

SOCIAL SCIENCES

GENDER DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN NEPALESE ORGANIZATIONS: CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES

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Abstract

This study looks into how gender diversity and inclusion are currently seen in Nepalese organizations, analyzes the difficulties women encounter at work, and suggests ways to encourage a more diverse and inclusive workplace culture. Even if certain organizations have made progress in promoting gender diversity and inclusion, the poll reveals that there are still many challenges to be overcome, including social expectations, a lack of education and awareness, and unconscious bias. The findings emphasize the significance of advancing gender equality and involvement in the workplace, not just for improved performance but also for sustainable development. Policymakers and advocacy groups can help with this effort by advocating for legislation and procedures that support providing people of both genders with equal opportunity. The study recommends further research on this issue in order to identify the most effective practices for promoting a more inclusive work environment.

Keywords: Gender diversity, Inclusion, Nepalese organizations, Challenges, Strategies.

1. Introduction

In the workplace, gender diversity and inclusion have gained popularity in recent years as they support fair opportunities for all workers, regardless of their gender, color, religion, or other characteristics. Research and survey results have indicated that gender diversity and inclusion continue to be major obstacles in workplaces all around the world. Companies in the top quartile for gender diversity are 15% more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry medians, revealed in a report by McKinsey & Company (2020). Despite this, women remain marginalized in leadership roles; according to a Grant Thornton analysis, only 28% of senior management roles worldwide are occupied by women. According to a Deloitte study, 71% of the organizations asked said they have formal programs in place, indicating that diversity and inclusion initiatives are becoming increasingly common in enterprises around the world. However, just 12% of workers in these businesses think that their company's efforts to promote diversity and inclusion are successful. In Nepalese organizations, women are particularly scarce in positions of leadership. Only 13% of Nepalese women hold managerial jobs, according to a study by the Federation of Woman Entrepreneurs Association of Nepal (Koirala, 2019).

The need for gender diversity and inclusion in companies is even more critical in Nepal, where gender inequity is still pervasive in many facets of society. In Nepal, gender-based workplace harassment, discrimination, and uneven remuneration still exist. According to a poll done by the International Labor Organization (ILO), 63% of Nepali women have faced harassment at work, and 35% of them have experienced gender-based violence. However, in recent years, Nepalese groups have made strides in fostering gender diversity. These

numbers are still low, though, and more has to be done to advance gender diversity in the workplace. These numbers are still low, though, and more has to be done to advance workplace gender diversity. In this research article, we'll look at how gender diversity and inclusion are now manifested in Nepalese organizations.

A survey and numerous research papers served as the foundation for the study. According to 2019 research by the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI), women now make up 23.7% of the private sector, up from 16.4% in 2014. However, there are still issues that women in Nepalese organizations must deal with, including gender bias and stereotypes, access to education and training, harassment on the job, and a lack of support networks. Employers could use tactics including informing and enlightening staff, offering equal opportunities, resolving workplace harassment, providing support networks, and fostering women's leadership to promote gender diversity and inclusion in Nepalese organizations.

2. Literature Review

There aren't many chances for women in the workforce in Nepal because of societal conventions and cultural beliefs that typically favor male leadership and decision-making (Subedi & Joshi, 2021). So, by examining pertinent literature, survey results, and information on the topic, this literature review's primary goal is to investigate the current situation of gender diversity and inclusion in Nepalese organizations. likewise, unintentional assumptions and prejudices still hinder Nepalese organizations' efforts to promote gender diversity and inclusion (Shrestha & Raut, 2021). According to research by UN Women in 2020, 62% of respondents thought there was still gender inequality in the workplace in Nepal, and 57% of respondents said they had

personally encountered bias or discrimination because of their gender (UN Women, 2020).

Women experience violence and unsafe working conditions as a result of workplace harassment. It is difficult for women because there aren't enough support structures, such as flexible work schedules, parental leave, and child care facilities. For Nepalese organizations to foster innovation and competitiveness, gender diversity and inclusion are essential. Shrestha and Shrestha (2021) did the research and discovered that gender equality in the workplace increases creativity, problem-solving, and decision-making. Multiple gender-friendly laws and procedures have been implemented by the Nepali government, including flexible work schedules, maternity leave, and childcare options (Thapa, 2020). Some organizations have also established training courses and workshops aimed at increasing awareness and eradicating unconscious prejudice (Shrestha & Raut, 2021). According to a study by Dahal et al. (2021), the adoption of gender-sensitive policies and practices in Nepalese firms had a beneficial effect on employee motivation and job satisfaction.

