

Assessing the Effectiveness of Life Insurance Products for Women in Nepal: A Comprehensive Content Analysis

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Abstract

This study delves into the evolving landscape of life insurance in Nepal, particularly focusing on its accessibility and effectiveness for women. Life insurance in Nepal has surpassed its traditional function of providing financial security in the event of death, becoming a multifaceted tool that supports families in various ways. Life insurance is not just about securing financial stability; it plays a critical role in supporting education, healthcare, and emotional well-being during challenging times. Furthermore, the impact of life insurance extends beyond individual families, contributing to the economy, strengthening social safety nets, and indirectly enhancing public health by promoting preventive care. Insurance companies in Nepal have been offering additional benefits such as double death coverage, disability protection, and assistance with critical illnesses, the article underlines the need for greater awareness and plans that cater to diverse needs and income levels, particularly for women and underserved communities. The gender-specific focus becomes crucial as women in Nepal have shown a growing interest in insurance policies, driven by coverage tailored to their unique needs, such as benefits during pregnancies or coverage for diseases like breast and ovarian cancer. The main aim of the research study outlined in the article is to evaluate the degree of women-friendliness of insurance policies provided by Nepalese insurance companies. The research meticulously gathers and assesses data on 217 policies from 14 companies, scrutinizing features, advantages, and aspects that are particular to women. The methodology involves content analysis, focusing on indicators such as maternity allowances, critical illness coverage, gender-neutral premium structures, loyalty bonuses, and women-specific riders. The findings unveil that out of the 217 policies examined, just one, named "Himalayan Nari Jivan Beema," is specifically tailored for women. The absence of women-centric policies in other companies suggests a potential void in inclusivity. The analysis further reveals that while policies commonly provide coverage for critical illnesses, accidental death benefits, disability income benefits, personal accidental benefits, and premium waiver benefits, gender-specific special offers or benefits are scarce and designed exclusively for women. This study concludes by stressing the need for more inclusive and responsive insurance offerings in Nepal, highlighting the potential benefits of dedicated women's insurance policies. As societal expectations change, the researcher argues that addressing gender-specific concerns in insurance is crucial for ensuring fairness, inclusivity, and responsiveness in the rapidly changing Nepalese insurance landscape.

Keywords: Life insurance, women's empowerment, Nepal, financial inclusion, content analysis, gender-sensitive products

Introduction

A life insurance policy is a financial agreement between the policyholder and the insurance provider. The insurance company guarantees a risk benefit payout to one or more selected beneficiaries upon the insured person's potential uncertain risk in exchange for the insured person paying regular premiums. In Nepal, life insurance has become more than just a way to provide money in case of death (NLIC, 2023). It now helps people and families in multiple ways. There are 14 insurance companies offering over 217 plans, and the government even gives tax benefits on premiums up to Rs. 40,000 making insurance more common (NIA, 2023).

Life insurance doesn't just offer financial security for debts or retirement; it also helps families by supporting children's education, healthcare, and emotional well-being during tough times. This doesn't only impact individual families but also helps the economy, strengthens social safety nets, and indirectly improves public health by encouraging preventive care.

Insurance companies are getting creative, offering extra benefits like double death coverage, disability protection, and help with critical illnesses. To make sure everyone benefits, especially women and underserved communities, there's a need for more awareness and insurance plans that fit different needs and incomes.

By spreading awareness, making insurance accessible, and coming up with new ideas, Nepal can create a safer future for its people. Getting life insurance isn't just about money; it's about giving peace of mind and security to loved ones. Imagine someone's spouse not worrying about mortgage payments or their kids' education costs, life insurance can make these worries go away. Some policies even let people save money, get long-term care, or receive income if you can't work.

