

Analysis Of Gender Role And Power Relations In Tamang Community

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Abstract:

Background:

Gender roles and power relations are socially constructed arrangements that regulate the division of labor, authority, and decision-making between men and women within a society. These roles are shaped by cultural norms, traditions, and ethnic practices and vary across communities.

Objectives:

This study examines gender roles and power relations in the Tamang community of Thakre Rural Municipality–06 (Tamang Gaun), Dhading District, Nepal.

Methods

The study adopted a quantitative cross-sectional research design, and 32 households were purposively selected from a total of 107 households. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using simple statistical tools such as frequencies and percentages.

Results

The findings reveal that women bear a disproportionate burden of unpaid household labor, reflecting the persistence of traditional gender roles. Household and socio-cultural decision-making remains largely male-dominated, accounting for 62.5 percent and 65.62 percent respectively, although joint participation in harvesting activities is relatively high (43.75%). Despite these disparities, all respondents reported equal wages for males and females performing similar work.

Conclusion

The study concludes that although women make substantial contributions to household and agricultural labor, gender-based power relations remain unequal, with men exercising greater control over household decision-making processes in the Tamang community.

Keywords: Gender roles, Power relations, Household decision-making, Tamang community, Quantitative study

Date of Submission: 23-01-2026

Date of Acceptance: 03-02-2026

I. Introduction

Gender roles and power relations are key social structures that shape the division of labor, access to resources, and decision-making authority within households and communities. In Nepal, gender refers not merely to biological differences between men and women but to socially constructed roles and responsibilities shaped by cultural traditions, institutional arrangements, and power hierarchies [1,5]. These gendered roles significantly influence individuals' access to education, land ownership, income opportunities, and participation in household and community-level decision-making processes [2].

Despite constitutional provisions promoting gender equality and social inclusion, gender disparities remain widespread, particularly in rural areas of Nepal. Although women's representation in political institutions has increased through affirmative policies such as quota systems, their actual influence over decision-making remains limited due to persistent patriarchal norms, social expectations, and structural constraints [2,7]. Gender inequality is further intensified among marginalized ethnic groups, including indigenous Janajatis, where gender-based disadvantages intersect with ethnic and socio-economic exclusion [1,4].

Empirical studies on rural livelihoods in Nepal indicate that women contribute substantially to subsistence agriculture, household management, and caregiving activities. However, much of this labor remains

unpaid and undervalued, while men continue to dominate wage employment, land ownership, and leadership roles within community institutions [3,9]. In addition, male labor migration has altered household labor arrangements, often increasing women's workload without corresponding increases in their decision-making power or control over resources [3]. These patterns reflect persistent gendered power relations that can be systematically examined through indicators such as labor participation, decision-making authority, and access to economic resources [6].

The Tamang community, one of Nepal's largest indigenous ethnic groups, is predominantly concentrated in hilly districts such as Dhading. Although Tamang society is often considered relatively less rigid than caste-based Hindu communities, studies suggest that gendered divisions of labor and male dominance in public and household decision-making continue to prevail [4]. Women's contributions to domestic work, agriculture, and community life are substantial, yet their participation in key decisions related to finance, health care, and socio-cultural affairs remains limited [9].

Gender roles are socially learned and transmitted through socialization processes within families and communities [5]. Power relations between genders are reflected in measurable outcomes such as control over resources, participation in decision-making, and representation in leadership positions. In rural Nepal, patriarchal norms continue to privilege male authority, while women's unpaid reproductive and domestic labor receives limited economic and social recognition [2,6].

In this context, the present study focuses on the Tamang community of Thakre Rural Municipality-06, Dhading District, to quantitatively examine gender roles and power relations. Specifically, the study analyzes the gendered division of household and agricultural labor, participation in household decision-making, and access to resources using survey-based data. By adopting a quantitative approach, the study aims to provide empirical evidence on gender disparities within a rural indigenous setting and contribute to policy-relevant discussions on gender equality and social inclusion in Nepal [1,2].

II. Material And Methods

The study was a descriptive cross-sectional research design which was conducted in Thakre Rural Municipality-06 (Tamang Gaun) of Dhading district, Nepal. Dhading district, with its headquarters at Dhading Besi, is located approximately 88 km west of Kathmandu. Under Nepal's federal structure, Dhading district falls within Bagmati Province and covers a total area of 1,926 square kilometers.

