

## **Socio-Cultural Constraints of Industrial Women Labourers in Nepal : A Case Study of Hetauda Industrial Area in Makawanpur District**

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*Women industrial workers, including those in Nepal, are female employees engaged in manual labour tasks within the industrial sector, contributing to the manufacturing, production, or assembly processes of goods or services. The purpose of this study is to collect comprehensive information on the working conditions and challenges faced by women industrial labourers in the Hetauda industrial area of Makawanpur, Nepal. The study utilizes a combination of descriptive and exploratory research design, with a purposive sampling method to select a sample of 44 women industrial labourers in the Hetauda industrial area, and employed face-to-face semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection*

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**JOURNAL OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Summer), 2023  
Peer Reviewed, Indexed & Refereed International Research Journal**

*technique. The study concludes that women labourers face various challenges in their work and personal lives, necessitating improvements in working conditions, employer behaviour, and wages to enhance their well-being and empowerment in the labour force.*

[**Keywords** : Socio-Cultural Constraints, Women Industrial labourers, Industrial occupation, Hetauda Nepal]

## 1. Introduction

Industrial labourers are workers employed in the industrial sector who are involved in manual labour tasks related to manufacturing, production, or assembly processes. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), industrial labourers are workers employed in the industrial sector who primarily engage in manual labour tasks associated with manufacturing, production, or assembly processes (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022). Women industrial workers refer to female employees working in the industrial sector, specifically in roles related to manufacturing, production, or assembly processes. Women industrial workers can be found working in diverse industrial environments, including factories, warehouses, and manufacturing facilities. The specific duties and responsibilities of women industrial workers may vary depending on the industry and job role they are engaged in.

Women industrial labourers in Nepal refer to female workers who are employed in various industrial sectors, such as garment factories, handicrafts, and agriculture, among others, and are involved in manual labour tasks related to manufacturing, production, or assembly processes. These women are actively involved in tasks such as operating machinery, stitching clothes, and performing other physical labour that contributes to the production of goods or services within industrial settings. In Nepal, women's participation in the industrial workforce has been increasing in recent years, with the country's garment industry being a significant contributor to this trend. According to a study conducted by the International Labour Organization (ILO), more than 60 percent of the workers in Nepal's garment factories are women (ILO, 2017). Similarly, a study by the World Bank found that women account for around 60 percent of the total workforce in the country's handicraft sector (World Bank, 2021).

Despite the growing number of women industrial labourers in Nepal, they still face several challenges, including low wages, limited

access to social security, and inadequate safety and health measures in the workplace. Additionally, gender-based discrimination and harassment are also prevalent in the country's industrial sector, with many women reporting instances of verbal, physical, and sexual abuse (ILO, 2017). Women industrial labourers in Nepal, as well as around the world, face several challenges that limit their opportunities and hinder their progress in the workforce. One significant challenge is gender-based wage discrimination, with women often earning lower wages than men for the same work. This wage gap perpetuates inequalities and undermines women's economic empowerment (World Bank, 2020). For example, a study conducted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) found that women in Nepal earned only 67% of what men earned in the same occupation (ILO, 2021).

Another constraint is occupational segregation, where women tend to be concentrated in lower-skilled and lower-paying industries or occupations. This limits their access to higher-paying and more prestigious roles, reinforcing gender disparities in the labour market (United Nations, 2019). In Nepal, women are over-represented in the informal sector and in low-paying jobs, while men are more likely to work in higher-paying formal sector jobs (ILO, 2021). Women also encounter limited career advancement opportunities within industrial settings. They may face barriers to promotions, leadership positions, and decision-making roles, preventing them from reaching their full potential and contributing to gender imbalance in higher positions (Catalyst, 2019). This is particularly true in Nepal, where women's representation in management positions is low, and they are under-represented in decision-making positions in the public and private sectors (ILO, 2021).

Work-life balance poses a significant challenge for women industrial labourers. Balancing work responsibilities with household and caregiving duties can lead to stress, burnout, and limited opportunities for career development. The absence of supportive policies and adequate work-family balance measures further compounds this issue (Eurofound, 2019). In Nepal, women's traditional roles as caregivers and household managers often conflict with their work responsibilities, making it challenging to balance both (ILO, 2021). Gender-based harassment, discrimination, and violence are additional constraints that women face in industrial workplaces. Such hostile work environments undermine their

well-being, job satisfaction, and overall career progression (International Labour Organization, 2018). In Nepal, women frequently experience sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace, with few reporting incidents due to fear of retaliation or lack of institutional support (ILO, 2021).

