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**Empowering or burdening women?**

**Assessing precariousness of vocationally trained women in Nepal**

**Keywords: Closure, Precariousness, Exclusion, Postcolonial Feminism,  
Gender-stereotyped occupations**

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## Abstract

Amidst the paradox concerning the role of gender-stereotyped vocational training programmes in empowering women, this research makes a qualitative study of the training and post-training experiences of women graduating from two so-called *women friendly* vocational training programs – tailoring and beautician. 12 beauticians and 7 tailors have contributed as interview participants in this research, and the data thus gathered have been analysed from theoretical perspectives of Closure Theory, Precariousness and Postcolonial Feminist Theory. Discussions suggest that women in Nepal are systematically excluded from better/equal training and working opportunities owing to the disproportionately lower attainment of formal education, extremely limited access to finances, as well as the traditional and philosophical orientation of the Nepali society. As a result, beauticians and tailors experience demarcationary closure and are nudged into such gender-stereotyped occupations. These occupations, although they provide extremely low financial returns, are heavily stratified in the labour market – based mostly on the number of training and credentials gathered by women. As such, to climb the ladder of stratification, women are compelled to attain as many training programmes as they can and gather several certificates, which signifies the existence of credentialism, usurpation and dual closure. In terms of precariousness, although gender-stereotyped vocational training programmes put women into economic activities, their jobs are largely precarious and their living conditions become worse as they are often forced to work in parallel with their socially dictated gender roles of household chores and nurturing roles. As such, they are found to suffer from triple (or at times even quadruple) burdens. Similarly, at least 5 out of 7 forms of Guy Standing's labour related securities are absent for beauticians and tailors, and even the remaining 2 display conditions of precariousness. As such, this research concludes that gender-stereotyped vocational training programmes are biased against women, exclude women from better/higher income-earning opportunities, and manifest precarious income, living and working conditions for women.

## सार

महिला सशक्तीकरणमा gender-stereotyped व्यावसायिक प्रशिक्षण कार्यक्रमहरूको भूमिकाको बारेमा भईरहेको विरोधाभासको बीचमा, यस अनुसन्धानले दुई तथाकथित महिला मैत्री व्यावसायिक प्रशिक्षण कार्यक्रमहरू - टेलरिङ्ग र ब्यूटीशियन बाट तालिमप्राप्त महिलाहरूको प्रशिक्षण र प्रशिक्षण पछिका अनुभवहरूको गुणात्मक अध्ययन गर्दछ । १२ ब्यूटीशियन र ७ टेलरहरूसँग अन्तर्वार्ता लिएर तयार गरिएको यस अनुसन्धानबाट उपलब्ध भएको डाटालाई closure theory, precariousness र postcolonial feminist theory को सैद्धांतिक दृष्टिकोणबाट विश्लेषण गरिएको छ । छलफल अनुरूप नेपालका महिलाहरू औपचारिक शिक्षामा रहेको असमानता, पूजीको अत्यन्तै कम पहुँच एवं नेपाली समाजको परम्परागत र दार्शनिक भुकावका कारण राम्रा/समान प्रशिक्षण र काम गर्ने अवसरबाट वञ्चित भएको पाईन्छ । फलस्वरूप, ब्यूटीशियन र टेलरहरूले demarcationary closure को अनुभव गरेको र यस्ता gender-stereotyped व्यवसायमा धकेलिएको पाईन्छ । यी व्यवसायहरूले अत्यन्तै कम प्रतिफल प्रदान गर्ने भएतापनि श्रम बजार भने महिलाहरू कतिको प्रशिक्षित छन् र उनीहरूले कति प्रमाणपत्रहरू भेला गरेका छन् भन्ने आधारमा स्तरीकरण भएको पाईन्छ । सोहि स्तरीकरणका कारण महिलाहरू सकेसम्म धेरै प्रशिक्षण कार्यक्रमहरूमा संलग्न हुन र धेरै भन्दा धेरै प्रमाणपत्रहरू संकलन गर्न बाध्य हुने गरेकोले नेपाली श्रम बजारमा प्रमाणिकरण (credentialism), usurpation र dual closure का फेनोमेनाहरू छन् भन्ने पुष्टि हुन्छ । Precariousness को परिपेक्षमा, gender-stereotyped व्यावसायिक प्रशिक्षण कार्यक्रमले महिलाहरूलाई आर्थिक गतिविधिमा सामेल गरेतापनि, उनीहरूका रोजगारीहरू धेरै हदसम्म असुरक्षित तथा अनिश्चित भएको पाईन्छ । त्यसका साथै, पहिल्यै देखी रहेको घर-धन्दा गर्नुपर्ने, बालबच्चा र वृद्धवृद्धा स्याहारनुपर्ने जस्ता एकल लैंगिक जिम्मेवारीहरू नबाँडिकन अबै आर्थिक जिम्मेवारी थप्दा उनीहरू तिनगुना (वा कहिलेकाँही चौगुना समेत) बोभहरूबाट ग्रस्त हुने गरेको पाईन्छ । त्यस्तै, ब्यूटीशियन र टेलरहरू गाइ स्ट्यान्डिङ्गले दिएका मजदुरहरूले पाउनुपर्ने ७ मध्ये ५ सुरक्षाहरू बाट पूर्ण रूपले वञ्चित भएका, र बाँकी २ मा समेत अनिश्चितताका लक्षणहरू रहेको पाईन्छ । अन्ततः यस अनुसन्धान gender-stereotyped व्यावसायिक प्रशिक्षणका कार्यक्रमहरू महिला विरुद्ध पक्षपाती रहेको, महिलालाई राम्रो/उच्च आय-आर्जनका अवसरहरूबाट अलग्याउने गरेको, र उनीहरूलाई अनिश्चित आय एवं असुरक्षित जीवन/रोजगारीको अवस्था सृजना गर्ने गरेको छ भन्ने निकर्षमा पुग्दछ ।

## Preface

This research: ‘Empowering or burdening women? Assessing precariousness of vocationally trained women in Nepal’ has been a rewarding experience. Conducting this research would not have been possible without the support and guidance of the few individuals/institutions I wholeheartedly acknowledge.

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Finally, and with utmost importance, I would like to thank the research participants for their time, effort and undisputed role in the co-construction of knowledge produced by this research. I hope this research, and the participant’s contribution to it will help improve the social, economic and political situation for women in the labour market of Nepal.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

This research aims to identify the limitations faced by vocationally trained women in Nepal followed by an assessment of the nature and the extent of their vulnerabilities. It narrowly focuses on two specific training programmes – beautician and tailoring – because they are widely considered to be *women friendly* training programmes by the bureaucrats at CTEVT<sup>1</sup>. After the first chapter, this research will draw insights from previous literature on vocational training (being focused around women) in the developing world – mostly in South Asia and in Nepal. This reflection will be followed by providing a theoretical framework for this research in the third chapter. In the fourth chapter, we discuss the methodology and ethical considerations employed by this research for data generation as well as their limitations. Then, in the fifth and the sixth chapter, empirical findings and discussions are simultaneously presented. Finally, this research concludes in the seventh chapter.

For this particular chapter, we begin with a background of the vocational training programmes and their association with women empowerment, which will then be followed by a brief introduction of the research organization and the context of this research. Finally, the research problem and the research questions will be presented at the end of this chapter.

### 1.1 Background

The response to the question, ‘Do vocational training programmes empower women in Nepal?’ is widely disputed among professionals, bureaucrats and scholars – especially given that the occupations and training programmes in Nepal are heavily gender-segregated. The former member secretary of CTEVT, Dr Ram Hari Lamichhane has gone as far as to identify only three distinct trades – beauty parlour, sewing and knitting – as being ‘*women-friendly trades*’, since these training programmes are the ones in which most women are interested (Lamichhane, 2014: 12). As such, he strongly recommends further development of these training programmes and their promotion among the wider population in order to get more women involved into economic activities.

His arguments, however, stands in sharp contrast to those of authors like Bhadra et al. (2003), Bhadra & Shah (2007), Messerli (2012) etc. who have frequently displayed the unfavourable outcomes of gender-segregated occupations and training to women. They tend to argue, as we

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<sup>1</sup> Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT) is the national skilling organization of Nepal which offers skill training through its vocational, technical and diploma level training programs.

shall see in the literature review below, that gender-segregated occupations for women are extremely limiting – not only in terms of painfully low financial returns they offer but also in terms of domesticating nature of such occupations. As such, they argue that further promoting these gender-segregated occupations would be a massive injustice towards women.

Providing evidence to this counter-argument, Messerli (2012: 42) writes that ‘although women [in Nepal] constitute an estimated 43% of all entrepreneurs, they are still found predominantly in low-growth areas earning lower financial returns than their male counterparts, facing socio-cultural obstacles as well as legal, regulatory and administrative barriers’. He further writes that 8 out of 10 high income earning training programmes offered by the Employment Fund (EF)<sup>2</sup> in Nepal were dominated by men, while only 2 attracted women. This observation of his synchronizes well with the government’s statistics for employment distribution throughout the country published by the National Planning Commission (NPC)<sup>3</sup> of Nepal – which shows that only 1 (Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery) out of 10 major occupational groups is dominated by women (NPC, 2018). All of these statistics display the existence of massive gender stereotyping and economic inequalities among men and women within the skilling, job acquiring and/or enterprise development landscape of the country.

As ghastly as this gender segregation of occupation might seem, it actually mirrors similar findings derived from all over the world. Smyth and Steinmetz (2015), in their study across 20 European countries, find that occupations in the European labour market are highly gender-segregated and this segregation is found to be furthered by the Vocational Educational and Training (VET) programmes – leading to men with VET qualification being more likely to be in typically male jobs and women with VET qualification being more likely to be in typically female jobs. This segregation would not be a problem if men and women were free to choose their professions, were not feeling pressured to give up on certain career choices, or would not be disproportionate victims of economic exclusion. Unfortunately, however, choices made by women are seen to be ‘hardly free’ from the institutional constraints that determine whether and how individual occupational choices can be realised in the labour market (*ibid*, 55).

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<sup>2</sup> The Employment Fund (EF) was established in 2008 as a result of a bi-lateral agreement between the Government of Nepal and the Government of Switzerland. From 2008 to 2015, the fund imparted short-term, market-oriented technical skills training to almost 100,000 young people- mostly poor and disadvantaged youth, with a special focus on women from disadvantaged backgrounds.

<sup>3</sup> National Planning Commission (NPC) is the apex advisory body of the Government of Nepal for formulating its national vision, periodic plans and policies for development.

The gender segregation and lack of choice stands quite paradoxical to the original aims of the vocation training programmes – which is to bring women into economic activities and empower them with financial resources, agency and the freedom to choose. Achieving empowerment in its true sense, therefore, can be quite challenging and difficult to achieve as literature points out that empowerment done with a mere objective of getting women into economic activities – without dealing with gender stereotypes and/or considering the quality of work/pay – does very little to radically change the ‘structural, systematic and/or institutionalized forms of subordination, oppression, and/or exploitation’ (Biewener & Bacqué, 2015: 67).

In this research, we will discuss the experiences of women and the outcomes of similar empowerment efforts conducted by the national skilling organization of Nepal – to which we shall turn to in the following section.

## **1.2 Research Organization and Context**

The Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT) is the state agency responsible for providing training to the citizens all over Nepal and making them ready for the labour market. It offers three levels of training programmes: diploma courses, Technical School Leaving Certificate (TSLC) and Vocational Training programmes (CTEVT, 2021). The level in which an individual can partake depends on their formal academic background – the most learned ones eligible for diploma courses, the ones having school level education eligible for TSLC courses and the ones with no or minimal education eligible only for vocational training programmes. In this research, we focus on *women* (as opposed to men) graduating from the *vocational training programmes* (as opposed to TSLC or diploma courses) offered by CTEVT. Even among several vocational training programmes, we narrow our focus to the graduates of beautician and tailoring courses because they are believed to be mostly preferred by women.

What this selection means in the context of this research is that the women stakeholders of this research are either locally employed in the informal labour markets, or self-employed in their own small shops. Alternatively, they could also be unemployed – because graduating from a vocational training programme does not necessarily mean that one can readily get a job, especially given that there are no state agencies in Nepal that help its citizens find employment.

Furthermore, for the unemployed, employed or self-employed stakeholders of this research, there are no provisions of unemployment benefits or national minimum income, meaning, that

the graduates of beautician and tailoring training programmes, who, very often than not, have extremely low incomes, also experience economic insecurity, extreme vulnerability, uncertainty, and often are at the brinks of poverty (Wagle, 2009). These are conditions that Standing (2011) characterizes to be precarious and are often manifested as a result of the absence of protective labour market policies in Nepal.