According to the National Population Census 2011, Dhading district has a total population of 336,067, comprising 157,834 males and 177,233 females, with a population density of 174.49 persons per square kilometer. The district consists of 73,851 households. The Tamang population in Dhading district is 74,239, accounting for 22.09 percent of the total district population. Based on the Thakre Rural Municipality Profile 2076 BS, Ward No. 06 consists of 107 Tamang households with a total population of 659. Due to the concentration of the Tamang community and the relevance of the study objectives, this ward was purposively selected as the study area.

Study Design: descriptive cross-sectional research design

Study Location: Thakre Rural Municipality-06 (Tamang Gaun) of Dhading district, Nepal. Dhading district, with its headquarters at Dhading Besi, is located approximately 88 km west of Kathmandu.

Study Duration: 1 July 2020 to 15 August 2020

Sample size: 32 Tamang Households

Sample size calculation: The sample size was determined based on the research objectives, homogeneity of the study population, and feasibility considerations. Since the ward consists of 107 Tamang households with similar socio-cultural characteristics, selecting 32 households (around 30 percent of the total households) was considered sufficient to capture variations in gender roles, household decision-making and socio-cultural practices. The purposive selection ensured that households capable of providing relevant and reliable information were included in the study.

Inclusion criteria:

1. Households belonging to the Tamang ethnic community residing in Thakre Rural Municipality-06 (Tamang Gaun)
2. Permanent residents of the ward at the time of the study
3. Households with at least one adult member (18 years or above) capable of providing informed responses
4. Respondents who were directly involved in household activities and decision-making processes

5. Households willing to provide informed consent for participation in the study

Exclusion criteria:

1. Households not belonging to the Tamang community.
2. Temporary residents, visitors, or migrant households not permanently residing in the ward.
3. Households where no eligible adult respondent was available during the data collection period.
4. Individuals below 18 years of age.
5. Respondents who were unwilling or unable to participate due to illness, absence, or refusal to provide consent.

Procedure Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative cross-sectional research design to examine gender roles and power relations within the Tamang community of Thakre Rural Municipality-06 (Tamang Gaun), Dhading District. This design was appropriate for collecting data at a single point in time to describe patterns of household decision-making, division of labor, and participation in socio-cultural and agricultural activities.

Thakre Rural Municipality-06 was selected purposively due to its ethnic homogeneity and relevance to the research objectives. According to municipal records, the ward comprises 107 Tamang households. A non-probability purposive sampling technique was employed to select 32 households, representing approximately 30 percent of the total households. One eligible adult respondent (18 years and above) from each selected household, who was actively involved in household activities and decision-making processes, was chosen for data collection.

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire designed to obtain information on household decision-making, division of labor, participation in socio-cultural and agricultural activities, and perceptions of gender-based wage practices. Prior to data collection, the purpose of the study was clearly explained to the respondents.

Ethical considerations were strictly maintained throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and participation was entirely voluntary. Respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and the information collected was used solely for academic purposes. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequences.

After data collection, the responses were checked for completeness, coded, and tabulated. The data were analyzed using simple statistical tools such as frequencies and percentages, and the findings were presented in tables and interpreted in line with the research objectives and relevant sociological concepts of gender roles and power relations.

Despite careful planning, the study has certain limitations. The research was confined to a single ward and involved only 32 households, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other Tamang communities. The use of non-probability purposive sampling may introduce selection bias. Additionally, the study relied on self-reported data, which may be influenced by respondents' perceptions or social desirability. Due to time and resource constraints, the study employed only quantitative methods, limiting deeper qualitative insights into gender relations and power dynamics.

Statistical analysis

The collected data were edited, coded, and entered into a computer for analysis. The data were analyzed using simple statistical tools, including frequencies and percentages. The results were presented in tables for systematic comparison and interpretation.

III. Result

This section deals with data analysis and interpretation of the responses given by respondents.

Table 1: Age and Education of Studied Population (N = 189)

Items	Male Number(%)	Female Number(%)	Total Number(%)
Age in years			
0-05	11(5.82)	07(3.70)	18(9.52)
6-10	05(2.64)	07(3.70)	12(6.34)
11-15	09(4.76)	08(4.23)	17(8.99)
16-24	18(9.52)	25(13.22)	43(22.75)
25-44	29(15.34)	26(13.75)	54(28.57)
46-59	11(5.82)	12(6.34)	23(12.16)
60-75	11(5.82)	10(5.29)	21(11.11)
75 above	—	—	—

