

WOMEN LEADERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS MANAGEMENT IN NEPAL'S PUBLIC BANKS

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Abstract

Women empowerment in Nepal public banks is providing the scope of sustainable business management by eliminating the gender gap discrimination. Diverse perspectives and social governance in the leadership style of women drives sustainable business management practices (Bulmer *et al.*, 2021). In Nepal public banks the trend of women leadership is increasing due to the enhancing educational opportunities and awareness of women empowerment. Women leadership strategies in the organisations are willing to develop an inclusive work environment and foster community engagement as well. The main challenge of women leadership in Nepal is lack of educational facilities and social awareness on women empowerment (Acharya, 2025). The promotion of women leadership in Nepal's public banks contributes to generate social awareness and mitigate the gender gap in the developing economies.

Increased stakeholder engagement, inclusive and ethical practices also can be developed in Nepal's public banks is getting encouraged through women leadership. Compliance of terms, such as "gender pay gap, women empowerment and workplace security" in the ESG policy of the banking sector can ensure a sustainable management system (Hsu, 2024). Regarding this, Nepal's banking sector is promoting women leadership in the management decision and initiating sustainability growth in the organisational performances. Social and government collaboration in women education and empowerment are providing the scope of future leadership opportunity in the professional sector (Ogbari *et al.*, 2024). Therefore, long-term vision, ESG performance, stakeholder engagement and commitment to DEI through women leadership is establishing sustainability practices in Nepal's banking sector.

Keywords: *Leadership, ESG, Inclusion, Ethical practices, Sustainability, Innovation, Gender gap*

Introduction

Women leadership in Nepal's banking sector is getting promoted widely and initiating a sustainable management approach in the overall organisation performance. In Nepal 6 million women are actively working compared to 2.8 million male labourers on average 9 hours per week (Worldbank, 2024). The opportunity of growth and participation in the public banking sector of Nepal to both the men and women employees are maintaining diversity and equality in the workplace. Women leadership in Nepal's public banking sector is supporting its future scope of growth by generating skilled labour force and promoting equality. In 2022, the number of commercial banks in Nepal reached 22 and a total of 66 micro finance institutions are working in the country (Nrb, 2022). Managing the growing market of the banking sector in Nepal the participation of women leadership is going to mitigate the skill gap. In 2021, Nepal's literacy rate among the women over 15 years old reached 71.5% with a 2.44% growth from 2019 (Macrotrends, 2025). Continuous growth of women literacy in Nepal is providing the opportunity of women's involvement in the banking and other sectors. This research has addressed the significance of women leadership in the public banking sector of Nepal for developing sustainable business management approaches.

Review of Literature

Significance of women leadership in sustainable business management

Women leadership strategy relies on the inclusivity and diversity practices to maintain equity in the workplace. As stated by Thomas and Das (2024) women leadership is driving innovation and holistic approach in the business to adopt sustainable practices and drive significant changes. For example, women leadership in Nepal is promoting equality by reducing the gender gap and inclusivity practices in the workforce to drive sustainable development. Based on the statistics of this study in Nepal's workforce every 100 males only 59 are female, due to lack of equal opportunities and lower representation of women. The

involvement of women leadership is making strategic imperatives to sustainable development in the business management. On the contrary, Faugoo (2024) added women leaders adopt long-term vision and decision-making for prioritising the stakeholders needs for leading sustainability transformation in the business. Under “SDG 5, United Nations” is promoting gender equality and eliminating discrimination to support women empowerment to bridge the gap in social and professional context. As per figure 1, in the countries of Asia, the gender gap is comparatively higher than other regions. The research of Bulmer et al. (2021) also mentioned that diverse perspectives and social governance strategies in the leadership style of women drives sustainable business management practices by eliminating conflict and legal risks. Hence, promoting women leadership in Nepal’s public bank is driving changes to establish equality and long-term vision in the sustainable business management plan.

