'Women corporate leadership and its challenges in Nepal'

A comparative study of women corporate leadership with the theories from North America, Australia and Europe.

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Dedicated to my father, Mr. Ramesh Kumar Shrestha. Thank you for always supporting my dream.

I love you.

ABSTRACT

The study was done among the women corporate leaders from Kathmandu, Nepal to explore the field of corporate leadership and its challenges. The challenges explored were socio-cultural, corporate and organizational. The data were collected using the method of online expert interviews and themes were generated using thematic analysis. The interview questions and analysis were largely based on the four theories originated from North America, Australia and Europe. The theories were Critical mass theory, Old boys' network, Feminist institutionalism and Time as a resource. The central themes generated from the interviews with the help of thematic analysis were 1. Fewer females in the top positions 2. Networking and mentoring as a crucial factor 3. Difficult to handle dual responsibilities 4. Patriarchy serving as a barrier 5. Institutionalised discrimination and flaws 6. Glamourisation of over time work culture. The findings of these themes were discussed alongside with the relevance of four theories in Nepalese context. The literature review heavily relied on literature from India which was also discussed and compared while analysing the data. The main research question was, "Despite the rise of women participation in the corporate sector of Nepal, what are the challenges faced by women corporate leaders?

Keywords: Corporate leadership, Challenges, Women.

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

1.1 Background of the research

'Women in leadership' is a highly discussed and researched topic in the world. Yet only few women in the world are in leadership positions. According to a recent report, only 29% of women are in the senior managerial position in the world (Women in Business, 2020). Over 15 percent of firms in Nepal have females as top managers which is higher than the rate of other countries in South Asia (World Bank Groups, Country Highlights 2013). The statistics provided by the Central Bureau of Statistics (2011), Nepal has an adult literacy rate of average 65% varying a huge gap between men and women being 75 and 57 respectively. If we look into the figures of the female university students of management in Nepal, we can see that females are outnumbering the male students (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2003) nevertheless the corporate sector in Nepal is highly male dominated. Women rarely make it to the top positions despite being in the sector for a long time. While growing up I never pictured a female boss or any female leaders in the offices and companies. This mindset was influenced much by my surroundings and environment where girls were rarely given leading roles. As the time and scenario has changed than before in Nepal, my curiosity level about the women in leadership positions in the corporate field and the reasons pulling them behind them have raised.

Not only the mindset of the people and society, the laws in Nepal that take care of marriage, property rights, divorce are driven by patriarchy which limits women's access to economic resources (Women in Nepal, Asian Development Bank, 1999). The history of women in the world entering into the workforce started from the 1960's however Nepalese women only gained equality through their constitution which mentioned no discrimination on the basis of sex and equal opportunities as their fundamental rights from 1990 (ibid.). It was until 1963 when women in Nepal were not given rights to participate in economic activities and own property. Women were restricted from getting an education until the 1960's (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2011).

1.2 Problem Statement

Out of the total population of Nepal which is 28.09 million (World Bank, 2018) only 1.4 million people are residing in the capital of the country, Kathmandu (UN, 2019). Women living in cities in Nepal have started coming out of the social and cultural constraints and entering the corporate

sector however there are very few females in top positions. Even though the city has the highest literacy rate in the whole country, females are still lagging behind when it comes to taking up the leadership roles. In today's modern world, working women are seen to be fulfilling dual roles; at homes and at offices. With a highly patriarchal society, Nepalese women seem to struggle with role dissonance in the male dominated corporate sector. It is indeed essential to hear their stories and talk about their obstacles. In the past decade, Nepal has seen a rise in the participation of women in the corporate sector. According to the survey of the world bank (2013), female participation is rising in the economy with ownership and also as managers. Nepal has done a commendable job in terms of women inclusion in the corporate sector as compared to other South Asian countries. However, the research in corporate challenges faced by women leaders in Nepal seems to be untouched. It also shows that the Nepalese society still has a long way to go in order to gain gender equality.

1.3 Study aims and objectives

The main aim of the study is to explore the corporate world through the lens of Nepalese women leaders. There are mainly two objectives for the research study which are:

1. To understand the challenges faced by women leaders in corporate sectors of Nepal
2. To check the relevance of theories from North America, Australia and Europe with context to Nepal

1.4 Research question

The main purpose of this research is to explore the field of corporate leadership in Nepal. Hence, this study aims to understand the field with the help of answering this main question:

"Despite the rise of women participation in the corporate sector of Nepal, what are the challenges faced by women corporate leaders? - A comparative study of women corporate leadership with the theories from North America, Australia and Europe".

Following sub questions are also fulfilled by the research study which will help to understand the topic and the main research question.

1. How relevant are the claims of western theories in terms of women corporate leadership in context to Nepal?

2. What socio-cultural and corporate challenges are existing in the Nepalese corporate sector?

1.5 Key terms and definitions

Corporate: The term corporate is used here for the business, companies and also for the entrepreneurs. The term addresses the women's participation in the corporate sector as in any kind of companies, banks or their own business/start ups.

Challenges: When mentioning challenges here in this study, the meaning of it are the socio-cultural, corporate and organizational challenges faced by women corporate leaders in Nepal.

CHAPTER : 2 Literature Review

The world history of women rights for freedom, equality and education has not been a long time. If we look back in history, development in planning was started in Nepal in 1956 but the importance of women in development got recognition only around the eighties. The Women's Development Section (WDS) was only established under the Ministry of Local development around the same time period. The plan of action for Women in Development was introduced in 1982 followed by the Production Credit for Rural Women (PCRW). In 1990, Nepal ratified the UN Convention on Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) without reservation. In 1995 after the Beijing conference, the Ministry of Women and Social welfare was established, and Nepal committed to ending discriminations against women. (Status of Women in Nepalese Society, 1996).

The inclusion of women in the workforce has been seen as a tremendous change since women workers/leaders brought various positive changes in the work arena. However, the participation of women in corporate boards seems to be disappointing when presented with the figures. According to Catalyst (2015a), the percentage of women in corporate board seats was 9.5% in India. Daily et.al (1999) claimed that hiring women in corporate sectors has become a 'practical necessity' and different countries have introduced various legislation regarding the matter however they come with the quota system. Whilst, there have been many challenges seen in the women leadership in corporate sectors, this chapter will highlight some of the major obstacles in the path of women's leadership in Nepal. This chapter highlights the challenges of women leaders in corporate sectors relying mostly from the literature of India since the literature for India is highly relevant to Nepal (Drucza, 2017). The challenges presented here are social, cultural and corporate challenges.

2.1 Socio-cultural challenges

2.1.1 Role of religion

Nepal is a predominantly Hindu country, with a majority of Hindu people followed by Buddhism (Majupuria, 2007). There is a reason given by Buddha (Sullavaga X,1.6), a holy book/script about why women are excluded or not trusted with responsibilities: "women are soon angered, women are full of passion, women are envious, and women are stupid. That is the reason, that is the cause, why women have no place in public assemblies and why women do not carry business and do not earn

livings by their profession" (ibid.). Not only Buddhism but also Hindu religion have views on women's involvement in leadership. If we look into Mahabarata (old Hindu holy book) it says that, persons who are excluded from the conference room of a king are those who are "dwarfs, hunch-backed persons, lean men, lame and blind men, idiots and women" (Majupuria, 2007.).

Hinduism is full of cultural practices and traditions that become a part of obstacles in the path of women's leadership. Hinduism depicts a number of goddesses and deities in their mythology. Hinduism often views women as Maa (Mother) which portrays women's character as being caring, nurturing, soft and loving. This according to the book Indian women in leadership, Hinduism...
"*obstructs the pursuit of leadership among women, the Vedas, Upanishads, and other scriptures, give numerous examples of women and their submissive role in the family*" (Chaudhari et.al, 2018, p. 18).

Several practices like child marriage, polygamy, widow burning has been obstacles for women in the ancient times. However certain practices still exist in some parts of Nepal and India. Other examples include women being viewed as a property and being unable to attain property rights and excluding widowed women from social functions and gathering has also contributed to the obstruction of women empowerment (ibid.).

Buddhism viewed women as dominant to men. Women were not allowed to enter monasteries because Buddha believed women to be seductive and as a distraction to the monks. Later women were allowed to join the monastery (Barnes, 1996 & Wilson, 2012), however, with conditions which required them to be subordinates of monks (Duwadi, 2013). A feminist writer shares her viewpoint on Buddhism as

"*I always had a hard time reconciling my love for Buddha's teachings with what I saw as historically Buddhism's dismissive attitude toward women. First, I had to contend with Buddha abandoning his wife and son Rahula….(to) reach enlightenment. Then, I was uncomfortable with nearly one-third more rules for ordained women then men and the stipulation that even the most vulnerable nuns had to bow to a ten-year-old male novice.*" (Diana, 2002, p.11)

2.1.2 Cultural Beliefs and Gendered Family Roles

Besides what is described in the religious scripts, an insight into the social condition of women in Nepal is also helpful for understanding women's lack of access to leadership. Patriarchy is highly dominant in the Nepalese society. Men are considered the head of family and Nepal is a society where male children are preferred over girl children (UNESCO, 2004). The difference in treatment according to the gender starts from the very first day of birth. Females are provided with different sets of rules and restrictions in their family compared to the males. The rules extend from basic approaches to life such as what to wear, what not to wear, how to behave, how to talk, access to the outside world like having only girl friends and so on. Whereas, on the other hand, males are given more freedom. Females are seldom encouraged to make decisions on their own but rather for seeking suggestions and permission from the male members in their family (ibid.).

Although the scenario is changing in some urban areas of Nepal and girls are given more accessibility, only few women have become Diplomats, Judges or Lawyers, Engineers, Chief officers and other high positions (Majupuria, 2007). So, what could be the possible factors affecting their life decisions?

According to a recent UNESCO report (2004), discriminatory values and norms against girls and women are deeply rooted in Nepali culture and society. A tradition of early marriage, social norms and values that undermine the importance of educating girls on an equal footing with boys, preferential treatment of the male child, perceived dubious benefits of educating girls, the traditional view of girls as someone else's property -- all conspire to limit girls' enrollment and school attendance. *"Why invest in a resource that will soon be someone else's?' is the common attitude to be found in most communities."* (Review of Research Literature on Girl's Education in Nepal, 2004, p. 7)

One of the major factors affecting girls' progress is their access to education. And the reason for the accessibility is also the economy and poverty (40% total population in Nepal is living under poverty). As mentioned above, girls are seen as someone else's property once married, sending children to school, especially girls, seems to require time and resources. There seemed to be a lack of awareness among the people about the connection between girls' education and economic development. Although schooling is free until primary level by the Government, other substantial

expenses like uniforms, exam fees, lunch, books and stationeries are beyond reach for poor people (ibid).

According to the UNESCO report (2004), women are expected to be confined between the walls of their home, family constraints and responsibilities. Also, female children contribute to more household chores than male children. That is also the reason why girls are kept at home and are deprived of education by not sending them to school, which later shows up as a gap between the literacy rate among genders (ibid.).

Even though the scenario of educating girl children has been changing throughout the time in Nepal among the cities from before, there is still a large population residing in the rural areas where the traditional viewpoint on giving girls access to education exists. It also shows the difference in treatment of girl children among the families which is one of the barriers to bring everyone in the same level of leadership (UNESCO Report, 2004).

In India, the urban population is growing and so is the lifestyle. Women in cities are juggling between work and family life. Both husband and wife work outside home however, women work after returning from their job which is often underrepresented and termed as unpaid care work. According to a recent report by International Labor Organization presented the fact that Asian women work four times more than men including the unpaid care work and approximately ten times more in South Asian countries (International Labor Organization, 2018). Dual responsibilities of women at home and at work makes it more difficult for women in their career path often leading the majority of them to drop out on the way (ibid.).

2.1.3 Influential Caste system

The categorisation of individuals according to the caste which were classified by their occupation creates a hierarchical order in the society which also determines power and privilege linked with wealth. There are four castes: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras ranked according to the order. The Shudras are considered as the low caste people and tagged as 'untouchables' (Deshpande, 2010).

A quote from Manusmriti depicts the place of women in the society where it says that Men belonging to Brahmans, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas can exploit Shudra women (Also known as Dalit

who are considered as the lowest caste of Hindu religion) and is considered as a minor offense as killing an animal. By the quote here one can easily depict the status of women belonging to the so called lower caste. Dalit women specially are often excluded from social gatherings and occasions by other caste groups. The discrimination in treatment among Dalit can still be seen in today's world (Rai, 2016). The ill social practice of considering Dalit people as untouchables still prevails in some parts of Nepal even though it was abolished by Muluki Ain (National Code of Nepal) in 1963 (His Majesty's Government of Nepal, 1963; Country Code, 1963).

Although the caste system has presented a hierarchy among the four, women belonging to all four are presented with certain restrictions. It has influenced the women's role in the family and in society. Widowed women are restricted from various auspicious occasions and are not considered for re-marriage. While women belonging to Brahmin caste is only under dominance of family i.e. husband, whereas, Dalit women are dominated by both family and society. Dalit people are not allowed to hold higher positions in the society where decisions are made and it's even more difficult for the Dalit women as being affected both by her caste and her gender (Murthy & Roy, 2018). One of the prominent things followed by women is not raising their voice in front of their husband and not taking their stance. This often leads to influencing the women of today where they are not encouraged to put forward their opinion even though they are the right ones (Chaudhari et.al, 2018).

2.2 Challenges faced by women in corporate leadership

2.2.1 Access to finance/Bank loans

In connection with the above-mentioned differences in treatment among genders, the fact that Nepalese families prioritise sons over daughters also has a connection with access to finance and bank loans. There exists a culture of giving sons more priority in accessing parental property rights over daughters, which is also one of the major setbacks for women in the corporate world (Bushell, 2008).

A bill was passed in the eighteenth session of Parliament, to make eleventh amendment to Muluki Ain (National code of Nepal) that guarantees women's right to parental property before marriage. According to the 2015 constitution of Nepal, Nepalese women can own property by inheritance and the constitution also declares no gender discrimination and equal treatment by law. In addition to

that, it also says that sons and daughters are provided with equal rights in the process of attaining ancestral property (USAid, 2018).

Bushell (2008), say many of the women who want to build their own business or want to expand are denied or not provided with the same level of financial support as a man would easily get access. Upon seeking financial help women are asked multiple questions and banks demand for fixed collateral property in order to provide them a loan for their business. This leads to women having to rely on their personal savings. According to Nepal Rural Credit Review Study (NCRS, 1991/92) only 15.4 percent of women among the female led households take loans from institutional sources such as Agricultural Development Bank and Commercial Banks while the rest of 84.6 percent are dependent on taking loans from other sources such as lenders or friends or their own personal savings (Institute for Integrated Development Studies, 1997). Furthermore, a report presented by Asian Development Bank claims that women's access to financial loans are confined because of familial and societal constraints, lower level of awareness and their confined mobility (Asian Development Bank, 1999).

Even when women own property they need permission from their father/brother/husband to use it as their security for a bank loan. According to the National Population and Housing Census (2011), only 10.8% women own property especially in the form of lands and houses which itself restricts a larger population of females to get access to bank loans (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2011).

According to a recent report by USAid, the case is even worse when it comes to Dalit women since the ownership of property for instance land is unevenly distributed. The so called upper class, people or people belonging to upper caste, owns majority of land in Nepal and have been gaining benefit from those resources whilst high number Dalit people are landless (US Aid, 2018).

In 2007, Under the amendment of Civil Service Act 1993, Nepalese government came up with a special policy (reservation/quota) favoring women and marginalised caste/ethnicity (Drucza, 2017) at the workplace. Similarly, India came with Companies act 2013 with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) which has a criteria of hiring at least one woman in the board member team. Not only that, but it also focused on gender equality at work and empowering women. (Abraham, 2013). Although these kinds of acts and policies exist there are companies hiring women just for the sake of hiring and not for the purpose of advancement. Some of them appoint a woman from their

family member for the sake of fulfilling the criteria of gender diversity that exists within their company's CSR (ibid.).