Total	94(49.74)	95(50.26)	189 (100)
Educational Status			
Unable to Read and Write	16(8.46)	33(17.46)	49(25.93)
Read Only	05(2.64)	07(3.70)	12(6.35)
Primary Level	13(6.88)	15(7.93)	28(14.81)
Lower Secondary Level	06(3.17)	10(5.29)	16(8.47)
Secondary Level	30(15.87)	13(7.93)	43(22.75)
I.A., 10+2	17(8.99)	08(4.23)	25(13.23)
B.A. and Above	02(1.06)	05(2.64)	07(3.70)
N/A	05(2.64)	04(2.12)	09(4.76)
Total	94(49.74)	95(50.26)	189(100)

Table 1 presents the age composition of the studied population comprising 189 individuals. The population is almost equally distributed by sex, with males accounting for 49.74 percent and females 50.26 percent of the total population. The largest proportion of the population falls within the economically active age group of 25–44 years (28.57%), followed by the 16–24 years' age group (22.75%), indicating a predominance of working-age population in the study area. Above table illustrates that the male and female literacy rates of the studied population are almost equal. Out of the total population, 49 respondents (25.93%) were unable to read and write. Among those who were unable to read and write, 16 (8.46%) were male and 33 (17.46%) were female. The majority of the literate population (22.75%) had studied up to the secondary level, of which 30 (15.87%) were male and 13 (7.93%) were female

Table 2 Age Composition of the Informants (N = 32)

Age groups	Male Number(%)	Female Number(%)	Total Number(%)
18–24	—	03(9.37)	03(9.37)
25–44	01(3.12)	08(25.00)	09(28.12)
45–59	03(9.37)	05(15.62)	08(25.00)
60–75	07(21.87)	05(15.62)	12(37.50)
Total	11(34.38)	21(65.62)	32(100)

Table 2 shows the age composition of the informants, comprising a total of 32 respondents. Females constitute the majority of the informants (65.62%), while males account for 34.38 percent, indicating higher female participation in the study. No male informants were recorded in the 18–24 years age group; all informants in this category were female, accounting for 9.37 percent of the total respondents. The largest proportion of informants falls within the 60–75 years age group (37.50%), followed by the 25–44 years age group (28.12%) and the 45–59 years age group (25.00%).

**Table 3: Family Structure and Occupation of the Informants
N=32**

Items	Number of Households	Percentage
Family Structure		
Nuclear family	17	53.12
Joint family	15	46.88
Occupation		
Agriculture/Government	01	3.12
Agriculture	11	34.37
Agriculture/Wage Labor	01	3.12
Agriculture/Foreign Employment	01	3.12
Housewife/Agriculture	15	46.87
Student/Agriculture	01	3.12
Business/Agriculture	01	3.12
Any Other	01	3.12

Table 3 revealed that, 17 households (53.12%) were nuclear families, while 15 households (46.88%) were joint families. Out of the 32 households, 15 (46.87%) have occupation housewife and agriculture-related activities.

**Table 4: Food Sufficiency Situation and Supplementary Sources for Food Deficit Families
N=32**

Food Sufficiency Situation	Number of HH	Percentage
Having no own production	02	6.25
0–3 months	08	25.00
3–6 months	06	18.75
6–9 months	08	25.00

9–12 months	02	6.25
More than 12 months or surplus to sell	06	18.75
Supplementary Sources for Food Deficit (n=26)		
Agriculture Wage Labor / Foreign Employment	02	7.69
Wage Labor	10	38.46
Mechanical Work	03	11.54
Business	01	3.85
Wage Labor / Government Service	01	3.85
Agriculture Wage Labor / Wage Labor	08	30.76
Agriculture Wage Labor / Mechanical Work	01	3.85

Above table revealed that only six households (18.75%) out of the 32 households have sufficient food for more than 12 months or surplus to sell. The majority of households, eight (25%), have food sufficiency for 0–3 months, followed by another eight households (25%) for 6–9 months. Two households (6.25%) have no own production. Wage labor is the primary supplementary source of livelihood for food-deficit families, accounting for 38.46% of households. Smaller proportions of households rely on mechanical work (11.54%) or combine agricultural wage labor with foreign employment (7.69%). Very few households depend on business or government service as supplementary sources (3.85% each).

IV. Gender Roles And Power Relations In Social And Cultural Activities

Gender Roles and Power Relations in the Family

The family is the fundamental social institution in all societies and communities, fulfilling the biological, physical, psychological, and emotional needs of individuals. It provides essential support related to reproduction, protection, socialization, and economic security, while also serving as the primary source of identity formation for individuals.

Over time, family structures have undergone significant transformation with the evolution of human society. Historically, family systems shifted from nomadic and pastoral living arrangements to settled communities, and from large extended family systems to smaller nuclear families. Due to cultural diversity and social variation, it is difficult to define a family through a single universal concept. However, sociologists and anthropologists commonly classify families into nuclear, joint, and extended types based on their composition and living arrangements.

Table 5 Decision-Making Role in Household and Family Affairs Activities

Household Activities	Male (No.)	Female (No.)	Both (No.)
Seeking Treatment	26(81.25)	2(6.25)	2(6.25)
Schooling of Children	20(62.50)	2(6.25)	10(31.25)
Use of Family Planning Methods	5(15.62)	1(3.12)	2(6.25)
Seeking Child-related Decisions	26(81.25)	2(6.25)	4(12.50)
In Decision-Making Activities			
Buying and selling grains	17(53.12)	15(46.88)	00(00)
Control of household wealth	16(50.00)	15(46.88)	01(3.12)
Purchase of goods/commodities from the market	17(53.12)	15(46.88)	00(00)
Decision in household matters	20(62.50)	10(31.25)	02(6.25)
Final decision for spending money in social, cultural, and religious ceremonies	21(65.62)	11(34.37)	00(00)

Table 5 indicates that household decision-making in family affairs is predominantly controlled by men. Decisions related to seeking medical treatment and child-related services are mainly made by male members in 26 households (81.25%), while female decision-making is reported in only 2 households (6.25%) in both cases. In matters concerning children's schooling, male decision-making is reported in 20 households (62.50%), while joint decision-making is relatively higher at 10 households (31.25%). Decisions regarding the use of family planning methods, male decision-making accounts for 5 households (15.62%), joint decision-making for 2 households (6.25%), and female decision-making for only 1 household (3.12%).

Out of the 32 respondents, decisions related to buying and selling activities were mainly taken by males (53.13%), while females participated in 46.88% of such decisions. Decisions concerning household matters showed a higher level of male involvement (62.5%), whereas females accounted for 31.25% of such decisions. In matters related to final decisions on spending money for social, cultural, and religious ceremonies, males again played a dominant role (65.62%), while females contributed to 34.37% of the decision-making process. Overall, the data indicate that males continue to hold a primary role in decision-making across most domains, although females are actively involved in many areas.

Table 6 Composition of Tamang Household Heads (HH) in Tamang Gaun

Caste/Ethnic Group	Male-Headed HH Number (%)	Female-Headed HH Number (%)
Tamang	20(62.5)	12(37.5)

Table 6 shows that out of 32 Tamang households, 20 households (62.5%) are headed by males, while 12 households (37.5%) are female-headed. Although male-headed households predominate, the proportion of female-headed households is relatively high, indicating the presence of women assuming household headship, likely due to factors such as male migration, widowhood, or marital separation.

Table 7 Gender Roles in Household Activities and Agricultural Activities in Tamang Gaun

Items	Male (No.)	Female (No.)	Both (No.)
In Household Activities			
Cooking	1(3.12)	31(96.88)	0(0.00)
Cleaning	1(3.12)	31(96.88)	0(0.00)
Fetching	1(3.12)	29(90.63)	2(6.25)
Washing	1(3.12)	31(96.88)	0(0.00)
Collecting Fodder	1(3.12)	24(75.00)	7(21.88)
Caring for Livestock	1(3.12)	16(50.00)	15(46.88)
In Agricultural Activities			
Seed selection	15(46.8)	11(34.4)	06(18.75)
Planting	01(3.12)	30(93.75)	01(3.12)
Weeding	00()	27(84.37)	05(15.62)
Use of fertilizer	28(87.5)	04(12.5)	00(00)
Harvesting	12(37.5)	06(18.75)	14(43.75)
Land preparation	30(93.75)	02(6.25)	00(00)

Table 7 clearly demonstrates a strong gendered division of household labor in the Tamang community. Domestic activities such as cooking, cleaning, and washing are overwhelmingly performed by women, accounting for 96.88% of households in each activity, while male involvement remains negligible at 3.12. In comparatively labor-intensive activities such as collecting fodder and caring for livestock, women continue to play a major role, contributing in 75.00% and 50.00% of households respectively. Overall, the findings highlight women's disproportionate burden of unpaid domestic and household labor, reinforcing traditional gender roles within the Tamang community. The findings show that seed selection involved both males and females, with 15 (46.8%) males, 11 (34.4%) females, and 6 (18.75%) respondents reporting joint participation. Similarly, weeding was predominantly performed by females, with 27 (84.37%) female respondents and 5 (15.62%) reporting shared responsibility.

In contrast, the use of fertilizer and land preparation were mainly male-dominated activities. A total of 28 (87.5%) respondents reported male involvement in fertilizer use, while land preparation was carried out by males in 30 (93.75%) cases. Harvesting showed comparatively higher joint participation, with 14 (43.75%) respondents indicating shared involvement.

Table 8: Respondents' Wage Rate for Similar Works

Description	Male Number (%)	Female Number (%)
Equal	11(34.37)	21(65.63)
Less than Male	-	-
Less than Female	-	-

Table 8 reveals that there is an equal wage rate for males and females performing similar work. Out of the 32 respondents, 11 males and 21 females reported that there is no gender-based discrimination in wages for similar types of work.

V. Discussion

The present study examined gender roles and power relations in the Tamang community of Thakre Rural Municipality-06, Dhading District, with the objective of understanding the division of labor and decision-making patterns within households and the community. The findings indicate that gender roles are clearly differentiated, with women bearing primary responsibility for domestic and agricultural work, while men dominate public roles and major decision-making processes. Such patterns reflect deeply rooted social norms that continue to shape everyday gender relations in rural Nepal [7].

The study reveals that women are extensively involved in household management, childcare, and subsistence agriculture. Despite their significant contribution to family sustenance, women's work remains largely unpaid and socially undervalued. Men, on the other hand, are more involved in income-generating activities outside the home and represent the household in social and community affairs. This division of labor is consistent with earlier studies, which show that women's labor in rural and indigenous communities is often taken for granted and excluded from formal economic valuation [3,9,11].

In terms of power relations, the findings show that decision-making authority within households is predominantly held by men. Decisions related to land ownership, financial matters, major household expenditures, and community participation are largely controlled by male members. Women's participation in decision-making is mostly confined to routine household matters and child-related issues. Similar findings have been reported in other studies from hill and indigenous communities of Nepal, where men retain authority over strategic decisions regardless of women's workload and contribution [8].

These findings can be further interpreted using Bourdieu's concept of capital and power. Men's greater access to economic capital (land and income), social capital (community networks), and symbolic capital (recognition as household heads) legitimizes their dominance in decision-making processes [10]. In contrast, women's limited access to education, property rights, and formal employment weakens their bargaining position within households, reinforcing unequal power relations [6].

However, the study also identifies gradual changes in gender roles, particularly in decisions related to children's education and health care. Women's participation in such decisions has increased, especially among younger households and in families where women have some level of education. This finding supports previous research suggesting that education and exposure to development interventions play an important role in transforming gender norms and enhancing women's agency [12].

The persistence of unequal gender roles and power relations has important implications for women's empowerment and community development. Limited decision-making power restricts women's influence over household resources, education, and health outcomes, which may adversely affect overall family well-being. Studies indicate that households with greater female participation in decision-making tend to demonstrate improved educational and health outcomes [8].

This study has certain limitations. It is based on a relatively small sample size and focuses on a single community, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. In addition, reliance on self-reported data may involve response bias. Nevertheless, the study provides valuable empirical insight into gender relations within the Tamang community and contributes to the broader literature on gender and power relations in rural Nepal.

In conclusion, the study demonstrates that gender roles in the Tamang community remain largely traditional, with men occupying dominant positions of power and women carrying a disproportionate burden of domestic and agricultural work. Although gradual changes are evident due to education and social awareness, deeply rooted patriarchal norms continue to shape gender relations. Addressing these inequalities requires sustained efforts to enhance women's access to education, resources, and decision-making opportunities at both household and community levels [2,7].

VI. Conclusion

This study examined gender roles and power relations in the Tamang community of Tamang Gaun, Dhading, Nepal. The findings reveal significant gender disparities in household decision-making, with men exercising greater authority, particularly in financial matters and family planning, even in female-headed households. Women bear a disproportionate burden of domestic responsibilities, reflecting deeply rooted cultural norms. Although both men and women participate in decision-making, final authority largely remains with men. In agriculture, women contribute substantially to activities such as planting and weeding, while men primarily control land preparation and input use. Despite equal wage rates for similar agricultural work, women continue to lack equal status and decision-making power. Overall, the study highlights the persistence of patriarchal structures that limit women's empowerment within the Tamang community.

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