



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



UNDERSTANDING GENDER ROLES AND POWER RELATIONS AMONG THE TAMANG COMMUNITY: A QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTIVE STUDY IN THAKRE-06, DHADING, NEPAL

Bimala Adhikari *

Patan Academy of Health Sciences, School of Nursing and Midwifery, Sanepa, Lalitpur, Nepal.

* Corresponding Author.

World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews, 2026, 31(03), 906–916

Publication history: Received on 27 July 2026; revised on 05 September 2026; accepted on 07 September 2026

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2026.31.3.2291>

Copyright © 2026 Author(s) retain the copyright of this article. This article is published under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0

ABSTRACT

Background: Gender roles and power relations are socially constructed through cultural norms and authority patterns, dictating the division of labor, civic participation, and decision-making architecture within communities.

Objective: This study explored gender roles and power relations across household, agricultural, and socio-cultural activities within the indigenous Tamang community of Thakre Rural Municipality-06, Dhading, Nepal.

Methods: A qualitative descriptive design was used. Semi-structured in-depth interviews (n = 29) and key informant interviews (n = 3) were conducted with 32 purposively selected participants. Data were analyzed manually using Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework for thematic analysis [14], resulting in five core themes.

Results: A rigid gendered division of responsibilities exists. Women bear a heavy double burden, driving reproductive domestic labor, childcare, routine agricultural cultivation (weeding, planting), and informal savings groups. Conversely, men dominate market-driven commerce, heavy land preparation, macro-financial inputs, political forums, and institutional leadership roles. While women's everyday social visibility is significant, final executive authority over high-stakes financial assets, major household decisions, and formal community structures remains heavily centralized among men. Acute time poverty stemming from unequal unpaid care work acts as a major structural barrier preventing women from ascending into public administrative domains.

Conclusion: Gender dynamics within the Tamang community remain strongly constrained by traditional patriarchal expectations. Physical visibility in micro-economic and communal activities does not automatically secure equitable structural authority or decision-making autonomy. Achieving genuine parity requires interventions targeting the redistribution of household labor, mitigating women's time poverty, and reforming local institutional leadership frameworks.

Keywords: Gender Roles; Power Relations; Tamang Community; Gender Inequality; Decision-Making

1 INTRODUCTION

Gender roles and power relations influence the distribution of responsibilities, access to resources, participation in institutions, and decision-making within households and communities. Gender roles are socially constructed and shaped by cultural traditions, social expectations, and patterns of authority. These roles determine how women and men participate in household, economic, social, and cultural activities and may vary across geographical and ethnic contexts. In rural agrarian settings, deeply rooted gender norms can influence women's opportunities to participate in public governance, financial management, and decision-making processes [1].

In Nepal, gender relations continue to be influenced by historical social structures and patriarchal cultural expectations. Although women make substantial contributions to household management, caregiving, subsistence agriculture, and community activities, unpaid domestic and care work remains disproportionately concentrated among women. Evidence from Nepal shows that women spend considerably more time on unpaid domestic and care work than men, even when they participate in paid employment. Women's participation in household decision-making is also influenced by factors such as their position within the family, economic resources, and demographic circumstances [4].

Gender relations have particular dimensions within indigenous (*Adivasi Janajati*) communities, where gender roles are shaped by customary practices, social organization, livelihood systems, and cultural traditions. The Tamang community has distinctive social and cultural practices through which gender roles and relationships are expressed in everyday life. Although some literature has characterized Tibeto-Burman indigenous communities as having relatively more egalitarian gender relations than Orthodox Hindu groups [5], studies of Tamang women indicate that their socio-cultural and economic position is changing while traditional gender expectations continue to influence their roles and opportunities.

These gendered patterns are particularly evident in rural agricultural livelihoods. In Nepal's Middle Hills, male out-migration has contributed to the feminization of agriculture, with women taking greater responsibility for agricultural work and day-to-day farm management. However, increased involvement in productive labor does not necessarily result in greater decision-making power. Traditional gender norms may continue to limit women's access to financial resources, cooperatives, markets, and formal political and leadership spaces [1]. Thus, women's increased participation in economic and agricultural activities may coexist with unequal access to authority and decision-making.

