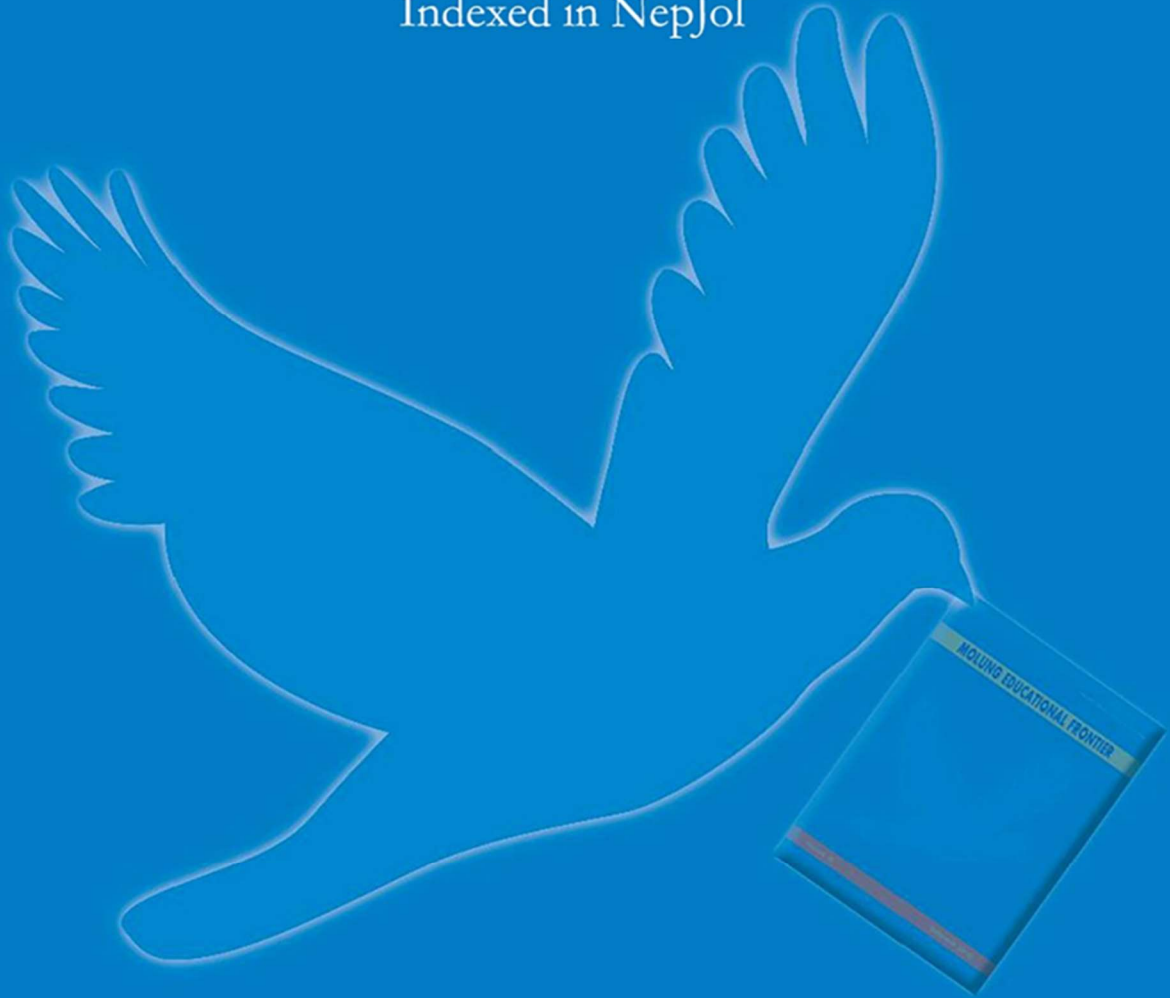


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### **Interdisciplinarity and Multiculturalism in Education**

Prof. Bhupa P. Dhamala, PhD

Editor-in-Chief

Education has increasingly become more global, multicultural, and interdisciplinary in the present century than ever before. In this context, higher education institutions worldwide have updated their education system to meet the growing needs of the people. They also need to address research-based education to enable their graduates to compete in the global market. They have introduced interdisciplinarity and multiculturalism in their curriculum and teaching. Governments of many nations have also established some government-funded research centers and allocated budgets for their operation.

However, the efforts made by the states, their governments, and higher education institutions are inadequate. Considering this situation, Molung Foundation has been legally instituted to contribute to research and publication. This institution has been conducting research activities chiefly related to education, development, and social change since the last decade. Among the various tasks it has performed, the publication of *Molung Educational Frontier* has been its regular task since 2010. This journal covers multiple studies conducted in many disciplines under different streams of education, ranging from social sciences to natural sciences.

We have incorporated twelve research articles and one book review in the present volume. These articles explore different issues from different sectors of nature and society. Out of the 12 research articles included in this volume, at least

three deal with the discipline of education, and the remaining nine have been indirectly related to scientific and social issues.

In addition to the general contribution to education, development, and social change, these articles can also contribute to formulating appropriate government policies for Nepal's overall development and the evolution of an equitable society.

Several scholars have been engaged in this endeavor. I express my sincere gratitude to the editors, guest editors, and advisors for their valuable contributions in reading, editing, and suggesting fruitful ideas for its continuous development. Likewise, all article contributors who contributed their articles in their respective disciplines are thankful for their efforts. Most importantly, I thank all the reviewers who offered their valuable comments and suggestions to improve the writer's articles. Finally, I express my sincere gratitude to Sanjeev Dahal for his valuable support in correcting the latest versions of the APA style sheet.

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### **Students in Economics Facing a Digital Divide**

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### Abstract

The digital divide in schools in developing countries is becoming increasingly evident as information communication and technology (ICT) has entered the educational system. However, access to ICT infrastructure alone does not guarantee that a person would be motivated to use it. The unequal access to digital technology is a digital divide. In Nepal, the COVID-19 pandemic caused limited access to ICT among low-income families and rural populations. This research aimed to inquire into the motivational access-based digital divide among 12 students in economics in Kathmandu Valley. The research problem of this study was: what are the ICT access levels for Class 12 economics students in Kathmandu Valley regarding motivational access? The researcher utilized a descriptive study design under quantitative methodology for the study. Closed structured questionnaires were used to collect primary data. Descriptive analysis is included in the analysis of data. It is used to calculate the percentage, frequency, mean, and standard deviation to assess the motivational access level of students through the Likert-scale data. The study's findings demonstrated a digital divide among students regarding motivational access. There is no distinct difference between the students regarding school type (private and community). The digital divide between gender, rural and urban origin, ethnicity, and parents' employment conditions is evident. This study implies that parents and concerned authorities should provide favorable environments to increase motivational access to ICT, which reduces the digital divide in terms of motivational access.

*Keywords:* motivational access, ICT, empirical study, economics students, Kathmandu Valley

### **Students in Economics Facing a Digital Divide**

The digital gap, which is described as a societal inequality between persons regarding access to ICT, frequency of use of technology, and the ability to use ICT for varied purposes, becomes more evident with the rise in ICT use (Ercikan et al., 2018; Van Deursen & Helsper, 2015). The digital gap in schools in underdeveloped nations is becoming increasingly apparent as ICT permeates the education sector (Chen, 2015; Olaore, 2014). The COVID-19 pandemic has made this situation worse. There is no guarantee that someone with ICT infrastructure would also use it or have ICT skills (Chisango et al., 2020). All types of the digital divide, i.e., motivational, material, craft, and usages, are better described and explained using a broader definition of ICT access. This refers to the entire process of using a specific technology. Here, the motivation for and attitude toward obtaining material access comes before the actual material access itself. Material access also refers to the ongoing process of gaining access to new versions of peripheral devices, subscriptions, and software and hardware, rather than a single decision to accept and buy a specific technology. Physical access cannot be obtained if people cannot use the technology. As a result, access also requires knowledge and abilities (Van Dijk & AGM, 2017).

Inequalities in the access to and usage of ICTs are now perceived, notwithstanding the lack of a firm understanding of the employment conditions and degrees of science and technology students will face in the future (Gonzales et al., 2020; Robinson et al., 2015; Robinson, 2021). Right now, this is a severe issue. Beyond the classroom walls, the importance of including digital competency in the young generation's education cannot be overstated (Ciampa, 2014; West et al., 2019). Because of this, there is a discussion about the digital divide between students who utilize ICT in one or more contexts, such as the home and the classroom. Students' motivation and interest in all facets of daily

life are impacted by the variety of knowledge and resources produced by technology and the internet, which are rare and have created little scientific understanding (Bagon & Vodopivec, 2016; Romero López et al., 2019).

According to Van Dijk (2012), four distinct stages can be used to categorize the digital access gap: motivation access, material access, skill access, and usage access. The digital gap is explained by how motivation, devices, skills, and usage interact (Jupin, 2019; Soomro et al., 2020; Van Dijk, 2012). The motivation gap is caused by a lack of willingness to use ICT tools, a requirement for adopting ICT (Ben Youssef et al., 2022; Dhawan, 2020). The digital divide among students gets wider since some do not want to learn new technology. The lack of motivation to utilize technologies is allied with a decreased willingness to use ICT resources, such as Internet connections, social media platforms, and search engines; this is correlated with several socioeconomic characteristics (Ghobadi & Ghobadi, 2013; Vicente & López, 2010; Yu et al., 2016). For instance, compared to their more active counterparts, students less willing to access or use ICT are more likely to be passive technology users.

In the Nepalese context, there are differences among people, especially those from vulnerable and marginalized groups, with access to the fundamental rights protected by Nepal's constitution (Arora, 2022; Sijapati, 2017). For example, the digital divide, the COVID-19 outbreak in communities with low incomes, residents of rural areas, and minimal access to information, communication, and technology (ICT), which perpetuates inequality among the people, is one of the recent issues (Gurung & Paudel, 2021). The digital gap is caused by various socioeconomic factors that interact with one another in Nepal (Jha & Pandey, 2016; Mathrani et al., 2022; Quibria et al., 2003). While examining the digital divide, differences based on gender are equally crucial to take into account. Since it offers opportunities in challenging circumstances, using

technology in teaching and learning is the best solution. It does, however, greatly divide students (Antonio & Tuffley, 2014).

As part of the SSDP 2016-2023 Program, Nepal has started several technological efforts, including enhancing ICT infrastructure at schools and universities, ICT-enabled teaching and learning, and integrating the education management information system (EMIS). A more significant technology push is necessary to add programs for skill development and awareness (Karki, 2019) to address persistent issues, boost institutional capacity, close the nation's digital gap, and optimize the impact of ICT in the sector. However, Nepal lacks research on the digital divide among students regarding motivational access.

### **Objective of the Study**

The objective of the study is to investigate the motivational access-based digital divide among class 12 students in economics in Kathmandu Valley.

### **Methods and Materials of the Study**

This article is based on a field investigation carried out during November and December 2022. The fieldwork has been placed for ten days. The research temporarily has used a descriptive study design. Primary data was gathered through closed structured questionnaires.

A quantitative methodology was applied to gather and analyze the data from each respondent in this study. The researcher created a questionnaire independently, then edited it by experts and polished it before distributing it to the intended responders. The survey was made to satisfy the study's goals about the motivational access-based digital divide among economics class 12 students in public and private schools. A simple random sampling procedure was used to select the respondents in this study.

Respondents were assessed using a self-developed cross-sectional survey questionnaire with four sections and 44 items. The survey used a Likert scale with five possible outcomes: five strongly agree, four agree, three neutrals, two

disagree, and one strongly disagrees. The sample for the study was randomly chosen from 125 economics students, of which 61 were girls and 64 were boys. Ages ranged from 15 -22. All respondents were from Kathmandu Valley, though their origination was also from rural areas. The sample answered the statements, basing their decisions on their perceptions.