Furthermore, women often have limited access to training and skill development opportunities, hindering their ability to acquire new skills and advance in their careers. This lack of investment in women's professional growth perpetuates inequalities and restricts their upward mobility (United Nations, 2019). In Nepal, women have lower levels of educational attainment than men, and they are less likely to receive training and skill development opportunities (ILO, 2021). These constraints faced by women industrial labourers in Nepal and across the globe highlight the need for concerted efforts to address gender disparities, promote equal opportunities, and create inclusive work environments that enable women to thrive and contribute fully to the industrial sector's development and success. The purpose of this study was to gather comprehensive information on the working conditions and challenges experienced by women industrial labourers in the Hetauda industrial area of Makawanpur Nepal.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Sociological Theories related to Industrial Women Labourers**

Industrial women labourers face various socio-cultural constraints in their workplace. Sociological theories can help us understand how these constraints arise and how they can be addressed. In this review, I will discuss some of the key sociological theories that link the socio-cultural constraints of industrial women labourers. One of the most prominent sociological theories related to the constraints faced by industrial women labourers is intersectionality theory. Intersectionality theory posits that social identities, such as gender, race, class, and sexuality, are interdependent and intersecting, and these intersections shape one's experiences and opportunities in society (Crenshaw, 1989). According to this theory, industrial women labourers face multiple layers of discrimination, including gender-based discrimination, discrimination based on their socio-economic status, and discrimination based on their race or ethnicity. These intersecting

forms of discrimination create unique challenges for industrial women labourers, including limited access to education and job opportunities, poor working conditions, and low wages (Hooks, 1984).

Another important sociological theory that explains the socio-cultural constraints faced by industrial women labourers is the theory of gendered organizations. This theory posits that organizations are gendered and reflect societal norms and values related to gender. As a result, women's experiences in the workplace are shaped by gendered expectations, such as the assumption that women should be caregivers and are not suited for physically demanding jobs (Acker, 1990). This can lead to women being excluded from certain jobs or being paid less than their male counterparts, even when they are performing the same work (Reskin and Roos, 1990).

The social exchange theory also offers insights into the socio-cultural constraints faced by industrial women labourers. This theory posits that social interactions are based on the exchange of resources, such as money, time, and emotional support (Blau, 1964). Industrial women labourers may face challenges in balancing their work and family responsibilities, which can lead to a lack of resources to meet their needs in both spheres. This can result in stress and burnout, leading to poor job performance and ultimately job loss (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985).

In conclusion, sociological theories offer valuable insights into the socio-cultural constraints faced by industrial women labourers. Intersectionality theory highlights the interdependence of social identities and the unique challenges faced by women with intersecting identities. The gendered organizations theory explains how societal norms and values related to gender shape women's experiences in the workplace. Finally, the social exchange theory demonstrates how women's work-family balance can impact their job performance and lead to job loss. By using these theories, policymakers and stakeholders can develop targeted interventions to promote gender equality and empower industrial women labourers.

## **2.2 Empirical Review of Industrial Women Labourers**

Several empirical studies have investigated the working conditions and challenges faced by industrial women labourers. A study conducted by Devkota et al. (2018) examined the experiences of women working in the ready-made garment sector in Nepal. The study found that women faced a range of challenges, including low

wages, long working hours, and limited opportunities for career advancement. Moreover, women workers reported experiencing harassment and discrimination at the workplace. The study highlights the need for policies and interventions to address these challenges and improve working conditions for women labourers.

Another study conducted by Fuchs and Shaban (2019) investigated the experiences of women working in the garment industry in Jordan. The study found that women faced a range of challenges, including low wages, long working hours, and poor working conditions. Women workers also reported experiencing harassment and abuse from male supervisors and colleagues. The study highlights the need for policies and interventions to improve the working conditions and protect the rights of women labourers. A study conducted by Paul-Majumder and Begum (2018) examined the working conditions and challenges faced by women working in the ready-made garment sector in Bangladesh. The study found that women faced a range of challenges, including low wages, long working hours, and poor working conditions. Women workers also reported experiencing harassment and discrimination at the workplace. The study emphasizes the need for policies and interventions to improve the working conditions and promote gender equality in the industrial sector.

Moreover, a study conducted by Bhatta and Sharma (2019) examined the experiences of women working in the carpet industry in Nepal. The study found that women workers faced a range of challenges, including low wages, long working hours, and poor working conditions. Women workers also reported experiencing health problems, including respiratory issues and back pain. The study highlights the need for policies and interventions to improve the working conditions and protect the health and well-being of women labourers. In summary, these studies illustrate the range of challenges and issues faced by women industrial labourers, including low wages, poor working conditions, and harassment. The findings highlight the need for policies and interventions to address these challenges and promote gender equality in the industrial sector.

### **3. Methodology**

The research design employed in this study was a combination of descriptive and exploratory approaches. The main objective was to

investigate the socio-economic conditions of female labourers in the Hetauda industrial area. The study aimed to explore various aspects of women's participation in the workforce and provide a comprehensive understanding of their experiences. To achieve this, a descriptive research design was utilized. The study focused on describing the characteristics and experiences of female labourers in the area. The research aimed to gather accurate data to depict the socio-economic conditions and challenges faced by these women. By collecting detailed information, the study aimed to shed light on the factors influencing women's participation in the industrial sector.

