

Women Empowerment through Micro Business : A Study of Beauty Salon in Kathmandu

Arjun K. C.*

Women empowerment refers to women's ability to make strategic life choices which had been previously denied them. Empowerment equips and allows women to be economically independent, self-reliant, have a positive self-esteem to enable them to face any difficult situation and they should be able to participate in development activities and in the process of decision-making. They may have the opportunity to redefine gender roles or other such roles, which in turn may allow them more freedom to pursue desired goals. It also aids the ability to manage risk and improve women's well-being. The main objectives of the research are to explore the income generating activities of women in the micro business of beauty salons and to examine women empowerment through the micro business of beauty salons. This study uses both quantitative and qualitative methods to substantiate its argument. In this study survey and case studies are used as the tools and techniques. This research reveals that the empowerment brought by the micro business of beauty salon based in Kathmandu. Therefore, the increase of women's

* Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu (Nepal) E-mail <arjunkc946@gmail.com>

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involvement in the economic development of the family and society is also a crucial issue which needs to be addressed properly.

[**Keywords** : Women empowerment, Micro-business, Beauty salon, Decision Making]

1. Introduction

Ramani and Nandita (2014) views that women empowerment is the capacity to participate as equal partners in cultural, social, economic and political systems of a society. This view is in line with the thinking of those who felt that empowerment of women may be taken to mean strengthening women's position in the socio-political power structure of the society. Empowerment in this sense cannot be achieved without strengthening women's position in the existing economic system, which means creating both more social opportunities and capacities for women so that they can participate in effective and significant manner in the functioning of the economic system of the society.

Kahlen (2013) opines that empowerment is concerned with power, particularly power relations, distribution of power between individuals and groups. Kabeer (2005) perceives empowerment as the expansion of the ability of people to make strategic life choices in a situation where such ability was denied to them. Shakya (2006), expresses a similar view, the author sees empowerment as a means to let women live their own life in a way they think appropriate because of their conditions, family circumstances, qualities and capabilities of which they themselves are the best judges. Demand for empowerment is not a demand for equality or superiority; it is the demand to let them realize their own true self, which should not be denied to them on any basis whatsoever, anywhere, anytime and anywhere.

Achala (2015) holds the view that the ability to direct and control one's own life is empowerment. It is a process of enhancing human capabilities to expand choices and opportunities so that each person can lead a life of respect and value. Empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building, leading to greater participation, greater decision-making power and control over transformative action. Briefly, empowerment refers to giving power to individuals in all spheres of life, which are essential for the survival, and overall development of humankind. Empowerment of women means equipping women to be economically independent, self-reliant, have

a positive self-esteem to enable them to face any difficult situation and they should be able to participate in development activities and in the process of decision-making. More employment opportunities in rural areas, availability of more local products and services are the result of local micro enterprises. Since the word 'Micro' represents 'small', the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise. Small manufacturing and service enterprises such as brick kiln industry, stone crushing industry, bakery, steel fabrication, cane and bamboo, washing soaps, food products, beauty parlors, tailoring and embroidery, jewelry designing, supari processing are some of the examples of micro enterprises.

The beauty salon industry is one of the basic businesses that the women entrepreneur follows these days. Nowadays people are beauty conscious, so there is an increasing craze of the business. The increasing craze of this business is increasing participation of women in this sector. Female entrepreneurs identified certain commonalities among entrepreneurs all over the world, such as age, education, marital status, and their interest in pursuing business in the service industry (Crozier and Kafle, 2010). Samden (2016) has highlighted the issues relating to empowering women through the development of micro enterprises via SHGs, in an article entitled empowering women through micro enterprises development. The author has suggested that women SHGs should be financially integrated with mainstream rural credit to become self-sustainable. As a result, they continue to function even after the end of the programmers.

In identifying the differences between male and female entrepreneurs, studies of female entrepreneurs identified certain commonalities among entrepreneurs all over the world, such as age, education, marital status, and their interest in pursuing business in the service industry. The service industry consists of retail, catering, beauty salons/clinics, and similar businesses with low levels of investment; hence, assuming that female entrepreneurs engage in risk-free businesses (Sarker and Hideki, 2007). Pragathy (2017) in her doctoral study, attempts to assess the empowerment of women through micro-enterprises in the Ranga Reddy District of AP. The study reveals that there is a slight improvement in the involvement of women in household decision-making in male-headed families with regard to credit, disposal of household assets, education of children and healthcare.