Nepal is ranked 109th out of 156 countries in the Global Gender Disparity Report 2021 for the gender disparity in economic participation and opportunity. Women still experience gender-based harassment, discrimination, and unequal compensation at work, which impedes their professional advancement. The government has implemented a quota system that mandates that women hold one-third of all government positions (Shrestha & Shrestha, 2021). Additionally, non-governmental groups are promoting gender equality and inclusion within Nepalese institutions. For instance, the Women's Foundation Nepal helps female entrepreneurs flourish in the male-dominated business environment by offering training and mentoring (Devkota, 2021). The key to developing a diverse work environment is educating and sensitizing people to diversity and inclusion issues. Providing diversity and inclusion training to employees has been shown to boost employee satisfaction, teamwork, and innovation, according to research by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM, 2019). Unconscious bias training, which focuses on recognizing and treating unconscious biases, has also been demonstrated in studies to be effective in reducing prejudice and boosting workplace diversity. According to Harvard Business Review research, organizations that offered unconscious bias education saw a 7.5% rise in the number of women in management roles.

Despite the significance of diversity and inclusion training, the Society for Human Resource Management found that there was no formal program in place (SHRM, 2019). Further study has indicated that more participatory and customized training approaches may be more effective than typical diversity training programs in producing the intended results (Gallagher & Cavanagh, 2019). But a study by Kalev, Dobbin, and Kelly (2006) looked at the effect of diversity training initiatives on gender and racial representation in the workforce. The study discovered that the presence of women and minorities in management roles increased

in companies that adopted mandated diversity training programs. In Asia in general, it's essential to educate and sensitize workers about diversity and inclusion issues in order to foster a more welcoming workplace. According to a PwC report, more than 80% of workers in Asia believe that workplace diversity and inclusion are important and that businesses with more diverse workforces are more inventive and better equipped to attract and retain talent. But Frederick and Weber's (2016) research looked at the connection between team effectiveness and demographic diversity. Contrary to popular opinion, demographic diversity had a negative effect on team effectiveness, especially when it came to decision-making processes, according to their research.

In a study report published in 2015, Lu, Lu, and Lu questioned the assumption that enhanced innovation results from diversity. They claimed that the promotion of creativity inside organizations is more heavily influenced by aspects such as team cohesion, leadership, and communication than by diversity alone. Additionally, studies have demonstrated that unconscious bias training is beneficial in raising awareness and altering attitudes in Asian nations toward diversity and inclusion. According to a Catalyst study, unconscious bias training reduced the influence of implicit preconceptions on decision-making in Asian businesses. Despite the significance of diversity and inclusion training, Willis Towers Watson's survey revealed that only 50% of Asian firms have explicit diversity and inclusion policies in place, and even fewer have formal training programs in place (Willis Towers Watson, 2020). Dobbin and Kalev (2016) conducted a study that examined decades' worth of studies on diversity education initiatives, including unconscious bias training. They discovered less evidence to support these programs' ability to alter attitudes and behaviors over the long run. According to the study, individual training sessions are frequently insufficient to bring about long-lasting change, and other interventions may be required.

The research on implicit bias training was examined in the article "Training programs designed to reduce implicit biases are not effective" by Forscher et al. (2019) in the Harvard Business Review. The authors looked at a number of studies on the subject and discovered that the programs had no influence on subsequent behavior or decision-making. According to survey and study findings, South Asia might benefit from its workforce being more inclusive by training and sensitizing workers to concerns of diversity and inclusion. According to a Deloitte study, 72% of Indian employees think their employers should do more to promote diversity and inclusion (Deloitte, 2020). The research on implicit bias training was examined in the article "Training programs designed to reduce implicit biases are not effective" by Forscher et al. (2019) in the Harvard Business Review. The authors looked at a number of studies on the subject and discovered that the programs had no influence on subsequent behavior or decision-making. Based on survey and study findings, South Asia might benefit from its workforce being more inclusive by training and sensitizing workers to concerns of diversity and inclusion. According to a Deloitte study, 72% of Indian employees think their

employers should do more to promote diversity and inclusion (Deloitte, 2020). Only % of Indian firms have explicit diversity and inclusion policies in place, and even fewer have formal training initiatives in place (Monster.com, 2019).