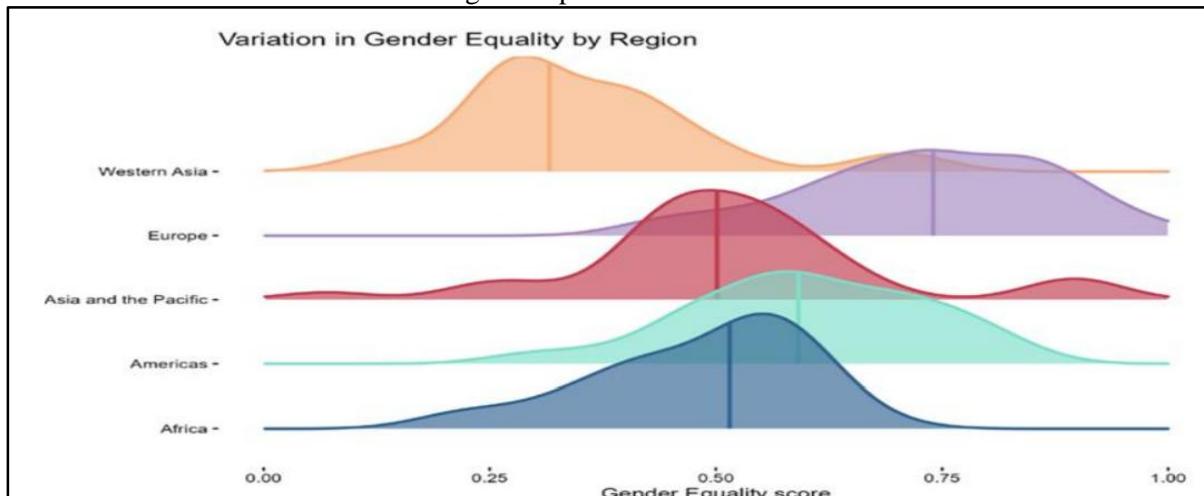


Figure 2: Gender equality in different region

(Source: Faugoo, 2024)

Challenges of maintaining sustainable business management and women leadership

The maintenance of sustainable business management in Nepal’s public bank is facing the issues of gender gap, economic crisis and skill gap due to its social and economic infrastructure. Adhikari and Molla (2024) stated that financial constraints in the SMEs of Nepal are creating issues to adopt “long-term vision, advanced technologies and upgrade the infrastructure”. Regarding this, enabling sustainable business management practices in Nepal’s public banks can face the issues of resource collection and upgrade the services. Women leadership has the ability of adding innovative ideas and implementing long-term plans to eliminate the issue of budget constraint significantly. Urgent needs of digital transformation in Nepal’s business can support its operational efficiency and adopt digital innovation as well. However Aryal (2024) stated that “poor digital literacy, lack of women participation and collaboration” are creating issues in Nepal to deliver sustainable business management plans. Lack of social and economic infrastructural development in Nepal are reducing the scope of sustainable development in the banking sector. Acharya (2025) also highlighted the lack of educational facilities and social awareness in Nepal on women empowerment is creating challenges to get equal opportunities and skill growth. Hence, encouraging women leadership, Nepal’s public banking sector can get the advantage of enabling innovation and long-term plans to deliver alternative solutions in business management.

Recommendations for women leaders on improving the sustainable business management

Government initiatives along with social contribution in the social and economic reform of Nepal can empower women leaders and drive sustainable changes in public banks. The promotion of digital literacy along with awareness of women's education can contribute to a sustainable business management plan by driving the changes. Tushabe *et al.* (2025) mentioned that promoting work-life balance for the women can encourage their engagement and reduce the gender gap as well. Proper educational facilities, equality on employment policy and social awareness in Nepal’s public bank governance can support women engagement and leadership performances in driving sustainable changes. On the contrary, Farmanesh *et al.* (2023) mentioned that fostering leadership support in allocating human and financial resources deliver sustainability initiatives in the business performances. Driving sustainable business management in Nepal’s

public bank, leaders should understand the capability of the organisation in adopting the changes. For example, in the small and middle scale banking organisations, leaders should focus on short-term vision based on organisational capability to avoid the risk of budget and market volatility. Hsu (2024) mentioned that compliance of “gender pay gap, women empowerment and workplace security” in the ESG policy eliminate the ethical and legal risk factors in the sustainable business management practices. Women leadership in the banking sector can be beneficial to deliver alternative strategies in the business management to establish innovation and sustainable practices. Hence, social and economic collaboration in the banking sector of Nepal can reduce the scope of frequent volatility and adopt the iterative changes under the women leadership practices.