Chitra (2018) has conducted a study on 202 leaders of Self-Help Group members of Madhurai District in Tamil Nadu with a view to understand the impact of micro-enterprises on quality of life of the women which was measured in terms of their living standards. The author observed that most of the women in micro-enterprises wanted to reduce poverty and share their family responsibilities. The survey demonstrated that the quality of life of the rural women had substantially increased which is the objective of the establishment of the micro-enterprises.

Sahab et. al. (2021) in their article have emphasized the role of micro-entrepreneurship in empowerment of rural women. The authors have stated that the women as members of SHGs are involved in micro-entrepreneurship and are becoming economically independent which in turn has led to development of family, community, society, state and nation. The authors have stressed the need to give keen attention over empowerment of women in the rural area for the real development of our country in all spheres. Microenterprise development forms an essential element for promoting the well-being of the poor by providing significant income and employment generating opportunities.

In this study, it is tried to assess the activities of beauty salon business and economic empowerment of women. Therefore, this study is mainly concerned with analyze; roles of micro businesses of beauty salons for economic and social empowerment of women due to their control in economic activities. Nevertheless, this research tries to reveal the empowerment brought by the micro business of beauty salons based in Kathmandu. There are a lot of studies based on women's empowerment through other forms of micro business, level of education and jobs. However, the roles of beauty salon business have not been more studied. So this study observes women's involvement in the micro business of beauty salons and their level of empowerment. Development of women enterprises is a global issue. It is important for economic growth and it is a growing phenomenon all over the globe. Rural women's involvement in the economic development of the family and society is also a crucial issue that needs to be addressed properly in view of the fact that the contribution is significant especially in poverty alleviation. Since women have been traditionally involved in micro enterprises, it is logical to focus micro enterprise development to ensure sustainability.

2. Statement of the Problem

In most societies, the role of the women is limited within the domestic space, which is one of the major causes of their backwardness. However, the increasing numbers of income generating activities in rural and urban communities on one hand has made women's participation in economic activities. On the other hand, small businesses like street vendors and beauty Salon businesses have increased Nepalese women's participation in income generation. These economical activities have been empowering Nepalese women by making them economically independent. It also has created decision making roles of women in family and society. Keeping these issues into the consideration, this research raises the following research questions regarding Beauty Salon Business and Women empowerment:

1. What is the role of the micro business of beauty salons in the economic activities of women?
2. How are women empowered through the micro business of beauty salons?

3. Objectives

The Specific Objectives are :

1. To find the income generating activities of women through the micro business of beauty salons.
2. To examine women empowerment through the micro business of beauty salons.

4. Significance of the Study

Empowering women has been an indispensable strategy for advancing development and reducing poverty. Monitoring progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment has been therefore of great importance. Women must have provided opportunities to have control over production resources that would lead to better life for their families and their children. Thus, this research will help the economist and subject related person to know about economic activities of women based on the micro business of beauty salons. It would be helpful to observe the role of women in decision-making and their participation in small business and their changing economic, social and family status. The research would be

helpful for the researchers, students and stakeholders who aim to study and make plans and policies regarding women's empowerment through micro business.

5. Limitations of the Study

This research has certain limitations since it is prepared during a certain time and places. It only deals with the beauty salon business and the participation of women in economic activities within it. This study is related to women who have been handling beauty salon business in Kathmandu ward no. 16 who have come from different parts of Nepal. Since, this study is only based on the beauty salon business in Kathmandu ward no. 16. So, it may not cover the whole beauty salon business of Nepal.

6. Methodology

6.1 Research Design

Since, the research focused on the role of beauty salon micro business in women's empowerment, this study is based on exploratory and descriptive research designs.

6.2 Universe and Sampling

This research has included 28 women of different ethnicity, caste and religion involved in beauty salon business in the area of Kathmandu ward no. 16. In this research total 28 samples were selected through the census method. All of the respondents were affiliated with beauty salon business for their income generating activities.

6.3 Nature and Sources of Data

Primary data were collected by developed questionnaires were used within the respondents. Secondary data or information were collected from different relevant books, journals, reports, institutional publication and website. Secondary data were collected from websites and internet, reports, relevant books, journal, magazine, and other related research literature.

