

**Analysing meaningful representation of elected Dalit
women at local level of Nepal in 2017 election**

By

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Abstract

In 2015, Nepal promulgated a new constitution aiming for proportional representation and inclusive participation in the 2017 election. This inclusive approach secures a mandatory representation of two women ward members at the local level election, including one woman and one Dalit woman. According to this provision, Non-Dalit and Dalit women were nominated in 753 local areas across Nepal as a local ward member. This was an opportunity for the Dalit community to come into the mainstream of the nation and have the responsibility to perform in the best way. The 2017 election has thus become a milestone for Dalit women who are discriminated against socially, economically, and politically.

This study thus examines the situation and explores the meaningful representation of Dalit women in politics through two different theoretical lenses: intersectionality and critical actor theory. Using an intersectional feminist lens this thesis hopes to bring to light the overlapping structures of oppression at work in the intersectional identities of Dalit women in Nepalese society. Critical actor theory adds a critical perspective to critical mass theory which I argue the government of Nepal adopted by regulating the provision of quota system regarding Dalit women. When considering a quota system critical mass theory mainly focusses upon the number of the participants without considering effective participation whereas critical actor theory focusses on both number as well as capability and capacity of the representatives. The government of Nepal concentrated on the number of the Dalit women by introducing a 'Dalit ward member quota' without considering a prior plan to develop their capability and capacity

This study is based upon secondary data sources, including 17 case studies of the elected Dalit women ward members at the local level after the 2017 election and examines the status of Dalit women in the society, their challenges and obstacles before, after and during the 2017 election. In conclusion, this study argues that the quota system is an important milestone for Dalit women in the 2017 election. This is the good start by the government to bring historically discriminated community in the mainstream politics of Nepal, however, at the same time government of Nepal is not paying attention to other factors that limit elected Dalit women's participation and meaningful leadership. This thesis ultimately argues that the government of Nepal must not only focus on the quota system and must also pay attention to social, economic and cultural factors that play a part in the failure or success of Dalit's women's positions in local government.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signed:

Poonam Mohtey

30 December 2020

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Background

The representation of women in politics is globally low. Comparatively, it is lower in developing countries than the developed ones. According to UNWOMEN¹ (2019), 24% of total seats in the parliaments worldwide are held by women, an uneven representation in the political arena. Likewise, the USA has an average of 30.6% of women in the parliament whereas in Asia, only 19.8% of seats in parliament were held by women in November 2018 (UNWOMEN 2019). Low participation of women in politics contributes to unequal power in the decision-making process (Childs & Krook 2008) and consequently many countries have introduced the quota system as affirmative action to increase the participation of women and minority groups in different areas such as government service, education, and political organisations. The main aim of the quota system is to include women in politics and decision-making processes and ensure that they are not the victims of tokenism (Krook & O' Brien 2010). However, the present-day debate on the quota system focuses mainly on the number of elected women political participants rather than focusing on their responsibilities or duties after being elected (Childs & Krook 2008). With this in mind, my study explores the quota system and representation of Dalit women in the context of local level election 2017 of Nepal.

Nepal has undergone a complex transformation in experiencing remarkable socio-political changes from civil war to harmony, a unitary system to the central government and monarchical government to the Federal Republic. Women played a prominent role within the political sphere during these periods. Even though historically women have faced different discouraging environments in politics, they have built themselves up as key performers of socio-political changes making a significant contribution (Upreti, Upreti & Ghale 2020). In the Constitutional Assembly of Nepal 2008, women ensured 33% representation through first-past-the-post and proportional representation. Among those 33% there was a large percentage (35%) of indigenous women participating, followed by 22.4% Brahmin women, so-called higher-caste, whereas Dalit women (so-called lower and marginalized) equalled 10.7% (IDEA 2011). This shows the gap within the caste system and the significant position

¹ UN Women is the United Nations entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women and was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide:
<https://www.unwomen.org/en/aboutus/about-un-women>

of women who hold different identities within society. Since this study examines elected Dalit women after the 2017 election at a local level in Nepal, it is essential to know about Dalits.

'Dalit' is a term derived from the Sanskrit language meaning broken or scattered. In Nepal and India, Dalit is a term used for the people who belong to the lower-caste community within the four-fold varna system of Hinduism according to the caste system such as Brahmin, Chattriya, Baisya, and Sudra (Teltumbde 2020). Falling under the fourth caste system in the hierarchy as 'Sudra', Dalits are historically oppressed, neglected, considered the lowest and deprived of basic human rights and opportunities. Despite the legal announcement against caste-based discrimination, discrimination is still in practice especially in the rural and urban areas of Nepal. Dalits are viewed as unimportant, socially discriminated against, politically underrepresented and excluded, and treated as untouchables. According to the 2011 census, out of nearly 29 million people in Nepal 13.5% of the population are Dalits, with half of these being women. Likewise, the United Nations report on Human Development 2014 illustrated a 0.434 Human Development Index (HDI) value for Dalits, which is the lowest value compared with Brahmin and Kshetriya who have an HDI of 0.538 which is the highest among all the castes in Nepal (UNDP 2017a). The literacy rate of Dalits is low, only 52.4% compared to Brahmins, with 81.9% (Sharma 2014). The most inferior and unequal status of Dalits in society directly affects their political representation compared to other higher-caste people (Bishwakarma 2017). The above data explains that Dalit community has got lowest status in the society of Nepal. In addition to the caste system, gender discrimination is also one of the crucial factors that creates inequality between the people of Nepal.

Nepal is a country of diversity in topography, culture, tradition, and religion. The majority of communities follow the patriarchal pattern where women and men are treated differently. The patriarchal structure of the society along with the lack of education, knowledge and skill amongst women has resulted in violence and discrimination in the lives of women. Also, families and societies do not offer any psychological or economic support to women (Gurung 2018). Though the constitution of Nepal 2015 included 'right to equality' in Article 18, this has not been significantly implemented. However, the introduction of affirmative action in 2007 elevated the representation of women in the decision-making process of those who hold the power of politics. The reservation of 33% of seats allocated in the constitutional Assembly, and interparliamentary women's caucus form a critical mass in

the parliament (Lotter 2017). Since 2016, Nepal has developed and set an example within South Asian countries by electing women to positions such as president, chief justice, and parliamentary speaker. Even then women are imperilled in functional as well as non-functional manifestations of patriarchy. However, this change assimilates into the life of every women differently (Walby 1989). For instance, discrimination, suppression, and violence as well as political favouritism are encountered differently by women from upper caste as compared to the women from low castes (Dalits) or marginalized group in Hindu societies (Lotter 2017). Dalit women in Nepal bear oppression, discrimination, and violence more than other women because they are economically, socially, and politically weak.

Dalit women constitute approximately 10% of the total population of Nepal (Sob 2012). They usually suffer from gender and domestic violence. Dalit women have constantly become the victims of severe violence. Due to the lack of power and ignorance about the rights, out of 49.1% cases of violence against Dalit women, only 4.4 cases were registered (FEDO 2015). In addition, 80% of Dalit women live below the poverty line (FEDO 2015). Since the political change in 2007, the situation of Dalit women has gradually improved. The Nepalese government had a provision of 25 seats for women in the first Constituent Assembly, but later this was decreased to 22 in the second Constitution Assembly (FEDO 2015). However, Dalit women have been excluded from state mechanisms, governing structures, and the political sphere for decades. Even though the average national poverty rate of Nepal is 25%, the Dalit average national poverty rate is 42% and the literacy rate of Dalit women is 34.8% (national average 65.9%) (FEDO 2015). In order to increase political participation, the government of Nepal introduced the quota system to help women and marginalized groups (Marschall & Shah 2007; Jensenius 2016). Nepal promulgated a new constitution in 2015, which made inclusive participation of Dalit women at the local government level. The mandatory provision made by the government also allows other marginalized communities who are living at the bottom of the hierarchical system of society to participate in politics. Although the election of 2017 in national and local levels supported women's political participation in numerous ways, specific measures may be required to overcome the barriers of gender discrimination (The Asia Foundation 2017).

Women candidates may face gaps in capacities or resources that prevent them from competing effectively. For instance, there are different impediments to local and national level women's participation because they do not have the knowledge, skills, or data to analyse and correct things while executing their duty (Samabeshi Foundation 2019). However, the

question is how can the representation of Dalit women influence Dalits and marginalized communities through politics and public service? How do they address the common problem of other Dalit women while they encounter discrimination set by the society at their workplace? These issues are becoming more critical for investigation purpose. So, this paper tried to address those above issues of 2017 election of Nepal where Dalit women ward member quota has given to those group of people (Dalit women) who are historically marginalised. Moreover, the quota system is one of the fast tracks in an electoral system that can help in building an equal representation of men and women in government (Dahlerup & Fridevall 2005) which is the policy adopted by the government of Nepal when introducing inclusive participation. Discrimination against Dalit women highlights their multiple intersecting identities, such as being Dalit, being a woman, and their weak economic conditions (Sagar & Bhargava 2017). The Constitution 2015 has mandated a proportional representation of women in all government levels of Nepal (The Constitution of Nepal 2015). The Election Commission agree that 40.45% of the nominated seats at a local election are for women. Similarly, at the local municipality level, each ward has seven committee members, including a Chairperson and Vice Chairperson, with a mandatory provision that the ward committee must have at least two women members, including one Dalit woman (IFES 2020).

Over the decades, the representation of Dalit women was negligible. This has increased enormously at local election breaking the ongoing pattern of the hierarchical mindset which is one of the main aims of the quota system (Jenselius 2016). The election result shows a historical change in the status of Dalit women who have been devalued and suppressed by the Nepalese society for a long time. Despite the remarkable presence of Dalit women, their presence in higher positions is comparatively low in local government (The Record 2017a; The Record 2017b). Nevertheless, the 2017 election allows them to show their capacity to participate in the mainstream politics of the nation. There still lies a challenge for Dalit women to perform in the best way due to the multiple identities enforced by the stereotypical pattern of the patriarchal and caste system of the Nepalese society.

Additionally, Nepalese society is still in the patriarchal mindset where women are responsible for the household work even when they work as an administrative officer or are involved in a higher position in society (Gurung 2018). Moreover, their presence and decision-making are ignored and unwanted in the household decision-making process, which is always guided by a male member. In other words, Dalit women are more vulnerable than other high caste women who have lesser power controlling positions and mostly their

decision-making capacity is guided by communities, neighbours, family/spouse, etc. which is influenced by patriarchal pattern and intersectional identities of Dalit women in the society (Malik 2011). Moreover, Dalit women face different challenges while performing their duty as an elected member at the local government level in Nepal. Thus, this study will examine the problems or challenges faced by elected Dalit women while fulfilling the duties at the local government level in 2017. This study uses feminist internationality theory to analyse the intersectional identities of Dalit women in local government in Nepal and compares the Childs Sarah and Lena Krook Mona's (Childs & Krook 2009) theory of critical actors to find out the meaningful representation of Dalit women.

1.2. Problem Statement

To overcome the enormous gender inequality, the new constitution of Nepal has made a mandatory provision of reserving a total of 6567 seats for Dalit women at the local level (The Asia Foundation 2018). The local level elections of 2017 were held in three phases, on 14th May, 28th June, and 18th September in 753 local constitutions across Nepal. According to this provision, Dalits and non-Dalits women were nominated as local ward members in 753 local areas across Nepal. This was an opportunity for the Dalit community to come into the mainstream of the nation and also have the responsibility to perform in the best way. However, the mandatory provision made without any prior preparation, brought a great number of Dalit women into local government in Nepal. Each and every party was responsible for electing one Dalit women member from their party to fulfil the inclusive provision policy in the constitution of Nepal. As a result, they were chosen randomly without any preparation or prior knowledge about the provision, duties and responsibilities given to the participants. This later became a challenge for those elected Dalit women who were responsible for their position and duties (The Asia Foundation 2018).

Similarly, in some places, they also face the problem of 'tokenism' where their positions are misused by other persons or candidates because of the intersecting identities where caste system and patriarchal pattern of Nepalese society plays an important role. Thus the 'pseudo participation' of Dalit women has no effect on the Dalit community where elected candidates are treated as tokens in the power and politics of the hierarchical society imbedded within the caste system and gender inequality (Bishwakarma 2017). The research report released by National Planning Commission (2018) on 'Nepal's Multidimensional Poverty Index: Analysis towards Action' states that lack of strong leadership among marginalized communities has resulted in development of inequality and poverty among marginalized

communities. It has insisted on strengthening the political leadership of women and other marginalized people to ensure inclusive development (Samabeshi Foundation 2019). Because of their total ignorance of various international and national provisions and instruments related to rights, equality, and representation, the women just witness the decisions made by the males. The government brings an inclusive policy to bring most marginalised in the field of politics demanding a larger group of people without analysing the factors that questioned the representation of most marginalised people who are unknown about their duties.

Therefore, this study helps to evaluate the impact of gender and marginalised quota for Dalit women in local government.

1.3. The rationale for the project

The representation of Dalit women in local government is an historical achievement. After a long struggle, efforts and massive discussions among the political leaders, intellectuals, human rights activists, and scholars, Nepal has reached this state of empowering Dalits and women to this extent. The patriarchal and casteism mindsets have been shaken thoroughly this time. No other country has recently taken such a bold decision on inclusion and representations. A big milestone has been reached, but the more significant challenge is to keep it sustained. Dalits and all women should do justice to the opportunity they have been given. They need to prove that when given an environment, they are capable of bearing responsibilities no less than non-Dalits or men. Hence, it is pertinent that these local representatives take up the roles with full zest and zeal to complete their terms and pave their way for other Dalit women in the coming years. Their success guarantees the sustainability of this new political paradigm based on inclusion and representation in the future. The main aim of the study is to identify that the quota system given to the Dalit women has ensured their active participation and leadership at all levels of planning processes of development and in decision-making structures (political parties, government, and non-government mechanisms) at the local level.

1.4. Research Question

Within this context the following research question will be investigated in this research.

Is the newly introduced descriptive quota system for Dalit women capable of making real or meaningful participation or contribution to society?

1.5. Objectives

In order to undertake this research and identify the issues the following objectives are identified.

- To analyse the current socio-economic situation of Dalit women in Nepal.
- To identify the challenging factors that affect elected Dalit women and their performance at the local government
- To examine the issue of symbolic representation of the elected Dalit Women
- To analyse the policy on inclusive participation

1.6. Methodology

The research has been undertaken using a desktop analysis and secondary data. The data sources and methods of analysis are briefly described below.