Additionally, an exploratory approach was adopted to delve deeper into the research topic. The study aimed to explore different dimensions related to women's work, including their economic contributions, the nature of their work and work environment, and the challenges they encountered. By adopting an exploratory stance, the researchers sought to uncover new insights and understand the complexities of women's experiences as industrial labourers.

The study encompassed all female labourers in the Hetauda industrial area, representing multiple industries. Given the unknown population size, a purposive sampling method was employed. The researchers intentionally selected a sample of 44 women industrial labourers who met specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. This sampling approach allowed for a focused examination of the socio-economic conditions and experiences of female labourers in the Hetauda industrial area.

Data collection involved face-to-face interviews with the selected respondents. A semi-structured interview approach was utilized, utilizing an interview schedule divided into different sections. The initial section aimed to gather general information about the women in the sample, while subsequent sections explored their problems, attitudes, and social aspects related to their work and personal lives. The semi-structured nature of the interviews provided flexibility for probing deeper into specific areas of interest while maintaining a standardized framework for data collection.

## **4. Findings and Discussion**

### **4.1 Caste/Ethnicity of Respondent**

In this study, I get women labourer from different castes.



**Table-1 : Caste/Ethnicity of Respondents**

Caste/Ethnicity	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Bramhan/Kshetri	4	9
Janajati	23	52
Madhesi	7	16
Dalit	10	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source :** Field Survey 2023

The above table-1 shows the ethnic composition of women labourer. Among the total caste, Janajati (Magar, Gurung, Tamang, Newar) is the highest, Dalit is the second position, Madheshi is stayed third position and Bramhan/Kshetri is stayed in fourth position. Because that position determine by their education and family background.

#### **4.2 Age Structure of the Respondents**

Age is an important demographic variable and is primary basis of demographic classification in the vital statistics. The age groups of 0-14 were taken as economically inactive and dependent population. The youth and adult of the age 15-59 were taken as economically active population and the olds belonging to the age group of 60 years and above were taken as dependent population.

**Table-2 : Age Structure of the Respondents**

Age (In years)	No. of Respondents	Percentage
16-25	9	20
26-35	17	39
36-45	11	25
45 over	7	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source :** Field Survey 2023

The above table 2, shows that majority (39 percent) of the informants belonged to the age group of 26 to 35 years. And 25 percent of the information belonging to age group of 36 to 45 years and 20 percent of the informants belonged to age group of 16 to 25 years and 45 years over. The above table shows that majority of the



surveyed women were on their prime age period. Although these industries are not always labourer intensive even than they refuse to employ above 45 years age group.

### 4.3 Skill Level of the Respondents

The women labourers of the Hetauda Industrial Area are normally raw labourer with very basic education and skills. They do not have any specific skill. Most of the women they do not have received any formal education for the skill development before joining to the industry. After joining the industry they have been frequent to handle with machinery equipment and packaging skills. They can be categorized as semi-skilled for this type of labourers. Some are totally unskilled who are just engaged only with lifting and carrying.

**Table-3 : Skill Level of the Respondents**

Skill Level	No of Respondents	Percentage
Skilled	4	10
Semi-skilled	3	7
Unskilled	37	83
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source :** Field Survey, 2023

It can be observed from table 2 that majority (83 percent) of the women labourers are unskilled. They have neither got any technical education before joining the industry nor have any chance for skilled works. 7 percent of women are semi-skilled. They have knowledge of handling same machinery equipment and packaging skills. Those cannot take as skilled labourers, only few portions (10 percent) of the respondents fall into the skilled labourer nor have any chance for skilled works. They were working in the industry as skilled manpower having different technical knowledge and skill. This is because of unskilled women worker is root level rather than skilled women in Hetauda industrial area.

### 4.4 Working Hours Per Days

As women are involved in various types of economic activities, their working hours also differ from one another. 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	29	66
10 Hours	10	23
11-14 Hours	5	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source :** Field Survey, 2023

Table above shows that average daily duty hours of most (66 percent) of the women labourers was 8 hours. 23 percent of the respondents had the average daily duty hour of 10. 11 percent of the respondents had 11-14 hours. The working hour for administrative and some others levels workers post is 8 hour per day but for lower rank, they have to work more than 8 hours per day. These finding shows that the average daily duty hour of the sampled women labourers had also same as 8 hours of internationally accepted all over the world.

#### **4.5 Household Duties**

Working women do not rid of performing repetitive Household chores despite them entering into the public sphere. This study tried to understand what types of household works women labourers have to perform in their “second shift”. The findings are given in table-5.