Worldwide, there is a widespread issue with workplace harassment. According to a survey by the International Labor Organization (ILO), 17% of men and 35% of women have both experienced sexual harassment at work (ILO, 2018). A sample of working women's sexual harassment experiences was explored in the study "Predicting the Perceived Validity of Sexual Harassment: The Role of Gender-Role Attitudes and Hostile- and Benevolent- Sexism" by Cortina, Berdahl, and Castro (2001). According to the study, 70% of the women said they have encountered sexual harassment in some capacity while working. More than one-third of Asian women have experienced sexual harassment at work, according to a poll by the International Labor Organization (ILO) (ILO, 2018). Furthermore, a survey by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) revealed that about 20% of women in Asia and the Pacific have experienced workplace sexual harassment (UNDP, 2019). In addition, a Pew Research Center study revealed that a sizable proportion of workers across many nations have encountered some kind of harassment or discrimination at work. For instance, 27% of American workers have dealt with racial or ethnic discrimination, while 22% have dealt with sexual harassment (Pew Research Center, 2019).

Further, research has demonstrated that workplace harassment hurts both businesses and individuals. According to a study by the Center for Talent Innovation, businesses that fail to address workplace harassment run the risk of losing talented employees and tarnishing their reputations. Employees who experience harassment are more likely to experience depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues. According to Gallup research, how managers and leaders are per-

ceived by their workforce has a big impact on how engaged and loyal they are. A productive workplace atmosphere and improved brand recognition are a result of effective leadership, transparent communication, and encouraging management. The studies have indicated that because of cultural and socioeconomic reasons, workplace harassment is frequently underreported in Asia. According to a survey by the International Bar Association, many Asian victims of sexual harassment keep their experiences quiet out of concern for social stigma or retaliation (International Bar Association, 2019). In South Asia, just 5% of women who experienced workplace harassment reported it to their employer or legal authority, according to a UN Women survey (UN Women, 2021). Although workplace harassment is common in Asia, there is rising attention to the problem and action being taken to deal with it. For instance, calls for legislative changes and increased reporting of workplace harassment have intensified as the #MeToo movement has gained popularity in various Asian nations (BBC). Despite the difficulties, there are initiatives to combat workplace harassment in South Asia and Asia. There have been more reports of workplace harassment and requests for policy reforms as a result of the #MeToo movement, which has gained support in a number of nations in both areas (BBC News, 2021).

3. Methodology

To explore the results of diversity and inclusion of gender in Nepalese organizations; Secondary data from recent surveys and reports produced by organizations and government agencies in Nepal have been obtained from a range of sources, including reports made public by the Nepali government, non-governmental organizations, and academic publications. These four are the key characteristics that we will be looking at, although there are many other considerations to take into account when assessing gender diversity and inclusion in the business.



Source: BCG analysis

3.1 Lack of support systems

Women in Nepal frequently lack access to mentorship and networking opportunities, which can make it challenging for them to develop relationships and improve their professions, according to research by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD, 2016). According to the report, women are frequently left out of informal networks and circles of power, which might restrict their access to prospects for professional progress. According to a 2017 survey by the Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB), women in Nepal encounter many obstacles when trying to get credit and

financial support, which might restrict their capacity to launch and expand enterprises. According to the report, women frequently aren't included in formal financial organizations and have a difficult time getting credit and other financial services.

3.2 Gender stereotypes and Bias

In Nepal, gender stereotypes are pervasive, with women being judged as less competent and capable than males, according to UNDP research published in 2019. The study also discovered that women experienced a disproportionate amount of poverty and discrimination, as well as frequent gender-based violence.

Another study by the World Bank study from 2013 concluded that traditional gender roles and stereotypes were strongly embedded in Nepalese society and that women were frequently excluded from leadership roles and decision-making processes. The research also revealed that women were more likely to hold low-paying, precarious employment. According to a survey done by ActionAid Nepal (2018), gender stereotypes and biases present many difficulties for women in Nepal. According to the report, women are frequently pressured to fit into stereotypical gender norms and are dissuaded from pursuing employment outside the home. In addition, it revealed that women experienced harassment and discrimination at work.