The present study focuses on the Tamang community of Tamang Gaun, Ward 06 of Thakre Rural Municipality, Dhading District, Nepal. In this community, women and men appear to have differentiated roles across household, agricultural, community, and socio-cultural activities. Women are primarily involved in domestic work, subsistence farming, ceremonial preparation, and community support, whereas men tend to have greater visibility in market-related activities, local politics, and institutional decision-making. These patterns provide an important context for understanding how gender roles and power relations are experienced and maintained within an indigenous rural community.

Although quantitative approaches can demonstrate the extent of gender differences, they may not adequately explain the meanings, experiences, cultural expectations, and social processes underlying these differences. Therefore, a qualitative descriptive approach is appropriate for exploring not only what roles women and men perform, but also why these roles persist, how they are experienced in everyday life, and how participation in household and community activities relates to decision-making power and authority. The study therefore seeks to provide a deeper understanding of gender roles and power relations within the Tamang community.

2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Study Design

A qualitative descriptive research design was used to explore gender roles and power relations within the Tamang community of Thakre Rural Municipality-06, Dhading District. The design enabled an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences and perceptions regarding division of labor, household decision-making, resource control, community participation, and leadership.

2.2 Study Setting

The study was conducted in Tamang Gaun, Ward 06 of Thakre Rural Municipality, Dhading District, Nepal. The setting was selected as a traditional yet changing Tamang community where cultural practices, gender norms, and socioeconomic changes shape household and community relationships.

2.3 Study Population

The study population comprised adult male and female members of the Tamang community permanently residing in the study area. Participants were selected based on their experience and knowledge of household responsibilities, decision-making, community participation, and gender-related practices.

2.4 Participant Selection Strategy

Participants were selected using a **purposive sampling strategy** designed to capture both grassroots lived experiences and institutional community perspectives. The sample was structured into two distinct segments:

- **Community Participants (In-Depth Interviews):** General community members were selected using *purposive maximum variation sampling* to ensure a comprehensive capture of information-rich perspectives regarding domestic gender hierarchies. The researcher deliberately recruited participants across diverse demographic axes, including variations in age, marital status, occupational background, and degrees of domestic responsibility.
- **Key Informants (Key Informant Interviews):** Key informants were purposively selected based on their distinct social positionality, leadership status, and structural overview of power dynamics within Thakre Rural Municipality-06. These individuals were chosen because their professional or community roles provided an elevated systemic perspective on changing gender norms.

Data collection and recruitment occurred iteratively and were sustained until **conceptual data saturation** was achieved—the threshold at which subsequent interviews with community members ceased to yield novel conceptual codes or thematic variations regarding localized gender relations.

2.5 Sample Size

The final study sample consisted of a total of **32 participants (14 male and 18 female)**. This cohort was methodologically disaggregated into two distinct groups based on the interview format:

- **In-Depth Interview (IDI) Participants (n = 29):** This group comprised ordinary members of the Tamang community, including **13 males and 16 females**, ensuring grassroots representation from various household units.
- **Key Informant Interview (KII) Participants (n = 3):** This group comprised **1 male and 2 females** holding specialized structural roles within the community, specifically:
 - A local primary school Head Teacher (Male)
 - A localized Women's Group Leader (Female)
 - A recognized Local Community Leader (Female)

The final sample size was determined by the thematic depth, adequacy, and conceptual richness of the qualitative narrative data gathered, rather than statistical formulas.

2.6 Inclusion Criteria

To be eligible for inclusion in the study, individuals were required to meet the following parameters:

- Self-identify as an adult male or female member of the Tamang community.
- Reside permanently within the designated boundaries of Thakre Rural Municipality-06.
- Possess direct experience or knowledge regarding domestic, agricultural, or community-level gender roles.
- Provide voluntary, verified informed consent to participate.
- Be capable of articulating their experiences and perspectives in Tamang or Nepali during the interview process.

2.7 Exclusion Criteria

Individuals were excluded from participation if they met any of the following conditions:

- Declined or were unwilling to participate in the study.
- Lacked the cognitive capacity to provide autonomous informed consent.
- Remained unavailable or unreachable during the scheduled fieldwork period after three contact attempts.
- Experienced severe speech or communication barriers that prevented the shared co-construction of narrative data during the semi-structured dialogue.

2.8 Data Collection Tool

A semi-structured interview guide was developed based on the study objectives and relevant literature. The interview guide consisted of broad, open-ended questions and probing questions related to:

- Gender roles and division of household labor.
- Division of agricultural and income-generating activities.
- Household decision-making.
- Access to and control over household resources.
- Participation in community activities.
- Participation in formal leadership and decision-making.
- Perceptions regarding traditional and changing gender roles.
- Factors influencing gender relations and power within the household and community.

The semi-structured nature of the interview allowed the researcher to maintain consistency across interviews while providing participants with an opportunity to describe their experiences and perspectives in their own words.

2.9 Data Collection Procedure

Prior to data collection, ethical approval and administrative permission were obtained from the concerned authorities. Participants were informed about the study purpose, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and their right to withdraw at any time. Written or verbal informed consent was obtained before each interview. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in private and culturally appropriate settings at convenient times. Rapport was established with participants, and probing questions were used to obtain detailed information. With participants' permission, interviews were audio-recorded, and field notes were maintained to document relevant observations and reflexive notes. Data collection continued until data saturation was achieved.

2.10 Data Management and Linguistic Translation

Each participant was assigned a unique identification code (e.g., TM01 for Tamang Male 01 and TF01 for Tamang Female 01) to maintain anonymity. Audio recordings, field notes, and transcripts were securely stored in password-protected files accessible only to the researcher. Interviews conducted in Tamang or Nepali were transcribed verbatim in the original language and then translated into English for analysis and reporting. To maintain the meaning and cultural context of the data, selected transcript segments were back-translated by an independent bilingual expert. Transcripts were also cross-checked with the original audio recordings to ensure accuracy.

2.11 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed manually using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase reflexive thematic analysis. The researcher repeatedly listened to the recordings and read the transcripts to become familiar with the data. Meaningful statements were coded, and similar codes were grouped into categories. Related categories were reviewed and developed into themes and subthemes.

Themes were reviewed against the original data to ensure they accurately represented participants' experiences and addressed the research objectives. Attention was given to similarities and differences in the perspectives of male and female participants. Representative verbatim quotations were used to support the findings and were identified using participant codes.

2.12 Trustworthiness of the Study

Trustworthiness of the qualitative findings was ensured through credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

- **Credibility:** Credibility was enhanced through repeated review of transcripts, probing questions, detailed data collection, and inclusion of both male and female perspectives.
- **Dependability:** Dependability was maintained by following a systematic process of participant selection, data collection, transcription, coding, categorization, and theme development, with relevant procedures documented.
- **Confirmability:** Confirmability was ensured by grounding findings and interpretations in participants' statements, supported by verbatim quotations, field notes, and documentation of the analytical process.
- **Transferability:** Transferability was supported by providing adequate description of the study setting, participants, and socio-cultural context, enabling readers to assess the relevance of findings to similar settings.

2.13 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the appropriate ethical review committee before commencement of the study. Permission was obtained from the concerned local authority and community representatives as required.

Participants were provided with clear information about the purpose and procedures of the study. Participation was voluntary, and written informed consent was obtained before data collection. Participants were informed that they could refuse to answer any question or withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

Confidentiality and privacy were maintained throughout the research process. Participant names were not recorded in the findings, and identification codes were used instead. Interviews were conducted in a private setting, and audio recordings and transcripts were securely stored. The information obtained from participants was used solely for research purposes.

Because gender roles and power relations can involve sensitive personal and family experiences, the researcher conducted the interviews respectfully and avoided questions or procedures that could unnecessarily cause discomfort or social harm to participants.

2.14 Researcher Reflexivity

The researcher remained aware that personal experiences, assumptions, values, and interactions with participants could influence the collection and interpretation of qualitative data. Throughout the research process, the researcher maintained reflexive notes and attempted to distinguish participants' perspectives from the researcher's own assumptions. The researcher also remained attentive to power dynamics between the researcher and participants during interviews and provided participants with sufficient opportunity to express their views freely.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Theme 1: Gendered Division of Household and Agricultural Labor

3.1.1 Introduction

The fieldwork data collected in Thakre Rural Municipality-06 reveals a rigid, deeply entrenched gendered division of labor within both domestic households and localized agricultural activities. While both men and women function as co-contributors to family survival and livelihoods, the nature, scope, and spatial location of their everyday responsibilities differ significantly. Women are predominantly relegated to repetitive, indoor domestic chores, intensive childcare, and routine manual farm labor. Conversely, men gravitate toward physically demanding agrarian tasks, commerce, and activities requiring external mobility outside the immediate household geographic space.

3.1.2 Subtheme 1.1: Women's Primary Responsibility for Domestic and Reproductive Work

Female participants consistently described domestic activities—including cooking, house cleaning, fetching water, collecting forest firewood, managing childcare, and caring for elderly family members—as their natural, non-negotiable responsibilities. These tasks are not performed in isolation; rather, they are executed in tandem with grueling daily agricultural tasks, creating a compounding and exhaustive physical workload for women. As one informant shared:

“Even after returning from the farm, I have to cook, clean the house and take care of the children.”

— Female Participant, 35 years

This narrative highlights that the conclusion of agricultural labor does not signal rest for Tamang women; instead, it marks the transition into a second shift of unpaid, reproductive domestic obligations.

3.1.3 Subtheme 1.2: Men's Centering in Heavy Agricultural and External Activities

In stark contrast, male labor patterns within Ward 06 are characterized by tasks requiring heavy physical exertion (such as plowing fields) or outward mobility involving market transactions and institutional engagement. Participants indicated that because men are largely exempt from routine indoor domestic maintenance, they enjoy greater freedom and flexibility to travel, participate in public functions, and attend community political gatherings. A male community member remarked:

“Men usually go outside for work and meetings, while women have to manage the household.”

— Male Participant, 42 years

This distinction demonstrates how spatial mobility is gendered, wherein the domestic domain remains heavily feminized while the public and external economic domains are largely claimed by men.

3.1.4 Interpretation

These findings signify that gender roles within the target location remain highly segregated and unequal. Tamang women bear a disproportionate double burden of unpaid care work and subsistence production, while men retain systemic access to public spaces and external networks. This pattern reflects the ongoing dominance of traditional, socially enforced patriarchal expectations that systematically prescribe what constitutes appropriate male and female labor.

3.2 Theme 2: Gender Relations in Community Participation

3.2.1 Introduction

Field findings show that both men and women participate in civic life in Thakre Rural Municipality–06, but their roles and influence differ significantly by gender. Women are highly active in informal and community-based activities, particularly savings groups and agricultural labor. However, their participation does not translate into formal authority, as leadership positions, executive roles, and major community decision-making remain predominantly male-dominated.

3.2.2 Subtheme 2.1: Women's High Density in Informal and Cooperative Community Groups

Tamang women display remarkable solidarity and active engagement in localized grass-roots groups, particularly informal savings and credit cooperatives and mutual agricultural labor sharing networks. These spaces offer women vital avenues to interact socially, pool minimal financial resources, and collectively discuss household vulnerabilities. One female member explained:

"Women participate more in saving groups and agricultural work. We regularly attend the meetings and activities of the group."

— Female Participant, 28 years

While this data underscores women's strong commitment to collective financial safety nets, it simultaneously reveals that their civic engagement is safely cordoned within support-based, informal structures rather than formal power centers.

3.2.3 Subtheme 2.2: Structural Male Dominance in Formal Leadership and Executive Roles

In formal leadership structures, including forest user groups, school management committees, and ward-level governance, women's visibility and influence decline sharply. Participants reported that leadership, public speaking, and major decision-making are largely perceived as male roles, with men occupying key positions and directing important community decisions. One female participant (46 years) stated, *"Men usually take the leadership positions and speak more in important community meetings."* This reflects persistent socio-cultural norms that reinforce male dominance in formal decision-making and limit women's institutional authority.

3.2.4 Subtheme 2.3: Time Poverty and Competing Caregiving Constraints as Barriers

Time poverty is a major structural barrier limiting women's participation in formal public leadership. The combined demands of household work, childcare, livestock care, and agricultural activities leave women with limited time to attend community meetings or undertake leadership responsibilities. As one female participant (31 years) noted, *"It is difficult for women to attend every meeting because they have to finish the household work and take care of the children."* Thus, women's limited representation in formal institutions reflects structural constraints arising from the unequal division of domestic labor rather than a lack of interest, ability, or willingness to participate.

3.2.5 Interpretation

Cumulatively, these dynamics reveal a highly gendered hierarchy of civic participation. Tamang women supply the foundational labor and informal participation that sustains local micro-economies, yet they are systematically insulated from the executive power structures that govern those spaces. This confirms the core thesis derived from the field: physical participation alone does not guarantee structural empowerment, as men continue to successfully convert their socio-cultural privileges into absolute formal authority.

3.3 Theme 3: Gender and Household Decision-Making

3.3.1 Introduction

The qualitative data gathered from field interviews and key informant interviews in Thakre-06 reveals a segmented hierarchy within domestic decision-making. While the household unit depends heavily on the synchronized efforts of both spouses, authority over choices is highly gendered. The findings indicate a clear division between routine, daily domestic decisions—which are largely delegated to women—and major strategic or financial decisions, which remain firmly under male dominance. Even where collaborative discussions occur, final executive veto power is predominantly held by the male head of the household.

3.3.2 Subtheme 3.1: Women's Autonomy Limited to Routine and Domestic Choices

Tamang women demonstrate considerable autonomy in routine household matters, such as food preparation, grocery purchases, minor household needs, and children's clothing and dietary requirements. However, this autonomy is largely limited to low-cost domestic decisions. As one female participant (39 years) stated, *"For daily food, spices, or buying clothes for the children, I do not need to ask my husband. I can manage it with the small cash I keep in the kitchen. But if it involves spending more money or taking a decision for the future, I cannot do it alone."* Thus, women exercise operational agency in everyday matters, while major financial and long-term decisions remain predominantly controlled by men.

3.3.3 Subtheme 3.2: Male Hegemony over Major Financial and Strategic Decisions

When decision-making shifts toward long-term investments, large-scale financial expenditures, buying or selling livestock, agricultural crop commercialization, or children's higher education, male dominance becomes clear. Male participants are widely recognized as the primary economic gatekeepers. Even when women generate their own income through savings groups or farm labor, major allocations require male approval. A participant described the dynamic:

"When it comes to selling our buffalo, buying land near the highway, or taking a loan from the bank, the final word always belongs to my husband. We may discuss it, but he holds the wallet and makes the main choice."

— Female Participant, 44 years

This dynamic reveals that executive economic power inside the household remains heavily centralized in male hands, reinforcing patriarchal authority over long-term family survival strategies.

3.3.4 Subtheme 3.3: Emerging Trends of Consultative and Joint Decision-Making

Despite the persistent patriarchal framework, the field data captures an emerging generational shift toward consultative or joint decision-making, particularly among younger couples in Ward 06. Driven by increasing awareness, literacy, and women's participation in micro-finance cooperatives, some male heads now actively consult their wives before finalizing major transactions. A younger community member shared:

"Things are different now compared to our parents' time. Before my husband goes to the market to sell our seasonal vegetables or deals with the cooperative, we sit together in the evening and decide how to spend the income. He values my advice."

— Female Participant, 26 years

3.3.5 Interpretation

These patterns indicate that while domestic decision-making is evolving into a more communicative process, it remains structurally unequal. Women's authority is concentrated in low-stakes, routine domestic management, whereas men retain dominant control over structural and macroeconomic household choices. The shifting patterns among younger generations represent an entry point for empowerment, but traditional gender hierarchies still dictate the final execution of household power.

3.4 Theme 4: Access to and Control over Resources

3.4.1 Introduction

A critical determinant of power relations within the Tamang community of Thakre Rural Municipality-06 is the structural distinction between *access to* resources and *control over* them. The qualitative findings show that while Tamang women have widespread access to natural, agricultural, and community resources—meaning they utilize them daily for production—they possess severely limited institutional control over high-value tangible assets, such as land, property deeds, and large-scale capital.

3.4.2 Subtheme 4.1: Asymmetrical Control Over Land and Fixed Assets

Land is a major economic asset in rural Dhading, yet ownership and legal titles remain largely patrilineal. Although women contribute substantially to agricultural labor, they rarely hold land titles (*Lalpurja*), limiting their access to credit and economic independence. As one female participant (34 years) stated, *“I spend my entire day digging, planting, and working on this farm, but the Lalpurja is in my father-in-law’s name, and it will go to my husband. Without land in my name, I cannot even get a formal agricultural loan from the bank if I wanted to start my own business.”* This reflects a structural inequality in which women provide significant agricultural labor, while men retain legal ownership and the institutional power associated with land assets.

3.4.3 Subtheme 4.2: Gendered Disparities in Capital Accumulation and Independent Income

The expansion of local savings and credit groups in Thakre-06 has improved Tamang women’s access to small loans and independent income. However, a significant gender gap persists in the control of larger financial resources. Women generally manage small amounts for household needs, while men retain greater control over income from commercial farming, trade, and remittances. As one female participant (31 years) explained, *“In our saving group, we handle small amounts—five hundred or a thousand rupees. But when big money comes from outside, like when the commercial vegetables are sold in bulk or when remitted money arrives from the Gulf, the men take control of that capital.”* This indicates that women’s financial participation has increased, but control over substantial economic resources remains predominantly male-dominated.

3.4.4 Interpretation

The evidence confirms that a deep asymmetry persists regarding resource distribution in the study area. Tamang women are rich in resource *utility* but poor in resource *ownership*. By excluding women from the legal ownership of fixed capital like land and confining their financial liquidity to micro-credit scales, the socio-cultural system maintains a dependency loop. This imbalance directly limits women’s structural leverage, preventing them from translating their heavy labor contributions into true equity and community authority.

3.5 Theme 5: Cultural Norms and Changing Gender Roles

3.5.1 Introduction

The final thematic axis explores the socio-cultural fabric governing gender relations within the Tamang community of Thakre Rural Municipality-06. The field data reveals a complex interplay between deeply entrenched traditional expectations and a modern shift toward gender equity. While ancestral patriarchal norms continue to police everyday behavior and enforce distinct standards for men and women, contemporary influences—such as increased literacy, the growth of microfinance networks, and generational shifts—are gradually dismantling these rigid structures. This dynamic environment is fostering emerging forms of female agency and transforming traditional community power relations.

3.5.2 Subtheme 5.1: Traditional and Social Expectations of Gender Behavior

Participants reported that everyday life in Ward 06 is shaped by socio-cultural norms that define gender-appropriate behavior. Women are socialized to prioritize domestic responsibilities, caregiving, and obedience, while men are expected to exercise authority and represent the household in public spaces. As one female participant (42 years) stated, *“Our community expects a woman to stay close to home, look after the livestock, cook, and not talk back to elders. If a woman speaks loudly in village meetings or stays outside late, people begin to criticize her character, but a man can do as he likes.”* This illustrates how persistent gender norms normalize male privilege and reinforce women’s subordinate roles in both domestic and public spheres.

3.5.3 Subtheme 5.2: Generational Changes and Evolving Attitudinal Shifts

Despite persistent traditional norms, field findings reveal a clear generational shift in gender attitudes. Younger Tamang couples, particularly those with basic or secondary education, show greater willingness to challenge traditional gender roles. Young men increasingly support their wives’ education and public participation, while younger women are less accepting of male dominance. A community elder (61 years) observed, *“The young daughters-in-law today are not like we were. They have studied in school, they know about the world outside, and they expect their husbands to listen to them. Even the young boys now help carry water or support their wives going to training.”* This suggests that gender norms are gradually being renegotiated through education and wider social exposure, contributing to a shift in traditional male authority.

3.5.4 Subtheme 5.3: Emerging Women's Empowerment and Agency

A prominent finding from the field interviews is the conscious emergence of female agency among Tamang women, driven primarily by collective solidarity in local saving groups and adult literacy programs. These platforms have evolved beyond simple financial tools into spaces for social consciousness. Armed with financial literacy and mutual support, women are increasingly stepping out of the domestic sphere to speak at community meetings, demand visibility, and challenge discriminatory practices. A female group leader confidently stated:

"Before joining the saving group, I was too shy to speak even in front of my neighbors. Now that we meet every month and manage our own accounts, I feel strong. Last month, I went straight to the ward office to demand that they allocate budget for our community group."

— Female Participant, 29 years

This clear shift proves that when structural entry points are provided, Tamang women are fully capable of converting collective solidarity into personal and political agency, effectively redefining their roles within the community.

3.5.5 Interpretation

The findings under this theme indicate that the Tamang community of Thakre-06 is currently in a state of socio-cultural transition. While traditional patriarchal norms and social expectations still exert considerable control over individual behavior, they are no longer absolute. Generational changes and targeted economic networks are actively fracturing historical gender barriers. The emergence of women's empowerment in this ward highlights that while structural violence remains a challenge, targeted socio-educational tools can successfully shift the balance of power toward a more equitable community framework

4 DISCUSSION

The findings show that although both men and women participate in community activities in Thakre Rural Municipality, their roles and influence differ considerably. Women are highly involved in saving groups, agricultural labor, and community activities, whereas men dominate formal leadership and major decision-making. Thus, women's community participation does not necessarily translate into equal power or authority.

Women's involvement in saving groups and agricultural labor reflects their important contribution to household livelihoods and local economies but remains closely linked to traditional gender roles. This finding is consistent with Acharya et al. [3], who reported that men dominate decision-making and planning in rural Nepal while women bear a disproportionate burden of subsistence work. Similarly, Bomjan[10] found that although informal economic activities can increase women's household agency, their participation in political decision-making and control over major assets remains limited. These findings suggest that women's labor and participation remain separated from formal decision-making power.

Time poverty was another major barrier to women's meaningful public participation. Women's extensive responsibilities for domestic work, childcare, agriculture, and caregiving limit their ability to attend meetings and undertake leadership roles. Therefore, their limited representation in formal structures reflects structural constraints rather than a lack of interest or capability.

These findings are consistent with broader regional perspectives. IWGIA [11] highlights the systemic barriers faced by indigenous women in South Asia, where patriarchal structures restrict institutional authority. Kabeer [12] further explains that socially constructed power relations can reinforce inequalities and enable men to retain authority in domestic and public spheres. Similarly, Oyěwùmí[13] argues that the expansion of private property and market-based systems can marginalize indigenous women from resource ownership and institutional power. Together, these perspectives demonstrate that community participation and empowerment are multidimensional; participation alone does not ensure equal decision-making power.

Despite these inequalities, women's involvement in saving groups provides an important foundation for empowerment by strengthening confidence, social networks, information sharing, and collective voice. Such groups may provide entry points for greater participation in formal governance.

Overall, achieving gender equality requires more than increasing women's attendance in community activities. It requires addressing time poverty, promoting shared domestic responsibilities, challenging gender norms, and strengthening women's representation in formal leadership and decision-making structures.

5 CONCLUSION

This qualitative descriptive study provides insights into gender roles, division of labor, and power relations within the Tamang community of Thakre Rural Municipality–06, Dhading. The findings indicate that women make substantial contributions to household, agricultural, and community activities and have increased their participation through informal saving groups and agricultural cooperatives. However, their increased participation has not resulted in equal access to formal leadership and major decision-making positions, which remain predominantly held by men.

The study further shows that the unequal distribution of unpaid domestic work, childcare, and agricultural responsibilities creates significant time constraints for women and limits their participation in public and decision-making spaces. Thus, increased economic and community participation alone does not necessarily lead to greater empowerment when traditional gender norms and unequal household responsibilities persist.

Overall, achieving greater gender equality in the Tamang community requires efforts that go beyond women's participation in economic and community activities. Greater attention is needed to promote shared household responsibilities, strengthen women's access to leadership and decision-making opportunities, and support their meaningful participation in community institutions. Addressing both household-level and community-level power relations is essential for transforming women's participation into meaningful and sustainable empowerment.