Objectives

Aim

This research has aimed to evaluate the role of women leadership in Nepal’s public banks for initiating a sustainable business management approach.

Objectives

- To analyse the significance of women leadership in sustainable business management
- To understand the importance of women leadership in Nepal’s public bank
- To identify the challenges of sustainable business management practice in banking sector
- To recommend probable suggestions on women leadership in sustainable business management

Research Methodology

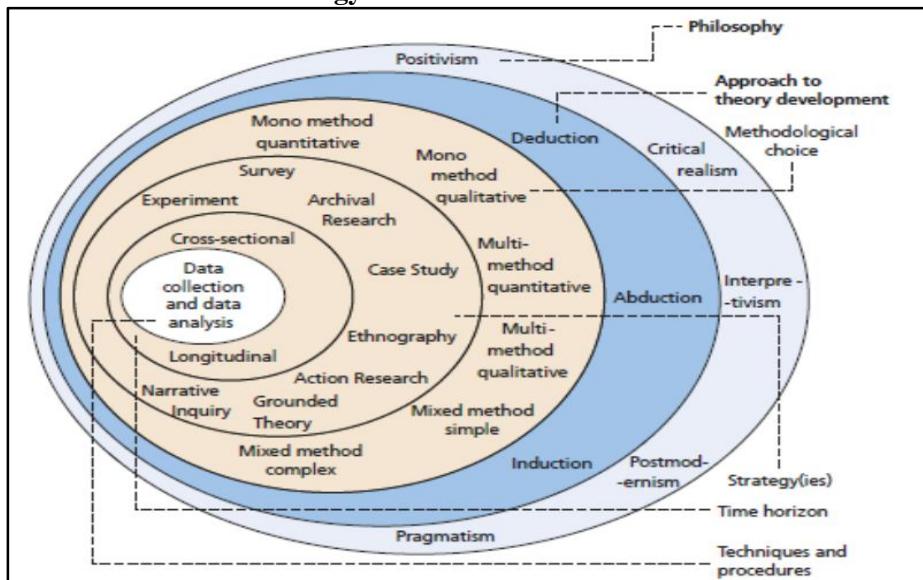


Figure 3: Saunders research onion

(Source: Wimalaratne and Kulatunga, 2022)

This research has adopted the secondary qualitative research method to analyse the significance of women leadership in Nepal’s public bank in adopting sustainable business management. Followed by Saunders research onion, this study has made its methodological choices for sourcing secondary qualitative information on women leadership and sustainable business management in Nepal. The secondary research method is time and cost effective to source available information and support the research outcome (Taherdoost, 2021). Considering this, the selection of interpretivism research philosophy and deductive approach has supported the research findings to implement a subjective experience on women leadership in Nepal. Based on the keyword based search strategy, this research has sourced available and authentic sources of secondary information in the research findings. The selected keywords for this research are “women leadership, ESG, inclusion and diversity, ethical practices, sustainability, innovation and gender gap”.

Supported by the thematic analysis method this research has generated has 3 themes on women leadership and sustainable business management strategies. Braun and Clarke’s thematic analysis method, consider 6 stages in the thematic analysis process to generate new themes based on the identified keywords and names (Byrne, 2022). Depending on the convenience sampling method, this research has selected 6 journal articles

sourced from Google Scholar based on the keywords of “women leadership, sustainable business management and banking services”. This has helped the research to gather required sources of information and avoid the issue of including general information in the secondary research. In the process of the secondary data collection method, this research has paraphrased the sourced information and mentioned proper citation against the collected information. Hence, followed by the secondary ethical principles this research has maintained the data security and copyright claim to meet the research objective successfully.

