so I applied for the M.Phil. Program at Open University. My name was not on the merit list. The daily schedule was going as usual in my part-time teaching as no

one could help me with the child at home. I used to take my child to my mother's house and bring her back when I returned from college. I managed a year following the same routine. One day my husband said, "You are ignoring the child's emotions for small pay. You do not need to go teaching; give proper time and care to her as I'm always busy with my work. You should be at home". I thought he was right and left the job without thinking. I was jobless before and became the one again. I was sad when I left teaching. I was a complete housewife for more than five years.

My Struggle for Higher Education

I used to look on different university sites for their application call for M.Phil. Program. One day I found an application call from Kathmandu University in August 2021 named Dhulikhel cohort. I found another application call from Tribhuvan University; I applied to both universities. My husband asked me to apply to both of the Universities. I applied to both of the universities. Kathmandu University conducted the entrance examination on time. The good aspect of Kathmandu University was that it conducted the entrance examination online. I participated online and got passed the entrance examination.

I was happy and a bit sad at the moment. I was happy to continue my studies and sad because I had to leave the house, worried about what I would do with my child. With whom will she stay? Days later, I decided to take my child with me no matter what. I was juggled among the responsibilities of my child and my studies. First, I visited the university alone. I was afraid of how I would go there in a new place and adjust myself. I talked to one of my neighbours and found the address of a girl studying nursing at KU; then, I went to her place for a few days. I was really sad because the classes were in the evening and I had to travel a long distance alone at night after my classes. I felt really bad for myself. Again, I thought of my daughter. She is the one for whom I had to struggle. As a mother of a girl child, I faced many problems in the society of the Far West. People used to say she had only a girl child, no boy, who would look behind them in their old days. I know in the society of the far-west, it is hard to survive if you have only a girl child. Leaving behind all these issues, I struggled to find accommodation and a maid for my child but could not find any, although my professors also helped to find accommodation for me. I called my daughter after I found a space for accommodation in the hostel near the KU gate. My daughter and husband came to Dhulikhel. I was more than happy to see both of them

together in my place. My husband left for his hometown, and we were alone in the new place.

I admitted my daughter to a school suggested by my professor. My daughter went to school for a week happily. After her schooling of some nine or ten days, she vomited continuously for more than 2 hours, in the evening at nearly 9 o'clock. I was afraid and nervous. I know I was crying. The other girls in the hostel came and said that this all happened due to the cold weather and the hostel's food. They asked me to rub Vicks on her chest, hands, and legs. I knew this all happened because of the cold, but I was helpless. I called one of my professors about my child, and he said he would call the doctor in the hospital. The hostel's owner helped me to take my daughter to the hospital, and we went to Dhulikhel Hospital. I was all alone in this situation. I called my husband from the hospital, and he also panicked and said he would visit my place as soon as possible. I was alone, so I called my neighbouring brother, who was studying at the same university. He came at night at around 10 o'clock.

I waited with an empty mind in the hospital with my neighbouring brother. My daughter slept for an hour, and one of the doctors came and told me "Your daughter is ok; take her home. I insisted I was from Dhangadhi and no one was here as my guardian. I will go tomorrow morning. I requested, but he denied it and planned to send me home. Forcefully, at midnight on a cold, windy night, I was forced to take my daughter from the hospital. I was on the road at midnight with my daughter and neighbouring brother. He was the only helping hand with me in my difficult situation. He searched for a vehicle that could drop us to the hostel. I was initially afraid, as there was no way out. I travelled in the van with my brother. The van dropped us near the hostel. I returned to the hostel, but my daughter started vomiting again. Now, I was helpless. The hostel sisters suggested taking my daughter to Kathmandu for further treatment.

I was unaware of anything. I called one of my husband's friends, and he said to bring my daughter to Kathmandu. The girls in the hostel searched for an ambulance, and I called the neighbouring brother again and went for Kathmandu in an ambulance with my daughter, who was vomiting in Kathmandu. I was helpless until I reached the hospital. I reached the hospital at around 3: 4 o'clock. My daughter's condition was worse. And I was cursing the doctor who sent us forcefully from the hospital. I thought if the same thing had happened in Dhangadhi, no doctors would dare send me home late at night as Dhangadhi was my place, which was a new place for me.

The doctors came and checked my daughter and asked me to make her sleep. My daughter slept in no time. My brother, who was with me, watched my daughter sleeping peacefully and worriedly. I called my husband and said she was sleeping now. He said he did not get any flights at night; he is coming as soon as he finds the flight. The same day he reached Kathmandu. I sent my brother to Dhulikhel, and we stayed in the hospital. My daughter was more than happy when she saw her father. I could see the happiness in both of their eyes. I had to struggle for my education and could not bear my responsibilities toward my child. I needed clarification on whether to continue my studies or leave. I said to my husband I will quit college. But he said no, and convinced me that he would manage time for our daughter. My daughter said *Mamu xito aunnu hai*, and I said, *Hus*. I know I was not coming that early, as she said.

I went back to Dhulikhel for my regular classes. I was all alone; I felt an emptiness inside me. But somehow, I took the classes and completed my assignments on time. The whole day I used to sit in my professor's office and search for new articles related to the topic I was working on. Thanks to his efforts and time, I learned better and more simply. Now, my daughter is sad with me in her conversation on the phone as she knows I will not be coming there. I lived in Dhulikhel for two months, and the classes were going great as we had a small group of six people. I had some health issues; too, I could not sit on the chair in the class. My professor noticed it and asked me to rest for a few days. I said I would go home once I finished my research methodology assignment. I worked hard and nearly completed my work. I was still not in good health condition, so I asked my professor if I would go home for a few days. He said to Mam "Please go home and be healthy first". Thanks to his concern and care. I visited the doctor in Kathmandu and went to my hometown for a few days. My daughter was happy to see me at home, and even I was delighted. Luckily the University decided to conduct online classes, and I got to read online and stay with my child. But it was challenging for me. I had to take care of my child, cook food, do all the household chores at home, and manage my time for classes and assignments. I managed the time somehow; I used to do all the household chores in the daytime and complete my assignments at night.

I got a phone call from Tribhuvan University when I was nearly about to finish my first semester at Kathmandu University. I took my regular classes with ups and downs till the third semester. Sometimes, I feel that being jobless and doing M.Phil. I do not know where I'm going and what I'm doing. However, one of my

teachers called and asked me to join his school. I was not interested in joining his school, so I said I would join later. I was seeking better opportunities. I planned that without completing my M.Phil. I will not join any institution as I cannot manage time for my study, home, family, and job, so I decided to complete my thesis. For that, I needed to travel again to Kathmandu as I travelled early in the second semester and defended my proposal. The situation was the same with my child as she was having her holidays and no one was there to look after her. I planned to take her with me for about 20 days. When her school resumes, I would send her back to her hometown, and she would continue her school, and I would work on my thesis.

Besides all these struggles, I struggled a lot to pursue my higher education. Being jobless, I was worried much about my professional career, my child care, household responsibilities, and other seen and unseen responsibilities at home, which have made me juggle my responsibilities. The story I presented above is not only the story of me as a women educator. I have noticed that it is also the story of many other women teachers. The women teachers in my periphery also face the same issues. I have faced in pursuing higher education and professional careers. I want to explore the stories of women teachers who struggle to pursue higher education together with professional careers and other seen and unseen responsibilities at home.

The Rationale of the Study

In my research, I presented the stories of women teachers. I faced difficulties in my personal and professional life as a women teacher. I was involved in house-making, and engaged in professional duties. I needed to collect the stories of women teachers who struggled for professional development. I narrated the struggling stories of the women teachers pursuing their higher education, developing their professional identity, looking after their children, and struggling to complete their household responsibilities. All people see the women teacher's position but no one dares to go with the struggles they have faced in their day-to-day life to be professionally sound.

The study of the women English language teachers profession and their stories of getting into the profession is highly significant. Ruohotie-Lyhty (2013) argues that in teachers' first year in the career is a widely advised area, the aspects that assist in accepting a 'struggling' in its place so that a particular person engages in teaching create their career distinctiveness are yet less considered. Similarly, Demarse (2005) states that their narratives and cooperation oppose and simplify the resemblance of the women teachers who struggle alone. The teachers of this research

are encouraged to look for collaboration correlation and follow professional development. These writers also felt that the women teachers who struggle alone must be recognized.

Similarly, with the help of multiple case studies, a sequence of critical events and exposure connected to establishing the area of study of self-identities of four initial basic level women educators along a career entrance together with a perception of a teacher personality as own experience (Avraamidou, 2019). These studies have been done in the area of women teachers. Especially, education has built up perceptions from teachers' personal stories of schooling activities (Clandinin & Connelly, 1987; Connelly & Clandinin, 1995) that women's activities of women need recognition. In my study, I narrated the struggling stories of women teachers.

The stories of women teachers from Nepal, particularly from western Nepal are unheard of. The well-established institutions need to recognize the efforts of women teachers. In the same way, even the well-established institutions working for the well-being of teachers do not have a record of how many women teachers are working at the school and university levels (Khadka, 2020). These institutions should also be concerned with their employees' all-around ease and difficulty in their personal and professional lives. This systematic environment would also help them grow professionally and personally. The study regarding the women English language teacher's stories needs to be further studied as these types of research are scarce regarding balancing their personal and professional careers. Going through them, I was motivated to study the stories of women English language teachers in far-west Kailali, Nepal.

This study is helpful for women teachers to manage their responsibilities. It will help the educators, policymakers, co-teachers, and school management committee understand the women teachers' struggles and cooperate with their struggles with personal and professional issues. The women teachers' inspiring stories would help the other teachers to be professionally active and manage household responsibilities.

Problem Statement

Often, I hear about women teachers' professional careers. Only a few discuss their struggling stories. Even I have struggled much for my professional stability and higher education. I had many responsibilities to handle at a time and I juggled among all these responsibilities. I had to leave my job for my children and was at the house

for over five years. Being an educated woman, I faced all these issues. Even I was curious about what other women's teacher stories would be. I thought the other women's teachers' stories were more interesting, filled with joy and sorrow, and saw and unseen struggles. So, I thought to bring the stories of women English language teachers.

In our society, people admire the posts and position of women teachers. Our society praises the professional achievement of women teachers in their workplace. They admire their lifestyle and achievements. Most researchers focus more on their professional development. Karki's (2021) study critically explores the struggles and professional activities of basic-level English teachers in professional development, and the result revealed that the participant was innately interested in the teaching profession before involvement. However, the situated school system discouraged the ideology of the teaching profession even though he determined to continue his profession by involving himself in different seminars, workshops and studies. This situation favours men because of the patriarchal mindset undoubtedly, most women teachers feel discriminated against in the workplace, and male teachers grab the prospective professional development opportunities.

Similarly, Khadka (2020) studied the experiences of women teachers in their professional life and motherhood. The study explored how female English language teachers can maintain their social and professional identity in Nepal. She found that balancing motherhood and professionalism as a woman teacher has many challenges, resulting in the incompatibility of both roles. The sensitive nature of the job and the inflexible and monotonous duties of homemaking make women teachers for women to undertake their duties perfectly at school and home and vice-versa. In this study, the women teachers cannot balance their duties at home and workplace. However, (Paudyal, 2015) argues women teachers are excluded because of the patriarchal social system.

Similarly, Paudel (2017) found a connection between English language competency empowering women teachers in their workplaces, and the decision-making process at home and school. To understand this connection aspect, she examines the positive and negative aspects of integrating the issues of how education empowers and enables them to face the traditional roles of women. English language education gets them ready to fight against social inequality of women and cultural and religious life replacing the traditional values and norms.

The study by Poudel (2017) explored the relationship between English language education and women empowerment in the context of Nepal. The study's conclusion shows that the English language is considered an opportunity to be independent and capable. In their study, Shetty and Hans (2015) in India also found that education enables young girls and women to face challenges, confront their traditional roles and change their lives.

These researchers concentrated on the issues of professional development and motherhood, social exclusion, English language education, empowerment, and face challenges. However, in the context of Nepal, the struggles of women language teachers and their empowerment process in the form of stories have yet to be adequately documented and discussed.

In my study, I explored the stories of women teachers reflecting on their struggles for their professional achievement, the stories of their suffering, their family responsibilities, and their time for their children. The women's stories are not asked and revealed, the stories have all the struggles of struggle and achievement. I want to see their stories of struggles and sacrifice, which have strengthened women teachers in their professional and personal lives. So, their struggling stories will be the source of motivation for other women teachers.

Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to explore the stories of women English language teachers' struggles in their personal and professional careers in the Kailali district. More specifically, I wanted to understand how they have struggled in their profession and how English helped them empower themselves in the context of the Far West.

Research Questions

The following questions were addressed to carry out the research:

How do women English language teachers narrate their struggles in learning English?

How does proficiency in English empower them in a Nepali socio-cultural context?

Delimitation of the Study

I explored the stories of women teachers in the context of Nepal's far-west Kailali district Nepal. I limited my study to the far western part of one ward. I only selected the women teachers purposively; only women teachers are part of my research. The women teachers were engaged in their profession together with

household responsibilities and empowered themselves despite being powerless in their socio-cultural context. With the help of English, they can empower them and know their capability.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter critically reviews the literature related to my area of research. The first section of this chapter examines relevant literature concerning the stories of women teachers and their empowerment. The literature review is the summary of major writings on a selected topic. Creswell (2009) states that a literature review means stating and summarizing a related topic.

In the second section, I developed the theoretical framework of my study within the theoretical frame of the empowerment theory and capability approach. The third section reviews the policies of the Nepal government regarding women teachers. The fourth section enumerates the previous studies in my research area and then states the research gap. Finally, I have summarized my understanding of this review process.

Status of Women Teachers in Nepal

The status of women teachers in the context of Nepal has been improving over the past few days but still, female teachers do not enjoy the same equality as men do. The efforts made to promote girls' education have contributed to the understanding that women deserve equal status in society, as highlighted by Thapa (2012). However, despite these initiatives, the educational status of women remains low. This can be attributed to the less favourable attitude of society towards women's education, as stated by Thapa (2012).

The women teachers' presence in the school makes the school environment safe and sound for the girls. According to Bista (2004) and Paudyal (2012), the lack of female teachers in schools contributes to an unsafe environment. Parents feel apprehensive about sending their daughters to male-dominated settings, which raises concerns about their safety.

The recruitment of women teachers in the school is increasing but there is no equal distribution of female teachers to male teachers from the government. In a study by Bista (2006), the representation of women teachers at the primary level increased from 10 per cent in 1980 to 29 per cent in 2003. In a report by the Ministry of Education [MOE], (2014), it was found that in 2014, the percentage of women teachers at the primary, lower secondary, and secondary levels were 42, 28, and 17

respectively. The gradual improvement in the representation of women in the teaching force is evident from the statistics mentioned earlier. However, there is still a significant disparity. According to the Department of Education [DOE], (2012), 27 per cent of primary schools do not have a woman teacher. Despite the implementation of various national and international policies aimed at improving the situation, the current status suggests that the effectiveness of these policies is questionable. The current figures also reveal the existence of gender disparity and disparity among women in the teaching profession.

The participation of women is seen less in every sector. In the study by Visvanathan et al. (2011, 213), women's participation in political, economic, and professional sectors is lower compared to men. They are often perceived as more submissive and more likely to accept tedious and monotonous work. The lower wages they receive reflect their secondary status, which is attributed to their ability to bear children. Additionally, there is a significant association between violence and occupation with low income or unemployment.

Narrating Women English Language Teachers Struggle

The women's teacher stories of learning the English language are diverse according to their family member's literacy, education awareness, society's influence, and friends' motivation. Along with these struggles in the family, society, and school, the women feel inferior due to the patriarchal society, where men are more prioritized than women. These women teachers have diverse stories according to their experiences. I heard their stories as narratives to collect valuable information from the women teachers. The narratives, which make sense of experiences, can provide valuable information on how teachers interpret their teaching and learning experiences.

The teachers know the value of narratives. The narratives help to get the experiences in detail. Lewis (2018) states that language teacher educators understand the importance of using narratives to make sense of experiences. Therefore, they frequently request that new teachers share stories about their teaching experiences through writing, one-on-one meetings, or as part of discussions in language teacher education courses. The women teachers shared their experiences along with their struggles. Language teachers, learners, and teacher educators use narratives to explore and make sense of real and potential life experiences. This is in line with the views of Ochs and Capps (2001) who state that stories are used to "air, probe, and otherwise

attempt to reconstruct and make sense of actual and possible life experiences" (p. 7). The experiences the women teachers share reflect the good and bad times in their teaching career and their struggles.