In Nepal, insurance companies offer a variety of policies to the public, but the focus on whether these policies are truly women-friendly and appealing to women buyers remains a critical aspect (Ghimire, 2020). There is a growing interest among women in these policies, and this interest is spurred by the inclusion of special coverage catering to women's unique needs. For instance, policies that provide benefits during pregnancies or offer specific coverage for diseases like breast cancer or ovarian cancer, which predominantly affect women, capture the attention of female consumers. Additionally, the potential allure for women might be heightened if they receive more significant tax benefits compared to men. Currently, both men and women can avail themselves of up to Rs. 40,000 in tax benefits, but exploring whether women are more attracted to these policies due to tax advantages is an essential aspect that warrants further investigation (Insurance Khabar, 2022). Even though Nepal is making progress in treating men and women equally, there are still differences in the life insurance sector. Women might face higher prices or fewer options for certain diseases. But fixing these issues will make life insurance better for everyone, especially women. It's about making sure everyone can feel safe and empowered with life insurance in Nepal.

Understanding the specific elements that make insurance policies appealing to women will contribute valuable insights to the effectiveness and inclusivity of insurance offerings in Nepal.

The primary objective of this research is to assess the women-friendliness of insurance policies provided by Nepalese insurance companies. To achieve this, the study has systematically gathered and analyzed data on various insurance policies offered by these companies. The analysis focuses on evaluating the extent to which these policies genuinely cater to the needs and preferences of women. By scrutinizing the features, benefits, and special considerations within these insurance offerings, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of whether the current landscape of insurance policies in Nepal is truly inclusive and responsive to the unique requirements of women. The findings of this study aspire to contribute valuable insights to enhance the gender sensitivity and effectiveness of insurance products in the Nepalese market.

Literature Review

The insurance industry is starting to take notice of a powerful demographic: women. Their increasing financial independence and diverse roles, including single parenthood, highlight the critical need for them to safeguard their finances through insurance (Jawaharrani et al., 2023). While research on the female market in insurance remains limited, evidence suggests they represent a significant and untapped pool of potential customers (Grown et al., 2017).

However, gaps in women's health coverage persist. Insurers often exclude services crucial to women's well-being, leaving them exposed to higher costs and denied claims (Palanker & Davenport, 2016). And for market women, in particular, low insurance knowledge and negative perceptions of the industry, fueled by experiences like delayed claims and high premiums, create significant barriers to entry (Bediako, 2014).

To attract and retain women as clients, insurance providers need to acknowledge and address these concerns. Marketers should incorporate research findings into their strategies, prioritizing transparent communication, gender-sensitive product development, and accessible information tailored to women's unique needs and financial realities (Lambrew, 2001).

A recent study by Jawaharrani et al. (2023) focused into the impact of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) on women's health coverage, pinpointing persistent gaps caused by insurer exclusions. Examining health plans from 109 insurers across 16 states in 2014 and 2015, the researcher's unearthed six commonly excluded services despite the ACA's expansion of coverage. To bridge these gaps and ensure comprehensive healthcare access for women, the study recommends specific policy changes. While the ACA undoubtedly improved women's health coverage in this research remind us that challenges remain, urging closer scrutiny of insurer exclusions as a crucial step towards equitable healthcare.

The article by Gilliland (1986) aims to investigate the challenges women face in accessing healthcare through insurance, particularly as influenced by economic status and organizational barriers. The study employs advocacy for legislation and regulatory changes as its primary methodology. Key findings underscore that merely ending sex discrimination is insufficient to address access issues; instead, the article emphasizes the critical role of legislative and regulatory processes in overcoming these barriers. The conclusions drawn advocate for compelling social policy arguments supporting nondiscrimination in insurance as a means to improve women's access to healthcare, stressing the need for systemic changes to ensure equitable and inclusive health coverage for women.

The article by Shanmugam et al. (2022) investigate the awareness, associations, and obstacles influencing the selection of exclusive women insurance policies. The study, conducted through quantitative research in Chennai using statistical techniques, reveals a noteworthy finding: respondents exhibit low awareness of exclusive women's insurance policies. The conclusions drawn from the research highlight the potential benefits of women-focused insurance programs in fostering financial independence. However, the study underscores a critical challenge, as the awareness among respondents regarding these policies remains notably low. This suggests a need for increased efforts in education and promotion to enhance awareness and understanding of exclusive women insurance policies, ensuring that women are informed about and can access tailored financial protection options.