2.2.2 Limited networking

According to the book, 'Indian Women in Leadership', men and women have differences in their accessibility to freedom and opportunities, many of the women are not comfortable with any time any where model which assumes the leader to be available any time any where for their career growth (Suessmuth-Dyckerhoff et.al, 2012). They are expected to be home taking care of the family and children, cooking and cleaning even if they work outside their home no matter what level they are in their office/company. Working women have been facing dual responsibilities and one of the factors influencing them to not reach leadership positions is also their role dissonance. Women are seen as submissive, nurturing, caring, soft spoken, emotional and are expected to be the same in their work space which does not allow them to be in the top positions since the leadership roles consider so called masculine traits. The workplace expects masculine traits/style of functioning with tough assignments and women expected to be assertive like men (McNay, 2009; Uppalury & Racherla, 2014).

The responsibilities from family and home gets reflected in women's career life, since they cannot attend after work social time like gatherings and parties where most of the networks are built among the work colleagues, stakeholders and business people. The 'Boys only network' also refrains women from being out of the networking group at times (Gupta et.al, 1998). Access to professional networking is considered as the major barrier for women's leadership and is determined by various internal and external factors. Internal factors such as fear of being questioned on their character if staying late at work or going out for conferences, seminars for days with colleagues, guilt for leaving their family/children at home unattended. (Chaudhari et.al, 2018)

External factors such as women workers not being taken seriously at the workplace and accusation of being less committed to their work due to their familial/cultural barriers which expects them to be available for her husband and children during morning and evening/night time, time schedule of returning home at a specific hour after work and being questioned if not also affects women's leadership path (Uppalury & Racherla, 2014). Similarly, public scrutiny and rumors of romantic involvement with the male mentors in the society also lags them behind from taking professional training (Smetana et.al, 2018).

2.2.3 Unequal opportunities/Gender bias in career development

Gender wage gap as a global issue has also been seen as the case in Nepal. The average income of a Nepali individual as per the latest report of Central Bureau of Statistics is recorded of Rs 17,809 per month whereas the difference among male and female favoring men is of Rs 5,834 (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2018). According to the provision of Labor Act and Labor Regulation (1993), women are claimed to receive equal payment for equal work. Women in South Asia earn generally 20-40 percent lower than that of men even after considering the level of education and work (The World Bank, 2012).

Although the policy and law in Nepal does not positively discriminate on the basis of gender in work, women seem to be assigned with 'less challenging jobs' which are mostly office based and require less or no travel or field work. (Adhikary, 1996). Workplace involving work politics which makes women take less strategical work or lower level jobs, only part time jobs where women are given less responsibilities. Women are seen mostly in the roles where it is difficult to lead to the executive positions. For instance, they are seen more active in the roles of Human Resource (HR), Information Technology (IT) department and servicing activities (Gupta et.al, 1998).

In the Year 2015/16 the Nepalese government introduced a bill where properties owned by women are given a certain amount of discount on tax/registration fee, and many of the people took advantage of it. However, many people used this policy in order to pay less tax/registration fees but not for the purpose of encouraging women to own finances. The financial bill was passed so that the women could get more ownership and security but many people are also simply unaware about it (USAid, 2018). Ganesan (2003) termed this as "Surrogate entrepreneurship" where the husband owns the business and the wife functions only as a figurehead in the business. Since there lacks proper documentation of up to date statistics it is very difficult to track women involved in business.

In addition to that, different findings have shown that women are more attracted to the nonprofit organisations compared to the corporate sectors because of the various offers presented by them. For instance, the organisations are more aware of their reputation and requirement of hiring females on their team by offering them handsome salaries than that of corporate fields (Upadhya, 1996).

Furthermore, women's lack of skill in information technology, availability of resources and internet usage also adds up to the barriers. According to a recent Mobile Gender Gap report (2020), the mobile internet gender gap is widest in South Asia being 51 percent and women are 8 percent below men to have a mobile phone which is only 165 million women in the whole South Asia in the year 2019. The report presents various reasons for this issue such as: not being affordable, women being illiterate and also some family approval issues (GSMA Report, 2020).

Hence, as claimed above unequal opportunities and gender bias in both family and work place affects women career development and growth.

2.2.4 Less female mentors/role models

With relation to the things mentioned earlier, we can see that Nepal lacks female participation in leadership roles. Many of the authors have claimed one of the barriers for women not entering in the leadership field is also because they don't see enough women in leadership roles where they can picture themselves in the future (Smetana et.al, 2018).

If we look into the figures provided by the Central Bureau of Statistics of Nepal, we can see that the ratio of male and female students in the University levels are similar. In fact, female students outnumber male students in many fields such as Management and Health except for few like degrees such as Engineering, Law, Science & Technology. The situation looks contrasting when compared to the enrolment of female students to the number of female participation in the corporate field (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2003). Young girls need to see more female role models in the career fields they choose so that they can picture themselves in that position and work towards it.

Women participation in the private sectors such as banks, industries or business entrepreneurs are emerging in Nepal. The organisation which looks after private sectors i.e. Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industries (FNCCI) has a female leader. Likewise, there are several other private organisations which have some women in the leadership positions. However, this is not the case in every place of Nepal. Due to the absence of statistics in Nepal, it is difficult to estimate the percentage of women participation in the corporate sector. It is estimated that nearly one third of Asia's small companies/enterprises are owned and started by women (Thapa, 2004). According to the statistics provided by Central Bureau of Statistics (2003), out of 9.5 million working people in Nepal only 1.5 million are paid and out of which only 400,000 are females with

82 percent being self-employed and the rest are engaged in other jobs (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2003).

In addition to that it is found that male managers are not comfortable mentoring the female employees because of intimacy and fear of losing job security. They feel it as a potential threat to their relationship and take it as a risk (Klenke, 2004).

2.2.5 Lack of women participation in decision making levels

Generally, women are not included in the decision making process even in their own household and also in the higher political levels. Inclusion of women in such levels can bring new perspectives in the roles of men and women in the society (Manikoth et.al, 2018). The number of female led households in Nepal has increased from the last decade (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2003) however, the households led by females are exceptions. The exceptions are the not the choices they are given but are obliged due to various factors and circumstances. Some of the reasons include death of a husband or separation and divorce or lack of male members in the family. There seems to be a lack of females in decision making levels from the government bodies to the executive bodies in the companies or organisations (Adhikary, 1996).

Looking at the figures in the women's participation in leadership positions in the political scenario, South Asian women on average hold only 7 percent of ministerial positions and 15 percent in national level parliament (Pio & Syed, 2013).

According to the UN report (2012), India women constitute 11 percent representation in the parliament while Nepal has 33.2% of women representation. Four countries in South Asia including Nepal have constitutional quota for women representatives in the National parliament which leads among the other South Asian countries (Pio & Syed, 2013). Although the presented figures implies Nepal to be very progressive in the field of inclusion of women in politics, the reality is different. Most of the women in both urban and rural parts of Nepal seem to be unaware about politics which is depriving them from active participation in politics (Adhikary, 1996).

2.2.6 Work situation/Work life balance

According to the book 'Women in Business', most of the working women and entrepreneurs are married women (Reeves, 2010). Although there exists highly educated females in Nepal, one of the reasons for them to not continue or join the workforce is the mindset and expectations of the families and husband that she should not or does not have to work for what she is provided by them already (The World Bank, 2012). Husband's also expect their wives to handle the daily household chores together with their professional life, which is difficult for women aspiring to top positions (Uppalury & Racherla, 2014).

On top of that lack of day care facilities for children and maternity leaves for working women also adds up to their challenges. Similarly gender exclusive policies, sexual harassment at work, male dominated work and attitudes of male officers towards female workers or officers are also the challenges for women leaders (Bushell, 2008). Certain stereotypes in the workplace towards the female workers are also seen as a major problem. A successful woman is often stigmatised along their relationship with men. *"I bet she gives instructions in bed"* was a comment made by male executive towards a female worker who was doing well in her management role (Morrison et.al, 1992).

According to the Labor Act and Labour Regulation (1993), women should be provided with equal pay for equal amounts of work and are also given the services as maternity leave and other gender related privileges. Nevertheless, while in practice they are not given the same opportunity to work at the same level and are given low level jobs. Even in the tea estate industry, women workers have different fixed wage than that of male workers (Labour Act and Labour Regulations, 1993).

2.3 Recommendations to overcome obstacles

According to the literature that has been reviewed, there are some recommendations provided by the authors and scholars to overcome challenges for women leaders in the corporate field in both Nepalese and Indian context. Financial support for the working women or women who want to run their own business should be prioritized through both private and public institutions. Government shall also give emphasis on the policies and acts that support women who want to engage in the corporate sector. Similarly, the flow of information by the different levels of government on new or changed policies covering all the areas should be considered.

Skill building and training programs shall also be run rigorously with the help of professionals and woman to woman mentoring should be highlighted. In addition to that, opportunities for women to build professional networks through various programs should also be conducted. Involving women in the decision making process and in the meetings can also be fruitful to make women feel capable to perform in high positions. According to a paper presented by Srinivasan et.al (2013) recommends organizations to invest in child care facilities or support in flexible work options for mothers so that they would not drop out from their career (Srinivasan et.al 2013).

Moreover, women also need to develop their technical skills and reach out to more technology which will help them also to tackle work life balance, flexibility and time saving (Budhwar et.al, 2005).

CHAPTER 3: Theoretical Framework

This chapter will cover the theories which are relevant to the recommendations from the literature review chapter. The theories mentioned here are all linked to women's corporate leadership in a broader perspective, and I go beyond the context of Nepal and India from the literature review, to include theories originating in North America, Australia and Europe.

Table no.1: Links between recommendations from the literature review and the theories selected and presented in this chapter

Recommendations	Theories
Professional networking and women mentorship	Critical mass theory, Old boys' network
Financial support and Investment	Feminist institutionalism
Gender friendly government policies	Feminist institutionalism
Work life balance	Time as a resource
Training programs (Human Resource Development programs)	Feminist institutionalism
Female role models	Critical mass theory
Female participation in decision making levels	Critical mass theory

All the theories mentioned above in the table and described below in the text are interlinked to each other and each theory section will cover a few lines on operationalization to the interview guidelines.

3.1 Critical Mass Theory

Critical mass theory is the most widely used theory in the field of women's leadership. This theory presents the idea of necessity of a certain number/ critical mass that is required to bring change in an institution or organization. The theory originates from the US, and the work of Rosabeth Moss Kanter. Kanter (1977) claims that few numbers of minorities, for instance women, in an institution are seen as tokens. She further theorizes that there exists four types of group composition in any

organization/institution: uniform groups 100:0, skewed groups 85:15, tilted groups 70:30 or 65:35 (minority) and balanced groups 60:40 or 50:50.

According to Kanter, the Uniform group represents a homogeneous group of individuals where there exists only one specific kind of individual. Similarly, skewed groups are mixed with minorities as token members. Most of the skewed groups, especially in business, 'women' are seen as tokens and also as a 'hyphenated' member. For example, whenever there is a female who is the CEO of a company, people will always address her as the 'Female CEO' whereas it will not be the same in a male's case. No one will address a male who is a CEO as the 'Male CEO' of the company. Likewise, a female engineer, female manager and so on (Strydom et.al, 2017).

In addition to that, the token members are less likely to impact on the decision making levels and are often described by their individual characteristics, rather than their groups such as race, religion, group, ethnicity etc which are known as 'master status' for which the presumptions about them are highly prevalent in the institution (Kanter, 1977). Tokens are seen as minorities which automatically are more visible because of their number. Kanter (1977) says,

'Tokens can never be just another member while their category is so rare; they will always be a hyphenated member' (Kanter RM, 1977 Some effects of proportions on group life: Skewed Sex Ratios and Responses to Token Women, p.40)

Since women are seen as minorities and treated as tokens in the workplace, stereotyping of women as a minority group also hampers their career growth. There are three perceptions on tokenism; visibility, polarization and assimilation (Kanter, 1977). As mentioned earlier, tokens are more visible than other individuals in an organization since they represent a smaller number of people and also become representative of the whole group. It also leads to performance pressure in the token group. Whereas, polarization tends individuals to exaggerate the characteristics of token groups and it becomes easier for other people to see the contrast in differences. Polarization might lead to isolation in token members from the group and heighten the boundary between them and remaining members of the organization (ibid.).

Assimilation represents stereotyping and generalising of the members which eventually leads to 'role entrapment'. Stereotyping of individuals on the basis of their master status - for instance

women working in a male dominated company where she represents a minority, gender stereotyping becomes a barrier. Furthermore, they are often doubted and not trusted for their performance which leads them to self doubt, lose confidence and isolate themselves from other groups (ibid.).

Tilted groups are represented by less extreme distributions and less exaggerated effects, but where women are still minorities and men as majorities. Whereas balanced groups are with 40-60% of women. Incremental changes in the proportion of majority and minority in the tilted and balanced group can bring valuable changes, according to Kanter. If there is an increase in the number of minorities, trust from the majority also increases. Skewed boards have less earning quality and tilted groups of boards have better earning quality (Strydom et.al). On increasing the numbers of minorities, majorities also take advantage of women's representation as a resource and the benefits she can provide to the organization (Torchia et.al, 2011).

'Women make up slightly more than 50% of the world's population, yet average only 16% of the world's elected political post' (Grey, 2006, p. 492).

Hence, this theory of critical mass presents the idea of women being allowed to participate in decision making upon reaching a certain level of threshold of 40% women representation/ participation. In many countries, women who are in boards are still taken as tokens (Daily and Dalton, 2003; Kanter, 1977a, b; Singh et al., 2001; Terjesen et al., 2009). Women bring positive changes in the companies/organization when reaching critical mass of 40%, for example Grey states that:

'Gaining 15% of the seats in a political body may allow female politicians to change the political agenda, but it may take proportions of 40% to have women friendly policies introduced' (Grey, 2006, p. 494).

All boards with no females have less earnings than the ones with females, however, having only one female board member does not bring significant quality changes. Two or more than two are linked with significantly better results in earnings according to research undertaken in Australia by Monash University (Strydom et.al, Australian Journal of Management, 2017). Companies with high numbers of female board members do well in earning management and make better monitoring

roles than men by being more ethical and detail oriented, according to various studies (Bernardi & Arnold, 1977; Krishnan & Parsons, 2008).

3.1.1 Operationalisation

Thus, critical mass theory leads to some possible questions to the interviewees. Some of them could be;

1. How many females are there at your workplace? Is there any quota system existing in any forms?

2. Do you think a higher number of female employees/board members makes a positive difference at any company or organization?

3. Have you ever faced any kind of discrimination on being a woman, or felt that you are representing a minority?

3.2 Old Boys' Network

One of the major barriers in the life of a working woman is lack of access to professional networking and mentorship as per the literature reviewed in the previous chapter. Less access to professional networking acts as a glass ceiling in a woman's career (David-Netzely, 1998). With linkage to the previous theory of critical mass, women do not constitute critical mass in executive levels and are under-represented, which leads to lack of women in senior positions in companies/ organizations. On top of that, sex role stereotyping along with sexism also acts as barriers. With less female representation in the senior levels, there also exists organizational/structural barriers which prevent women to reach the top. Since there are very few women in influential positions in the workplace, it leads to less opportunities in networking and also mentoring. Women get less promoted and have less access to the resources due to lack of networking opportunities (Brass, 1985; Burke et.al, 1995a). Furthermore both the authors claim,

'Gender differences in the awareness and use of social networks in organisations are one of the main reasons why women earn less, get promoted less often and do not have access to as many resources as their male colleagues' (Brass, 1985; Burke et.al, 1995a).