1.6.1. Data Sources

This research is predominantly based on qualitative data and information from the peer-reviewed articles: non-governmental, and international non-governmental organisation's reports are used as a secondary source. The reports from different governmental and nongovernmental organisations such as the United Nations Development Program Nepal, UNWOMEN, International Democracy Electoral Assistance (IDEA), The Asia Foundation, NGO IFES Nepal, Feminist Dalit Organisation (FEDO), International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and Jagaran Media Center (JMC) are used to identify the problems and challenges after the 2017 elections. Likewise, the government reports and government Acts, such as the Election Commission Act 2017, Constitution of Nepal 2015, Nepal Central Bureau of Statistics will be used to analyse the policy gap in the inclusive representation of the government. I have included some grey literature, such as national and international newspaper articles, because these give more information about the local-level election of 2017, and vividly describe the culture and position of Dalit women in the political sphere. Some of the grey literature sources are *The Kathmandu Post*, *The Himalayan Times*, *The Rising Nepal*, *The Record*, and *The Guardian*.

1.6.2. Methods of Analysis

There are two methods of analysis used in this study. First, the feminist theory of intersectionality analyses the position of Dalit women in Nepalese society. 'Intersectionality' is a term coined by a black feminist, Kimberly Crenshaw, in 1989 (Coaston 2019). Intersectionality is an analytical tool that helps to identify the complex identity of a certain

group of people who have different identity at once while analysing the political and social life of human by introducing different factors that they are affected with and experiences that they face it (Hill & Bilge 2016). Similarly, there are six different analytical tools used to analyse the intersectional identities of certain groups of people or women: social inequality, power, relationality, social context, complexity, and social justice (Hill & Bilge 2016p. 25). This study examines the intersectional identities of Dalit women in society which provides a framework for explaining how the social division of caste, gender, age, class, knowledge, position may treat people differently in a society or community (Hill & Bilge 2016). In Nepal, the position of Dalit women is always low in society. I have collected 17 case studies of the elected Dalit women through report of one of the local NGO (Jagaran Media Center) study in the three district of Nepal Kapilvastu, Rupandehi and Nawalparasi which explains the challenges and problems of elected Dalit women before, during and after the election. The reports of NGOs and INGOs and newspaper articles were collected for extra information like comparing data and numbers that show the political representation of elected Dalit women at local and national level. Intersectionality frameworks help to determine the different factors that impact the status of locally elected Dalit women while fulfilling their responsibility at the local government level.

Secondly, this study also uses the conceptual framework of 'Critical mass ' and 'Critical actor' theory proposed by Sarah Childs and Mona Lena Krook (2008). 'Critical mass theory' is related to descriptive representation, which focuses on the number of people represented in a political or administrative sphere (Childs & Krook 2008). Childs and Krook are wary of 'critical mass theory' and argue for an approach they call 'critical actor theory' to identify the meaningful or what they term 'substantive representation' of women in politics. Critical actor theory is the preferred approach and enables an analysis that takes into consideration both the number of women represented, as well as the capability or capacity of the representatives. Unlike critical mass theory, critical actor theory focuses on the 'how they work?' of significant representation of women instead of 'How many of them work?' and the work of 'specific actors' instead of only 'women' (Childs & Krook 2009 p.126). Thus, critical mass theory and critical actor theory help to examine the situation of substantive political representation of elected Dalit women through the indicators used by different scholars (Childs & Krook 2009). Using these theories, the main aim of this study is to determine whether or not the newly introduced descriptive quota system for Dalit women is capable of making a real or meaningful difference or contribution to society. For that reason, I argue that

critical mass is the system used to create an inclusive government for Nepal where the 2017 election includes a large number of Dalit women at the local level with the policy of proportional representation but we must analyse this situation using critical actor theory and contemporary feminist theories of internationality in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the capacity of Dalit women in local government in Nepal.

I go into more detail about these methods in the second chapter of this research paper which describes the conceptual framework.

1.7. Hypothesis

The main aim of this research is to identify the obstacles and challenges faced by elected Dalit women at local government. The hypothesis of this research is that quota system does not facilitate a meaningful representation of Dalit women. Dalit women are facing different challenges because they are uneducated, poor and historically oppressed. In this condition, Dalit women are not able to fulfil their duties and responsibilities according to the provision and post. Without any prior training and knowledge about their rights and responsibilities, there lies a big question regarding the representation of Dalit women. So, this research tends to explain whether Dalit women are being given a fair opportunity to the pathway of politics or it is just making them a token of the upper caste men centric policy.

1.8. Limitations/Constraints

There are several envisioned restrictions for this study, such as: -

- This study focusses on the locally elected Dalit women in the 2017 election at the local level, however it does not give information or analysis of other levels of government and participation of Dalit women.
- It may be challenging to find peer-reviewed academic articles, and/or other secondary sources that specifically discuss Dalit women issues in the context of Nepal.
- As this study is based on secondary sources only, this may be an impediment in finding reliable sources of information

1.9. Organisation of thesis

The research consists of four chapters. Chapter 1 presents the background of the study which explains the overall status of Dalits, women and Dalit women and the issue of the political participation of elected Dalit women at the local level in Nepal. The chapter then

identifies the research question which needs to be addressed, with the objectives that are analysed, the research methodology, limitations, and significance of the study.

Chapter 2 includes the Literature review and conceptual framework in which several previous studies on gender and marginalized quotas are discussed. This helps to strengthen the conceptual framework that will be used in the study to analyse available information. It focuses on the challenges and barriers encountered by marginalized women globally and in Nepal in particular, while fulfilling the duty of an elected candidate.

Chapter 3 contains the analysing secondary data using different theme through the conceptual framework explained in Chapter 2 to explain the status of meaningful representation of elected Dalit women.

Chapter 4 concludes with the findings of the study and the recommendation for further amendments of the policy and its application in Nepal and possible future research directions.

Chapter Two: Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

2.1. Introduction

This chapter reviews selected literature relevant to the subject of this research project. It addresses the primary focus of the study, which is to examine the quota system, methodological framework and some literature in the 2017 election in Nepal. The first section describes the quota system, global perspectives of the quota system, and the history of representation where critical mass and critical actor theory has been discussed. The second section includes the literature on the 2017 election of Nepal where women, Dalits, and Dalit women were given the opportunity to participate in politics through the quota system. The final section covers the conceptual framework describing Dalit women's representation through the quota system.

Finally, the indicators, factors, and challenges of substantive representation which explain the status of Dalit women, which is the main aim of this research, are described the quota system and how the quota system is pertinent to influencing minority women's position is explained.

2.2 Gender and the minority quota system:

The quota is a type of government policy which acts as a model of affirmative action or is used as a measure to address the slow progress in support of women and minority communities in different societies who are underrepresented at work, training, and political organisations (Australian Institute of International Affairs 2014). The gender quota is recognized and was engrained in the *Convention of the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)* in 1979, and the *Beijing Declaration and platform for Action 1995* with the motto "women in decision-making" (McCann 2013). The quota will reserve a certain number of seats for minority communities and historically underrepresented women. Moreover, the quota system framework is not to put the load of enlistment onto the individual women, but on the individuals, who process the recruitment (McCann 2013). In other words, the central thought behind this framework is to enlist women into political positions and to guarantee that women are not just symbolic but can generate their value in political space. Women have become progressively dynamic and compelling in political life in numerous nations, yet they remain underrepresented in political dynamics and positions of authority at all levels.

However, in the 1990s, to increase women's participation in politics through a quota system has been acknowledged and authorized by many nations. According to a Dah report (1995), women need to be allocated 30% of seats for meaningful representation in legislation (cited in McCann 2013). As a result, this condition has been fulfilled by adapting the quota system, which has become a tool to increase women's participation in government. Globally, nearly 50% of countries have adopted some form of gender quota in their government's electoral system (Australian Institute of International Affairs 2014). However, this was to be accomplished through a range of methods to embrace women's government participation. The International Parliamentary Union (2012) noted a reduction in gender disparity due to the quota systems in the national legislatures. Legislated and voluntary quotas have had a positive impact on women's participation in politics. Twenty-two countries have adopted electoral quotas by 2012. As a result, through the legislated quota system, 24 % of women had participated through the voluntary quota system, 22% of women participated in government, whereas only 12% of women participated without a quota system in these countries (International Parliamentary Union 2012). Similarly, the quota system is regarded as a "fast track" or speedy pathway for women and minority groups to be included in the political sphere and make them capable of decision-making (Dahlerup & Friedvall 2005).

There are many worldwide studies by academics concerning electoral gender-based quotas and this is the subject of continuous discussion concerning their legitimacy and adequacy. The group opposing the system considers the idea as superfluous, biased, and the mutilation of the democratic world (McCann 2013). Some critics consider quotas as a factor to weaken the legality of women who subjugate quotas, or some understand it as a heightening opportunity for women in political representation. Supporters contend that intercession is essential because institutional and social inclinations on gender keep on existing, forcing undisputable obstructions to women in the election (Rodrigues 2013). A few supporters have used different terminologies like 'equality' or 'equalization of sexual orientation' to share the power among men and women who have opposed embracing the word 'quota' as a specific term to use to prevent adverse meanings (McCann 2013). Thus, the quota system is mainly aimed at including those minority groups and women in the decisionmaking process of the political mainstream, but it has critics and supporters. In my view the quota system gives women and marginalized groups who are underrepresented throughout the history, an opportunity to be a part of the decision-making process.

2.3. A global perspective on quotas, minority women and intersectionality in political representation

In the history of democratic rule, women and minority groups do not have strong participation in politics (Paxton & Hughes 2007). To amend the sustaining disparities, most countries have adopted quota systems and strategies requiring candidates or legislative bodies to incorporate women, racial groups, ethnic groups, or religious minorities or other individuals from specific communities (Htun 2004; Krook 2010). Nonetheless, analysts have not rigorously assessed how minority women influence the representation or position. In history, women, and minorities are essentially underrepresented in politics, not having any strategy. Moreover, later it is brought to women and marginalised to the mainstream of politics addressing three approaches of inclusion, reversal and displacement (Mansbridge 1999). Thus, this approach later observed as courtesy rather than competing. The quota system also works to progress descriptive representation and numerical uniformity between administrative bodies and the voters: this signifies gender, race, ethnicity, or other demographic qualities (Paxton, Kunovich & Hughes 2007). Two scholars and empirical researchers have criticized the connection between descriptive and substantive representation, contending that women and minority lawmakers are not ready to speak for the interests and strategies inclined towards women and minorities (Swain 1995; Young 1997). However, different nations have continuously adopted descriptive representation to compensate marginalized groups who are politically underrepresented (Squires 1996).

Similarly, theories of intersectionality bring in the concept of discriminating factors like race, sex, and other forms of inequality interconnected with one another that control power through multiple overlapping identities (Collins 2002; Crenshaw 1989; Glenn 1999; McCall 2005; Weber 2001). Even though minority women could hypothetically profit from either gender or minority quotas, they may not take advantage of either of these (Hancock 2007). In other words, minority women are embedded with multiple identities which do not make them to establish political status. Nevertheless, intersectional academics additionally find that minority women's multiple identities (for example ethnicity, gender, disability) can sometimes provide a possibility to participate in different categories at the same time (Fraga et al. 2008). In other words, minority women might have the option to underscore their gender or minority status in various institutional settings to increase their chance to stand as candidates. The quota system has become relatively divergent globally, changing the representation models, including different groups in an inclusive way. Today, the quota

system has an advanced representation by including sex, race, identity, ethnicity, religion, caste, dialectal, age, disability, occupation, and habitation (Krook & O'Brien 2010). However, the gender quota has become a more prominent strategy for forming an inclusive government.

According to Krook (2010), more than one hundred countries have adopted gender quotas to increase women participation. Similarly, minority quotas have also been adopted by 20 countries influencing public councils (Htun 2004; Reynolds 2005). There are different levels of quota system available through the constitutional provision, electoral laws, and other organisational rules. Women secure around 33% of seats in all nations in the political representation of at least one group at the state level, and these are sometimes labelled as 'legal quotas' (McCann 2013). Some countries with legal quotas save seats in the legislature, providing seats through a unique voting system or distinct party records, or may choose different methods (Htun 2004). In other nations, national electoral laws manage representation by demanding all political constituencies work around a firm portion of women and minority contenders. For example, in 1991, Argentina adopted the national candidate quota for the first time. Likewise, Armenia, Belgium, Peru, and the Philippines have also followed the same quota system. There must be one party's quota in all multimember districts for minority women (Jones 1996). Thus, the quota system helps generate a secure place for women and minority groups of people in the political field, where intersectionality also plays an important role.

2.4 History of representation of women in politics: critical mass to critical actor

Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, is regarded as the first political theorist to propound the political representation of women, the discussion in the modern era (Castiglione 2012). In her book 'The Concept of Representation' (Pitkin 1967), she discussed four political representation models. They are formalistic, descriptive, symbolic, and substantive. According to Pitkin (1967), these models have two distinctive natures: 'stand for' and 'act for'. Descriptive and symbolic representation indicates 'stand for' whereas substantive representation means 'act for' (Pitkin 1967). Substantive representation is mainly drawing a connection in both representation and represented, also known as act and acting. This is the opposite of 'standing for' that describes symbolic and descriptive representation (SchwindtBayer & Mishler 2005; Celis 2009). From 1967, these concepts were developed and revised by different feminist academics and those who practiced gender politics. For instance, some academics have described an upsurge in the numbers of women participating in politics as women's descriptive representation (Celis et al. 2008a). In an upsurge, women's

policy affairs attentiveness is women's substantive representation. In other words, descriptive representation is mainly concerned with the number of women participants, whereas substantive representation is concerned about the policy, primarily for gender and women issues. Moreover, descriptive representation focuses on the structure and size of an organisation's participation rather than its acts (Celis et al. 2008a).

Conventionally, studies concerning women's political representation putting women in the centre, questions whether women in legislative positions brings consideration to 'women's issues' (Childs & Krook 2008). This study adopts the idea that only women can speak about women's issues concerning increase in representation, but different researchers acknowledge the fact that it is not fundamentally explaining the whole picture concerning the substantive representation of women. For that reason, women representing women became a simple question for analysing women's representation in the political sphere. According to Fiona Mackay (2008) a gender academic, a contextualized, inter-relational, whole system approach explains about substantive representation of women (SRW) is required instead of a limited approach on whether or not women agents act for women (Mackay 2008). Mackay (2008) introduces a dignified system theorized to show a broader and wealthier picture of women's substantive representation. To characterize and judge substantive representation, three primary topics are developed: they are critical mass, critical acts and critical actors.