6.4 Tools and Techniques of Data Collection

The primary data were collected from field survey; interview and case studies. Household surveys were done during the field visit to the salon for the research. To obtain the primary data face to face

interviews (unstructured and structured) were adopted, where the researcher directly talked to the respondents to know the facts of the women. It involves interaction between interviewer and respondents. It has included different types of questions; general information, information about income, borrowing, expenditure, business activities, occupational change and empowerment.

6.5 Data Analysis and Presentation

Collected information is processed and analyzed scientifically with the help of computer software like excel as well as manually. Different tables were prepared for different socio-economic variables. Mathematical calculation and statistical operations and tests are performed for quantitative information. Qualitative information is presented in a descriptive way.

7. Results and Discussions

Many beauty care service providers have sprung up all over the country in the last decade as the significance of being and looking beautiful has increased among women. The present research study was conducted to bridge the gap by suggesting a sustainable model for the salon industry with the objectives to identify the factors that motivated women entrepreneurs to start their salons, to know the reasons for selecting a particular location for opening a salon, to identify the inter-relationship between elements of the business model and sustainability of salons, and to present a sustainable business model.

Data were collected from 28 women entrepreneurs in Kathmandu by using census method. Frequency and percentage analysis were carried out to study the socio-demographic features of the respondents, and factor analysis was used to identify the factors affecting the motivation levels of the respondents. It present the primary findings from the fieldwork by dividing the analysis into three main sections: family structures; workplace relations; education and training of the women respondents involved in salon business. In which the two sub-questions are addressed. It renders possible understanding of women's motivation to enter the path of self-employment. The questionnaire distributed in research area offers an opportunity to explore and explain women's perspective supporting women empowerment.

7.1 The Background of Respondents

The background of respondents are as following :

Table-1 : Background of Respondents

Background of Respondents	No. of Respondents	Percentages
Age		
16-25	5	16.67
26-35	12	40.00
36-45	7	23.33
46-55	4	13.33
56-65	2	6.67
Total	30	100
Education		
Illiterate	3	10.71
Literate	7	25.00
Primary Level	9	32.15
Secondary Level	6	21.43
Higher Education	3	10.71
Total	28	100.00
Caste/Ethnic Group		
Newar	9	32.14
Chhetri	7	25.00
Magar	4	14.29
Brahmin	5	17.86
Gurung	3	10.71
Total	28	100.00
Religion		
Hindu	15	53.57
Buddhist	8	28.57
Islam	2	7.15
Kirat	3	10.71
Total	28	100.00
Marital Status		
Unmarried	2	7.15
Married	24	85.70
Widowed	2	7.15
Total	28	100

Source : Field Survey, 2021

This data shows that the majority of the women involved in Salon Business belong to the age group 26-35. The age group followed it was 36-45. Likewise, 16.67% of the total sampling population were from the age group 16-25. Only 6.67% of the respondents were from the age group 56-65 and 13.33% of the respondents are from the age group 46-55. It marks that the majority of the women were from the active population group involved in the income generating activities related to Salon Business.

The above presented data shows that the majority of the women involved in Salon Business have primary level education, numbers of these women was 32.15%. Likewise, the group of literate women followed it. Similarly, 16.67% of the total sampling population were illiterate and a similar number of respondents had higher-level education. 21.43% of the respondents had secondary level education. Only 10.71% of the respondents had higher-level education. It marks that both the educated and uneducated have been practicing their economic activities by affiliating in Salon Business. Likewise, women's illiteracy was 10.71% and seems to be decreasing day by day.

The respondents were from various castes and ethnic groups. Following table depicts the ethnic components of the respondents. The above presented data shows that the majority of the women involved in Salon Business were from the Newar community. Likewise, the group of Chhetri women follows it. Similarly, there were 17.86% of total sampling populations from Brahmin communities and 14.29% women were from Magar community. Likewise, only 10.71% of the respondents were Gurung. Anyway, the data clarifies that women from different communities have been involved in Salon Business.

The above presented data shows that the majority of the Hindu women were involved in Salon Business. Likewise, the group of Buddhist women followed it. Similarly, there were 10.71% of total sampling populations were from Kirat religion and 7.15% women were from Islam religion.