Similarly, mentorship has been seen as an effective tool in the path of women's corporate leadership. Mentors provide valuable support and sponsorship to individuals. Women are seen as

tokens, and the socialization process of gender leads to stereotypical attitudes of men towards women on mentoring and also as colleagues. Men are often hesitant towards mentoring women due to the risk of losing their job, as it is a potential threat towards their image by being close to women in their workplace. Networking is often built in informal settings, and men are more comfortable in sharing their knowledge with other male members rather than females (Ehrich, 1994).

The phenomenon of 'Old boys' network' is a closed group of men in a professional setting where they built their networking. According to Ehrich (1994), there are three types of networks that have been identified; Formal, Informal and Community based. Formal networks are those kinds of networks where the members have to pay a fee for the services, they also get a specific time schedule and subscription for newsletter and other networking activities. Whereas informal network groups are groups of like minded people who meet on a regular basis where they share their knowledge, for instance women's groups. Lastly, community based network groups refers to organizations and social clubs formed in the community among the members for the purpose of building networks (Ehrich, 1994).

One potential result of women being represented as minorities, may be that they do not get the same level of training as men in the companies and support from the senior level. According to Ehrich (1994), very few women appear in the top positions in the companies as managers, and they do not have the same level of contact as male managers, which makes it difficult for women to choose their networks. Sex role stereotyping also acts as a crucial factor leading to women's less access to informal networks. Access to network leads to visibility in the community, confidence and information to get promotion (ibid.).

According to a questionnaire prepared by Still and Guerin to Australian male and female executive managers, there seems to be differences in the way male and female networking takes place. Networks that males belong to are more powerful than the networks that females belong to. Males use their network more successfully and seriously where they promote their business compared to females (ibid). Furthermore, they demonstrated three main differences in how males and females networked. Firstly, women were seen to be more keen to establish a network that is warm and more friendly than that of men. Men tend to utilise their network in a more functional manner. Secondly, there was a difference in the type of formal associations that males and females were involved in. Males were more involved in service, political, community-based, and sports networks, while

females were more inclined towards sociocultural and feminist organizations. The last finding was that women were more likely to stay in contact with other women and men with other men.

It was argued from the findings that networking is more effective to men than to women. Women join less powerful formal networks compared to men, mostly networking only with women and doing networking differently. Two types of networking were found to be followed by women; 'expressive network relationships' and 'instrumental network relationships' (Brass, 1985; Moore, 1990). The first one, 'expressive network relationships' are the ones where women make networks with other people for support and friends while the other one, 'instrumental network relationships' are the ones where the network is made with a high number of male members in the company to gain understanding and guidance (ibid.).

Traditionally women have been less active in community areas, which makes it difficult for them to develop community based networks. Women were historically confined in their homes and families which barricaded them from obtaining community networks. Community networks are closer to the male members of the society, and they find it easier to get access to different networks. Women hesitate to ask for mentorship especially from men, because of the fear of being misunderstood as making a 'sexual advance' (Ehrich, 1994).

3.2.1 Operationalisation

Hence, according to the theoretical approach of 'Old boys network', some of the possible questions with linkage to the interview questions could be;

1. How important do you think networking is in a workplace? Does your company/organization conduct some events where you can meet new people and build networks?
2. Is there any situation where you feel excluded from a networking group because you are a woman?
3. What are your viewpoints on networking and mentoring? Do you believe that women are less likely to be in top positions because they lack in proper networking with important people?

3.3 Feminist Institutionalism

Addressing the recommendation of Inclusion of women in formal institutions and their participation in decision making levels, especially at the level of governmental authorities,   the feminist

institutionalist approach seems theoretically relevant to include. This approach is about contextual inclusion associated with gender inclusion, women's empowerment and social inclusion in the institutions. Within this theory, women are considered as a marginalised group in the society, or the excluded group, limiting them from various opportunities (Mackay, 2010).

'Feminist institutionalism questions why and how seemingly neutral institutions (such as parliaments, courts and bureaucracies) continue to affect the daily lives of women and men, differently' (Wagle et.al, 2020, Extending on Feminist Institutionalism, p.251)

Institutionalism overall deals with how individuals and structures interact with each other and how an institution works to benefit people (Peters, 2005). Whilst Institutionalism focuses on political strategies and its results which can influence individuals' daily lives, it also emphasizes on formal and informal institutions. Institutionalism also realises the importance of both formal and informal institutions in policy making and governmental processes (Mackay et.al, 2010). Formal institutions are those institutions which are built with a purpose, whereas informal institutions are built by individuals, society and culture, for instance religion, traditions, values, customs etc (Wagle et.al, 2020). However, according to Wagle et.al, informal institutions have more power than the formal ones.

Various versions of institutionalism exist, including Rational choice Institutionalism (RCI), Historical Institutionalism (HI), Sociological Institutionalism (SI), Discursive Institutionalism (DI). RCI focuses on the 'micro-level', and claims that it is important to understand humans' tactical behaviors, and furthermore RCI views institutions as a 'voluntary cooperation' (Mackay et.al, 2010). This variant believes that institutions are also a medium for individuals to exert their power and control over other individuals (Knight, 1992; Lowndes, 2010;Moe, 2006).

HI, on the other hand, focuses on the 'meso - level' taking history seriously and emphasizing in solving real world problems related to politics and history (Mackay et.al, 2010). SI works on both 'micro-and macro-level interactions' focusing on the interlinkage between the actors and institutions (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). The main idea of SI is to highlight social and cognitive attributes of the institutions, which contrasts with RCI, which is claiming that they present the shared understanding about the way the world works rather than for creating solutions through

collective actions (Mackay et.al, 2010). Lastly, DI involves various levels from micro to the macro level of analysis.

Feminist institutionalism, on the other hand, differs from the above described variations in its core argument that the role of gender has been overlooked in the literatures of institutionalism. This is why a feminist way of institutionalism seems to play an important role in bringing gender friendly changes like mainstreaming policies including quotas and other 'institutional processes' (ibid.). Furthermore, feminist institutionalism argues that the use of a feminist lens brings institutional change (Mackay, 2009). Nevertheless, 'power' seems to be a common factor in addressing the issue from both feminism and Institutionalism more generally, where Wagle writes;

Power is another area of common interest between feminism and new institutionalism. Most of the forms of new institutionalism such as Historical Institutionalism (HI) and Rational Choice Institutionalism (RCI) include power as either a central or a peripheral component (Wagle et. al, 2020).

Power and hierarchy are interlinked to each other. Hierarchy also acts as a tool in the power and gender disparity which can also be seen in the wider society among institutions. According to theories of feminist institutionalism, women are mostly intentionally placed in positions where it is difficult to reach/get access to higher positions. For instance they are often hired for administrative support, cleaning, catering jobs and so on (Itzin & Philipson, 1995). Furthermore, research indicates that quota systems effectively increase women's representation in lower levels, but not in higher levels, since there are very few vacancies available for women. For example, according to Ali and Syed (2017) findings from Pakistan and Bangladesh reveals that women face more discrimination than men, and there exists a gap between policy and implementation due to low levels of organizational commitment (Ali & Syed, 2017). Also the study done at the Nepal forest bureaucracy about discrimination of women, pointed to a lack of policy implementation in the organisation (Wagle et.al, 2020).

Structural and organizational rigidity limits the workplace to bring gender friendly changes. There seems to be a lack of collective action from females, collective action brings changes in institutions (ibid.). Upon linking this theory to 'time as a resource' (see the next section), women have limited time available since most of their time is spent at household chores and taking care of family

(Rutherford, 2001). Workplaces and institutions lack initiative and leadership from women, and also lack of unity among female professionals. They are often pulled down because of backbiting, spreading rumour about other women. Women lack genuine support from other women. For instance, a study done in the Ministry of Forestry in Nepal showed lack of unity among women professionals working under the ministry, and demonstrated how these women frequently participated in miscellaneous activities such as backbiting, spreading rumour and public scrutiny (Wagle et.al, 2020).

Linking feminist institutionalism and critical mass theory, women's representation and participation in politics have not reached the critical threshold number. Participation below 15% are taken as tokens and upon reaching 35%, significant changes in policy and decision making levels can be seen (Kanter, 1977). Quota systems are seen as a tool to bring gender mainstreaming from a feminist perspective. The token members are judged more by their performance and their hard work rather than their positions in the institutions but on the flip side males are more privileged. It's easier for them comparatively to gain trust and respect in the workplace through their positions (Wagle et.al, 2020).

Likewise, office infrastructures and work environments disabling women from work, physical layout, building, rooms, for instance, lack of separate toilets in Bangladesh led women to stay reluctant to work outside the home (Rezina & Mahmood, 2016). Not only that, gender insensitive behaviors from male co workers and clients, inappropriate behavior from male co workers, lack of respect, male staffs considering themselves as senior if they are older than the female staffs despite the positions, and males considering themselves superior by default are also factors contributing to the obstacles in women's career path. In addition to that, lack of access to child care facilities from the workplace/institutions also makes women reluctant to work outside from home (Wagle et.al, 2020).

Similarly, with connection to old boys' network theory, new male staff in the office can build their networking in different ways informally, while females are not provided with the same level of opportunity especially with males, because it is not considered appropriate to develop a close relation to other male members outside the family, even though it is for professional purposes (Smetana et.al, 2018). Workplace related bullying and sexual harassment are also seen as barriers where women are often victimized. There can be two broad categories for sexual harassment,

'hostile working environment' and 'quid pro quo' (Berdahl, 2007; Salin, 2016; Dillon et.al, 2015; Bala, 2006). Hostile working environment refers to the environment with sexual intentions, but with no employment benefits (McDonald, 2012), whereas quid pro quo refers 'this for that' if literally translated and refers to an exchange relationship (Mellon, 2013).

Sexual harassment exists because of asymmetrical power relations between genders, stereotypes towards male and female, men considered as more economically empowered, powerful positions of men in the workplace. The power difference also makes some groups of people more advantaged than others to use the resources and positions (Wagle, 2020).

3.3.1 Operationalisation

In accordance to the 'Feminist Institutionalism' theory, there are some potential interview questions for the interviewees. Some of them are;

1. In your understanding, what role does a governmental institution play in order to support women's inclusion in the corporate sector?
2. Do you find it important to have women involved in decision making levels? Are there women in top positions where they can make decisions for the company?
3. Do you think informal institutions such as culture and family make males more privileged than women in the workplace? Are you involved in the decision making process in your family?

3.4 Time as a resource

Work-life balance for professional working women is also a challenge. According to Rutherford (2001), women have less access to time as a resource than men. This is because of gendered differences, and women spend more time in unpaid care work at their homes with their family and children. According to Rutherford, men are often provided with time at their availability by their partners. Their partners contribute their time to them so that they could work outside home without having to worry about things at home. This theory claims time as a resource that is more available to men at the workplace. Furthermore she claims,

'Women are less likely to have equal access to time because of the gendered division of domestic labour, and indeed men's time is often made available to them by their partners at home. At a time when women can offer almost everything that men can in terms of ability, skills and experience,

time becomes the differentiating feature which makes men more likely to achieve promotion' (Rutherford, 2001, Time as a resource, Abstract).

Time as a resource is made available to men by women's labour. Men can get more availability to their jobs and more privilege when their pay rises (Rutherford, 2001). On the flip side, women are seen as less committed to their work and career, since they are not available the same amount of time as men (Coward, 1993).

The overtime work culture at the workplace acts as an obstacle for women at their workplace since they cannot contribute more time to their work outside home. Their work-life balance gets disturbed. There seems to exist unspoken expectations to work for extra hours at work especially when you are in higher positions such as managers. According to the Labour Force Survey Report (1997), the UK has the longest working hours in Europe, 48hrs a week and 11 % of the full time employees worked more than 60 hrs a week. The report also claims that it leads to a subtle pressure of working overtime to other employees (Rutherford, 2001).

Kodz et.al (1998) presented some of the reasons for doing extra work in a report by the Institute for Employment Studies. These reasons are: Work burden, expectation from the workplace, demand from the customers, scarcity of staff and budget, people's attitude towards overtime, working employees seen as committed and dedicated towards their work, and overtime seen as a willingness to strengthen an individual's career. Other reasons could be, time is seen as a resource, peer group pressure, teamwork fulfillment, culture of honoring over time work. These reasons are provided by Rutherford's study on high technology workers, where Massey found that within the workplace reciprocity, individuals can develop a culture of praising over time and organizations might make the most of this culture. The report from the UK Labour Force Survey (1997) also showed that women tend to work more hours as she enters higher/senior positions.

Patriarchy and time
It is difficult for women with children to manage household and work simultaneously. In the UK most of the overtime working men have a partner and dependent children at home (Institute for Employment Research, 2000). The report also claimed some of the reasons for working overtime were: need for money and to be able to work more in exchange for not having to take care of the household. One of the reasons for men to be able to work outside their home more efficiently than

that of women is also because their physical and emotional needs are covered by their partners at home, whereas women have to work extra hours even after returning from work (Rutherford, 2001).

It is important for the organizations to understand the concept of time and how it is operated, constructed and experienced (Starkey, 1989). Most of the jobs are customized according to the availability of women's time when they are exempted from domestic work, which has become a source for low wage workers. Bushwell and Jenkins (1994) talks about the use of time as being a patriarchal blueprint for exclusion of women in the workplace.

Senior managers at a company have their secretaries to manage their time, which could save his/her time. A majority of senior managers are with non-working wives, who take care of their household chores while they could work in the office (Rutherford, 2001). Rutherford claims these phenomena as "paradox of time saving". With gender and time, Rutherford's analysis in an airline company, two groups of people worked for shorter hours; working mothers and older men. The findings agree with the survey report of the Institute for Foreign Employment Research which presents that women with partners/children or family work less hours than that of men. When working women are provided with an option of working from home with flexibility, it gets exchanged with loss in credibility for not being visible. One of the women working at the airline company in finance department said,

'*I work from 4 to 6 am. most mornings at home so that I can get home in the evening and spend some time with my son and husband*' (Rutherford, 2001, The Long Hours Culture, p. 269).

Although the theory speaks mostly for working women with family, even the women without one also find it difficult to have a work-life balance (Rutherford, 2001).

3.4.1 Operationalisation

Hence, this theoretical approach 'Time as a resource' leads to ask some questions related to interviewee's work-life balance. Some of the possible questions could be;

1. Do you see time as a resource? And how do you manage time for work outside home?
2. How important is it for you to have supportive and understanding family members? Do they motivate you to work?

3. Do you believe that men are more likely to get promotions since they can commit more time to their work compared to women? Why or why not?

4. How much time would you estimate each week on your job? Do you also have to take care of household chores? If so, how much time do you spend on that?

CHAPTER 4: Methodology

4.1 Overview of the chapter

This main goal of this research was to investigate the challenges of Nepalese women in corporate leadership. This chapter presents the methodological procedure which has been the guidelines for the study. This study is a qualitative research method with no testing of hypotheses. Nevertheless, the data collection has been influenced by theories that have been used. This methodological framework includes subchapters on theory of science with constructivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology, research method and data collection, consideration about sources of data (Primary and Secondary), data sampling method, choice of interview (Expert interview), data analysis method, ethical consideration and limitations.

4.2 Theory of Science

This section covers the philosophical stance which guides the data analysis process.

4.2.1 Constructivist ontology

The study is based on a constructivist ontology. Social constructivism is an approach to research which argues that meanings are dynamic and acquired by the social actors when they engage with each other, and in this sense meanings are subjective. This nature of reality focuses on an individual's experience, their environment and social properties (Bryman, 2012). It also covers a wide range of human behavior, and focuses on how interpretations contribute to making the social world through social processes and practices (Young & Collin, 2004). There exist various factors which affect an individual's reality such as their past experiences, peer group, culture, environment, people around them. Hence, in relation to my research objectives in this thesis, the theoretical position of social constructivism would presume that women in leadership roles are influenced by their social environment, role models, family, culture and religion and many other extraneous factors.