However, among Pitkin's theories of political representation, critical mass became more prominent and essential in discussing women's participation in numbers instead of substantive or meaningful representation in the field of gender policies (Childs and Krook 2008). Child and Krooks (2008) further argue about the critical mass theory that more strategies will be favourable to women if more women join political domain. Consequently, these strategies will help all women. In another sense, critical mass is a less reliable way of defining women's representation in politics. Additionally, gender academic Sarah Childs explains that critical mass only gives an idea of a large number of women in the political field where women understand the behaviour and effects, but at the same time, it neglects reflecting on the acts of women being in the position which may be the first place to get productive outcomes (Childs 2006).

On the other hand, critical acts depend on the marginal groups to establish themselves, and form coalitions to act on women's issues (Celis & Childs 2008b) i.e.

representation must deal with what is completed instead of who completed it. Moreover, new strategies, a gender quota system, and a legislature relating to women have been incorporated through critical acts (Childs & Krook 2009; Dahlerup 2008; Celis et al. 2011; Hughes 2011; Meier & Lombardo 2013; Celis et al. 2014; Krook & Zetterberg 2014; Shin 2014). The concept of critical acts is increasingly replaced by critical actors; those who are performing the 'critical act' (Sawer 2012). According to Dahlerup, the 'critical act' is the concept of representation, which will continuously and significantly change the interest group's position, which may also lead them into additional transformation (Dahlerup 1988). Thus, critical acts are reliant on the eagerness and capability of the minority group to mobilize the sources of the institution to upgrade their condition and that of the entire minority community. Likewise, in politics, critical acts comprise an empowerment for women (Dahlerup 1988).

Currently, critical actor theory has been extensively used to explore the status of women in politics. Scholars are now more interested in critical actors than critical mass. However, critical actors mainly concentrate on actors or performers rather than consequences (Childs & Krook 2009). Similarly, Childs and Krook explain critical actors as a concept where representatives start to introduce strategy and recommendations on their own or inspire others to find a way to advance approaches for women. However, a small number of women representing critical actors can tackle the problem without being a token of any dominant members. There are no compulsory positions for women representatives; sometimes, men may perform a vital role in proceeding with women's policy affairs (Childs & Krook 2009). Contrary to critical mass, critical actors mainly focus not on what women do as a representative but on what a particular actor does while he/she performs his/her duty (Childs & Krook 2009).

2.5. Relevant literature on Dalits, women and Dalit women in the 2017 inclusive election in Nepal

This section focuses on a collection of literature written after the two phases of local elections held in May and June 2017 in Nepal, including academic articles, grey literature and newspaper articles. Some reports and articles were initially written in the Nepali language, which I have translated into English. The literature is presented chronologically according to the publication year. The secondary data mainly focus on the issue of inclusive provision for Dalits and women: a small number of articles I focus on Dalit women in the 2017 elections.

2.5.1 Women participation in the 2017 election

Lotter (2017) studies the political transformation and inclusion of women in the patriarchal structure of the society from 2008 to the 2017 elections in Nepal. She argues that in a gender quota criterion, women MPs entering through the proportional representation list tend to come from a highly privileged socio-economic environment. Conversely, The Search for Common Ground (SFG 2017) discusses the evidence which shows that women who aspire to enter politics became demotivated because of the extremely patriarchal structure in the society, as well as a culture dominated by a stereotypical mindset, resulting in 'tokenism'. Similarly, *Aljazeera* (2017), published an article based on fact and figures, including an interview with a man from higher caste contesting that women are elected in allocated seats only because of quota representation. This indicates that politics still shows a patriarchal mindset. Moreover, Hewitt (2017), explains about the political sphere is still being in a patriarchal mindset by giving an example of mandatory provision, or quota fulfillment where women have only been given chances in the second level positions, such as Deputy Mayor, Vice-Chairperson at the local level. They did not equally participate in decision-making, showing that the gender-inclusive quotas do not overcome patriarchal attitudes and hierarchies that entrench women's inequality.

Similarly, Dahal (2017) explains how inclusive representation, giving priority to women, and a good number of Dalits in the constitution of Nepal 2015, is a unique and essential development in the political history of Nepal, but there is a challenge in implementing proportionate action in the nation. Likewise, *The Guardian* (2017) published an article which explains that the 2017 election was a test for the government to implement inclusive government. It has not been properly structured and implemented as data reveals that Parliament is still run by men. Moreover, this also affects those candidates participating in the election through proportional representation. Similarly, UNDP (2018) claims gender inequality in politics and suggests that interventions should create a broader range of socioeconomic opportunities for women, which can address gender division of labour within and outside the house. Furthermore, Keshav K Acharya (2018) conducted a study by interviewing government officials, teachers, and other governance and education policy stakeholders. The study revealed implementation challenges, which are unavoidable, largely due to lack of training, infrastructure, community participation, and education policy guided by a patriarchal mindset. These factors impede political participation of women and minority groups Nepal. Gurung (2018) argues about the double burden of women that affects

their social responsibilities. She contends that women's participation in the political sphere is not meaningful due to the disparity in family and community. Similarly, Shangraw (2019) interviewed teachers and Chairpersons of the ward which revealed that women in local government were trapped in a patriarchal culture, and their limited access to education, information, and experience impedes their appointments in the decision-making positions. Similarly, IFES (2020) explains that women's unequal access to funds for female candidates, reinforced by patriarchal attitudes of political stakeholders, adversely affects women's political representation in Nepal. Thus, the report clearly shows women candidates' difficulty while raising finances for their campaign due discriminatory behaviours of their family and political parties.

The bulk of the literature quoted here suggests gaps in women's and Dalit women's political participation, despite the introduction of quota system. This is largely due to the patriarchal mindsets, and discriminatory attitudes towards women in general and Dalit women in particular (Lotter 2017). In short, lack of a transparent mechanism for policy implementation, male dominance in the political systems, and lack of agency in women has largely curtailed women's, and Dalit women's participation in 2017 elections.

2.5.2 Political empowerment of the Dalits

A range of reports, articles, and peer-reviewed articles discuss Dalit candidates in the 2017 election are considered in this section. Bishwakarma's (2019), research finds that Dalit participation in local government is increased, but there is a low number in the central government. Both, local and central governments did not give Dalits adequate decision making opportunities. He further argues that discrimination against Dalits emerged within the political parties due to the lack of social, economic, and educational status of Dalits and the government's improper arrangements to accommodate. Similarly, Hatlebak (2017), explains the relationship between politics and the economy, and how it affects Dalit participation. He further analyses the political representation from the 1980's elections to the 2017 elections, where he found upper-caste men holding a higher status than other castes and usually using their power of nepotism and favouritism to claim the most significant decision-making positions. Similarly, *Nagarik News* (2017) explains that obligatory Dalit women quotas are against the constitutional provisions. However, the article covers specific points such as rejection of leadership, humiliated feelings representing through quota. Furthermore, *The Record* (2017b) reveals lower participation of Dalit men as compared to Dalit women in 2017 elections. Paswan (The Records 2017b) further argues that, although some Dalit men in

primary position were elected, Dalit women were largely excluded from the primary positions with decision-making power. Likewise, according to the policy paper published by Samata Foundation (2018), the policy of inclusive representation of government in 2015 constitution is not properly implemented and effect the participation of Dalits in primary position. Another INGO, International Alert (2019) found that the 2017 elections policies made provisions for the inclusion of the minority groups, but did not address their culturespecific needs

Bishwakarma's (2019) described the 2017 elections as being the political transformation of Nepalese politics that impacted the interrelationship between long-standing caste discrimination, and inequality of Dalit representatives. This research used different secondary sources and a theme based phenomenological ²interview method to explore the experience of Dalits. He successfully depicts Dalits' low political participation as a critical factor because the caste system still exists in Nepalese society and continues due to socioeconomic and educational barriers. *The Himalayan Times* (2020) published an article about the Dalit Concern Forum and Dalit Youth Alliance, filing a complaint with the election commission against several parties. They claimed that some parties included non-Dalits in the Dalits' quota, and some parties included fewer Dalits than was provisioned by the Election of Member of House of Representatives Act-2017 although, the parties refuted the allegations.

It is clear from this brief overview of the literature, that there were a number of significant issues faced by the Dalit community in 2017 elections them. The analysis shows that Dalit representation is low especially in decision-making positions and those that did get elected faced the challenges of caste-based discrimination, exclusion from the decision making positions and policy implementation. Thus, the government must ensure their representation in politics as well as in decision-making position to abolished caste-based discrimination in the country. The challenges of Dalit women in the 2017 election, despite the quota system, and their unique position is discussed below.

² Phenomenological: Phenomenology, a philosophical movement originating in the 20th century, the primary objective of which is the direct investigation and description of phenomena as consciously experienced, without theories about their causal explanation and as free as possible from unexamined preconceptions and presuppositions (Smith 2013)

2.5.3. Specific issues related to the election of Dalit women

The literature reviewed above on Dalits and women did not pay much attention to Dalit women's specific issues. Critically no academic articles have yet been published on Dalit women's issues after Nepal's 2017 election. Nevertheless, some of the following NGOs and INGO reports, and newspaper articles have discussed issues pertaining to Dalit women. UNDP (2017b), baseline survey explains that the constitution has opened the door for women, especially Dalit women. There are different challenges regarding lack of necessary information on legal provision, the rights of the Dalit women and electoral procedures, among other aspects that have hampered their rise into a position of leadership. Similarly, Taormina (2017), an international journalist explains the quota system at the local government level of Nepal is a milestone for Dalit women. She appreciates it as a definite step that the government has taken, but more work is needed to change the status of the marginalized groups. Though Nepal has formally banned caste discrimination it was still seen at election time. Similarly, Clulow (2017), explains that though marginalized women had some space in politics, they might be unable to achieve what they wanted. Likewise, the International Dalit Solidarity Network (2017) published a report that explains how Dalit women enter local government due to the quota system. It still must go a long way to secure their full inclusion in decision-making positions due to various social, economic, and cultural barriers. The report further states that the system of inclusion is more elusive than inclusive, and inclusion is arbitrary.

According to the FEDO, the local level Dalit women representatives, are largely wage labourers. It is therefore challenging for them to volunteer to act as ward members without payment. Different national newspapers such as the *Kathmandu Post* (2018) and *My Republica* (2018) reported the real issues faced by the Dalit Parliamentarian Kalu Devi Bishwakarma, who faced a month-long struggle to get a rental apartment in Kathmandu. The inability of a lawmaker of the nation who is a low caste woman to get a room for rent, proves that despite the Caste-based discrimination Act 2011, discrimination still exist in Nepal. Similarly, *The Record* (2017a) explains that the quota system identified only 2% of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor positions as being held by women. Dalits women appear significantly high in ward member because of mandatory provisions in the quota, but they failed to secure any of the three executive positions. Thus, the quota system has failed to ensure any meaningful participation of Dalit women.

Reports, media articles, and peer-reviewed articles written about the 2017 election discuss 'women' perspectives. Very few were mainly concerned with Dalit community or Dalit women in the context of the inclusive policy of the government. Dalit women, who have gained more significant numbers of participants at the local level, are still historically marginalized through their multiple identities. Writers, journalists, NGO reports emphasize the concerns of Dalit women, Dalit issues, or Women issue. Few cover the problems specifically experienced by Dalit women because of their intersectional identities. The issues of Dalit women count separately. This research aims to use intersectional perspectives to examine the challenges Dalit women face in Nepal's processes of democratic government by analysing whether the descriptive participation fulfils the meaningful role of Dalit women.

2.6 Conceptual framework

The introduction of a quota system and its inception has been presented in the above literature reviews. The literature explains the importance of the quota system and its types, which is one of the models of affirmative action introduced to include more women and marginalized group people in the decision-making process of the government. Most nations around the world are adopting quota system as a government policy to form an inclusive government. This is also known as 'fast track' pathway for women and marginalized people to get positions in the political domain of the country. In other words, the quota system is one of the most essential factors in forming an 'equitable' society. But some of the academics cited above have their own views on the quota system. Some of the critics of the quota consider that the system may deteriorate the legitimacy of women who overpower quotas. However, the quota system has taken a pathway for women and marginalized groups to be representatives in government. There are different types of representation which shows the status of participation of women in politics. Pitkin (1967) describes the types of representation where he presented two models of representation one of which is 'stand for' and the other 'act for'. These two terms stand for being passive participants or active participants. Descriptive representation describes the 'passive' or 'stand for' participation as it considers the number of participants in the government, as developed by the Nepal government in the 2017 election as an inclusive government model, by giving more than 40% of seats to women in the government. Substantive representation is known as 'act for' or active representation which gives more importance to the quality of participants rather than the number of participants. Thus, this current research helps to analyse whether the Nepalese

government's inclusive policy for marginalized/Dalit women's participation is descriptive or substantive through critical mass theory.

According to critical mass theory presented by Dahlerup (1988), to make an influence, there must be 30% representation of women in decision-making positions in politics (Dahlerup 1988). In Nepal, the same practice of critical mass theory is seen where Dalit women constitute 40% in the ward level of government. These women can raise their voice and participate in the decision-making process, which is the best model for inclusive government. However, Dalit women are absent in higher positions like Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Chairperson, and Vice-Chairperson: positions which are mainly taken by upper caste women (The Record 2017a). Likewise, Dalit women's capability and efficient involvement has been questioned by different people (The Asia Foundation 2018). Despite representing many, Dalit women are neglected by depriving them of any opportunities for decisionmaking and leadership.

Similarly, the deeply rooted male-centric social norms may weaken the status of newly elected Dalit women who are ingrained with three tiers of identity (UNDP 2018). According to Bishwakarma (2017), no political parties have introduced a system to encourage improvement in the status of Dalit women who are historically suppressed and underrepresented compared to male members of the society. Therefore, due to inefficient accomplishment of inclusive strategies and lack of effective methods, Dalit women cannot work effectively as elected members in local government. Similarly, Kanel (2014) states that women in the Constituent Assembly (CA) had the option to raise a few issues of women, for example, citizenship rights and legal status of women commission, but the males made the final decision in the CA where women could not break male-centric norms in the CA. Therefore, she further added that women might not carry substantive representation in politics because of patriarchal patterns in the organisation or government and lack of lawmaking knowledge. Similarly, Bishwakarma (2017) argued that Dalits' participation in politics is token rather than a method of confirming effective participation, which makes the participation Dalits 'pseudo participation'. Moreover, these critical factors in the participation of Dalit women in politics became an important issue that has emerged after prolonged historical suppression and exclusion and is now only possible through several political movements. The most prominent issues that have become clear from the above literature review are the absence of interest in studying the impacts of the Dalit women's quota framework in local administration. Even though the equivalent examination is directed at the

parliamentary level, it has not yet been focused on a local level of the Dalit women's role in politics. This study will not be concerned about the large number of Dalit women candidates for local government. Conversely, this study will only focus on how gender quota affects Dalit women's status with descriptive representation and substantive representation.