Discussing the policies that do exist, however, Nepal has several provisions that encourage its citizens to be self-employed and establish their own micro-enterprises<sup>4</sup>. The state provides free skill training, exemption on enterprise registration fees, and even tax exemptions for up to 5 years after registration – all of which encourage individuals to be self-employed mostly in their own micro-enterprises. These policies are even more generous towards women entrepreneurs (an example is that women get 7 years of tax exemption as opposed to 5 years which is the case for men) suggesting that women are more encouraged than men to start their own micro-enterprises and become a part of the informal labour market of Nepal.

While these provisions do seem to financially empower women at face value, what it also does is exclude women from enjoying the state or corporate benefits derivable by being a part of the formal labour market. For example, ILO (2018) reveals that the most recently launched contribution-based social security scheme of Nepal completely excludes the informal sector workers – and, although it was estimated that the Nepal Government soon plans to extend the scheme to the informal sector, experts comment that this scheme has already failed to kick off even in its current model (The Kathmandu Post, 2019) as only an abysmally low number of employers and employees have registered to be a part of this scheme. As a result, women stakeholders of this research are found to be completely excluded from all forms of social security provisions including medical health, pensions, maternity benefits, and all others.

Amidst these conditions of precariousness and rather absent policies from the state, this research aims to make an account of ways in which beauticians and tailors are found to be excluded from better opportunities as well as the nature of their daily life insecurities. In the next section, we shall dive deep into the actual research problem and propose two concrete research questions.

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<sup>4</sup> The Industrial Enterprises Act (2020) defines micro-enterprises – among other things – as any industry with a fixed capital not exceeding NRs. two million (USD 17,000), where the entrepreneurs themselves are involved in the operation and management of the industry and has a maximum of 9 staffs including the entrepreneurs themselves.

### 1.3 Research Problems and Research Questions

Having briefly explored the vulnerabilities related to the informal labour market as well as the lack of protective labour market policies in Nepal, we circle our focus back to CTEVT and its vocational training programmes. The major problem leading to this research is the fact that an overarching evaluation (Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman, 2009) of these training programmes has never been conducted before (Bhadra & Shah, 2007) and as such, there are no organized manners in which the effectiveness of CTEVT's training programmes could be assessed.

Furthermore, NPC (2017) believes that the NRs. 20 billion (USD 170 million) that the Nepal government invests annually in various unorganized training programmes are being highly ineffective (*ibid.*). 'These vocational training programmes have been running for the last four decades in Nepal, and yet, a detailed plan of action has never been formulated. Each year the programme runs without a specific objective or a goal' (NPC, 2017: 24). This suggests that Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) and Evidence-Based Policy-Making has never been implemented within the vocational training arena of Nepal.

This makes at least two research gaps apparent. First, is an overarching evaluation of all vocational training programmes in Nepal – its economic impacts and potential in lifting women out of unemployment and poverty, and second, is a closer assessment and an in-depth analysis of ways in which these training programmes interact with women in the labour market – their experiences of working in gender-segregated occupations, the outcomes of the training programmes in helping them acquire jobs and/or navigate away from their insecurities etc.

This study aims to fulfil the second research gap by making a qualitative study of the training and post-training experiences of women graduating from two so-called *women friendly* vocational training programs (sewing and beautician) offered by CTEVT. Specifically, it focuses on studying the training's contribution in acquiring jobs or establishing an enterprise, as well as the potential evidences of closure and precariousness experienced by women in the informal labour markets of Nepal.

The concrete research questions are listed below:

- *In what ways do women experience exclusion in regards to occupational choices and vocational training programmes offered by CTEVT?*
- *What forms of economic and social precariousness do women graduating from the vocational training programmes experience?*

## Chapter 2: Previous Studies

Several works of literature concerning vocational training in South Asia confirms Agrawal (2013)'s findings that vocational education and training systems in countries around South Asia have not been quite remarkable. He summaries studies from all over Asia and argues that there are mixed outcomes of VET programmes in countries: whereby Japan, Korea and Singapore have the best results; Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Sri Lanka have moderate results; and Bangladesh, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan have relatively poor results of VET systems. Despite a growing demand for skilled labour force all over Asia, several authors argue that the labour market outcomes for those who have followed the vocational path – and even more so for rural areas in South Asia – have not been satisfactory (Agrawal, 2013, Vollmann, 2013).

World Bank (2007a) writes about India – a country where more than 90% of the labour force is working in the informal sector – mentioning that while there is an increase in demand of workers with secondary education, the demand of those with vocational education is actually decreasing. As a result, it was observed that more than 60% of VT graduates in the public sector remain unemployed even after 3 years of training. Even then, the World Bank (2007a) writes, that the policymakers remain keen to further expand vocational education. Similar results can be seen in Shah et. al. (2010)'s study of Pakistan, where they conclude their paper with a list of 9 serious problems of the VET sector like outdated curriculum, lack of industrial based training, the absence of proper planning, implementing and monitoring systems etc.

Studies from Bangladesh and Afghanistan have further discussed issues of vocational education from a gender perspective. World Bank (2007b: 33), together with showing general problems within the vocational education sector in Bangladesh – like significantly dropping pass rates and lower financial returns, also shows that women find jobs more easily than men but only because women are more preferred to be employed in 'home grown' jobs like sewing in garment factories which are known to be extremely low-paid. Similarly, Savage and Brennan (2011)'s study in Afghanistan shows that an increasing number of NGOs are concentrated in skilling (particularly) women in skills that already exist (like sewing) rather than identifying areas where there are unmet demands.

“Every NGO is teaching women to sew and giving them sewing machines at the end of training. There are so many women sewing that there is no one left to sell to: women just sew for their own families now.” Savage and Brennan (2011:21)

This trend points to an over segregation of gender in the vocational education sector. Bredlöv (2018: 18) defines gender segregation as ‘processes in which masculinity and femininity are constructed and connected to specific occupations’ and argues that in the VET arena there are ‘tendencies such as gender stereotyping of vocational fields, sexist practices and discrimination, and unequal salaries’ (*ibid*, 17). She further identifies the existence of what she calls ‘vertical and horizontal gender segregation’. By vertical gender segregation, she means a hierarchical gendered order where men and women generally hold different positions (mostly men higher and women lower) when it comes to status and prestige, and by horizontal gender segregation, she refers to an unequal distribution of men and women across educational and occupational fields (*ibid.*). By this, (mostly) women feel excluded from either position of higher power within the same occupation or from the entire occupation altogether.

Estévez-Abe (2011) argues that vocational education is far more gender segregating than general education. Likewise, the exclusion experienced by women from male-dominated occupation within VET becomes very difficult to overcome. Buehren and Salisbury (2017)’s study of Uganda and Ethiopia concludes that women who choose to operate in a male-dominated trade (or do a crossover) typically have three times more profit than those who stick to women-dominated trades. Unfortunately, however, only those women who have existing relationships with people (mostly men) who work in male-dominated trades are more likely to make this switch. They found that although as high as 83% of women considered at least one male-dominated courses as among their top three preferences, most of them did not prioritize them over non-male dominated courses.

When it comes to gender segregation of vocational education, Nepal shares a similar story. Bhadra and Shah (2007), for example, write that training programs received by women have been immensely gender-stereotypical – providing women with limited market opportunities and remunerative value. This, they claim, has led to a ‘feminization of the informal sector’ (p. 45) and that women, even after being vocationally trained, are unable to get out of the poverty trap specifically owing to the ‘extremely micro-sized investment-enterprise’ they are involved in (*ibid*, 49). Although women graduating from the training programmes experience a slightly raised income, they are still unable to get out of the poverty trap – so much so, that most women ‘do not have [access to] adequate food and clothing for their families’ (Bhadra et al., 2003: 51). They calculate the total per capita income of women after receiving different kinds of training to range from NRs. 524 (USD 4.53) to NRs. 1,550 (USD 13.40) and argue that it is

unreasonable to assume '*women's economic empowerment*' with this '*meagre*' amount of saving (*ibid*, 7).

Coupled with the evident economic limitations, there exist other underlying injustices that women graduating vocational training programmes go through. A majority of women who are working in their own micro-enterprises are doing so in parallel with performing their traditional gendered roles such as household chores, unpaid family labour, assisting the male members of their family in their enterprises and also subsistence agriculture (Bhadra & Shah, 2007). Women have to perform not only their socially dictated gender roles but also invest whatever little time they have remaining in income-generating activities like sewing, knitting, candle making etc. resulting in an increased workload continuously deteriorating their health conditions (Bhadra et al., 2003).

The overarching research conducted by Chakravarty et al. (2019) perhaps explains the background of vocational training for women in Nepal the best. They present in their evaluation that despite efforts from the EF to encourage women into non-traditionally female trades, most training programmes ended up being heavily gender segregated anyway – owing to continued traditional and philosophical barriers limiting their mobility, employment and occupational choices. As a result, the impacts of their EF training programmes – although considered successful – engaged women only in 'non-farm self-employment activities carried out inside [but not outside] the house' (Chakravarty, 2019: 92).

These are clear examples of societal norms acting as barriers for women in making independent career choices, integrating into the labour market, developing skills for higher-income earning professions, and, at times, even coming out of their households for working. In addition to such restrictive social norms, there are two factors – level of education and access to investment – that act as similar barriers limiting women from having equal access to economic opportunities.

CTEVT dictates that only those who have a certain level of educational attainment (different for different courses) are eligible to enrol in higher-income earning diploma or TSLC courses – which means that anyone without a formal educational degree can only join the relatively low income earning short term vocational training courses (Bhadra & Shah, 2007). To put this into context, this minimum educational requirement completely excludes more than 40% of women in Nepal from attaining higher-income earning skill training – as Nepal has a literacy rate of only 59.7% for women aged 15 and above (World Bank, 2018).

This lack of education does not just form a barrier in learning better skills but also leads to added dependence of women over men. Bhadra et al. (2003) write that illiteracy coupled with lesser training and lack of skills in accounting and management makes women entrepreneurs unable to independently run their micro-enterprises and ultimately compels them to seek help from the male members of their family. As a result, although it is found that women who have received training – as opposed to those who have not – have comparatively more access and control over resources like labour, time, land, livestock and income, they still have much ‘less[er] control than their male counterparts’ (*ibid*, 47).

Another barrier for women to perform well in the labour market is their limited access to finances. The latest census of Nepal in 2011 reports that only 19.7% of women had ownership of a house or land or both (NPC, 2020), meaning that getting loans for investment from formal financial institutions (like banks) by keeping their property as collateral is not a realistic aim for most Nepali women. Accordingly, Bhadra and Shah (2007) cite the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) of Nepal in noting that only 10.1% of the total household loans of the poorest quintile came from banks and other formal sources proving that women’s access to credit is still largely marginal (Acharya, 2003).

To overcome the barrier of women’s access to finances, there have been provisions of providing collateral-free loans to the graduates of training programmes set up by the government. Even then, however, Bhadra et al. (2003) write that these loans are mere micro-credits which, although it gives some disposable income to women, is in no way adequate to set women into the path of economic growth or even out of the poverty trap. As a response, women are often compelled to either resort to loaning from informal sectors or making private/collective initiatives. A phenomenon of collaboration is particularly noted in Nepal whereby women organize themselves into groups, set up a mutual savings fund and use the collected amount to fund each other’s initiatives (NPC, 2016). This collective effort from women has been noted to help women and their families to overcome – to a certain degree – their financial hardships and contribute to a relatively easier livelihood (*ibid.*).

In light of these experiences of exclusion, insecurity and uncertainty faced uniquely by women in Nepal, this research proceeds with a theoretical background of closure theory, precariousness and postcolonial theory, towards which we turn our discussion in the next chapter.

## Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

This research benefits from three different theoretical/conceptual perspectives. Firstly, as previous literature, especially from South Asian countries, points out different forms of barriers for women in entering as well as progressing in the labour market, a closure theory perspective is employed. This theory will help to analyze the different forms of exclusion experienced by women – particularly working in the informal labour market of Nepal. Secondly, as this research is an attempt to identify and understand the economic and social insecurities of women, it benefits to employ the concept of precariousness. Finally, as both: closure theory and the concept of precariousness were originally developed in the west to describe western societies, this research employs a postcolonial feminist theory to properly contextualize their usage in Nepal, an underdeveloped country of the global south, and in understanding women's conditions within its current state/labour market conditions.

### 3.1 Closure Theory

Lamichhane (2014)'s list<sup>5</sup> of five factors that act as hindrances for women to partake in vocational training programmes is theoretically relatable to exclusionary strategies discussed widely in the closure theory literature. The original concept of closure theory – although it has been developed significantly over the decades by scholars like Parkin, Collins and Murphy – can be traced back to the works of Max Weber (Macdonald, 1985) as he uses the term 'closure' to explain the phenomenon of 'subordination whereby one group monopolizes advantages by closing off opportunities to another group of outsiders beneath it that it defines as inferior and ineligible' (Murphy, 1986: 23). This subordination is experienced not only via market monopolization by the property class but also in other forms such as 'monopolization of power and opportunities by racial, ethnic, linguistic, religious, sexual and other status groups' (Murphy, 1984: 548). This subordination and monopolization of power and opportunities is used to enhance or defend one group's share of rewards or resources (*ibid.*).