The article by Ettis and Haddad (2019) explores the impact of perceived benefits on attitudes toward e-insurance, specifically examining gender differences. The study employed a self-administered survey and utilized the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM-PLS) approach. Key findings indicate a significant correlation between perceived benefits and attitudes, with gender playing a moderating role in this relationship. The conclusions drawn from the research contribute valuable insights into the factors influencing the adoption of e-insurance, highlighting the importance of recognizing and understanding gender differences in shaping attitudes. Overall, the paper provides a nuanced perspective on the dynamics of e-insurance adoption, emphasizing the need to consider gender-specific factors for a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behaviors in this domain.

The article by Grown et al. (2017) delves into the significance of the women's market for the insurance industry and offers recommendations. While the specific research methods are not detailed, key findings highlight a gap in research concerning the women's market. The article provides recommendations focused on attracting and retaining women clients within the insurance sector. The conclusions drawn emphasize the crucial role women play in the insurance industry and underscore the necessity of taking steps to enhance their inclusion. By recognizing the unique needs and preferences of women in the insurance market, the recommendations aim to contribute to a more inclusive and responsive industry that better serves the diverse needs of all clients.

The article by Zajac (2009) addresses gender-based disparities in health insurance costs and coverage within the U.S. The specific research methods are not detailed. Key findings of the study reveal that women tend to pay more for health insurance, with actuarial justifications cited as contributing factors. The conclusions drawn from the research highlight the differences between the U.S. and Australian healthcare systems and underscore the importance of research funding in addressing and rectifying gender-based disparities in health insurance. The article thus serves as a call to action, emphasizing the need for further examination and intervention to promote equitable and affordable health insurance coverage for women in the United States.

The study by Kansra (2015) focuses on investigating the awareness of health insurance among women in Punjab and identifying its socioeconomic determinants. The research methodology involves Probit regression analysis. Key findings from the study reveal that education, occupation, marital status, and wage loss significantly influence awareness levels. The conclusions drawn from the empirical analysis recommend interventions aimed at increasing awareness of health insurance benefits among women. This underscores the importance of targeted efforts to address specific socioeconomic factors in order to enhance awareness and understanding of health insurance, ultimately promoting better access to healthcare for women in the studied region.

The research report by Lambrew (2001) has the objective of addressing disparities in health insurance for women. The specific research methods are not detailed. Key findings from the article emphasize social policy arguments for insurance nondiscrimination. The conclusions drawn include acknowledgment of funding sources and contributors, underscoring the importance of addressing health insurance disparities. The article appears to advocate for policy changes to ensure equity in health insurance for women, with a recognition of the financial support and contributors who contribute to the research and initiatives aimed at improving the status of women's health insurance.

The study research by Wyn et al. (1997) aims to compare satisfaction, access, and costs between women in fee-for-service and managed care plans. The research utilizes data from The Commonwealth Fund's 1994 Managed Care Survey. Key findings reveal that women in managed care express lower satisfaction levels with provider choice and access compared to their counterparts in fee-for-service plans. The conclusions drawn from the study emphasize the need to focus on understanding and addressing differences in satisfaction and access between fee-for-service and managed care plans for women, providing valuable insights into the dynamics of healthcare delivery and the impact on women's experiences within different healthcare models.

Methodology

This research ventures into the uncharted territory of women-centric insurance in Nepal, a domain with immense potential yet surprisingly underexplored. In this research data of 217 policies offered by 14 Nepalese life insurance companies is collected with their features from their websites and interviewed with respective communication officer of the company. Qualitative data analysis methodology is applied to analyze the collected and the data analysis method used was content analysis that involves systematically analyzing the content of textual data to identify themes, and insights (Columbia, 2016) .

Through meticulous content analysis, this study investigates the presence and efficacy of women-centric features in life insurance policies. We scrutinize crucial indicators like maternity allowances, critical illness coverage tailored for women, and gender-neutral premium structures to evaluate their potential impact on female policyholders.