For analysis, the Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to compile the data collected from the respondents. Descriptive research is included in the study. The researchers used descriptive analysis to examine the frequency and percentage of the general population in the demographic background. Additionally, it is used to calculate the percentage, frequency, mean, and standard deviation to assess the motivational access level of students.

### **Results and Discussion of the Study**

The researcher collected the data from 125 respondents studying economics in class 12 in Kathmandu Valley. The collected data were put in SPSS, managed, coded, and analyzed based on the research objective. The sample characteristics and motivational access of students present below.

#### **Characteristics of the Sample Variables**

Among the respondents, 50.4% of students were from community schools and 49.6% from private schools. Regarding the age factor, the highest percentage (67.20) were from the 18-20 age group, followed by 15-17 years (30.40%), and only 2.4 percent of respondents were in age from above 20 years. Similarly, in gender, 51.20 % were male students, and 48.80% were female. In the case of ethnicity, 56.8% were in Janajati, followed by Chhetri, which was 17.60 percent, 15.20 % were from other ethnic groups, and the lowest was in Brahmin, i.e., 10.4%. Respondents were 58.4% in rural origination and 41.6% in urban-based origination. Regarding the parents' employment situation, 24.0% had business followed by agriculture, i.e., 16.8%, then 11.2 % had government services, 8 %

had private service, and abroad, 4 % were unemployed, and 28.8% had other occupations.

**Table 1**

*Socio-demographic characteristics of Respondents*

		Numbers	Percent
Type of School	Community	63	50.4%
	Private	62	49.6%
Ethnicity	Chhetri	22	17.6%
	Brahmin	13	10.4%
	Janajati	71	56.8%
	Other	19	15.2%
Gender	Male	64	51.2%
	Female	61	48.8%
Origination	Rural	73	58.4%
	Urban	52	41.6%
Parent's employment situation	Government service	14	11.2%
	Private Service	10	8.0%
	Abroad	10	8.0%
	Business	30	24.0%
	Agriculture	21	16.8%
	Unemployed	4	3.2%
	Other	36	28.8%

### **Status of Motivational Access of Students to ICT**

It is essential to understand the status of motivational access of students to ICT in the changed context of technological development. It can be seen as follows:

**Table 2***Motivational Access of Students to ICT*

S.N.	Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.	They are an entertaining way to pass the time	3.53	1.036
2.	They let me connect with people who are important to me	4.30	0.696
3.	They can help me to take part more in my study	4.27	0.652
4.	They help me to stay on top of news, sports, or events	3.90	0.875
5.	They allow me to share my ideas and the things which I create	4.17	0.693
6.	They make life easier	4.06	0.676
7.	Knowing how to use technology is beneficial when trying to get a job	4.15	0.524
8.	I feel that people pressure me to constantly connected	2.78	1.062
9.	There are a lot of things on the internet that are good for people like me	4.06	0.600

Respondents were asked to respond to the motivational access on ICT used through 9 statements on a five-point Likert scale (i.e.5=Strongly Agree, 4= Agree, 3=Neutral, 2=Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree) to rate their level of agreement on nine statements. In Likert-scale data, the mean is very significant, and the scale of data strongly disagrees from 1-1.8, disagree from 1.81-2.60, neutral from 2.61-3.40, agree from3.41-4.20, and strongly agree from 4.21-5. The statements are presented in Table 2. The result showed that the responses mean ranges from 3.53

to 4.30, indicating that the students had an agreeing to strongly agreeing regarding the motivational access of ICT use., but the mean score of the negative item (I feel that people pressure me to connect constantly) is 2.78. It means the students responded to neutral in negative items. The standard deviation also showed better motivational access of students in ICT use because the value of the standard deviation of negatives is greater than 1. Still, other statements had less than one.

### Motivational Access Based on Gender

Table 3 below reveals descriptive statistics of gender-based motivational access of students of ICT. Nine things were asked for a response on motivational access to ICT. The mean score of male students was higher than that of female students in all statements. It shows that male students' motivational access is more elevated than female students. Suppose we see a standard deviation of both genders. In that case, the value of male students is less than that of female students, which shows the consistency of responses of male students is better than that of female students; this result is similar to Van Deursen et al. (2019). However, the mean score of all other statements was higher for the male and female students; the mean score for the negative statement, "I feel that people pressure me to connect constantly," was low in both gender, i.e., 2.97 for male and 2.57 for female show the good responses of students.

**Table 3**

*Gender-based motivational access of students*

Gender								
Male			Female			Total		
Mean	Std.	Deviation	Mean	Std.	Deviation	Mean	Std.	Deviation



They are an entertaining way to pass the time	3.55	0.904	3.51	.906	3.53	1.036
They let me connect with people who are important to me	4.41	.526	4.18	.827	4.30	.696
They can help me to take part more in my study	4.31	.687	4.23	.616	4.27	.652
They help me to stay on top of news, sports, or events	3.97	1.054	3.98	.645	3.98	.875
They allow me to share my ideas and the things which I create	4.30	.706	4.03	.657	4.17	.693
They make life easier	4.09	.771	4.02	.562	4.06	.676
Knowing how to use technology is beneficial when trying to get a job	4.17	.521	4.13	.532	4.15	.524
I feel that people pressure me to constantly connected	2.97	1.007	2.57	1.087	2.78	1.062
There are a lot of things on the internet that are good for people like me	4.11	.645	4.00	.548	4.06	.600

### Motivational Access Based on School Type

Respondents were asked to respond to the nine statements to investigate their motivation for ICT based on school (community and private). The

motivation level of community school students was better in five statements, and private school students showed better motivation in three statements. The motivation for negative statements was at the same level. The result indicates, however, the material access may be different. Still, in the case of motivational access for students, there is no significant digital divide between community and private school students. It can be shown in the following table:

**Table 4**

*School-based motivational access of students*

	Type of School					
	Community		Private		Total	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
They are an entertaining way to pass the time	3.25	1.177	3.81	.786	3.53	1.036
They let me connect with people who are important to me	4.22	.771	4.37	.607	4.30	.696
They can help me to take part more in my study	4.27	.574	4.27	.728	4.27	.652
They help me to stay on top of news, sports, or events	3.98	.907	3.97	.849	3.98	.875
They allow me to share my ideas and the things which I create	4.19	.737	4.15	.649	4.17	.693
They make life easier	4.03	.803	4.08	.522	4.06	.676
Knowing how to use technology is beneficial when trying to get a job	4.21	.481	4.10	.564	4.15	.524

I feel that people pressure me to constantly connected	2.94	1.091	2.61	1.014	2.78	1.062
There are a lot of things on the internet that are good for people like me	4.10	.499	4.02	.689	4.06	.600

### Ethnicity-based motivational access of students

The researcher investigated the motivational access of students to ICT based on their ethnic group also. Based on ethnicity, his study showed a digital divide among students in motivational access. Among the students of different ethnicity, Brahmin students have conducted the greater motivation in all statements of motivation of ICT. The range of the mean of Brahmin students was 4.15 to 4.62, besides the negative statement followed by Janajati (3.5-4.27), other (3.09-4.23), and Chhetri (3.07- 4.17). It shows the digital divide condition in ICT regarding motivational access among different ethnic groups of students. The overall mean and standard deviation of different ethnic groups of students are shown in Table 5. This result is similar to Cruz (2020). It is stated in Table 4 below:

**Table 5**

*Ethnicity-based motivational access*

Ethnicity	Chhetri	Mean	3.79
		Standard Deviation	.39
		Row N %	17.6%
		Mean	4.24
	Brahmin	Mean	4.24

	Standard Deviation	.38
	Row N %	10.4%
Janajati	Mean	3.92
	Standard Deviation	.32
	Row N %	56.8%
Other	Mean	3.85
	Standard Deviation	.51
	Row N %	15.2%

### Origination-Based Motivational Access of Students

The digital divide between the students is clearly shown in Table 6 based on origination. Students of Kathmandu Valley, whose origination was a rural area, was less motivational access to ICT than urban origination. The consistency of responses was also high in urban origination than in rural. The result of the study is similar to other studies in the Nepalese context and other countries (Baral, 2022; Cruz, 2020; Dawadi et al., 2020; Goh et al., 2016; Gurung & Paudel, 2021; Rana & Rana, 2020). It is stated as below:

**Table 6**

*Origination-based motivational access of students*

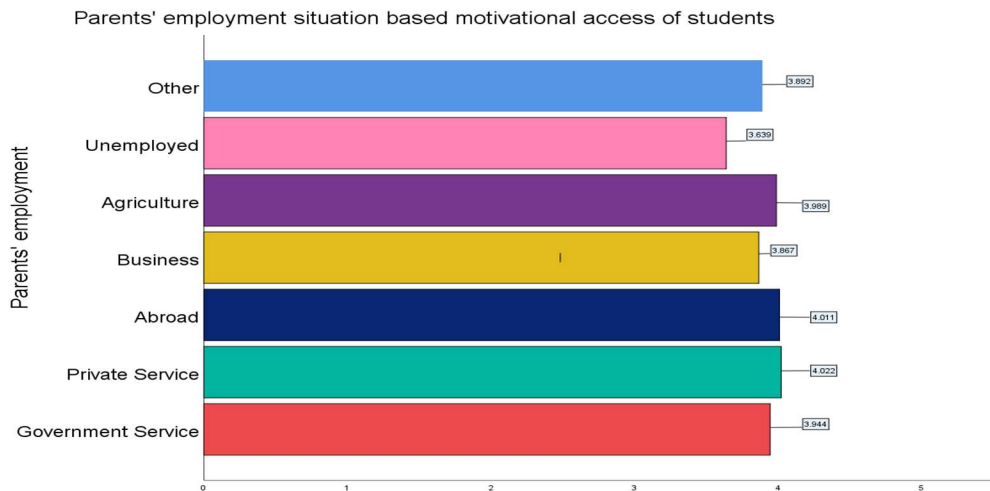
Origination	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Rural	3.8676	73	.39312
Urban	3.9936	52	.37561

Total	3.9200	125	.38943
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### Parent's Employment-Based Motivational Access of Students

Students' motivational access level has been seen differently based on their parent's employment situation. There was low motivational access for economics students whose parents were unemployed and employed in business and government services. Besides these, the motivation access was investigated at the same level. The cause of the low motivation of unemployed parents' kids may be the low affordability of ICT tools and other equipment for use. The main reason may be the economic capacity of the family (Cruz, 2020; Liesa-Orús et al., 2020; McLaren & Zappala, 2002; Rodríguez-Abitia et al., 2020; van de Werfhorst et al., 2020).

**Figure 1**



### Conclusion

Concerning economics students in class 12, the current study sought to identify the motivational access-based digital divide component. According to the study, there is a digital divide among students. Compared to students at

community schools, students in private schools show more motivation to use Technology. Students from urban origins have better access than those from rural backgrounds, and the consistency of responses is also higher in urban origination than in rural students. The result shows that male students' motivational access is more elevated than female students. Still, in the case of motivational access for students, there is no significant digital divide between community and private school students.

On the other hand, among the students of different ethnicity, Brahmin students have shown greater motivation in all statements of motivation of ICT. It shows the same national status of ethnic group students. The study's most significant finding is the poor motivational access of students with unemployed parents, which illustrates the link between a family's financial situation and a student's incentive to use ICT. Governments and educational institutions are responsible for inspiring students by creating an environment where they can access ICT in a motivating and conducive way to improve their ICT proficiency. Children will be more motivated to utilize ICT and aware of its significance if parents give them the necessary resources and encouragement for academic goals. Federal and local governments must assist students who require assistance but are unable to complete their education because they do not have access to ICT resources for motivational access in ICT.