The desire to comprehend how new language teachers tell stories and comprehend their experiences is not recent. In the Language Teacher Education (LTE) field, there has been a significant focus on novice teachers' narrative reflections in journals, action research or inquiry reports, and language/literacy autobiographies. This has been explored in various studies, including those conducted by Canagarajah (2015) and Johnson & Golombek (2011). Women teacher narrators usually attempt to present their stories in a manner that portrays themselves in the most positive light possible. This is in line with the views of Ochs et al. (1989), who state that narrators tend to tell stories. In a way that portrays themselves in the most complimentary light" (p. 244). But, while sharing their experiences, they also share the good times and the struggling parts. Estola, et al., (2003) conducted a study in which teachers shared their personal stories about their work and life experiences in response to different reforms in Finnish education.

The women's teacher struggle is portrayed in different studies. In a study by Rijal and Wasti (2018), women teachers are shuffled between communal norms, family responsibility, and organization expectations. Female teachers have various responsibilities to look after their families; female teachers are unable to have a balanced life. The study recommended that each healthcare institution in Nepal claim an equal workplace and even provide equality to female workers. In our society, there is no gender-balanced work environment for females. Women are supposed to bear the burden of all the responsibilities at home. (Paudyal, 2015) states that there is an issue of inclusion and exclusion in the contextual case of women teachers. The women who belong to the elite group, power-holders, benefit from the affirmative policy. There is a business between the power holders and power-less women, as their class can be the reason for enrolling in professional opportunities.

The struggles of women teachers are seen everywhere, such as at home, school, and society. The women teachers manage to be around in need. They struggle more to fit in the workplace and with household responsibilities.

Women's English Language Learning Issues

Women teachers face difficulties in their professional and personal lives when they have more responsibilities after being married. Women cannot enjoy the freedom

of men due to the patriarchal society, as the work division between men and women has also made women more engaged in household responsibilities. The men are free and are not obligated to help the female members at home. This distinction between men and women has created a gap in the lifestyle of men and women. With the appropriate environment for teaching and learning, women perform better.

The gender gap in English language learning is seen in our classes where the females are fewer and men outnumber women in Nepali schools. But, the study shows that women are better learners than men. The study by (Keller, (1983); and Aacken, (1999); Dornyei and Shoaib, (2005) stated that Gender has been a significant aspect in studies related to second language learning. These studies have shown that females exhibit greater interest, positive behaviour, and better performance than males.

The women are found to be more engaging in learning the English language. In several instances, students reside in an environment with similar variables, such as society, culture, language, and educational systems. Studies have revealed that female students tend to excel in learning English compared to their male counterparts in such cases. This has led to a growing interest in understanding the underlying reasons for such disparities. Research has suggested that single-sex schools could be a viable option for motivating students Al-Mahrooqi and Ambu Saidi, (2012); Coskun, (2014). Schools that focus on gender-based enrollment can encourage students. Sometimes the women students can feel the gender differences, but while performing, girls excel. According to Lent, Brown, and Hackett (2000), academic achievement is crucial for adolescents to discover their talents, abilities, and competencies, which are vital in developing career aspirations. The issue of women students failing to reach their academic potential has raised concerns about gender-related differences in academic performance (Wentzel, 1988). Despite the higher literacy rate among boys compared to girls, it is noteworthy that girls tend to outperform boys in almost all academic exams.

The girls are better performers in the English language. Karthigeyan and Nirmala (2012) evaluated gender differences in the academic achievement of 10th-grade English students in Tamil Nadu's Salem and Sankari educational districts. The results showed that the student's academic achievement in English was average over the five years studied. Additionally, the analysis based on various demographic variables indicated that girls had a higher mean score than boys in English academic

achievement. In both educational districts, girls performed better than boys in language-related subjects.

Similarly, Ali et al. (2013) investigated the relationship between test anxiety and achievement in English among secondary school students. The study found a negative correlation between test anxiety and academic performance in English. Additionally, the study concluded that female students had higher test anxiety levels than their male counterparts. The women students prepare better because they fear failing and scoring good marks in their examinations.

Women are better performers in the English Language, no doubt. However, women teachers' responsibilities as housemakers, child bearers, caretakers, and other seen and unseen duties around the home and outside hold back their personal life and work lives. Lack of support at the beginning of a teaching career is also an important factor affecting the teaching profession. Women teachers did not get support in the initial days of their profession, and the responsibilities of household chores constrained their work life, too. The job instability, handling of the children, and unsupportive behaviour and advocacy in the working association are the superior objections in their work (Ruohotie-Lyhty & Kaikkonen, 2009). While working in the community, gender biases make the women's teacher's job challenging. According to CERID (2009), "policy on the recruitment of women teachers is relevant to girls' education because they do not only fulfil their responsibility of teaching but also take care of children". (p. 37). The women teachers caring behaviour of the students also helps to increase the number of students in the school.

Women teachers are capable of performing their professional duties but the family members and society's perception hinder and the women teachers are found struggling for professional stability. Bista (2004) also focuses on the other matter where pools of women with eligibility to become teachers exist; however, family members' unwillingness to allow women to join schools and community and school principals' preference for men teachers are guided by an acceptance that it is male who should run schools. These tell that women struggle to advance in this traditional, male-dominated society. However, women teachers in the male-dominated society face a lack of support from the family, despite their academic qualifications, and suffer due to these absurd views from the family and society. In another study, "The project concentration area was to expand the presentation of women and

deprived candidates in teaching by empowering them" (Sapkota, 2009, p. 9). Some of the projects to empower women have helped women teachers empower them.

All the studies mentioned here claim that women teachers need to be provided with a platform and a suitable working environment for them. The help and support with the work balance at home and workplace can uplift the professional career of women teachers.

English Language as an Instrument for Women's Empowerment

Nepali society values a person who can communicate in English is valued. In developing countries, all people struggle for development in all aspects of their personal and professional lives. The English language has become a good medium that has helped women teachers grow personally and professionally. The English language has provided name and fame to everyone professionally involved in English language-related professions. It has helped the women teachers to be financially strong and it helped to empower themselves through the English language.

Empowerment involves enabling individuals or groups to control their lives and make positive changes. It often involves providing access to resources, knowledge, and opportunities to help people achieve their goals and improve their circumstances.

The English language helped the women teachers to develop confidence. Alkire (2002) researched women's empowerment through English language education in Lahore, Pakistan, as part of the Oxfam project. The study found that English language training positively impacted the participants' self-confidence. Similarly, Esch (2009: 6) argues that when English Language Education expands one's choices, it can result in empowerment. Women, in particular, can benefit from English language education as it equips them with the knowledge and skills necessary to take charge of their own lives and make informed decisions regarding their economic and social well-being. With the help of English language education, women teachers can foster their lives economically and socially, which helps women empower themselves.

The English language brings new opportunities for women teachers in their community. The English language has helped women in Arab countries and empowered them, to apply for higher education, which helps them in empowerment. Mohammadian (2014) states that English language education can empower women by providing them with new opportunities and expanding their sense of community. This is especially true for women from less privileged families in third-world countries and

the Middle East. Learning English can enable Arabic women to become more self-reliant by allowing them to apply for university scholarships and pursue postgraduate degrees from English-speaking institutions. This, in turn, can lead to better career prospects and university job opportunities upon graduation. The women feel they are equal to the males as they have gained knowledge of the English language. The women teachers build confidence and assurance that they can overcome any circumstances. The English language has provided many possibilities for women to grow professionally. Similarly, Lydia et al. (2021) suggest that English language education can effectively eliminate inequalities and promote women's empowerment. Women can gain confidence and self-assurance by participating in English classes to help them feel more empowered.

The English language provides more doors of opportunities. Ahmed et al. (2023) argue that English as an international language (EIL) can be a powerful tool for promoting educational and socio-economic empowerment. By providing greater access to education and creating more opportunities for success, locally and globally, EIL can contribute to a brighter future.

The English language provides boundless opportunities to all the people who have good command over it. The English language has helped women teachers find new opportunities for them. It has helped women teachers to empower them and establish good remarks in their professional careers. English has helped women teachers to grow economically, socially and professionally.

Issues with Women's Empowerment

Women's empowerment means enabling them to move forward to power from powerlessness. Women should be empowered socially, economically, educationally, and politically, which helps them make decisions concerning education, economic aspects, and participation in different programs. Empowered women can make self-decisions and uplift their living standards by being empowered financially.

Women's empowerment helps women achieve their desired goals. In the Nepalese context, it is complicated to empower women socially, economically and politically due to the socio-political issues and patriarchal mindset. In Nepalese society, women in urban areas are empowered compared to women in rural areas. Women in rural parts of the country face many difficulties and do not enjoy any freedom. Similarly, Kumar (2005) argues that women face domestic suppression and are not given the same level of respect as men. They are often seen as less intelligent

and powerful. Women's participation in politics is limited, and even when they do participate as voters or representatives, they are frequently controlled by male relatives. In a patriarchal society, women are typically devoted to household work. These disadvantaged conditions have led to instances of domestic violence, sexual abuse both at home and in the workplace, and a lack of opportunities for progress in all areas of life. All these issues make the women suffer and they do not get opportunities for empowerment.

The obstacles in women's lives lead them to face gender inequality, early marriage problems and male domination. Shetty and Hans (2015) argue that there are obstacles to women's empowerment violence, gender inequality, family restrictions early marriage and dependence on male members of the family. The women are unable to rise and shine due to the domination of their own families. In the same way, Babbar (2022) states, that throughout history, women have been subjected to mistreatment in society. There have been numerous harmful practices such as Sati Pratha, child marriage, and strict rules for widows.

Additionally, female fetuses have been aborted and women have endured domestic violence, rape, acid attacks, honour killings, and the burden of dowry systems. Unfortunately, these injustices continue to occur today. These issues hinder women in the empowerment process. Women need equality in society, freedom, and economic stability for empowerment.

Women empowerment is seen in women's participation in overall aspects such as decision-making, participation in society, and equality at home and workplace. According to Malhotra et al. (2002), we can use multiple indicators to measure and analyze women's empowerment. These indicators include decision-making within the household, financial and resource allocation, social and domestic affairs, child-related issues, access to or control over resources, freedom of movement, and other related factors.

The factors hindering women's empowerment should be kept as a priority to eliminate these factors from women's daily lives. Society, family members and the workplace should consider these issues to empower women teachers. Without the help of the family and society, women teachers cannot empower them personally and professionally.

Review of Previous Studies

Being a woman and engaging in household responsibilities and professional work create difficulty in teacher's personal and professional lives. In my study, I listened to the stories of women teachers about coping with both responsibilities together.

Witherspoon (2020) exposes the hardships faced by African-American female educators; this study goes to the source of barriers and avoids these barriers in the teaching sector with the help of qualitative research and online surveys. The researcher interviewed in-service teachers and retired teachers. The study found that women educators face discrimination, lack of representation, and lack of financial literacy. Likewise, Ruohotie-Lyhty (2013) conducted a narrative study comparing two novice competent teachers, discussed the factors that help to understand the struggles of the professionals who are involved in full-time teaching and researcher found the importance of teacher identities and sharing narratives is the process of the identity formation process.

These studies show discrimination among African American teachers, and teachers in their first year of teaching also face some hardships. In my study, there are stories of women teachers struggling with their professional careers as they struggle with household chores and institutional responsibilities; the women teachers seem to be stuck between these responsibilities.

In the same way, the study by Paudyal (2015) tries to explore the experiences of women English teachers on social inclusion and exclusion when they start and continue teaching by interviewing female teachers who have been in the profession for more than three years and represent a diverse group with caste, ethnicity, ability, and teaching status. The research concluded that the attitude toward the profession, personal commitment and sacrifice, pro-women policy, marital status, and being local determine the female teachers' inclusion, in contrast, the outsider has an unmarried status, is physically disabled, and is Dalit which makes them feel excluded from getting into the teaching profession. Similarly, Khadka's (2020) study explores how Nepali women English educators in the English language balance their jobs and maternity. Three female English educators who are mothers with their children from the Far East to the Far West were interviewed in depth. The study findings state that balancing maternity and a job as a female English educator is difficult, resulting in contradictions in both roles.

The study by Lewis (2018) explores problems that language teachers experience, pedagogical strategies, and the teachers talk about the moments of challenge, even failures to their peers and evaluators, by examining the two stories of the novice teachers about the same teaching event the researcher found the importance of understanding and supporting the complex work novice teachers engage in when they narrate their practice, particularly when focusing on moments of struggle.

Estola et al., (2003) presented the life stories of three teachers that describe the content of their vocation and how their sense of vocation developed, arguing the concept of vocation by being sensitive to teachers' language. The study found that they could understand the essence of teacher hood from teachers' perspectives.

Rijal and Wasti (2018) attempted to understand factors influencing the career progression of working women in health services: A case from Kathmandu, Nepal assessed factors affecting the career progression of female employees in health service organizations and found that female employees are juggled between societal norms, family duties and expectation of the organization.

In the study by Karthigeyan and Nirmala (2012), the researcher analyzed and assessed the gender differences in the academic achievement of 10th-class students in English in two districts of Tamil Nadu and found that the girls had a higher mean score than boys in the academic achievement of English in five years.

The study by Ali et al. (2013) investigated the relationship between test anxiety and achievement in English among secondary school students. The study found a negative correlation between test anxiety and academic performance in English. Additionally, the study concluded that women students had higher test anxiety levels than their male counterparts.

In empowering women, the English language has played a vital role. Alkire (2002) researched women's empowerment through English language education in Lahore, Pakistan, as part of the Oxfam project. The study found that English language training positively impacted the participants' self-confidence.

In the study by Lydia et al. (2021), the purpose of a research study conducted in a private university in Malaysia was to examine how the English language affects the concept of women's empowerment among undergraduate students. The study aimed to identify the perceptions of male and female students towards women's empowerment and investigate the correlation between their perceptions and the role of the English language. It was found that male and female students have different

perceptions of women's empowerment, with the English language significantly shaping these perceptions. Female participants were aware of how using the English language can increase their level of empowerment.

These studies talk about women teachers' struggles in their professional career in the initial stage, gender inequality, discrimination among the teachers, experiences of women English teachers on social inclusion and exclusion, problems that language teachers experience, factors influencing women's careers, gender differences in academic achievement, test anxiety and achievement in English language, Women's empowerment through the English language, and the effect of English language and concept of women empowerment. My study aims to study the stories of women Language teachers and how the English language has helped women teachers to empower them. I listened to the stories of women teachers, which present the story of pain, struggle, discrimination, and empowerment. The stories reflected their journey of learning the English language in struggling situations. The stories also presented the stories of empowering stories. I found that only a few stories of women teachers were explored so, I decided to explore the stories of women teachers from their initial days of schooling to the state of empowerment.

Theoretical Review

Below I outline the theoretical framework I developed for my dissertation, i.e., the empowerment theory and capability approach.

Empowerment as a Theory

In my study, I argue that empowerment theory addressed the issues concerning women teachers' empowerment process in their profession. As women, teachers have many struggles in their personal and professional lives. This theory talks about the process from powerless to power. It helps to understand how empowerment theory helps them to get empowered, as Moscovitch and Drover (1981) take empowerment as a process to access power. Two components are being addressed: the first is powerless, and the second one is power. Being empowered means being powerful.

Empowerment is important for creating a positive work environment where employees feel engaged, valued, and motivated. Empowered employees have the necessary resources, training, and feedback to perform their work successfully and take ownership of their responsibilities. This leads to increased productivity and job satisfaction. Furthermore, when employees feel empowered, they are more likely to contribute to the overall success of their organization. According to the United

Nations (2014) strong economies, just societies, achieving goals for development, and improving quality of life are the main principles of empowerment.

The most effective approach is establishing a support and encouragement system to maintain a state of empowerment. The quality movement has brought several new ideas to the modern workplace. Edwards (1986) has been instrumental in promoting statistical tools and challenging traditional assumptions about organizational leadership. Likewise, Juran (1964) introduced the idea of involving teams of people in diagnosing and resolving quality issues in their workplace.

Empowerment theory talks about empowering women. In my study, the English language has helped women teachers to empower themselves. The English language has provided them with freedom and the opportunity to work, which leads to empowerment.

Dimension of Empowerment

Empowerment is a complex and multifaceted concept, and people may define it differently. Some common dimensions of empowerment include economic, political, social, and personal empowerment. These dimensions may be particularly important regarding women's empowerment, as women have historically faced barriers and discrimination in many areas. By promoting women's empowerment across these dimensions, we can help to create a more equal and just society. Kabeer (2001, p. 46) suggests three main dimensions of empowerment: agent, resource, and achievement.