In each of the 217 policies are analyzed based on the presence or absence of above mentioned key aspects and then concluded based on the outcomes that the policies offered by Nepalese life insurance companies are women-centric or not.

Findings and Discussion

This research takes a close look at policies offered by Nepal's insurance companies, pointing out the specific focus given to women in critical illnesses, support for maternity and loyalty bonuses etc. The analysis started with the determining whether the policy offered provided women related name to focus the attraction of women insurer. After that researcher take care on whether the policy give specific benefits to women or not. In this way the content analysis is carried to reach to the conclusion.

Table 1: Life Insurance Policy Targeted to Women

S. N.	List of Life Insurance Company	Number of Policies	Is this a Women-Centric Policy
1	American Life Insurance Limited (MetLife)	10	No
2	Asian Life Insurance Company	22	No
3	Citizen Life Insurance Company Limited	9	No
4	IME Life Insurance Company Limited	14	No
5	SuryaJyoti Life Insurance Company Limited	16	No
6	Life Insurance Corporation (Nepal) Limited	20	No
7	Prabhu Mahalaxmi Life Insurance Limited	15	No
8	National Life Insurance Company Limited	20	No
9	Nepal Life Insurance Company Limited	20	No
10	Rastriya Jeevan Beema Company Limited	8	No
11	Reliable Nepal Life Insurance Limited	14	No
12	Sanima Reliance Life Insurance Limited	11	No
13	Sun Nepal Life Insurance Company Limited	13	No
14	Himalayan Life Insurance Limited	25	Yes (Himalayan Nari Jivan Beema)
	Total	217	

The analysis of 217 policies across 14 life insurance companies uncovered intriguing findings regarding the presence of policies tailored to women. Out of the total policies examined, only one, named "Himalayan Nari Jivan Beema," was explicitly women-focused, originating from Himalayan Life Insurance Limited. All other 13 insurance companies did not have policies with women-related names. Notably, out of the 217 policies, only the Himalayan Life Insurance policy stood

out for its emphasis on women. This result implies that, as far as policy names suggest, the life insurance industry in this study primarily does not emphasize policies for women. The presence of only one women-centric policy among the 14 companies highlights the potential for a more inclusive and diverse range of insurance offerings. Further analysis is required to determine whether the "Himalayan Nari Jivan Beema" policy offered by Himalayan Insurance truly focuses on women and provides riders with benefits specific to them, as well as whether other life insurance policies offered by insurance companies in Nepal offer riders with benefits tailored to women.

The purpose of this analysis is to determine whether life insurance companies operating in Nepal are offering riders specific to women for their policies, specifically in relation to critical illnesses for women. The analysis examines the presence of Accidental Death Benefits (ADB), Disability Income Benefits (DIB), Personal Accidental Benefits (PAB), and Premium Waiver Benefits (PWB) for each product, with the exception of Himalayan Nari Jivan Beema. The findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Analysis of Policies on the Basis of Riders Facilities

Facilities	Additional benefits	Special offers for women
Critical Illness (CI)	Yes	No
Accidental Death Benefits (ADB)	Yes	No
Disability Income Benefits (DIB)	Yes	No
Personal Accidental Benefits (PAB)	Yes	No
Premium Waiver Benefits (PWB)	Yes	No

The analysis of life insurance policies offered by companies in Nepal, excluding Himalayan Nari Jivan Beema, reveals a comprehensive overview of additional benefits and riders, with a particular focus on features tailored for women. The findings indicate that while these policies commonly include critical illness coverage, accidental death benefits, disability income benefits, personal accidental benefits, and premium waiver benefits, there is a notable absence of gender-specific special offers or benefits exclusively designed for women in these categories. This suggests that, in terms of riders, the insurance industry in Nepal may not have developed nuanced products that address the distinct needs or risks faced by women. The absence of gender-specific features calls attention to the potential for greater customization and inclusivity in insurance offerings to better cater to the diverse needs of policyholders.

Upon initial observation, it appears that there is no clearly defined "Special Offering for Women" associated with any of the listed riders. This lack of gender-specific options contrasts significantly with the growing emphasis on inclusivity within the insurance industry, and warrants a comprehensive examination of the current situation in Nepal.