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**Virtual International Group Study Program: Towards Understanding  
Sustainable Development Goals and Community  
Development in Nepal**

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### Abstract

To fill the gaps in international education left by the COVID-19 pandemic, many study abroad educators have become creative with their international programming by going online. This theoretical paper describes the conceptualization and delivery of a virtual collaborative program that was developed through a partnership between the Faculty of Social Work professors at the University of Calgary in Canada and Southwestern State College in Nepal. In this article, we share the model of the program and our motivations for developing the program; a formal evaluation of the model has not yet been conducted. Our pedagogical approach was grounded in anti-oppressive practices, which prioritizes the importance of engaging in empowering practices that share power based on mutual respect and learning. In our attempt to address and mitigate divides of students in the Global South and North, we sought to maximize engagement between students, educators from both institutions and social work practitioners (formal and informal) from Nepal to help promote intracultural learning. We also chose the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals as a site of inquiry with the aim of bridging divides and uncovering commonalities across the two countries – Canada and Nepal. With a mission to deliver an interdisciplinary approach to social work, in this paper, we outline the ways that virtual programming can be made collaborative, immersive, and experiential for all participants regardless of their global location. Lastly, the future of this program will be discussed as travel-based education reopens around the world. In presenting our model, we hope to inform the development of future anti-oppressive international education in social work.

*Keywords:* international virtual group study, social work, Canada, Nepal

**Virtual International Group Study Program: Towards Understanding  
Sustainable Development Goals and Community  
Development in Nepal**

This article describes a new, short-term international group study program (GSP) to Nepal delivered virtually in Spring 2021 and 2022, led by two social work instructors from the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Calgary (UC) in Canada, in collaboration with the Department of Social Work at the Southwestern State College (SWSC) in Nepal. The GSP entitled, *Community and Sustainable Development: Collaborative Field Study in Nepal*, sought to provide students with the opportunity to learn about key social issues related to community and sustainable development in Nepal and draw implications for the Canadian context.

GSPs have been touted as exemplary means to equip social work students with the skills necessary to work in a diverse world (Cotten & Thompson, 2017; Dunlap & Mapp, 2017). The Study abroad has also been highlighted as an important educational strategy to develop global awareness, instill a lifelong pathway of self-reflection, and promote cultural humility (Belliveau, 2019; Fernandez, 2020). Cultural humility, first introduced by Tervalon and Murray-García (1998), is defined as “a lifelong commitment to self-evaluation and critique, to redressing power imbalances . . . and to developing mutually beneficial and non-paternalistic partnerships with communities on behalf of individuals and defined populations” (p. 123). Cultural humility is increasingly recognized as a necessary component for effective social work practice (Gottlieb, 2021; Zhu et al., 2022) and global learning (Habashy & Cruz, 2021).

Several models of study abroad programs have been identified. In their 2012 critical review, Nuttman-Shwartz and Berger summarized current

knowledge about international field education in social work and identity four competing models: “(1) independent/one-time; (2) neighbor-country; (3) onsite group; and (4) exchange/reciprocal” (p. 225). The authors conclude that an egalitarian international experience is premised upon the following:

The sending school and the host organization need to collaborate fully in all phases of conceptualizing the goals, objectives, policy, structure and strategies of the program. Such collaboration is anticipated to enhance mutual learning, assure a balanced division of power and responsibilities and minimize imposition of western values and misunderstanding caused by cultural differences. (p. 55)

Despite the call for and proliferation of study abroad programs globally and the overwhelming support for anti-oppressive (Patterson Roe, 2019) and anti-colonial ways (Villarreal et al., 2021) GPS approaches in the social work literature, there remains the need to advance such models. Anti-oppressive models of social work education recognize intersectional oppressive structures in society and work toward reducing these and the resultant inequities (Laird, 2008), and anti-colonialist paradigms focus on dismantling global structures of domination to redress harmful legacies of colonialism (Afevorki Abay et al., 2023; Carlson, 2017; Fortier & Hon-Sing Wong, 2019).

Further, the recognition that going abroad may not be possible or feasible in the post-pandemic world due to rising inequality, increased political turmoil, and economic recession; hybrid social work programming may be an inevitable future resulting in the “need to redefine the ‘locality’ in social work practice” (O’Leary, & Tsui, 2021, p. 647).

### **Going Abroad Virtually**

While the decision to provide this GSP virtually was a response to COVID-19 travel restrictions, it also offered an opportunity to revise how study



abroad could be re-envisioned to be more inclusive and sustainable while promoting anti-oppressive and anti-colonial pedagogy. The benefits of a global education have been clearly established. Global learning during post-secondary experiences helps students develop the intercultural competence and humility (Kako & Klingbeil, 2019) required to “operate effectively in global contexts ... [and] is equally important for living in our increasingly diverse and multicultural local communities” (Jones, 2013, p. 98). Additionally, the shared learning experiences required to induce cultural humility require students to “take risks and become open to change. Such learning may entail recognizing biases and prejudice and shifting frames of reference” (Smith & Paracka, 2018, p. 24). Students who participate in global learning activities experience a shift in worldview that enables them to build meaningful relationships with people of diverse perspectives, both in the classroom and in the community (Smith & Paracka, 2018).

Additionally, clear benefits of global study for building future skills, particularly in remote workplace settings, have been touted – particularly given the recent shift in workplace structures worldwide (Reuil, 2022). Despite these benefits, a 2017 report from the Centre for International Policy Studies reported that only 11% of Canadian undergraduates undertake an international mobility experience over the course of their degree. According to The Canadian Bureau for International Education (2016), the most significant barrier to education abroad is financial; 80% of students require financial assistance to participate. Virtual study abroad offers a potential solution to increase the accessibility of global education.

Virtual study abroad is not new. There have long been a variety of virtual international learning opportunities in post-secondary education. Opportunities such as collaborative online international learning have been practiced by universities (both formally and informally) since the early 2000s (Jones, 2020; The Forum on Education Abroad, 2020). In these programs, professors often

collaborate on a course or project to bring students from different backgrounds (nationally or internationally) together with the aim of relationship building, problem-solving, collaboration, sharing perspectives, and cultural growth (Minei et al., 2021; Lee & Park, 2017). Lipinski's 2014 case study of virtual study abroad on international business programming concluded that, despite the noted limitations, "virtual study abroad classes can stimulate learning, cross-cultural awareness, and heighten the desire for students to expand their knowledge base" (p. 114). However, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought these opportunities and limitations into sharp focus and acted as an accelerant for online education, generally (Li & Lalani, 2020). Spurred by the global pandemic, burgeoning research on virtual group study has brought to light the problems of exclusively offering in-person global study and highlighted many benefits of offering virtual global learning opportunities. According to Liu and Shirley (2021), "redesigned online study abroad course(s) engaged students in active learning activities and cultivated students' intercultural competence development" (p. 182). Virtual study abroad courses also helped students to overcome such barriers to entry for global learning opportunities as the high cost (and opportunity cost) of leaving their home school for an extended period of time (Custer & Tuominen, 2017); fear of geopolitical factors such as the rise of nationalism, and cultural and political conflict that deter many non-white and first-generation post-secondary students from participating in international education opportunities off campus (Robson et al., 2018).

The full long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on global education is not yet known, but, as Upson and Bergiel (2022) and Tuan (2022) speculate, ongoing restrictions in many countries, such as border closures and quarantine measures, will continue to disadvantage less privileged students seeking global experiences – especially short-term group programs like GSPs. Indeed, virtual international experiences, such as virtual GSP "look set to endure post-pandemic"

(Tuan, 2022, para 11), with specific aspects of GSP likely to persist into the foreseeable future (Gallagher, 2021). In reframing the pandemic crisis as an opportunity, Brandauer et al. (2022) assert virtual international education can be a mechanism for achieving our “collective commitment to building just, inclusive and sustainable communities, a spirit of collaboration and a desire to seek out future-forward and innovative opportunities for continued global learning” (p. 9).

### ***Critique of Virtual Study Abroad***

In-depth evaluations of virtual international programs are beginning to emerge in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. It has been shown that opportunities to internationalize ‘at home’ through virtual learning experiences can yield fruitful intercultural learning experiences (Custer & Tuominen, 2017; Soria & Troisi, 2014; Watkins & Smith, 2018). Nevertheless, there have been some challenges and drawbacks identified in the virtual learning environment that educators must be mindful of when designing and executing these international group programs. Challenges include the inability of students to consistently interact due to time-zone constraints (King et al., 2021; Krishnan et al., 2021), the need for unstructured socialization time for students to interact outside of an academic setting (King et al., 2021), and logistical challenges such as the use of different online learning platforms and types of technology (Krishnan et al., 2021).

While many see the opportunity for students to participate in virtual programming as a way to increase the number of students who are able to incorporate an international experience into their post-secondary program, it is important to remember that “more exposure to other cultures via international field experience highlights the fact that working across cultures can be complicated, which may subsequently dissuade students from engaging in these types of activities” (Lee et al., 2022, p. 206). Additionally, the favourable cost and

convenience may also deter students from traveling abroad in the long run (Lee et al., 2022). Importantly, King et al. (2021) noted in their study findings that students who physically traveled to their host country had different learning outcomes than those who participated in the same program virtually (p. 796).

### **The Nepal Virtual Group Study Program**

The Nepal GSP was developed by two social work educators from UC. In terms of background and preparation, Christine Walsh has been to Nepal conducting extensive field visits to determine the suitability for the group study in Nepal in each of the two years preceding the virtual implementation, and Rita Dhungel, a native of Nepal, has extensive connections in Nepal including in the post-secondary educational sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), social agencies, and the tourism sector. Her dissertation research was conducted in Nepal, where she continues to have an active program of research. Hana Curties is a UC Global Learning Advisor who has worked on programming, promoting, and studying intercultural development in students participating in travel and virtual education abroad programming. Curties provided logistical support for the program including recruitment and enrolment and led a mandatory orientation session for students to ensure that they were equipped to work in intercultural groups online. Walsh and Dhungel engaged in extensive consultation and research prior to implementing the GSP. In terms of consultation, over the course of approximately two years, the two first met with staff at UC International, other UC group study educators and experts, and members of NGOs and educators in SWSC, Kamdambari College, and Tribhuvan University in Nepal. Additionally, the two UC instructors completed a 14-day field study in Nepal in June 2019 to examine opportunities for mounting a GSP in Nepal. Also, Walsh et al. (2021) completed primary research on developing an anti-colonial/postcolonial framework to conduct international field education, which she used to successfully implement a 2019 GSP in Mexico.

The Nepal GSP was designed to build students' skills in intercultural practices to address such social issues – whether in Nepal, Canada, or elsewhere. The pedagogical orientation of this GSP was rooted in critical pedagogy (Saleebey & Scanlon, 2005) and participatory methods as a means of disrupting the reproduction of “hierarchies of power and colonialism” (Pipitone, 2018, p. 54). In our teaching, we sought to move, in some small way, towards Nepali social work educator Raj Yadav's (2019) directive to “unmask the ongoing insidious effects of domination, exploitation, oppression, and injustice all too visible in the importation of West-centric social work in ‘Other’ contexts . . . to achieve progressive home-grown social work to ensure sustainable human development goals (p. 4).

Our intention in developing the GSP was to use critical/participatory principles and pedagogical frameworks to deliver a collaborative GSP that examines social issues in Nepal through a multi-disciplinary framework that focuses on the United Nations 2015-2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations General Assembly) 2015 in Nepal (United Nations Nepal, 2022), and, to a lesser extent, in Canada. In 2015 the global community agreed to the 2030 Global Agenda entitled ‘Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’. This action plan which replaces the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), is universal in nature and comprehensive in the range of issues and concerns addressed pertaining to development, economy, human rights, and the environment. The theme of ‘no one will be left behind’ is most critical so as to ensure that inclusive development is within the reach of all people groups and communities. The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW, 2014), the International Association of Schools of Social Work, and the International Council on Social Welfare jointly initiated a global agenda between 2012 and 2016 to support the UN in the preparation of the post-2015 development agenda, specifically to “strive with others for a people-focused global economy

that is regulated to protect and promote social justice, human rights, and sustainable development” and to “promote education and practice standards in social work and social development that enabled workers to facilitate sustainable social development outcomes” (IFSW 2014, p 3).