4.2.2 Interpretivist epistemology

The study is guided by an interpretivist epistemological stance. This epistemological stance claims that the reality is formed by human interpretations based on how things are perceived by individuals, and social realities are constructed through the activities done by social actors (Porta &

Keating, 2008). This research emphasizes the challenges of corporate leadership faced by women in Nepal. The epistemological stance can be seen mostly in the data analysis section where the researcher analyses the data with interpretivist lens along with constructivism.

Data analysis is done using both the stances with the acknowledgement of the fact that realities are constructed through individuals' interpretations, experiences and perceptions.

4.3 Research method and data collection

This study is based on a qualitative research method with constructivism and interpretivism as the philosophical stance, and it uses in-depth semi-structured online interviews. The reason for choosing a qualitative research method is for in-depth data collection, it's flexible nature and it also provides opportunity to do in-depth analysis of the data. Since the topic itself demands elaborative knowledge, it requires to know about the opinions, perception and experience of the corporate leaders in the Nepalese context.

4.4 Considerations about sources of data

This section highlights the sources of data that are used in the thesis. The literature search for the thesis was a difficult task to perform. There were only a couple of literatures based in Nepal, whereas most of the literatures were from neighboring countries India and Bangladesh. With the difficulty in searching for the literature, the validity, reliability and credibility of data are also taken into considerations. Initially the idea to collect data was to reach out to family and friends for their networks to use as interviewees. However, it did not work out and had to change the idea for the data collection method. The researcher realised in the process of using family and friends networks that the data could be biased since the potential interviewees might not be as reliable as others in terms of the information being provided. Hence, the researcher switched to another approach which was reaching out to people via social media.

4.4.1 Primary source of data

For the primary source of data, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted individually with the participants to gain information about challenges in the corporate field.

4.4.2 Secondary source of data

Various articles, books and journals are used for the secondary sources of data. The book 'Indian women in leadership' has been used predominantly for the literature review part. Similarly for theories, the critical mass theory by Rosabeth Moss Kanter, articles on Old Boys' network, Feminist Institutionalism, Time as a resource by Sara Rutherford are used. In addition to that, different study reports published by the Nepalese Government and various NGOs and INGOs such as USAid, UNESCO, ILO and so on are also used.

4.5 Data sampling method

A brief description of the study was posted on two social media platforms i.e. LinkedIn and Facebook. Similarly, friends and family members in Nepal also helped reach out to some of the possible participants, while one of the participants who is the CEO of an e-commerce company was reached out personally via Facebook. After getting the email address of the possible participants, a standard email invitation was sent to them for knowing their availability and also scheduling their interview time. Altogether 15 participants were contacted, some of them are referred by some social media friends by commenting and tagging people in the post. Some of the participants contacted directly via LinkedIn message and student email account. Since there were not a lot of participants to choose from, initially everyone who responded were selected for the interview. Nevertheless, later more participants responded to the emails but due to the time limitations they were not interviewed.

The snowball sampling method is considered as a useful technique of collecting data in a qualitative research method. This kind of data sampling method is required when there is a requirement of high level of trust and a few number of potential respondents. Even though snowball sampling method sounds easier to carry out, it actually is not easy to carry out, and the participants are selected by convenience sampling method (Baltar & Brunet, 2012). However, there are some important criticisms of the snowball sampling methods, like the sample being influenced by the initial needs and potentially being distorted by individuals' network size (Magnani et.al, 2005).

According to Benfield and Szlemko (2006), virtual snowball sampling helps to reach out samples from a wider range of population and can also increase the sample size by lowering the time and cost. In addition to that, it can also provide flexibility to both the parties to perform the data

collection method (Evans & Mathur, 2005). On the flip side, there also exists disadvantages such as the fact that email addresses could be spammed reducing the probability of response rate and pre assumptions of interviewees about the interview process (ibid.).

4.6 Choice of Interview

Semi-structured online interviews were conducted with the help of online platforms such as Google meet, Skype, Zoom and Facebook Messenger. The participants were given the choice to select the online platform according to their convenience. Each interview lasted from half an hour to 45 minutes depending on the length of answers from the interviewee. The reason for conducting online interviews is because of the distance from Denmark to Nepal and the COVID-19 pandemic. In this way, the online interviews provided both a convenient and safe way of collecting data.

The interview questions were generated according to the theories that are presented in the theoretical framework. There were 12 questions for four theories and one extra question on 'access to finance' especially for entrepreneurs, which was not relevant for other participants working in the corporate field. All the questions were open ended questions and some presented the essence of theory. For example: the theory of 'Time as a resource' was presented with its gist before asking the question. The last question for the entrepreneurs was not generated out of existing theories, but rather from the literature review, which revealed one of the major challenges for women in business as access to finance. The last question was asked to women entrepreneurs if they had the same problem and agreed to the literature. The interview questions are semi-structured and were customised while asking according to the structure and flow of the answers. This follows recommendations from Kvale and Brinkmann on semi structured interviews technique (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009).

In depth semi structured interviews were conducted since the research topic needed deeper understanding and knowledge of the field. The interviews were also intensive and conducted with a small number of participants. The interview questions were customised according to the flow of the interviewees answers and also probing questions were asked. It was very important to carefully listen throughout the interview in order to ask probing questions even though it was being recorded. One of the challenges was to schedule interviews with the difference in time zone between Nepal and Denmark and to conduct expert interviews with the busy schedule of the participants.

Furthermore, one of the interviews for a CEO of a company was taken together with a student from Boston, USA due to the limited availability of time of the participant.

4.7 Expert interview

As mentioned earlier, a small number of persons were interviewed, these are all in leadership positions in the Nepalese corporate sectors and also business entrepreneurs, and they are all women. It was deemed necessary to use the expert interview technique. According to Pfadenhauer (2009), expert interview is a technique which allows to reconstruct certain knowledge. In this study, interviewees are the experts who have leadership positions in the corporate sector of Nepal. For instance Managers, CEO, HR and so on. The interviews were conducted with consideration to expert interview technique where the interviewees are made comfortable while giving their answers and the option to skip the question if they feel it too personal to answer. Expert interview is not an interview where the interviewees feel like it being too inquisitive nor unnatural, but it should be like a normal casual talk situation where they feel like expressing themselves easily (Honer, 1994), as they are being interviewed about a subject on which they have expert first hand knowledge.

4.8 Data analysis method

Thematic analysis is used for the data analysis method. Thematic analysis was first used in the 1970s, and there exist different versions of it. Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke claim it to be a 'flexible and accessible' method of data analysis. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) there are six phases of analysis on thematic analysis. They are listed below:

1. Familiarization with the data (including transcription and reading data)
2. Generating Initial codes
3. Theme and sub themes searching
4. Theme and sub themes reviewing
5. Defining and labeling themes
6. Report generation

For the first step of the process, data was reread and reviewed and transcribed manually using word documents. The language used for the interview was both Nepali and English as preferred by the participants. The use of Nepali language was translated directly to English for the easier process of

analysis. Since the Nepali language writing requires a different keyboard and is time consuming, the important information was transcribed directly to the word document. However all the sound clips from the interviews were uploaded while submitting the final thesis paper. All the transcribed interviews were saved individually and each question and answer were taken for analysis. All the important information was highlighted using different colors according to the question number in all the documents. After that, the initial themes (see table no.2 in chapter 5) are generated and listed out using a table according to the theories. The central themes were generated according to the content similarity which were categorised under same headings and presented in a table with their descriptions.

Iterative data analysis method was used which requires going back and forth to the data for analysis. Since this was a qualitative research method, data analysis occurs parallel to data collection (Galletta, 2013).

4.9 Theory driven analysis and discussion

For the analysis, the first part is presented with data in the front where the information is presented through interviewees direct quotes underlying theories and philosophical stances. A separate section is written after analysis about discussion where the findings are discussed according to the theories that are used. In this section the data and information are put out through the four theories.

4.10 Ethical considerations

It is crucial to take ethical consideration while approaching for the interviews and also during and after the interview process. It was important to gain trust with the participants to extract the required important information from them, since some of the answers also required personal experience with examples. The choice for the interview medium as audio/video call was highly prioritised with consent taking before starting the recording of the interview which is included in the recordings. As the principle suggested by Shamoo and Resnik (2015), honesty, objectivity, carefulness and confidentiality are taken into consideration while conducting the research.

While taking into account ethical consideration, there also comes ethical dilemmas which have direct/indirect link with the lives of the participants. Ethical dilemmas do not come planned and can arrive any time in the process. Ethics are always affected by circumstances and complex issues

which cannot be covered all (ibid.). This research took care of the ethical considerations from the very beginning of the data collection process by developing a standard invitation email and sending it to each potential participant, even in cases where they contacted me personally via social media (See Annex for standard email). The participants are given assurance for data confidentiality, anonymity and the fact that the interviews are solely used for academic purposes. Participants are informed and asked for their consent before recording the interviews. As a part of gaining trust, the researcher also promised to share the final thesis paper with them since they are keen on reading the final analysis of the data collected.

4.11 Limitations

4.11.1 Validity

Data are generated by first-hand individual online interviews. All the data and information provided by the respondents are taken into consideration keeping them confidential and anonymous. While presenting the information from the interviews, only the position of the interviewees are disclosed but with no company/institutions name.

4.11.2 Reliability

The sample group are the women corporate leaders in the capital region of Nepal who fall under the privileged category. Hence, the readers should keep in mind that these sections of the population do not represent the entire country Nepal, but rather a small group residing in the capital city 'Kathmandu'. The reasons for this are, most of the educated number of people reside in the capital city of Nepal with a higher number of employment rates. There are a low number of female corporate leaders in Nepal and since 'Kathmandu' is the most developed city in comparison to other cities and places also with the accessibility of resources, the sample number was taken from the same place itself.

CHAPTER 5: Analysis

This chapter of the research covers overview of the data from the seven interviews, and introduction to the six generated themes. Following this, I proceed to the analysis, presenting one theme at the time along the way drawing on the theories presented in chapter three which is presented in the discussion section. The interviewees were reached out to via Facebook, LinkedIn and through family networks. Within a week of posting my invitation on LinkedIn, it created a big attention among the Nepalese people, who started sharing, commenting and tagging people they know. The post was viewed by 19,835 people which also showed that the topic could generate wide interest. Many females in leadership roles were willing to participate and help with the interview. With the title 'Women corporate leadership and its challenges in Nepal' the themes for this chapter have been generated on the basis of thematic analysis of the data. The information in transcribed interviews were highlighted with different colors and the repetition of the information belonging to the same color were categorised under one initial theme. There were 12 interview questions whose individual answers were color coded using the same colors for 7 interviews. After that a table was made for initial theme generation according to the four theories that were used for generating interview questions.

All the quotations mentioned are anonymised and only the position of the participants are mentioned. The themes are interlinked with each other and several theories are relevant for one theme and vice versa. The first section of analysis will focus more on the data and prioritise data over theories. The next section of discussion will present more theoretical driven analysis and bring theories in the front. The first section of analysis ends with the extra information provided by the interviewees.

Table no. 2: Overview of data content and initial coding themes

Theories	Initial themes
Critical Mass theory	1. No quota system but preference to females 2. Prioritising qualification over gender 3. Less females in top positions (fewer role models) 4. Positive influence from females in the workplace 5. Discrimination/Stereotypes on the basis of gender
Old boys' network	1. Few female role models 2. Networking and Mentoring as a crucial factor 3. Difficult for females to reach networks/had to fit in 4. Feeling of exclusion/ignored 5. Difficult to balance between home time and office time
Feminist Institutionalism	1. Very important for women to be at decision making levels 2. Female bosses bring positive changes 3. Patriarchy benefiting males both at work and home 4. Men underestimating the decisions made by women 5. Governmental improvements (Digitalisation, less bureaucratic, separate departments, strict implementation of laws) 6. Balanced groups

Theories	Initial themes
Time as a resource	1. More time to work, managing both home and office/Role dissonance 2. Less time available as compared to men 3. Important to have supportive family and moral support 4. Glamorization of overtime work culture

In addition to the above themes, which are all related to theories included in chapter three, a final theme about 'access to finance' was generated with reference to the extra question asked for the entrepreneurs with consideration of challenges presented in the literature review.

Access to finance	1. Rely on personal savings 2. Help from networks and family 3. Discrimination from banks for loans on the basis of gender 4. Less availability of investors 5. Second thoughts from family and having to prove yourself

Furthermore, these initial themes were categorised under six different headings according to their content similarity.

Table no. 3: Overview of central coding themes

Central theme	Meanings
Fewer females in top positions	There is less female participation in the corporate sector which has led few females in top positions and also in the board members in the companies. There also seems to be a lack in female role models for other aspiring women leaders in future.

Central theme	Meanings
Networking and mentoring as a crucial factor	Networking and mentoring plays an important role to climb up the corporate ladder. Business relies heavily on networking. Lack of female networking, since less female participation in the corporate world and lack of mentors overall. Feeling of exclusion during networking events.
Difficult to handle dual responsibilities	Hard time balancing home and work. Expectations from family to fulfill dual responsibilities as a corporate leader and daughter in-law or a mother. Difficult to make family understand the importance of work.
Patriarchy serving as barrier	Interlinked to every other challenge presented in the information. From home to office, patriarchy serves as an obstacle for women and provides males with more privilege. Various kinds of discriminations on the basis of gender at the workplace. Difficulties in being a female manager, HR, Head of department and so on. Females have to prove themselves at work and in front of other people, leadership positions but not enough power to make sole decisions, being ignored by male corporate leaders.
Institutionalised discrimination and flaws	Institutionalised discrimination from Governmental authorities and also banks in terms of business and loans. Underestimating women's capabilities, rigid about taking women in higher positions, traditional working methods.

Central theme	Meanings
Glamourisation of overtime work culture	More time spent at the office is seen as more dedicated and hardworking, less time availability with women having to take care of both household and work. More responsibilities for mothers and married women. Supportive family serving as a bonus to stay late at work.

The above mentioned six central themes are 1. *Fewer females in top positions, 2. Networking and mentoring as a crucial factor, 3. Difficult to handle dual responsibilities, 4. Patriarchy serving as a barrier, 5. Institutionalised discrimination and flaws and 6. Glamourisation of overtime work culture.* These themes are further explained and analysed in detail below.

5.1 Central themes descriptions

5.1.1 Fewer females in top positions

The theme 'Fewer females in top position' presents the findings of less female leaders in the companies, which results in less female role models for young female aspiring leaders. According to the interviewees, there are very few women in corporate sectors in Nepal as compared to other sectors such as NGOs. Since they belonged to the top positions of their companies, some of them did mention that they have more numbers of female staff than male. While others mentioned being only one or two.

"People are so used to not seeing females in the board members. They are not even bothered by that. There are not many biases I have faced, but the mentality that women are incapable is still there" (Corporate Head, Company)

Nevertheless, as one of the corporate leaders mentioned, people are not used to seeing female leaders and they are often discriminated against according to their gender as being incapable. Furthermore, they are also judged because of their position, power and gender.

"I get comments that I am too bossy and also people tell me that I am trying to show my power because of my position. But for men it will be more casual since they are in a high position" (Managing Director, Company)

According to the Old boys' network theory, along with organizational and structural barriers, sex role stereotyping also acts as a barrier for females in the corporate world. This theory seems to be relevant in the context of being in a leadership position as a female in Nepal. Upon asking the question about the process of hiring female candidates in their companies, none of the companies had a quota for women, however, women were encouraged to apply for the positions. Everyone believed in hiring people on the basis of their skills and qualifications over their gender. However, women were still treated as a minority because of their number and less participation. Just like the critical mass theory presents the idea of being a 'hyphenated member', interviews did mention about being treated differently being a woman leader and as a female manager and not only a manager, or a female marketing head and not only as a marketing head.