From the above table, we come to see that 7.15% of the women respondents were unmarried whereas 85.70% of them were married. While 7.15% of the women respondents were widowed.

7.2 Salon Business and Women Empowerment

Salon Business has been helping for the proper income generation for the Nepalese women who have been affiliated with

this sector. Following information clarifies the contribution of Salon Business for women empowerment.

7·2·1 Duration of Participation in Salon Business

Participation in Salon Business as well as the duration of involvement in income generating activities is another factor to mark women's empowerment. This research tries to bring the reality of women's affiliation in Salon Business. Following table shows their duration of involvement in the Salon Business.

Table -2 : Duration of Participation in Business

S. No.	Entered Time	No. of Respondent	Percentages
1.	1 Years	7	25.00
2.	2 Years	6	21.43
3.	3 Years	6	21.43
4.	4 Years	4	14.29
5.	5 Years	2	7.14
6.	6 Years and above	3	10.71
Total		28	100.00

Field Survey, 2021

The above presented data shows that the majority of the women were involved in the Salon Business only in last year's. Likewise, the other 21.43% and 21.43% were involved in the last two and three years respectively. 14.29% of the respondents worked for four years whereas 7.14% of them worked for five years. There were only 10.71% of respondents who were involved for six and above years. However, the trend of involvement has been growing each year, which assumes that in the near future there will be participation of women in Salon Business in large numbers. It also marks the growing popularity of Salon Business among women.

7·2·2 Contribution of Salon Business

Behind the participation in Salon Business might have different purposes for women Purpose to mark the role of the Salon Business for women empowerment. This research tries to reveal the contribution of salon business by the women from the research area.

Table-3 : Contribution of Salon Business

S. No.	Contribution	No. of Respondent	Percentages
1.	For Income	15	53.57
2.	For Saving	7	25.00
3.	Both of them	6	21.43
Total		28	100.00

Field Survey, 2021

The above presented data shows that the majority of the women were involved in the Salon Business for regular income. Likewise, another 25.00% for saving money. Likewise, 21.43% were involved for both regular income and saving. These data indicate that there are more contributions of salon business among the respondents.

7.2.3 Utilization of Income

It is revealed that through the Salon Business, most of the respondents have good income. However, it is necessary to know where the respondents have been spending their income. The result is presented in the following table.

Table-4 : Utilization of the Income

S. No.	Entered Time	No. of Respondent	Percentages
1.	Personal use	4	14.29
2.	For daily family expenses	12	42.85
3.	For Buying Land	2	7.14
4.	For buying daily using Utensils	4	14.29
5.	For Building Home	2	7.14
6.	Loan settlement	4	14.29
Total		28	100.00

Field Survey, 2021

The majority of the women respondents spent their income for settlement of their daily family expenses. Only 7.14 percent of respondents used their income for building the house. Likewise, other 14.29% respondents used income for buying daily utensils. Some of them even used money for buying lands and other

household infrastructure construction i.e. 7.14%. 14.29% of the respondents carry out loan settlement from their income. Likewise, very few respondents, only 14.29% used money for personal use.

7.2.4 Satisfaction with Salon Business

It is necessary to know if the respondents are satisfied with their business activities or not. Given table depicts the level of satisfaction of respondents with Salon Business.

Table-5 : Level of Respondents' Satisfaction with Salon Business

S. No.	Response	No. of Respondent	Percentages
1.	Fully Satisfied	16	57.14
2.	Partially	10	35.71
3.	Not Satisfied	2	7.15
Total		28	100.00

Field Survey, 2021

The above presented data shows that the majority of the women respondents responded that they were satisfied with their business. The Number of such women who were satisfied with Salon business was 57.14% of total respondents. Likewise, 35.71% told that they were partially satisfied and only 7.15% of respondents were unsatisfied with the Salon Business.

7.2.5 Decision Making Role

Decision making is an important factor in family & society. Women participation is a gate of development. The following table shows the decision making role in a household.

Table-6 : Decision making role in Household

S. No.	Decision making in the Household	No. of Respondent	Percentages
1.	Women (active)	18	64.29
2.	Women (inactive)	10	35.71
Total		28	100.00

Field Survey, 2021

In the study area, it was found that actively participating in decision making of women was 64.29 percent. While 35.71 percent

were inactive in decision making. This reveals that in the study area women are active in the role of decision making.