Cordoba and Bando (2022) call for “greater social work engagement with the United Nations’ SDGs to address urgent social and environmental challenges” (p. 519). Further, the role of social workers in the achievement of the SDGs is increasingly relevant in light of the inequities uncovered and exacerbated by the global pandemic (Öztürk et al., 2022). Relatedly, Muleya (2020) reinforced the relationship between social development and the SDG in reducing poverty and inequities. However, the SDG in relation to social work education is not without criticism. For example, a study in Malaysia identified the human rights approach as a challenge “due to the political implications and justice aspects which could be viewed as confrontational” and “limited activity in the area of environmental and sustainability” (Jayasooria, 2016, p. 27 ). Other authors propose the degrowth approach, one that reduces economic activity to achieve ecological sustainability as an alternative, which recognizes “the fundamental incompatibility between relentless economic growth and ecological conservation” (Powers et al., 2021, p. 9).

Given the clear direction from the literature for the need for international education and the salience of the SDGs in social work education to address social inequity among other social justice pursuits, we aimed to deliver the Nepal GSP with the learning objectives of the SDGs as our foundation.

The following section describes the course model. The GSP was comprised of two integrated and cohesive undergraduate elective courses, one taught by each of the social work instructors, in Spring 2020. While our ability to travel to Nepal to deliver the GSP was derailed due to the COVID-19 global

pandemic and the ensuing public health directives and travel bans, our desire to provide a highly engaged, experiential, and collaborative immersion experience for students from the UC and the SWSC was not. We also recognized an added benefit of virtual study abroad is the reduction of the environmental impact of international travel in accordance with the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (n.d.), in alignment with UC's membership in the Sustainable Development Solutions Network Canada and contributing to making education accessible to more students a priority of SDG 4, Quality Education.

**Collaborative.** With support from UC International and administrators at the SWSC in Nepal, we decided to mount a virtual GSP. We worked collaboratively to ensure the delivery of the virtual GSP met, to the highest extent possible, the pedagogical approaches that we had established. That is, to be highly collaborative, interdisciplinary, immersive, and experiential. The virtual course was delivered in Spring 2021 and 2022, with only slight variations between each delivery year. In terms of collaboration, the GSP was designed with input from social work educators from SWSC, who were provided with remuneration for supervision and support of the approximately 20 Nepalese students who took the course each year. Each year, the Nepalese students and the approximately 20 UC students completed two group projects together, one for each of the two courses. Because of the broad aims and objectives of the course (described in more detail below), we hoped to attract students from a range of disciplines. The instructors were social work educators, and the majority of students were enrolled in social work; a minority of students were from other disciplines (anthropology, astrophysics, business, geography, health sciences, international relations, psychology, and sociology).

**Immersive.** Lectures and tours applied knowledge through experiential, collaborative, and reciprocal learning encounters that include Nepalese educators, community leaders, organizers, activists, and students. A key focus of this course

is fostering reciprocal learning and knowledge exchange opportunities with social work students from SWSC, engaged as co-learners on this course. Centralizing anti-oppressive theory and practices, learners were encouraged to participate in critical reflexivity and examine their perspectives on social justice and methods of achieving social change.

**Experiential.** Experiential learning provided students with exposure to and active participation in a wide range of Nepalese cultural activities, including spirituality, meditation, Nepali traditional dance and songs, and the preparation of traditional Nepali food (momo, achar, and chai). Students also learned the basic Nepali language and practiced this skill both inside and outside of classrooms. For example, students had the opportunity to apply their rudimentary language skills when introducing and thanking classroom guest speakers and interacting with Nepali students and community members while completing their group assignments.

All UC GSP students were required to enroll in both courses, for which they received two half-course credits, and complete the usual processes established for study abroad programs. The SWSC students were selected for their potential interest in the GSP by instructors and received a certificate of completion for their participation.

### ***The Courses***

The two courses were integrated both substantively and pedagogically and co-taught by both UC instructors. The objective of the community development course is for students to critically understand social justice issues from intersectionality lenses and explore a wide range of community development models/approaches and their applications in Nepal. The sustainable development course builds students' understanding of the SDGs as they relate to key social issues and community development in Nepal. The GSP builds on students'



abilities to work inter-culturally with the opportunity to explore, in collaboration with Nepalese academics, students, and community leaders, how such SDGs and social issues may be addressed through community-based interventions. Specific objectives of each of the courses are detailed below:

### **Community Development Course**

1. Students will be introduced to the history, knowledge, and geo- and socio-political contexts of Nepal.
2. Students will increase their understanding of social issues and social policies in Nepal.
3. Critically examine the social service delivery system in Nepal and its impact on how community services are delivered to urban, rural, and disadvantaged and marginalized communities.
4. Demonstrate an understanding of the links between micro, mezzo, and macro social work practice and how they all work collaboratively to create change.
5. Demonstrate an understanding of the dynamics of power in the community setting.
6. Demonstrate an understanding of the historical and current practices and tools used to mobilize communities.
7. Utilize practice skills used to overcome systemic barriers, and to promote human rights and social justice within diverse contexts and with diverse groups.
8. Describe social capital theory, assets-based community development, participatory action research, and community capacity building.
9. Demonstrate the skills necessary to critically self-reflect in the community setting.

10. Demonstrate an understanding of how the neo-liberal and neo-conservative paradigms marginalize vulnerable communities.
11. Apply knowledge of community practice in both local and international settings.

### **Sustainable Development Course**

1. Students will be introduced to and involved in the process of critical reflection/analysis, group discussion, and action-related inter-global and cross-cultural work between (and among) Canada and Nepal.
2. Students will develop their capacity to engage with participatory, popular, and democratic learning processes.
3. Students will develop reciprocal learning and exchange methods with social work students from SWSC in Nepal.
4. Students will develop their knowledge and practice to work inter-culturally.
5. Students will be introduced to a selection of tools and approaches used to address the 2030 SDGs (e.g., human rights and environmental sustainability) at a local level.
6. Students will apply their knowledge of SDGs in relationship to Canada and Nepal

Each of the two courses has three assignments. The first assignment was a self-reflection assignment which prepared the students to begin their engagement, asking them to examine and describe their personal lens with regards to learning interculturality and the substantive content (i.e., community development or SDGs in Nepal). The second assignment for each course was a group project with small groups of SWSC and UC students designed to deepen their engagement interculturality and increase their knowledge of the substantive content. For the community development course, small groups of students from both countries met

virtually with community activists, educators, service providers, and community residents in Nepal to gain an understanding of key social justice issues in that country. For the sustainable development course, working in small cross-cultural groups, students presented their learning on their chosen SDG through a visual research project. The final assignment for the community development course had UC students identify relevant national laws/policies, programs, and services aimed at addressing one social justice issue and examined gaps in existing knowledge. The final assignment for the sustainable development course consisted of an individual written research report that identifies the social issues of interest and the relevant, sustainable development challenge in relation to social work or community development. Students are asked to use the SDG framework to articulate the issue that is being addressed in Nepal, what is working, what is not working, and how the learning can be applied in Canada, an example of which is the article by Buekner and Walsh in this issue.

We hope that the model we have shared is useful for others considering ways to approach the development and delivery of anti-oppressive, international GSPs between social work students and educators in the Global North and South. Further, we propose that examining the UN SDGs might be a useful platform upon which to begin this important work.

### ***Future Directions***

We are in the process of evaluating the virtual GSPs, the results of which will be made available in a subsequent publication. In the Spring of 2022, we delivered the GSP through funding provided by the Canadian Government Global Skills Opportunity, in which students in Canada and Nepal took ten additional hours to complete The Global Indigenous Skills program. The aim of this program “is to invest in global skills for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students,

cultivating leadership, identity awareness, and global networks related to Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, connecting, and being” (n. p.).

In the Summer of 2023, we will again work as partners with SWSC to deliver the Nepal GSP virtually; while recognizing the benefits of the study abroad, we still encountered several barriers to participation in travel programming at this time.

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## **Impact of Workplace Stressors on Employee Burnout: A Survey on Diversified Professionals**

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### **Abstract**

The study has focused on the impact of workplace stressors explained by workload, work hours, unsupportive supervisors, and unfair treatment on employee burnout. The study adopted a quantitative research approach using a survey method. Professional employees of different sectors have been considered as the population. The 115 usable samples have been taken for the study purpose. The sample has been taken purposively. Five Point Likert Scale and multiple-choice questionnaire have been used for the collection of the data. Questionnaires have been administered online. SPSS and Microsoft Excel software has been used to analyze data. However, data were analyzed using correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis. The study results suggest that work hours are the major predictor of employee burnout among Nepalese professional employees, and workload, unfair treatment, and unsupportive supervisors have negligible contributions to the burnout of Nepalese professional employees.

*Keywords:* Nepalese professionals, workload, work hours, unsupportive supervisor, unfair treatment

### **Impact of Workplace Stressors on Employee Burnout: A Survey on Diversified Professionals**

The term 'burnout' originated in the 1970s AD, and for the past fifty years, the medical community has argued on the definition of it. When Stanford researchers looked into how workplace stress affected health costs and mortality in the United States, they found that it led to spending nearly \$190 billion, roughly 8 percent of national healthcare outlays, and nearly 120,000 deaths yearly (Moss, 2019). Employee burnout had often manifested as an increasing lack of enthusiasm and engagement that built over time in response to job dissatisfaction. The consequences of burnout include increased employee absence, lower productivity, and higher turnover, all of which could affect a company's bottom line. The disruptions to work dynamics, demanding workloads, lack of social support, and blurring of work/life balance have all contributed to the pressure cooker environment for employees, leading to increased burnout in the workforce (Chua, 2022).

Employee burnout happened when the employee became exhausted in the workplace. Employee burnout is a psychological process that could arise due to continuous stress or excessive work hours. There could be various reasons behind employee burnout, like work pressure, unfair treatment, lack of support, lack of specified/prescribed role, etc. Burnout could cause feelings of emptiness, frustration, exhaustion, etc., that might lead to depression in extreme cases. The employee could have a sudden drop in performance and productivity and, with the passing of time, could collapse under pressure situations due to burnout.

Employees in recent days were undoubtedly feeling the pressure of an 'always-on' work culture, causing stress and sometimes leading to burnout (Moss, 2019). Job burnout is a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job. It has been defined by the three dimensions of exhaustion,

cynicism, and a sense of inefficacy (Maslach, 2016). Employee burnout as a type of occupational stress was recognized even by the World Health Organization (WHO), in which employees experience general unhappiness with their work and different levels of tiredness, such as; mental, physical, and emotional fatigue. As a result, an employee might no longer feel up to the task at hand or be disinterested in their work or profession, resulting in mental detachment and decreased productivity (Langballe et al., 2010). This could result in higher staff turnover and attrition, poorer employee engagement scores, and a negative impact on workplace culture, all of which could harm the company's overall performance (Langballe et al., 2010).

Employee burnout does not happen by itself; it must be induced. This was usually attributable to the way an organization functions, as well as how people processes responded to employees' requirements. Employee burnout manifested itself in a variety of ways. Based on the company's key performance indicators like; employee turnover rate, increase in employees' sick leave, simple mistakes, and poor customer service (Brandon, 2021). To know the situation of burnout, the first step was to conduct an employee engagement survey to learn how your employees feel, their current levels of engagement, and whether or not burnout was a risk for the company. Actually, there was no study found on burnout in Nepal, but a small group survey with the help of a checklist by the researchers found that workplace stress was high and employee workplace stress was vibrant. Thus, the study might help the policymakers of different industrial sectors formulate human resource policies and make decisions on employee-related issues. Thus, the main aim of the study had been confined to analyzing the relationship between workplace stressors and employee burnout.