According to critical mass theory, 40% participation of women is required to bring substantial changes in the companies. One of the HR managers in the interview mentioned that when there are less females in the board members or in top positions, there will be less women friendly decisions and policies in the companies. The interviewees mentioned having very few or no females in the head positions. While the interviewees said there is less participation of females in the corporate sector, they also mentioned that having more female employees and more females in higher positions in the companies brings positive differences. They said that they feel more confident, flexible and understand the environment to work. One of them also added that the decision making gets smoother. Women leaders understand more about the nature and problem of the work as compared to other male leaders, she claimed. Female employees are more loyal towards their work while also giving new viewpoints.

"So when I came to this company I was very happy since the interview. Even the interview was taken by a female. It somehow increased my confidence level……I had this fresh perspective fueled by two ladies. I really liked it and there is definitely a difference. My immediate boss is a female and my managing director is also a female. And both of them have very strong personalities whereas they are very empathetic as well. So I don't need to explain so many things to them because they

understand in terms of what I am going through and all these work from home things" (HR, Company)

All the above mentioned qualities of a female leader by the interviewee resonates with the theory of critical mass, as it also states that women bring positive changes in the company/organization, however having only one or only few female board members does not bring significant changes in the company. The theory claims that only organisations going above the 40% threshold of women's representation/participation allowed to bring changes in the company - with less, women in the boards still taken as tokens.

As a constructivist, one of the main observations from my research interviews is that there exists more socio-cultural challenges than corporate challenges for females in the field of corporate leadership roles. When interacting with the participants, some of them mentioned that the new generation of corporate men are welcoming to the new females in the sector, which shows that the corporate world is willing to accept more female participation and things are changing slowly with time.

5.1.2 Networking and mentoring as a crucial factor

The theme 'Networking and mentoring as a crucial factor' presents networking and mentoring as being one of the most important factors for corporate leaders. All the participants agreed on the importance of networking and mentoring and also shared that females have more difficulty in building networks compared to males, as mentioned in the theory 'Old boy's Network'. However, there were two participants who said that the time has changed now, and females are much more ahead than before in terms of building networks. The first interviewee mentioned that people with good networks often get benefited in the company along with their qualifications. One of the corporate head of a company mentioned;

"Networking and mentorship are very important. If you don't have a connection then it's very difficult. Even if you meet someone generally in some events that also becomes important. And if you have the networking, but not mentorship, then I don't think you can start somewhere. I don't think you will find a solution for whatever you are looking for when you are working. If you have networking, but not mentoring, then you have that gap to fill yourself" (Corporate Head, Company)

Furthermore, some interviewees mentioned feelings of exclusion during networking programs and events where they have to fit in or blend in with the circle as claimed by the theory of 'Old boys' Network'. In addition to that, they also said men tend to ignore women during the meetings and events with no eye contact, shortening their meeting time as compared to being with a male leader.

"But one thing I have felt in this industry is men tend to completely ignore women. And that is not professional when you are talking and giving a full fledged 25 minutes presentation it is very important that they at least make eye contact" (Corporate Head, Company)

Mentorship seems to be lacking in the corporate field, and participants mentioned it to be more effective especially in the beginning phase, since fresh graduates of business have no idea of where to start in the company.

One of the other challenges for not getting opportunities to find networks and mentors was also created since there are few females in the top positions (as being mentioned in the critical mass theory). This resulted in the fact that other females had a hard time trying to reach out to mentors and build networks with other females. With the less females in senior level positions, there are less opportunities for other young women for networking and mentoring.

"If there are female core team members then as I said earlier, it inspires other females too to look forward to something. Especially if you are a young woman leader then you can look up to someone....I didn't find any females for the profession I am in. I could not reach out to anyone" (HR, Company)

While the HR person mentioned the importance of networking, she also further claimed some females get higher positions also solely because of their hard work and qualifications. Not only that, as per the theory of 'Old Boys' Network', the interviewee also mentioned male mentors/leaders being more comfortable to share their knowledge and expertise with other males rather than females, which also creates a barrier for females in their professional life.

5.1.3 Difficult to handle dual responsibilities of work and home

As clear as the meaning of the theme is, this theme presents the findings that women corporate leaders have a hard time managing their responsibilities both at home and at work.

"I work both at work and home. I do my office work even at home which is usually after 9 pm and stay late night. I start my day at 6:30 am and end it around 11:30 pm. I also take care of my son and help him with his studies. And sometimes I work until 2-3'o o'clock in the night" (Marketing Head, Company)

The participants mentioned it being difficult for females to fulfill societal and familial expectations as a daughter/daughter in-law/mother as compared to being a male member. Most of the corporate sectors require people with managerial positions to work extra as compared to a normal positioned employee, which makes it difficult especially for women with family and children. One of the participants shared her experience of having to be out of home late in the evenings and sometimes at night, where she has been scolded by her parents a lot of times. She also mentioned that she has difficulties making her family understand the nature of her work and her career ambitions and goals.

"So many of our female managers had a hard time working from home because their in-laws wanted them to do household chores. All of the married women leaders were struggling and still are in their work. We had an informal discussion within our company on how to tackle that. People have their own set of expectations once you are married. Even though you are a highly educated field you still feel the pressure from home" (HR, Company)

With the pandemic situation, as the work from home culture started, the female managers also shared having difficulties to work from home. The time was especially difficult for married women where their in-laws did not understand the concept of working from home and expected them to do household chores even in the office hours, while taking care of the children. Another challenge is having to return home to household chores and children after a long day at work.

"I still have to take care of my household after returning from work, my husband does help but still that mentality exists that I feel cooking is my responsibility. I still feel that and when my husband cooks I feel uncomfortable. So, that is culture" (Marketing Head, Company)

One of the important observations and analysis as a constructivist and interpretivist researcher is the internalization of patriarchy by women, which is presented in the above mentioned saying by the marketing head. Similarly, decisions at home are mostly made by the male figurehead as father/ husband of the family. It seems difficult to get out of the patriarchal bubble in society which serves as a barrier for women.

5.1.4 Patriarchy serving as barrier both at work and home

As presented by the previous theme, this theme showcases the findings of how patriarchy creates obstacles for women both at home and work. A supervisor from a bank mentioned that decision making at home is often handled by her husband for which she says,

"When it comes to making decisions at home, male members are considered as the head and in my case my husband, I need to ask him before making any decisions. But it does not mean that they are right every time, when they are wrong we can also make decisions. But overall, I cannot make any decisions without asking my husband and I don't think a situation like that exists yet" (Supervisor, Bank)

Hence, males are more privileged both at home and work in Nepalese society. The participants felt that the workplace also demands a male leader for managerial positions and sees females as incapable of handling the responsibilities. A HR of a company says,

"As you advance with their career growth, then I felt like maybe the company wants a male leader. They feel like female HR leaders are more suitable for software companies, companies with more professionals than with labour class employees or where there are no unions. Women are always treated like they get emotional or they might not be able to speak up or speak diplomatically. I realised companies wanted to hire male HR leaders since they are not driven by their emotions as females. They also feel that males are more experienced than females. Even though both male and females have equal qualifications, the companies view that males are more capable" (HR, Company)

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As the quote mentioned above, one of the HR manager also mentioned that gender bias in the work place also starts once you get into the workplace and start your job. Discrimination on the basis of gender seemed be highly prevalent in the corporate world. Because of less female participation in the leadership roles, there were lack of women friendly changes and policies from male colleagues. Women leaders in the decision making levels also felt that men underestimate women's opinion and decisions made both at work and home. One of the privileges of men was to be able to stay at work as long as they wanted and return home according to their wish. Men are not questioned for their every action, whereas on the flip-side women have to justify every decision they make. One of the HR managers of a company said,

"Yes, there were a number of times I felt discriminated against for my gender. Like whenever we sit for meetings if there are 10 males and only 1 female, they really don't care about making it more women inclusive. And when I suggest they make it more inclusive, they don't feel the need for it. They don't make women friendly decisions. I did what I can from the position I have, but they don't consider even small things like making toilets women friendly" (HR, Company)

Women's position and power are also underestimated by the men. Men seem to be always at the top of the hierarchy, which seldom allows women to take sole responsibility and make their own decisions.

"I am the head of marketing and communication so I do have the right to make decisions. But there are three other people whose signatures are needed even though they are from the different departments, but their permission is required" (Corporate Head, Company)

5.1.5 Institutionalised discrimination and flaws

The theme 'Institutionalised discrimination and flaws' presents the findings of women being discriminated at their work, and from the other institutions such as governmental authorities and banks. According to the participants, there are some positions in the company for which they prefer male staff over females. One of the challenges for women leaders is organizational barriers, where the companies only want to hire females for pretty looking positions.

As per the theory of 'Feminist Institutionalism', informal institutions such as culture, society, tradition and so on have more power than formal ones. This theory was seen relevant in the corporate world. Culture and patriarchal society - as mentioned in the earlier theme - were seen as the major set back for women in leadership roles.

"There's the benefit of patriarchy for males like they can return home anytime they like. No one asks you why you are late? Companies also hire male because they can stay late to work or it will be easier for us to send him out of the city but it will be difficult in the case of females" (HR, Company)

Furthermore, lack of female participation in the decision making levels and also at the corporate sector were the result of lack of collective actions from females themselves.

The interviewees also had a few things to share regarding their personal experience with governmental authorities. Nepalese government offices need to be digitalised, which will make people's work easier and faster. Traditional ways of working from the government creates obstacles, especially for women entrepreneurs who have their own company or business. Pre information about the necessary documents was one of the suggestions from the participants.

"If the government services would have been more advanced and digitised then it would have been much easier to get it from home. We didn't have to go to authorities physically for everything. Since it is not yet digitised and they have traditional ways of working there are a lot of hassle while doing governmental work. It would also have been better if they could provide pre information on requirements of documents which are needed for specific tasks" (HR, Company)

The government authorities also seem to be less open towards giving higher positions to women, even at their offices despite their efforts in female empowerment programs. There also seemed to be a lack in female leadership training programs.

"More female leadership training, more women friendly labor laws. Government has raised paid maternity leaves which is a good step. I wish the government was more strict about laws" (HR, Company)

Likewise, female entrepreneur participants also mentioned the discrimination present even from the banks for giving loans between males and females. Females have to encounter more questions from the banks upon requesting for business loans, they claimed. One of the interesting findings from an interview with a participant was that the big institutions related to business are led by men, whereas it is supposed to represent all the business people in the country. A marketing head from a company said,

"Institutions like FNCCI (Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce) have all male members whereas it is for everyone. So, I see a lack of perspective. They have the mindset that they are always superior and do not really listen to you. That's the time when I feel there is male dominance whenever I go to FNCCI" (Marketing Head, Company)

5.1.6 Glamorisation of overtime work culture

The theme directly links with the theory of 'Time as a resource' and presents the findings, the culture of taking overtime work as a sign of dedication and commitment, a phenomenon which affects the probability of promotion among men and women leaders. One of the managing directors shared her experience as,

"I was equally competitive. I used to spend more time at the office even though I got scolded by my parents a lot. While my male counterparts had the liberty to stay as late as they want…… he is perceived as more committed and dedicated than me. But they forgot to see that I finished my work on time and returned home. I used to get questioned in my previous job whenever I left office at 6 which was the leaving time. 'Oh you are leaving early today?' would be their question" (Managing Director, Company)

The managing director of the company faced problems while she wanted to leave on time after managing to deliver her work on time. Above mentioned quote resonates highly with the theory of 'time as a resource'. As a constructivist, the researcher can also see how external factors such as patriarchy affects individuals lives, where males are provided with more liberty compared to females in Nepal.

As all the themes are interlinked with each other, this theme highly resonates with patriarchy serving as a barrier as mentioned before. Women often have to return home around a certain time, and also manage their time according to their home work availability. All the interviews were conducted according to the participants availability after their night time household chores. One of the participants even mentioned that she would have had time for the interview in the afternoon or early evening if she was a man and didn't have to take care of the chores. She also said,

"If there was no situation then we can easily be equally competitive. Having more time they really have an advantage in their work" (Marketing Head, Company)

"I do believe that overtime work culture affects individuals' promotion probability. Especially in Nepalese culture, people who work until late are considered as sincere and dedicated towards their work. I need to get out of my office around 5:30 because of my household chores but men or women who do not have to take care of their homes or someone who has people to do their things or full support from the family are seen as more dedicated and have higher chances of getting promoted. People who leave office early are perceived negatively but they never seek for the reasons behind. I think this culture is prevalent all over our society's work culture. I am facing this problem personally but there is no other option for me. I cannot give all the time to the office. I also have to take care of my home" (Supervisor, Bank)

Hence, the over time work culture in Nepal seems to be evident and glamorized. The participants claimed that men have more time as a resource and are more available to their work which tend to affect their career directly/indirectly.

Access to finance

The theme 'access to finance' presents the findings related to the challenges for women entrepreneurs while arranging and getting access to finance. Finance seemed to be one of the biggest challenges for women in business wanting to start their own company. The participants relied on their personal savings rather than asking banks or their family for avoiding unnecessary long procedures, and not having to bother to have to prove themselves and their ideas being worth investing in.

"It has been the major challenge for me from the very beginning until now. I started with my pocket money. I never took a bank loan. It is very difficult in Nepal to get investors since startups are new things. There are a limited number of investors and even within the limited number they hesitate to invest in startups with limited amounts of investment. And it is more difficult for females who want to do their business to get the investment. I don't think there are any investors investing for female led businesses" (CEO, Company)

"My family were supportive when I asked them for financial help but there was always a second thought for them. If I were a guy it would have been easier but now I have to prove myself and my idea being worth it" (Managing Director, Company)

This theme also links with 'Networking and Mentoring' as one of the corporate heads mentioned it being easier if one has good networks. One can find investors for their business ideas if they can reach out to their networks. Overall, the Nepalese corporate sector seemed to lack enough business investors especially for females.

Extra information provided by the participation

After all the interview questions, the interviewees were asked if they would like to add some other challenges they have faced or are facing then one of the Marketing heads mentioned that she has difficulties dealing with governmental authorities as custom officers. She says that they do not listen to females and often tries to take some bribe to get the work done.

"Sometimes we feel like we need male members in the workplace for taking care of legal stuff since the government officers do not listen to females. We sometimes feel inferior and don't know how to tackle the situations. We also feel harassed by the officers at times. I feel it is difficult to work with custom offices while exporting and importing. These kinds of situations push me back and I wish more male colleagues to deal with it. I feel more inferior when I have to deal with taxes and custom duties. I always step back during those times" (Marketing Head, Company)

As an interpretivist and constructivist, as mentioned earlier as well the female leaders themselves underestimate themselves in certain situations and think males are better or can handle the situation better than them. Not only that, but the male officers also think themselves as superior and try to make women feel inferior in any possible way.

5.2 Discussion

This section of the research will cover discussion of findings by bringing to the front the four theories from chapter three, namely *critical mass theory, old boys' network, feminist institutionalism* and *time as a resource*. A review is presented by cross checking the relevancy of data with the literature review. Each theory has its own heading which will be discussed together with the interview findings.

5.2.1 Critical Mass theory

The critical mass theory suggests the idea that as soon as women's participation reaches a certain level, this will bring substantial changes in the institutions. However, none of the companies of the participants had a quota system for female candidates for the recruitment. However, most of them mentioned encouraging female candidates to apply, and also encourage the female employees to reach higher positions in the company. The women group at the companies are seen as minorities, since the Nepalese corporate sector still lacks equal women's participation and men are leading the sector. Hence, the theory of critical mass seems to be relevant in this case also, despite the fact that it was developed almost 50 years ago and in a very different context from the Nepalese one. None of the companies of the participants employed a gender balanced group, except for one which was led by female leaders.

The concept of tokenism and being a hyphenated member proves to be applicable as well, because the managers are seen as 'female managers' and the same goes for other female leadership positions. One of the HR managers mentioned that she was called 'Bro' by the other employees, since she was the only female manager in the company since people were not used to seeing females in the company.

"Everyone used to call me 'Bro' for some reason and every one called each other brothers. I used to get offended before but after I felt it was nothing offensive. But people are so used to not having females" (HR, Company)

Female employees and leaders are still seen as token members, as claimed by Kanter (1977). In addition to that, female stereotyping is hampering their career growth, as per the theory also seemed to be relevant in the Nepalese context as well. The corporate female leaders in Nepal were often

accused of misusing their power because of their position, and they were tagged as being 'bossy' for their actions.

Nevertheless, companies having more female participation brought various positive differences and diversity as per the theory and interviewees' information. However, female employees were often provided with stereotypes and excuses by the male members in the company, like they are incapable, cannot stay late at night, have to return home on time, cannot travel out of the city for several days and so on.

"With my past experiences I have seen that companies won't take females for marketing head positions. They provide you with excuses like females cannot stay late night, return home on time, do household chores and are also incapable. On the flip side it does happen because of the society we are living in" (HR, Company)

When asked for the comparison between companies with less and high levels of female participation and the importance of females at decision making levels, all of the participants agreed on the notion that females should be involved and given opportunity to make decisions if she is capable and has the qualifications.

The critical mass theory appears to be highly relevant with accordance to the findings from the interviews. Some participants also mentioned the need to push other female employees to speak up at the meeting tables and not sit silent. They often do that because of the feeling of being in a minority group, and also they do not see many females at the meeting tables, interviewees expressed. Lastly, the companies led with more female leaders were said to be easier to work with in a flexible and less rigid environment.

5.2.2 Old Boys' Network

The importance of networking in the Nepalese corporate market was mentioned by one of the participants during the interview. Networking as a crucial factor is presented by the interviewees, as also suggested by the theory. This theory can be interlinked with the above mentioned theory of critical mass in the sense that there are few women in top positions, which limits the networking and mentoring opportunities for other aspiring female leaders. As the old boys' network theory claims networking to be one of the significant reasons for career growth, it also serves as a barrier

when the network is missing. However, in the context of the Nepalese corporate sector, networking alone does not seem to work to reach higher positions.

"I also have seen females getting higher positions because of their hard work and on the basis of their qualifications. And once you are placed in the job then they will start questioning your female quotient as well. I feel that we are evaluated on the basis of our gender after we are already in the job" (HR, Company)

Hence, even though participants agreed on the importance of networking in the corporate sector, they also claimed qualification to be dominant. With regard to professional networking opportunities for females in the corporate world, the theory seems to be partially relevant. Nonetheless, females still have to go an extra mile to get things done compared to males. Yet, they are pushing off their societal boundaries and coming out of their constraints progressing in their career as time changes.

The old boys' network theory appears to be a little old fashioned with the current Nepalese corporate scenario in mind, where females are being equally competent as males. Families of the female leaders are also supportive with the nature of their work compared to previous times, which adds up to their flexible time availability for networking. However, mentorship being a crucial step, as mentioned by the theory, seems to be lacking in the corporate field of Nepal. The reason provided by the theory - that men are hesitant to mentor women - seems to be true, as one of the participants mentioned it being uncomfortable to have a professional relationship with male members in the company. As a result she has to seek for mentors and networks outside her company, within her circle of friends working in different companies.

Gender role stereotyping, bias and unequal opportunities with regard to the theory and literature review gives the impression of being highly evident in the companies. Female leaders are not given much attention and often looked down on in terms of their capability. The corporate world in Nepal still seems to be highly male dominated, and as few of the participants mentioned, the men tend to completely ignore women during meetings and networking events. Women are still struggling to prove themselves and their capability as being equally competent. With more time in the corporate sector, men have more tendency to have better networks, which benefits them.

From the institutional point of view, male members are preferred in terms of leadership roles rather than females, according to my interviewees. For instance; companies seek males for marketing heads over females, and provide several excuses like females not being capable and so on.

One of the important parts for the discussion would also be the power that comes with the position. Female leaders in Nepal are not easily overlooked, even though there are underlying stereotypes and biases because of their gender. The whole idea of females having difficulties with building networks in the professional arena might not be true as per the information provided by the participants.

Overall, the concept of old boys' network theory regarding closed groups of men in professional settings does affect women's opportunities to grow their network, but with time and scenario changing, women are more outgoing and meeting people as compared to old days, according to my interviewees.

5.2.3 Feminist Institutionalism

The findings from the interviews present a lack of political and policy level knowledge among the participants. With less knowledge on governmental institutions among half of the participants, it was not easy to see the relevancy of the feminist institutionalism theory. The constitution of Nepal puts women together with the other marginalised groups, i.e. it mentions women together with indigenous groups, Madhesis (people from the Terai region), disabled, and people from rural areas. However, informal institutions such as culture, tradition, society and so on seemed to play an important role in affecting the individuals' life. As the theory claims about informal institutions being more powerful than the formal ones, it appeared to be fully true in the Nepalese context with a patriarchal mindset and society.

Nonetheless, components of feminist institutionalism like gender mainstreaming policies and gender friendly changes were mentioned by some interviewees. Companies with less female participation at the top positions lacked bringing women friendly changes and making institutions more inclusive, according to my interviewees. One of the participants mentioned being the only female manager while sitting at a meeting on a table with nine other male members who did not bother to make any inclusive changes. Structural and organizational rigidity proves to be evident in the companies of Nepal with the information given by the participants. Feminist institutionalism

was seen more applicable with female business entrepreneurs, as they needed to negotiate with the governmental bodies more directly than the corporate women leaders. All of the participants also complained about lack of proper policy implementation from the governmental level and also suggested if they could be more strict with the laws.

"When we have to import things from outside the country there is unnecessary tax for that. I see a lack of policies for e-commerce even though it is building up slowly. These days the government does reach out to us entrepreneurs and e-commerce. The Ministry of Industry does reach out to us for policy making and share with us their drafts but when we give our feedback and suggestions they don't incorporate those things. But they do include us" (CEO, Company)

The above mentioned quote is from a female entrepreneur of a company who is complaining against governmental policies and it's implementation. Addressing the power and hierarchy from the theory of feminist institutionalism, the concept of providing women with less powerful and low hierarchical positions was relevant as mentioned by one of the participants. Companies often provide women with 'pretty looking jobs' where they are not promoted to higher level positions. The workplace also prefers hiring women for HR positions, this interviewee claimed because of her gendered qualities rather than her skills. One of the arguments here was that the HR position needs to deal more with people, and females are better in terms of negotiating and giving a good impression among the clients. However, it is easier for males to gain trust and respect as compared to females struggling to prove themselves often with their position, this interviewee said.

Although the corporate sector largely is dominated by males, the new generation is becoming more accepting towards seeing more female participation, as one of the female entrepreneurs mentioned in her interview. The male members are turning more welcoming towards female entrepreneurs as compared to the old days. Yet, the attitude and mindset towards women being inferior and less capable compared to them still seemed to be existent.

5.2.4 Time as a resource

Compared to all the four theories, time as a resource theory appears to be highly relevant in the field of the Nepalese corporate sector. Nepal has a patriarchal society with high male dominance, which is also the reason for many females to manage work and home time. Time seems to be a challenging factor for female corporate leaders in Nepal. As per the theory, all the interviewees agreed time as

being a resource which is more available to men. Women need to allocate their time to professional and personal life which makes them return home from work at a certain time. This limited time availability of women affects their career which makes them less visible at work. As a result, they are perceived as less committed and dedicated towards their work.

In Nepal, female managers work one hour extra compared to male managers, being 49 and 48 hours respectively in a week (Nepal Labour Force Survey, 2017/18). However, on average, male workers of all ages worked longer hours in Nepal compared to females, according to the same survey.

"I take care of my home in the morning and evening. I leave my house at 8 in the morning and return between 6-8 in the evening. Then after returning home I help my mom in the kitchen. There's no any role of male in the kitchen" (Marketing Head, Company)

Not only married women with family have to return home on time, but it also applies for single women with family restrictions from their parents. However, the scenario seems to be gradually changing in Nepal with time. More accepting and supporting families are seen as per the interviews.

According to the theory 'Time as a resource', it is necessary for the organization/institution to understand the concept of time, which appears to be relevant to the workplace of the interviewees with female leaders, as they seem to be more understanding compared to that of male leaders. Hence, this theory interlinks with critical mass theory and also feminist institutionalism theory. Apart from the formal institutions, informal institutions like family also play an important role in making resources (time) more available to the working women. On asking the participants, everyone thanked their parents and family for being understanding and supporting to let them work.

Nonetheless, it looks like the corporate workers in Nepal have started to understand the concept of smart work over hard work and working overtime as a sign of inefficiency. Hence, a few of the participants mentioned that people work over time since they could not deliver their work on time. Even though patriarchy plays a crucial role in the Nepalese society, the role of ethnicity also seemed to be influential as per the literature review. One of the female working in HR mentioned that,

"We should also consider which caste group or ethnicity we belong to as well. I believe it makes a lot of difference. And I have seen how daughter in-laws in different castes are treated" (HR, Company)

In addition to that, another corporate head of a company said,

"It depends on how a set of culture treats women in a country. When I was doing my Master there was a whole set of subjects on culture and one of my organizational and behavior professors said that women are very complicated and they cannot make any decisions and they are very calculative. Of course you have to be calculative when you are in a position. Culture definitely binds women but it's up to her whether she follows or comes out of it" (Corporate Head, Company)

Therefore, we can see patriarchy and culture as a guiding factor for a woman to have time as a resource and its availability. The findings resonate with the literature review presented in the second chapter of the research. Perhaps the culture of gender stereotyping exists throughout the world and is not only limited to Nepal. But the Nepalese women corporate leaders are getting out of the socio-cultural boundaries and heading towards their career goals.

CHAPTER 6: Conclusion

The final chapter of the research presents a summary of the study followed by reflection of personal experience of the researcher and ends with suggestions for further research recommendations.

6.1 Summary

This research explored the challenges of Nepalese women while working in the corporate sector. The interviewees were from the capital region of Nepal from big companies where they were serving in the leadership and managerial positions such as HR, Marketing Head, CEO, Supervisor, Corporate Head, Managing Director and so on. The seven interviewees were reached out via social media (LinkedIn and Facebook) and referral through friends and family members. A thorough literature review was done in the beginning of the research. Since there was nearly no literature available in the context of Nepal, the researcher had to rely on the literature from neighboring countries and highly from India followed by Bangladesh. The literature was divided into two parts: socio-cultural challenges and corporate challenges. The socio-cultural challenges included topics like role of religion, cultural beliefs and gendered family roles, influential caste system while the corporate challenges included topics like access to finance, limited networking, unequal opportunities, less female mentors, lack of women participation in decision making levels, work situation/work life balance.

Similarly, four theories critical mass theory, old boys' network, feminist institutionalism and time as a resource were used for the theoretical framework. The theories were selected on the basis of relevancy and also with the western context (North America, Australia and Europe). With the help of these theories the 12 interview questions were generated. The questions were also developed in a way to check the literature review and theories in context of Nepal. Even though the theories were from different parts of the world and developed in different time periods, the relevancy of the theories were high. However, the information gained through the interviews were more of socio-cultural challenges than that of corporate challenges. Hence, Nepalese corporate sector is evolving with gradual increase in female participation with more socio-cultural challenges as per the observation and analysis of the researcher.

6.2 Reflection

Initially the research was to be done as a comparative study between Nepal and the USA. The reason was to make a comparison between the challenges of two highly different countries in terms of culture and geography. However, the research still became comparative in the sense with theories from North America, Australia and Europe. The whole research process was an insightful journey with challenges which made the work even more exciting. I chose this topic because it matched with my knowledge and interest. I always wanted to explore the field of women corporate leadership since my bachelor's degree. It was quite shocking to see nearly no literature available in the field of women corporate leadership in context to Nepal but a lot in reference to India. I was aware of the fact that India is a big country with the second highest population in the world. Lack of literature from Nepal was one of the difficult challenges to overcome during this research period. However, this research was also an opportunity for myself to have a reflection on already existing knowledge in the field of gender. The literature and theories became insightful for the research and also for my own brainstorming in the field of women empowerment projects in Nepal. I was quite amazed by the amount of attention and responses that was gained through the topic in social media. The attention and response from people showed how the topic has been untouched and people are willing to explore more. Women corporate leadership is not a new topic but it seems to be a new thing to discuss in a country like Nepal where women are gradually coming out of their houses pushing off the socio-cultural constraints. This also made me realise that I could research more in depth in this topic as my PhD. I am quite sure that a PhD research on this topic could bring new dimensions in the field of women corporate leadership and also the theories that have been used. Not only that, but this research could also be a resource for other young researcher wanting to research more on Nepalese women leadership.

I am grateful for the opportunity I got through this research to connect and talk to women leaders with high positions in big companies where I also got to learn from them. I could have interviewed more people if time favored, however, I decided to stop with seven and do in depth analysis of the information. The information gained from the interviews were not very new as compared to the literature however Nepalese women seem to be facing more socio-cultural challenges than that of corporate challenges as mentioned earlier. One of the reasons could also be the interview questions which were driven by the theories and literature review. I as a researcher followed a social constructivist paradigm which might also have affected the interview style and technique. Also, the

fact that no literature availability from Nepal made me rely on literature from India even though Nepal and India have a lot of similarities. If there was literature from Nepal, maybe the interview questions set up would have been different.

One of the reflections that I would like to mention is about the power that came through the position of the women leaders in Nepal. Even though the theories used did not clarify different challenges faced by a woman as just an employee and women in leadership positions, it seemed to be double edged with the challenges women in general face during their career. Likewise, institutionalism seemed to be more directly associated with entrepreneurs as compared to corporate leaders because of the fact that entrepreneurs have to deal with the governmental bodies more directly. This observation and analysis made me question institutionalism theory, if it only deals with already existing institutional challenges or also brings new institutionalisation?

6.3 Further recommendations

The study was limited to the sample number of seven and in the sample area of Kathmandu, Nepal. The research could be extended to more areas for instance other cities of Nepal like Pokhara and Chitwan with higher sample numbers. Since there was only four months of time for the whole research and writing period it was not possible to take many interviews. The study could have been better with physical data collection like face to face interviews and focus group discussions. Due to the distance and pandemic the researcher was obliged to gather online data which limited participant observation. For better research data collection, future researchers can keep all these points in mind. It could also be a comparative study between private and public companies or between female corporate leaders and female entrepreneurs. Not only that, but more high level positioned women could also be reached out from different backgrounds such as culture, ethnicity, religion, geography and so on.

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Email invitation for interview participants.

Subject: Invitation for Participation

Hello, I am Ronisha Shrestha. I am a Master's student at Aalborg University, Denmark. My specialization is in 'Organization and Leadership', for which I am doing a thesis on 'Women corporate leadership and it's challenges in Nepal'. I am writing this email to ask if you would like to be a part of my interview for my thesis. I have generated around 12 semi-structured questions related to the field of corporate leadership in Nepalese context. The interview will take place online via Skype or Messenger (whatever you prefer) and would take around 30-45 minutes approximately. Participants will be provided with a choice of audio or video call. The information you will provide to me will be kept anonymous and solely used for academic purposes.

The thesis data sample would be women corporate leaders of Nepal in various fields. I would really appreciate your participation and your information would be a contribution in the field of Nepalese women leadership.

Please feel free to ask any questions regarding the thesis. I would be more than happy to answer. If you want to know more about my thesis you can email me or my supervisor in the following emails.

Note: If you cannot participate but know someone who can, please do let me know.

Ronisha Shrestha

Student

Master's in Organization and Leadership

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<center>**Interview questions**</center>

Age:

Status:

Academic Background:

Company:

Critical Mass Theory

1. How many females are there at your workplace? Is there any quota system existing in any forms?

2. Do you think a higher number of female employees/board members makes a positive difference at any company or organization?

3. Have you ever faced any kind of discrimination on being a woman, or felt that you are representing a minority?

Old Boys' Network

1. What are your viewpoints on networking and mentoring? Do you believe that women are less likely to be in top positions because they lack in proper networking with important people?

2. How important do you think networking is in a workplace? Does your company/organization conduct some events where you can meet new people and build networks?

3. Is there any situation where you feel excluded from a networking group because you are a woman?

Feminist Institutionalism

1. Do you find it important to have women involved in decision making levels? Are there women in top positions where they can make decisions for the company?

2. Do you think informal institutions such as culture and family makes males more privileged than women in the workplace? Are you involved in the decision making process in your family?

3. In your understanding, what role does a governmental institution play in order to support women's inclusion in the corporate sector?

Time as a resource

1. How much time would you estimate each week on your job? Do you also have to take care of household chores? If so, how much time do you spend on that?
2. How important is it for you to have supportive and understanding family members? Do they motivate you to work?
3. Do you believe that men are more likely to get promotions since they can commit more time to their work compared to women? Why or why not?

Thank you so much for your time.

Interview transcriptions

Corporate Head

1. As of now, the ratio to female and male is not very low. A year or two before it was low but now it has started hiring more females. But very few females are leading in the company and even in this sector of Nepal. There is no such quota system but in our policy we do have no discrimination against gender. It's the normal interview procedures going through interviews. And he/she gets hired according to their qualification.

2. Yes, it does. I do not have any female members on the board of my company. I believe decision making gets smoother and it's very difficult to work in a rigid environment. The male staff and male board members are very rigid when it comes to procedures. Since it is an insurance company males think it has to be traditional door to door sales but that's not how it works or maybe because I come from a marketing background I think it's not only about door to door. They follow a certain kind of rigid bureaucracy rather than having a normal decision making process.

3. Yes, sometimes when I am making decisions. I am the head of marketing and communication so I do have the right to make decisions. But there are three other people whose signatures are needed even though they are from the different departments but their permission is required. That kind of difference I do get most of the time. But I think that is changing over time. I worked in a very different industry before. I worked in digital financing. It was quite different. We had a lot of females. We were given more freedom to make decisions. And since it's marketing and the decisions if they have to go through bureaucracies you will lose that creativity in the process. That's the difference I have seen.

4. Networking and mentorship are very important. If you don't have a connection then it's very difficult. Even if you meet someone generally in some events that also becomes important. And if you have the networking but not mentorship then I don't think you can start somewhere. I don't think you will find a solution for whatever you are looking for when you are working. If you have networking but not mentoring then you have that gap to fill yourself. And we cannot say that women are less likely to be in top positions because of lack of networking now because women

have better networks now than men. It depends on the culture as well and believe that culture creates barriers. I would completely disagree that men have better networks.

5. We have various events. They do often conduct it. I attended one which was quite interesting to know about the company.

6. We were the only two women to attend that event. Honestly I felt a little bit left out. But it's not about gender I am talking about, branding and communication is such a subjective topic. Everyone working in the company still thinks traditionally so nobody really understands what marketing is and they would not think how a celebrity endorsement could impact the product you are selling. So, that's where I felt left out rather than being a woman. But one thing I have felt in this industry is men tend to completely ignore women. And that is not professional when you are talking and giving a full fledged 25 minutes presentation it is very important that they atleast make eye contact.

7. Of course it is very important. It's not just about her capability. There are various things that come to mind when we talk about decision making. If she is qualified and she has had the experience then why not? But if she doesn't have it then she should not be there. Men underestimate the decisions made by women be it professionally or personally. It's very important to give her freedom to express her opinion and needs to be heard by the qualified people sitting around her.

8. It depends on how a set of culture treats women in a country. When I was doing my Master there was a whole set of subjects on culture and one of my organizational and behavior professors said that women are very complicated and they cannot make any decisions and they are very calculative. Of Course you have to be calculative when you are in a position. Culture definitely binds women but it's up to her whether she follows or comes out of it. I will not say that I am the one to make decisions but I am involved. Since I am newly married I am still adapting. I am asked by my husband or my father in-law or my mother in-law if this is correct. So there is respect in opinion. I feel it doesn't really bind me in making decisions. If there's something I need to say then I will and there have been times it has been implemented.

If you have the network then it will be easier to get access to finance as investors.

9. I understand the government plays a very important role but I have never been really here in Nepal for a long time. I feel the government has a lot of improvement to do but I cannot pinpoint where and how. But reducing burrecreucies and making it digitised would be the first steps.

10. I start at 7 in the morning, we do have people to help with the household so I don't really need to take care of that. I start my office at 10 and end at 4:30. But as my role requires me to move to many places I am not always in the office. I am mostly out for networking and branding. Then after returning home it's dinner and family time. It's normal life, not much hectic schedule. But sometimes I do work late at night.

11. Yes, it is very important. My family is very supportive. It's not only about support but also about hearing your opinions. Because I don't think someone will be liberated enough to go out if she/he does not have freedom to express their opinion. It is very important to have a family and a partner like that. I feel very blessed for that because I think your family and your partner shapes you as an individual over time. Maybe your success or your failure is because of your partner and your family.

12. I will say this very personally. I think women balance it very well and men don't. Glamorising of over time culture is very evident. People don't understand that if you are working late then you are being inefficient. I have seen my husband working more than myself after work time. But it also depends on the individual. He likes being involved all the time. So there are different types of people. It is glamourising if you leave early and return late from work but that's not how it works. You might not be as productive as you have been working in your work hours so there's no point in staying late. I guess now the overtime work culture has changed in private places. They are understanding it as being ineffective. You have to work smarter than hard. There might be some cases of people being promoted that way but it is improving and people are being judged by their efficiency.

People are so used to not seeing females in the board members. They are not even bothered by that. There are not much biases I have faced but the mentality that women are incapable is still there.

Marketing Department Head

1. More than 800 artisans. We hire people on the basis of their skills and capacity. We have a higher number of female participation. It would be 60-40 female to male ratio.

2. It does make a difference to have a higher number of female employees. It is also because of the nature of the work since it's art and design. I believe males have less interest in design, art, craft and production. We are supporting women empowerment. Our design and finance head are women. So according to the demand and knowledge of women we have more female employees. Whenever I have to hire employees I seek for females because I could not indulge myself with male employees. For example when a client asks about a design of a product then a male employee cannot think of the products that are beyond the desk. You can also use your imagination and offer the client a unique design which is not even designed yet. I don't find that quality in males.

3. We are working in a place where women are prioritsed so I have never faced such kind of discrimination. I have been given a lot of opportunities.

4. Yes maybe. I don't see a lot of females in top positions in corporate sectors. The place I am working in has a lot of females in high positions. It is very important to receive mentorship especially in the beginning phase. Having someone's guidance makes a lot of difference and we are saved from a lot of mistakes. We also get international guides and coaches even from Europe.

5. We do organize a lot of networking events. We do continuous meetings with international partners, workshops and now zoom meetings. We solve problems jointly by discussing together. And also we have international conferences.

6. No, there have been no situations.

7. Yes, ofcourse. All the heads in my workplace are women. They are equally capable of making decisions as males.

8. I am responsible for the whole decision at my workplace. All the decisions at my workplace I can easily make decisions on my own. Also at my home I am given freedom to make my decisions. My brother was in Banglore when my mother suffered from cancer and the doctor suggested to have an operation immediately so I took her to the hospital on my own and did the treatment. I decided to have an operation and took the decision myself. And maybe to some extent like daily work and household when I am tired and have work burden. I still have to take care of my household after returning from work, my husband does help but still that mentality exists that I feel cooking is my responsibility. I still feel that and when my husband cooks I feel uncomfortable. So, that is culture.

9. The government is trying but still they are not working. Governmental offices still are not open yet to let women reach higher positions. So if they open opportunities for more women to reach higher positions it would help more women to explore their potential.

10. I work both at work and home. I do my office work even at home which is usually after 9 pm and stay late night. I start my day at 6:30 am and end it around 11:30 pm. I also take care of my son and help him with his studies. And sometimes I work until 2-3'o o'clock in the night.

11. Yes, it is very important to have a supportive and understanding family. I have seen people whose family doesn't support their career. They never think that you also work hard outside of the home and expect you to work at home no matter what.

12. I am answering this not referring to my workplace but I think that might be the case. Because we have restrictions to come home on time. Like for example when you asked my time for an interview if I was male or unmarried I could have given my time before in the evening which means I have to complete my daily chores. If I was a male I could have committed my time to other jobs and projects. So if they have more time and produce more results then it's easier for them to get promoted. I agree with the theory. If there was no situation then we can easily be equally competitive. Having more time they really have an advantage in their work.

Institutions like FNCCI (Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce) have all male members where as it is for everyone. So I see a lack of perspective. They have the mindset that they are always superior and do not really listen to you. That's the time when I feel there is male dominance whenever I go to FNCCI. And also the Banks they do discriminate in terms of procedures for loans

between male and females. Maybe one of the reasons there also could be networking, because women in business are just coming up while males have been there for a long time.

Sometimes we feel like we need male members in the workplace for taking care of legal stuff since the government officers do not listen to females. We sometimes feel inferior and don't know how to tackle the situations. We also feel harassed by the officers at times. I feel it is difficult to work with custom offices while exporting and importing. These kinds of situations push me back and I wish more male colleagues to deal with it. I feel more inferior when I have to deal with taxes and custom duties. I always step back during those times.

HR Manager

1. Male ratio has always been higher than the female ratio in the corporate field. We were only 2 female leaders in a company. There are not many women leaders to look upto like if I do better in my career then I can look up to this position. There are not many core team members in the corporate houses that I have worked with. But in one of the companies I have worked before had a 50-50 ratio of male and female. Every year we had a diversity assessment we have in the organization.

2. Yes obviously. But it depends on team synergy rather than male or female. If there are female core team members then as I said earlier, it inspires other females too to look forward to something. Especially if you are a young women leader then you can look up to someone. That's how I felt when I got promoted. When you have female leaders in the team then the emotional quotient is fulfilled. There's a diverse perspective coming out because males think in a certain way. The brainstorming sessions and meetings are different. Usually men speak up and women keep quiet especially if they feel that they are not heard. But it also depends on who is hosting the meeting and how he/she incorporates everyone's opinion. Personally I didn't have a tough time because supervisors were open to include women in the company. And if there are few women in the company then it is hard to speak up about sexual harassment cases. The team with women feels a little different even though male colleagues are respectful towards females.

3. Yes. This happens a lot but not just within specific companies. I have felt being discriminated a lot of times especially when you are moving ahead with your career path. As you advance with their career growth then I felt like maybe the company wants a male leader. They feel like female HR leaders are more suitable for software companies, companies with more professionals than with labor class employees or where there are no unions. Women are always treated like they get emotional or they might not be able to speak up or speak diplomatically. I have faced those kinds of situations a lot. At one point in my career I wanted to reach out to women HR leaders to know how to go forward but I didn't get anyone that I could talk to. I was even planning to reach out to male HR senior. I realised companies wanted to hire male HR leaders since they are not driven by their emotions as females. They also feel that males are more experienced than females. Even though both male and females have equal qualifications, the companies view that male are more capable.

4. For me I would say I didn't find any females for the profession I am in. I could not reach out to anyone. I have many friends who have studied in the field of HR and working as an HR at the same level in other companies. So, I always reached out to them if I had any problem discussing and sharing our feelings as being female HR professionals in Nepal. So, that was my network and even in the organization since a lesser number of women leaders are present, males have stronger networking tham females. Males feel more comfortable with other males even though we are friends. Women have limited opportunities as compared to males in terms of networking. Males have stronger networking within the organization and they are all over the place. And if we only seek for female networks then the opportunities are more limited. Males can connect to females more openly but it's not the same case the other way around. But I also have seen females getting higher positions because of their hard work and on the basis of their qualifications. And once you are placed in the job then they will start questioning your female quotient as well. I feel that we are evaluated on the basis of our gender after we are already in the job. But having said that I have had great supervisors who are also mentors. They have helped me, supported me and guided me. I would say that I had better male supervisors than females. But I did look up to the female leaders in my company. I was so inspired and saw them as my role models but I didn't get any guidance from them. I think working with female supervisors was much more difficult than working with male supervisors.

5. In my first company there used to be a lot of networking events where we participated. It usually used to happen after work but I would stay to attend those events.

6. Well, not really. Maybe because of my personality. I am a very social person and I like meeting and interacting with people. But I have heard that other females have problems attending networking events because of their personal life and also their family responsibilities.

7. Of course. They play an important role and their voices should be heard. As I mentioned earlier, there are very few women in the corporate field and I believe we should give more opportunities to women to make their voices heard.

8. Yes, our culture and family makes male more privileged than females.

9. If the government services would have been more advanced and digitised then it would have been much easier to get it from home. We didn't have to go to authorities physically for everything. Since it is not yet digitised and they have traditional ways of working there are a lot of hassle while doing governmental work. It would also have been better if they could provide pre information on requirements of documents which are needed for specific tasks.

10. Thankfully, I don't have to take care of my household chores much. I give most of my time to my work.

11. My family is super supportive towards my career and ambitions in life. I am grateful to have such parents who understand me.

12. Not really the major factor but it does affect your chances of being promoted in the workplace. I think it depends more on the individual's qualifications rather than being seen as more dedicated and committed towards work for overtime. There used to be that culture but slowly things are changing and people are valuing smart work over hard work.

Supervisor

1. No quota system, no preference, total 12 staffs, 5 female staffs

2. Not specifically difference if there are female board members in the company

3. Not felt any kind of discrimination on the basis of gender, maybe because of the position I have since it's a high position

4. Very important to have networking at a corporate level. If there are two people one with more network and the other one with less but has the same capacity, the one with more networking will benefit. For example: if you and I are on the same level but you have better networking and mentoring then you will be more likely to get promoted than me.

5. Networking events are conducted frequently, thrice a year, different kinds of programs.

6. We should not feel excluded when we are in the corporate sector. They manage the timing according to our schedule.

7. All the top positions in my company are women. Women are in the place for decision making levels. I am not aware about other companies but the company I work in has a lot of priority for women in decision making level and their voices are heard.

8. I manage both home and office. For example: I cannot give more time to my office since I also have to handle home chores. When it comes to making decisions at home, male members are considered as the head and in my case my husband, I need to ask him before making any decisions. But it does not mean that they are right every time, when they are wrong we can also make decisions. But overall, I cannot make any decisions without asking my husband and I don't think a situation like that exists yet. Both me and my husband make mutual decisions and it's not like before where male are super dominant.

9. I see more women inclusion in every sector these days. I am not really aware about the government and parliament but I see a lot of active women in so many sectors. I don't believe that

females should outnumber male in all the sectors but there should be balance and more opportunities. Talking about society, our culture makes men more privileged which allows them to stay longer at work but the same thing cannot be done by women. And that is one of the challenges women are facing these days. I also see a lot of female entrepreneurs coming up.

10. I work 8 hrs per day for 6 days a week. I have to take care of home totally from A to Z. I work 10-6 at my Bank and do household chores until 8:30 pm. Taking care of my child comes as an extra duty beside all of these things.

11. It is very important to have a supportive family. If you don't have a supportive family and if you also have to take care of your child then you cannot really work at your office. I also have to work at home and since all the household chores like cooking, cleaning is tagged as a female job but if there is no family support then I think women won't be able to come out of their roles as daughters, wives to the corporate field. Women will be confined inside their homes.

12. I do believe that overtime work culture affects individuals' promotion probability. Especially in Nepalese culture, people who work until late are considered as sincere and dedicated towards their work. I need to get out of my office around 5:30 because of my household chores but men or women who do not have to take care of their homes or someone who has people to do their things or full support from the family are seen as more dedicated and have higher chances of getting promoted. People who leave office early are perceived negatively but they never seek for the reasons behind. I think this culture is prevalent all over our society's work culture. I am facing this problem personally but there is no other option for me. I cannot give all the time to the office. I also have to take care of my home.

CEO

1. Overall 50-50 male to female ratio in the company. No quota systems for hiring female staff. Females are more qualified when they send us the applications. We prioritise qualification over preference.

2. I don't want to see things in gender perspective however I feel females are more loyal to their work. If given more opportunities to them they are more willing to learn and commit themselves more compared to male.

3. I was very young when I first started my company. I cannot talk through gendered lens but I did face a lot of challenges in the beginning but maybe it could be because of my age. I have had a hard time convincing people and proving myself. It was a very different scenario back then as of now. People wanted me to follow my education rather than starting my own company. I was also highlighted in the media since it was a new thing back then to be a young female entrepreneur. But I have heard and seen people discriminating against women. On my previous job at a startup company, there have been a lot of times where I have felt left out in the meetings even though the other male members were of similar age group. I learnt that from the company and made sure that such things won't happen at my company. Women are given equal power and decision making spaces. But my company has a higher number of female staff and no one has tried to discriminate against me. There are always some people outside of the company who try to but I don't want to see it in a bigger picture. There have been cases where I was attending events outside of Kathmandu. I was once in Pokhara to attend an event where there was no female participation beside me because females are not allowed to enter the forum in Pokhara. So when I was attending that entrepreneur event I felt like I was attending a male gathering programme. There still exists the mentality and attitude towards women being less capable. I still face this problem at times even after proving myself for 8 years long so I can only imagine how difficult it is for the newcomers.

4. It is very important to have networking and mentoring. I believe business is a collaboration and it is easier if we build more networks. Having good networking will create a win-win situation for both parties of business people and investors. I have been attending every event possible for networking from the very beginning. And that has been a help for me until now. I have been able to build an ecosystem through networking. I am also a part of this building networks to other people.

Networking is very important for people who are starting up their business especially in a country like Nepal where startups are still considered as a new subject. For example during this COVID situation when the government banned online deliveries we could fight against it because of the networks we had built among the e-commerce individuals. Talking about mentoring, it is also very important if you get a good one. But I believe no one could be a mentor directly to you in the field of business and that is also the reason why we are entrepreneurs. Mentorship in specific subjects would be more effective like for example I have to do pitch decks in so many events and also if I could learn specific things from the experts themselves. Mentorship these days is not limited within countries, we can find mentors globally. Mentors play important roles in different parts of business but not as a whole.

5. Networking does play an important role but it is not only the factor. It varies from company to company. Maybe for IT companies it might not be as important as it is for ours where we need to deal with people a lot. As I have seen in Nepal, there are a lot of opportunities for females in Nepal and I don't find males too dominating as in other countries. I find them welcoming especially for female entrepreneurs. It won't be suitable for now to say that there are less chances for females to build networks.

6. We often do networking events in our company. I make my employees participate as well. We invite all the entrepreneurs from Nepal since I believe that networking is important.

7. I have not really felt excluded in networking events until now. Maybe it is also because I have my own company. But maybe as an employee they can feel excluded. I have seen and heard other females having hard time to fit in also because of their work and personal life timing. Maybe in my case, I started quite early with my business. I already knew a lot of people so it was not that difficult for me to fit in. As I mentioned earlier at an event in Pokhara, I thought I would be left out between all the males but I was welcomed and everyone made me feel comfortable. Maybe I was lucky in those kinds of situations but I have heard from other females being left out.

8. Yes, definitely it is very important to have women in the decision making levels where they can be at companies or at any other institutional levels.

9. Patriarchy is a deep rooted thing in our society even though my family is super progressive. My family is very supportive and since we are only two daughters in our family that has not been the case. My elder sister used to take decisions more because of her seniority than me but now I also take decisions quite often. But before starting my business I have seen males getting more privileges in the family because they are seen as the ones taking the legacy ahead. I cannot tell my personal viewpoint since I don't have male siblings to compare.

(Access to finance) It has been the major challenge for me from the very beginning until now. I started with my pocket money. I never took a bank loan. It is very difficult in Nepal to get investors since startups are new things. There are a limited number of investors and even within the limited number they hesitate to invest in startups with limited amounts of investment. And it is more difficult for females who want to do their business to get the investment. I don't think there are any investors investing for female led businesses. It is very difficult to get the investment even if you ask for your family because they also don't have enough funds. Plus I don't come from a family business background so we lack knowledge in business. Banks do tell that they provide loans but it is so little and we have to go through a long procedure for that.

10. When I started there was no section for e-commerce by the government and we had to do it by retailing while getting registered but now we can do it as an e-commerce. When we have to import things from outside the country there is unnecessary tax for that. I see a lack of policies for e-commerce even though it is building up slowly. These days the government does reach out to us entrepreneurs and e-commerce. The Ministry of Industry does reach out to us for policy making and share with us their drafts but when we give our feedback and suggestions they don't incorporate those things. But they do include us. We also protest in social media against the government. The government is trying and hopefully they will include our suggestions for policy.

I give most of my time to my work. I was busier before than now since we have assigned more leadership roles to others as well. The work has been distributed accordingly. Before I would return home around 9 pm. Thankfully, I don't have to look after my home that much and I am grateful for my parents especially mom.

11. Yes, it is very important to have a supportive family and my family fully supports me.

12. I do believe that overtime workers are seen as more committed and dedicated by the company. I agree that people giving more time to their work are more likely to get promoted knowingly or unknowingly. People working more also know more about the company. But I do understand that it is more difficult for married women to stay late at work. There are no married female employees at my office but two married males.

Managing director

1. It's my startup and it's been only 5 months. I am the only female employee in my company. We don't have a quota system. If someone has the qualification then they can join.

2. I don't really discriminate between genders but rather see people on the basis of their qualifications. But in Nepal I see a lack of female empowerment. Having a female on board member definitely gives a different viewpoint which generally male members cannot give. There may be less chances of male ego clash and also it might affect the entire company's environment. Women can influence positively.

3. Yes, definitely. I have felt discriminated against at every corporate level. In my previous experience, my toughest role was in marketing. I had to fight a lot to prove myself while I saw my male counterparts reaching there easily.

4. I was lucky enough that my previous bosses were like my mentors. I had to show them that I have worked hard to get there. Whenever I used to go out for networking I was so neglected. I could feel them not looking at me. My previous position as marketing manager where I had to go out often people used to get shocked looking at me as a marketing manager from a company because I am a woman. People used to shorten their time to meet with me. If I was a man they would probably talk with me for one hour but because I am a woman they would shorten it to 15 minutes.

5. There used to be networking events in my previous company but I see less women participating since it would be late at night and it is not safe. So they would rather go home. Nepal is all about networks so it is very important to have networking. If you don't have networks then you will go nowhere. It is difficult especially for women to build networks. I am blessed that I have good male colleagues so I can accompany them together at events. There's a feeling when you go alone that there's a wall they have built around them that I cannot get passed to them as easily as males. Business runs through networks. It's 6 pm now and I will have to attend the event later even though I will get calls from home.

6. Yes, a lot of times. As a marketing manager I used to accompany my boss to coffee meetings with clients and they are big brands and big names. I felt like I was not there in the meeting. They were

not even looking at me. The whole event went by without even making eye contact with me. Whenever I put my point they would look at me for one second and then be directed towards the male. I have faced this multiple times.

7. Of Course I find it important to include more women in decision making levels. I feel like we don't give enough opportunities to females in Nepal. Even in the meeting tables I have to raise my voice just to get my points across even though I give logical reasonings. I have seen a lot of females in meeting tables where they sound more logical so it is very important to empower them. Even in households moms are more logical but it is so male dominated that they perceive women as incapable of making decisions. In my family we as female members, we are nowhere in making decisions. We have to ask dad in making every decision.

8. Yes, definitely. But now since I have started going out of my home and work outside I realised that I need to change this culture and slowly started to raise my voice and made myself heard. I have seen a lot of capable female candidates when I take interviews. They are so talented, they have logic in their decisions and being in a leadership role I always have to push those girls to talk at the meeting table and tell them not to stay quiet. I was also very silent in the beginning but I taught myself to raise my voice to be heard. I try my best to empower other females. Even in my previous company where I was trusted to hire employees I used to push female applicants. I take their interviews and I know how capable they are. Even in marketing the companies try to hire guys for some reason. A lot of females are rejected by the companies because of the mindset they have towards women being incapable. They only give small positions to females like receptionists where they are hired because of their physical appearance.

(Access to finance) Because there are no male members in my family I get the liberty. Out of all my siblings I am more outgoing and they tell me that I am the son of the family. They were supportive when I asked them for financial help but there was always a second thought for them. If I were a guy it would have been easier but now I have to prove myself and my idea being worth it.

9. It might be too wrong to say that but empower more women and more women entrepreneur friendly policies. Other than that, the government is pretty fair with everyone.

10. I take care of my home in the morning and evening. I leave my house at 8 in the morning and return between 6-8 in the evening. Then after returning home I help my mom in the kitchen. There's no any role of male in the kitchen.

11. It is so important and my family is supportive also because I have three siblings who are sisters. They are tired of convincing me to come home on time. Even though my sisters are educated they ask me why are you doing this job which requires you to stay late. And those times I feel a lack of support from them. When I had a meeting where I had a kickass conversation with a client I want to come home and share but how can I when they don't understand my work. I am so glad that I have my colleagues who understand and I would rather spend my time with them and share with them. I want to tell my parents that I am doing this but they don't understand. I am adjusting. It is more difficult in the creative field to make a family understand unless it's about money.

12. I totally agree with this notion of glamourisation of overtime work culture. Especially in the advertisement companies they have this craze for overtime work. I was equally competitive. I used to spend more time at the office even though I got scolded by my parents a lot. While my male counterparts had the liberty to stay as late as they want. I used to finish my work and go even though I did overtime but my male colleagues used to stay much longer just because they have the liberty to do so. Then he is perceived as more committed and dedicated than me. But they forgot to see that I finished my work on time and returned home. I used to get questioned in my previous job whenever I left office at 6 which was the leaving time. 'Oh you are leaving early today?' would be their question. So yes overtime work culture has been way too much glamorized and see the individuals as more hardworking. The companies should see the final result rather than how much time they invest on it. That is why at my company I have set this rule that you can work from wherever you are but the job needs to get done. I get comments that I am too bossy and also people tell me that I am trying to show my power because of my position. But for men it will be more casual since they are in a high position.

HR Manager

1. 280 total staff. 102 males, 132 females in Nepal's company. More male staff in Sydney. No, there is no quota system at all. But we encourage women to apply.

2. One owner organization, no board members. Our seniors are females. I used to work in an organization which was completely male dominated and I was the only female manager. I used to be the only female when sitting for a meeting. Whenever I used to voice out they could not relate to my things. So when I came to this company I was very happy since the interview. Even the interview was taken by a female. It somehow increased my confidence level. And I was so used to being with men that I used to feel an identity crisis. Everyone used to call me 'Bro' for some reason and every one called each other brothers. I used to get offended before but after I felt it was nothing offensive. But people are so used to not having females. Personally I felt really sick of being around male all the time. I had guy friends and then I have a son at home. So when I came to this company I had this fresh perspective fueled by two ladies. I really liked it and there is definitely a difference. My immediate boss is a female and my managing director is also a female. And both of them have very strong personalities whereas they are very empathetic as well. So I don't need to explain so many things to them because they understand in terms of what I am going through and all these work from home things. Suddenly this work from home was a lot, I needed to balance between home and work and I also needed to take care of my son. Having a female boss really helped because they do understand.

3. Yes, there were a number of times I felt discriminated against my gender. Like whenever we sit for meetings if there are 10 males and only 1 female, they really don't care about making it more women inclusive. And when I suggest they make it more inclusive they don't feel the need for it. They don't make women friendly decisions. I did what I can from the position I have but they don't consider even small things like making toilets women friendly. Everything has to be told to them but they won't do it by themselves. Somewhere I felt like they were ignoring the fact even though they were fathers or brothers to someone. There were so many instances like this that have happened which do not claim that because you are a woman but indirectly discriminating.

4. I think mentoring is not only lacking in females but in everyone. I am saying this being an HR because when fresh graduates come they have no idea what to do and what's happening in the

corporate world. But males already have this upper hand to reach senior positions. And I think it mostly comes from the attitude. With my past experiences I have seen that companies won't take females for marketing head positions. They provide you with excuses like females cannot stay late night, return home on time, do household chores and are also incapable. On the flip side it does happen because of the society we are living in. If I am a female I am expected to take care of the household. But when I came to this company I felt there is a different mentality towards females. Here people understand, I am still taking care of my son and my house but they understand. I find more flexibility and understanding here with this company which empowers me to do more. This flexibility allowed me to go further ahead in my career. Networking, I think it's more an individual's thing. Few women being present in top positions in Nepal is also the reason for less mentorships and role models.

5. We have events very often. We conducted some virtual events within the company staff this year.

6. No, not here in this current organization because here women are so empowered. I had to fit in the events before in the previous companies. Like I said earlier about calling me 'Bro' for which someone took me aside and told me that it's a good thing and that means you are viewed the same way as us. I took it with a pinch of salt because being an HR I had to maintain good relations with everyone. I learnt how to blend in.

7. Yes, I do believe that women should be in the decision making level. There should be both male and female balance in companies where you get two perspectives.

8. Of course. Because of patriarchy men are more privileged but not like before. For example: cooking is my wife's primary responsibility and I will just help her. And there's the benefit of patriarchy for males like they can return home anytime they like. No one asks you why you are late? Companies also hire male because they can stay late to work or it will be easier for us to send him out of the city but it will be difficult in the case of females. I am the sole decision maker so far at my home.

9. I do not believe in the quota system but I do believe it should be both gender inclusive. I think people should be hired according to their capabilities. More female leadership training, more

women friendly labor laws. Government has raised paid maternity leaves which is a good step. I wish the government was more strict about laws.

10. I now have more flexibility for my work hours since I am working from home these days. It has made my life much easier. If my son is at home then I spend time with him as well and work later. I do office work even in the evenings or nights.

11. My family is very supportive. I consider myself to be very lucky because my family supported me a lot to be in this position. But I have seen a lot of females struggling these days with leadership roles as a daughter in law and a corporate leader. So many of our female managers had a hard time working from home because their in-laws wanted them to do household chores. All of the married women leaders were struggling and still are in their work. We had an informal discussion within our company on how to tackle that. People have their own set of expectations once you are married. Even though you are a highly educated field you still feel the pressure from home. I know someone who is a CEO who has a strong personality but when she goes home she is expected to cook. Cooking itself is not a bad thing. She enjoys cooking but there's a difference when you do it by your will or by someone's order. And that really brings her down. So every morning she felt like she had to put extra energy to self motivate her.

12. It depends as I have seen. IT companies are male dominated since there are few female programmers. Most people are not discriminating against gender but also because of the fact that there are few qualified females. But when it comes to promotions it was not the case of overtime work culture. I think it depends on the role. But from what I have seen, for HR positions they look for females. So I think for promotions it depends on what job it is. Sometimes women have more privilege at work as well.

We should also consider which caste group or ethnicity we belong to as well. I believe it makes a lot of difference. And I have seen how daughter in-laws in different castes are treated.