7.3 Selected Case Studies

To find out the maximum possible aspect, two case studies have been selected. Both case studies have been selected on the basis of research objectives as well as their social background, educational attainment and change, change in economic life patterns, social life patterns and empowerment through beauty salon.

7.3.1 Case Study - 1

Smriti Bohora is a middle aged woman living in Vanasthali with her husband two children and in-laws. She has to take all the responsibilities of household chores and also manages her duties at school. Being a patriarchal family, her husband never helped her in household chores nor did her in-laws let male members of family to involve in household chores.

From 2010, she started the beauty salon business on a small scale though her family didn't support her. Slowly she expanded her business through investment done by her own father. Besides family dispute but she never gave up her beauty salon business. And after so many struggles and hurdles, finally she had earned some profit from business after three years and was able to support her family economically due to which family dispute problem was also solved. Moreover, her husband's family helps her in business by investing more money in beauty parlors and then the beauty salon business grows more and more. Now, she is a reputed beautician in that locality and she is socially renowned in that local community.

This case study shows how women empowerment has changed the life of Smriti Bohora from dependent women to independent, socially renowned, economically capable women.

7.3.2 Case Study - 2

Sunita Shrestha from Gorkha was a woman who started Beauty Salon Business 8 years ago. Before starting business she has remained confined with her home not getting along with others. Her economic condition was too poor, because her husband's income from the driver occupation was very less. She has a strong desire to make her daughter to be well educated but her family financial condition was too poor. She was not able to let her daughter into private school

because of financial conditions. Her husband had a friend who was also a driver but was able to teach their son in private school because both husband and wife used to work. Sunita Shrestha was motivated by her husband and she joined the beautician training. After completion of training she worked as a junior beautician in a local beauty parlor with minimum salary. By the dual salary from husband and wife they were able to admit their daughter to a private school. After working for more years as a beautician she gained experience in the beautician field and now she has own beauty salon with an employee. Now after her daughter is studying in class ten and dreams to become a doctor.

This case study reveals that how women empowerment has changed the life of Sunita Shrestha and her family.

8. Conclusion

Micro business play a vital role in women empowerment. It is a key force in improving the holistic conditions of women. The salon business serves as an opportunity space where mutual solidarity and support, close client relations, secure working conditions, informal savings groups help nourish and facilitate entrepreneurial activities. With close proximity to other women who share similar opportunities and challenges, the market offers a supportive base where the entrepreneurs can capitalize on their economic ambitions and express their desire for independence, which may not have been possible in a setting dominated by male entrepreneurs. Besides workplace relations, the importance of education and business training is particularly striking, as many women seem to be strongly motivated by educational opportunities for either themselves or their family members. Lastly, education and training account for one of the most important reasons why women work hard to ensure their children's school enrollment. The normative environment has been argued to influence this factor as it places a large responsibility on women in relation to caretaking of family members.

This study shows that having multiple roles as wives, mothers and entrepreneurs, the women interviewed in the salon sector express several challenges related to their entrepreneurial endeavors. Characterized by its patriarchal structures along with imbalanced gender roles and relations, the normative institutional environment is argued to influence women's motivation to run their

own enterprise. In this study, it was found that some women were motivated by the large responsibility for family dependents; others seem to perceive self-employment as a means to achieve increased empowerment and independence as well education for the family. Operating in a female dominated marketplace with close proximity to other women entrepreneurs enables the traders to exchange information and share business experiences from which they can all benefit. One of the main benefits expressed in this regard, is the opportunity for women to create savings groups where they can obtain loans for their enterprise activities.

It concludes that the majority of the women have been involved in the salon business only in the last year. The trend of involvement has been growing each year, which assumes that in the near future there will be participation of women in Salon Business in large numbers. These factors along with the flexible and secure surroundings of operating in a marketplace location are argued to be significant factors motivating the women in Salon business. Moving beyond regulative barriers and political initiatives related to the advancement of women entrepreneurs and their role in society, this study looks at the underlying societal structures and interplays that arguably motivate women to pursue self-employment. In doing so, this article helps in further research to investigate how the micro business helps in the women empowerment.

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