3.3 *Lack of access to education and training*

While Nepal's general literacy rate has increased recently, according to 2019 research by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), there are still sizable gender discrepancies in access to education. According to the survey, girls are more likely than boys to leave school, and that women are more likely to be illiterate. In a 2019 study,

the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) discovered that women in Nepal encounter many obstacles when trying to access chances for education and training. According to the report, women frequently have limited access to resources and information, which can make it challenging for them to pursue education and training. Additionally, it was shown that women are frequently dissuaded from seeking jobs outside the home, which can restrict their chances of rising up the ranks of businesses.

3.4 *Uneven wage rates*

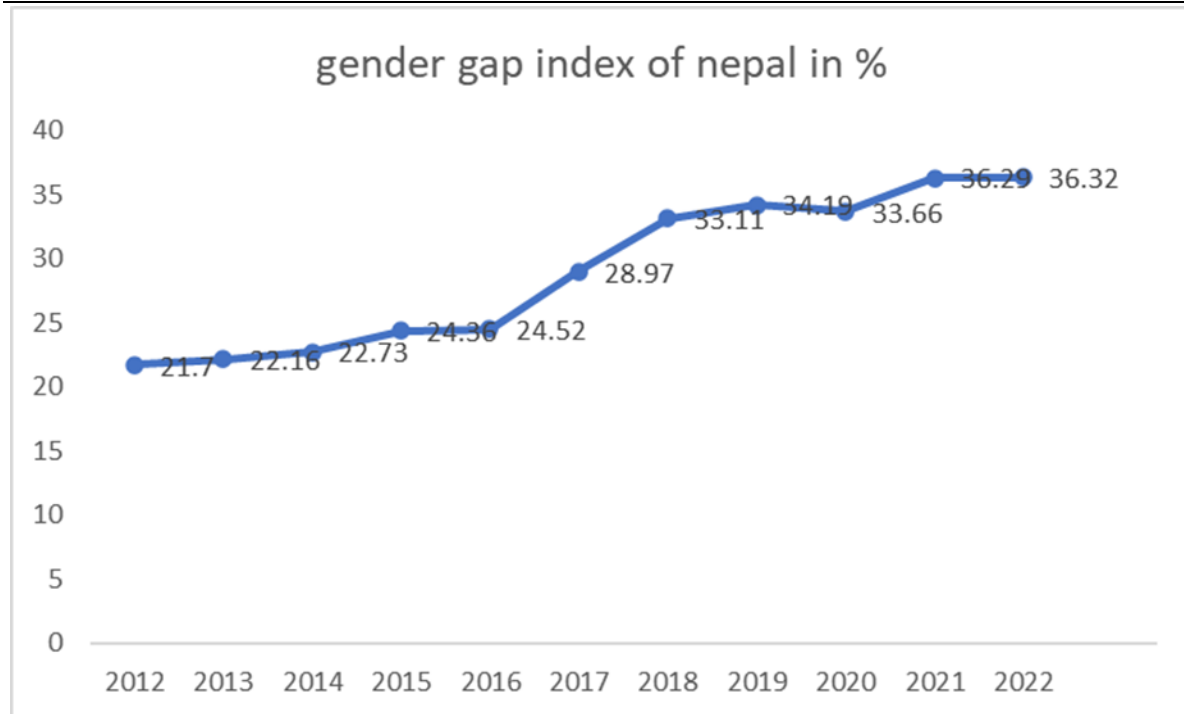
In general, the gender salary gap ranges from 15.2% to 23.6% or more, according to the International Labor Organization's (ILO) Global Salary Report 2021 (ILO, 2021). According to a 2017 survey by the Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB), women in Nepal encounter many obstacles when trying to get credit and financial support, which might restrict their capacity to launch and expand enterprises. According to the report, women frequently aren't included in formal financial organizations and have a difficult time getting credit and other financial services.

Nepal's global gender index



Source-gender gap index,2022; World Economic Forum
(<https://nepaleconomicforum.org/global-gender-gap-index-2022-assessing-nepals-progress>)

The nation did best in the political empowerment pillar of the Gender Gap Index 2022, scoring 58 out of 146. The nation ranks 98 and 125 in educational attainment in terms of economic participation and opportunity. Nepal placed 109th out of 146 nations in the category of Health and Survival.