Furthermore, this study explores the theory of descriptive and substantive representation using the case study of Dalit women in Nepal elected as Dalit ward members in local government. Is the socio-economic condition effecting, Dalit women, while fulfilling their role? What are the challenges they face while fulfilling their roles? What are the factors that affect their status from descriptive representation to substantive representation? What are the policy outcomes that affect the performance of Dalit women ward members? These are some objectives of this study that the case study of newly elected Dalit ward members in Nepal's local government is trying to answer. The answer to these objectives is through the critical mass and critical actor theory. It helps to determine the substantive representation of the Dalit women in local government using the indicators propounded by Child and Krook (2009) in their work '*Analysing Women's Substantive Representation: From Critical Mass to Critical Actors*'. The indicators are given below: -

2.6.1. Indicators

Women forum, civil organisations, women council

Women's issue, women interest, and debates

Outcomes of policy (for women)

Impact on Men's behaviour

2.6.2. Enabling factors

The increasing number of women delegates

Attendance at the women's parliamentary forum

Attendance of critical actors

Women with feminist nature

Interconnectedness with women in Parliament, women institution, and civil organisation

2.6.3. Challenging Factors

The essence of the patriarchal mindset in politics

Absence of institutional assistance

Party beliefs

Gender Stereotypes

2.7. Conclusion

This study helps to determine the impact of Dalit women in the political representation of Nepal's local government by analysing the indicators and enabling factors of substantive representation as well as the challenges that prevent Dalit women from fulfilling their meaningful representation. The same type of examination had been done previously on Nepal's constituent assembly before the 2017 election. That examination concluded that though some women are in a higher position in politics, the patriarchal pattern still exists in politics and this has a major effect on the ability of women to act effectively in their roles (Kanel 2014). Thus, this research aims to determine the obstacles and challenges of elected Dalit women who have multiple identities in society, at the local government level in Nepal.

Chapter Three: Analysis

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the analytical part of the study through analysing three main themes: 1) the current social situation of Dalit women in Nepal, 2) factors that affect elected Dalit women's performance at the local government level and 3) analysing symbolic representation of the elected Dalit women. The study included 17 case studies and secondary data related to elected Dalit women collected by Jagaran Media Center, an NGO of Nepal in 2017 election. The studies are done in three districts Kapilvastu, Rupandehi and Nawalparasi of 20 municipality and rural municipality of Nepal. The case studies and quantitative data help to analyse the four objectives of this study and discussion through theories. There are four section in this chapter. First, it analyses the social structure of Nepal which explains and discuss the intersectional identities of Dalit women. Second, it contains the challenging factors that affect elected Dalit women's performance at the local government level. Third section examines the symbolic representation and policy analysis of inclusive government. And fourth section discussed the meaningful representation of elected Dalit women through the lenses of critical actor theory. Thus, the four sections of this chapter help to analyse the meaningful representation of elected Dalit women through intersectional approach and critical actor theory described in the second chapter of this study.

3.2. Analysing the current social situation of Dalit women in Nepal

Women have never been a homogenous identity. They have different statuses or identities at various stages of their work or when performing their duties or when related to others in Nepalese society. The multiple identities of women in Nepal are intersected with one another, which contributes to their intersectional oppression. However, the status of Dalit women is more vulnerable than other upper-caste women. Dalit women are marked by the intersections of structures of gender, race, class, ethnicity, geography, age, sexuality and particularly, caste. In Nepalese society, multi-lingual, multi-religious with more than 120 different caste/ethnic groups have more than 120 languages who practice ten other religions (Thebe 2018).



Figure 1. Traditional caste system of Nepal

(source: DFID & World Bank 2006)

The above pyramid (Figure 1) shows Nepal's caste system's hierarchies (Varna system). The pyramid is divided into two separate halves, pure and impure. The first half is regarded as pure, which shows that the peak up to the middle of the pyramid is ruled by pure caste, i.e., upper-caste people like Brahmin, Chettri, Adivasi, and Janjati. The other half is called impure. They are also divided into 'Pani Nachalne' or 'Water unacceptable' and 'Acchut' or 'Untouchable.' 'Pani Chalne' or 'Water acceptable', meaning higher-caste do not accept food or water given by those people who are Muslims and foreigners. Similarly, 'Acchut' or 'Untouchable' means that higher-caste people do not accept any food or water from those people, and they are not allowed to enter higher-caste houses or be touched by higher-caste people. Dalits belong to the caste of "Untouchables" (Thebe 2018). Dalits are thus at the bottom of the hierarchical caste system, which was accepted in the 1954 civil code 'Muluki Ain', according to traditional Hindu Law (Khanāla, Gelpke & Pyakurel 2012). But in 1962, a law was passed, making it illegal to discriminate against castes, which led to all caste being treated equally (Khanāla, Gelpke & Pyakurel 2012). Similarly, the caste-based discrimination and Untouchability (offense and punishment) Act, 2068 (2011) has made provisions on caste-based discrimination and untouchability in Nepal (The constitution of Nepal 2015). Regardless of this law, however, the caste system and gender inequality still exist in Nepalese society. Even elected Dalit women candidates have to face discrimination after they win the election. Dalit women face three-fold discrimination, i.e., of caste, gender,

and class, which make their lives even more vulnerable (Sob 2012). The multiple identities (being Dalit, woman, and Poor) of marginalized women can be recognized through the feminist approach of intersectionality.

3.2. Intersectional identity of Dalit women of Nepal

Women are particularly vulnerable in Nepalese society as shown in this analysis. In addition, Dalit women are at the bottom of society and cannot raise their voice to improve the quality of their lives. And, while Dalit women have now been given a strong position it is misused by the patriarchal society, including males and so-called high-class people. Elected Dalit women are still following other's decisions, proving that they are not pursuing their own interests. We might argue, then, that even in democratic rule, women and minority groups do not have a strong participation in politics; in the global context, women and minority groups remain considerably underrepresented in the political sphere (Paxton & Hughes 2007). Moreover, women from marginalised communities are more vulnerable due to the multiple identities. Intersectionality allows us to understand the vulnerable status of Dalit women because of multiple oppressions they hold in society (Hill & Bilge 2016). Dalit women are embedded with various identities. For example, for elected Dalit women they are ward members as well as being a woman, lower-caste, having poor economic background and lack of education, which are the factors that directly affect the status of elected Dalit women at the local level.

The case studies in this chapter aim to demonstrate how these intersecting oppressions related to caste, gender and education may affect elected Dalit women ward members' performance in their local government roles. Most Dalit women in the case study face caste discrimination before, during, and after the election, which brings their lack of confidence to the forefront of the so-called high caste candidates. And, while quotas for female candidates, and low-caste Dalit women, are catapulting underrepresented groups into Nepal's local governments is a strong start and advocates to break the historical caste and patriarchal system, it still requires more work to help them deliver on the promise of change. Historically the quota system always looks at the participation of various groups of women in politics but has not concentrated upon their quality to improve their status and position (Mansbridge 1999). As seen in the context of the elected Dalit women, Dalit women are not given any opportunity to understand their position or any training to understand their duties and rights, and often question their ability.

While different countries accept the quota system to uplift those who are historically suppressed and discriminated against this mostly results in an increase in the number of participants with descriptive representation rather than substantive representation or meaningful represent which act for women rather than stand for women (Swain 1995; Squires 1996). This quota system presents women with multiple identities like being a woman and a Dalit with higher chances in securing a seat in the government. However, this situation is precarious due to their low status in the society which often deprives them of these opportunities. Intersectionality is thus helpful to analyse this problem as Dalit women have multiple identities which work to discriminated against them in various overlapping ways (Collins 2002; Crenshaw 1989; Glenn 1999; McCall 2005; Weber 2001; Hancock 2007). Intersectionality also helps to analyse women's status in society, explaining the hierarchical pattern from higher to lower. In the data from the previous chapter, we can find the so-called high-caste women held more superior and decision-making positions than Dalit women, but there are a larger number of Dalit women at local government level because of the quota given to them in the lower unit of local government (Lotter 2017). It seems that the government is more flexible and upgraded its inclusive policy to cover women and Dalits in the 2017 election by giving mandatory positions to Dalit women as compensation for their historical inequality. However, they missed the needs and interests of those Dalit women who are socially, educationally, politically and economically discriminated against. They have limited space to decide or share their thoughts, mostly guided by men and so-called high caste women and men. However, the following analyses are undertaken through the socioeconomic status of elected Dalit women using 17 case studies that explain before, during, and after election as a Dalit woman and performing their work at the local level. The following sections explains the intersectional/multiple status of elected Dalit women through different case studies taken from the report of one of the NGO based in Nepal, Jagran Media Centre.

3.2.1. Caste Discrimination:

Caste discrimination is rooted in Nepalese society. In my observation, Dalit women and men have been killed in the name of caste reported by social media and internet recourses. A recently reported news story from Nepal states that when a boy from the Dalit community had a love affair with a high caste girl and wanted to get married, he was killed by villagers who came to take the high caste girl back (The Guardian 2020). Similarly, another news reported that a 12-year-old Dalit girl was found hanging in the tree, a day after community leaders in Rupandehi District ordered her 25-year-old rapist to marry her as a

‘punishment’ (HRW 2020). Most of the cases of untouchability were solved by community agreement without the involvement of police, which could have brought the issue of caste-based discrimination. Some direct and indirect quotes from Dalit women are used in this section to explain the discrimination faced by elected Dalit women in their lives before, after, and during the time of elections at the local level. The quotes (Table 1) are from the interviews with elected Dalit women (JMC 2018), which are taken directly from the research report conducted by Jagaran Media Centre Nepal, that mainly works on the issues of marginalized and Dalits.

<p>Khagi Sunar "Society made us Dalits because my mother was brought up by people from the Dalit community," says Khagi. She also experienced some unusual behaviour during the election campaign. For example, “whenever we go to a house to drink water, the owner of the house gives water to others first, then only to her” (JMC 2018).</p>
<p>Bina Kumari Darnal She says, "I am a member of Vijayi Ward, but even now when I go somewhere in the village ward, I have to wash the glass after drinking tea myself, Caste discrimination and untouchability are on a rampant in our village. I want to make it an ideal village free from caste discrimination"(JMC 2018).</p>
<p>Makhamali Sunar On top of caste discrimination, single Dalit women also has to face discrimination because they are unmarried. There is no measure of discrimination Makhamali has faced. People said many mean things to her face like “I saw her face and now my day is completely ruined.”. Whenever she went for door-to-door visit asking for votes, she wasn’t allowed inside the house based on her caste (JMC 2018).</p>
<p>Prasadi Harijan "At other times, there were protests saying, 'you are a cobbler', but if you talked about discrimination during the election, you should have quietly endured that the vote would be cut"(JMC 2018).</p>
<p>Radhika Dadhi During the election campaign and door-to-door campaign, she even reached the fifth floor of the 'upper caste' house and asked for votes. "Nobody said anything; they didn't behave differently"(JMC 2018).</p>

Suman Nepali Once, the Priest did not put tika on her forehead, and she asked the Priest, "Why didn't you put tika on me?" Priest replied, "Rice also has a variety called 'Masino and moto'." We are more than rice, and we are human beings; human beings have caste; work is done according to caste. Not everyone is a scholar, and not everyone is the same. Today I will put tika to you, tomorrow a Dalit boy to marry my daughter, will I accept that too? That is why some castes are restricted to put tika from Priest. 'I will never forget this,' says Suman (JMC 2018).

Kamala Bishwokarma She has never felt any caste discrimination in the village and the reason is that there is no discrimination against Dalits in this village. She thinks that everyone is the same in the village (JMC 2018).

Binda Devi Dhobi She says that the situation of caste, untouchability and discrimination is similar to other villages in the Terai, and Binda Devi's village is no different. Even now, when fetching water or going to other's houses, people from the Dalit community are told, 'Don't come here, just stay away.' In political life, he has not faced such discrimination. The party candidates walked together in the election campaign. Maybe that's why he didn't face any bias (JMC 2018).

Sabitri Sunar She says that there has been no reduction in caste discrimination against the Dalit community in the Terai or hill districts and the villages. Savitri also thinks that ethnic untouchability is the same as it was before. The Dalit community is still be treated badly when it comes to non-Dalit communities. During the election, he did not feel such discrimination (JMC 2018).

Sushila Harijan She says that untouchability and discrimination based on caste are rampant in the village. On top of that, women from the Dalit community have to face more discrimination. Such discrimination has not been removed even now. After entering politics, he did not face caste discrimination (JMC 2018).

Sita Devi She also suffered from all the discrimination that the Dalit community has been suffering from. She says that she will never forget a nasty incident in class 7. At that time, she had gone to cut paddy in someone else's field. When it was time to eat, everyone else was called inside the house, but she was kept outside and given food. "I left crying without eating," she says. "I left because I was a Dalit." I will never forget this incident"(JMC 2018).

Yaniswara B.K stated that she is also a victim of the discrimination, especially at weddings, banquets, and going to the temple, such discrimination was a bit excessive. The new generation is liberal about caste untouchability, but she has experienced that older people still behave in the same way. But after entering politics, she did not have to experience such discrimination. During the election campaign, some people used abusive language and even tried to discourage her. However, there was no ethnic discrimination. All the leaders and cadres of the party openly supported her. She also received good support from her husband and family (JMC 2018).

Table 1. Quotes from interviews with Dalit women

The above case studies (Table 1) explain the caste discrimination faced by elected Dalit women ward members who have always had to suffer from their childhood until they were elected as a Dalit ward member. In most of the case studies, participants talked about their bitter experiences in the past, which made them reluctant to follow the caste system in Nepal. Their childhood was spent undergoing discrimination from society while going to the temple, hotels, and people's houses. They had to remain outside without touching the people of higher-caste. Bina Kumari Darnal explains that although she has become a ward member, she still has to clean her teacup in the shop. In this context, even now, Dalits are treated as untouchables. Most of the participants in the case study shared that they have bitter experiences of the election whilst on an election campaign. They would be served water outside the house and only after it was offered to all other high caste people. They have had unpleasant experiences that demotivated them. However, some of them have different experiences, and they think the situation is better now because they were not discriminated against and can enter higher-caste people's houses while asking for a vote. They believe society has accepted them, and people do not have any qualms against being Dalit. But this is not the case for others, as some feel discrimination within the party. Thus, analysing the above case study, it could be argued that even though the government brought in the policy of social inclusion in the election criteria, the caste system and gender inequality still exist in society, creating barriers for Dalit and Dalit women and their political career.