Results and Discussion

Results300

Authors	Keywords	Themes	Description
Kathayat (2024) Hamal <i>et al.</i> (2025)	“Empathy, leadership and ethical principles”	Theme 1: Empathy and flexibility in women leadership include proactive approach and implement ethical principles	Empathetic approach allows the women leaders to understand the diverse perspective and develop a strong relationship to address ethical principles. As investigated by Kathayat (2024), predictors such as Competence, Transparency, and Accountability have 57.4% of the variance in Public Trust. Women leaders have the skills mentioned as predictors which make them competent enough to build public trust. In the investigation of Hamal <i>et al.</i> , (2025), it has been found that The R Square value of 0.560 indicates approximately 56% leadership effectiveness depends on self-awareness for relationship management. Based on the relationship development capability by the women leaders found in the above mentioned static model taking ethical decisions became easier for them.
Gupta <i>et al.</i> (2021) Pokharel (2024)	“Gender gap, discrimination and budget constraints”	Themes 2: Limited access of network due to gender discrimination and work life balances create challenges in women leadership and sustainable business management	Issues of gender discrimination is a major issue that has put limitations before the women leaders of Nepal. The study of Gupta <i>et al.</i> (2021), has mentioned that 66% women of Nepal have encountered at least one type of gender discrimination. Due to gender based discrimination women leaders often failed to get different facilities that put limitations on network development. As mentioned by Pokharel (2024), 66% women in Nepal have confronted verbal abuse while 77% of the mentioned incidents occur within the family. It indicates that women in Nepal do not get proper support from their family which would act as a major hindrance before their work-life-balance.
Sharma and Paudel (2025) Prajapati and Chauhan (2025)	“Sustainability, innovation, mentorship and leadership program”	Theme 3: Mentorship on sustainable business management and women leadership program drive sustainable changes	One of the main reasons for women leadership falling back in Nepal is poor guidance. SMEs in Nepal are accountable for 90% business operations while the involvement of women is lacking (Sharma and Paudel, 2025). Proper mentorship to the women in Nepal would help them to actively participate in the SMEs of Nepal which would also encourage women leadership. Investigation of Prajapati and Chauhan (2025), indicates that mandatory gender quotas at least from 33% political parties and legislative bodies would help in strengthening representation of women through expansion of training and mentorship. Mentorship and training approaches require the support of government and legislative bodies which would help to empower women in Nepal and make them participate in leadership roles.

Table 1: Thematic analysis

(Source: Self-created)

Discussion

Objective 1

The approaches of ethical decision making heavily rely on the aspects of empathy and relation development while women possess these skills which make them rational empathetic decision makers. Kathayat (2024) has argued that women inherently possess competence, transparency and accountability that explains 57.4% of variance in public trust making. However, the risk of generalisation is present in these findings as correlation supports the claim that women leaders only exclusively possess the mentioned predictors or skills. On the other hand, Hamal *et al.* (2025) mentioned that self-awareness factor is 56% responsible for leadership effectiveness evaluation in terms of relationship management. The discussed theme denotes that self-awareness factor competence, transparency, and accountability inherited by the women better be translated to the ethical decision making capability. Thus, statistical evaluation indicates a generalisation based on skills but inheritance of the mentioned skills to some certain extent ensures the consistency in ethical leadership approaches among the women leaders of Nepal.

Objective 2

Issues of gender discrimination significantly impose barriers before the progress of women leadership in Nepal by limiting their access to opportunities and resources. As mentioned by Gupta *et al.* (2024), 66% of Nepali women have encountered at least one type of gender discrimination. Due to the gender discrimination factor and its systematic nature, women leaders of Nepal often failed to get access to the required resources to build a network that hampers their growth. On the other hand, 66% of women face verbal abuse while 77% of incidents occur within the family (Pokharel, 2024). Dual burden of public and family discrimination as family failed to be a support system to the women leaders and become a source of constraints. Critical discussion reflects that women leadership gets undermined by workplace bias along with deeply rooted cultural norms that affect the work-life balance.

Objective 3

Key factors that hinder the women leadership in Nepal due to lack of structural mentorship and guidance. SMEs constitute 90% of the business approaches in Nepal while women involvement in the approach is not sufficient (Sharma and Paudel, 2025). Structural barriers and insufficient institutional support for women's inclusion in the entrepreneurial spaces can be managed with the help of mentorship and training. As mentioned by Prajapati and Chauhan (2025), 33% representation from the political parties and legislative bodies needed to mandate gender quotas could contribute in expanding training and mentorship. Reliance in the government initiatives and legislative bodies for driving the mentorship and training is crucial enough for developing and sharpening the skills of women to handle the leadership responsibilities. Hence, mentorship needs to be embedded with broader structural reforms through inclusion of political parties and governmental agencies for mentorship and training approaches.