Parkin later introduced the two reciprocal modes of closure – exclusion and usurpation – whereby exclusionary closure signifies one group exercising power in a downward direction – closing off opportunities of other groups beneath it through a process of subordination, while

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<sup>5</sup> Lamichhane (2014) lists five major causes hindering the access of women in TVET programs which are: being barred from higher education, higher responsibility towards household work, high male dominance, low access to information, and low access to financing.

usurpatory closure signifies exercising power in an upward direction by the excluded groups in order to attain some advantages enjoyed by the higher groups (Murphy, 1983). Regarding the basis of such exclusions, Murphy (1984) writes that the closure theory enlarges the concept of exploitation from its restricted Marxist meaning to include all exclusionary practices based on property ownership, school credentials, race, sex, religion, language etc. Other scholars like Witz (1990), however, argue that even the concept of closure – in its original sense – fail to sufficiently capture the depth of gender dimensions when applied to professionalization strategies.

Building on the arguments like those of Macdonald (1985), who characterize professionalization as a strategy of exclusionary closure and registration as a means of occupational closure, Witz (1990) argues that the patriarchal society is full of tactical means by which male power is institutionalised and organized. In such societies, she writes, there exist distinct forms of closure where there are resources of (male) power – access to which are denied to women, leaving them unable to use those powers (*ibid.*). Hence, to address these issues specific to women, she argues the need for a ‘more finely tuned model of the variety of closure strategies ... which captures their specifically gendered dimensions’ (*ibid.*, 676). As a result, she proposes a distinction between two forms of occupational strategies namely gendered strategies of exclusionary closure and gendered strategies of inclusionary usurpation.

Gendered strategies of exclusionary closure signify dominant men restricting the access of their privileged rewards and opportunities from women – regarding them as a class of the ineligible (Witz, 1990). She argues that this strategy employs ‘gendered collectivist criteria of exclusion *vis-à-vis* women and gendered individualist criteria of inclusion *vis-à-vis* men’ (*ibid.*, 680). Alternatively, a gendered strategy of inclusionary usurpation signifies a phenomenon whereby women seek to challenge the male monopoly in certain occupational positions from which they are generally excluded merely because they are women. For this, she justifies that it is a usurpation because it is a countervailing strategy in conflict with exclusion, and it is inclusionary because it ‘seeks to replace gendered collectivist criteria of exclusion with non-gendered criteria of inclusion’ (*ibid.*, 680). The gendered strategy of exclusionary closure is clearly evident in the Nepali labour market based on previous literature like those of Chakravarty et al. (2019), where they write about the traditional and philosophical barriers (exclusionary closures) which limit women’s mobility, employment and occupational choices to only in-house employment activities.

The gendered interpretation of closure theory also incorporates what Wits (1990: 682) calls a ‘gendered strategy of demarcationary closure’. By this, she refers to inter-occupational rather than intra-occupational control – creating boundaries between gendered occupations in a division of labour. This, she claims, is not mere exclusion but rather an ‘encirclement of women within a related but distinct sphere of competence in an occupational division of labour and, in addition, their possible subordination to male-dominated occupations’ (*ibid*, 682). The relevance of this interpretation once again circles back to the immense gendered stereotyping of occupation present in contemporary Nepali society (Bhadra and Shah, 2007), whereby women are strategically limited to low income earning trades (as compared to high income earning trades for men) in the name of these trades being ‘women friendly’ and ‘most preferred by women’ (Lamichhane, 2014, 12).

Another aspect of closure theory much relatable to the conditions identified in the Nepalese vocational training arena is the rise of credentialism and its role in disproportionately excluding women from attaining training programmes yielding a higher income. Collins discusses this phenomenon in-depth and argues that those who do not hold specific credentials are considered inferior outsiders and hence deemed ineligible for specific opportunities (Murphy, 1983), even when much of those academic credentials have an ‘unproven relationship to the necessary job skills’ (Murphy, 1984). A direct translation of this concept is seen in the recruitment criteria of CTEVT, whereby eligibility to high income earning TSLC or Diploma programmes requires candidates to have acquired a certain level of an academic degree. This policy – provided that women in Nepal are significantly less educated than men – disproportionately victimizes women.

A final concept that is central to closure theory is Parkin’s concept of dual closure. Expanding on the idea of exclusion, Parkin highlights practices of groups, especially those at intermediate positions in the stratification system, as they react to their exclusion by further excluding other even lower groups by mobilizing power in a downward direction (Murphy 1983; Murphy 1984). As a result, they exclude other groups that they consider ineligible from opportunities available for them, while simultaneously, being excluded by groups above them. Wits (1990) dives deeper into dual closure from a gender perspective by illustrating how dual closure is practised in already gender-stereotyped professions. She draws examples from nursing and midwifery and explains that while professionals in these occupations are themselves closed from higher opportunities, they embrace other exclusionary tactics like those of registration and credentialism thereby regulating newer entries into such professions.

In these regards, closure theory is an appropriate theoretical perspective for this research as it expands its focus from one particular means of monopolization or exclusion to explain the idea of exclusion in and of itself (Murphy, 1986). The gender perspective discussed earlier, I believe, adds a necessary depth to facilitate a better understanding of how gender-based closures are unique and thus necessitates special attention. Gender stereotyped vocational training programmes in the Nepali labour market suffers from several exclusionary rules and thus a proper understanding of this phenomenon is possible only by a holistic overview – which closure theory provides.

### **3.2 Precariousness**

Precariousness, a concept which is being increasingly used in the labour market literature, defines a phenomenon observed in the modern labour markets as an effect of neoliberalism – whereby an individual (a precariat) is exposed to ‘chronic uncertainty’ (Standing, 2015: 6) leading to a life full of ‘unknown unknowns’ that are uninsurable (Standing, 2011a: 2). The precariats – no matter in which form uncertainties are manifested upon them – share common conditions whereby their labour is instrumental for them to survive, opportunistic – meaning that they do not have the option to choose how they make money, and precarious – meaning that they cannot be certain to rely on a single job at any point of time (Standing, 2011b). Such conditions occur as a result of the absence of one or more of the following seven forms of labour-related securities:

1. *Labour Market Security*: Adequate income-earning opportunities for all.
2. *Employment Security*: Protection against dismissal, regulations on hiring and firing etc.
3. *Job Security*: Ability to retain a niche in employment, barriers to skill dilution, and opportunities for ‘upward’ mobility.
4. *Work Security*: Accidents/ illness protection at work, safety and health regulations, limits on working time etc.
5. *Skill Reproduction Security*: Opportunity to gain skills, through apprenticeships, employment training and so on, as well as the opportunity to make use of competencies.
6. *Income security*: Assurance of an adequate stable income, comprehensive social security, progressive taxation to reduce inequality and to supplement low incomes.
7. *Representation security*: A collective voice in the labour market, independent trade unions, a right to strike etc. (Standing, 2011b: 10)

Although these preconditions of precariousness are labour related conditions, its consequences extend well beyond work and the workplace and affect many non-work domains like individual health and well-being (like physical and mental problems, stress etc.), planning for the future

(like being able to plan for studies, personal development, recreation etc.), family formation (being able to decide on marriage, having children etc.) and also the nature of social life in general (like community engagement, social cohesion, presence etc.) (Kalleberg & Vallas, 2017). As a result, a precariat experiences what Standing (2011b) calls the four As: anger, anomie, anxiety and alienation.

Anger develops from the constant accumulation of frustration of working tirelessly on multiple low-paying jobs and still being unable to break out of the poverty trap. Such frustration proliferates further when one is surrounded by seemingly material successes and celebrity culture around them while they themselves are stuck in a lifetime of flexible jobs together with insecurities that follow with them (*ibid.*). Second, anomie comes as a result of being constantly associated not with success but rather with defeat and being tagged by society and politicians as ‘lazy, directionless, underserving, socially irresponsible’ or something even worse (*ibid.*, 19). The third is anxiety. A precariat is anxious not only because of the uncertainty and the inability to plan for their life and future but also because their entire survival is dependent on external factors and luck. One single mistake or one piece of bad luck could not just deprive them of all future incomes and thus well-being but in fact, strip them completely of what little they already possess. And finally comes alienation which suggests the absence of a purpose. A precariat does what they are being told to do by others – often without knowing what they are working for or without being satisfied in their jobs. They are told that they should feel positive and happy that they have jobs, but often they cannot see why they should feel as such (*ibid.*, 20).

Much of the feelings of 4As in precariats arise as a result of an apparent loss of control: the control over space and over time. Standing (2011b, 118) introduces the phenomenon of ‘the tertiary workspace’ by which he explains the blurring of the line previously drawn between home and office. Precariats are increasingly using one space for the other purpose (eating, sleeping or listening to music in the office and working from home, restaurants or car). This phenomenon of thinning of the workplace and home duality becomes relatable as Chakravarty et al. (2019) argue that VT programmes for women are especially optimal in areas where women can work from home and do not have to step out of their houses for labour.

Chakravarty et al. (2019) further argue that home-based VT programmes have been successful for women only because women can carefully fit their revenue-generating activities within their already busy schedule filled with household chores and other traditional gender roles. This demonstrates, perfectly, the phenomena of ‘tertiary time’ (Standing, 2011b: 119), which

in the developed world is experienced as blurring between personal time and working time. Precariats are losing the sense of and control over time as they do not have fixed working hours, might be forced to take power naps in the office (to be able to work longer), or work additionally from home whenever summoned. Even at times while they are not working for revenue generation, a precariat is forced to constantly engage themselves in formal skill development or employability skills development. These two concepts – while seemingly similar – mean two different things.

With formal skill development activities, Standing (2011a: 3) means a bag of ‘tricks’ a precariat needs to learn constantly – which sometimes become outdated even before they get to use it. They learn these multiple skills only so that they can remain active and relevant for new kinds of jobs in the labour market and do not miss out on important updates. The crisis involved in skill training, however, is such that the more skill a precariat learns the more they feel unskilled and thus in need of new skills (*ibid*, 124). There is always another training, a specific skill, a seminar or workshop they need to attend so as to remain better and thus more qualified than the other precariat. Of course, all of these skills come at a price, meaning that in due time the cost of acquiring skills becomes far more than the actual or even potential income that can be expected out of those skills. As such a precariat has a ‘lower expected return to investment in any specific sphere of training’ (*ibid*, 121).

Employability skills, in contrast to actual skills, focus on personal independence and self-sufficiency. Examples of such skills are demonstrated by Van Oort (2015; 74) in her studies of two job-search non-profits, where she finds that one of them helped their job-seeking clients to actively recraft their personal and professional selves through ‘personal branding and social networking’ and training them to be ‘self-entrepreneurs’, while the other controlled client behaviour relying on programme requirements and shuffled them into low-wage work. This shows how acquiring jobs and remaining employed is actively the responsibility of the precariat and their behaviour – and their tendency to smile, network and make friends etc. matters significantly. Standing (2011b: 121) labels these skills as ‘tertiary skills’ and refers to ‘body language’ and ‘emotional labour’ which he believes is currently considered to be just as important as ‘formal skills learnt through years of schooling, formal qualifications or apprenticeship schemes’. A successful precariat is a positive person who smiles frequently and greets their boss and clients with just as much importance as their actual formal skills.

The constant need to acquire new skills displays how the locus of responsibility of acquiring and maintaining jobs and the risks associated with it are transferred to individuals – as employees – instead of enterprises as employers or even the government (Kalleberg & Vallas, 2017). Coupled with this added responsibility, is the lack of community support in times of need – like state benefits, enterprise facilities or even private support to supplement direct monetary earnings – which curtails any means for a precariat to deal with their vulnerability. As a result, the precariats become among the groups who constantly need support from the state, but ironically, also among the ones who gain access to ‘neither social insurance nor means-tested social assistance’ (Standing, 2011a: 2).

These conditions for a precariat, as Kalleberg & Vallas (2017: 8) argue, are a result of neoliberalism which ‘pressures nation-states to uproot their provisions for income supports, to weaken labour regulations and minimum wage standards, and to foster decentralized forms of collective bargaining, all of which leave workers more dependent on employers’. Even if there were labour laws protecting employee’s rights as citizens, Standing (2011b) argues that precariats are very likely to be devoid of legal knowledge or even the means or resources to seek professional advice, which he argues, curtail one or more forms of citizen’s rights leading precariats into becoming ‘denizens’ (*ibid*, 14).

Denizens, as he describes, are the ones who fall behind in one or more range of rights to which people are entitled, like ‘civil [rights] (equality before the law and right to protection against crime and physical harm), cultural [rights] (equal access to the enjoyment of culture and entitlement to participate in the cultural life of the community), social [rights] (equal access to forms of social protection, including pensions and health care), economic [rights] (equal entitlement to undertake income-earning activity) and political [rights] (equal right to vote, stand for elections and participate in the political life of the community)’ (*ibid*, 14). In this light, the notion of freedom promoted by the current labour market conditions is only implied in a neoliberal sense – that is free to compete, free to consume and free to labour – but in reality, is scarcely liberating (*ibid*).

Diving into how precariousness affects women differently than men, C. Young (2010, 89) argues that women are more likely to be in low-quality job settings than men, characterized by ‘less financial rewards, fewer benefits, union protection, and part-time work status’. She argues for two theories why this might be the case: first, the human capital theory explaining how women have lower human capital owing to their pre-existing family obligations acting as

hindrances for them to meet the working criteria and second, the gender stratification theory explaining that women's overrepresentation in precarious employment conditions is partly a result of discriminatory practices in the workplace.

Although C. Young (2010)'s research was based on data from the US, Standing (2011b) confirms that women even beyond Europe and North America have taken a disproportionate share of precarious jobs, being far more likely to have short-term contracts or no contracts at all. As a result, women's growing labour market involvement has coincided with the growth of the precariat (*ibid*, 60). Furthermore, he argues that with the increased notion that women must be in the labour market, more women have experienced a 'triple burden' as they are expected to 'do most of the care work for children and 'the home'', they are expected to labour in the market in order to afford 'the home', and they are expected to care for the growing number of elderly relatives' (*ibid*, 61). This triple burden could even increase to become a quadruple burden as, at times, their conditions might be so poor that they have to take not one but two jobs. This analysis of triple (or quadruple) burden coincides with the previous literature from Nepal, especially that of Bhadra and Shah (2007), who write that women are forced to perform income-generating activities like sewing, knitting, candle making etc. in parallel with (and in whatever remaining time they have from doing) their socially dictated gender roles.

The relevance of 'precariousness' as a concept in the increasingly (neo)-liberalizing world together with its potential of explaining the insecure conditions of labour – especially for women – makes it a suitable theoretical perspective for this research. Given that the theory was developed in the west – with reference to the changing labour market conditions of Europe and North America – however, necessitates that the reader is mindful of the socio-political, cultural and historical uniqueness of the Nepalese society. More on what this uniqueness and differences might look like and how a reader can be mindful is explained below.

### **3.3 Postcolonial Feminism**

This research borrows theories and concepts from the west majorly developed with the purpose of interpreting western societies. As Nepal, like all other South Asian countries, does not resemble the social, political and governance mechanisms of the west, one has to be mindful about possible misinterpretations of directly adopting these concepts without context appropriation. To facilitate this, we draw additional inspiration from a postcolonial feminist theory (Mills, 1998).

The value that this theory adds to this research, among other things, is an understanding that working with western theories and concepts to study non-western societies comes with its own sets of challenges regarding representation, subalternity and reflexivity of the researcher and the research participants (Ozkazanc-Pan, 2012). More practically, this research has to carefully reflect the diversity of experiences and conditions under which women live (*ibid.*) enabling them to speak across ‘national and cultural barriers’ and contextual differences (Mills, 1998: 109). Although Nepal was never colonized, it lies in South Asia – representing everything associated with what we call today ‘The Global South’ – and hence has not escaped the western influence of globalization and modern neoliberal policies of international institutions.

Starting with precariousness, this concept was developed in reference to the exponential growth of Non-Standard Employments (NSEs)<sup>6</sup> in the west – juxtaposed against permanent full-time standard employments that evolved following the rise of globalisation and neoliberalism across the globe (Standing, 2011b). Because South Asian countries do not share the same western history of industrialization and employment standardization, the same preconditions of precariousness cannot be assumed in these countries.

The same applies while discussing precariousness from a welfare state perspective. Authors of precariousness literature repeatedly mention how the precariats are away from welfare benefits like social insurance or means-tested social assistance. But South Asian countries, including Nepal, never really had a properly developed welfare state that took the responsibility of its citizen’s employment or unemployment benefits. Following Esping-Andersen (1990)’s typification, Nepal is not even a welfare state but rather an Informal Security Regime: characterized by an ‘uneven development, social relationship based on exclusion, exploitation and domination and a weakly developed state’ (Wood and Gough, 2006: 18). Even the recently launched Social Security Scheme of Nepal leaves the informal sector workers out of its coverage (ILO, 2018).

While *some* dimensions of precariousness are therefore unsuitable lenses for case studies in Nepal, many other dimensions remain relevant. For example, while Standing (2011b)’s concepts of tertiary workspace and tertiary time explain the blurring of personal and professional spheres in the west, the entire work being performed from home fitting them in between a full day of household chores can be observed in Nepal (Chakravarty et al., 2019).

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<sup>6</sup> NSEs: Non-Standard Employments (NSEs) can be defined as part-time/casual work, working irregular hours or on-call work, seasonal, temporary or fixed-term contracts and self-employment (Fritz, 2013).

Even at a macro-level, a large population of Nepal is employed in the informal segments of the economy with low productivity and earnings manifesting a large number of the so-called working poor (ILO, 2021). Additionally, given the lack of a welfare regime (Wood and Gough, 2006) in Nepal, its citizens – men and women alike – are also far from social insurances or means-tested assistances. Perhaps Cross (2010) mentions it's the best in reference to an economic zone in postcolonial India, where she writes that the terrible working conditions in the west labelled as precariousness is in fact 'already de facto conditions of work for a majority of [Indian] people'. One could say that same applies to Nepal as well.

From a feminist standpoint, this research must also be mindful of the existing intersectionality in shaping the precariousness of participants with 'intersecting identities' (Shields, 2008: 305). Several factors contribute to the exclusion of (specifically) women – not only because they were *born in the third world* and thus are far from better opportunities like that of the west but also because they were *born as women* and are systematically discriminated against by men in their own societies. Some areas of intersectionality which affect women – of this study in particular – are exclusions that come as a result of having a low level of education (as opposed to a high level of education), being employed in the informal sector (as opposed to the formal sector), having no or extremely limited access to fixed asset etc. Additionally, Lamichhane (2014)'s lists of five factors contributing to *closure* for Nepali women (being barred from higher education, higher responsibility towards household work, high male dominance, low access to information, and low access to financing) also evidences the women's experiences of intersectionality.

Hence, given that not all aspects of the theories and concepts used in this research can be directly translated into Nepal, we have to proceed from a social constructionist point of view (Pernecky, 2016), whereby realities about precariousness and experiences of closure will be formulated inductively based on how women themselves talk about their experiences of going through *intersubjective processes* and how the socio-political environment of Nepal assists in maintaining their conditions (*ibid*, 159). The exact process that has been followed in this research is explained in the methodology section below.

## **Chapter 4: Methodology**

This chapter is divided into three sections – study design, ethical considerations and study limitations – all of which together explain the methodology employed in this research. The study design section is further divided into four subsections: sample population, sampling strategy, data generation and data analysis which explore, in detail, the research methods employed in this research and the rationality behind their use.

### **4.1 Study Design**

Given that this research aims to display the various forms of exclusions and conditions of precariousness experienced by women, it is very important that this research carefully collects and utilizes the contextual and subjective experiences of women taking part in this research. Mason (2018) suggests that in researches where participant's experiences are crucial, it is important to ensure that the research participants hold an equal stake in co-constructing knowledge. This means that while the researcher can form subjective analysis from academic and theoretical perspectives, the participants should have enough power to properly express themselves as well as enough opportunities to clarify the researcher's misunderstandings while informing the empirical section of the research.

Thus, to facilitate an equal stake of the research participants, this research employed a multi-method qualitative research approach (Creswell, 2015) through semi-structured interviews (Mason, 2018; O'Reilly, 2009) and observations (Mason, 2018) both of which were used to generate data about lived experiences of closure and precariousness among the research participants.

#### ***4.1.1 Sample Population***

The sample population of this study includes women graduates of either beautician or tailoring training programmes offered by CTEVT. Among the graduates, only those who were already employed, self-employed or unemployed but searching for work in the same profession in which they were trained were included in the study. On the contrary, women who took the training only because they wanted to learn the skill following their passion but were working in some other professions or were not considering working as beauticians or tailors in the future were excluded from the study. The rationality behind imposing these inclusion and exclusion criteria was the belief that the experiences of women who took the training for reasons other

than professional (employment securing) purposes could misrepresent the usual experiences of professional beauticians and tailors. As such, only women who took the training with professional aspirations have been included in this research.

#### ***4.1.2 Sampling Strategy***

The most preferable method of sampling for interview participants in this research was approaching a state-funded government-run vocational training institute in Kathmandu and requesting the contact information of their previous students. For privacy and security reasons, however, obtaining this data would be impossible without proper authorization by a higher authority. Fortunately, a council member of CTEVT as well as a member of the National Planning Commission – Hon. Dr Usha Jha – was not only made aware of this research but was also consulted while drafting the design of this study. This made it relatively easier to obtain her letter of recommendation. With her recommendation and the documented proposal of this research, Mr Shankar Man Shrestha, the Vice-Principal and Mr Shiva Karanjit, the team leader of job placement unit of Balaju School of Engineering and Technology were approached. After some verifications and formal procedures, a list of the school's former students of beautician and tailoring training programmes along with their contact information was obtained.

After receiving the list, a purposive and stratified random sampling method (O'Reilly, 2009) was employed to filter appropriate candidates from the list of graduates. The purposive selection first ensured that the list was on par with the inclusion/exclusion criteria mentioned above. Only those women who had graduated from the training and also were working or looking for work in the same profession were retained. This list was then stratified into beauticians and tailors. Finally, using random sampling, 7 tailors and 12 beauticians were selected to be interviewed. This ensured that both strata had at least 6 interviewees which, according to Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006), is the minimum number of interviews required to observe most of the relevant phenomena under study. The table below provides the anonymized overview of the selected research participants including their profession, employment status, number of years of experience in the same field and their age.

<b>ID</b>	<b>Course(s) Graduated<sup>7</sup></b>	<b>Employment Status</b>	<b>Years of Experience</b>	<b>Age</b>
B1	Beautician Level 1	Self-employed	12	37
B2	Beautician Level 1 and 2	Employed	9	36
B3	Beautician Level 2	Self-employed	5	27
B4	Beautician Level 2	Employed	13	35
B5	Beautician Level 2	Self-employed	5	35
B6	Beautician Level 2	Self-employed	15	44
B7	Beautician Level 2	Self-employed	2	38
B8	Beautician Level 2	Self-employed	27	45
B9	Beautician Level 1 and 2	Self-employed	15	39
B10	Beautician Level 1 and 2	Self-employed	5	28
B11	Beautician Level 2	Employed	2	27
B12	Beautician Level 1 and 2	Self-employed	6	25
T1	Tailoring Level 1 and 2	Self-employed	18	39
T2	Tailoring Level 2	Self-employed	7	36
T3	Tailoring Level 1	Unemployed	3	37
T4	Tailoring Level 2	Unemployed	0	39
T5	Tailoring Level 2	Self-employed	15	39
T6	Tailoring Level 2	Self-employed	10	35
T7	Tailoring Level 1	Self-employed	5	32

*Table 1: Overview of the Interview Participants.*

#### **4.1.3 Data Generation**

The data used in this research were generated primarily by the researcher in the form of semi-structured interviews with 19 participants combined with observations of living/working conditions of 2 participants. Because of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic during the interview period, only 4 interviews could be conducted in person, and the remaining 15 had to be conducted over the telephone. Keeping into consideration that the participants of the research were women who potentially had precarious jobs and extremely low income, it was necessary to be mindful about how the age, sex and social position of a young male academic researcher

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<sup>7</sup> Both Beautician and Tailoring Training Programmes have two different levels: Level 1 for beginners and level 2 for advanced skills. For being included in this study, participants had to have passed at least 1 of these levels. Some participants are seen to have passed level 2 (but not 1). This is because it is possible to give a skill test and directly get enrolled for level 2 of the training.

might impact the participant's level of comfort in discussing personal and sensitive issues (Buscatto, 2018). As such, assistance was sought from a female student pursuing Bachelors in Psychology while conducting the interviews to ensure that the participants felt comfortable at all times. A non-disclosure agreement was secured from the assistant before starting with the interviews.

The interviews conducted were semi-structured (Mason, 2018; O'Reilly, 2009), meaning that only a basic outline of the interview questions was prepared as interview guides (Annex 1). This prevented the interview from being unidirectional and allowed the participants to have significant discretion in manoeuvring the interview discussions and hence have an equal role in the construction of contextual knowledge (Mason, 2018). All interviews were also conducted in the Nepali language – which is the national language of Nepal and also the language in which all participants could comfortably communicate.

Two out of four in-person interviews were conducted in the participant's natural location (one in their home and another in their workplace) as this allowed a practical reference and observation (rather than mere imagination) of the working/living conditions being described (Mason, 2018). The remaining two interviews, as perhaps the participants did not feel comfortable having researchers in their homes, were interviewed in public places (Kusenbach, 2003). Others, with whom the in-person meeting was not possible, were asked over the phone if they had some time to participate in the interview. If not, an appointment was fixed at a later time (or day). Each interview lasted between 30 and 50 minutes and began with an explanation of the purpose of the research and the participant's role as interviewees.

While conducting semi-structured interviews, a researcher has to carefully avoid having a monopoly of interpretation and the interview being a manipulative dialogue (Kvale, 2006). As such, the manner in which each answer was understood and documented were repeated back to the participants so that they get the opportunity to correct possible misinterpretations or simply comment on them. Towards the end of the semi-structured interviews, demographic data of the participants like their monthly income before/after the training, the salary of their employees, social-security benefits received from state/workplace, legality/registration of business etc. were also collected. Following Israel (2015), the interviews were terminated by first reiterating to the participants how the data will be used, and finally, gathering either a written consent – in case of an in-person interview, or a verbal consent – in case of a telephone interview (Annex 2).

The interviews were documented in two ways: first was field notes of answers taken simultaneously during the interviews, and the second was reflection notes taken after finishing each interview incorporating the details of the objective as well as the subjective aspects of the interview usually missing from the field notes (Mason, 2018). Because a majority of the interviews were conducted via the telephone, it was not possible to record and transcribe the interviews.

#### ***4.1.4 Data Analysis***

The collected data existed in the form of field notes and reflection notes derived from the interviews. As the interviews and the note takings were conducted in the Nepali language, these notes were first translated to the English language. After translation, the interviews were ready to be analysed.

For analysis, meanings were derived from seemingly similar descriptions of phenomena that kept recurring in many interviews, thereby suggesting that those experiences were mutual to most women stakeholders of this research. For example, if statements like ‘I couldn’t do/be [something], just because I was [.....]’ were recurring in several interviews, these were interpreted as experiences of closure. Similarly, if statements like ‘I cannot (socially or economically) afford to [be/do something]’ were recurring in several interviews, these were interpreted as experiences of precariousness.

All such meanings derived from interviews and field note transcripts were then indexed and accordingly categorized into various themes that were relevant to the theoretical frameworks employed in this research. Indexing and categorization also allowed for a cross-sectional thematic analysis of the collected data (Mason, 2018) which helped not only in developing a collective understanding of the phenomenon but also in making in-depth arguments from a theoretical perspective (O’Reilly, 2009).

In addition to the cross-sectional thematic analysis, the collected data were also subjected to a holistic analysis of the narratives. This allowed for an extended understanding of the phenomenon – not just within its theoretical perspectives but also as embedded in the wider historical or cultural context of gender and social policies (Mason, 2018).

## **4.2 Ethical Considerations**

This research was carried out being mindful about both: the pre-research ethical considerations (procedural ethics) as well as ‘ethics in practice’ (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004: 262). Firstly, the rise of Covid-19 cases in Nepal had itself become an emergent ethical dilemma. Under such circumstances, the wellbeing of the research participants was considered as the first priority (Israel, 2015) and thus, all pre-planned in-person interviews were shifted to be conducted over the telephone.

Secondly, it could not be readily anticipated that all participants would understand what it meant to participate in the research and give/withdraw consent. As such, these concepts were meticulously explained to all participants allowing them to make informed decisions throughout the research process (Mason, 2018). Considering that their willingness to participate and being represented might change after the actual interview, the purpose of the interview was once again reiterated and written or verbal consent was retaken in the end. Finally, the identities of all research participants have been kept confidential and non-disclosure has also been agreed upon with the interview assistant.

Seeking help for the interview process from a female student of Bachelors in psychology was itself a rationally informed ethical consideration. Women in vulnerable positions might have felt uncomfortable talking about their social and economic problems to an unknown male researcher which could have hampered the participant-researcher relationship (Buscatto, 2018). As such, getting external help during the interview and clearly explaining their roles to the participants helped not only in making them feel comfortable and genuinely express themselves but also facilitated in forming smooth participant-researcher relationships.

Finally, Israel (2015) suggests that the purpose of the research is not only to avoid any harms to the participants but also to do as much good as possible for them. Accordingly, after a preliminary analysis of the collected data, the conditions and concerns of vocationally trained women were presented in a webinar among civil society experts and senior members of the National Planning Commission (NPC).

## **4.3 Study Limitations**

This study was met with a few challenges. The first one, no doubt, was the Covid-19 pandemic which prevented the conduction of in-person interviews. The added value of in-person interviews in this research would have been immense – as observations of the home or work

environment of participants would have generated a richer understanding of their living/working conditions. Although the Nepal government had just lifted its 5 months long nationwide lockdown during the data collection period, it was still deemed unsafe to conduct in-person interviews as doing so would involve meeting new participants regularly which would ultimately increase the risk of contamination within participants and their family members.

The second challenge, which came as a result of the first challenge, was the inability to record the interviews for future transcription and better analysis. Recording the interviews would have allowed the possibility of word-by-word transcription of interviews – catching every statement as they were spoken. This would have further negated any chances of missing the themes covered during interview discussions. However, because of technical challenges as well as difficulty in gaining consent in recording telephone conversations, it became impractical to record the interviews.

The third challenge was the unavailability of previous holistic researches – especially impact evaluations concerning vocational training programmes – against which the collected data could be triangulated. The availability of recent studies which look at vocational training from a gender perspective would have allowed for a comparison of the two data sets and further building of the meta-analysis. The absence of such previous studies, however, compelled the research to rely on extremely old and/or very specific researches conducted by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) or other funding agencies.

Finally, a challenge on the academic part of the research was the necessity to rely solely on western concepts and theories to analyse the Nepali society. The absence of local concepts and theories that could be implemented in the Nepalese (or even South Asian for that matter) labour market meant that the research had to put on a postcolonial feminist lens and borrow ideas from western academia.

## Chapter 5: Empirical Findings

This chapter presents the empirical findings of the data collected by this research in the form of qualitative interviews and observations.

### 5.1 Gender segregation of occupation and women's experiences

All participants of this research were working as or were trying to work as professional beauticians or tailors. Most of them were found to have been encouraged by their friends or family to join this profession and also take the CTEVT training. It was found, however, that this training by CTEVT was not the first-ever training they had taken to enter into this profession. Surprisingly, all women claimed that even before attaining courses at CTEVT, they had already taken private classes with other professional beauticians or tailors, often paying a hefty price. These private classes would be offered by former graduates of CTEVT, and the courses would be structured either formally – as professional training, or informally – by allowing them to work as a helper in the beginning and gradually teaching them the necessary skills.

Why then, do women feel the need to take the CTEVT training on top of the courses that they already took? All participants gave one of two reasons. Either they wanted to start their own enterprise (a small shop) and believed that being trained by CTEVT validated their credentials in the market, or they just wanted to get a certificate of graduation from CTEVT – which, according to the participants, was more valued in the job market.

An interesting observation about attaining the CTEVT certificate was that although all participants valued the certificate they had gained from CTEVT, some of them expressed reservations about the fact that the certificate, in and of itself, carried so much importance.

'I had already worked in this profession for more than 25 years and had lots of experiences. Yet, many newcomers boasted about their [CTEVT graduation] certificates. I felt terrible and undervalued as if my skills and experiences didn't matter. Skills are skills, aren't they?

Anyways, this is why I felt compelled to take the training myself and get the certificate.' – B8

This observation got even more fleshed out among beauticians. Between the two levels of beautician training – Level 1 (basic) and Level 2 (advanced), not everyone had graduated Level 2. However, all the participants, including the ones who had graduated Level 2, expressed that the Level 2 examinations were particularly challenging for them (many had taken the

examinations twice) and claimed that there is an unhealthy competition between the teachers and the students.

‘They (examiners of CTEVT) won’t let you graduate Level 2 that easily. There are only two levels in beauticians (Level 1 and Level 2), and if the students pass the second level, the students will come to be at the same level as trainers themselves. This is why, I personally think they decide on a specific number of students to pass even before the examination and perhaps when that number is met, they fail everyone else.’ – B9

‘I think the teachers are very insecure about their qualifications and don’t want to give many beauticians the Level 2 certificate. Regardless, of whether they are experienced teachers or fresh graduates, Level 2 is valued similarly in the market and that is why teachers don’t allow their students to graduate so easily. I think that is the reason why only limited students graduate Level 2.’ – B7

Although these remarks followed the participant’s personal beliefs and were not based on actual pieces of evidence, it was surprising to see this comment being repeated so often during separately conducted interviews.

Regarding the perception of women towards the actual training process, however, most women found the training to be quite useful and claimed that it had positively contributed to their profession. They claimed that the courses were properly designed and were taught by skilled and qualified teachers. Another value, that most participants considered to have gained from their time in the training, was the network of beauticians or tailors in their class with whom they were able to establish connections. They claimed to have remained in communication with their classmates and supported or learnt from each other even after the training had ended.

‘For me, personally, the best thing was meeting so many other tailors like me in the training. I mean, the training was a one-time thing and it was over very quickly, but friends – I have maintained a few of them for so long.’ – T7

‘Knowing other tailors has also helped me professionally. If there is a new design out in the market or someone wants a specific cut [of clothing design], I can ask around how to do it and someone can surely teach me.’ – T6

As such, most participants positively evaluated their experiences as students of the vocational training programmes: both in terms of the actual training as well as in terms of developing personal/professional relationships. Between teachers and students, however, some participants – especially beauticians – hinted at the potential existence of unhealthy competitions and experiences of closure. Although everyone had graduated at least one vocational training course of CTEVT, some expressed their dissatisfaction as to how much

importance the certificate carried in the labour market. This, as they claimed, made everyone in the profession feel compelled to take the training and obtain a certificate, even though they were already skilled through private training elsewhere.

## **5.2 Economic precariousness of the participants and its consequences**

It was found that all except two women were either employed or self-employed after they had graduated from the training. Some women continued with their jobs they had before with a higher salary, some got a job in the same place they had taken private courses before, while most had established their own enterprise (small shops) after, or in some cases, even before they joined the CTEVT training. Most women claimed that getting a job or running an enterprise became relatively easier after completing the training which suggests that the training programme was effective in placing women into economic activities.

The level of income women attained from these employments or their own shops, however, painted a different picture. Almost half of the women that were interviewed had a monthly income of less than NRs. 15,000 (USD 129). Among them, several had earnings even below NRs. 10,000 (USD 86). To put this into perspective, the monthly national minimum wage of Nepal is set at Nepalese Rupees 13,450 (Poudel, 2019) (approx. USD 116), which means that most women participants of this research had earnings less than what has been prescribed as the national minimum wage of Nepal – an income which is already set at a very low level. Only a few self-employed graduates claimed to have incomes higher than NRs. 15,000 (USD 129) but that too, as they claimed, differed from month to month.

It is important to note here that these income levels are of women who had graduated from the CTEVT courses and thus have had their skills verified. The income of other women – those who were not the participants of this research but were working as staffs or helpers in the shops established by the research participants – was much worse. Most women who had established their own enterprises said that they had anywhere between 1 to 3 staffs – most of whom were offered monthly salaries less than NRs. 10,000 (USD 86). Only a few participants shared that they gave some of their staffs up to NRs. 15,000 (USD 129) which is still only around the lowly set national minimum wage.

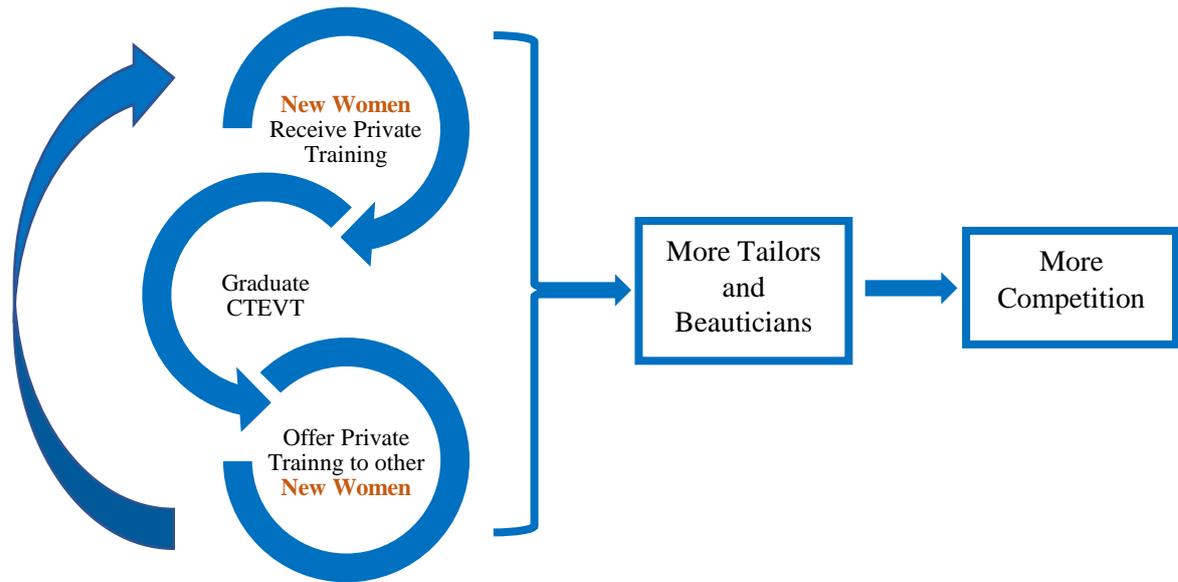
This low level of income from practising their profession is often found to lead women into looking for additional opportunities of earning money – the most notable of which is training other women in the same profession as theirs.

‘I am always giving training to 2 or 3 women at my shop. Training others is very normal within this profession. Actually, it is impossible to survive in the market without giving training – the income from the shop alone would never be sufficient.’ – B6

‘Training other women not only gives me some additional income but also gives other women some skills so that they can do something for themselves and earn some money. I feel very proud that I have trained so many women over the years’ – T5

It was found that training others, in fact, is an even higher source of income for women than just working in their shops – generating revenue of anywhere between NRs. 30,000 (USD 258) to NRs. 45,000 (USD 387) per student for a 3 – 5 months private course. This means that several shops established by CTEVT graduates also functions as a learning centre where other women could come and learn the skills privately – much like how the graduates themselves had started their journey into being beauticians or tailors. This made apparent a vicious cycle whereby because of low-income levels, beauticians and tailors are obligated to draw in more women into joining these professions who would then go on to take the CTEVT training to certify themselves, and later have their own private students.

The direct impact of this phenomena is evident in the market in the form of extremely high competition: both among professionals and among their enterprises. Participants claimed that because being trained in these skills were relatively easy and took only 3 – 6 months, the barrier to entry in their profession is very low. As a result, the number of beauticians and tailors in Kathmandu are rising exponentially. Furthermore, it was found that it takes around NRs. 1,50,000 (USD 1290) to NRs. 2,00,000 (USD 1720) to open a new shop (different participants mentioned different amounts but most of them fell within this range), which means that most women prefer to somehow manage the funds and set up their own shops rather than working



*Fig. 1: Showing the vicious cycle by which more and more women are encouraged to join gender stereotyped occupation which ultimately increases market competition*

for someone else because doing so provides them with higher income, more agency and also the possibility to train other women.

The prevalence of high competition in the market is seen to yield further consequences. Firstly, the shops that are established are unable to grow significantly. Most of the shops of the participants had only 1 – 3 staffs working in them. Participants claimed that as staffs felt confident in their skills, they left their employers/trainers to open their own shops. This phenomenon leads to a single locality having 2 – 3 shops providing the same services and thus preventing any of these shops from growing bigger or generating substantial revenue.

‘If you look there (pointing outside) you will see another beauty parlour. It is a new one. It didn’t exist there before, but now it does. So now, we have to compete for the same customer because we both provide the same services.’ – T2

Secondly, many women claimed that because the competition had dramatically increased they were regularly forced to lower the prices of their services.

‘The competition is so high that if I do not offer cheap services, no one will visit my parlour. Nowadays, I only charge NRs. 20 (USD 0.17) for threading. It (threading) looks easy but it is a tough manual job for only 20 rupees. I have been doing it so much for the last 5 years that I have started to develop severe back pains.’ – B3

The job is manual and very time consuming (for example threading, which is the easiest and the least time consuming of all services, can only be performed on a maximum of 3-4

individuals in an hour). This means that for an increased income, women are often forced to work several hours a day – as most of their income depends mostly on how many clients they serve each day.

Hence, it was observed that although graduating from the CTEVT vocational training programmes put women into jobs or encourage them to start their own enterprises, their job conditions and income levels are extremely precarious (Standing, 2011b) – in many cases offering incomes below the national minimum wage. As a result, women are often obligated to have extra jobs: notably train other women in the same skills – which, in the long run, adds to their competition in the market and furthers their vulnerability by forcing them to lower the prices of their services, work extra hours and also compromise with their health conditions.

### **5.3 Social precariousness of the participants**

Another recurring theme that was observed during interviews with the participants was their tendency to often attribute their possible successes or failures to their own performances and not external factors like the market or the state. Firstly, participants believed that, if they could give more time to their enterprises or add more hours of work to their day, it would increase their income.

‘I know I earn very little, but I also know that I could earn a lot more from this profession. The thing is that my husband is sick, and there is no one to look after him. So, I have to make sure that I work only a few hours a day and take care of him for the rest of the time. I really want to work and earn more, but I have no choices.’ – B10

This displays a combination of social precarious of women resulting in conditions of economic precariousness. Because of absent welfare provisions in general, her husband could not access proper health care, because of their economic vulnerabilities, they cannot afford to access healthcare or nurses privately, and because of her being a woman, she is bound to stay home to take care of her husband and perform her nurturing roles (Standing, 2011).

Secondly, many women also mentioned that business outcomes relied heavily on how they present themselves among customers.

‘In service-oriented professions like ours, the level of income is really subjective. You have to behave in ways that make customers want to come back to your shop. You have to present yourself nicely, talk to them in a friendly manner and make sure that they like you’ – B5

Finally, another pattern that displayed social precariousness among women was their eagerness in learning new skills – believing that doing so would increase their income. Most of them, right after being approached for an interview asked if the interview was concerning another training opportunity at CTEVT. Most of them assumed – or rather hoped – that CTEVT had released level 3 of the training and were looking for participants. Some others, by the end of the interview, were curious if CTEVT would design any training programme for Training of Trainers (ToT). Even during the interview, when the participants were asked if they felt like they could benefit from any additional training from CTEVT, almost all of them mentioned some skill or technique that they would like to learn. Beauticians suggested specific skill-oriented training like nail art or tattoo piercing while tailors wanted to learn how to make new kinds of clothes to keep up with the fashion trend. All of them believed that learning new skills would expand their horizon of work and that they could serve more customers generating additional income.

Thus, it was observed that most participants had attributed their reasons for successes or failures to internal factors concerning themselves like their skills, personality, home environment etc. On the flip side, women did not even consider the state (or their employers) to be responsible for helping them maintain their income levels or make the social security provisions available to help them overcome their vulnerabilities – indicating that they had neither hopes nor expectations from the state.

#### **5.4 Exclusion from state welfare and financial institutions**

None of the participants of this research received any forms of social security benefits from their employer or from the state. This means that the participants were devoid of all forms of welfare provisions like healthcare benefits, pension schemes, contractual maternal leaves, unemployment insurance etc. The absence of these social security provisions coupled with low income from work significantly added to their vulnerabilities. Furthermore, the fact that most women who worked as employees had salaries less than the national minimum wage already suggested that they were not even legally registered as employees at their workplace.

Additionally, it was found that some of the enterprises that were established by the research participants were not even registered in the concerned government offices. This sheds light on newer forms of vulnerabilities that are not readily apparent at a single glance. Firstly, the fact that their enterprises were unregistered meant that they were not legally protected by the state – even against physical harms meaning that they would not have any legal means to press

charges or even claim for insurances even if someone were to vandalize their shops or steal from them. There was no mechanism for these women to feel safe and insured while working within their workplace.

Secondly, an unregistered status also meant that they had no legal means to obtain loans from financial institutions like banks or cooperatives. Although many enterprises were now registered, 13 out of 14 women expressed that during their initial days they had established their enterprise seeking loans from either their family members or their friends. Only 1 out of 19 participants claimed to have ever taken loans from the bank to finance their enterprise. These conditions display that the women are not only excluded from access to finances but also have an increased dependency and thereby responsibilities towards friends and family.

‘I would love to have a parlour of my own in the future. But the idea of taking loans scares me a lot. I cannot go to banks for loans because I have no asset for keeping as collateral. So, I have to ask for money from my family. And doing that is very scary because just-in-case I fail to pay back, I will always be hated by my family members.’ – B4

Given enough finances for investment, many participants claimed that they could invest in resources that could expand their incomes. However, the absence of such investment opportunities is also seen to limit the growth of women’s micro-enterprises.

‘Oh, I would love to take new courses and expand the range of services in my shop. I have heard of so many new and fancy technologies that have come from Bangkok, but what to do, I can neither afford the training nor the new technologies ... I wish the state provided these courses for free and gave us these new tools.’ – B12

Hence, while considering the social security situation of the participants of this research and their enterprises, it was found that none of the participants received any forms of welfare-related benefits or social security provisions from their workplace or even the state. The enterprises of women were either unregistered – thereby having no legal protection – or even if registered, had reduced possibilities for growth owing to non-existent or at least reduced access to finances.

## **Chapter 6: Discussion**

This chapter is dedicated to an in-depth analysis of the empirical findings (presented in chapter 4) from theoretical lenses (proposed in chapter 2). Additionally, this chapter also attempts to answer the two research questions proposed in the first chapter meanwhile engaging in the larger discussion pertaining to the women's conditions and performance in the labour market of Nepal.

### **6.1 Women and their experiences of closure**

To briefly revisit closure before we start to use its concepts for analysis, Murphy (1986) defines it as monopolization of advantages by a certain group thereby subordinating, excluding or closing off opportunities to other groups beneath it. Such exclusionary practices are based on factors like property ownership, school credentials, race, sex, ethnicity, religion, language etc. some of which are seen as evident in the society under study. Furthermore, Macdonald (1985)'s professionalization as a strategy of exclusionary closure and registration as a means of occupational closure, Witz (1990)'s gendered strategies of exclusionary and demarcationary closure, as well as Parkin's concept of dual closure are all evident in the study. In the subsequent sections below, we shall observe how each of the abovementioned forms of closure prevail in the Nepalese labour market thereby attempting to answer the first question proposed by this research.

#### ***6.1.1 Gendered strategy of exclusionary and demarcationary closure***

Women begin to experience exclusionary closure even before joining the labour market or even the vocational training, to begin with. Lower educational level among women, higher responsibility towards household work, high male dominance, low access to information and low access to financing are five major causes that, as Lamichhane (2014) argues, continue to hinder women's access to TVET programs. These causes, as he explains, are unique experiences of women and are reasons why women, in particular, find themselves excluded from being able to participate in economic activities. The traditional and philosophical thinking that women are homemakers and thus should remain within the boundaries of family act as a perfect excuse for upholding such barriers acting as closure for women to even enter the labour market (Chakravarty et al., 2019).

Even if women are to find enough courage and resources to join the labour market, Bhadra and Shah (2007) demonstrate that the labour market in Nepal is extremely gender-segregated and Messerli (2012) writes that works that are done typically by females are reserved in extremely low-income/low-growth areas providing limited financial returns to women. For men, on the other hand, Messerli (2012) writes that they form a majority in eight out of ten highest income-earning trades. This alone makes evident the existence of a gender misbalance, a phenomenon which Witz (1990) theorises as demarcationary closure whereby males occupy the high-return typically-male trades – which women are normally excluded from – and women are typically encircled into a distinct sphere of low-return typically-female trades.

Quite in line with Witz (1990)'s concept of demarcationary closure, it was found that the majority of women who themselves were beauticians and tailors have husbands who are skilled at performing relatively better-paying jobs. While beauticians and tailors stayed home and/or ran their businesses domestically, their husbands (or other male members of the family) went out to work in more standard jobs. This makes evident the gender-based demarcation of jobs within the household of women that were interviewed.

The choices of profession among the participants – in being beauticians and tailors – were often found to have been influenced by their friends and family or, in some cases, by vocational training institutes, NGOs/INGOs or by an instructor.

'My cousin was a tailor and she offered me to help her in her shop. From her, I learnt the basics of tailoring. Then I went to CTEVT's training to become more skilled as well as get a certificate. [...] Now, I have my own little shop and I work whenever I am free from other (household) works. [...] It does not make me a lot of money, but enough to compliment my husband's income in buying some groceries for home and stationaries for children – being able to do so makes me happy!' – T1

'She (her employer) taught me everything I know and made me a confident beautician even before joining CTEVT. I still work with her and I enjoy doing that. [...] She has given me the responsibility of the whole shop now.' – B2

These excerpts suggest that an agreement to societal norms (of exclusion and inclusion) still remain a big determiner of women's choice of profession. Even if they could, potentially, step out of the typically female vocations and engage themselves with something that could give them higher income – doing so would introduce them to other dimensions of closure that we now turn into.

High income earning professions are typically designed as TSLC or Diploma courses, entry into which requires the attainment of some forms of formal education. This prerequisite, in theory, excludes all women and men who do not have the academic credentials. However, in practice, given that the adult literacy rate of females in Nepal is only 59.7% compared to 78.6% of males (UNESCO, 2016), women become disproportionate victims of this policy – thereby allowing more males with options to choose from within occupations that yield higher returns. This displays how the notion of free will is further curtailed for women as they are subjected to not just direct exclusion through restricting societal norms, but also indirect exclusion based on credentialism (Murphy, 1983).

In this research, however, the investigation of the formal educational background of the participants showed an interesting observation. Many among the research participants had actually graduated high school, meaning that they were eligible for high income-earning TSLC or Diploma courses. But they still opted to train for being beauticians or tailors. One possible explanation for this is that societal norms dictating that women should be restricted within the household could have acted as strong forces of closure thereby barring them from entering other courses and professions that would require them to work outside of their households. Another possibility is that the gender stereotyping of occupation within the Nepali society might have acted as a strong mode of exclusion because of which the research participants never considered doing anything else except what was readily available as well as acceptable for them. Both these possibilities are viable but neither of them has been conclusively proven in this research as this observation was made only during the data analysis phase and it was not possible to reengage the participants and ask more questions. As such, concrete reasons as to why women chose to remain in gender-stereotyped low-income earning profession even when they qualify to get skilled for high-income earning professions is yet to be found and can definitely be taken up in future researches.

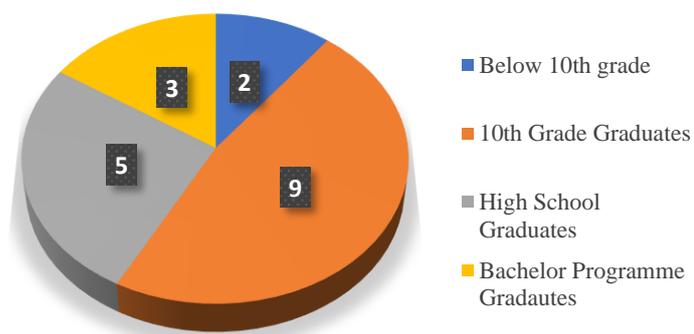


Fig. 2: Education level of the research participants

Even after having made these career choices, beauticians and tailors often continue to experience closure in other forms. As discovered in this research and discussed in the empirical section, beauticians and tailors working in the informal labour market are systematically excluded from social security provisions. Some of them work in shops that are not registered with the government, many employed women are themselves not registered as employees of a firm, most of them receive salaries or incomes less than the national minimum wage, and none of them have ever received any forms of welfare benefits from their employers or from the state. Even the social security scheme, recently released by the government of Nepal, is designed in a manner that excludes beauticians and tailors as they are often working in the informal sector (ILO, 2018).

Finally, experiences of closure also come in the form of exclusion from access to finances. Rijal (2018) writes that only 19.7% of the total women in Nepal have ownership of any forms of fixed assets (house and land 10.7% and land only 9%), which means that even after working very hard and making tremendous savings, beauticians and tailors very rarely have the possibility to fund the establishment of their own shops. They often have to rely on others – typically male members of their family – for funds to start or scale up their shops. Banks or other formal financial institutions are also not easily accessible as getting loans from them often requires some fixed asset to be kept as collateral – which, as explained above, are rarely within the reach of women.

As such, at least four different forms of closure specific to beauticians and tailors has been identified. Traditional and philosophical thinking of the Nepali society and education level of women and girls act as sources of demarcationary closure even before getting trained or joining the labour market, while exclusion from welfare and social security provisions, as well as limited access to finances, continue to act as gendered strategies of exclusionary closure after joining the labour market (Witz, 1990).

### ***6.1.2 Evidences of dual closure and usurpation***

Dual closure is a phenomenon whereby those in the intermediate position of the stratified system react to their exclusion by further excluding other even lower groups by mobilizing power in a downward direction (Murphy 1983; Murphy 1984). In this research, most beauticians claimed that the teachers made it particularly difficult for students to graduate Level 2 of the examination. They claimed that the teachers would feel insecure about their own positions if many beauticians carried the same certificate and thus the same credentials as they

did. This closing off of opportunities for students who are trying to reach the same level as the teachers can be interpreted as direct evidence of dual closure whereby teachers – who themselves occupy a subordinated position in the labour market – use their powers to further restrict the access of other candidates from acquiring the same positions as themselves.

All beauticians and tailors being highly interested in taking additional courses related to their field can be interpreted as women looking forward to climbing further up in the established ladder of stratification. Particularly, the fact that many participants were curious if CTEVT would ever come up with ‘Training of Trainers’ (ToT) – a training which would certify them to teach their skills to new students – displays the usage of usurpatory strategies that beauticians and tailors implement to remain on top of the stratification hierarchy.

The provision of certification, in and of itself, and regardless of its necessity, indicate the presence of what Macdonald (1985) calls professionalization as a strategy of exclusionary closure. There were more experienced participants who claimed that before receiving the CTEVT certificates, they felt left behind by other even less experienced professionals – simply because their skills were not verified by a certificate. Another evidence of professionalization as a strategy of exclusionary closure is the existence of different certificates for Level 1 graduates and Level 2 graduates – which, although in principle, carries different value among beauticians and tailors in the labour market, yields the same financial returns in practice. This resonates very much with the phenomena of title inflation (Rosenstein, 2009) that originated in the 1970s where the employer would not increase the employee's wages significantly, but would certainly promote them with a fancier title – making them feel more accomplished. The Level 2 of the training for beauticians and tailors functioned similarly, as it although added to their list of accomplishments and perhaps a bit on their skills, did very little to actually increase their level of income.

Additionally, the fact that many participants, even when they had graduated Level 2 and were already giving private training to new women in their shops, further demanded a ‘Training of Trainers’ (ToT) course indicates that beauticians and tailors have not only internalized the role of certificates in maintaining a hierarchy but are also motivated to exercise usurpation and attain the advantages enjoyed by the higher groups.

## **6.2 Women and their experiences of precariousness**

Precariousness, as defined earlier, is a state of constant insecurity and chronic uncertainty. In this section, we try to answer the second question posed by this research by using the evidences displayed in the previous chapter and discussing them from the theoretical perspective of precariousness as defined in chapter two. First, we discuss how the labour-related experiences of beauticians and tailors in Nepal relate to the seven forms of securities listed by Standing (2011), and then we discuss some other dimensions of precariousness that was evident in the study.

### ***6.2.1 The seven forms of (in)securities***

Standing (2011b) lists seven forms of labour-related securities that are desirable for individuals in the labour market and claims that the lack of one or more forms of these securities can result in precariousness. Here, we list all seven of these securities and discuss whether or not (and if yes – in what ways) are beauticians and tailors devoid of these forms of securities.

First is *labour market security*, which means individuals having adequate income-earning opportunities (*ibid.*). We have frequently discussed how labour-market opportunities are extremely gender-segregated in Nepal, and how most women are subjected to a limited number of career choices. Because of this exclusion based on gender-stereotyping of occupation, we can claim that beauticians and tailors have inadequate as well as rather biased opportunities in the labour market.

Second is *employment security*, which includes protection against dismissal, regulations on hiring, firing etc. (*ibid.*). The findings of this research show that most beauticians and tailors are not even registered as formal employees of their workplace and therefore lack a formal contract with terms and conditions guaranteeing employment protection. Even the workplace themselves, oftentimes, functions without registration. As such, beauticians and tailors are away from any forms of employment-related securities.

The third is *job security*, which is the ability to acquire and maintain employment opportunities (*ibid.*). Fortunately, most of the beauticians and tailors interviewed for this research were either self-employed or employed in an enterprise. Responses also often indicate that it is easy to find a job or even start their own enterprise as a beautician or a tailor. Participants claimed that the training at CTEVT had validated their credentials which helped them in finding/retaining their

jobs and/or boosted their confidence to start their own enterprises. For these reasons, we can conclude that beauticians and tailors often had some degree of job security.

Fourth is *work security*, which refers to provisions of protections against illness, physical and mental well-being, limited working hours etc. (*ibid.*). As participants of the informal labour market and also non-registered employees of their workplace, beauticians and tailors often lack any formal forms of work-related securities. Furthermore, as their level of income is directly linked to the number of hours they work, beauticians and tailors are often found working overtime (in their jobs alone or in tandem with their household responsibilities) which also could hamper their physical and mental wellbeing. Some examples include, B3, who claimed that she had started to develop back pains by working extra hours, or B10, who claimed that she had a reduced income because her husband was sick and having to take care of him meant that she could not invest enough time in her work.

Fifth is *skill reproduction security*, which means the possibility of upgrading their skills through training or apprenticeships as well as making use of these upgraded skills (*ibid.*). Among the list of securities, skill reproduction is perhaps what beauticians and tailors are most secured in. There is almost always some other skill that is yet to be learnt and there are always ways in which they can be learnt – either through organized formal training, private training or skills exchange among colleagues. Hence, skill reproduction is quite naturally secured for beauticians and tailors.

Sixth is *income security* (*ibid.*), and perhaps the one in which beauticians and tailors suffer the most. Previous literature discusses how women-dominant trades provide a ‘meagre’ amount of saving (Bhadra et al., 2003), and it coincides with the empirical findings of this research which suggest that most beauticians and tailors only make an income close to the national minimum wage which is extremely lowly set at NRs. 13,450 (approx. USD 116) per month. One example is T1 who claims that the most she can do with her income are buying groceries and some stationaries for her child.

Finally comes *representation security*, which is the ability to have a collective voice in the labour market through (say) trade unions (*ibid.*). Although beauticians and tailors do have a sense of unity and cooperation among each other, they have never been in a position to organize themselves and make demands to the government. Furthermore, given the micro-size of the

enterprises included in this research, employees uniting to balance the power of the employers is not really relevant in this case.

Hence, we can see that vocationally trained beauticians and tailors in Nepal are excluded from at least 5 (out of 7) desirable forms of labour-related securities. Fortunately, they do have job security and skill reproduction security, but, upon deeper analysis, even these securities depict other properties of precariousness – which we shall discuss in the section below.

### ***6.2.2 Other evidences of precariousness***

Starting with job security, although beauticians and tailors find it relatively easy to find a job or start their own shop, they are doing so in tandem with their extremely demanding gender roles of doing household chores. For families that cannot afford technology and modernization, household chores for women often include manual labour of cooking 3 – 4 meals and doing the dishes for the whole family every day, and cleaning the household and doing laundry at least 2 – 3 times a week. This can sometimes be followed by having to take care of the children and/or the elderly members of the family. This means that performing household chores is often a full-time responsibility on top of which they carefully fit some income-generating activities by working in their shops.

These household responsibilities were a recurring theme in almost all of the interviews and it perfectly coincides with how Standing (2011b: 61) describes the ‘triple burden’ faced by women – first being their household work, second being the responsibility of taking care of the children and the elderly and third being their income-generating activities.

‘Saturdays are busy days for me because everyone is home and I have to do more cooking and laundry and everything. So, other days are usually better for working. Usually by 11 am (on a working day), I am done with the kitchen chores and I am free until 4 pm. So I work in the shop as much as I can during these hours. At 5, the kids come home from school, so I have to be home early to make them some food.’ – T2

Standing (2011b) even notes that the income level of women from their primary job could be so low that they might be forced to take additional works thereby facing not just triple but in fact quadruple burden. Accordingly, because the income from merely practising their professions was not enough, the more experienced (12 out of 19) respondents of this research, had also engaged themselves in providing private training to other women in the same skill that they had acquired. This demonstrates how beauticians and tailors, although they have high job

security, are often found to lose control over their time by being burdened with four roles – thereby making their daily life situations extremely precarious.

This loss of control of time often expands to a loss of control over space as well. B2 who shared that she liked working with her employer and having responsibility for the shop also shared the following:

‘I work in the front (of the shop) during the day and sleep here in the back (her room/home) to take care of the shop during the night.’ – B2

The interview had taken place in the participant’s home which was a room that extended right behind the shop. This shows how beauticians and tailors could be burdened with quadruple roles, lose control over space and time and essentially be pushed to precarious working as well as living conditions.

Regarding skill reproduction security, so far, we have discussed how beauticians and tailors have plenty of resources and opportunities to learn new skills. Skill reproduction for precarious workers, however, can be less of an opportunity to enjoy and more of a necessity to endure. Participants often claimed that they had to stay on top of all the formal skills as well as employability skills if they were to perform well in the market. If beauticians and tailors are to maintain their credibility they have to pass both levels of CTEVT training, and also get other skill-specific training (often learnt through friends, funded NGO courses or from fee-paying private courses). Several participants also remarked on the necessity of having to be friendly, smiling frequently and engaging the customers properly if they want to retain them. This demand (rather than opportunity) of having to remain well equipped with formal as well as informal/employable skills also represents the precarious nature of work.

Thus, with these examples, it can be concluded that even within the forms of securities that beauticians and tailors seem to enjoy, there exist properties of precarious living/working conditions.

### **6.3 Contextualizing from a postcolonial feminist perspective**

As mentioned in the theory chapter of this research, while borrowing perspectives of closure theory and the concept of precariousness from western academia, it is important to be mindful of the socio-cultural differences of Nepal from the west. Thus, in this section, we discuss how certain dimensions of closure and/or precariousness are unique to Nepali women and how some

other dimensions can be experienced by all Nepalese in general owing to the country's social, cultural and political orientation.

First of all, it is necessary to bear in mind that Nepal is not yet a welfare state but rather an Informal Security Regime (Wood and Gough, 2006: 18), meaning that a huge proportion (72% as of 2017) of the labour market, regardless of their gender, is devoid of basic labour related securities like employment security, unemployment benefits, health insurance, pensions provisions etc. (Khadka, 2017). Among the ones receiving the benefits, a majority of them are public sectors workers who enjoy most of the benefits (*ibid.*). Even the newly formulated social security scheme targeted towards private-sector workers exclude the informal sector workers (ILO, 2018).

Secondly, given the absence of social security benefits for private-sector employees (even lesser benefits for informal sector workers), it should be understood that the notion of standard employment of the west – characterized by secured full-time employment with added benefits – does not hold true for Nepal. As is evident in the empirical findings, both: employees of shops as well as self-employed owners of the shops had similar levels of income, and also quite similar conditions of precariousness. It must be noted, however, that entrepreneurship, as opposed to employment, is rather widely glorified by the Nepali society as well as supported by the policies of Nepal. It is also seen within the research that the participants were either proud of having their own shops or had hopes of someday opening their own shops representing their belief that having their own shop provides them with a greater degree of agency and more control over their time.

Thirdly, other forms of insecurities like the absence of representation/labour union, merging of home and work-space, having to constantly develop their skills, having multiple precarious jobs etc. can be faced similarly by men and women workers of the low-income informal labour market.

Having mentioned that, however, it is important to consider some other factors that make women, in particular, more likely to face these problems than men in a disproportionate ratio. These factors include facts like women in Nepal being significantly less educated than men (UNESCO, 2016), holding much lesser ownership of property than men (Rijal, 2018), largely occupying less income-earning professions than compared to men (Messerli, 2012) etc. These

inequalities, besides being problematic in and of itself, result in a large number of women facing much more limitations than men in the labour market.

Finally, women of Nepal also experience intersectionality as they are subjected to multiple layers of oppression. They become affected not just by poor labour market conditions and absent welfare policies of Nepal but also the victims of their gender orientation in the forms of gender-segregated occupations as well as oppressing gender roles. Being preferred to either remain confined to their household full time, or work from home, or at least finish all household chores before engaging in economic activities (the latter was the case for beauticians and tailors of this study) are problems specific to women solely because of their gender orientation. Thus, the resulting triple or even quadruple burden is an experience that is unique to women, and a phenomenon that cannot be generalized to men of Nepal.

## Chapter 7: Conclusions and Recommendations

### 7.1 Summarizing discussions

This research started with the paradox that lies in the opinions about promoting gender-segregated Vocational Training Programmes like beautician and tailoring. On the one hand, experienced bureaucrats like Lamichhane (2014) argue that *women friendly* training programmes should be promoted as they bring women into economic activities and empower them, but on the other hand, professionals like Bhadra et al. (2003), Bhadra and Shah (2007), Messerli (2012) etc. argue that these training programmes further gender stereotypes and injustices towards women. Amidst this paradox, this research kicked off with an important aim to identify and discuss, based on real-life experiences of beauticians and tailors, ways in which they are excluded in the Nepali labour market, closed from opportunities, and feel precarious in their living and working conditions.

The best way to achieve this aim was through qualitative research – more specifically through in-depth interviews with actual beauticians and tailors who have graduated from such training programmes and have built their life around the profession. Accordingly, 19 qualitative interviews (with 12 beauticians and 7 tailors) were conducted and the results were analysed for meaning-making through indexation and thematic categorization based on the theoretical perspectives of closure theory (Murphy, 1984) and precariousness (Standing, 2011b). Furthermore, a postcolonial feminist perspective was also implemented to maintain contextual relevance while adapting these western theories into the Nepali context.

From a closure theory perspective (Murphy, 1984), this study reveals several unique experiences of closure – specific to Nepali women – suggesting that women’s experiences of closure are much more complex than a traditional class-based exclusion and thus necessitates discussions from a gender exclusion perspective as well (Witz, 1990). Evidently, unique experiences of closure for Nepali women begins right at the entry point to the labour market as gender-segregated vocational training programmes offer only a limited number of training opportunities and career options to women – usually the ones providing relatively lower financial returns. Rooting in the traditional and philosophical orientation of the Nepali society, this barrier acts as a ‘gendered strategy of demarcationary closure’ (Witz, 1990: 680) thereby limiting women, unlike their male counterparts, from having a wide range of high-income earning professions to choose from.

Even after making occupational choices, women often come across other exclusionary policies that, although are designed to affect men and women equally, exclude women significantly more than men – owing to their intersectionality and the socio-cultural realities of Nepal. One such example is the minimum educational requirement for entering TSLC and diploma courses (typically the ones providing higher income) which, in principle, excludes both uneducated men and uneducated women equally, but, in practice, excludes a lot more women because significantly more women in Nepal are far less educated than men. Another similar example of biased means of exclusion is a requirement of a fixed asset (lands and/or house) for getting bank loans – which, once again, is a requirement similar for both men and women, but ultimately affects women disproportionately as only 19.7% of women in Nepal have access to any fixed asset at all (Rijal, 2018). Both these examples represent what Witz (1990: 680) calls ‘gendered strategies of exclusionary closure’ as these seemingly class-based exclusionary policies exclude women significantly more than men.

This research also identifies and discusses the prevalence of dual closure. One such phenomenon is a mutual belief among several women that teachers of the training programmes make it extremely difficult for students to pass the Level 2 of the training. Allowing students to graduate Level 2 easily would bring the students and the teachers to an equivalent level in the labour market – which would then devalue the prestige and meaning carried by the possession of the Level 2 certificate. As such, several participants claimed that teachers of the training programmes strategically let only a handful of students graduate each term. This practice represents the exercising of dual closure as the teachers of these training programmes, who are themselves quite excluded in the labour market, are perceived to be using their powers to further exclude others from having the same level of benefits or opportunities as themselves.

The second evidence of dual closure, and simultaneously a means of closure based on professionalization (Macdonald, 1985), can be explained by the existence and the nature of certificates themselves. There are two levels of training programmes (Level 1 and Level 2) – and although graduating from Level 2 does not necessarily increase women’s income, they are definitely valued more by the professionals in the labour market. Furthermore, there is an ever-increasing demand for newer forms of training programmes like Level 3 or Training of Trainers indicating that beauticians and tailors feel the necessity to exercise techniques of usurpation and climb up the social hierarchy in the labour market. This higher level of prestige attached to Level 2 certificates, combined with an increasing demand for newer training programmes, suggests that having more credentials leads to higher/more-prestigious positions and in turn

excludes others who do not have the same credentials – thus displaying clear evidences of dual closure.

Regarding the experiences of economic and social precariousness, beauticians and tailors are seen to be suffering from the absence of at least 5 out of 7 forms of Standing (2011)'s labour related securities. Having limited career options represents their lack of *labour market security*, the absence of contract-bound employment with protection against dismissal, hiring and firing represents their lack of *employment security*, the absence of provisions for protection against illness represents their lack of *work security*, the absence of adequate income-earning opportunities represents their lack of *income security*, and finally, the absence of mechanisms by which they could organize themselves and make demands from the government represents their lack of *representation security*.

They do seem to have the remaining two forms of securities: *job security* meaning the ability to acquire and retain jobs, and *skill-reproduction security* meaning the possibility of learning new skills and executing them. However, a detailed investigation of even these two forms of securities display conditions of precariousness.

Within *job security*, CTEVT certified beauticians and tailors find it relatively easy to acquire/retain jobs or even open up their own new shops for business. However, while performing their jobs, they are often seen to be suffering from a 'triple burden' (Standing, 2011b: 61) – having to work their jobs, perform their gender roles of housekeeping chores, and also take care of the dependent members of their families. At times, owing to the lack of sufficient income from merely practising their professions, they even have to take students privately and teach other women their skills which adds an extra layer to their 'triple' burden – now making it 'quadruple' (Standing, 2011b: 61). All of these burdens are inevitably blurring their sense of time and space as they are often found merging their home time with working time (by working in whatever hours they have left from doing household chores and nurturing roles), and their home space with working space (by either working from home or, at times, even living in a tiny room behind their shops).

And finally, skill reproduction security, although it seems advantageous that there are multiple avenues that women can get trained in and multiple courses that they can take, they are less of an opportunity and more of a necessity for them. Taking new courses and getting new certificates gives them more credentials and is the only way to lift their positions on the hierarchy of the stratified labour market. Thus, women are bound to take newer training

programmes – not necessarily for an increased income – but rather to get a sense of satisfaction derivable from a collection of credentials.

The most notable form of vulnerability for women, however, remains to be their extremely low level of income. In their current forms of engagement, their income level surrounds the lowly set national minimum wage of NRs 13,450 (approx. USD 116) per month (Poudel, 2019) – which is merely enough to cover expenses of their groceries and stationaries for their children. As such, they almost always have to remain dependent on the male members of their families (most likely their husbands) for fulfilling their other (even) basic needs like house-rent or medical expenses. Coupled with this, is the fact that they remain completely uncovered by any forms of social security provisions (like healthcare, pension scheme etc.) – neither from their employers nor from the state – thereby adding to the extremeness of their vulnerabilities. One mistake or a single instance of bad luck (say an injury or an illness) can drive them completely out of the market and out of any possibilities of generating income.

## **7.2 Reflections and prospects for future research**

I originally began this research with the sole objective of studying the conditions of social and economic precariousness of beauticians and tailors. Very soon into my research, however, I realized that doing so was impossible without first identifying the ways in which women experience discrimination in the labour market and their potential exclusion from opportunities. An in-depth reading of literature made me confident to add to this research a theoretical framework of closure theory, doing which, I believe, has definitely added to the depth of the discussions in this research. One possible regret, as mentioned before, is the absence of South-Asian labour market theories which compels me to rely solely on western theories – although being wary of Nepal's resemblance with the uniqueness of postcolonial countries. Given enough resources and a pandemic free world, I would also aspire to do more in-person interviews for similar studies in the future, as I could tell from the few in-person interviews I have had that the depth of the discussions and the amount of knowledge generated from such interviews were evidently better than the ones generated from telephone interviews.

Finally, this research has also identified three more areas where further researches could potentially be done. First, there is a need to regularly conduct large scale quantitative researches throughout Nepal (and not just in Kathmandu) focusing on the actual economic impacts of vocational training programmes for women. This research can help in making an estimate of exactly how much do the (gender-stratified) vocational occupations contribute to women's

economic conditions and finding out best and/or alternative ways through which much higher levels of income can be achieved. Particular focus should be given to finding occupations that put the least amount of strain in women's lives in terms of their roles, time and space management. Such research can also be useful in making a cost-benefit analysis of individual training programmes and thus deciding individually upon the legitimacy of their continuation.

Second, and in parallel with economic assessments, future researches must also make qualitative assessments of how vocational training programmes affect or change women's lives, their conditions and specifically their positions within the society. Although most professionals believe that having some income increases the agency of women, this research has pointed out that working extensively, especially when they have a triple (or at times quadruple) burdens, might actually be decreasing women's agency and control over their time and space. As such, future qualitative researches can focus specifically on making a comparative analysis of whether vocational training programmes and occupations increase or decrease the agency and control of women.

Finally, as pointed out in the discussion section of this research, it is worth investigating the reasons why some women, even if they have an advanced academic degree, choose to pursue their careers in low-income gender-stereotyped professions. Having an answer to this question will definitely help us understand the social construct of Nepali society better and hopefully, plan and implement intervention measures that address the gender-based exclusion that currently confines women into gender-stereotyped occupations.

In conclusion, this research demonstrates that promoting gender-stereotyped beautician and tailoring training programmes for women excludes them from better/higher income earning opportunities, and although it puts them into economic activities, they manifest extremely precarious income as well as working/living conditions for women.

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## **Annex 1: Questions for Interview Guide**

[Note: The interviews took place in the Nepali language.]

### **Experiences before/during/after training**

- What motivated you to join the training program?
- How do you evaluate your time as a student at CTEVT?
- Describe your post-training experiences:
  - (How) Did you find a job?
  - (How) Did you start your own enterprise?
- Conversations about income, living, working and physical and mental health conditions of the participants and their family members.

### **Relationships with the state/market/policies**

- How did you finance the establishment of your enterprise (if self-employed)?
- Is your (or your employer's) enterprise registered?
- What benefits (if any) do you (or your employees) receive (or have received) from the workplace?
- What benefits (if any) do you (or your enterprise) receive (or have received) from the state?

## **Annex II: Informing Participants and Gathering Consent**

[Note: Informing participants and taking consent were done in the Nepali language.]

### **Informing participants:**

- About the background and the aim of the research.
- About the background of the researcher/research assistant.
- How were the participants selected? What are their roles in the research?
- Ensuring anonymity.
- How will the data be analysed?
- Where will the research be published?
- About the possibility to withdraw consent in the future.

### **Gathering Consent**

- Confirming the demographic data (name, age, address) of the participants.
- Confirming informed and wilful participation of the participants.
- Gathering consent for the use of data for analysis and the publication of the research.
- Establishing means for future communication.

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature (if applicable):** \_\_\_\_\_