3.2.2. Patriarchy

Patriarchy plays a vital role in making any decision about women's life in Nepalese society. According to Carole Pateman, "The patriarchal construction of the difference between masculinity and femininity is the political difference between freedom and subjection" (cited in Facio 2013). In other words, women are regarded as inferior and less powerful than men in a patriarchal society. Women from higher-caste to lower-caste need male members of society to decide anything from household to social matters. Dalit women mainly follow their husbands, fathers, father-in-law, and heads of the local communities' decisions and are more influenced by them. Out of the 17 case studies, 50% of participants responded that they participated in the election due to their father, father-in-law, husband, or ward's chief decision. These activities explain the gender inequality in Nepalese society, where women, regardless of caste, are always second to men. Moreover, caste and gender intersect to show different outcomes for different women, but all are oppressed by patriarchy. They do not make their own decisions but follow the family head, which is usually a male. Through the

case studies below, we can make the point that because of patriarchy, even the elected Dalit women are still much under the influence of men and patriarchal attitudes.

Binda Devi

Binda's husband is a general political activist, and according to her, the compulsory provision of Dalit women to run in the election has worked more than her husband's political background in getting the opportunity to contest the election. She knows that her husband's role is very important. She says, "How could the women, who have not been able to get out of the house without the help of our husbands, win the election?"(JMC 2018).

The above case study of Binda, who was elected as a Dalit ward member, explains the status of women in society. She explains that her husband has political background and active in politics. It defines that women needs support from their husband who involved in politics. Not only that she further explains that she never been outside the house but also win the election due to the husband support. After analysing the situation of Binda, it clearly defines the dependency of women to men is the normal things which is accepted by the women herself. So, the stereotypical society of patriarch finely plotted the mind of women that they cannot go against men.

Chanda Devi Harijan

"Sir says (the current Ward Chairperson Bhawant Gupta) if you have the idea of serving the people, then fight for election as a ward member, we will create an environment," says Chanda Devi Harijan (JMC 2018).

This case study of Chanda Devi Harijan who is also Dalit ward member explain that she was in the position due to Ward Chairperson (man) because it seems that he supports Chanda Devi in the time of election. Chanda Devi is influence by the man who is holding a good position in the community and give assurance to create an environment to win her in the election. So, this situation defines the inferiority and position of women in the society which directly affects the patriarchal pattern in the society.

Prabhavati

"I am completely new to politics, but there was a political atmosphere at home. Other members of the family were involved in politics in one way or the other," The Chairperson was the one who nominated me in the ward members, campaigned and even won the election" Says Parvati (JMC 2018).

In the above case study, Prabhavati is unfamiliar with politics, but a male Chairperson of the ward influences her to participate in the election (JMC 2018). This situation validates the earlier mentioned inadequacy of the Dalit women representatives that impedes their meaningful participation in politics.

Sita Devi B.K

"I was able to become a candidate because my husband is an old member of the UML" says Sita Devi B.K. "Even within the UML, there were three Dalit women candidates, but all of them supported me" (JMC 2018).

Hence, we can deduce that the only reason for Sita's presence in politics was her husband's position within the party, which also overrode another women's presence and agency. It shows the power of inequality which incapable her statuses of being in politics and it also affects her decision-making capacity. But in the same it also explains the solidarity of women (other candidate for Dalit ward members) helps to create an opportunity to Sita Devi B.k's and bring out her ability to become a leader of the society.

The above section discusses case studies indicate the dual subjugation of Dalit women, who are marginalized by the caste system and patriarchy. They have unquestionably internalised this subservient position and are acting as mere pawns in the hands of the powerful men of the family or society. Patriarchal influence is also an essential aspect for the low caste women in Nepalese society. Irrespective of caste, patriarchal figure (male members of the family) has always taken over the decision-making and ruling of the family. This adds to the obstacles Dalit women has to go through in order to be heard and acknowledged in the society. Through the case study discussed earlier it was found that most of the elected Dalit women are influenced by the male members of their society or family. For example, one participant explained that her father wanted her to be in politics from an early age, and her brother helped her arrange to be elected in a local level election. Hence, she can fight the

election. So, examining this through the case study it can be seen that one of the participants is more influenced by her father's words and depended upon her brother to win the election.

This was not an isolated case: 80% of the case studies presented in the explain the importance of the influence of their husband, father, brother, or the chief member of the ward in the society who is male. But one or two Dalit women elected to ward members explained that they were encouraged by the woman of the family or one of the chief women members to participate in the election.

3.2.3. Low economic status

Women are considered as second-class citizens in Nepalese society as an effect of patriarchal practices. Women are limited to the home or domestic sphere, where they are always treated as the lowest in the family. They are not included in any decision-making processes. The Dalit community is the most impoverished in society. As a result, Dalit women are more vulnerable and dependent upon their husbands' financial status, or they are in lower-paid jobs such as labourers, helpers, and field workers, which sets them apart from the higher-caste women. The following experiences of different women help to identify the economic situation of elected Dalit women (Table 2).

<p>Khagi Sunar "My cash and lump-sum expenditure were only five thousand rupees. Besides, about 15,000 NPR (equivalent to 167.291AUD³) may have been spent in titbits". "My husband sent all these expenses from abroad."- says Khagi Sunar (JMC 2018).</p>
<p>Bina Kumari Darnal states that as her husband was unable to work due to eye problems, the entire burden of the family's expenses fell on her shoulders. She worked as a labourer to run her family (JMC 2018).</p>
<p>Makhamali Sunar raised her three sons and a daughter on wages after her husband died 14 years ago; the only source of livelihood is wages (JMC 2018).</p>
<p>Parsadi Harijan explained that the party raised in the election did not pay the election expenses. She contested the election with the money earned by her sons (JMC 2018).</p>
<p>Radhika Dadhi explained that she did not spend much on elections. The party did not ask for money or help. All that was spent on the election campaign came from her husband and sons (JMC 2018).</p>
<p>Suman Nepali stated that 50,000 NPR (equivalent to 557.720AUD) was spent during the election period, raised by her husband (JMC 2018).</p>

³ Author's conversion using exchange rate of 1AUD = 89.6644 NPR

<p>Kamala Pariyar stated that many candidates spent too much in the election, but they did not spend much. What's more, she had no money to spend! "My identity is like that of a squatter. There is no land, no property. The party is well aware of my condition, so there is no problem," she said. During the election campaign, she only spent 2,000 NPR (equivalent to 22.3108 AUD) on tea and lunch (JMC 2018)</p>
<p>Kamala Bishwakarma stated that the party did its best to help her win the election. Although other candidates spent a lot, she did not have to spend much in the election. The ward Chairman candidate did not allow Dalits and women to spend much (JMC 2018)</p>
<p>Nitu Darji stated that the ward Chairperson says, "Your financial situation is weak, don't spend a lot of money." She says, "Most of the election campaign expenses were borne by the ward Chairperson. Only 5,000 NPR (equivalent to 55.7758 AUD) was spent on the election"(JMC 2018).</p>
<p>Bindadevi says, "I must have spent a total of 5 to 6000 NPR (equivalent to 66.9233AUD) from my pocket." She is a housewife and mostly engaged in household work (JMC 2018).</p>
<p>Chanda Devi stated that she did not spend as much as others during the election. In all, it may have cost about 9000 NPR (equivalent to 100.386). "That too was spent on tea when my husband and father's friends came," says Chanda Devi. "I paid for it from home" (JMC 2018).</p>
<p>Parbhavati stated that other candidates spent a lot in the election. She also had normal expenses. According to Prabhavati, who has spent about 20,000 NPR (equivalent to 223.079 AUD), no one has helped me financially, all the expenses have been raised from home (JMC 2018).</p>
<p>Savitri stated that there were many meetings during the election. She attended all those meetings and kept her word. "I come from a poor family, my party knows this very well," says Savitri. "The party gave me 500 NPR (equivalent to 5.57869 AUD) and I won the election with that 500 rupees" (JMC 2018).</p>
<p>Sushila stated that she did not spend much while contesting the election. A total of 10,000 NPR (equivalent to 111.574 AUD) was spent, which she had raised herself. "Dalit women are in a very precarious situation. Something needs to be done for them," says Sushila. "Now we have to be taught how to work"(JMC 2018).</p>
<p>Sita Devi B.k stated that she did not spend a lot of money like others, but whatever money she spent was given to her from home but not by the party (JMC 2018).</p>
<p>Yaniswara B.K stated that although the male candidate spent a lot in the election, the female candidate did not spend much. During the election period, she spent about 20,000 NPR (equivalent to 223.147 AUD), sent by her husband from India (JMC 2018).</p>

Table 2. Elected women experience on expenses on politics

The above quotes explain the real picture of Nepalese society where Dalit women have no or limited access to economic resources. In a family, most Dalit women are

dependent upon their husbands or other family members who earn money. However, those who have jobs have low positions and can hardly live on their incomes and cannot spend the money on their election campaign due to the intersectional oppressions of caste and patriarchy. It could also be deduced from the testimonies that the (male) chairpersons and other influential (male) members of the society are inclined to support Dalit women's electoral activities because of their vested interests. They are aware that these women could easily be manipulated by them. Moreover, we can see the economic situation of the candidate also affected in the political sphere. Dalit women are regarded as marginalized within a marginalized group. This means that Dalit community's poverty rate in Nepal is higher. Additionally, Dalit women's economic condition is lower than Dalit men. Dalit women are unable to access good jobs because of their low education level and inequality. Thus, the economic condition of Dalit elected candidates is dependent upon their husband or from the little wage work undertaken, which sometimes is not enough for what is required in the election campaign.

3.2.4. Lack of education

Education is an integral part of human life, which gives people the knowledge to think critically and wisely. However, the condition of Dalit women is not education friendly. Dalit women lag behind in the education sector due to caste, gender inequality, cultural barriers, and poor economic conditions. According to the national average of 42.5% of Nepali women, only 23.5% of Dalit women are literate, 80% of Dalit women married at the age of 16, Among Nepali women, working as a sex worker in India 80% of women are from Dalit community, and 58% of Dalit women suffer from domestic violence (Sob 2012). The following data shows the intersectional vulnerabilities of Dalit women in educational status, marital status and economic status. The following table (Table 3) provides an overall picture of the elected Dalit women's educational status who are elected ward members.

S.N	Name	Age	Education			
			Illiterate	Literate	Primary level (Grade 1-8)	Secondary level (Grade 9-12)
1	Khagi Sunar	30			√	
2	Bina Kumari Darnal	42			√	
3	Makhmali Sunar	40	√			
4	Prasadi Harijan	60	√			
5	Radhika Dhadhi	55	√			
6	Suman Nepali	43				√
7	Kamala Pariyar	37			√	
8	Kamala Bishwakarma				√	
9	Tika Bishwakarma	41	√			
10	Nitu Darji	38				√
11	Binda Devi Dhobi	47	√			
12	Chanda Devi Harijan	26			√	
13	Prabhawati Harijan		√			
14	Sabitri Sunar			√		
15	Sushila Harijan	57				√
16	Sita Devi B.K	35				√
17	Yaniswara B.K			√		

Table 3. Education status of elected Dalit women ward members (N17)

(source: JMC 2018)

Out of the 17 participants, eight have never been to school in their lifetime but can write their name, while some cannot. Six participants are illiterate, they don't know to read and write. Likewise, five participants can read and write. Similarly, five participants studied up to primary education level. Lastly, among four participants in secondary level, two participants studied up to grade twelve and are more active and knowledgeable than other participants. More than 80% of the participants are at the primary level of their educational status due to poor economic conditions and cultural barriers. Though, there are provisions for free education, they do not cover other expenses of poor children. Furthermore, there are

more uneducated Dalit girls than Dalit boys, due to discriminatory practices against girls, and cultural norms and beliefs. (UNICEF 2016). Moreover, Dalit boys and girls are discriminated within the school by other caste students, as well as teachers (Khanal 2015). Table 3 shows that different education levels of the Dalit women representatives, which is generally on the lower side. Further we can notice that none of the elected Dalit women have tertiary or university level education. This could be correlated with their lower performance levels in their respective positions.

Education also plays a vital role in decision-making and creating the right social environment with equality. Overall, the education status of Dalit women in Nepal is lower than that of the other women in the society. However, looking at the case studies of the newly elected members, it shows that out of 17 participants, out of four participants from secondary level, only two of them had passed grade 12, and most of them are under primary level (Grade 1-8). Some of them knows how to write their name, whilst others struggle to read and recognise letters. The case studies show the vulnerable condition of Dalit women's educational status, making them more backward and simply a token of the society in the meetings and ward committee's programs. The high risk of becoming a token and lack of knowledge may bring the policy's discontinuity in the near future.

3.3. Challenging factors that affect elected Dalit women's performance at the local government level.

Nepal's 2015 constitution allocated women the right to proportional representation in all governance levels, which is addressed in Article 38 number 4. According to the 2011 census, the female population is 51.5% of the total, however, the election commission has assigned 40.4% of all candidate spaces to women (Jagaran Media Centre 2018). It also stated that positions of Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Chairperson and Vice Chairperson of rural municipalities, parties need one women candidate compulsorily. Likewise, at the ward committee level, among four wards member spaces, parties must allocate two spaces, one for women and one for Dalit women. Despite this, men and other women within the quota system have more power in decision-making than Dalit women. Though Dalit women have lower positions in politics, there are different challenges that they go through while fulfilling their duty, which may risk their positions in the near future. The following case studies and data identify the challenges and hurdles of Dalit women.

3.3.1. Lack of training and knowledge of politics

The current study has demonstrated that the elected Dalit women have been able to participate in politics due to the quota system. However, Dalits are historically backward community; and within Dalits, women are even more vulnerable due to their intersecting identities, that exacerbate their marginalization. Furthermore, evidence shows that no affirmative actions have been taken by both, the government and non-government institutions, to increase the capacity and knowledge of the elected Dalit women. The below table summarises some of the thoughts shared by the elected Dalit representatives.

<p>Khagi Sunar "As we are weak today, we do not know when the judicial committee was formed; for that, we need capacity building and leadership development opportunities," says Khagi Sunar. She further stated that she does not have enough information about the constitution, law, rights, Dalit rights, caste discrimination, etc., and if she had knowledge about it, it would be easier for her to move forward"(JMC 2018).</p>
<p>Bina Kumari Darnal "This is my weakness because I don't know how to read or write. I feel weaker than others because I don't know anything," says Bina. "The art of speaking would also be developed if some training and arrangements were made to teach us knowledge. And, the role of the people's representative could be shown in a way that everyone could believe"(JMC 2018).</p>
<p>Makhamali Sunar "I have not dreamt of becoming a people's representative. These representatives of Dalit women, who are lagging behind in education and unaware of the environment outside the home. They want to speak confidently in front of a large crowd, but they do not have that ability and confidence. "I would like to be well-informed before I raise my voice against the existing Dalit discrimination issues," she says"(JMC 2018).</p>
<p>Prasadi Harijan "I don't know what is written in the constitution, I don't even know about the rights of Dalits, no one has taught me anything about the rights of Dalits," says Prasadi. "We also need to explain what is written in the constitution and the law"(JMC 2018).</p>
<p>Radhika Dadhi "It would have been much easier for uneducated people's representatives like us if some training had been provided for capacity building," says Radhika. She further added, "I may not be able to become a Deputy Mayor in future because I don't have the education, ability, and knowledge for the post"(JMC 2018).</p>
<p>Kamala Pariyar "Those who win directly are also new, they are also gaining experience, the only difference is that they know a lot because they are educated and understand things quickly," says Kamala. "We may lack experience, but we are not weak. We need training and education to gain knowledge of politics"(JMC 2018).</p>
<p>Kamala Bishwokarma "We need knowledge about Dalit rights, the constitution and the rule of law." "Administrative knowledge is equally needed," Kamala says, "Yesterday, women were confined inside the house, so they lag behind in external knowledge. Now they have come out, they should expand their knowledge even by organizing training and seminars"(JMC 2018).</p>

<p>Tika Bishwokarma "We don't know how to speak well because we don't have literacy. We need knowledge about the constitution, laws and policy rules, "she said." A judicial committee has been formed, but its functions and duties are not known. The rights of the Dalit community are also not known. It would be nice to organise some training to teach us these things"(JMC 2018).</p>
<p>Nitu Darji "Since I have lived in India since I was a child, I don't know anything about Nepal's political situation, constitution, and rules," says Nitu (JMC 2018).</p>
<p>Binda Devi Dhobi "I wish there were more training and seminars to teach us," she says. "If I learn something and increase my capacity, I will speak up for the rights of my community"(JMC 2018).</p>
<p>Chanda Devi Harijan "I can't get up and speak, that's why I come back after listening to what others have to say... We don't know many things. If we had the training to understand the laws/learn these things, we would have been able to talk in the meeting like others," says Chandadevi. "I have heard that society can be changed through politics"(JMC 2018).</p>
<p>Prabhawati Harijan "After doing a good job for five years, I have an idea to run for the post of Ward Chairperson next time," says Prabhavati. She does not understand the constitution, law, and the rights of Dalits. "It would help if some training could be organised"(JMC 2018).</p>
<p>Sabitri Sunar "I don't know about the rights of Dalits; I don't even understand the constitution and the law," says Savitri. "It would have been easier if we had some training to make us work"(JMC 2018).</p>
<p>Yaniswari B.K says, "It would have been better if we had been trained to teach such things. I have heard that they give trainings, but I have not got that opportunity yet"(JMC 2018).</p>

Table 4. Elected women experience on lack of training and their performance

The above case studies are provided by the Jagaran Media Center report (JMC 2018). Out of 17 participants, nearly 80% stated that they did not have sufficient knowledge about political parties, rights, duties, constitution, and governmental plans and policies. Similarly, they expressed the need of training and seminars to understand the government's plans and policies to raise their issues and get knowledge about their duties. Moreover, the comments show the government and parties have largely failed to understand the needs and capacity of Dalit women. The case studies above illustrate that the government and party should be more focused upon the capacity building of Dalit women prior to and after the election, which would help to empower Dalit women in the near future to compete in higher positions. The result shows that government policies are more focused upon increasing the number of Dalit women in politics rather than building their capacity to build up their future endeavors.

The next section provides different quantitative data and graphs from the newspaper articles and NGO report (The Record 2018; SAMATA foundation 2018). This section analyses the data and graphs through critical actor theory, which helps to find out the results of this study by explaining meaningful representation of elected Dalit women in the 2017 election of Nepal at the local level.

3.3.2. Unequal distribution of genders comparing to local and National government

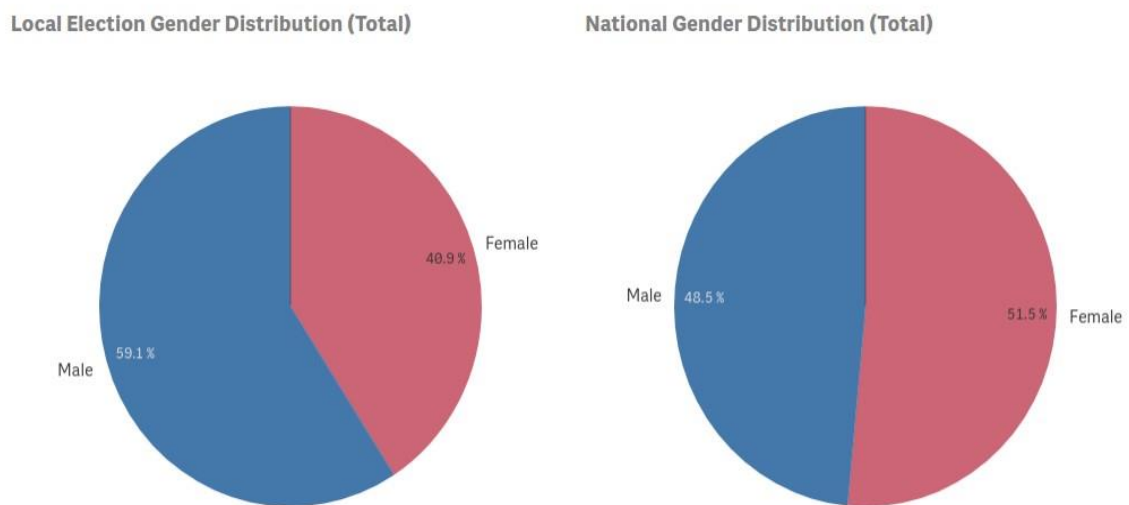


Figure 2. Gender distribution comparison between elected local representatives and national population

(source: The Record 2017a)

Despite the 50% quota for Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Chair, and Vice-Chair and compulsory two seats reserved for women out of four ward members, women do not make half of the seats than men at local government covers. The pie charts (Figure 2) show the local election does not give women the full 50% of participation. Women show 40.9% in local elections, whereas men are 59.1% in the provincial election. Thus, the data reveals that even though women are getting the quota in certain positions, there is still a barrier to making a full representation at the local level.

3.3.3. Unequal distribution of gender in higher post at local level

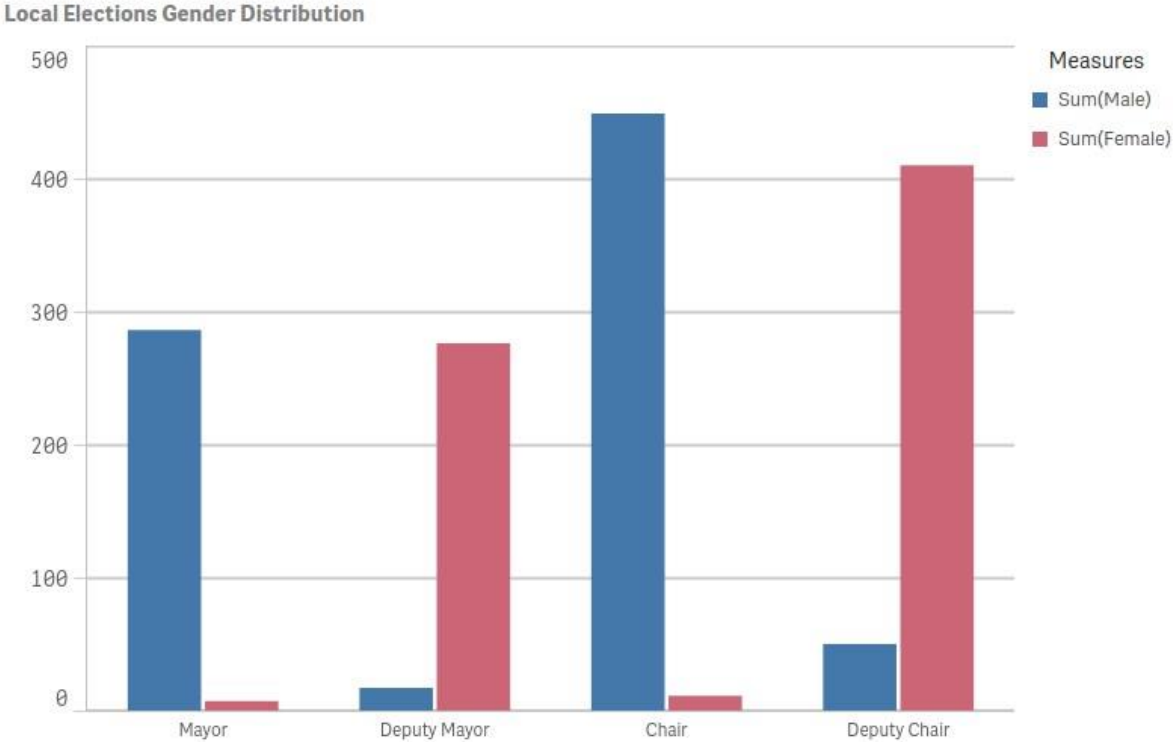


Figure 3 Local elections gender distribution in higher posts

(source: *The Record* 2017a)

Figure 3 shows men and women's situation and position in different places at the local level. The chart clearly shows that women are more in number in the lower positions, and most of the higher position is covered by men. The result shows that women won Deputy and Vice-Chairperson positions rather than prominent positions. However, only 2% of the Mayoral positions are women out of 753 local governments, whereas women are in 91% of Deputy Mayor positions. Moreover, these data reveal that women are always given the second position rather than the primary position, which helps men control women's decisions. So, the women's position is always secondary and less effective.

3.3.4. Unsatisfactory distribution of gender in open seats at local level

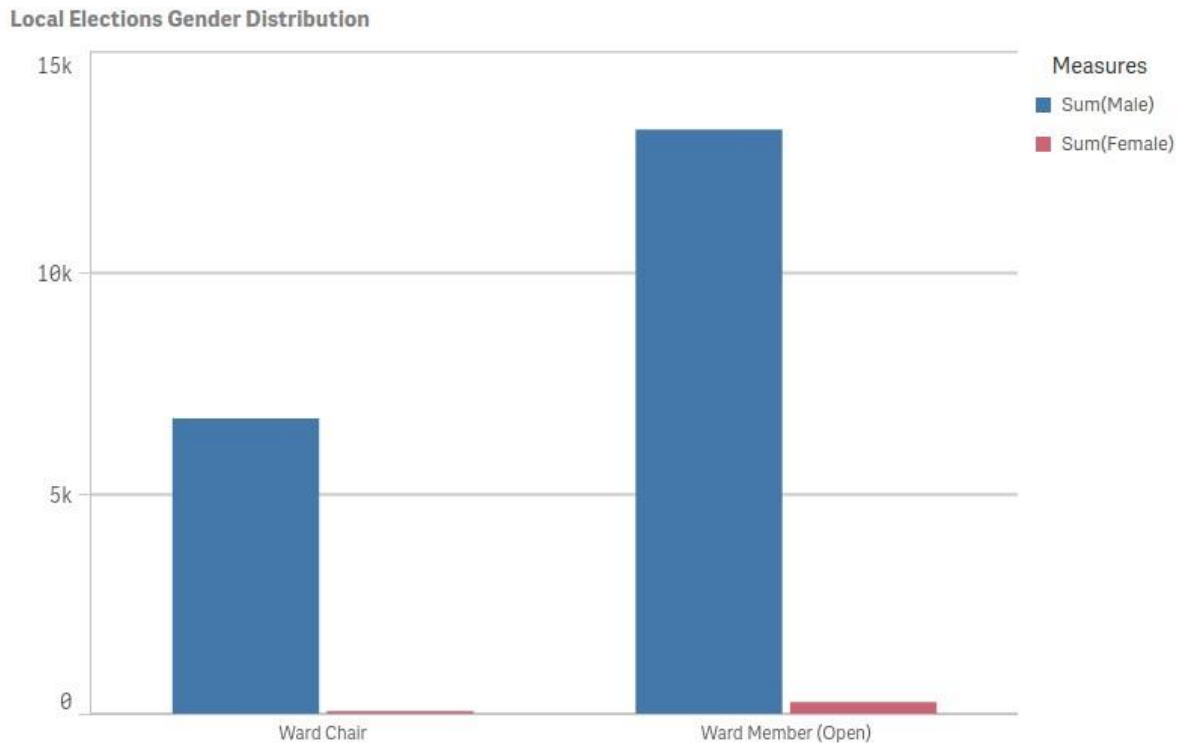


Figure 4 Local Elections Gender Distribution in Open Seats

(source: *The Record* 2017a)

Figure 4 shows the two different positions at the local level in rural municipalities i.e, Ward Chair, the higher position, and ward member, which is not a mandatory position for women. In non-quota ward member seats, out of 13,484, only 2% were held by women. Similarly, women won only 1% of Ward Chair seats out of 6742. Thus, the vast difference between the reserved seats for women and men without quota is clearly shown in the graph. Moreover, it also shows the government's patriarchal mindset, which provided the gender quota system for the lower position; for that reason, women were excluded from higher positions. Thus, the graph clearly explains the patriarchal influence in politics plays an important role. The low representation of women in the Ward Chairperson and open seats describes the status of women and their critical acts has not being acknowledge by the government but it only focussed upon the quota which is only available in the lower position where the decision- making power is low or nil.

3.3.5. Figurative representation of Dalit women comparing to others

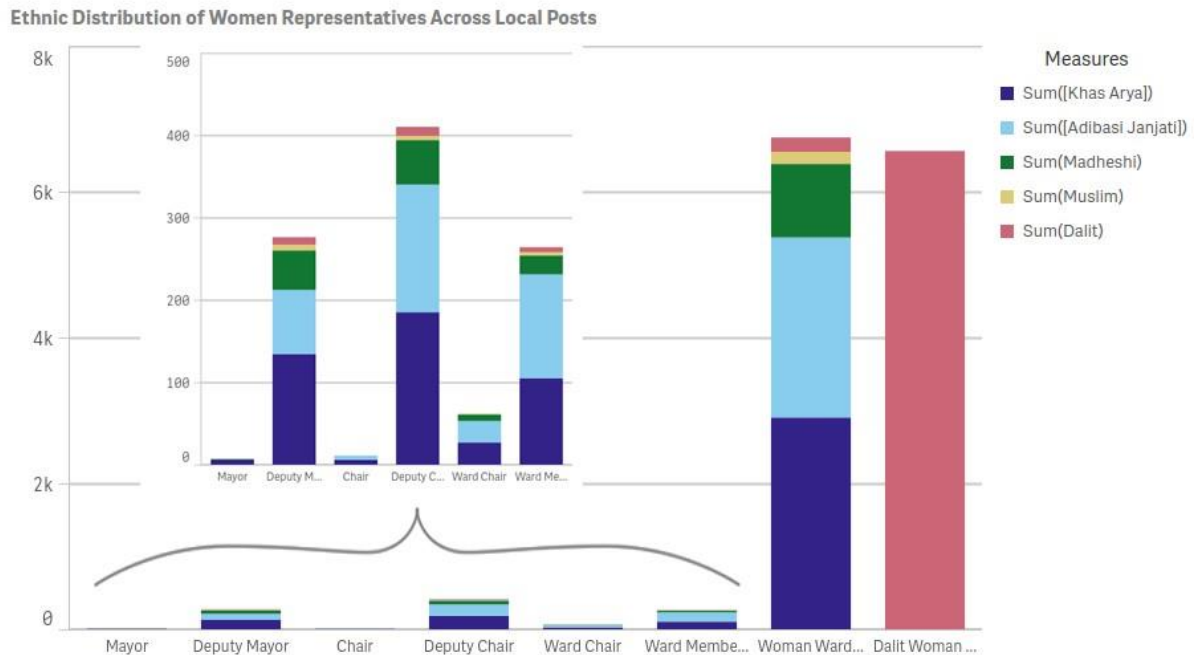


Figure 5 Ethnic Distribution of Women Representatives Across Local Posts

(source: The Record 2017a)

The final graph (Figure 5) shows the ethnic distribution of women representatives in local government in different positions. The chart shows different categories (Khas Arya, Adhibasi Janjati, Madhesi, Muslim, and Dalits) of women at the local level in different situations. The above-disaggregated data shows that out of a total 40.9% of women representatives, 47.4% are Dalit women, 23.5% are Khas Arya women who are denoted as higher-caste (Brahmin and Chettri), 19.9% are Janjatis (indigenous people), and 1.3% are Muslim. It shows a comparatively higher number of Dalit women's participation due to the mandatory provision of quota in ward member positions. However, they were excluded from the higher positions taken by Khas Arya women followed by Janjati women. Moreover, it shows that 'caste' is an essential factor in making people marginalized and vulnerable. Though women of Nepal are lower in position, the above figure clarifies that Dalit women's position is lower than the other caste women. The result shows that without a quota system, Dalit women would be excluded from the political sphere.

In conclusion, the graph and case studies show that women's position is very low in Nepalese society where quota plays an essential role in fulfilling the political sphere. At the same time, the government is unaware that while making policy for Dalit women, they must

realise the social structure of Nepalese society. Moreover, they were unaware that Dalit women are economically, socially, and educationally backward and do not measure Dalit women's challenges while fulfilling the duty that may invalidate Dalit women's quota in the near future. Thus, due to the culture of treating women as second citizens and Dalit as lowercaste, the government installed a quota system in 2017, but it seems that it has not been successful because the government are still ignorant and unaware of the hurdles and challenges that elected Dalit women face on a daily basis.

3.4. Analysing symbolic representation of the elected Dalit women

Symbolic representation or descriptive representation focuses on the number of people who 'stand for' certain groups or communities (Pitkin 1967). Furthermore, they do not have much concern about the 'act for' or in an ordinary meaning how one can work for the issues and development of any community for whom they are standing, which is also known as a meaningful representation or substantive representation. Dalit women are more descriptive than substantive, which shows the number is important rather than action. This helps to make a symbolic representation of Dalit women at the local level rather than the substantive representation in gender policies (Celis et al. 2008; Childs & Krook 2008).

In the 2017 election, local government is the most critical level for Dalit women participation. Nepal government placed the local government form through democratic methods and processes. That is why political knowledge is considered indispensable among the people's representatives in local government. However, political parties in Nepal still do not seem to make a political impression in most marginalized communities (Sob 2012). When there is an emergency, there is a tendency to tempt the cadres into politics. Such a trend from the past has also dominated the local, state, and House of Representatives elections this time. Different studies show that political parties have not trained the most marginalized communities politically, and they have not been adequately integrated into their organisations with their rights. The following chart figures analyses the real representation of Dalit women, which is symbolic in nature which is only focussed in number or 'stand for' certain position which do not rely upon 'act on'.

3.4.1. Representation of Dalit women in parties at local level

Ethnic Distribution of Women Local Representatives per Party

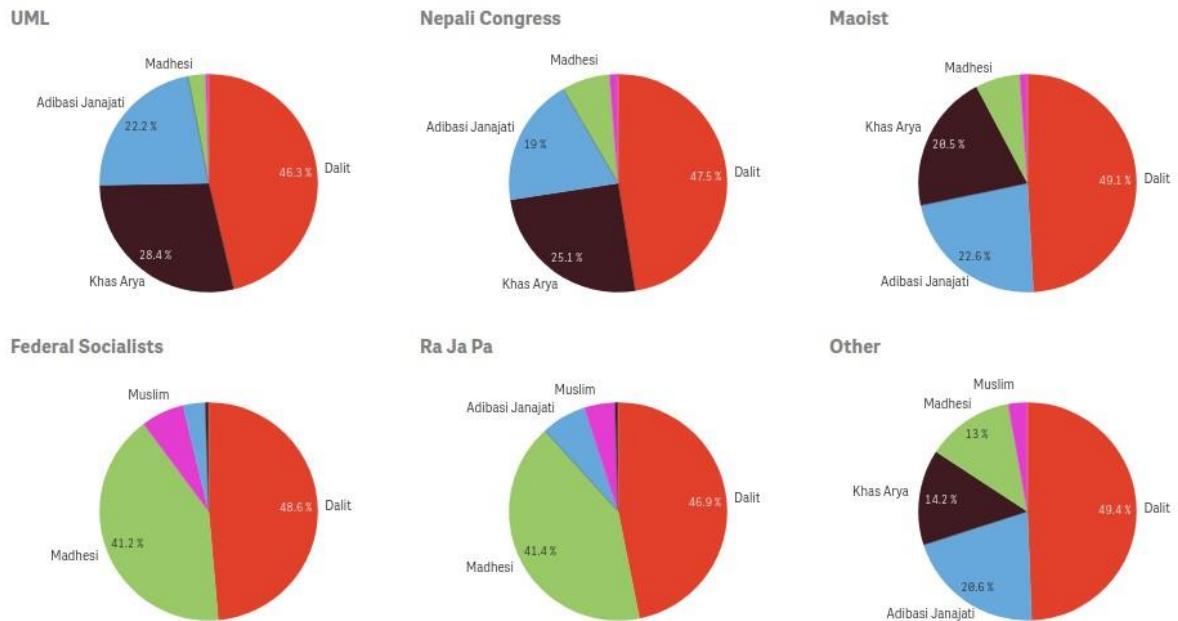


Figure 6 Participation of elected ethnic women in parties

(source: The Record 2017a)

The pie charts (figure 6) shows the ethnic distribution of local women representatives per party. Clearly Dalit women have a significant presence in parties, and this is because of the compulsory provision for the Dalit woman in ward member positions. While analysing the seats according to positions, Khas Arya and Janajati women have the most significant presence in the mainstream parties. The smaller parties that incline towards identity have a high representation of Madhesi and Muslim women but the least presence of Khas and Janajati women.

3.4.2. Dalit women represented higher number in lower post than other at local level

Ethnic Distribution of Women Local Representatives (Total)

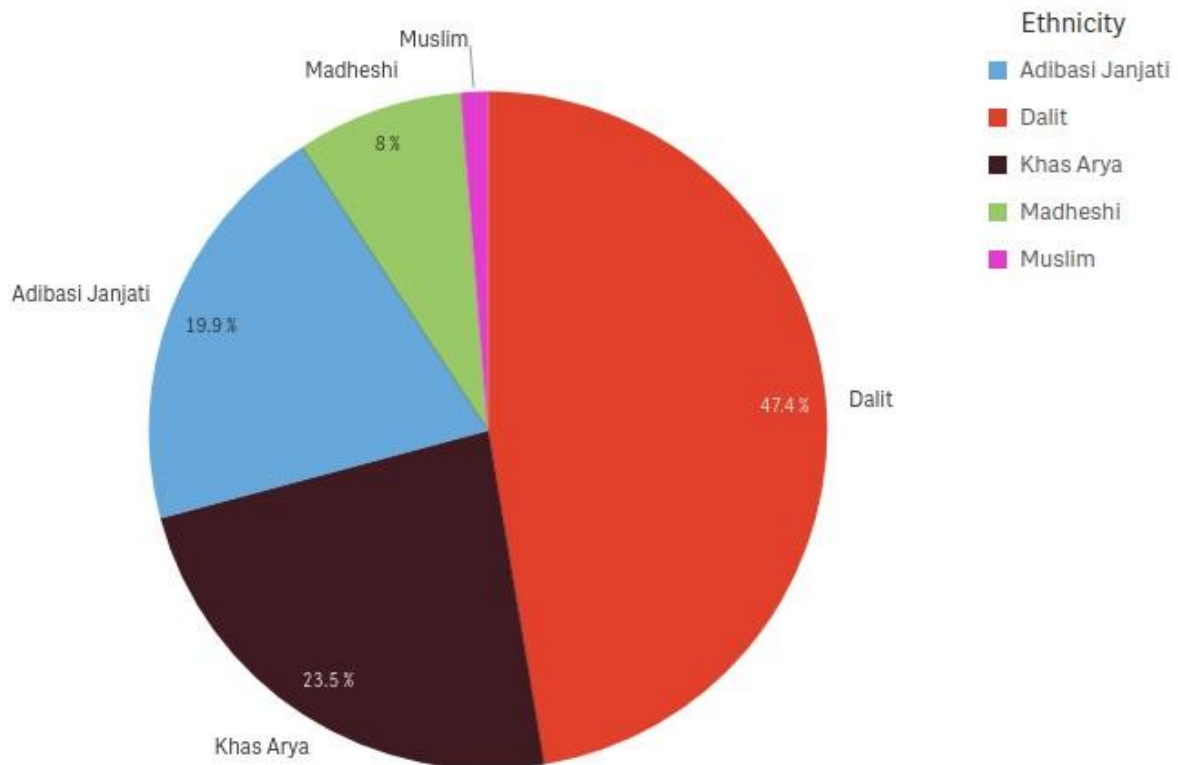


Figure 7 Ethnic distribution of elected women at local level

(source: The Record 2017a)

The above pie chart (figure 7) shows the number of ethnic elected women at the local government level. The total number of women is 14,339, among them, 47.4% are Dalits, 23.5% are Khas Arya women, 19.9% are Janajati, 8% Madhesi, and 1.3% Muslim. Out of 263 Mayoral seats, seven were won by women; among them, six of whom are Khas Arya, and one is Madhesi. Similarly, in the Ward Chairperson position there were eleven women, six of whom were Khas-Arya and five Janajati. Dalits appear significant in number, but outside of the Dalit women quota, their presence barely registers. The charts show women having a place with various identities as non-uniform. Dalit women have a large presence because of the Dalit Women Ward Member post. However, they do not hold any significant position in the government as they are missing from the three leadership places of Chairperson seats, Vice Chairperson seats and open Ward member seat. In the non-Dalit portion seats, Khas Arya women overwhelm, followed by Janajatis, Madhesis, Dalits and Muslims. Hence, the

above chart shows that despite the guarantee of state rebuilding, women are still denied of political force at the local level.

3.4.3. Analysing inclusive policy on political participation

The fourth and most important objective of this study is to analyse the policy of the quota system in Nepal. The constitution of Nepal 2015 has mandated the provision of 40.4% of all candidate seats to be reserved for women. Women were elected in different positions in huge numbers in the 2017 election in Nepal. Nearly 14,000 women candidates were elected from the local level election in three phases (The Asia Foundation 2017). Similarly, there is a mandatory position for one women and Dalit women ward members in the local government. About 6,567 ward members were elected as Dalit women ward members at local level which is the first and foremost decision of government in the history of Nepal (The Asia Foundation). This is a significant decision for Dalit women who are historically excluded from society providing them with the opportunity to participate in the election and be a part of the political sphere.

Nonetheless, the complex political structure and socio-cultural aspects of the country brings challenges to the elected Dalit community which is not recognised by the government. Through the case studies and data presented earlier it can be seen that there is still deepseated gender inequality and caste discrimination, and consequently the ability of elected Dalit women has been questioned (The Asia foundation). It is seen that a policy of inclusiveness alone helps to create an all-inclusive society. In order for this to happen, different plans and policies are needed to develop the quality of candidates in Nepal to help produce critical actors by measuring inequalities. However, the new quota system policy gives an opportunity to Dalit women but without any prior support brings the situation of insignificant representation and challenges to the forefront of elected Dalit women.

3.5. Elected Dalit women and meaningful representation as critical actors

This thesis argues that the election of 2017, which mostly focused on recruiting people, can analysed using critical mass theory and critical actor theory. I suggest that focussing recruiting people can be understood as a critical mass approach whereas we must pay attention to critical actor theory which pays attention to selecting the candidates who ‘act individually or collectively to bring about women-friendly policy change’ (Childs & Krook 2009). Critical actors are the suitable theory for meaningful or substantive representation of

Dalit women in Nepal. Nepal's government imposes the inclusive political participation policy, a mandatory provision of reserving two seats, one for women and one for Dalit women at the local government level. In this context, Nepal's government adopted a critical mass policy rather than a crucial or critical actor. Out of 6,742 a total number of 6,567 Dalit women were elected as Dalit ward members in the local government. The figure for participation has shown a large number of Dalit women at the local level, but they are nil at the decision-making level. This study's earlier analysis describes the social, economic, and educational status of elected Dalit women, which clearly defines that elected Dalit women at the local level participate only for mandatory provision rather than participation working for the Dalit women's interest. In political parties' data, the large number of Dalit women has been seen to cover more than 50% of seats looking through ethnic distribution, but it is only because of mandatory ward member position of Dalit women. All the higher-level roles are held by so-called higher-caste women (Khas Arya) followed by indigenous women.

The Asia Foundation (2018) explains that Dalit women have been elected randomly without any previous exercise or training about their participation. This happens because political parties must fulfill the criteria to select one Dalit woman from their ward. Moreover, the political parties seemed to have only fulfilled their criteria for the mandatory provision of selecting one Dalit woman for the ward level but not supporting the interest focussed upon Dalit or Dalit women issues. Similarly, tokenism plays an essential role in the context of Dalit women, where they have to maintain the position of 'pseudo participation'⁴ because of the multiple identities intersecting with one another (Bishwakarma 2017). However, Dalit women are lower in the hierarchical pattern of the society which brings the chances of critical mass theory that adopted by government brings more chances of converting Dalit women as 'pseudo participant' As we can see, most of the elected Dalit women members lack knowledge about their duties and responsibilities and are ignorant about the constitution and their rights have been misused. They have attended the meetings and programmes conducted at the local level but are unable to raise their voice; instead, they used to listen, sign their attendance, and return to their home without giving their thoughts. So, the work of elected Dalit women was questioned and invalidated by others.

⁴ pseudo participation: is an approach to management in which managers cultivate an impression of openness but are careful to retain decision-making in their own hands. It is associated with the use of direct communication and other weak forms of employee participation (Oxford 2020).

Similarly, the interest of the Dalit women has not been given priority, which is a critical factor and helps to form a meaningful representation of the particular group or community in the political sphere (Childs and Krook 2009). For example, elected Dalit women who have an interest in understanding the constitution, their rights, and duties identified hurdles to fulfilling their duty. Those challenges are not understood by others and there is no attempt to set up any workshop or training for women by the government, which helps them become more vulnerable and forces them to the fringes of the political sphere. Nepal adopted the quota system with a descriptive representation using the critical mass theory which only explains certain marginalized groups' many representations. However, they do not follow those groups' interest and active participation by bringing a critical actor to change those marginalized groups' status as a substantive representation, which is always confined with quality rather than quantity (Childs and Krook 2009). The meaningful representations of Dalit women are possible in the political sphere when the government allows critical actors to represent them on behalf of the marginalized groups. They are from any background, caste, class and gender who have the intention to help as well as support marginalized groups who are historically backward.

The case studies explained the overall marginality of the Dalit women who are struggling to be in politics. Moreover, the quota system brings a new wave in the life of Dalit women who are historically marginalized and can participate in the political sphere in different stages. But the quota policy only focussed upon the actual representation of the people. They are unaware of the fact that Dalit women are socially, and economically backward community with no position to share their thoughts and decisions.

3.6. Chapter Summary

Overall, this chapter helps to analyse the objectives of the study that are intended to clarify the social structure, political participation and challenges faced by elected Dalit women at the local government level of Nepal. This chapter contains the in-depth analyses elected women through intersectionality approach and critical actor theory. Those theories successfully explain the multiple factors that impact elected Dalit women performance and meaningful representation. This chapter further describes the social structure of Nepalese society where Dalit women are in the bottom category of the hierarchical division of both the caste system and gender. The multiple identities of Dalit women directly impact their social as well as political participation. The social situation of elected Dalit women brings challenges and hurdles for them while fulfilling their duty. The government of Nepal seems

largely unaware of the challenges and hurdles which negatively impacts the substantive or meaningful representation of elected Dalit women at the local level. Lack of awareness of the government makes elected Dalit women's lives more difficult as they do not share their thoughts, raise the issue of Dalits and women or discuss decisions in the meeting or while making budget expenses for local people. Thus, inability and incapacitated status of elected women causes them to be represented as symbolic which subsequently helps to develop a form of tokenism.

In conclusion, the government of Nepal concentrated mainly upon "the number" (quantity aspect) of the participants as critical mass to fill up the positions but failed to acknowledge the intertwining challenges of Dalit women. Nepalese society followed the historical pattern of the caste system and patriarchal society which directly impacts the status of Dalit women which brings them the concept of being a marginalized group of the society. Dalit women are in lower positions in the social structure of Nepalese society which does not give them a meaningful representation in politics. Moreover, intersectionality plays an important role in the social status of Dalit women's multiple identity as being female, Dalit and poor. The caste system in the society developed the concept of discrimination between people as higher or lower-caste, touchable and untouchables, superior and inferior etc. These biases in society help to break the confidence level and deprive this group of people of different opportunities. Thus, the government should investigate the multiple identities of Dalit women including gender, caste, education and economy which affect their work in local government and bring critical actors who have more concerns about their work rather than their number to participate in elections.

Chapter Four: Conclusion

This concluding chapter comprises a summary of the results, conclusion, and the implications of this study for further research and policy.

4.1. The key results of the study

Nepal's government developed the new 2015 constitution's inclusive policy, which reserves one specified seat for Dalit women at the local government level. In this study, four different aspects were utilized to illuminate and explain the representation of elected Dalit women. The relevant aspects are: i) Women's forum, civil organisations, women's council, ii) women's issues, women's interest, and debates, iii) outcomes of policy (for women), and iv) impact on the patriarchal nature of society. The elected Dalit women's participation at the local level helps determine their position and decision-making ability indirectly by using different indicators to explain their insignificant and meaningless involvement at the local government level.

The analysis part of this study has identified four themes (objectives) that implicate strongly and significantly the indicators related to representation and significant or meaningful representation of elected Dalit women. The main three objectives are used to analyse the case studies and data from the secondary sources to determine the meaningful representation of elected Dalit women. The first theme helps to find out the intersectional identities that a Dalit woman is bearing through social structure of the society. The second theme helps to determine the challenges and hurdles before, during, and after the election, which make them weak and less capable than other women who are elected to the same positions at the local level. The third theme helps to detect the symbolic or abstract representation of elected Dalit women at the local government level, which becomes a token in the society only because they hold a position, even though they are not participating in the decision-making process or raising the issues of the Dalit community. This study's final theme helps to determine local government policy analysis, which introduces proportional representation through the number of quotas provided to Dalit women. The inclusive policy established by the government of Nepal did not provide any prior interests or research on the challenges that are faced by elected Dalit women candidates in the Nepalese society. Dalit women are historically oppressed and have never been given the chance of gender equality

but had a huge representation at the local level. Thus, government inclusive provisions made without any prior research brings hurdles for the elected Dalit women ward member in the present situation and makes it very hard for them to be effective.

Among the enabling factors for successful representation are, attendance of critical actors, women with feminist nature, and interconnectedness with women in Parliament, women's institutions, and civil organisations which helps to generate the significant and meaningful representation of Dalit women. Imbibing these factors would enhance the ability of Dalit women in adapting decision-making skills and gaining meaningful experiences in the long run. This would in turn strengthen the community as a whole. The above enabling factors help to generate a substantive or meaningful representation of elected Dalit women with challenges that may obstruct those critical actors' positions and ability. The essence of the patriarchal mindset in politics, the absence of institutional assistance, party beliefs, and gender stereotypes are some of the challenging factors for elected Dalit women ward members for meaningful or substantive representation. Even though critical actors do not accept a gender focus in the position, those patriarchal and gender patterns may generate inequality in the political sphere. This helps to create obstacles for those who possess a critical position in the political sphere, or those men in the position who may have made unequal decisions due to the patriarchal mindset they adopt within society.

Similarly, due to party beliefs, most of the elected members who do not have a decision-making role are deprived of participation in party activities, especially when electing men and women in the election. The party has its ideology to choose the participants according to their rules and strategy where the party sometimes cannot necessarily be consistent regarding the issue of women and minorities across all legislative levels. Likewise, the absence of institutional assistance has been seen in the elected Dalit women's issues: they do not have any assistance, like training and workshops, to build their capacities regarding the constitution and people's rights. Finally, Dalit women's political participation is mainly affected by the social structure of Nepalese society. As Nepalese social system is embedded with a patriarchal and caste hierarchical pattern, enabling minority groups of people to raise their issues and difficulties in the community remains a significant challenge.

4.2. Policy Implications

The study suggests several policy endorsements for the government, other participants, and political parties to improve the status of elected Dalit women to develop

meaningful representation. These recommendations are outlined below. In the 2017 election, the quota system played a vital role in Dalit women's lives at the local level even though they are regarded as historically suppressed and discriminated communities. However, the social structure of suppression and discrimination still exists in Nepalese society, unacknowledged by the government while making inclusive policy. Lack of education, poverty, social inequality, and gender inequality directly impacts on the performance of elected Dalit women, which should be improved. Nepal's government should follow the pattern of critical actors rather than critical mass to give a meaningful representation to improve and acknowledge the marginalized communities' issues.

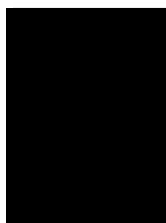
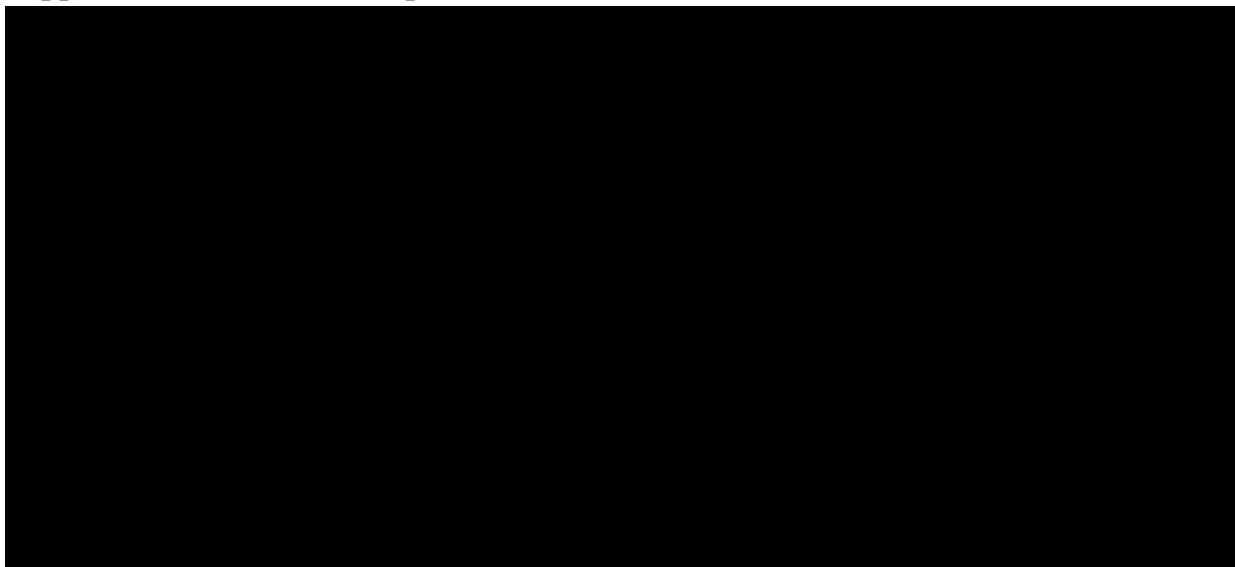
Other recommendations based on the findings from this study are as follows: -

- To develop a plan and strategy in a particular area of long-term or short-term programs where marginalized community could benefit (International Alert 2019).
- Awareness-raising programs should be developed the knowledge in the area about rights, the constitution, opportunities, and capacity building for the elected Dalit women (International Dalit Solidarity Network 2017).
- Political parties and party leaders should be made accountable and responsible for the inclusion of the Dalit community that pays attention to the social and economic factors that I have outlined in this thesis (Samata foundation 2018).
- The government must have a prior plan to increase education at the grassroots level if they are planning to provide reserved places for the Dalit community at the local government level (Samabesi foundation 2019).
- Planning of an extensive program of GESI (Gender equality and social inclusion) and social change which points towards marginalized and women's powerful interests in local administration where more quotas have been given; Peer to peer learning session should be organized for all women who develop sustained interest in social advancement. For example, Amma Samuha, Credit and Savings/SHGs, and so on at the local level are empowering spaces for women's authority (Asia Foundation 2018).
- Finally, for future reference while designing the program to elect Dalit women under the quota, policy research should be done by the government to understand the position of elected Dalit women in society and public office more particularly rather than generally.

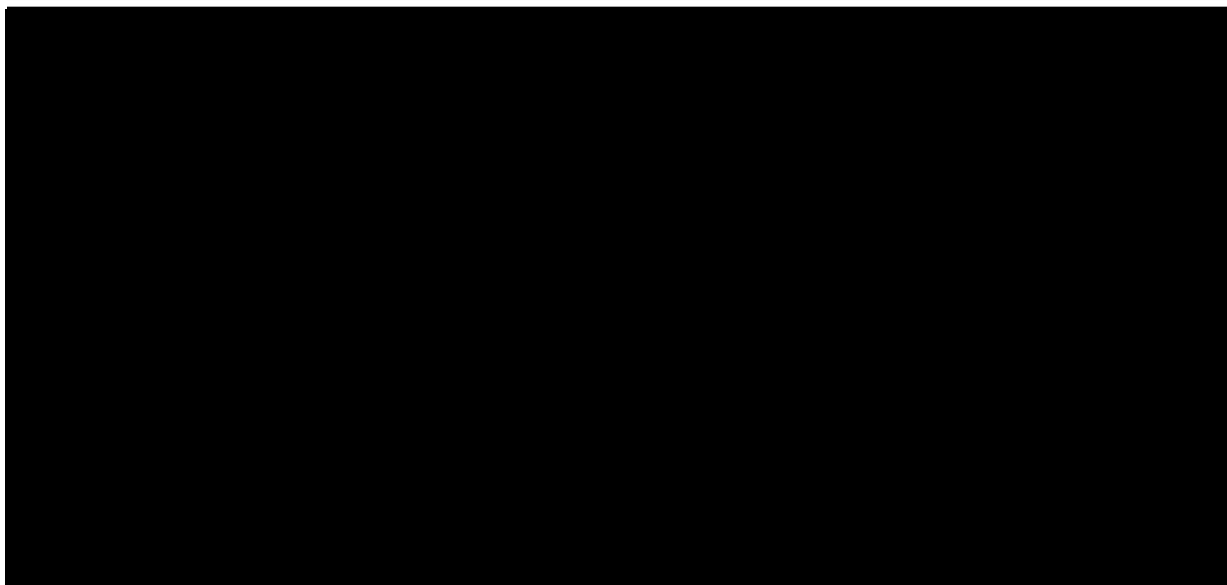
Thus, the government of Nepal, political parties, civil society, the women's caucus, and all communities are equally responsible for the outcomes of the quota system for Dalit women. The challenges and hurdles should be acknowledged in the context of Nepal's social structure, where women and minorities are still discriminated against in the name of custom and tradition. It is vital that the strategic plans and programs should be designed to make marginalized groups fully aware of constitutional knowledge and rights, which will help to develop a meaningful representation of Dalit women in government and ensure that they have a better and more substantial place in society.

Appendices

Appendix A: Permission Request



Appendix B: Correspondence Granting Approval



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