The first dimension of empowerment is that resources can refer to material goods and human resources used to achieve a particular goal. Material resources might include land, equipment, and financial capital, while human resources might include skills, knowledge, and social networks. By having access to these resources, individuals and groups are better able to make choices and take action to achieve their goals. Resource allocation is often an important part of development and empowerment efforts. The second dimension is agency, a complex concept involving much more than individual decision-making. While decision-making is an important aspect of agency, it encompasses many other actions and processes. These might include bargaining, negotiation, deception, manipulation, subversion, resistance, and protest, as well as more abstract cognitive processes like reflection and analysis. By recognizing the full range of actions and processes that constitute an agency, we can

better understand how individuals and groups navigate complex social, economic, and political systems, and how they work to achieve their goals.

Most importantly, my research focuses on the third dimension of empowerment, achievement. The outcomes are an important way to evaluate whether someone has been empowered. When it comes to women's empowerment, outcomes can be measured in several ways, including changes in social, economic and political status. Increase in a woman's income or access to education is a positive outcome of empowerment efforts. Similarly, changes in social norms or attitudes towards women might also be an important outcome of empowerment efforts. The achievement the women teachers gained through their struggles and being financially independent empowers them.

Components of Empowerment

There are different components of empowerment. For women's empowerment, Pettit (2012) has discussed that focusing on enhancing their social, economic, and political standing is important.

Social empowerment is about changing society. Empowerment involves transforming the status of women in society so that their desired social environment is respected and acknowledged rather than dictated by others. Through empowerment, women gain autonomy and are valued in society. This allows women to maintain control over their bodies, participate in politics, receive fair compensation for their labour, and fully utilize public services such as health and education.

Political empowerment refers to achieving equal representation of women in political institutions and ensuring they have a louder voice in decision-making processes that affect their lives and those of others. This means that women should be able to speak for themselves and participate in political processes, which requires a shift in social and cultural attitudes towards women's political participation and leadership. Empowering women politically can create a more equitable society where everyone has an equal say in decision-making.

Economic empowerment means that women should be able to contribute and benefit from economic activities in a way that recognizes the value of their contribution, respects their dignity, and allows them to negotiate a fair distribution of returns. This requires changing institutions and norms that prevent women from participating in the economy, such as societal attitudes about childcare or the types of work that women can do. By empowering women economically, we can create a more

equitable society where women have equal opportunities to participate in economic activities and benefit from them.

In my research, economic empowerment helped the women teachers to establish themselves professionally. The women teachers established them in their profession with their hard work and were able to support them financially. The economic aspect helped the women teachers make themselves strong in society and family. After becoming financially independent, their role in the family changed.

Capability Approach

The capability theory talks about the process of making human beings capable by achieving the goals that people wish to gain, and this approach provides the theoretical reinforcements for the struggle of my research participants that make them aware of their capabilities.

According to Sen (1993), capability refers to an individual's ability to perform valuable actions or attain valuable states of being. It represents the different combinations of actions and states an individual can achieve. Capabilities are opportunities or freedoms that enable individuals to pursue what they consider valuable (p. 30).

The capability approach is not an individualistic framework that prioritizes self-actualization above all other goods. Instead, it views each human being as an end and embraces "ethical individualism" (Robeyns 2005, p. 108), a normative approach that evaluates actions based on their impact on individual human beings. According to Brighouse and Swift (2003), individuals are the "primary objects of moral concern" (p. 358) in this approach.

The capacity approach provides a comprehensive normative framework for assessing individual well-being and social arrangements in any context or society. While it is not a complete theory of justice, it addresses the question of the balance between freedom and equality that has been central to discussions of social justice since the late 18th century. Sen (1980) raises the fundamental question of "equality of what?" and notes that all egalitarian theories that have endured over time focus on achieving equality in some aspect, such as income, welfare levels, rights, or liberties. In education, this question arises in philosophical and sociological discussions on conceptualizing and analyzing the provision of equal learning opportunities (e.g., Brighouse 2000; Ball 2003).

Determining what individuals have reason to value in education or any other aspect of social action is critical to expanding human capability. According to Sen (1992), expanding human capability involves increasing individuals' freedoms to choose the lives they value. People should be able to make choices that are important to them for a fulfilling life. Capability is about freedom, which refers to individuals' options in deciding how they want to live (Dreze and Sen 1995, p. 11). Capabilities can also be understood as actions that individuals value doing or approaches to living their values (Unterhalter 2003b, p. 666).

Furthermore, Sen (1980) states that the second main idea in the capability approach is the difference concerning capabilities and functioning. Functions are realized consequences, as reading, talking with the children, taking part in the social life of a community through a school, and being calm and cool, all are functioning, for instance, having been taught to read books and newspapers, living in a society where gender, race are permitted to talk to children and attend the meeting at a school; and having the conditions that will help to develop calm (working with freedom). The difference between capability and functioning is one between opportunities.

As defined by Nussbaum (2000), the capability approach argues that the main reason for suffering women in developing countries is the capability of women's failure. In other words, it can also be interpreted that the main reason for the suffering of women is a lack of developing capability. In my research, the capability approach helps to make women capable.

Government Policies on Women's Empowerment

The government of Nepal has made different plans and policies for women's empowerment. The government is working on the implementation of plans and policies. I have presented some of the plans and policies made by government and non-government organizations for empowering women.

Ministry of women children and senior citizens (2020, p. 15) has a President Women's Upliftment Program. The President Women Upliftment Program (PWUP) was launched on 8 March 2017 as a flagship program that aims to transform the lives of disadvantaged, poor, and marginalized women through various components under three clusters of activities. The first cluster focuses on improving livelihoods, generating employment, and promoting entrepreneurship. The second cluster focuses on raising social awareness. The third cluster includes activities such as assisting pregnant and lactating women, grants for rehabilitating children with disabilities, and

support for adolescent girls and women. The program covers 34 districts with a lower Human Development Index than other areas.

MoWCSC (2020) states that the National Civil Code 2017 law prohibits discrimination in public places and the use of public services and utility basis, including gender. It also prohibits discrimination in wages and social security based on gender. The law ensures equal inheritance rights for both daughters and sons and equal spousal rights to property. Additionally, the law provides for alimony for women before divorce.

Nepal Government (2015) states that there is a right to equality: The law states that all citizens are equal before it and have the right to equal protection under it. No discrimination should be made in the application of general laws based on factors such as origin, religion, race, caste, tribe, sex, physical condition, disability, health status, marital status, pregnancy, economic condition, language, region, ideological conviction, or any other similar grounds. The State is also prohibited from discriminating among citizens based on these factors.

The fifteenth periodical plan (6.6) states that Gender equality and women empowerment have these objectives: to establish a gender-responsive governing system that provides a supportive environment for women's livelihoods. This includes eliminating all forms of violence and discrimination against women. Additionally, the goal is to provide equal opportunities and benefits for women by creating opportunities for their participation in leadership roles and ensuring their access to resources.

Ministry of Education Nepal (2016) states that the distribution of teachers across the country is imbalanced, with an excess of teachers in some areas and a shortage in others, particularly in remote areas. This has resulted in a shortage of teachers at the secondary level and an excess at the basic education level. Additionally, there needs to be more representation of women teachers throughout the education system, with the lowest numbers found at the secondary level.

Article 38 of the Constitution of Nepal (2015) has given the fundamental rights as discussed below. Thirteen, Three-Year Plan (2013- 2016) No discrimination of any kind should be made against women by gender. Every woman has the right to reproductive health and reproduction. Sons and daughters have an equal right to ancestral property. Women shall have the right to participate in all bodies of the State

based on the principle of proportional inclusion and a citizenship certificate through the mother's name also be given to the children.

Policy for women teachers in rural parts needs to be made for the women teachers to enter the teaching profession and to sustain in the profession. The local bodies have different aspects of caste and ethnicity. A unique framework should be enacted through the municipality for inclusive education, including all the deprived communities. The marginalized and targeted females benefit from the policy; then what about the female teachers who are in the same situation and are facing the same struggles as the other females?

Policymakers left to include strategies for empowering females to bring a positive attitude towards the teaching profession in different policies at different levels.

Research Gap

Looking at the previous studies, all the studies have highlighted the points on women. English teachers and their difficulty in managing the balance between their professional careers and personal stuff at home.

Paudyal (2015), on the one hand, teaching is growing as a women's occupation. On the other hand, appreciation for this profession is declining, which signifies the advanced range of knowing how these two situations are interconnected. In the same way, in another study, Chien (2014) states that advanced study on instructional coaches who are eligible to meet the standards given by MOE and completed graduate-level basic school in English. Teacher programs study how their English education guidance history and language learning circumstances have impressed their roles as language teacher advisors.

Poudel (2019) highlights the perspective of family, the level of working women in the city and rural areas as a professional practice, and the balance between work life and gender are still to be explored in the area of women teachers. In the same way, Khadka (2020) states that traditionally entirely fixed attitudes should be released, and the demand for the efficient enactment of the policies formed for female empowerment should be acted upon. Furthermore, (Sapkota, 2019) exposes that the relative study can be done by analyzing the educational exposure of women academics from various criteria, bringing a unique portrait of existence in various criteria in the Nepalese community. Kayastha and Kayastha (2012) also suggest

exploring reasons for the teacher's work comfort, their achievable result, and preventive measures.

Teacher education project (2004) has set the objective regarding women teachers and the focus on women teachers providing fellowship for the disadvantaged group; then what about the other women teachers as they also have the same struggling phase for getting and being in the profession?

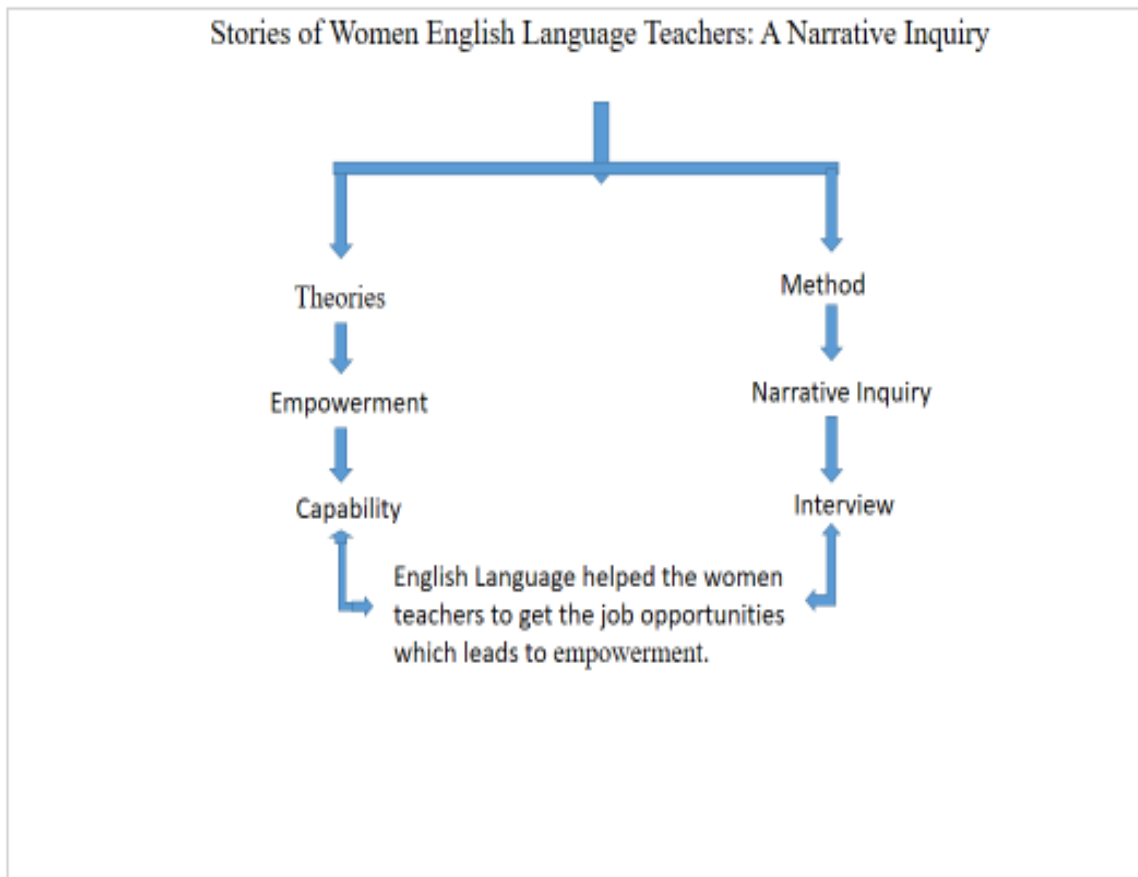
The school sector development program (2016) also has a gap in teacher distribution, which has caused a shortage of teachers in secondary education. The policy regarding the equal distribution of teachers in urban and rural areas should be in act.

The policy regarding women teachers is not so strong. The policy for women teachers to enrol and sustain teaching despite their maternity leave and child-rearing should be more flexible than the existing policy. The policy for women teachers should also address gender issues in their work, as the school's division of work can be a great issue for women teachers.

To empower women teachers professionally, the gap in the government policies, and public and private schools' provision for recruiting women teachers needs to be revisited. In my study, I have tried to look at the economic aspects of women's empowerment.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is the guideline of my research. This conceptual framework shows the picture of my study. I have brought the stories of women teachers into my study. Narrative inquiry theories help us understand, analyze, and evaluate stories (Jeong-Hee Kim, 2017). I interviewed the women teachers for their stories of struggle in learning the English language and in the empowerment process.



Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the status of women teachers in the context of Nepal, stories of women teachers along with their struggles and issues in learning the English language. I discussed the English language as an instrument for empowerment and the issues of empowerment. I stated the theories that helped me understand the empowerment and capability approach. Then I mentioned a conceptual framework, research gap, and government policies regarding women's empowerment.

CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I discussed the philosophical assumptions of my research work. I explained the philosophical understanding of my research work. I discussed my study's research paradigm, research site and participants, data collection strategy, quality standards and ethical considerations.

The methodology is guided by the researcher's understanding of the philosophical consideration of the knowledge. The philosophical assumptions consist of my understanding of the study of existence (ontology), the theory of knowledge (epistemology), the theory of value (Axiology), and the entire process of research methodology. I collected the data by listening to the stories from the women teachers during their initial days in their professional careers and the positions they are in today, by struggling in every aspect of life. I recorded the data, listened to the stories of women teachers, translated and transcribed the data in English, and created the themes. This chapter also provides an overview of research quality standards that are applied. Ethical considerations are also important for the research, so this chapter introduces ethical standards for which I approached the participants in detail. This chapter describes the whole research technique. It shows how the research is done by comprising the participants, research site, and data collection tools.

Philosophical Considerations

The philosophical assumption guides the research. The knowledge about the subject matter differs from others as each individual is different. I discussed the philosophical consideration of my study in different headings below:

Ontology

Ontology is the study of reality. For me, it is the nature of reality. The issue of reality has been constantly questioned and defined differently. Richards (2003) explains, "Ontology, literally the science or study of being, is concerned with the nature of reality and their stances" (p. 34). In other words, an ontology of any research is related to our beliefs on the constituent of reality. Ontology assumption is related to what establishes reality, particularly what reality is. The researchers must consider their concept of things and how things work.

In my study, the reality differed according to the participants' views. The reality constructed by my research participants is valued as they share their experiences through their stories, which differ from person to person. Reality is constructed from the participants' stories.

Epistemology

The knowledge aspect of the study is epistemology. "Epistemology is concerned with the nature and forms of knowledge" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 7). We create knowledge with the subjective expertise of people. The researcher needs to visit the participants time and again and live and work with them to know what the participants are saying. Plenty of time spent in the related field or knowing the participants helps the researcher get the primary information. Epistemology is how truth is known by the researcher (Carson et al., 2001). It relates to the researcher's intention to reveal knowledge to reach reality.

The knowledge created with a deep understanding is always true. In my research, the knowledge is created with a detailed study and opinions from the participants.

Axiology

The researchers admit that research is value-laden and that biases are present. The researcher honestly argues about the attitude in the stories and contains his/her interpretation in addition to the explanation of the participants. Axiology is part of the value divided among the participants' experiences. Creswell (2003) states that "an individual looks for the understanding of the world in which they live and work" (p. 181). It means that the person can realize his/her value by exploring the knowledge with the help of their views based on time and space. Moreover, it deals with the philosophical approach to creating choices that give importance to correct decisions (Finnis, 1980), as cited in (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). It requires describing, interpreting, and knowing the perception of correct and incorrect behaviour connected to the research. It thinks about our appreciation for the research participants and data. It also gives importance to the human values of everyone involved in the research participation (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

In my research, I respect the values and belief systems of people directly and indirectly related to my research work. The participants' views are valued in my research work as my study is based on the participants' experiences which helped to construct the reality.

My Research Paradigm: Interpretivism

The interpretive paradigm states that reality exists, and we socially construct it. In this world, there is multiple reality. Interpretive discusses that reality and knowledge are subjective, culturally, and historically situated. Interpretive is based on human beings' experiences and understanding of them. The researcher can never deny their values and beliefs. In interpretivism, the investigator recognizes "the world of human experiences" (Cohen & Manion, 1994: p. 36).

Similarly, Creswell (2003) and Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (2011) stated that an interpretive researcher reveals truth through participants' perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences. Interpretive methods give insights and understanding of behaviour, explain the participant's actions and perspectives, and don't control the participants. The interpretive paradigm helps the investigator to have a dynamic local realization of the participants' lived world (Taylor & Medina, 2011). The participants shared their experiences through interviews, and the researcher helped them feel natural in the local setting.

In my research, I explored stories of women teachers to reveal their struggles for professional stability despite their hardships. I interpreted the women teachers' experiences and constructed meaning. I interpreted the women teachers' social and cultural situations and analyzed and interpreted the data accordingly.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is the mechanism of introducing the activity of every participant and every interviewer's life. It investigates the experiences and acknowledges them narratively. "People shape their daily lives with stories of who they and others are and they interpret their past in terms of these stories. In the current idiom, the story is a portal through which a person enters the world, and their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as a story, is, first and foremost, a way of thinking about the experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as a phenomenon under study" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 375). People make meaning of their lives according to the story available to them. Stories are constantly reformed with new events and are shaped by lifelong personal and community narratives. "Collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and social interaction with milieus" (Clandinin &

Connelly, 2000, p. 20). Similarly, Kramp (2004) states that " stories assist humans in making life experiences meaningful whereby preserving our memories, promoting our reflections, connecting us to our past and present, and assisting us in envisioning our future" (p. 107). The stories of humans help to make memories of the past, present, and future.

In this study, the women teachers' narratives are explored in depth. The interviews and casual discussions helped me to gain the best stories from the participants. By analyzing the narratives, I made the meaning. The participants also shared their experiences gradually from the beginning of their struggle until now. Similarly, Atkinson (2012) states, "We think in story form, bring meaning to our lives through the story" (p. 115). The story brings meaning to our lives. Narrative can be the circumstance considered, such as a narrative of disability or the approach used in any investigation. Such as the strategy of studying the stories told (Chase, 2005; Clandinin & Connolly, 2000; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007) as cited in Creswell, (2013). This study helped me to create new thoughts, beliefs, and connections among the participants' past, present, and future and reshape their experiences through stories.

Research Site and Participants

Four women secondary English language teachers from the Kailali district of one ward were selected as my research participants as they are feasible to my home town. I selected four women teachers from different families and socioeconomic backgrounds who studied in public schools to get diverse stories for my study. The in-service teachers who taught for more than five years in the private and public schools are selected as my participants. The women teachers had more motivating and encouraging stories than the men teachers in the Kailali district of Nepal.

Data Collection Strategy

I maintained a good rapport with the participants to know more about them and their stories, which helped me to get more information for my study. As Clandinin and Connelly (1988) noted: one research partner anticipated a new narrative unity, began it, and felt betrayed by it, while the other continued with an ongoing narrative unity revising it only to the point of encompassing a new set of school data according to his image of himself as a researcher. (1988: p. 281) as cited in Clandinin et al. (2006). The arrangement of qualitative data sources is ever-expanding (Creswell, 2013). The data are always expanding, as research is an ongoing, and never-ending process.

In my study, I enlarged my data as far as possible. I interviewed my participants more than two times to know the details of their stories. I only got the real depth of their stories in one attempt. I engaged with the participants to get more emerging experiences for my study.

Interview

The interview is an instrument for gathering data. The interview helps the researcher and the participant exchange their ideas and opinions about how they see things. “The interviews are the natural and overall accepted way of collecting the information” (Dornyei, 2007, p. 134). Interviews are socially accepted tools for collecting information. “The qualitative interview is also commonly used to provide detailed information about the participants’ experiences on a certain topic” (Turner, 2010, p. 754). Similarly, the interviews are broadly conducted as a beneficial way to know informants' beliefs and experiences. "Interviews are done to understand the participants' views" (Kvale, 2008, p. 9). The participants give a peculiar entry to the lived world of the subjects and describe their activities, experiences, and opinions in their own words. Similarly, qualitative interviews are taken into consideration while interviewing. However, Kvale and Brinkman say, “It appears to be plain to interview, but it is difficult to do fine” (2009, p. 1).

In the same way, as the interview is divided into structured, semi-structured, and unstructured, I carried out the semi-structured interview for my research. Keller (2012) states that a semi-structured interview allows one to go into detail when necessary to convey the knowledge. While interviewing, the researcher can change the order of the questions and leave the unwanted questionnaire. Similarly, Gavora (2006) claims that a semi-structured interview is a qualitative research method; its’ purpose is not to reject a current theory but to substitute alternatives to current perspectives about positive issues instead of exposing new visions in them. I tried to bring new insights from the respondents with the help of a semi-structured interview.

Interpretation/Meaning-Making

The interpretation of the data is done to make the meaning. The interpretive researcher’s efforts to make the event acceptable and illustrate it concerning the meaning of the participants' place on them (Creswell, 2013). The researcher comes to an end while commanding, explaining, recalling, and reciting the narratives where the stories make the lives of both the researcher and participant (Clandinin & Huber, 2014). I will analyze my participants in the same way as Clandinin mentioned.

Clandinin (2013) states that the field is continuing communication with the candidates where they share their narratives. The writer further says that we compromise with the candidates on continuing the comparative inquiry area, a comparative area we call a field.

I gathered the information from the participants with the help of guiding questions in the Nepali language. I transcribed and translated the data into the English language. I coded the interviews and made the themes from the codes. I analysed the themes and coded my participants' views to make the meaning more supportive.

Quality Standard

The quality standards in the research work help to maintain the quality of qualitative research. Being a researcher, I maintained a quality standard for my research work. I looked at reflexivity, transferability, and temporality. The best-known criteria for qualitative research are credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability, as defined by (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In the same way, Taylor and Medina (2011) state that the quality standards of interpretive research consist of the quality standards of trustworthiness and authenticity. I maintained the quality standard, maintaining the points that are discussed below:

Trustworthiness

I was honest and truthful with the participants in my research work. Trustworthiness is a way of making the research trustworthy from different points of view. Trustworthiness is ensured through a deep understanding of the meaning perspective and a deep concentration on the social world comprising four quality standards: transferability, dependability, and conformability (Taylor, 2014). Trustworthiness shows the intimacy between the study's findings and the phenomenon's reality. I maintained trustworthiness by assuring them of the purpose of my study and its importance in the research work. The women teacher's stories show the real struggle of women teachers. All the women teachers trusted me while I was in research work with them.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a tool that made my research more reflective. I constructed and reflected on the participants' stories from multiple perspectives. Reflexivity makes the research process more transparent as personal, ethical, epistemological, methodological, and theoretical. I attended all levels of reflection (Hunter, 2012). In my research, I used reflexivity to make clear how my participant stories are created

and to follow various forms of knowledge made by women teachers in developing their professional careers (Colombo, 2003). I tried to understand the different phases of women teachers' understanding.

Similarly, according to Saldana (2015), reflection refers to contemplating different aspects of a research project to comprehend and attain personal insight into their meanings. This involves making sense of confusing or perplexing components and grasping their significance or intention (p. 198). I found the importance of the women teacher's stories. I also focused on self-reflection about the understanding and experiences of women teachers regarding their professional careers. I developed reflective notes based on the participants' stories regarding their struggles in professional careers.

Verisimilitude

Verisimilitude means the approximation toward or closeness to the truth about how the world is. The stories of women teachers conveyed their stories in detail. The stories reflected the women teachers' struggle. Amsterdam et al, (2000) view the stories as deriving from their power not from verifiability but from verisimilitude: they will be true enough if they ring true. I created stories of my research participant's verisimilitude by creating a real context. The stories were based on the experiences of research participants, and whoever reads the story feels the story is real because it is based on the reality of our society. Creswell (2007) defines verisimilitude as a specific literary style in which a written work appears authentic and dynamic, allowing the readers to visualize real-life scenarios and events effortlessly. I explained all the struggles of women teachers in the form of a story. The story made the participants go into more detail and the stories revealed the truth about the women teachers' struggles.

Ethical Considerations

During my research work, the participants enjoyed the moral aspect. I explained all the important points to the participants, and they did not find any ethical issues in the study process. Ethical research concerns what researchers should and should not do in their research and behaviour (Cohen et al., 2017). Similarly, the fundamental ethical consideration is to be accountable for assuring that the study is conducted ethically (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). So, I followed the ethical considerations to entrust my participants, for which I am fully responsible.

In my research, I told the participants about the purpose and nature of my research. I assured my participants that their names and addresses will be confidential.

I visited the participants repeatedly to gather the stories in detail. Being a researcher, I explored the personal struggles of working women teachers and their efforts for professional development. In my research, I used informed participation, confidentiality, and anonymity as ethical considerations.

Informed Participation

Before conducting the research, I informed the participants about the purpose of my study. I asked for their permission to collect the data from them. The participants were free to decide whether to quit or participate in the research work.

Confidentiality

I followed confidentiality as my ethical standard in my research work. The participants share their past, present, and other confidential information regarding their personal and professional life. I was extra careful about the information provided and kept the participant's experiences private. I assured the participant's confidentiality in the research process.

Anonymity

The information provided by the participants was kept secret. I kept the participants' and institutions' names secret and used pseudonyms to address their identity. To make the narratives of my participants look more natural, I followed anonymity. To maintain privacy, I used my participants' and institutions' names as pseudonyms.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have introduced my philosophical consideration which guides my research, my research paradigm: Interpretivism in which I have socially constructed the reality through the female teacher's experiences, I have discussed narrative inquiry as it investigates experience and acknowledges them narratively. I selected the research site and participants from my area as it was feasible for me. I discussed the data collection strategy interview, quality standards and ethical considerations of my study.

CHAPTER IV

STRUGGLES OF WOMEN TEACHERS

This chapter presents the struggling stories of women teachers regarding their family, society, school, and workplace environment. Women teachers have different responsibilities, such as balancing their professional and personal lives, dealing with the children, looking at the senior people in the house, doing all the household chores, and facing societal uncertainties, which need to be noticed in the research area. With their profession, household responsibilities, and the English language, women teachers must explore their stories of struggle.

I analyzed the data from casual conversations and interviews in this chapter. I found the stories of women teachers and their struggles to be professionally sound; they have come struggling from their childhood days to learn the English language.

I listened to the stories of women teachers teaching in the far western region of Nepal for over five years. I faced many difficulties while teaching and could not share my problems with anyone. So, I wanted to provoke women teachers' stories of struggle to sustain their profession and cope with their household responsibilities. I had many opportunities, efforts, and responsibilities when I started teaching. Even I was suffocated by the burden of all the duties. Like my struggle, I could bring more stories of women teachers working in the far-west. Often people miss things about how these women teachers are here at this professional place and how they have managed their time for the family being married. People ask about their positions and achievements, but no one listens to their stories of struggles. So, I decided to work with the women teachers' stories.

In this chapter, I addressed my first research question: How do women English teachers narrate their struggles in learning English? Four themes emerged when I analyzed the stories of my participants. I discuss these themes below.

Family Environment

The family is the first school of a child. The child learns to behave, cooperate, discuss and defend the family. The family environment helps the child foster his abilities and develop innate capabilities. The children learn more through observations and their experiences. The children need a good family to support them emotionally, socially, physically and psychologically.

A family is a group of people who share the same genes, blood, and emotions and live together in a house, sharing love, support, and a roof over themselves. The family members live together under joint domestic rights and share duties (Barnard, 2023). The word family came from the Latin word '*familia*', indicating a group of people related by birth or marriage. Collins et al. (2009) further say that the persistence of the family is to maintain the well-being of its members and society. Ideally, families offer probability arrangement and care as members mature and learn to join the public. Historically, most human societies use family as the primary locus of affection, nurturance, and socialization.

The family environment includes the conditions and everyday situations within families. Since each family consists of diverse personalities in a changed setting, each environment is distinct in its social and economic aspects. A good family environment encourages a person to fulfil his dreams, whereas, in a bad family environment, the person is supposed to struggle for achievement. Family environment plays a vital role in developing life professionally/ personally. In Nepalese society, the family environment for men and women is distinctive due to the patriarchal mindset of the community.

My research participants are from diverse family environments, such as; the joint and nuclear families, which has brought a different state of struggle while coping with the family size and availability of a favourable environment to pursue education.

Junu narrates her story of being in the nuclear family; she did not get any help in education from her parents, as her mother was illiterate and her father was in 'India.' Her brother and sister were younger than her.

My mother was always busy with the work at home. I joined a government school in rural Nepal in grade five. I had difficulties learning the school's language and adjusting to the new environment, neighbourhood, friends, and even the new school environment.

Junu's mother, an illiterate lady, could not help her with her studies, but she supported and encouraged her to study. She studied in a Hindi medium school in India but had to shift to a Nepali medium when she came to Nepal. Another research participant, Lalita, also studied in India till class five. However, Lalita recounts her experience slightly differently:

I studied in an English medium school in India. My mother focused more on my studies as my father was always busy working. However, after the sudden

demise of my father's sister-in-law, all family members shifted to our home country. My father decided to look after his brother's family. I shifted from a small family to a big joint family. I had brothers, sisters, grandmother and my father's brother's family together. I was admitted to the government school in Nepal with my brothers and sisters in Nepali medium. I was unable to give more time to my studies. I used to help my mother with the household chores, looking after the goats, and cattle, cooking the meals and going to school with my brothers and sisters was my daily routine. My mother insisted that I should focus on my studies but I could not do so as my other brothers and sisters and neighbouring friends had the same routine at work and school; I also did the same and helped my mother in the work at home.

Lalita studied in an environment where all the children were engaged in the household chores with their other family members. The surrounding environment encouraged her to concentrate on household chores and cattle rather than her studies. Due to the excessive workload, she could not dedicate her time to her studies.

Here, both of the participants have a problematic situation when learning English. There was no help from the family. The new environment in the teaching-learning process has yet to motivate them. They were unable to play the role of a good student. Kahn et al. (1964) defined role conflict as the "simultaneous occurrence of two (or more) sets of pressures such that compliance with one makes more difficult compliance with the other" (p. 19). These participants could not cope with the new environment, schooling, and language, creating conflict. Here, even the mother has a conflict between work and family roles. This situation shows that women have dual responsibilities. The female teachers who did not get a suitable environment had to struggle from their early professional careers. Dew (1997), assumes that all systems are organized into a hierarchy, including individuals and families. A family is a system that consists of subsystems: the individual family members. Family therapists understand that these subsystems are interconnected and affect each other unexpectedly. For instance, if a child is struggling in school, it may stem from problems within the family system, such as dysfunctional behaviour from a parent that manifests through the child's behaviour. It is often helpful to involve the entire family system in therapy to address behavioural issues within a family. This is because a subsystem cannot be fully healed if other parts of the system continue to create stress or reopen wounds.

The nuclear family helps more in empowerment as the family members focus more on the overall aspect of the child. Rita shares her storylines of how she lived in a joint family with eight brothers and sisters from her parents.

I had a big joint family of 18 members, including grandparents, uncle, aunty and siblings. My parents had never attended the school. My parents were involved in farming. All the elderly people together worked all day in the field. I was from a Chaudhary community, and there was no motivation to educate the children. Only a few people in the community used to send their children for education. However, I used to go to school with my brothers and sisters. We went to the government school near my house. I used to go to school but did not get time to revise my books at home, I was always busy with household work, and in the field with my parents. My parents focused more on learning the work in the field rather than studying. During the vacation, everyone in the family, including brothers and sisters, fully devoted their time to agricultural work with our parents.

She further said that she was Mostly involved in household chores and needed more study time. Although she scored passing marks in her examination, she wanted more from her studies.

Another research participant, Sima, recounts her story; she comes from a low-income family background. She did not get proper food two times; she was just a year old when her father passed away. All the people in the family, especially her grandmother, cursed her for being unlucky for the family.

I lived in my maternal uncle's house when I was three. My mother took my brothers and sister to the village, leaving me in the terai. I lived in a big family. However, I was all alone; no one loved or liked me. Sometimes my grandmother had a soft corner for me, but when she got angry, she used to curse me without any reason. She said I was unlucky for my family. I observed my brother and sister were loved, cared for, and nurtured. I never felt any good thing for me. I was all alone working all day in the house with my grandmother. My maternal uncle's children used to dress well, and they went to a private school, and I was supposed to go to the government school without proper dress and slippers. I could find the difference between them and me being in the same family. I did not get proper food whenever there was something delicious in the kitchen.

Sima living in others' houses faced many difficulties and partiality in behaviour. The family members did not give her any priority. She pursued her education by working for others.

The family environment determines the educational attainment of the children. Feinstein et al. (2008) and Shonkoff and Phillips (2000) argue that the family environment intensively affects 'Youngsters' educational attainment. The family has a powerful impact on family capital and social capital on children's academic achievement, apparent in the strong connotations between children's achievement and family income, parents' professional status, and parental education.

Children need a suitable environment for better academic achievement. The parent's overall status can be a curse and a boon for the child's growth. If the family environment is unsuitable for the child, the child has to struggle from their early days. Likewise, my research participants do not have an excellent environment in which to pursue their family and academic lives. These female teachers worked from their childhood days for food, clothing, care concern, help, support, love, affection, and a proper learning environment, which shows the family environment was unsuitable for their upbringing.

Despite not getting a proper family environment, these female teachers could maintain professional stability. The female teachers' self-motivation and their unknown hard work lead them towards a better life.

Social Environment

The surrounding environment helps the child acquire respect, care, and concern for others. The child acts according to his observations of the people in the society. Children learn more from society. They learn to be friendly, honest, loving and supportive of the community.

The social environment states to the technique that the classroom environment influences the connections among young children, teachers, and family members. A well-designed social environment can encourage progressive relationships between peers and between grownups and children and provide opportunities for adults to help children accomplish their social objectives. Teachers need to plan activities that reflect numerous aspects to create a positive social environment in the classroom (The IRIS Center, 2015). The teachers can help the students with a better social environment.

The social environment provides support to the teacher. Hofstede (2005) states that women teachers are thought to be more worried about taking care of the home, family, and children, and to take tender roles, sometimes male teachers underestimate their women teachers. So, an unhealthy social relationship disappoints the women teachers. An excellent social environment helps a student to foster the horizon of knowledge. Women teachers juggle household responsibilities and professional duties in our social-cultural context. Despite all these issues, an excellent social environment can play a vital role in the upbringing of children at school and home.

In my research work, some of my research participants enjoyed an excellent social environment. In contrast, few women teachers struggled greatly in society for their personal and professional identity.

Junu narrated her story after her S.L.C. examination. She needed clarification about which subject to start at her intermediate level. She was deciding on her significant subjects, and her neighbours were busy deciding her marriage date. All the people were busy with some other gossip, she added:

I was in a dilemma in choosing the subject. My neighbours convinced my mother to marry me. But my mother said I should complete my studies. My mother said being uneducated, she faced many problems and was engaged in household work. She said she wants her daughter to be educated and professionally sound.

Junu decided to take English as her primary subject, as her mother was more supportive. But her neighbours said she could only pass English with a good vocabulary. These words had demotivated her towards English subjects. However, she was encouraged to take English as her major when she listened to one of his neighbouring brothers speaking good English. From their neighbouring brother, she knew that English education could be studied in her place. She joined English as her major subject in her intermediate, and one of her friends started a conversation in English with her. This helped her to learn the English language better.

Lalita shared that she came from India, and her tone was 'Hindi' or 'English,' the neighbours teased her, saying '*Desi ko xori aayo.*' She studied in the 'Hindi medium at her primary level. 'Hindi' has influenced her language, so she cannot utter it fluently in her mother tongue. She further says:

I could have gotten a better surrounding environment for teaching and learning. In my society, the neighbouring children used to help their parents

with household work. My friends were very interested in helping the family; even their parents forced them to be involved in the household work as the male members of the family were outside the village for jobs. Most of the time, I worked with other friends too. My mother was all alone working in the house. I used to collect firewood with my mother, graze the cattle with my neighbouring friends, plant the paddy with my siblings, and help harvest it.

Lalita was a helping hand for her mother, and she was reducing her mother's workload. She was imitating the working environment in the surroundings. She could manage less time for her studies as she was involved in work at home. Besides all these struggles, the women teachers were involved in all the work at home and continued their studies. The continuity of their studies made the women teachers more confident and motivated, which also helped them empower themselves. The women teachers were able to bring change in their lives. Empowerment also talks about change.

Empowerment helps to achieve the desired goal. It can bring differences in the status of the person. Empowerment is understood as a process of change as stated by the Cornell Empowerment Group (1989). As my participant, Junu was in a dilemma; she could not change her life because of socio-cultural norms. Whitmore (1988) defines empowerment as an interactive process through which people experience personal and social change, enabling them to take action to achieve influence over the organizations and institutions that affect their lives and the communities in which they live (p.13). The women teachers' interactions and behaviour from childhood helped them to bring change in their lives.

As my participant cannot decide for herself, she seems influenced by the incidents in her life. Keiffer (1984) states that at the individual level, powerlessness can be seen as the person's expectancy that their activities will manipulate the result of life actions.

Similarly, Rita recited her story as she convinced her parents to send her to school. She forcefully went to school till grade 10. However, the family members were unwilling to send her to school for her intermediate-level studies. The family members said they couldn't afford her fees. She further stated:

After my S.L.C., my parents completely denied sending me to school. My parents were unable to pay my tuition fees. There was little income, and my parents needed to be more educated. My neighbours convinced my parents

that girls do not need higher education. In my community, only a few girls were going to school to pursue higher education. My mother told me to learn how the household works properly. I had no interest in my mother's words. I was worried about my higher studies. One day, I said to my mother If you cannot support me in my studies, then ok, but I will continue my studies by hook or crook. I am ready to work for others to support my studies.

Rita can have self-control over her decision. She was determined to continue her studies no matter what the situation was. She was confident that she was able to support her studies.

Empowerment helps to improve own's life. Rappaport (1987) states that "by empowerment, I mean our purpose should be to enhance the potential for people to control their individual lives" (p.119). She has empowered herself by deciding on her higher studies.

Sima shared her story of struggling to live and starting her education at her maternal uncle's house. She said:

I did not get any care or concern from my family. I lived in other houses where I was treated as a housemaid. I used to work all day for a living. The family members did not have any soft corners for me. But my neighbours sometimes appreciate my hard work saying you are so sincere and hard-working; you work all day for others and go to school for studies. I had to look after my brother and sister, graze the goats and cows in the field, wash the dishes at home, and sweep the house floor.

She further said she did not get proper time and concern for her studies, although she passed her exams. Sometimes the aunties in the neighbourhood call her and give her some food, asking her to come to their house whenever she was hungry or needed help. She felt god had sent these people to console her as she was alone. There was no one to understand her feelings, pain, suffering, and struggles I was doing to survive in this society.

Sima lives in another's house. She does not get any support from her family. But she got empathy from the neighbouring people. This helped her to be motivated towards her work and studies. She was determined towards her work. She was able to change her status through her hard work.

Empowerment also talks about the status of the people. Empowerment theory emphasizes transforming an individual's social, economic, and psychological status. It

helps to comprehend how social and economic changes affect women's lives; empowerment requires achieving social and economic independence, which grants access to power.

School Environment

School is the second home for children. In school, the children have much exposure in their day-to-day life after their home. The children learn to behave and act according to their teachers, and peers. If the children do not get proper care and concern at home, they may show unusual behaviour at school.

The school needs to maintain a good relationship with the community. The school is the representation of the people in society. The school environment is the physical, social, and learning environment plan, comprising classrooms, arrangement, well-being, cleanliness, teacher' and student relations, and moral and social values. As Corral-Verdugo et al., (2015) state, the overall situations of the educational, social, and physical structure, curricular activities, and the administrative part of the school are related to the school environment for the well-being of the students. The school environment plays a vital role in the lifestyle of the students. It has a significant role in student achievement. The abilities and potential of the students keep improving in a positive learning environment.

The students achieve better with the best opportunities in school. The school needs to take good care of the student's emotional and social well-being. The environment of the school and students' achievement is strongly connected to the various kinds of student necessities (Kutsyuruba et al., 2015). The school environment decides the overall achievement of the students. So, the school should consider the student's various aspects as the environment for learning, cooperation, intimacy, and discipline. The students can foster their abilities in a peaceful school environment.

The stories of my research participants have also faced some uncertainties in the school environment. Due to the less concern of the parents, teachers, and committee, as they were unaware that the school environment plays a vital role in the overall development of their children.

Junu narrated that she found the difference in the English spoken by her and her classmates. She completed her primary level in a 'Hindi' medium school in India, where she had no exposure to the English language.

I learned the alphabet in class five after I joined the public school in Nepal. I had no idea about capital letters and small letters. I felt difficulty learning the

English language, too. One day, the teacher said he asked to spell the words in the class and read the words from English subjects. The next day was the test, so I did not go to school that day because I feared failing an exam. The next day, I went to school, and the teacher asked me to spell the word elephant. However, I was unable to spell the word elephant. My teacher rudely threw my copy in my face saying girls cannot read English subjects. My teacher threatened me to go home and learn to do household chores. I was really sad about this incident, and I did not go to school for a few days after this incident.

Her parents insisted on her attending the school, and she deliberately continued schooling just for her parents. Otherwise, she has decided to quit the school. This incident has shown that the school environment is different for every student.

Junu could have gotten a better learning environment. However, Lalita recites her story that her school environment was liberal, and the teachers provided much freedom to her as her previous schooling background was strict and well-disciplined. The teachers used to focus more on her studies, and she strictly followed the rules and regulations in the school. The situation of schools in Nepal was different. She narrated;

Going to school in Nepal was fun for me. I was free, and I did not have to follow the rules and regulations of the teachers. The teachers never asked me to maintain a fair copy. My mother was busy with household chores; she never visited the school to inquire about my studies. The teachers were free as there was no one to ask about the activities of teachers. The teacher never completed their course, and they used to say Keep reading; I will ask you. God knows he never asked me anything.

Lalita got much freedom in school, which is a positive aspect of learning. However, providing freedom and negligence in teaching and learning activities from the teachers affected her studies. She further stated that there was no routine for regular classes and some unusual tests. Sometimes the teacher used to take the test all of a sudden without informing and used to punish the students. She did not like the way the teachers imposed their decisions on her.

Lalita could have gotten a better opportunity to learn in her school. In the same way, Rita told her story; she could not write a sentence in English. She studied

in a government school where she was not taught about grammatical structures. She analyzed the Nepali language pattern in her mind and could not create the sentence in English, and struggled to analyze the subject and verb pattern.

I found learning the grammatical rules the most difficult thing. My teachers forced me to learn all the grammatical rules. I needed help learning the grammatical rules. I liked speaking in English. I loved speaking in my mother tongue, which was prohibited in school. My mother tongue interfered with learning English as I was habituated to practising it. My tone was like my mother tongue, even if I tried to speak English. While writing, I needed help to write a few correct sentences in English. After writing a paragraph, I used to write almost eighty per cent of incorrect sentences in my observations.

She wanted to improve her language skills. She did not need the need for English subjects in a country like Nepal. She further says that English is unnecessary as a subject if everyone can communicate in Nepali. She decided she would never read English subject.

Rita was not happy with learning the English language in her initial days in school. While Sima delivers her story, she starts studying in the government school. Her maternal uncle's children were sent to private boarding schools. She felt inferior as she was alone in the family to attend the government school. All the other children were privileged to go to private schools with good uniforms, and she had to go to school with slippers on her feet and dirty dresses as the uniform.

I used to wear dirty clothes compared to my classmates. I used to wash my dress but was unable to make them clean. I know how bad I felt about my dress and my slippers. I had to wait for Dashain for a new dress. One of my women's teachers helped me a lot. She used to come to my home to receive me sometimes. Once, she even provided me with a new school dress. She was like a fairy to me. I admired her love and concern.

She got good help from her teachers. The teachers provided them with books, copies, and pencils. The teachers encouraged her to complete the exercise of the books in the school during the leisure classes. The teachers knew she was busy at her house with the unnecessary burden of work. She was also determined to do her studies regardless of the situation.

Continuing education during difficult situations helps make a beautiful destination for personal and professional growth leading to empowerment.

Empowerment only happens sometimes. For empowerment, one should develop the capacity to deal with any situation and make better selections. Alsop and Heinsohn (2005) define empowerment as the capacity to make informed decisions that lead to personal growth. They position that the primary objective of empowerment is to equip individuals with the ability to make sound choices. Despite the struggles, women teachers had chosen not to leave their education and developed personally and professionally.

Workplace Environment

The workplace consists of peers and other senior and junior members. The cooperative environment in the workplace makes the work best done. Learning, academic practices, and experiences are mostly shared in the workplace. The workplace atmosphere helps one to sustain in the profession for a long time.

The workplace environment is the main feature of an institution. A good workplace environment helps build up confidence in the workers. The workplace environment improves an organization's enactment and the workers' confidence (Bushra et al., 2011). A better working environment creates dedication in the employees, bringing great results to the institution. Likewise, MacNeil et al. (2009) state that students who study in a school with a healthy environment achieve better grades. The same is the situation with the students and employees; in a better working environment, anyone can achieve better results. Similarly, Sharma (2016) mentions that in an excellent working environment, there is a solid and positive relationship between teachers and students. The positive vibes in the workplace bring the best results, so the working atmosphere should indicate inclusion for everyone working in any institution.

The workers work for the institution and see the opportunities for their future in the organization. The workers in the institution perform better when they see job security; otherwise, they leave the institution very soon. Most people argue that job safety and an excellent employment environment are fundamental in developing employees' confidence and presentation in the institution (Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006). The people working in the institution should be assured of the best job security to motivate them toward their work.

My research participants also faced many difficulties in their workplace, and they could cope with the situation. The narratives regarding the workplace environment provided by my research participants are presented below.

Junu narrated her story; she started teaching at a private boarding school. When she worked as a primary teacher in her initial days, she gradually worked hard with dedication and worked long hours with the students for their betterment. While working for a few years, the school founders appointed her as principal. As the founders watched her dedication to the institution, she worked with all her efforts for the school.

I felt difficulty working as a principal as all the seniors' teachers visited me, shared their opinions, and forced me to apply their suggestions. They also insisted that they were my relatives. I was confused; no one interfered with my work while I was a teacher, and now most teachers are giving suggestions. I know what is good for my institution. Even the male teachers said they did not follow the rules made by a female teacher. They did not even greet me, even if I greeted them first.

She had difficulty dealing with the government school teachers, who needed to prepare to listen to her views in some meetings. The teachers had a different attitude toward their work; they needed to be more professionally active. She found their attitude of being a government teacher is a barrier to being active in their profession as the teachers were not listening to the suggestions provided by the private sector teachers for the plans and policies to recruit for the betterment of the school and students' education.

Junu had the experiences of being a primary teacher and the journey of being a principal in the school. While working as a teacher, she found the distinction between the working styles of government and private sector school teachers. Being a women principal, she had faced many obstacles in her workplace. However, another research participant Lalita tells her story that men and women teachers were not interactive in the initial days of her working days in the school. The men and women teachers do not have any coordination in their work. Even in meeting sessions, all the ladies' staff were silent.

I was disappointed with the social culture of the school. In school, I had monthly meetings at the end of the month. The meetings were conducted to provide feedback regarding the student's performance and suggestions to the school committee to improve overall aspects of the school. The men teachers were active, and all other women staff were silent in the initial phase of a few meetings. In the meeting session one day, I suggested some suggestions

regarding the students' approach to extra teaching-learning materials for students in the classroom. The teachers listened to my view, but no one acted on it.

She says she was unhappy with the decision not to implement her decisions. She planned to write an application to the school management committee for not listening to her views and not implementing her suggestions. She felt that women teachers were being discriminated against in the educational institution. The turning point in her school environment was when the school management committee decided to listen to men and women teachers equally code the things of the meeting and make a minute of the meeting to act appropriately. From this incident onward, the meetings in the school were democratic. All the women teachers also felt free to keep their word in the meeting. From this incident, she has also become bolder and commanding in her workplace.

Lalita maintained a good workplace environment despite her struggles in the institution where she worked for a long time. In the same way, Rita recites her story once she applied for the internal vacancy in the school where she worked. She knew she was better than the other candidates in her experiences and knowledge. She scored good marks in writing and interviews, though she was not selected; the other participant was selected as she could not convince the school committee and other teachers with her words. *I was not selected because of my community, as no one stood in my favour. Everyone in the school management committee favoured my competitor as someone else was from their community.*

The school committee bothered her time and again for small issues. The school committee has asked her for clarification of being a few minutes late at school, and she did not get any holidays in the emergencies at home, even when her child was ill at home and had to work unwillingly all day at school. She was more concerned about her child's health than teaching in the school. No one was concerned about her situation. She further said that male staff members were not asked for clarification about being late at school or leaving the school early during their class. The principal did not question them for leaving the school early and late. Even the school management committee did not raise any questions for these teachers. No one cares about the shortcomings of women teachers.

The women teachers had struggled a lot and coped with the situation. They were aware of the situations at the workplace and had prepared themselves according

to the situations in their workplace. McClelland (1975) argues that women must possess adequate knowledge about themselves and their surroundings to attain empowerment and become powerful. Although the working environment was unsuitable, these women teachers know better about themselves and their professional responsibilities to empower themselves.

Rita had experienced a diverse working environment for the men and women in her school and was prepared accordingly. However, Sima describes her story. In the initial days of her career, she was unaware of her teaching style. She didn't even know how to write a four-line copy. She learned to write in four-line copy while teaching in the school. With the small children, she learned the vocabulary and simple English words. The headteacher also motivated her to learn the writing pattern and a few English words to communicate with the small children. She hardly managed time for her studies, as she had to manage time for household chores, college, and school. She had to be at school at nine, so she could hardly manage time for college. The school had a strict rule to come with a uniform. She must face difficulties preparing for school classes if she manages time to go to college.

Often, I went to school without food as I was in a hurry. I had to manage time for all the responsibilities at home and reach school on time. I was working hard but never got my salary on time. However, I was working for low pay.

Once the principal could not give her a thousand rupees, her four-month salary was due. She cried loudly as she struggled more to help herself but was helpless because of not getting the payments on time. Often private institutions pay low salaries to teachers. After a few years of working in the same school, she thought private institutions exploited her; she joined the government school at the Montessori level for her bright future. In a government school, she faced uncertainties. The permanent teachers have never greeted her; when she greeted them, they didn't reply. She felt inferior to the permanent teachers because of their behaviour.

Sima faced unusual behaviour in both private and government institutions. However, she empowered herself with her determination and hard work in her workplace.

For empowerment, change is necessary. The system in the workplace shows the balance among the workers. The workers work with dedication and determination if the working station has a good working environment. Similarly, Dew (1997) states that; It is important to recognize that systems resist change, as they naturally seek

consistency, stability, and a central tendency. However, for a system to remain healthy, change is often necessary. The role of an organizational gardener is to introduce change into the system, despite the system's natural resistance and unpredictable reactions. Systems create rules to maintain balance, including written rules (such as policies and procedures) and unwritten rules (informal behavioural expectations). These rules can create struggles within the system. The women teachers had stories of struggle, which made them empowered.

Empowerment is gained with learning. For better learning, the plan needs to be implemented carefully in the workplace. Teachers cannot get opportunities to prove themselves and bring change without proper plans. Similarly, Lewin's (1981) observations regarding change have been supported by Marvin (1992), who has promoted empowering practices in the workplace. Weisbord recognized that learning is crucial to achieving empowerment but noted that people could feel deceived if sent to classes without opportunities to participate in policy, procedure, strategy, goal setting, and work design. From Lewin and Weisbord's observations, it can be concluded that empowerment requires an educational plan accompanied by changes that allow people to experience both the challenges and benefits of empowerment. Enabling behaviours that facilitate empowerment cannot be effectively taught through traditional classroom lectures.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the stories of women teachers' struggles during their professional development. They struggled in the family, society, school, and workplace to establish themselves professionally. The themes were discussed accordingly regarding the women teachers' struggle in their families, and workplace environment. The struggle made them stronger and more mature towards their profession and household responsibilities. I discussed each theme concerning the struggling stories of women teachers.

CHAPTER V

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN BY PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH

This chapter presents the struggle of women teachers for the English language. The women teachers struggled for professional stability and made it possible with the English language. The English language helped them to find opportunities and stability in their job. Women teachers' involvement in jobs helped them to empower themselves. In this chapter, I have analyzed one question: How does proficiency in English empower them in a Nepali socio-cultural context? I categorized the struggles of women teachers and made themes representing different aspects such as; the struggle for higher education, cultural dominance, decision-making roles and participation and an economic way to empowerment.

Struggle for Higher Education.

In this section, I presented the struggles of women teachers in higher education due to their socio-cultural context. Higher education is the way to address the development agenda and contribute to the economy. However, the women teachers seem to struggle more in the Nepalese socio-cultural context, as the society is male-dominated. Men teachers are preferred in most institutions. The women struggle for higher education as they are engaged in household responsibilities, bearing children, and looking after them after marriage.

It is not easy for women teachers to gain development in all other societal and economic aspects. Women enjoy the opportunities of education less than men do. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (2015) states that education is a basic human right and an important part of sustainable development goals. Governments must ensure quality education and promote gender equality and equal opportunities. Educating women can positively impact educational targets by boosting their confidence and empowering them. Higher education is a foremost step in expanding and supporting the world's economic, social, and cultural development. Highly educated women get more chances to empower themselves through education. (Castells, 2001a; Dill & Sporn, 1995; Newman, 2001). Highly educated women can support themselves financially, and they empower themselves. Educated women are highly respected in the society as well. The people in society admire their work and respect them.

The studies have found that many women at state and regional levels need help pursuing their educational and career goals, with many abandoning their education midway. This has brought attention to the issue of women's educational attainment. The women cannot complete their education as they do not get a favourable environment to continue their studies; some women marry early, lack financial support, prefer to educate boys rather than girls and feel the burden of household work and professional responsibility as stated by (Maqsood & Masood, 2012; Khan, 2008; Naz et al., 2013). Women need a proper environment to pursue higher education. They need financial help, family support, and help in household and workplace work to continue their education. Women are known as the multitasker but, without family support, they cannot complete their higher education and support themselves.

Women's education is not considered as important. Despite the significance of education, there is a need to pay special attention to women's education, which has been neglected. Women in rural communities often work long hours, waking up early and going to bed late. This issue requires particular attention as stated by (Shaheed & Mumtaz, 2017). Women in rural areas do not get proper education because of societal norms and values. The parents are unaware that education can change their children's lives as they assume their children must work like them. Women have to struggle much more to get the proper basic education facilities in remote areas than in urban areas.

During my study, I found that the research participants faced difficulties while pursuing higher education. Most of them started doing jobs to support their studies. They fought with their parents and neighbours to pursue higher education.

My participant Junu, said that she started her primary schooling in India. She came to Nepal and joined the government school in class five. She started learning the alphabet in class five. As she started her primary education, she faced difficulties learning English and Nepali in a new learning environment. She failed in class five due to less exposure to the language. She joined another school as she felt uneasy about joining the same school and facing the same friends in the upper class. She passed S.L.C from the same school. In her intermediate, she was in a dilemma in choosing her faculty, English, math, and arts. In the meantime, she talked to her neighbouring brother and was impressed with his English. Her brother also motivated

her to learn English as she was unaware that the English language could be learned in her place. She was happy that she could pursue English education in her place.

I joined English language education in my intermediate. After completing my intermediate, my parents were unwilling to send me to college for higher education. My mother said you studied much and there is no need to study further. I convinced them that I would join teaching to support my studies. I joined my bachelor's in my hometown and joined teaching in a private school to support my studies. It was not easy for me to continue my studies with the job. I used to study late at night, making question papers, checking the answer sheets, completing my professional duties, and sometimes helping my mother with household chores. After my bachelor's, my parents forced me to get married and settle down. But I was not willing to do so. I convinced my parents that I would go to the city and pursue my higher education with a job. They were unwilling, though I went to the city to pursue my master's. I went to the city and joined my master's in college. I needed help to adjust to the new environment. I hardly found a job as a lower secondary teacher. The pay was lower than my previous salary. Though I have decided to continue my studies with the job I worked hard to fulfil my basic needs. I could not pass my master's exams in two years. My parents insisted I return home and I went to my place and joined my previous school. I had no option and soon without completing my master's, I got married.

She found the difference in her professional career between being married and unmarried. Being married, she was questioned by her in-laws about being late. She was not able to cooperate in her professional duties. When she was unmarried, she enjoyed her work with freedom. Similarly, Lalita had a different experience regarding her higher education. She shared she started her primary schooling in India with her family. She moved in with her brother and sister in Nepal. She joined a government school in Nepal in class five. She enjoyed the freedom in the school as there was no obligation to do assignments and maintain the copy. The teacher needed to be more careful in applying the rules and regulations in the school. Somehow with minimum marks, she completed her school.

My father insisted I take math in my intermediate. I joined math but could not do good. I was afraid that I would not be able to continue math in my bachelor's. After my intermediate, I joined the language class to learn the

English language better. I continued learning the language class for four months. I improved my language skills. I joined a bachelor's in English language education and joined a private school to support my studies and learn teaching strategies.

She was paid a minimum salary, but also she was happy that she was learning the language with the students. All the teachers, students, and parents were happy with my teaching skills. She was happy and confident about being an English teacher. She completed her bachelor's together with the job. She said she wanted to pursue her further studies and join masters, but her parents insisted she should get married. She was helpless and could not deny her parent's decision and get married in a new place. She came to the new place and joined the master's degree and wishes to join teaching. But she could not find a job as she was doing in her place. She got a job as a grade teacher. She was not satisfied with grade teaching, but joined grade teaching, as she had to teach all subjects, including Nepali. She was not satisfied as previously she was teaching at a lower secondary level. Her responsibilities have doubled now. She has to look after all the household work, go for a job, and join her master's class. She got an opportunity to teach at a lower secondary level after a year of teaching as a grade teacher, and finally, she also got an opportunity to teach at the secondary level. With all her responsibilities, she partially passed her master's. Her struggle helped to gain a master's degree in English education.

My research participants faced gender inequality from their family members while pursuing higher education. The family put pressure on them to get married. The women are discriminated against in the name of their responsibilities toward the family. Sen (2018) states that women must follow societal norms, cultural values, and tribal codes of conduct. Unfortunately, these expectations often result in discrimination against women. This discrimination leads the women's lives nowhere, as they are juggled at home among responsibilities being daughter, married, mother, and many more roles. These roles affected their interest in higher education.

Similarly, Rita narrated her story. She started her education from her initial days at a government school when she was seven. She had a big joint family, and she used to go to school with her brother and sister. She used to help her mother at the house and in the field while planting crops and harvesting. She could not concentrate on her studies more as she was involved at home, being the helping hand of her mother. All her brothers and sisters were engaged in household work. Working at

home and going to school for a few days a month, she somehow passed her school level. After school, no one in the family was willing to send her for further studies. Her sister also left her studies after school level. Her mother focused more on household work rather than studies.

My family restricted me from pursuing higher education. I denied their decision and said I would continue my studies working for others. I talked to the people in the community to help me in my studies. The NGO people working for Mukti Kamaiya Children's Education helped me to get admission for my intermediate studies. I went to my school in the next village and lived there for almost two years. I taught small children to support myself. The school also provided me with a scholarship and I paid for hostel accommodation.

She used to consult the dictionary most of the time. Whenever she got confused, she searched for the word in her dictionary. She passed her intermediate. She wanted to enrol in a bachelor's degree, but her parents were not convinced about further education. Her parents said that she had read enough. She got an opportunity to teach at the primary level in the government school. She joined the school and started studying at her bachelor's level, convincing her parents she would support her studies. She struggles to manage time for her studies, school, and sometimes household work. She completed her bachelor's degree partially. After her marriage, she joined her master's in English education, managed for her studies, and passed all her examinations with good grades.

Rita had a family concern, although they were unable to support her financially and emotionally. Sima had a different experience than other research participants. She recalls her story, when she was a year old, her father passed away. She was only three years old when her mother left her in her maternal uncle's house. Her mother took her brothers and sister to her village and left her alone in the Terai in her maternal uncle's house. She studied in a government school. Her maternal uncle's children went to private schools with good uniforms. She struggled a lot to continue her studies. She worked as a housekeeper at her maternal uncle's house. She used to graze the cattle, wash the utensils, and sweep the house floor. She was not permitted to go to school regularly by her grandmother. Her grandmother focused more on household chores rather than studies. One of the female teachers used to come to my home to receive me, but I could not manage my time to go to school due to the burden

of household chores. She used to go to school as a tourist. However, she passed class nine with uncertainties. She stayed with her mother in class 10 as her mother migrated to Terai with her brothers and sister.

I was happy I got the opportunity to stay with my family. I studied hard to pass my S.L.C. examination though I failed in English. My mother sent me to one of my relative's houses in the city. I joined an English tuition class in the city, and the teacher was motivating and encouraging. I passed English subject with good marks. I needed clarification about choosing the subject for my intermediate, but my tuition teacher convinced me to take English and said it would provide me with job opportunities.

She joined intermediate, taking English as her major, thinking that she would be able to improve her financial status. She passed her intermediate. She wanted to study further, but her parents forced her to stop her studies as they could not support her financially. Her mother and brothers denied sending her to the city as there was no bachelor-level college. Her mother told her relative in the city forcefully that her daughter was coming for her studies. If they allow her, she will stay with them and help with the household work. Her relative allowed her to come to her place. She convinced her family that she would continue her studies with a job. She convinced her parents that she would pursue her bachelor's, work at home, and a job in a private school. She could hardly manage time for her studies as she had to do all the household work and manage time for her school, which resumes at 9 sharp. She joined the boarding school and learned to teach small things like writing in four-line copy, learning a few English words, and learning the teaching-learning style of the boarding school. She partially completed her bachelor's degree and is continuing her job. Currently, she is pursuing her master's degree with responsibility for her child, family, and job. Her dedication and determination will pay off in the coming days.

Higher education helps women to find new opportunities. Dreze and Sen (1995) investigate the impact of higher education on women's lives. Their research explores various aspects, including women's sense of empowerment, self-esteem, and well-being, as well as the employment opportunities, new ideas, and expanded life choices that higher education provides. Additionally, the study examines how women's changed relationships with their children as they model aspirations for enriched and fulfilling lives can affect their families. Finally, the research highlights how higher education can enhance women's motivations to contribute to and

participate in their communities and society. Educated women can set an example in society.

Similarly, in democratic countries, women's education helps them to be empowered. Nussbaum's research on higher education in the United States and schooling in India has emphasized the significance of education for women's empowerment and its crucial role in democratic societies (Nussbaum, 1997, 2002, 2004, 2006). Nussbaum argues that education is essential for enabling individuals to think critically, develop a sense of global citizenship, and cultivate their imagination.

Higher education plays a vital role in women's empowerment. Women cannot find opportunities without education. So, higher education helps women teachers build confidence and motivates them to find new opportunities. Sen (1999) highlights the tremendous potential that higher education offers individuals. Quality education allows individuals to pursue their goals and aspirations in the future. For women, higher education can be an opportunity to escape oppressive homes, seek outside employment, and secure their and their families' financial futures. Sen argues that economic self-sufficiency, equality, and gender equity for women cannot be achieved without reasonable access to education and literacy, particularly higher education.

Women need higher education to enjoy freedom, and equality, and break the stereotypical socio-cultural tradition where men are more valued and women are ignored. Higher education helps women to create a new identity in society.

Higher educational achievement provides many job opportunities to women teachers. In the same way, cultural dominance from the family and society also affects their education and mental stability as well.

Cultural Dominance

The socio-cultural aspect has an impact on day-to-day life. In our society, due to the culture, women face inequality. All the responsibilities of the children, house, elderly people, and women are supposed to be done. The Society made the distinction between men and women. The men are supposed to be the breadwinners, and the women are the caregivers.

These ideas are still followed in our society, and women teachers have to struggle with these situations.

Research Institution for Development Associate (RIDA, 1991) found that in the Nepalese socio-cultural context a girl child is unintentionally recognized as substandard even before she is born. The gender-linked discrepancy in patterns and

practices of child nurture in the early years negatively affects her individual growth (RIDA, 1991). When I analyzed the situation, I found that in our society, daughters are suppressed for many reasons. They are not allowed to move freely in our society, there is no daughter-friendly situation.

In my study, my research participant faced difficulties because of the culture. The women teachers living in a joint family have to follow cultural rituals unwillingly. In a nuclear family, the women teachers have the freedom to make their own decisions, but in a joint family, there are many people to suggest what to follow and what to do. Being professionally engaged the women teachers are supposed to work professionally together with all the responsibilities at home. Women teachers are assigned various responsibilities, such as health education, food distribution, immunizations, census data collection, and community development activities. However, if these additional duties are adequately compensated, they may increase teachers' motivation. It is important to reduce the workload to ensure effective teaching and maintain high motivation levels. However, Ordera (2009) cited in Mutiso (2012) states that many women teachers face challenges balancing work and family responsibilities. The needs of their families often take priority over their work obligations, a common issue female teachers face globally. Livingstone (2004) suggests that women spend significant time on family-related duties such as child care, cooking, cleaning, and shopping. These responsibilities often interfere with their ability to access teaching opportunities. Women teachers are juggled with many responsibilities.

In recent years, the number of women in education has increased. However, Mutiso (2012) suggests that despite having graduate degrees, women still face discrimination and limited opportunities for employment, promotion, and upward mobility due to societal expectations of their roles as housewives. Therefore, it is important to eliminate gender imbalance in areas such as employment and promotion. Women teachers still face discrimination despite being well-educated and professionally sound. Women teachers are motivated to work in the urban area. They feel that working in remote areas they have to face more cultural traditions. As per Iliya and Ifeoma's (2015) definition, female teachers' motivation to work in rural or remote areas can be significantly undermined by safety concerns and cultural traditions (p. 13).

My research participants faced cultural dominance in their lives. They are trying to cope with the situation for peace in the family. One of my participants, Junu, plans to challenge the cultural dominance of the family by trying to shift to the nuclear family and seek better professional opportunities too. Her husband is a banker and was not obligated to perform household work. Her mother-in-law would say her son had come from work and was tired. She never heard that she also might have felt tired as she is a working woman who works equally at home and school. Her mother-in-law never discussed her busy schedule.

Junu says she struggled a lot because of the sociocultural context. She faced issues that affected her mental health too. In the socio context of Far-west the sociocultural values have made her feel inferior and dominated, her brothers were allowed to go abroad for jobs but she was hardly allowed to go to the city to pursue higher education. As there was a restriction from the society, girls should not go outside the home before marriage. They may get distracted as they are supposed to go to others' houses they have to follow all the rules and maintain discipline. Even after her marriage, she was abandoned to go to the kitchen or puja room for seven days during mensuration and was provided with a separate plate to eat food and sleep separately; children were not allowed to sleep with me, she further says;

I was not given freedom as my brothers. My mother used to say you are the property of others, my son is the real gem of the house. I faced untouchability and discrimination during mensuration, I had to live separately from my children and husband. If I mistakenly touched anyone in the family, they had to take an immediate bath and change the sacred thread.

These societal norms have made her feel low and uneducated as she was following all the rituals followed by other women in the society. She strongly defends these ideas but her mother-in-law forcefully asks her to follow. She compares her with other women and consoles her that she is in better condition than them. Whenever she had a period problem, she had to take an instant bath and wear separate clothes during her periods. She tried to bring change to her family and fight against these absurd ideas, but she could not break the barriers. Her mother-in-law would not listen to her ideas of being an educated woman, although she was a teacher in the school. She thought having a debate in the family would destroy the peace in the family environment, so she stayed quiet. She had to follow the rules at home, go to school for her job, do all the household work at home and look after the child.

Junu said that she is an educated woman and professionally sound, but she faced difficulties accepting the socio-cultural tradition in the house; she further says she could follow the culture but cannot let her children's future reside on the same issues. She wants her children to grow with freedom. She tried to convince her husband that she needed to shift to the city for better job opportunities and wanted to educate her child in the city for a better education. In the same way, Lalita narrated her story; she could not change the mindset of her parents due to the socio-cultural context. All the women in the surroundings followed the rituals I could not stay away from it. She recalled that she was forbidden to talk with her father, grandfather, brother, or any male member of the family in their village during her menstruation. She has to do all the household work outside the house as collecting wood, cutting grass, working in the field, and grazing the cattle in the field. She was not allowed to go to the kitchen during her periods.

I had to sprinkle the cow urine over my clothes and to the place where I slept during periods. This practice is still common in my house. Even my in-laws also practice the same tradition. I obey these absurd ideas to maintain peace in the house. I feel inferior performing these acts.

She was aware that these traditions were good for no one. She felt low when she had periods. She was not allowed to enjoy her freedom. She had to follow her senior's rules in the house during her periods. However, Rita shared her story; due to the social and cultural tradition of educating boys rather than girls. Her parents focused more on her brother's education as sons are more prioritized in the Far West. Her brothers were not good at studying. Her parents were against her education. She struggled a lot to make a space for herself. Her mother was unwilling to send her for further studies, and she had to struggle more to convince her parents to pursue her higher education. As she was from the Chaudhary community, there were few girls in the class, and her mother also wanted her to help at home and learn the household chores rather than focus on her studies. Even the community members also pressured her mother not to educate the girl child in the Chaudhary community.

I was educated and had a good degree which was rare in my community. I was mocked that I would not get a good groom. No one from my community will marry me. I was tortured that my job would give me money but, I would not be given any respect in my community. I selected my job rather than the societal values of my community.

She was forced to engage herself in learning the household work and focus on working in the field. She chooses her education over household chores. She felt very bad when she had to listen to the criticism about her for not following the Chaudhary community rules. However, Sima had a different story; Sima narrated that her mother took all her brothers with her when her father passed away. She was left alone in her maternal uncle's house. She was not given good care and concern as her brothers as her mother prioritized her sons over her daughter. Sima recalls one incident: her mother sometimes visited her at her maternal uncle's house. She used to stare at other friends who visited school with their parents. She was far from her family as she was a girl child. She recalls her memory of childhood at around class five. Once, she had eaten some food with her friend from the Dalit community. This news spread in society and reached her mother's ear. Her mother threatened and scolded her. There was the division of the people according to their caste and work. The society has made a distinction and she had to follow the instructions from her family. Even in her school, the Dalit children were not allowed to bring water to any teachers. The teachers also asked the Brahmin or Chhetri child to bring water from the tap.

My mother left me at others house as I was not a boy child who is 'Budheskal ko Sahara' for her. I was always asked to believe in discrimination on caste, male and female. Once when I ate tiffin with the Dalit girl, I was threatened very badly. I was not allowed to enter my own house. My mother said you cannot come home as you have eaten food with low caste people.

Her mother convinced her that she would not have friends from the lower caste. She will make friends from the upper class. From that day, she never talked with her Dalit friends. Her freedom to make friends was limited, and she had to follow her maternal uncle's rules at his home. According to Sen (1999), development and freedom are created through the process of development and freedom itself. Therefore, a list of capabilities in education or any other area can only be predetermined with public consultation. Freedom is important because it allows individuals to choose what they want to do, even if they may not ultimately choose it. Sen also argues that basic ideas of justice are not alien to social beings and that there is a space for justice or fairness in the human mind. The challenge lies in effectively utilizing people's general moral concerns systematically and coherently. Justice and equal behaviour can only create a fair environment. The people need to behave systematically, otherwise, the dominant behaviour is seen.

Despite the cultural dominance, the women teachers struggled for their education and acceptance from the family and society. Likewise, they were participating and contributing to making decisions and fulfilling their personal and professional duties accordingly.

Decision Making

Decision-making helps to develop self-motivation. Women teachers feel they are included in the institution and society. Women teachers can make good decisions in teaching learning aspects and for the betterment of the students. As women teachers have multi-tasking experience, they can decide better about the students.

The decisions and the situations change over time. Okumbe (1998) states that decisions are made of values, facts, and assumptions, which can change over time. Therefore, decision-making is an ongoing process rather than a one-time event. For an organization to be successful, it must make decisions that help it achieve its objectives and meet the needs of its members as stated by Morphet et al., (1982). Alkin (1992) notes that schools make daily decisions about work procedures, resource allocation, and short-term objectives.

Change will occur in the school's working environment if all the teachers are equally treated and valued. According to Udo and Akpa (2007), if teachers are actively engaged in decision-making, they will be more committed and supportive towards the principal, making achieving the school's goals easier. Additionally, involving teachers in decision-making can help minimize apathy and opposition within the school. The institution will foster if the teachers are allowed to make decisions. The workload of the principal and school committee will be minimized.

Women teachers should be involved in decision-making; otherwise, they may feel excluded from the school community. Ndu and Anogbov (2007) observed that when teachers are not involved in the school's governance, they tend to feel like strangers within the school community. This can lead to a reluctance to try new ideas and approaches. However, it is important to note that teachers may be less willing to participate in decision-making if they feel the principal solicits their opinions. Still, they are not allowed to make the final decision.

In decision-making, if the issues are discussed en masse, the authority can get many ideas from different people. Emeneke (2004) discusses that involving people in decision-making provides a greater opportunity for expressing diverse ideas, existing disputes, and more occasions for disagreements and agreements. However, some

organizations may be gender-biased, leading to the marginalization of women in decision-making processes. According to the United Nations Department of Public Information (2006), on International Women's Day, women's participation in high-level economic decision-making remains low, even in developed countries, despite educational advances for women worldwide. The report also noted that women's participation in parliamentary decisions is only 10.99%. The International Federation of Journalists also reported that although one-third of journalists today are women, less than 3% of senior media executives and decision-makers are women. Women teachers should be encouraged to take part in decision-making.

According to Goetz and Nyamu-Musembi (2008), Madlala (2007), and Schley and Schratz (2011), women who serve on governing boards face several challenges in practice, particularly in societies that have historically been governed by patriarchy. These challenges are often greater than those faced by their male counterparts. In the Nepali socio-cultural context, the women are less privileged than the men. Women teachers face challenges in practice.

Women teachers should be encouraged to take part in decision-making. These practices lead women towards motivation and lead empowerment.

Role

Women teachers play an important role in decision-making. They can help and motivate the children as they have experience dealing with them. They help the children with their activities at home and school as they have experience handling the children. According to Tasner, Mihelic, and Cheplak (2017), women teachers are highly educated and deeply understand women's societal position. As a result, they encourage girls to pursue formal education, serve as change agents in their communities and bring about positive changes in the teaching profession. Female teachers possess a unique ability to comprehend the issues faced by female students, including their household problems, needs, and psychology, as they share the same gender. Therefore, female teachers are better equipped to support and help girls overcome challenges.

According to Islahi (2013), women teachers are perceived as more expressive, nurturing, informal, and open toward their students. Due to these qualities, women teachers are often seen as caretakers of their students. They have a crucial role in empowering and educating women and girls, particularly in societies where girls are expected to stay home and perform household chores. Parents are more likely to

encourage their daughters to attend school when they see female teachers as role models.

Junu shared that his husband was not willing to move with her to the city and she convinced him that she would do all the household chores and look after the children. She further says,

I have to convince my family in decision-making. I have to decide on my own and ask them to give permission. In my school, I make the decision myself. If I have any confusion, then I discuss it in a group; otherwise, I am the master of my own decision.

She said her husband does not want to get disturbed in his daily schedule and does not share his role as a father. She alone had to manage all the issues at home. However, Lalita recalls that she is a member of the family though. Her decisions should be more valued. Her in-laws and husband decide the family matters independently. But in school, she has all the freedom to make decisions regarding her students in school. She is free to make decisions regarding school matters and students for the school's betterment.

Rita shares her story that she has got huge respect from her family and society. All her neighbours admire her work and position in the school. She shares:

I am always there for my family though they also ask my point of view on small issues. I have to decide on the schooling of the children in the family. For financial support and expenses, my decisions are valued most.

She gives all her money to her mother but her mother asks her about where to invest the money. Deciding the financial issues at home, her words are valued. The family members listen to her words and follow. My brothers and sisters also respect my decision. Similarly, Sima said that she is educating her sister's children independently.

I decided to spend my earnings on my own. I paid my sister's children's tuition fees after I got the job. I was able to give money to my mother. I was the master of my own.

She can provide for the family and her education. Her family members listen to her. Her brothers had full faith in her decision. They believe she is educated and makes a good decision. Women teachers are found to have a compromising role in decision-making, which hinders their ability to make choices. Sen, influenced by educators like John Dewey and Paulo Freire, views freedom not only as the ability to

achieve valued outcomes but also as the processes of decision-making. Therefore, the ability to make choices and participate in decision-making is just as important as the opportunities to achieve desired outcomes. Women teachers struggle to decide at home and sometimes in the workplace, which results in low achievement.

Participation

Women teachers only participate partially in organizations due to their lower participation at the high administrative level. Some women are engaged in the teaching sector, but a limited number of women are at higher levels. Women are not encouraged much to be in a higher position by their male colleagues. The males feel dominated by women if women are in higher positions, as they are taught from their early days that men should be in higher posts and women, are good at home. In my study also from my participant's narratives, I have felt that women are under-represented despite their qualifications and experiences.

Recent studies (Acker, 2012; Blau and Kahn, 2006; Goldin, 2006) have highlighted the growing number of women in administrative and management roles. However, in education, women still need to be represented in top administrative positions and overrepresented in classroom teaching (Grogan and Brunner, 2005; Sampson et al., 2015). As a result, the presence of women in teaching roles may lead to a lower level of power within the school setting.

According to Lunenberg and Ornstein (2011) and Saha and Kumar (2017), participative decision-making (PDM) is an essential part of organizational processes. Pettigrew (2014) suggests that PDM can be a form of organizational power. Mehta et al. (2010) argue that PDM can help teachers contribute to successful educational management. However, Brinia (2012) and Sarafidou and Chatziioannidis (2013) found that women tend to have lower levels of participation in school decision-making than men. This gender disparity is particularly evident in managerial decisions, as Choge (2015) noted. Women are less represented and have less participation in participation than men. Women need a good environment for participation. Equal participation from women can be found when there is equality in behaviour, and applying it from childhood. The children should be taught the concept of equality and encouraged to participate.

Junu says being educated and financially stable. I have to ask my in-laws for their participation in household matters. *I work all day in the house and outside the home to provide for the family. My words are valued less.*

She says she has to contribute economically by buying groceries, and clothes, and paying tuition fees. Similarly, Lalita shares her story that she cannot participate in decision-making in the house. My in-laws make all the decisions and I'm not supposed to ask anything regarding the house's financial matters: them, I have to tell my economic status.

I did not get any chance to participate in the decision-making. My husband and his parents decided on the financial issues. I had to share my money in the household needs and pay tuition fees. I voluntarily spend the money on household needs. Sometimes my husband asks about my savings as well.

She said she helps her family members and shares her responsibility but the in-laws do not share their financial status with her. My participants did not enjoy their right to make decisions at home, so they could not enjoy freedom. Sen (1992) argues that the process of expanding human capability requires individuals to have the freedom to choose the lives they value. This involves the process of people making decisions about what they have reason to value in education or any other aspect of social action. Sen emphasizes the importance of individuals having the freedom to make choices that matter to them and contribute to a valuable life (p. 81). In the same way, Rita narrates her story that she had the freedom to participate in all the issues at home. But, in school, she hesitates to speak and participate in meetings and she feels backwards. She is afraid of speaking in the mass among so many male teachers. She says; *I do not have the habit of speaking to the masses. I have never faced the assembly either. The male teachers speak in front of the students. I communicate with my students in class.*

She says she was an introvert from her childhood days. Her mother said that girls do not argue. She is habituated although she knows being an introvert is not good for her personal and professional career. Similarly, Sima says that she cannot participate in the school's meetings. *I hesitate to share my experiences in the meetings. All the teachers are very experienced and senior to me.*

She feels inferior and less experienced among the senior teachers. At her home, she is the boss of the house. She takes part in every activity in the house. She spends her money on her family as she wishes. She could not participate in the discussion, which is essential to bring change. Sen (1999) argues that there is a social justice imperative for individuals to be able to participate in social decisions if they choose to do so. The process of public discussion is crucial in ensuring that both

individuals and the public are active participants in change. Citizens' voices must be heard and counted as part of a democratic process (p. 242). These women teachers' voices are unheard, and sometimes the circumstances make them silent. Participation in decision-making makes the women teachers inactive. Similarly, Dhakal (2016) argues that when women are actively involved in household and community decision-making, their families are better equipped to address the challenges of poverty, improve family health and well-being, and increase household income. Women's empowerment is thus crucial in reducing poverty. So, women teachers need active participation in decision-making to empower themselves.

Although the women teachers were not given equal participation, they were the real fighters for themselves. They managed to accomplish their duties at home and professionally together.

Economic Stability as a Way to Empowerment

The women are engaged in several types of work at home and perform their professional duties. Engaging in different responsibilities makes them less productive. Despite their responsibilities, the women empower themselves through the economy. They earn to support themselves and their family too. The women teachers are engaged in the work to be independent. Even if the women are engaged in the work as the men's partners, they are paid less.

Similarly, Beniell and Sanchez (2011) state that women are less likely to work and earn less than men for similar work. Even when working, women are more likely to be in poverty. Women spend almost twice as much time on housework and nearly five times as much on childcare as men. Women spend about half as much time on market work as men do.

The job for women should be created to help them grow professionally and financially. In the same way, Goldin (2006) states that economic development can change the nature of work that is more favourable to women. This was observed in the US between 1930 and 1950 when the demand for clerical workers increased, providing respectable jobs that married women could keep. Recently, this trend has also been observed in China and Mexico, where the rise of factory work has created more job opportunities for women. Additionally, in India, the rise of service jobs due to outsourcing has also led to more job opportunities for women. These actions in different countries to provide job opportunities will help empower women.

Development can significantly reduce inequality between men and women while continuing discrimination against women can hinder development, as Amartya Sen argued. Empowerment of women can accelerate development by promoting gender equality.

In Nepal, the status of women's empowerment has been gradually improving due to the efforts of policymakers, government mechanisms, and women activists. Traditional attitudes and practices regarding women's empowerment are also being replaced by targeted budget programs prioritizing women's active participation in socio-economic and political roles in society. Countries with low economic status, like Nepal, emphasize women's transformative role through economic empowerment and modernization. Consequently, women provide economic and livelihood support to household members and contribute to the local and national economy. Pandey (2016) argues that women's empowerment is critical to societal development. Without empowering women, a society cannot progress progressively and peacefully. Therefore, the process of empowering women should be given top priority.

Junu narrates her story; she has become independent because she earns sufficient money. She shares her money for the betterment of her family. She says she shares her income in the family's expenditure, like buying clothes for the family members, paying the fees, and sometimes giving *dakshina* to the relatives in the family. Sometimes her husband asks her to share financial responsibilities at home. *My economic stability is my way to freedom. I can buy anything, provide for the family, and help my husband financially in need. I can handle my life on my own.*

She is financially stable. She is motivated that she can handle her life properly. Similarly, Lalita narrates that she works in a private school that pays enough to meet the family's basic needs. She said that she independently pays for the family's expenses. She sometimes buys groceries and clothes for the children and herself and pays the children's school fees.

Being involved in a teaching job, I can fulfil my basic needs. I am happy that I can share my family responsibility. I do not need any assistance with my living expenses. I am financially stable and professionally able, I can handle my responsibilities myself and I do not mind other differences from my family members.

She further says she remembers all the absurd ideas in her family but is happy that she is the provider and does not have to depend on her family members.

However, she cannot save money as the goods are more expensive in the city than in the village. She has experienced that previously. She was able to save money, but now she is not able to save the money because she has to provide for the children's expenses and sometimes for other family members too. However, Rita recited her story: She was the first in the family to be financially independent. When she started working in the government school, she was paid a salary equivalent to the government school, sufficient to support her studies and help her family members. She earned for herself and her family. She earned the money, but she gave the authority to her mother to invest the money.

I was paid a good salary and I invested most of my salary in educating my nephews and supporting my studies, too. I experienced that you need money to have a good education. After being financially stable my family members also trusted me and asked my decision to manage financial aspects.

She prioritized spending the money on education. As She has struggled for education. She is empowered and stable in her profession despite leaving a stable job. Now, she is the main one in the family. She has faced the family's financial problems while pursuing her studies. She wants all her nephews to pursue further education without interruption. Her family members consult her on the financial issues at home and follow her decisions. She said that the teachers in the school also have greater respect than they had in the previous years when she was a student at the same school. The neighbours in the society also have a huge respect for her. She says the people who used to interfere in her studies now have praiseworthy words for her. They say she has set an example in the Chaudhary community. However, Sima has a different experience. Sima says that after being financially independent, she was able to support her family financially. When she started teaching at a private institution, she was paid a low salary, but she managed to pay the school fees of her nephews for more than seven years.

I was very good at managing money. I was paid a low salary but, managed to fulfil my basic needs, continue my studies, and help my family in need. I educated my sister's children. I felt very proud of myself. I struggled a lot with my living and job opportunities. I proudly say that I have made my life better than my maternal uncle's children for whom I have worked for years.

She supported her studies and helped her brothers and mother in the family. She spends her money buying clothes for all the family members during the festivals.

She can buy new dresses for herself and have snacks during her break at school. Although she earned a minimum amount, she could fulfil the family's basic needs. Her job was the first step towards independence. She was the guide for all the family members. After working in the private sector for over five years, she joined the government school for good financial support and a professional career.

Women should utilize their knowledge in every domain as political social and economic. Especially, with economic stability all other domains can be achieved. However, Acharya (2009) argues that women's empowerment is at the core of the overall empowerment process, as women are the most disadvantaged and excluded group of people globally. Women face social, economic, political, legal, and cultural barriers more than others. Women's empowerment is the process of integrating women into all spheres of social, economic, political, legal, and cultural activities. It involves building the capabilities of women and enriching them with political, economic, social, legal, and cultural power so that they can utilize their potential for optimal well-being. Economic empowerment is to invest in women's capacity for economic growth and overall development (UNDP, 1996). The economy helps women build capability and empowers them financially.

Despite all the struggles in higher education, cultural dominance, and decision-making, the women teachers could empower themselves financially and be independent in all aspects.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the importance of the English language to women teachers. Especially, the struggle of the women teachers to pursue higher education in English education. English language helped the women teachers to find job opportunities and helped them to empower themselves. The women teachers were able to empower themselves struggling with social, economic, political and family domains. I created four themes to show the struggles of women teachers. I analyzed each theme with the experiences of women teachers in their personal and professional lives. I concluded each theme with the main idea I got from the women teachers.

CHAPTER VI

KEY INSIGHTS, CONCLUSIONS, REFLECTIONS, AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Key Insights

In my study, I had two research questions: one is to narrate the women English language teachers' struggles in learning English and the other is to see how proficiency in English empowers the women teachers in a Nepali socio-cultural context. The main objectives of my study were to narrate the struggles of women teachers in learning English and see how English language proficiency helped them to be empowered. With the help of the research participants' stories, I analyzed their struggles in learning the English language and their empowerment with the proficiency of English. Empowerment and English are two different domains, but the English language has been a motivating factor in empowering the female teachers.

My study found that women teachers have struggled much with their professional development. They have completed all their responsibilities at home and tried their best to complete professional duties. Through their stories, they have proved that they are good multitaskers, and they have struggled from their childhood for higher education and fought against gender inequality and professional stability. Most women teachers sacrificed their jobs while their children were small. They sacrificed their career to provide good care to their children. After leaving a stable job, these women teachers started a new beginning in their professional lives. Women teachers are found to start a new job when their children reach school age.

Due to the socio-cultural tradition and patriarchal society, women are not getting proper help at home and in the workplace. No one understands the dual responsibilities. Women teachers are found to work better than male teachers. Despite their responsibilities at home, they are found performing their tasks on time at school. The stories they presented show that they have struggled much in their professional career. They are found working hard and even sacrificing their sleep for their household duties and professional duties.

I explored female English language teachers' struggles in learning English. Women are not given the rights and equal access to education in the Far-western part of Nepal, where men are more prioritized than a girl. The women teachers shared their stories regarding their family, social, school, and workplace environment. The women

teachers are found adjusting in each aspect. They seem to struggle with the family as their parents are illiterate, and they have difficulty adjusting to the big family, focusing more on the household chores, and compromising to live in others' houses for education. Socially they have faced issues like neighbors' interference and struggle between household responsibilities and study time. In school, the women teachers did not find any motivation from their teachers. The teachers focused more on rote learning, the humiliating behaviour of teachers toward female students, and the negligence in following rules and regulations. In the workplace they faced gender inequality, no democratic environment for decision-making, and less pay for private institutions. The women teachers were able to empower them as empowerment theory is an interactive process that helps to experience social and personal change. It helps transform one's social, economic and psychological status.

I found that proficiency in English has empowered them in the Nepali socio-cultural context. Women teachers struggled for higher education; they faced cultural dominance, in the decision they were not participating equally as men. Economic stability has been a way to empowerment for women teachers. They struggled for higher education as they convinced their parents that they would earn and pursue their education. English was a medium that helped them get job opportunities. Sometimes, unwillingly, the women teachers were mentally disturbed by cultural dominance and followed the absurd ideas regarding untouchability, mensuration, and the preference of boys for higher education than girls. Although they could decide on school, they could not participate in the decision-making issues at home, and the women teachers' financial stability made them able to spend money of their own will. The capability approach has helped the women teachers get higher education, which can create better opportunities for women and secure their financial future. English language has become a tool for good job opportunities and made women teachers economically stable. This has made women teachers more capable of knowing their potential.

The narratives of my research participants reveal that empowerment comes from power and power from information. They realize that knowledge of the English language helps them acquire information as English has been the storehouse of information.

The women teachers have struggling stories. The struggle in life has encouraged and motivated them to cope with difficult situations. I was surprised to listen to their struggles when I heard their stories. The women teachers were very

dedicated to their studies and household responsibilities from childhood. From all these women's teacher stories, I found that educated people can fight any circumstance in life. Fighting with the situations and being a multitasker, the women teachers have empowered them and they know their capability. The English language played an important role in empowering women by enabling them to access new opportunities and achieve freedom. It enhances their confidence and equips them with the necessary communication skills to excel personally and professionally. With a good command of English, women teachers gained secure jobs and advanced towards their goals. These types of studies can reveal the context of the Far West. The studies on the Western world and Eastern world can be compared in the upcoming studies to show the status of women teachers.

Conclusion

The stories of the research participants portray that women are not equally engaged in professional duties as males. Despite the struggles of women teachers and the government policy the equality in the distribution in the teaching sector is not satisfactory. In S.S.D.P., the women and male teachers' ratio depicts the difference in the enrollment of teachers in the school, where there is a huge gap in appointing men and women teachers. The women teachers' knowledge of the English language has helped them in economic stability. My research participants have acquired the English language as they know the English language will provide them with new job opportunities. Despite the social and cultural norms that they followed unwillingly, they were able to make changes through economic stability.

The English language has made my research participants powerful from powerless women teachers. This power has brought positive change in them, and they have been able to empower themselves. They empowered themselves from the struggles they faced in their personal and professional life. The English language helped them gain job opportunities, and economic stability helped them acquire freedom.

Women teachers being educated are still facing traditional and religious misconceptions. They are forced to follow these differences. They know to stand for them, step backwards due to the social norms, and maintain peace in the family. The division of work responsibilities in society has created a huge gap between men and women. This gap has put all the burden on women teachers and men to enjoy much freedom at home. These gaps must be filled through education, all women should be

educated and stable in the profession. When the woman comes into power she will make her family strong. Education is the means to maintain equality and consciousness in every human being.

Reflections

This part of my work expresses the emotions, insights, comprehension, and contemplation that I gained while pursuing my M Phil one-and-a-half-year degree at the School of Education, Kathmandu University. It highlights my reflective journey from the start to the completion of my research project.

My M-Phil journey started when I saw an admission call on the Kathmandu University website. I filled out the form and the University published the date for the entrance examination within the given period. I was afraid about the questionnaire pattern and time allocated for writing. I could have improved at typing, although I was practising a few days earlier. In the entrance examination, there were two options: write on the copy or type the answers in the copy, make a pdf file, and send it to the Department of School of Education. I was not good at typing, so, I preferred writing the answers on the copy. The result was published within a week, and I was happy that my name was on the merit list. I was a bit confused as I had to leave a part-time job at the government school. However, I quit school and went to Dhulikhel for further studies. I left my job, house and comfort for my studies. I remember my first assignment on research methodology in which I was supposed to type 800-1200 words, describing myself as a researcher. It took more than 6 hours for me to type the answer on my laptop. I was afraid about the assignment and my typing speed. Gradually I went on submitting my assignment and learned to type faster than before.

In our assignment, we need to read books and PDF files, write the main idea, review the book and write on certain topics. In the initial days, I used to ask my professors to send me articles related to my work as I could not search for them. I used to hesitate much, as I was unable to find the needy materials myself. When I met one of my research methodology professors, he taught me to search related materials in Google and Eric. He also taught me to read an abstract and find the main ideas from the paper. During my stay in Dhulikhel for more than two months I never missed a day to visit the professor's office and give updates on my assignment. I learned many ideas on introduction, methodology, literature review, and research proposal, as I was doing as my assignment for the first semester. I learned about issues in ELT, which was not a satisfactory class. All our friends requested our professor, and he

immediately arranged another professor. For our sake, the professor decided against his colleague. Now, I remember it must have been really hard for him. I learned many new dimensions from books like *School is Dead*, *De-schooling Society* and other books related to educational dimensions that were eye-opening and I loved reading these ideas.

In the second semester, I found research methodology a tough subject, but the professor made it easy with his guidance. Got a chance to have a class with a renowned professor, who taught us to see the syllabus, and evaluate the curriculum of different universities at different levels. Provided plenty of books and materials to read and review them. He encouraged me to finish the thesis on time as few students were completing the thesis on time. I feel lucky that my professor helped me write the proposal by reading it line by line. Sometimes he used to wait in the canteen early in the morning. He used to visit the college early in the morning to guide my proposal work. Without his constant help and support, I would not have been able to make a draft of my proposal. Learned new ideas on postcolonial and decolonization and learned to present in class. I was amazed at the new insights from the professors. I have always seen my professors reading, generating new ideas, and contributing to academia. They have more energy and dedication to their work.

I recall the motivational words from one of our professors. He said there are many M Phil scholars in K. U. but only a few can complete the thesis. These words motivated me to finish my thesis on time.

In the third semester, I felt the journey during my M Phil flew in a blink. In the third semester, we all were asked to write our reflections from Professor and he always tried to improve our academic writing. My writing was always like looking at London and talking to Tokyo. There was no coherence and no connection in my writing. I tried hard to improve my writing. I felt the need for good writing, and I was so annoyed by my previous teachers who never judged my writing or asked for any improvements.

I know it took a lot of work to transform myself. However, I worked hard to be techno-friendly and improve my language skills. Because of me, my daughter had to sacrifice; she was all alone in the house, and most of the time she asked me to play with her and I could not do so. I didn't visit my relatives and family members often.

I needed help with the data collection procedure for my thesis. I had to change my participants during that period. Some of the women teachers were afraid of

sharing their stories with me as I knew them professionally strongly, but they denied and I changed my research participants. I am indebted to them for their cooperation and help regarding their stories. I learned that my struggle does not matter much, because these women teachers have more touching stories than mine. These women teachers' stories have transformed my vision of life's struggle. These women are dedicated and determined to tackle any situation in life.

While I visited the library for my thesis, I got help from many people around the library. I loved the culture of sharing no matter how busy they were with their work. I got many new website links from the librarian and PhD scholars for their encouragement and motivation in writing.

To improve my writing, my thesis supervisor also helped me a lot. He used to see every line of my thesis and asked me to improve. Sometimes, he motivated me to go chapter-wise writing you will complete in time. I did as he said and now, I'm writing my thesis. If I'm lost somewhere or I didn't update my work he reminds me saying have you sent me the current file, this gesture reminds me of his concern about completing my work on time.

During this thesis work, I found a change in myself that these women teachers provided me. I could do better in any situation because my research participants' stories have motivated me. They were able to establish themselves professionally stable in their situation so why can't I? I remember all the people directly and indirectly related to conducting this thesis work and who have changed my perception of struggle.

Contribution

This study motivates women teachers struggling daily for education, equality, and professional stability. The stories help the women teachers cope with the situation relate their stories and work hard to succeed in life.

This study is equally helpful for the policymakers to maintain the gap in the distribution of female and male teachers and appoint more female teachers to maintain equality among men and women teachers.

It is equally helpful for the educational institution itself. Educational institutions provide a nursery for small children so that female teachers can concentrate on their children and educational activities.

It will help empower women English language teachers by creating a flexible working environment at home, school and society for women teachers.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I revealed my research journey. I have also mentioned my research participants' stories, through which I have created a struggling and motivating story for other female teachers. I have reflected on my knowledge and conclusions of the study.

I have tried to see the role of English in establishing professional stability and empowering women teachers economically.

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