**Table-5 : Respondents by performance of Household Duties**

Household Duties	No of Respondents	Percentage
Cooking, Cleaning, Washing, shopping only	5	10
Cooking, Cleaning, Washing, Shopping and care of children	1	3
All of above	38	87
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source :** Field Survey, 2023

From the above table it can be observed that majority (87 percent) of women labourers have to perform all types of household

duties including cooking, cleaning, working, shopping, care of children and care of aged members of the family. Another 10 percent of women have to work cooking, cleaning, washing and shopping. Rest of 3 percent of the women labourer has to perform cooking, cleaning, washing and shopping and care of children. Women from nuclear family don't have any types help and pressure from family member so they complete their household duties and comes do work in the industry so their number is high than other women.

#### 4-6 Working Place of Women Labourers

Working place of women labourers 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. The roof with thin aluminum tin, the thin partition wall and unavailability of air cooler and heater, they have to faced extreme hot and cold. When they were asked about working place their response was diversified which is presented in table-6.

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

Condition at Working Place	No. of respondents	Percentage
Too hot	15	33
Too cold	4	10
Wet place	3	7
Fresh air do not come	18	40
Good	4	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>100</b>

Source : Field Survey, 2023

The above table 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.

#### 4.7 Moral and Physical Exploitation Faced at Work

The main problem of women labourers at the work is moral and physical exploitation by the employee and co-workers. The survey question had asked to the informants and their responses are presented in the following table :

**Table 7 : Respondents by Moral and Exploitation faced at Work**

Exploitation Faced at Work	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	3	7
No	41	93
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>100</b>

Source : Field Survey, 2023

As shown in the table-7, majority 93 percent of the informants answered “No” when they were asked that do you face moral and physical exploitation at work. There were mostly middle aged women and they had not faced any moral and physical exploitation at work. But they also stated that the scenario was bad when they joined the worked. There has been increased in awareness among the male workers and they behave in positive way. 7 percent of the women workers answered ‘yes’ when they were asked that do you have faced any moral and physical exploitation at work. But they also stated that the scenario was bad when they joined the worked.

#### 4.8 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. Women have to face problem at work due to dual burden. They have to wake up early in the morning and perform cooking, cleaning, washing, shopping and care of children. Then they have to go to the job and have to work in job. She cannot perform the duty smoothly at work due to the over load of her dual responsibility in home and job place. A question was asked to the women labourers that do you feel problem at work due to your household responsibility with the possible answers of ‘yes’ and ‘no’. Here response of women labourers about the question is presented in the table-8 on the next page.

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

<b>Problem at work by Household Duties</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	34	77
No	10	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source :** Field Survey, 2023

In above table, 77 percent of the informants feel the problems at work due to their household duty. They have to cook food, cleaning, washing and caring their child themselves. 23 percent of the informants had not experienced the problems at work due to their household work. They are getting support from their other family members, because they had joint family, but women from nuclear family are helpless by their family so they feel the problem at work.

#### **4.9 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. The response given by the respondents is presented in the following table :

**Table-9 : Respondents by Satisfaction Level on Wage**

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

**Source :** Field Survey, 2023

It can be observed that from table most of the informants (70 percent) of are not satisfied by their wage most of respondent's daily salary is only 232 (two hundred and thirty two rupees only) and some of them very low wage than that. Therefore, they are not satisfied with that salary because this amount is not sufficient to run their family properly. Another 30 percent women labourer is satisfied by their wage. They did not have job before therefore whatever they have wage not they were saying it's ok.

## 5. Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussions presented, it is evident that women labourers face numerous challenges in their work and personal lives. The study sheds light on the diverse characteristics and circumstances of these women, including their caste/ethnicity, age distribution, skill levels, and employment status.

One significant challenge faced by women labourers is the burden of household duties, which often affects their ability to balance work and family responsibilities. This issue is particularly prominent for women from nuclear families without adequate support. Furthermore, the working conditions for women labourers are often unfavorable, with inadequate ventilation, extreme temperatures, and other physical challenges.

Although there has been some improvement in the behaviour of male workers towards female colleagues, a significant portion of women labourers still reported unsatisfactory treatment by their employers. Additionally, the majority of women labourers expressed dissatisfaction with their wages, as they often received low daily salaries that were insufficient to meet their families' needs.

Despite these challenges, a remarkable finding is that a high proportion of women labourers reported satisfaction with their jobs. This suggests a positive overall perception towards their work, potentially influenced by limited job opportunities or other factors.

In conclusion, this study highlights the complex and multifaceted experiences of women labourers. It emphasizes the need for improved working conditions, fair treatment by employers, and better wages to enhance the well-being and empowerment of women in the labour force. Addressing these issues can contribute to creating a more equitable and inclusive work environment for women, enabling them to thrive both personally and professionally.

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