Key findings

- **Empathy and relational skills support ethical decision making:** Women leaders in the Nepal region potentially have predictors like competence, transparency and accountability in public trust development. On the other hand, self-awareness approaches of the women leaders along with the other mentioned predictors strengthens the ethical leadership factors.
- **Gender discrimination creates systematic barriers:** Gender discrimination has been confronted by the Nepali women creating issues in accessing resources and networks. Systematic exclusion of women from different faculties creates issues before professional growth.
- **Discrimination from families enhances the challenges:** 77% cases of discrimination have been confronted by the women from their families. Therefore both the societal and domestic barriers like lack of family support impose barriers before getting work-life balance before women leaders to perform better.
- **Mentorship approaches from legislative agencies would create opportunities:** Mandating of quotas from the political parties and legislative agencies would create the scope for improving the skills of women in the arena of leadership for sustainable progress. The mentorship factor along with the support of the government would help the women to create their own network and work alongside their male counterparts to contribute in the business evaluation of Nepal.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Conclusion

Women leadership in Nepal's public banking sector is driving sustainable business management practices by eliminating conflict and challenging situations to meet the organisational goal successfully. The study of this research has evaluated that empathetic nature and innovativeness attitude of women maintain flexibility to adopt the changes for improving organisational performances. However, the issues of lack of social awareness, opportunity of growth, gender pay gap and discriminatory practices in Nepal are increasing the risk of implementing sustainable business practices. Considering this, social and government collaboration in women empowerment and driving sustainability initiatives are adding value in the banking services of Nepal. Along with this, poor network system, resource allocation and budget constraint issues are also affecting the future growth of the public banking sector of Nepal to adopt a sustainable business plan. In this condition, alignment of the regulatory framework in ESG policy and arranging skill growth programs for women can allow the implementation of ethical practices in business and improve the operational excellence. Based on the results and findings section this research has explored that transformative attitude of women leadership is breaking the systematic barriers of Nepal's banking sector. Hence, supporting the growth of women leaders and providing required infrastructure a long-term plan can be implemented to drive sustainable changes in the business management.

Suggestions

- ***Incorporating national laws on ESG policy in the banking sector maintain lawful management practices:*** The compliance of Nepal's national law on women leadership and equal opportunity can contribute to work-life balance and provide government support as well. Based on "The Constitution of Nepal 2015" Nepal government has eliminated any kind of gender discrimination in the context of "health, education, health, employment, equal pay, social security and property rights" (Unwomen, 2025). Compiling the legal policies of Nepal, the public banking sector can modify the ESG policy to support the inclusion and diversity practices on women employment. Hence, based on the regulatory principles of Nepal, the public banking sector can drive women employee engagement and support the leadership practices in developing sustainable business management.
- ***Adopting cutting-edge technologies in business performances reduce the scope of error and drive operational excellence:*** The use of cutting-edge technologies in the banking sector replaces human intelligence in saving the time of work and reduce the scope of error to drive sustainable business management. Technologies, such as "AI and cloud computing" ensure hyper-personalisation, create an integrated ecosystem and maintain a multi-stage authentication process to improve efficiency and customer engagement (Islam *et al.*, 2024). Adopting cutting-edge technologies in the banking sector of Nepal can reduce the scope of error and improve operational excellences to drive a sustainable management system. Proper training to women employees on technology integration and its optimisation process can benefit to improve the organisational performances and reduce the scope of error.
- ***Promoting mentorship programs for women employees contributes to skill growth and development:*** Skill development programs for women are necessary in Nepal's banking sector to adopt the changing market requirements and reduce the gender gap issue. Mentorship programs for the employees can support the skill development program and improve the ability as well as contributing to performance management (Sjarifudin and Rony, 2023). Identifying the skill gap issue and areas of improvements, employee training and development programs can improve the ability to adopt the changing scenarios. Hence, adopting the strategies of "on-job training and seminars" Nepal's public banking sector can improve the ability of women employees to become a leader and drive sustainable business management processes.

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