Furthermore, whether there are additional benefits on the policies offered by insurance companies of Nepal other than Himalayan Nari Jivan Beema are for women only, the presence or absence of different additional benefits in the policies are analyzed. The result is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Analysis on the Basis of specific Service Available for Women (Excluding Himalayan Nari Jivan Beem)

Facility Available	Facility Available	Special Offers for Women
Loan Against Policy	Yes	No
Loyalty Bonus Facility	Yes	No
Guaranteed Return Benefit	Yes	No
Surrender Value Benefit	Yes	No
Survival Benefits	Yes	No
Revival Benefits	Yes	No
Maternity Allowance	No	No
Money Back (periodic) Facility	Yes	No

The insurance companies providing various additional benefits such as loan against policy, loyalty bonus facility, guaranteed return benefit, surrender value benefit, survival benefits, revival benefits, and a money-back facility. However, there are no exclusive offerings or special benefits tailored specifically for women, including maternity allowance or gender-specific loyalty bonuses. This analysis provides clarity into the gender-neutral nature of the additional benefits associated with the policies offered by Nepalese insurance companies.

Again, whether there are additional benefits on the policies offered by Himalayan Nari Jivan Beema are for women only, the presence or absence of different additional benefits in the policies are analyzed. This analysis is done because this policy has given name Nari (women) that implies there may be some special additional benefits for women in this policy. The result is shown in Table 3.

Table 4: Analysis of Himalayan Nari Jeevan Beema on the Basis of Women-Centric Features

Facility Available	Facility Available	Special Offers for Women
Loan Against Policy	Yes	No
Loyalty Bonus Facility	Yes	Yes (2.5 % -20%)
Guaranteed Return Benefit	No	No
Surrender Value Benefit	Yes	No
Survival Benefits	Yes	No
Revival Benefits	Yes	No
Maternity Allowance	No	No
Money Back (periodic) Facility	Yes	Yes (2.5 of sum assured p.a.)

Findings investigates that the additional benefits associated with the Himalayan Nari Jivan Beema policy, aiming to discern whether there are specialized features exclusively designed for women. This scrutiny is prompted by the policy's nomenclature, suggesting a potential emphasis on women's welfare. The findings, outlined in Table 4, reveal several noteworthy aspects. While the policy allows for a loan against it, there are no specific offers or benefits exclusively tailored

for women related to this facility. The Loyalty Bonus Facility stands out as a distinct feature with a unique characteristic—women receive a bonus ranging from 2.5% to 20%, signifying a gender-specific loyalty bonus. However, the policy lacks a guaranteed return benefit tailored exclusively for women. Additionally, surrender value benefits, survival benefits, revival benefits, and a money-back facility are available without gender-specific distinctions. Maternity allowance is notably absent in the policy. This analysis suggests that the Himalayan Nari Jiban Beema policy designed with some specific gender-specific focus, while others maintain a gender-neutral stance.

Addressing this omission demands considering the evolving landscape, where gender-sensitive features are gaining traction. The absence of tailored services raises concerns about the industry's responsiveness to diverse needs. As societal expectations shift, incorporating gender-specific considerations becomes crucial. Exploring potential benefits of dedicated women's offerings could inform policy development, ensuring inclusivity and responsiveness within the ever-evolving Nepalese insurance landscape.

Conclusion

This research paper delves into the multifaceted realm of life insurance products in Nepal, emphasizing the need for policies that address the unique needs of women. The analysis, spanning policy names, additional benefits, and riders, uncovers a notable gap in explicitly women-centric offerings across all the insurance companies of Nepal. While one company stands out with a women-centric policy, the absence of gender-specific features in additional benefits and riders suggests an industry yet to fully embrace the evolving needs of its diverse clientele. The findings underscore the potential for a more inclusive and responsive insurance landscape in Nepal. Moving forward, insurance companies can leverage these insights to develop policies that not only cater to women's needs but also contribute to broader financial empowerment and security, aligning with the evolving socio-economic landscape of the country.

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