### **Literature Review**

Physical burnout is universal and not limited to employees of certain professions. Although burnout is directly linked with excess work-related



stressors, other factors that are the primary cause of burnout can be divided into organizational factors, personal characteristics, and work factors. As a job resource, job autonomy is expected to yield beneficial effects for employees. Considering the diversified workplace, the study argued that how job autonomy affected burnout depends on individuals' power distance orientation (PDO) levels. PDO moderated the relationship between job autonomy and three role stressors; role conflicts, ambiguity, and overload. In addition, the study found that people with different levels of PDO experienced different processes of job autonomy burnout relation (Guo et al., 2022). The negative association between the three dimensions of burnout: emotional exhaustion, feelings of cynicism, and a sense of being less effective, and the mediators: contribution to productivity and appropriate salary, were found in the study. However, it was detected that a strong mediating role of salary in the relationship between the burnout syndrome dimension of low effectiveness and quality of work life (Pereira et al., 2022). The results showed that burnout had increased drastically among hotel employees during the COVID-19 crisis. The results also indicated different demographic and job characteristics that had been found to have significantly high burnout values. The hotel industry needs to focus on employee welfare to avoid employee burnout and human resource strategies and initiatives should be taken to reduce burnout (Eason & Weerakit, 2022).

In the organizations, the most common factor which had been cited as the main cause of burnout was work overload. Due to continuous pressure in work and in personal life, once the employees become old, they tend to be more prone to burnout. Role uncertainty, employment guarantee, and brain drain were some of the main factors which were found as prominent dimensions in most of the literature (Nagaraj & Mahadevan, 2015). The work factors might include long working hours, frequent call duties, and time spent at home. Moreover, mundane documentation might also contribute to burnout at the workplace (Moss, 2019).

Job stress and burnout originate from environmental factors in the workplace. Job stress disturbs the physical balance, and burnout affects the quality of work and services, which might result in leaving a job, increased absence, and low morale and responsibility (Taheri et al., 2012).

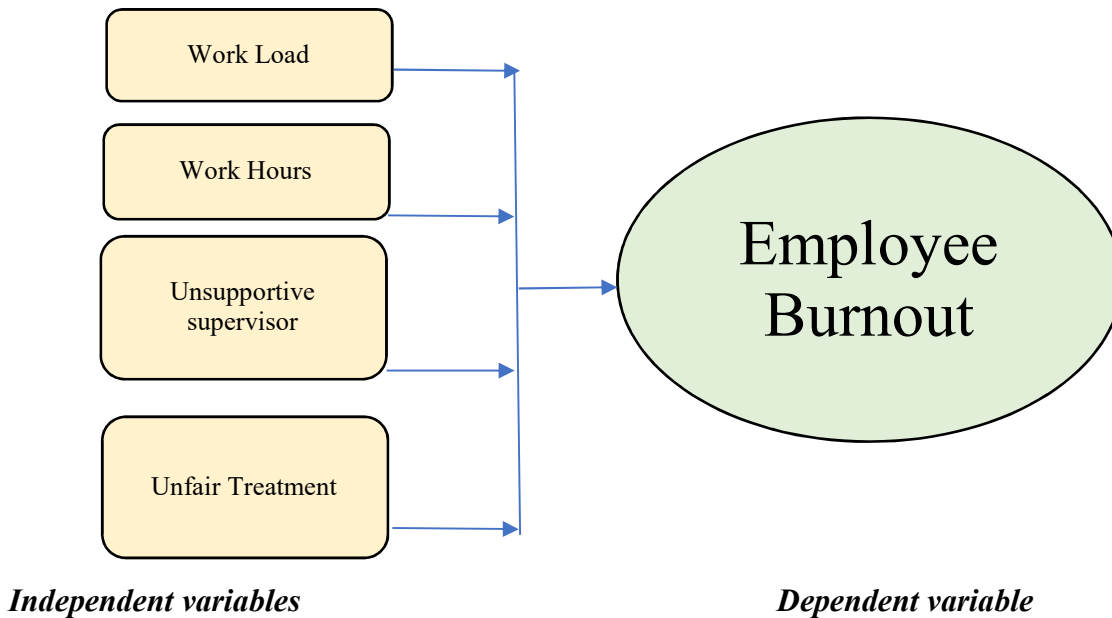
A study conducted among Professors and Employees at the University of Tabriz by Zamini et al. (2011) showed how organizational culture and job burnout were interrelated. There were four types of organizational cultures: rational culture; focused on efficiency and effectiveness, ideological culture; focused on decentralization of power and increasing competitiveness, consensual culture; focused on decentralization of power, variation in activities, and human relation and hierarchical culture; focused on centralization of power and integration of activities. Job burnout was higher in rational organizational culture and lower in participative organizational culture. Zamini et al. (2011) concluded that there was a significant difference between professors' and employees' job burnout. Differences in reward, social support, and working environment, payment system were the major causes of the difference in professors' and employees' job burnout. Similarly, there was a significant difference between male employees' and female employees' job burnout. This resulted from differences in the method of dealing with stressful situations. Further, the respective University should identify its type of organizational culture and should work to integrate its organizational values with individual values for the better performance of the University itself along with the job satisfaction of its professors and employees. Likewise, individuals should know their ability and method of handling stressful situations and work to improve their weaknesses (Zamini et al., 2011). The personal characteristics leading to burnout might include sleep deprivation, work-life imbalance, inadequate support from family and colleagues, and over-commitment, among others. The work-home conflict was found to be higher among women as compared to men. Another study suggested that the odds of burnout in employees

increased by 54 percent that had children younger than 21 years (Langballe et al., 2010). The authors discussed the next factor was the organizational factor. The organizational factors included were the lack of rewards, negative leadership behaviors, and lack of interpersonal collaborations (Langballe et al., 2010). Regular surveys using established scales were found essential for physicians before the effect of burnout was too serious. Work overload was the main contributor to physical burnout, as per physicians. Yoga, meditation, and similar relaxation techniques were helpful to some extent. However, in the severed situation, interaction with therapists was the right move (Langballe et al., 2010).

A study conducted among employees in Canada and China by Jamal (2005) showed how job stress related to total burnout and its three components; emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of accomplishment as well as health problems. Job stress could be conceptualized as an individual's reactions to work environment characteristics that appear emotionally and physically threatening to the individual. It had shown the poor fit between the individual's abilities/ experiences and the work environment in which excessive demands had been regularly put on the individual or the individual was not fully equipped to handle a particular situation. Job stressors such as work overload, work ambiguity, work conflict, and resource inadequacy were related to overall burnout, including its three dimensions; emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of accomplishment. But the relation between these factors among two different cultures was found to be differing from each other, which showed that the feelings of burnout could be led by different dimensions of similar job stressors in cross-cultures. Although the job stressors were significantly related to overall burnout, individual relationship with the dimensions of burnout were found to be different from dimension to dimension in each culture (Jamal, 2005). JDC theory of workplace burnout explains that when an individual faces high

demand with low control, led to psychological stress, work-related stress, and in the long term, weak physical and mental health (Karasek, 1979).

Raisiene et al. (2023) assumed that teleworking negatively affected employee well-being, as many teleworkers tended to suffer mental and physical exhaustion and social deprivation when working from home during the pandemic. The psycho-emotional state of employees had sought to be a key factor influencing an organization's intellectual resources in a period of uncertainty. Salama et al. (2022) concluded that there existed a strong positive association between work stress and turnover intentions as well as a positive association between job burnout and work stress. The findings of this study would help policymakers, hotel managers as well as practitioners to formulate policies for lessening work stress, job burnout, and turnover intentions among hotel employees. Doghan and Malik (2022) concluded that the relationship between job burnout and job satisfaction was inverse and statistically significant, while the relationship between stress and job satisfaction was insignificant. The results demonstrated that burnout harms job satisfaction, whereas stress had no bearing on measuring job satisfaction. Kloutsiniotis et al. (2022) found that HRM practices could enforce the impact of TFL on burnout. A study by Rozman et al. (2019) found statistically significant differences in occupational stress and symptoms of burnout in the workplace between older and younger employees. On average, younger employees perceived higher levels of occupational stress and burnout as compared to the older group. The research results also showed that occupational stress, behavioral symptoms, and emotional symptoms of burnout, as well as age, had a significant impact on employees' work satisfaction. Based on the reviews and JDC theory following theoretical framework has been developed as under:

**Figure 1***Theoretical Framework*

### Hypothesis

H1: There is a significant relationship between workload and employees burnout

H2: There is a significant relationship between work hours and employees' burnout

H3: There is a significant relationship between unsupportive supervisors and employees' burnout

H4: There is a significant relationship between unfair treatment and employees' burnout

### Research Methods

The research was based on a primary source of data using a quantitative research approach. The correlational research design was adopted for the study. The data was collected using a mailed questionnaire. To collect the data, a survey was conducted among the respondents. Questionnaires were prepared in Google

Docs, and the prepared questionnaire was sent through online means (Gmail). Multiple choice questions and Likert Scale questions were used to collect the data. A purposive sampling method was used for selecting the samples. Similarly, the sample size for the research was confined to 115. The response rate was 53 percent. Professionals from different fields were the respondents in the study. The SPSS software and Microsoft Excel were used for the tabulation and the analysis of data. The correlation matrix and ordinary least square regression were used to examine the degree of relationship and impact analysis.

**Results and Discussions**

**Demographic and Descriptive Analysis**

**Table 1**

*Age-Wise Profile of Respondents*

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18 to 24	13	11.3%
25 to 30	59	51.3%
31 and above	43	37.4%
Total	115	100%

The results have shown that among 115 respondents, 13(11.3%) were in between 18 and 24 years of age, 59(51.3%) were in between 25 and 30 years of age, and 43(37.4%) were in between 31 and 35 years of age. The frequency and percentage of age indicated that among the 115 respondents, individuals between the age of 25 to 30 years were large in number, followed by respondents of age between 31 and above and 18 to 24. It indicated that the results of the study are more applicable to the professionals of the age group between 25 to 35 years.

**Table 2**

*Gender-Based Profile of Respondents*

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	63	54.7%
Female	52	45.3%
Total	115	100%

The results have shown that among 115 respondents, 63(54.7%) were male, and 52(45.3%) were female. This indicated that among the 115 respondents, more than 50 % were male and female participants were less than male. Even though the numbers were different but the ratio had not been highly different. Thus, the results were applicable to both male and female employees.

**Table 3**  
*Respondents' Profile Based on Education*

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage
SLC	1	0.9%
+2 level	9	7.8%
Bachelor Degree	63	54.7%
Master's Degree	42	36.5%
Total	115	100%

The results shown that among 115 respondents, only 1(.9%) had passed SLC, 9(7.8%) had passed +2, 63(54.3 %) had the bachelor's degree and 42(36.2%) had the master's degree. It showed that most respondents had bachelor's and master's degrees. It meant that the research result was dominated by the opinion of educated persons.

**Table 4**  
*Profession Wise Profile of Respondents*

Profession Field	Frequency	Percentage
Academic	26	22.6%
Medical	14	12.2%
Engineering	13	11.3%
IT	13	11.3%
Hospitality	17	14.8%
Hospitality and Tourism	11	9.6%
Government	21	18.3%
Total	115	100%

The results had shown that among 115 respondents, 26(22.6%) were from the academic field, 14(12.2%) were from the medical, 13(11.2%) were from the engineering field, 13(11.2%) were from IT, 17(14.8%) were from hospitality, 11(9.6%) were from tourism, and 21(18.3%) were from the government sector. This showed that out of the 115 respondents, most of them came from the academic field, followed by the government sector, medical, hospitality, engineering, and IT. Similarly, there was the least participation from the tourism sector. The mixture of respondents was from various professions. Therefore, the opinion covered the feeling of every sector of employees.

**Correlation Analysis**

**Table 5**

*Relationship between Employee Workload and Burnout*

		Workload	Employee Burnout
Workload	Pearson Correlation	1	.129**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
Employee Burnout	Pearson Correlation	.129**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	



Pearson correlation of employee burnout and workload was found to be significant at a one percent level of significance. The study indicated that there was a positive relationship between employee burnout and workload. Further, the positive correlation indicated that both variables, i.e., workload and employee burnout, were moved in the same direction, which means that high workload leads to high employee burnout.

**Table 6**

*Relationship between Employee Work Hours and Burnout*

		Workhours	Employee Burnout
Work hours	Pearson Correlation	1	.152**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
Employee Burnout	Pearson Correlation	.152**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	

A significant relationship between work hours and employee burnout was found at a one percent level of significance. That meant a positive correlation existed between work hours and employee burnout. Further, both variables, i.e., work hours and employee burnout, were moved in the same direction, which indicated that with an increase in work hours, employee burnout also tends to increase.

**Table 7**

*Relationship between Unfair Treatment and Employee Burnout*

		Unfair Treatment	Employees Burnout
Unfair Treatment	Pearson Correlation	1	.123**

	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
Employee	Pearson		
Burnout	Correlation	.123**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	

A significant relationship between employee burnout and unfair treatment was found at a one percent significance level. There was a positive correlation between unfair treatment and employee burnout. Both variables, unfair treatment, and employee burnout, had moved in the same direction, which indicated that an increase in unfair treatment in the organization led to employee burnout.

**Table 8**

*Relationship between Unsupportive Supervisor and Employee Burnout*

		Unsupportive Supervisor	Employee Burnout
Unsupportive Supervisor	Pearson Correlation	1	.096**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
Employee Burnout	Pearson Correlation	.096**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	

There was the positive and significant relationship between unsupportive supervisors and employee burnout found at a one percent level of significance. There was a positive correlation between unsupportive supervisors and employee burnout. Further, both variables, i.e., unsupportive supervisor and employee burnout, were moved in the same direction, indicating that lack of supervisor support may lead to employee burnout. The correlation results showed that variables were significantly and positively associated with each other. It means

dependent and independent variables were perfectly correlated to each other and in the hypothesized directions.

**Impact Analysis**

The multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis and analyze the impact of independent variables on dependent variables. The model specification has been expressed as;

$$Y=0.329+0.053\beta_1 +0.168 \beta_2+ 0.005\beta_3+ 0.040\beta_4+\varepsilon$$

Where,

$\beta_1$  = Work Load;

$\beta_2$  = Work Hours;

$\beta_3$  = Unfair Treatment;

$\beta_4$  = Unsupportive Supervisor;

$\varepsilon$  = Error

**Table 9**

*Model Summary*

Model	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.826	0..529	.2781

**Table 10**

*Test of Fitness of Model using ANOVA*

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.982	4	.245	16.734	0.000
	Residual	37.085	111	.334		
	Total	38.066	115			

**Table 11**

*Regression Analysis Results*

Model		Unstandardized		Standardized		
		Coefficients		Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Significance
	Constant	.329	.218		1.040	2.3425
1	Workload	.053	.153	.087	.348	.072
	Work Hours	.168	.183	.278	.914	.036
	Unfair Treatment	.005	.116	.007	.041	.096
	Unsupportive Supervisor	.040	.096	.065	.419	.076

The coefficient of determination 0.826 showed the variance explained by independent variables on a dependent variable. It meant that employee burnout could be explained by the workload, work hours, unfair treatment, and unsupportive supervisors in the 82.6 percent. The standard error was found to be 0.2781, which showed that the variance of employee burnout around the fitted regression equation was 0.174. It meant the fitted model could not explain 17.4 percent. The F- statistic showed the fitness of the regression model. Table 11 provides information on constants, coefficients, standard error, and P- values. It had shown that the fitted model was good for the impact prediction, and other variables were not the major predictors of workplace burnout except work hours in the Nepalese context. It meant an increase in work hours increased workplace burnout.

## Testing of Hypotheses

### Hypothesis 1

The P-value was found to be 0.072, which was higher than the significance level. Hence, the null hypothesis was accepted. It meant there was no significant relationship between workload and employee burnout. It indicated that overload burnout typically affected highly dedicated employees who felt obliged to work at an unsustainable pace. As a result, they had driven themselves to the point of physical and mental exhaustion.

### Hypothesis 2

The P-value of work hours on employee burnout was found to be 0.036. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. Therefore, there was a significant relationship between work hours and employee burnout. It indicated that the employees had recommended that their employers ensure mandatory downtime after work hours, employee-care activities, and more specified deadlines. It might be the case for old aged people.

### Hypothesis 3

The P-value of unfair treatment on employee burnout was found to be 0.096. Hence, the null hypothesis was accepted, and the alternative hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, there was no significant relationship between employee burnout and unfair treatment. It indicated that unfair treatment of the employees in the workplace does not increase the burnout problem in the Nepalese context.

### Hypothesis 4

The P-value of unsupportive supervisors on employee burnout was found to be 0.076. Hence, the null hypothesis was accepted, and the alternative hypothesis was not accepted. Therefore, there was no significant relationship between unsupportive supervisors and employee burnout. It indicated that the employees' burnout was a problem with the company, not within an individual. The leaders need to own up to their role in creating the workplace stress that led

to burnout. Once leaders confront the problem at an organizational level and addressed the most common organizational culprits of burnout, they could reduce burnout and raise productivity.

### **Conclusions and Implications**

The workload, unfair treatment, and an unsupportive supervisor all have insignificant predictors of employee burnout. These variables do not affect the stress level of employees because employees have prior preconceptions of having such stress in the workplace. However, work hours affect the personal life of employees. Thus, they feel stress if more work hours are demanded by the employer. Employee burnout has far-reaching consequences for both employees and business organizations. Organizational surveys should be conducted to minimize employee burnout. Rather than assuming that one solution fits all, the business should evaluate other factors such as employee capacity, reward systems, participatory decision-making, and so on when major decisions are taken, for example, increased participation in the decision-making process is likely to prevent employee fatigue. While comparing to the JDC theory, most of the variables of the stressors are not accepted in the Nepalese context. It may be so because employment opportunities in Nepal are very low, so the employees and professionals do not express their opinion related to workplace burnout. Furthermore, each organization should make an effort to understand employees' perceptions regarding their work hours, the number of tasks, various reward systems, promotion opportunities, and supervisory behavior. Business organizations trying to compete in the market should not neglect the importance and values of their employees. They should pay special attention to identifying the causes, effects, and corrective steps to deal with the issue of employee burnout.

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**Supervisors' Perspectives on Generic Difficulties Faced by EFL  
Students in Writing Thesis: A Multiple Case Analysis**

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### Abstract

Writing a thesis is one form of academic writing that requires adequate research-related knowledge, interest, motivation, and effort. For this reason, students often consider thesis writing a challenging task. This qualitative multiple case study seeks to explore supervisors' perspectives on the difficulties faced by master's level English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students while writing theses in English Education. The participants consisted of eight thesis supervisors who have supervised at least ten master's theses written by the students who studied English Education as the specialization subject at the Master's level at constituent campuses under the Faculty of Education (FoE), Tribhuvan University (TU). I used simple random sampling to select the constituent campuses and purposive sampling to select the sample. I collected the data using a semi-structured interview. The interviews were conducted via a video conferencing tool named Zoom. According to the interest of the participants, the interviews were conducted in English, and all the interviews were audio-video recorded in Zoom. Recorded interviews were then transcribed and analyzed using the constant comparison method of qualitative data analysis. The findings show that the students' typical challenges with thesis writing were connected to their difficulty in integrating and generalizing related literature, their inability to prepare a theoretical framework, their lack of general knowledge of research, their lack of knowledge of citation and referencing, their difficulties in selecting appropriate methodology, and their inability to use academic language. The study concluded that EFL graduate students, regardless of their performance on the written examinations, depend substantially on their supervisors when writing a thesis.

*Keywords:* challenges, Master's level students, research, supervisors' viewpoints, thesis writing

### **Supervisors' Perspectives on Generic Difficulties Faced by EFL Students in Writing Thesis: A Multiple Case Analysis**

A thesis is a piece of academic writing that requires both intellectual and rhetorical abilities. According to Dong (1998), writing a thesis in a second or foreign (SL or FL) language is considered a very complex and challenging task. But no matter how challenging it is, writing a thesis is mandatory for the students who study for master's degrees in English Education at the Faculty of Education (FoE) at Tribhuvan University (TU) to complete a master's degree. Students who study M.Ed. in English Education at constituent and affiliated campuses under FoE should write their theses according to the format and guidelines prescribed by the Dean's office. Each student is assigned a supervisor by the respective department to assist them in writing their theses. During the thesis writing process, the supervisors guide and assist the students. Furthermore, students write their thesis under the guidance and supervision of a supervisor. When the students complete their theses, they are submitted to the concerned department with the supervisors' recommendation for external evaluation. They are then evaluated by an external examiner appointed by the Dean's office and approved by the thesis evaluation committee, which has three members, including the department head, an external examiner, and a member. Although the thesis is evaluated and approved by the thesis evaluation and approval committee, it cannot be evaluated without the recommendation of the supervisor. If the supervisor does not guide and supervise the students properly, they will face many problems during thesis writing. Therefore, the supervisor has a great deal of importance when writing a research paper.

According to Oshima (1998), academic writing is more challenging in an academic setting, like thesis writing. This ability requires research and training to master. In recent years, researchers have become more interested in investigating

whether and how much L2 students who write a thesis in English find it difficult to write the thesis to meet the standards according to the genre (Vos, 2013). Supervisors report that students struggle to construct a cohesive, coherent, and well-balanced text during thesis writing (Todd et al., 2006). They also report that students struggle to contextualize their arguments in different sections of their theses. According to Divsar (2018), students have trouble composing master's theses because they lack fundamental knowledge of the thesis writing process and its components, such as the literature review. For example, students frequently scrawl irrelevant information in the literature and fail to integrate the required information in their theses. They do not value the time supervisors devote to delivering feedback and are oblivious to their responsibilities (Hardling, 2004). According to a study by Brause (1999), the most challenging characteristics of master's thesis writers are their educational background, grammar, and cultural differences, which can result in despondency, loneliness, and isolation. According to a different study by Hyland (2019), postgraduate students, particularly those who are second language learners, have difficulty using citations in their master's thesis. He further adds that a major problem faced by second-language students in thesis writing is their inability to organize reference material in the research report.

Numerous studies have been conducted on the general difficulties students face when writing thesis. But, the specific generic problems faced by students while writing thesis have been exposed very little. The present study attempts to explore the generic challenges faced by master's level EFL students in writing theses in English Education from the point of view of the supervisors in the Nepalese context. Discovering the supervisors' perspectives on the student's writing would deepen our comprehension of the writing challenges faced by EFL students in the Nepalese context. This study would also aid students in being cognizant of the supervisors' interests and comments. By investigating

supervisors' perceptions, students may be able to reduce their writing errors by adhering to the supervisors' advice. Thus, this research is crucial for bridging the gap in the research study.

### **Literature Review**

Thesis writing in M.Ed. in English Education is a form of academic writing that addresses topics or elements in the discourses of linguistics and EFL instruction. It must be supported by research. Research studies reveal that research students often face lexical, syntactic, and discursive writing challenges while writing the thesis at the master's level (Nimulola, 2018). Lexical challenges include students' inability to choose precise and proper words, overuse and misuse of linking adverbials, and inappropriate use of articles and prepositions. Similarly, students' limited knowledge of academic vocabulary is also one of the main challenges for students in writing a thesis (Lovitts, 2007). On a syntactic level, students often use run-on sentences, sentence fragments, paraphrasing, and sentence patterns. An academic paper requires sentence variety, but students very often cannot maintain sentence variety in their thesis. Similarly, challenges in discourse contain discourse ambiguities, mixtures of discourse categories, subject shifting in discourse, inconsistency, and overgeneralization of discourse (Wang, 2004). Students' incomplete knowledge of grammatical items, carelessness in academic writing, lack of the habit of revising and editing the draft, a casual attitude towards uncertainties, and interference from their mother tongue are other challenges in thesis writing (Peng, 2018). These linguistic challenges are associated with meta-discourse challenges in thesis writing rather than content and other generic challenges (Swales, 1990). As mentioned by Parry (1998), supervisors experienced that the students struggled to organize consistent and balanced information for certain chapters of the thesis due to their unfamiliarity with research activities. Supervisors also remark that students struggle to frame their arguments in reference to the literature due to a failure to employ a proper

model of the thesis (Thompson, 1999). According to Thompson (2009), students struggle with writing hypotheses, literature review, methodology, results, and discussion and hypothesis and referencing research works that they have reviewed. Armstrong (2004) asserts that nearly fifty percent of students are unable to conclude their dissertations due to three distinct factors: personality, professionalism, and organization. Examples of the personality factor include distinctions in interpersonal language and work style. Organizational factors include student responsibilities and inadequate departmental provisions. Ignorant students and a lack of research interest are examples of the professional factor.

In addition to challenges at the linguistic level, numerous studies have identified additional challenges directly related to the genre of theses in terms of the introduction, literature review, research techniques, and discussion. Qiao (2013) investigated the English major students' difficulties in writing the introduction of their thesis at six institutions in northern China. The research shows that the probability value of the qualified samples is somewhat low, and there are significant differences in the relative frequency of the required moves used in writing the introduction section of the thesis. The study further emphasized that some students lack adequate awareness of the genre structure, social functions, and cognitive schema of a thesis, which hinders their ability to effectively convey their ideas in their thesis. Samraj (2008) also argues that students mostly focus on the real world instead of focusing on and identifying a niche or gap in the territory.

Similarly, the study conducted by Tahririan and Jalilifar (2004) revealed three challenges that students face while writing the literature review section of their thesis. These challenges include students' inability to construct a theoretical framework, their inability to create a research gap and reinforce the research gap due to their unfamiliarity with moves used in writing literature reviews, and their interest in incorporating the literature of elite authors or publications. According to

Yin (2009), poor academic foundations, a lack of knowledge of plagiarism, and the unavailability of related literature in their institutions are the main challenges faced by students while writing the literature review of their thesis. His study further highlighted that these challenges result from a lack of student autonomy, poor reading habits, and supervisors' negligence. A similar study conducted by Mullins and Kiley (2002) identified students' difficulty in identifying relevant literature and systematizing and categorizing literature in a consistent and logical manner as the main challenges in writing the literature review for the thesis. Their research has further explored personal or external factors that contribute to the difficulty of writing a literature review. Personal obstacles include a lack of English language proficiency, academic aptitude, and reading and writing experience. Limited access to academic materials, the laziness of the students, and the thesis evaluation system are examples of external obstacles.

The issues that advanced EFL students have with writing about research methodologies include data collection and analysis (Zhang, 2013). Those that concentrate on empirical research seem to struggle more with data collection and analysis, which are crucial components of their dissertation. Graduate students are said to struggle with the appropriateness of the research approach and the veracity of the gathered data.

Bitchener and Baskurkmen (2006) have identified three main challenges faced by EFL postgraduate students while writing their theses. The first is the students' poor understanding of the function of the discussion section; the second is the student's inability to review the related literature in an appropriate manner; and the last is their inability to select an appropriate methodology. According to Lan (2015), discussion sections written by EFL academic writers tend to be subjective and unconvincing. So, writing the discussion section of the thesis is its most challenging component.

It is clear from the literature reviewed above that EFL research students



face a variety of linguistic and general difficulties when writing a thesis in English. It must be acknowledged, however, that there is a paucity of literature addressing supervisors' perspectives in the Nepalese context. In addition, the vast majority of these studies tend to be statistically weighted and devoid of qualitative information. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to gather qualitative information from administrators regarding the difficulties master's level EFL students confront when writing their theses.

### **Methodology**

I utilized the qualitative content multiple case research approach since the research focuses on identifying underlying patterns in the materials being analyzed across multiple cases. With this method, data may be gathered and processed in their natural context without being converted into a numerical form for analysis. Case studies allow for the in-depth examination of social phenomena in the natural environment without compromising sensitivity to the complexity and contextual interconnectedness. Participants in the study included eight supervisors who had supervised at least ten master's-level EFL theses written by master's level major English students at constituent campuses under FoE, TU. I selected eight constituent campuses utilizing a simple random sampling technique and, then I identified the English language teachers with the help of the campus chiefs of respective campuses; and then I selected the eight most experienced supervisors, one supervisor from each campus, using purposive sampling. Teachers' experience was determined based on the number of theses they have supervised rather than the number of years they have taught on campus. I wrote the names of selected participants in alphabetical order and coded their names from S1 to S12 according to alphabetical order. I employed a semi-structured interview technique to collect the data. A consent letter was sent to each of the participants via email, and after receiving their consent, I started to conduct the interview. Self-designed interview protocols were piloted with three supervisors to assess the quality of questions, the

range of potential responses, and the validity of questions. All interviews were conducted in English using Zoom, a video and audio conferencing tool. In addition to the pre-planned questions, unanticipated questions also arose from the major questions with either pre-planned or unanticipated probes. Each interview lasted, on average, 35 minutes. Interviews started in May 2022 and continued until August 2022. Four participants were interviewed twice, while the remaining eight were only interviewed once. All interviews were transcribed and analyzed using the constant comparison technique of qualitative data analysis. The interview transcripts were reviewed and coded by examining and comparing instances. Then distinctive recurrent patterns were recognized and synthesized.

To conduct the research in an ethical manner, I made an effort to adhere to all ethical guidelines. I made every effort to prevent bias and preconceived notions throughout the process. The data were anonymized to protect the identities of respondents and to handle any ethical issues that surfaced during the research in the strictest confidence. Participants were informed of the study's objectives, methods, prospective risks, rewards, and uncertainties, as well as other pertinent information.

### **Findings and Discussion**

The findings of the research are presented in themes. Overall, six themes have been identified based on the information from the semi-structured interviews. Each of the themes is presented and discussed separately in the following section.

#### **Students' Lack of Research Knowledge**

The majority of supervisors stated that their students had little research-related knowledge required to write the thesis in English Education. Despite the fact that some of them were secondary-level English teachers with outstanding scores in written examinations. The participants stated that the students lacked academic socialization, as shown by their incapacity to conduct a critical literature review and their inability to develop their own theoretical framework for their

study. The following excerpt stated by S5 revealed that supervisors are often unsatisfied with students who are academically dependent.

Some students score highly in the written test. But it is evident that their personal research skills are very poor. We (supervisors) must use every available method to assist them in selecting topics, searching related literature, preparing proposals, proofreading and editing the thesis written by the students.

Regarding students' research foundation knowledge, three supervisors said that students lack a grounding in thesis writing since they do not understand what research is and are not taught how to create research reports. Similar to S5, S7 mentioned that students lack expertise and background in research writing since the majority of them have no concept of how to look for material independently. S6 also shared that the students can easily find the required resources to write a thesis in English education, but they do not want to search the resources themselves; rather, they ask supervisors to provide books and other materials they require while writing the thesis. The following excerpt mentioned by S3 also supports that the students do not have the sufficient background knowledge required to write a thesis at the master's level. As S3 said:

Most of the students whom I supervised did not have fundamental knowledge of the thesis writing process. Although they had studied research methodology courses in B.Ed. fourth year and M.Ed. fourth semester, they were quite unfamiliar with terminologies used in thesis writing. They understood the statement of the problem, literature review and discussion terminologies in different ways.

It is evident from the data that supervisors were completely aware of the obstacles postgraduate students in the Humanities encountered and the tactics they used while preparing the literature review for their theses. There were both parallels and differences in the reports of the supervisors. The findings indicate

that supervisors are very dissatisfied with their research students' inadequate use of general thesis writing characteristics despite their good written scores. Students struggle with thesis writing from the beginning, such as when they must choose a subject and compose a research proposal. This seems to support the results of prior studies demonstrating that EFL students from varied cultures and educational systems commonly fail to achieve thesis writing standards. According to Turmudi (2017), preparing the literature review for the thesis is challenging for students. Students' writing anxiety is referenced in the thesis writing study due to a scarcity of relevant past studies.

### **Difficulties in Integrating and Generalizing Related Literature**

The majority of the participants stated that the difficulty pertaining to the literature review section was mainly centered on the theoretical framework, author identity, argument support, and move development. The supervisors mentioned that the student's inability to integrate and generalize related literature is the main problem for students. As S1 explained:

I gave three model theses to a student who was writing theses under my supervision. Then I told him to write a proposal as soon as possible. After a few days, he told me that he did not have much time to study many theses, so he asked me to provide another sample thesis that could really help him write the proposal. When I told him to search for the model thesis in the library himself, he told me that he could not write the thesis himself. He also asked for the name of any institute that could write a thesis for him. Two days later, he came to see me again. The second time, I handed him two more sample theses and advised him to write a proposal based on the model thesis that I had given him.

All the supervisors mentioned that the skills of integrating existing literature and identifying research gaps were the most difficult tasks for the students during thesis writing. The participants further stated that the students felt

difficulty finding the relevant literature. Whenever they find the literature, they cannot summarize, paraphrase, or generalize it. The participants said that the students copied the literature into their theses without changing even a single word. As evidenced by the following statements made by the S8:

Their literature review is often like a shopping list: person A says this, person B says that, and if you ask them what patterns can be observed from these, they are quite poor in this respect, which is a major worry of mine.

Two of the participants reinforced this claim by asserting that the students' literature reviews were distinct from their own study. The lack of a critical perspective was at the heart of the issue, which led to the poor formulation of study questions. Their literature study was wide since it did not expressly relate to their own investigation. He elaborated:

Literature reviews must first be related to their own theme; they cannot be like two pieces of cake that have been sliced and are lying there independently. Many of the literature review articles I have read seem uncomplicated, yet, what literature review-related questions prompted the authors to do this research? This section's initial purpose is to explain the origins of the authors' inquiries. They should introduce their questions by referencing prior research, and there should be a strong relationship. Now, they are separated sometimes.

So, the literature review and the report of their own study in theses had two different styles, which showed a difference between what could be written and what could be shown, as he said:

They often replicate the original texts. In their theses, there are two distinct styles: the literature review section is well written since some of it is borrowed, but when it comes to their own research, such as participants, instruments, conclusions, and debates, there are several errors.

Thus, students were deemed incapable of producing evaluative literature evaluations in accordance with their supervisors' expectations. They were simply

permitted to reproduce or retell what was written without commentary on what they had read. Moreover, the students are unable to integrate, generalize, and organize the existing literature from several sources, which is considered a fundamental research competence. They can read and write individual chapter summaries or book reports, but they lack perspectives on what they have read. When evaluating sources, all they can do is describe or replicate the actual content of the book. As a result, their writing is more narrative than evaluative. The data show that students lack critical thinking abilities. To participate effectively in the advanced academic literacy process, students must enhance their research competency, which includes comprehension, problem-finding, problem-solving, and generalizing skills. Despite the general characterization of the writing of the thesis literature review as a challenge in the present study, consistent with the literature (e.g., Haider, 2012; Hayes & Flower, 1986), it is evident that issues such as the availability of classical texts and endnotes and footnotes were not only significant but also discipline-specific. As shown by the literature (Bilal et al., 2013), faculty members were worried about the difficulty faced by the students while synthesizing and critiquing the related literature. It was frequently difficult for graduate students to comment on the limits or relevance of different results (Allison et al., 1998).

### **Difficulty in Constructing Their Own Conceptual Framework**

The participants stated that as a consequence of their failure to generalize the literature, students were unable to develop their own conceptual framework in their research thesis. In this regard, S5 shared:

They (the students) are not proficient in generalizing the findings of the previous research studies. This is a problem that all students face during the research proposal defense stage. They can only write research papers and cannot create a conceptual framework. In my opinion, the main challenge in thesis writing in English Education is students' inability to

integrate and generalize similar concepts from the literature and develop their own conceptual framework.

One of the participants mentioned that students cannot answer their research questions because they do not have the idea of framing a conceptual framework, which is deemed the most important aspect of thesis writing. As S7 accurately stated:

Research outcomes are secondary, as findings. It is the capacity to identify issues, integrate current material, and construct one's own framework that matters throughout one's whole writing process. I believe that access to literature, materials, articles, and books, particularly current research papers and books, is often a huge issue. As a result, the applicant will devote the majority of his time to studying extremely irrelevant literature so they cannot prepare conceptual framework and establish strong theoretical foundations of the thesis.

The findings revealed that the students were unable to develop their own conceptual framework based on a broad variety of previous literature by posing their own queries. They fail to identify the connections between prior research and their own study and, hence, fail to construct their conceptual framework. They are also unsure of how to conduct research. Finally, their supervisors must assume responsibility for bringing the thesis up to an acceptable level. This is for many students, not just one. To summarize, students are thought to depend extensively on their supervisors academically in terms of literature review and conceptual framework owing to their inadequate English writing foundation and research skills, regardless of their ability to do well on admissions tests.

### **Difficulties in Selecting the Appropriate Methodology**

All the supervisors argued that the student's lack of experience, training, and competence in research techniques caused them difficulty in selecting appropriate methodologies that suit their topic of the thesis. For instance, S5

clarified that students write without understanding the methods they are learning in their course. Additionally, S7 stated:

They face issues with data collection, tool design, and suitable tool selection. They cannot generally employ qualitative research because producing the conclusions section calls for much imagination and thought.

The participants stated that students have trouble integrating the literature review, knowing how to construct their questions, and defining the tools, goals, and framework. S1 added:

Discussing the findings properly and coherently is a significant problem.

They lack the ability to defend the outcomes. They have several difficulties while outlining the steps they take to study the issue and the outcomes of their empirical investigation in the methodology chapter.

Therefore, a large number of participants recommended that students require additional training in research methods and that merely providing one brief session may not be sufficient. Wadison (2021) agrees with these results, noting that the methodology section might be difficult for students to master since they must thoroughly research and comprehend the proper technique, instrument, and data analysis.

### **Difficulties in Citing and Referencing the Sources**

Supervisors noted a variety of issues with students' improper usage of references and in-text citations. S2 said, for instance:

Many students find it difficult to follow the APA style guidelines for in-text citations and referencing sources, such as a book, an online resource, a link, and so on. Students are unfamiliar with electronic citation and reference tools. Not utilizing computerized and modern techniques of citation and references, such as Mendeley, Endnote, or other citation software, presents another obstacle for the students.



Referencing or citation procedures were often cited as a problem by the interviewing supervisors. The majority of the participants said that students struggle with the complexities of reference. The literature review is primarily concerned with citations, and it is not uncommon to see students referencing incorrectly. As S4 stated, the students were quite unfamiliar with style manuals, so they experienced difficulties in citing and referencing. He further believed that this was something teachers should be able to examine and provide feedback on. In a similar manner, S2 added:

Even when it comes to citing, it is sometimes disappointing; a master's level student does not know how to handle footnotes, endnotes, and in-text citation. Yes, sometimes they do not go beyond secondary sources such as books, but not journal papers, etc.

Citing or referencing sources is the most critical aspect of writing. It permits authors to recognize the thoughts or words of others in order to prevent plagiarism. In addition, it displays that the author is familiar with the relevant literature and can cite the opinions of experts to support his argument. Even if it is inadvertent, failure to correctly cite the material gained from the authors of any sources, such as the Internet, books, magazines, journals, newspapers, etc., is deemed plagiarism. This finding of the study is in line with the study conducted by Divsar (2018), which concluded that the students faced problems in writing authors' names and references, as well as a lack of indentation. A similar study by Lan (2015) also highlighted that, due to their lack of awareness of the significance of citation, they tended to use one citation pattern and were reluctant to use the other patterns. Furthermore, they lacked a critical eye toward references and had trouble using the correct reference forms.

### **Linguistic and Academic Difficulties**

Supervisors agreed that students needed to improve their academic writing abilities. They further claimed that some students struggle with the mechanics of

writing. They have poor English language competency and have a limited comprehension of the fundamentals of the research process. As S7 said:

Some students write poorly and lack basic academic writing skills. They frequently write poorly formed sentences, incorrect punctuation, and disorganized paragraphs. Originality and inventiveness are necessary for a thesis. They face linguistic obstacles at all stages, from drafting the proposal to writing the thesis.

In essence, students seemed to experience a wide range of issues with writing mechanics, tenses, ungrammatical sentences, punctuation mistakes, language choice, rephrasing, and information synthesis in larger chunks of speech. Evidently, they were not adequately prepared for the refined academic writing needed for a master's thesis that had been accepted. Similar to S7, S2 also shared:

The main challenge faced by students is that they are unable to synthesize ideas, maintain arguments, use suitable academic language, and maintain consistency and cohesiveness. In my experience, I have not met any student who can write consistently and cohesively.

Supervisors are concerned about the use of language from the micro to the macro level and are unwilling to take on the role of a proofreader. According to the evidence presented, students have trouble writing a thesis, particularly in terms of their English proficiency and time management. They face challenges in thesis writing since their English is still inadequate and restricted, which prevents them from writing an effective thesis. This phenomenon may occur because English is distinct from Nepali; as a result, individuals may have challenges with language comprehension and effective writing. According to Hyland (2019), the majority of academic writing students lack the necessary English language capability, such as deficiencies in tenses, ambiguous or loose sentence construction, unparalleled sentence construction, flaws in the surface and deep structure of sentences, poor

vocabulary and expression (style of language), and the inability to transform or rephrase texts for synthesizing information as a member of written discourse.

### **Conclusion**

From the standpoint of supervisors, this preliminary study gathered an in-depth contextual understanding of the prevalent general challenges in the thesis writing of master's-level EFL research students. The interview data analysis about the difficulties master's-level EFL students faced revealed some intriguing results. These results imply that writing a thesis is related to more entrenched and observable issues. In most cases, the students are unaware of the different techniques to address the types of problems they experienced in their thesis writing. Both supervisors and respective departments can assist in addressing the concerns found in this issue. In the case of generic difficulties in writing theses, supervisors may assist students in identifying relevant areas of the thesis and in finding related literature for those areas. The results mentioned above have educational implications as well, necessitating ongoing supervision of supervisors as well as students when it comes to preparing theses. Specific guidance on how to write a thesis literature review might be beneficial to them since some students may not be able to acquire what they need to know on their own. Supervisors and respective departments can work with departments throughout the campus to identify the unique issues that these students encounter while writing their theses in order to better satisfy their requirements as master's level students. The FoE can also modify academic writing courses to take student needs, progress, and input from supervisors into account. Supervisors may participate in seminars and training on cutting-edge methods of instruction and support for students as they manage their thesis writing.

It is crucial to recognize the limits of our research at this stage. The conclusions of this study need to be tested on research participants from other disciplines, especially from other faculties, since the research participants (i.e.,

supervisors) are all from the FoE. Furthermore, the study's participants were male, so future studies in the field will need to include the perspectives of female supervisors. This study at least demonstrates the need for more research on supervisors in certain institutional, cultural, and disciplinary contexts and their experiences in helping students learn to write theses. More ethnographic research is needed in departments from both education and other settings to examine supervisor perception and assistance for students writing other high-stakes genres of theses, such as methodology, analysis, and discussion. Future research will also need a triangulation of student interviews with supervisor interviews.

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### **Estimation of Global Solar Radiation using Angstrom and Gopinathan Model on Sunshine Hour and Temperature in Highland, Nepal**

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### Abstract

In developing countries like Nepal, the direct measurement of global solar radiation (GSR) is difficult. So, the estimation of GSR is carried out at Jumla (29° 16' N, 82° 11' E and about 2347 m altitude) for the year 2015 and 2017 using regression technique to the meteorological parameters on Angstrom model, Gopinathan and Olomiyesan- Oyedum models. Among three models, Olomiyesan and Oyedum model is better than other models. Its empirical constants  $a = 0.38$ ,  $b = 0.10$  and  $c = 0.09$  are found. The values of statistical errors MBE, MPE and RMSE are smaller than other models. Similarly, the coefficient of determination ( $R^2=0.89$ ) is greater than other models. Finally, the finding empirical constants and meteorological parameters sunshine hour, and temperature are used to estimate the GSR for the year 2017. In addition to this, the annual average GSR for the year 2015 and 2017 are found to be 18.86 MJ/m<sup>2</sup>/day and 17.50 MJ/m<sup>2</sup>/day respectively. It is concluded that the finding empirical constants are used to estimate the GSR and solar energy at similar geographical location of Nepal.

*Keywords:* global solar radiation, relative sunshine duration, clearness index, regression analysis

### **Estimation of Global Solar Radiation using Angstrom and Gopinathan Model on Sunshine Hour and Temperature in Highland, Nepal**

With the evolution of mankind, the energy has been becoming an important part of life. In the ancient period of time there was no invention and use of energy resources in different forms. The only available energy source is solar energy originated from the sun. That's why sun is termed as the 'GOD' because it is the source of all kinds of energy in the earth necessary to survive living beings. Solar energy is clean and pollution less source freely available everywhere. So to promote the alternative energy source like solar energy, it is necessary to study about global solar radiation. Many empirical models have been formulated so far to estimate the GSR (Poudyal, 2015). The Global Solar Radiation is very important weather variable to study various environmental phenomenon as it plays vital role in the climate change. Nepal is situated in between  $26^{\circ}22'$  -  $30^{\circ}27'$  N latitude and  $80^{\circ}4'$  -  $88^{\circ}12'$  E longitude. So it receives the annual average global solar radiation of 3.6 - 6.2 kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/day and sunshine hours for about 300 days in a year (Ahmad, 1989). The global solar radiation is important for most ecological model and input for different solar systems. Sunshine duration the main parameter to estimate global solar radiation. A study of the world distribution of global solar radiation requires knowledge of the radiation data in various countries. Unfortunately, there are very few meteorological stations that measure global solar radiation in the developing countries. For such stations, the alternative approach is to estimate global solar radiation from other measured meteorological parameters (Poudyal et al., 2012).

Incoming solar radiations affect the climatic factors. Solar radiation data are very important for the development and applications of solar energy technology. The study of global solar radiation includes various parameters like rainfall, sunshine hour, relative humidity and temperature. Among the various

parameters sunshine hour is a good predictor of global solar radiation. The establishment of an empirical model may take a long period of global radiation and sunshine duration measured (Aryal, 2012). The green planet earth receives  $1.76 \times 10^{24}$  erg radiant energy per second which is the most by any luminous masses in solar system. The radiant energy is the only source that affects atmospheric motion and responsible for the various phenomena in the atmosphere. It affects the processes like air and soil heating, evapotranspiration and snow melting. