

## **Constraints of Women Labourers in Industrial Sectors: A Study of Balaju Industrial Area in Kathmandu District of Nepal**

***Bilakshan Kasula\****

*Women's employment in industrial sectors can be taken as one of the basic prerequisites for their empowerment. Though nowadays the number of women who are involved in industrial sectors as labourers is increasing day by day, they are also facing different constraints in their occupations. This study explores the constraints of women labourers in industrial sectors in general and the women who are involved as labourers in the Balaju Industrial Area in Kathmandu Nepal in Particular. In this study, I have used an exploratory research design by taking 88 respondents through purposive sampling and have conducted interviews. I found that women laborers have faced different constraints, mostly related to duty hour, behaviour of employer, punishment system, and condition of working place.*

**[Keywords :** Women's labourers, Industrial sectors, Occupational constraints, Empowerment, Nepal]

---

\* Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur (Nepal) E-mail: <okasulaaditriya@gmail.com>

---

**CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL SCIENCES, Vol. 30, No. 4 (October-December), 2021  
Peer Reviewed, Indexed & Refereed International Research Journal**

## **1. Introduction**

Employment for women is essential for making them independent and empowered. Women's employment can raise their status by allowing them to earn income and have more control over resources. Nowadays, their participation in the labor force has increased in almost all regions of the world. Moreover, women are participating in the labor force in the greater number but they typically receive lower pay than men even when working in the same sector (Yellen, 2017). In today's world, every society has its social and cultural values and they feel that women should work to protect their rights.

Nepalese women have socio-cultural responsibilities more complex than men. They carry out dual roles and responsibilities in and outside the household. They spend much of their time carrying water over long distances, preparing food, and gathering firewood for household needs. In an average Nepalese household, women care for their babies and at the same time for other family members too. They do it by taking as their duty and they work very hard without any complaint. The household work of the women is not an economically rewarding job. Even the country's national accounting system does not consider being economically dependent on their husband even though they work so hard women who are interested to work and earn money have to fight for the right (Luitel, 2009).

In Nepal, there is no argument against the empowerment and autonomy of women, and it has been recognized that the social, economic, and political empowerment of women is essential for their sustainable development in all areas of life. Thus, it has been well accepted that women's empowerment and full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including in the decision-making process, and access to power are fundamental to the achievement of equality, development, and peace. Accordingly, appropriate policies and programs have been formulated to address women's development issues and problems in various ways at the national as well as local levels. But, due to the absence of effective mechanisms and political commitment to implementing them, women's concerns and needs tend to be marginalized and lost during the course of implementation.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

In every country, women have been facing different types of problems. Relating to women's employment in the industrial sector women's representation is very poor in South Asia especially in the countries like Nepal, Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan. This indicates that there is an increase in the work burden of females. But the control and the benefit of their work have been taken by males because women are confined only in household activities so they think inferior.

The economic activities of women are always underestimated because household works are not classified under the economic activities which show that women suffer from hard and face difficulties in society. Even family members do not assimilate that household work is really important work. It is true that in addition to the work in the factory, field, or plantation, women have to spend many hours attending to household chores. Women, therefore, experience the double day, double burden, and double shift. That is they bear the burden of "paid work" and "unpaid work". This double burden also makes it difficult for women to get better jobs, to get trained, and to make up the professional ladder (Bhasin & Khan, 1986).

Men and women possess different levels of power in the family, with women, typically being the less powerful partners. The work women do in their home is unremunerated and therefore, not even regarded as "real work". Women's jobs in the labor force are often what other demands wives have on their time. As such women's work is devalued and remunerated at a substantially lower rate than men's work (Renzetti, et al., 2012). The choices about who works in the family and who stays at home to care for the household and children are based on an ideology of appropriate gender roles. The jobs men do in home-do-it-yours, for example, are those that have a lasting output, while women are responsible for day-to-day repetitive, never-ending ones (Abbott & Wallace, 1997).

When it comes to housework, research consistently shows that wives spend more time on domestic chores than husbands do. A study of more than 200 scholarly articles and shows that although women have reduced and men have slightly increased their hourly contribution or routing household talks. Women do at least twice as much as housework as men do (Coltrane, 2000). A number of factory

workers show a similar pattern women and men working in separate occupations, with men working in jobs classified as skilled and women doing work classified as semi-skilled or unskilled and earning substantially less than men (Abbott & Wallace, 1997).

An increasing number of women's participation in the workforce is the result of several factors such as being independent to support family and to use education. But they are inferior positive in every sphere from public to domestic (Stri Shakti, 1995). So, this study explores the constraints of women laborers working in the Balaju Industrial Area of Kathmandu district. The purpose of this study is to find out the problems faced by the women laborers in industrial sectors in general and Balaju Industrial Area in particular.

### **3. Theories Related to Women's Employment : Liberal, Marxist, Psychoanalytic, Radical & Social Feminism**

Liberal feminism argues that gender inequality is the result of patriarchal and sexist patterning of the division of labor (Ritzer, 1994). Liberal feminists have been concerned to demonstrate that the observable differences between the sexes are not innate but a result of socialization "sex-role conditioning" (Abbott & Wallace, 1997). For Marxist Feminists, the feature of contemporary society in capitalism, within which women are subjected to a special form of oppression which is mainly the effect of their exclusion from wage labor and of their role in the domestic sphere reproducing the relations of production. That is women's unpaid work in caring for the labor force and raising the next generation of workers benefits capitalism and is essential to its continuation. The main beneficiary of women's unpaid labor force in capitalism, though individual men also benefit to some extent (Abbott & Wallace, 1997).

Similarly, the roots of psychoanalytic feminism maps and emphasizes the emotion dynamics of personality, emotions and are often deeply buried in the subconscious areas of the psyche; they also highlight the importance of infancy and early childhood in the patterning of these emotions (Ritzer, 1994). Another variant of feminism, radical feminists, called a revolutionary form of feminism is a theory on gender oppression that views patriarchy as an elaborate system of male domination which pervades all aspects of culture and social life. The central tenet of radical feminists is that gender inequalities are the outcome of an autonomous system of

patriarchy and that there has always been a sexual division of labor underpinning and reinforcing a system of male domination. The family is seen as a key instrument of the oppression of women, through sexual slavery and forced motherhood-through male control of women's bodies (Abbott & Wallace 1997).

Finally, socialist feminism sets out to bring together dual knowledge-knowledge of oppression under capitalism and of oppression under patriarchy into a unified explanation for all forms of social oppression (Ritzer, 2000). It opposes both capitalism and patriarchy commonly called 'capitalist patriarchy'. The socialist feminist attempts to develop an analysis that recognizes two systems, the economic and the sex gender. To understand women's oppression fully it is necessary to examine the sexual division of labor in the domestic sphere as well as in the labor market, and the partners' ship between the two. Women's reproductive labor limits their access to wage labor, but the limited range of wage labor available to women is what dives many of them into marriage (Abbott & Wallace, 1997).

#### **4. Research Methodology**

This study is based on qualitative and quantitative data with an exploratory research design to fulfill the specific objective of the study. The universe of the study was the total number of women laborers who were working in the Balaju Industrial Area in different industries. In this study the total number of universe is unknown and out of the universe, I have taken 88 respondents by using a purposive sampling design. Being based on the objectives, I have collected the required data by using the Interview process with an interview schedule. Finally, quantitative data are presented in terms of percentages. Frequencies tables and tables are used for the illustration of both qualitative and quantitative information. The collected data through various interview schedules were systematically processed and analyzed using both descriptive and statistical methods.

#### **5. Data Presentation and Analysis**

##### **5.1 Skill Level of the Respondents**

The level of skills of the labourers influences the problems faced by them in their working situation. Skill Level of the women laborers of the Balaju Industrial Area can be presented into three categories.

**Table-1 : Skill level of the Respondents**

Skill Types	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Skilled	8	10
Semi-skilled	6	7
Unskilled	74	83
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source :** Field Survey, 2021

The above table shows that majority (83 percent) of the women laborers working in the Balaju Industrial Area were unskilled laborers. Seven percent of the women were semi-skilled laborers. Only 10 percent of women were skilled laborers. They were at an administrative level.

## 5.2 Employment Status of the Respondents

The job types and job positions of employment also have significant affects on women laborers work and family and other social relationships. These aspects of the respondents are presented as following :

**Table-2 : distribution of Respondents by Type of Job**

Job Types	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Permanent	30	34
Temporary	68	66
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source :** Field Survey, 2021

The above table shows that 34 percent of the respondents were permanent and they get salaries on monthly basis. Other 66 percent of the women laborers get the salary on a daily wage basis but are paid monthly. All the respondents get the salary regularly and there was no delay on the distribution of salary only a few months.

**Table-3 : Respondents by job position**

Job Position	Education	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Administrative level	Above SLC	14	15
Manual labor	Under SLC	74	85
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>		<b>100</b>

**Source :** Field Survey, 2021

Table-3 on preceding page clearly shows that overwhelming proportions (85 percent) of women laborers are concentrated at the manual level of position. Only 15 percent of the women are concentrated at administrative level of position. One woman is working as managerial position among the sampled women. This clearly shows that women workers are experiencing low level of job.

### 5.3 Working Hours per Days

Working hours is also a crucial factor in determining the work life balance of women. Because women have to maintain both the household duties and outside work simultaneously this is often not in the case of man. This variable was taken into consideration.

**Table-4 : Respondents by Average Daily Hours in their Job**

Average Daily Duty Hours	No. of Respondents	Percentage
8 Hours	58	66
10 Hours	20	23
11-14 Hours	10	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>100</b>

Source : Field Survey, 2021

The above table reveals the duty hour of the female laborers. Most (66 percent) of the women laborers had duty hours of 8 hours. 23 percent of women laborers had 10 hours. Out of the total, 11 percent of respondents had 11-14 hours. This shows the variations of duty hour among the respondents.

### 5.4 Physical Condition of Working Place

Physical condition of working place is one of motivating factor for analyzing the women perception towards work.

**Table-5 : Respondents Comments with the Physical Condition of Working Place**

Physical Condition of Working place	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Good	14	13
Bad	66	77
Alright	8	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>100</b>

Source : Field Survey, 2021

Table-5 on preceding the page shows that majority (77 percent) of the respondent's working place was bad. Among the total, 13 percent of respondents' working place was good and 10 percent of informants working place was alright.

### 5.5 Working Place of Women Labourers

Working place of women laborers is important indicator to mention their problems faced at work. It is known that most of the women are manual level workers and they have not get very good place for working.

**Table-6 : Respondents with the Condition of their Working Place**

Condition	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Too hot	30	33
Too cold	8	10
Wet place	6	7
Fresh air does not come	36	40
Good	8	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source :** Field Survey, 2021

Data contained in the the table above shows that most (40 percent) of the respondents comment that their working place is not good because fresh air does not come inside their working area. 33 percent of the informants feeling were too hot in summer seasons inside industrial area. 10 percent of the respondents experience about their working place was also not good because of too cold in winter seasons. But rests of 10 percent of the respondents are happy and satisfied with their working area. The working environment for manual level workers not found good. The women have been working in cold temperature, not properly ventilated room and somewhere in hot room as well

### 5.6 Moral and Physical Exploitation Faced Work

The main problem of women laborers at the work is moral and physical exploitation by the employee and co-workers. The study questions had asked to the informants and their response is presented in the table-7 on next page.



**Table-7 : Respondents by Moral and Exploitation Faced at Work**

Exploitation	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	6	7
No	82	93
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>100</b>

Source : Field Survey, 2021

It is evident from the data contained in the table above shows that most (93 percent) of the women laborers do not feel any moral and physical exploitation from employers and male coworkers. Another 7 percent of women laborers feel as moral and physical exploitation at work as abusing sex words, teasing, and morally domination.

### 5.7 Problems Faced at work Due to Household Responsibility

Women have to perform the double role in household and at work. Women in almost all over the world do domestic work coupled with their additional work in productive spheres. A question was asked to the women laborers that do you feel problem at work due to your household responsibility.

**Table-8 : Respondents with Problems at Work by Household Duties**

Problem at Work by Household Duties	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	68	77
No	20	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>100</b>

Source : Field Survey, 2021

There was no wage difference for women laborers with males for the same post. The majority (73 percent) of the women laborers received suggestive comments from employers when they made mistakes. 17 percent of women laborers received threatening and 10 percent of women laborers received demotion at jobs when they made mistakes.

### 5.8 Punishment System

When women laborers made mistakes at work, the nature of punishment was depend on nature of mistakes. The study question asked about the punishment system for mistakes they have done at work and the work.

**Table-9 : Respondents by Type of Punishment System**

Type of Punishment	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Suggestive	64	73
Threatening	16	17
Firing from job	8	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source :** Field Survey, 2021

From the above table, it can be observed that majority (73 percent) of the women laborers received suggestive comment by the employer for their minor mistakes. They never feel abusive words or very bad comment from their management. Another 17 percent of the informants stated that the experience was threatening in work as the punishment when they did mistakes. 10 percent had the bitter experience of firing jobs as the punishment. The punishment system begins in Balaju Industrial Area from suggestion, threaten and termination from the job respectively.

### **5.9 Behavior of Employer (Boss) towards the Employee**

The behavior of employer towards the employee shape the women's perception and attitude toward work. The women laborers were asked what type of behavior they received from their employer.

**Table-10 : Respondents with the Behavior of Employer**

Behavior of employer	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Best	6	6
Good	40	46
Tolerable	42	48
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source :** Field Survey, 2021

It can be observed from the data contained in the table above that only 6 percent of women laborers have experience of good behavior of employer towards them. Another 46 percent of women laborers feel that behavior of employer was good. But 48 percent of women laborers experience about the behavior of employer toward them was tolerable.

### 5.10 Satisfaction Level on Wage

The employee's perception and attitude towards work largely depend on how much salaries they get from their job. To what extent they are satisfied or dissatisfied by their wage determine the perception towards the work, question had asked to the respondents that do they satisfied with their wage or not.

**Table-11 : Respondents by Satisfaction Level on Wage**

Satisfied with wage	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	13	30
No	31	70
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source :** Field Survey, 2021

Data depicted in the table above amply demonstrates that most of the respondents (70 percent) are not satisfied by their wage. Moreover, they are not satisfied with that salary because this amount is not sufficient to run their family properly. Another 30 percent women laborer is satisfied by their wage.

## 6. Conclusion

The slogan of development remains only in paper unless women participate equally in making and sharing the fruits of development. In Nepal, the thrust women constitute almost half of the labor force of Nepal. The research study was mainly focused to explore the overall condition of the women laborers working in the Balaju Industrial Area. The main target of the study was to explore the socio-economic profile and working conditions of the women laborers, household responsibilities and problems faced and work, and to find overall perception, attitude, and prospects of the women laborers towards work.

The overall situation of women laborers in the Balaju Industrial Area is not satisfactory and there was no proper adjustment process of work and household responsibility. The main aim of the study was to find the perception and attitude of women laborers in the Balaju Industrial Area who were satisfied with their work; because they do not have any other option except that labor work. Most women are not satisfied with their wages and it was just moderate for them to

sustain livelihood. Thus, the overall situation of the women workers can be analyzed as their perception and attitude toward work is positive.

## References

- Abbott, P. and Wallace, C., *An Introduction to Sociology: Feminist Perspective*, London : Rutledge, 1997.
- Bhasin, K. and Khan, N. S, *Some Question on Feminism and its Relevance in South Asia*, Manila, Philippines : The Institute of Women's Studies, St. Scholastica's College, 1986.
- Coltrane, S., "Research on Household Labor : Modeling and Measuring the Social Embeddedness of Routine Family Work", *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62(1), November 2004. 1228-1233. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2000.01208.x>
- Luintel, S., *Gender Studies*, Kirtipur : Academic Book Center, 2009.
- Renzetti, C. M., Curran, D. J. and Maier, S. L., *Women, Men and Society*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed., London : Pearson, 2012.
- Ritzer, G., *Sociology Theory*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Boston : MC-Graw Hill, 1994.
- Stri Shakti, *Women, and Development Democracy : A Study OD Socio-Economic Changes in the Status of Women*, USAID, DANIDA, CCO, Nepal, 1995.
- Yellen, J. L., "So We All Can Succeed : 125 Years of Women's Participation in the Economy", Speech from the Chair, Brown University, May 05, 2017.