Source: World Economic Forum by Sayas D Joshi | August 1, 2022
 (<https://nepaleconomicforum.org/global-gender-gap-index-2022-assessing-nepals-progress>)

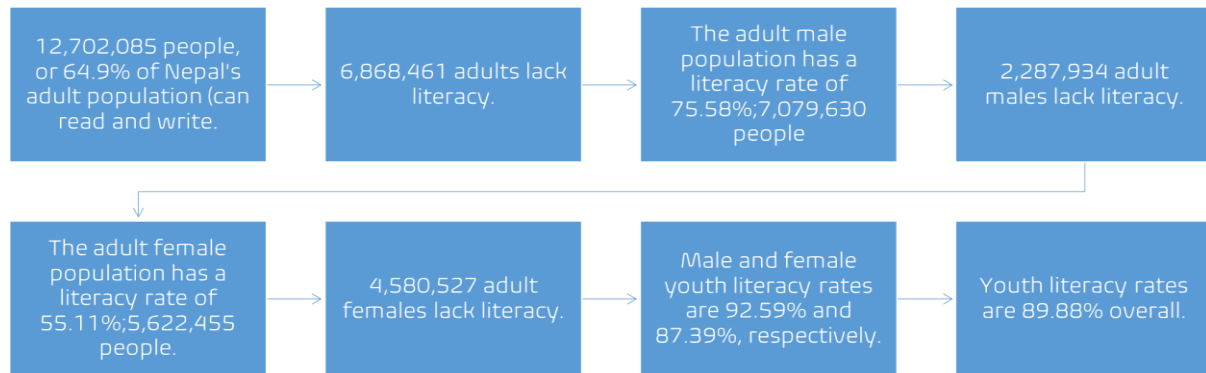
According to the statistics from 2012 to 2022, there was a growing gender disparity in Nepalese organizations until 2017. Thereafter, there was a period of fluctuation and somewhat stable conditions. The gender gap values are still very high, which emphasizes the need for deliberate efforts to enhance gender inclusion and diversity in Nepalese organizations. According to the International Labor Organization, the epidemic caused 1.6 to 2 million female Nepali employees to lose their jobs completely or have their hours drastically curtailed, which resulted in poorer income. In Nepal, 37% of enterprises reduced the pay of their female employees, while 58% reduced their compensation by 50%, according to a 2021 survey by the Asia Foundation.

year	category	male	female
1991	self	77.89	93.95
	employers	1.5	0.24
2001	self	75.12	93.02
	employers	1.57	0.27
2011	self	72.07	91.73
	employers	1.67	0.32
2019	self	69.14	90.4
	employers	1.67	0.36

source: Gender Discrimination and women empowerment in Nepal: Status and way forward for Economic Development, 2020.
 (https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342379200_Gender_Discrimination_and_women_empowerment_in_Nepal_Status_and_way_forward_for_Economic_Development)

The socioeconomic position of women in Nepal is compared in this graph. It also aims to illustrate the historical progression of women's empowerment and why it is crucial for the nation's economic growth.

Literacy Population of Nepal



Source: Nepal Population

(<https://countrysmeters.info/en/Nepal#:~:text=Literacy%20of%20population,2%2C287%2C934%20are%20illiterate.>)

4. Promoting Gender Diversity and Inclusion in Nepalese Organizations

To assist companies in promoting gender diversity and inclusion, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), a part of the World Bank Group, has started a Gender Equality Program in Nepal. To assist businesses in implementing gender-conscious policies and procedures, the initiative offers training and resources. The Women's Entrepreneurship Development Project (WEDP), which is supported by the World Bank and the Government of Nepal, intends to encourage women's entrepreneurship and improve their access to capital and markets. The project places a strong emphasis on gender inclusion and diversity in the workplace. A project led by the corporate sector, the Nepal Business Coalition for Women's Empowerment (NBCWE) strives to advance gender equality and inclusion in the workplace. The perceptions of inclusive leadership in six nations, including the US, Canada, and Japan, were examined in the Catalyst report "Inclusive Leadership: The View from Six Countries" (2020). According to the study, diverse teams with inclusive leaders were more likely to work well together.

A Women on Boards Observatory has been established by the European Commission to track advancements in gender diversity in the boardrooms of European corporations. By tracking progress toward the Commission's goal of having at least 40% of women on boards by 2020, the Observatory provides information on the representation of women on boards. To advance and enhance gender equality in Australian workplaces, the Australian government established the Workplace Gender Equality Agency. For firms to develop gender-conscious policies and practices, the Agency offers resources and support.

5. Findings

Worldwide, companies have made gender diversity and inclusion essential conversation points, and Nepal is no different. Although Nepal has made strides toward achieving gender equality, there is still a long

way to go before it can fully diversify and include all genders in its institutions.

According to studies, gender gaps in leadership still exist in Nepalese organizations, with women holding proportionately fewer high-level positions than males. Only 17.4% of management jobs in Nepal are held by women, as compared to 82.6% of men, according to a report by the International Labor Organization (ILO). despite the fact that there are laws and policies in place to guard against such actions and organizations. According to research conducted by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), 55% of women in the Nepalese workforce who had experience working in the Nepalese workforce frequently experience sexual harassment in the workplace due to gender discrimination. In addition to these difficulties, equal remuneration for equal effort is a problem for Nepalese organizations. According to a survey by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), women in Nepal make 29% less money on average than men doing the same work. Nepalese organizations need to take a more proactive stance on gender diversity and inclusion in order to address these problems. This includes putting in place laws and initiatives that support gender equality.

6. Analysis

Although the nation has made some strides recently toward gender equality, there is still a long way to go. In this research, we'll look at how gender diversity and inclusion are currently functioning in Nepalese organizations, as well as the difficulties they encounter and potential solutions. The paucity of women in leadership roles is one of the biggest problems facing Nepalese organizations. Only 17.4% of Nepal's managerial jobs, according to a report by the International Labor Organization (ILO), are held by women. In the commercial sector, where there are just 7 female executives, this disparity is even more pronounced. In Nepalese organizations, gender diversity and inclusion are crucial concerns that affect top management roles.

Sexual harassment and discrimination on the basis of gender are other issues that Nepalese organizations must deal with. Even though there are laws and regulations in place to guard against such behaviors, they are nonetheless common in the workplace. In a study conducted by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), 55% of working-age women in Nepal reported being the victim of sexual harassment. Equal remuneration for equal effort is a major problem in Nepalese organizations as well. According to a survey by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), women in Nepal make 29% less money than men doing the same work. Since women are more likely to labor in the informal economy, this gap is particularly severe there. Several actions need to be taken in order to increase gender diversity and inclusion in Nepalese organizations.

First and foremost, businesses must implement policies and initiatives that support gender equality in hiring, promotion, and retention. This involves giving women the same opportunities as men to hold leadership positions and tackling the problem of sexual harassment and gender-based discrimination. Several actions need to be made in order to increase gender diversity and inclusion in Nepalese organizations. First and foremost, businesses must implement policies and initiatives that support gender equality in hiring, promotion, and retention. This entails giving women the same opportunities as men to hold leadership positions and tackling the problem of sexual harassment and gender-based discrimination. Secondly, organizations must train and educate staff members about gender awareness and how to avoid harassment. This may contribute to a more welcoming workplace where everyone is treated with respect and value. Finally, organizations can collaborate with the state and civil society to advance gender equality in society at large. This entails pushing for policy reforms that address gender-based discrimination as well as supporting projects that advance the education and empowerment of women. Organizations must educate and teach staff members about gender sensitivity and how to prevent harassment. This may contribute to a more welcoming workplace where everyone is treated with respect and value.

5. Conclusion

The expansion and success of Nepalese organizations depend on gender diversity and inclusion. Although there has been progress in fostering gender diversity and inclusion, more work is still required to address the difficulties that women confront in the workplace. Employers should implement policies and practices that support gender diversity and inclusion, such as training staff, granting equitable opportunities, resolving workplace harassment, establishing support networks, and fostering female leadership. Nepalese organizations may contribute to gender equality in society and a more inclusive and inviting workplace culture by encouraging gender diversity and inclusion. In Nepalese companies, workplace harassment is a serious problem that affects gender diversity and inclusion. It is common and can have serious repercussions for people and businesses, according to research and survey data. Nepalese organizations can build a secure and

welcoming workplace where everyone can thrive by enacting a zero-tolerance policy for harassment and discrimination.

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