STATEMENTS ON COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who contributed directly or indirectly to the successful completion of this research study.

First and foremost, I am deeply grateful to Tri-Chandra College, Ghantaghar, Kathmandu, for providing me with the opportunity to undertake this Master's level research and for the academic support throughout the study. I am especially thankful to my research supervisor for valuable guidance, constructive suggestions, encouragement, and continuous support throughout the research process.

I sincerely appreciate the concerned authorities of Thakre Rural Municipality, Dhading, and the community representatives for their permission, coordination, and support during data collection. I am particularly grateful to the Tamang community members of Thakre Rural Municipality–06, Dhading, for generously sharing their experiences, perspectives, and valuable time. Their participation and cooperation were essential to the completion of this study.

I am also thankful to all those who supported me during fieldwork, data collection, data management, analysis, and thesis preparation. My heartfelt appreciation goes to my family, friends, and colleagues for their continuous encouragement, patience, understanding, and moral support throughout my academic journey.

Finally, I acknowledge that this research was self-funded and express my gratitude for the personal and collective efforts that contributed to its successful completion.

I sincerely thank everyone who contributed, directly or indirectly, to this research.

Funding Source

This research received no external funding and was fully funded by the researcher.

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The author declares that there is no financial or non-financial conflict of interest related to this study.

Statement of ethical approval

Ethical approval was obtained from the appropriate ethical review committee, and permission to conduct the study was obtained from the concerned local authority and community representatives.

Confidentiality and privacy were maintained throughout the study. Identification codes were used instead of participants' names, and interviews were conducted in a private setting. Audio recordings and transcripts were securely stored and used solely for research purposes. Given the sensitive nature of gender roles and power relations, interviews

were conducted respectfully, protecting participants' dignity, privacy, and well-being and avoiding unnecessary discomfort or social harm.

Statement of informed consent

Participants were informed about the study purpose and procedures, and written informed consent was obtained before the interviews. Participation was voluntary, and participants had the right to refuse any question or withdraw at any time without consequences.

REFERENCES

- [1] Holmelin M. Agriculture and gender shifts in the Middle Hills of Nepal. *Local Environ.* 2019;24(3):122-138.
- [2] United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women). Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The gender snapshot 2023. New York: UN Women; 2023.
- [3] Acharya DR, Bell JS, Simkhada P, van Teijlingen ER, Regmi PR. Women's autonomy in household decision-making: a demographic study in Nepal. *Reprod Health.* 2010;7:15. doi:10.1186/1742-4755-7-15.
- [4] Bhusal M. Domestic hierarchies and gender relations in agrarian systems. *J Peasant Stud.* 2020;47(1):89-104.
- [5] Acharya M, Bennett L. The status of women in Nepal. Kathmandu: Centre for Economic Development and Administration; 1981.
- [6] Khatri K. Shifting indigenous frameworks and changing gender dynamics. *Nepalese J Dev Stud.* 2021;4(1):12-28.
- [7] Tamang S. Critical gender analysis on Tamang communities and modern spaces. *Tribhuvan Anthropol J.* 2012;5(2):67-83.
- [8] Maharjan A, et al. Male out-migration and feminization of agriculture in Nepal. *Dev Policy Rev.* 2012;30(4):451-472.
- [9] Acharya S. Gender variation in domestic and family affairs in rural Nepal. *Tribhuvan Univ J.* 2019;33(1):89-102.
- [10] Bomjan M. Changing economic and household roles of Tamang women at the household level in central Nepal. *Rupandehi J Dev Stud.* 2020;3(2):45-58.
- [11] International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA). Intersecting realities of indigenous women in South Asia: A regional assessment of Bangladesh, India, and Nepal. Copenhagen: IWGIA; 2021. Report No.: IWGIA Report Series.
- [12] Kabeer N. Qualitative analysis of gender inequality and power relations: A methodological framework for structural change. *Fem Econ.* 2018;24(3):112-136.
- [13] Oyěwùmí O. Global reinterpretation of indigenous gender roles and structural disruptions. *Gender Soc.* 2022;36(4):501-523.
- [14] Braun V, Clarke V. Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qual Res Psychol.* 2006;3(2):77-101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa.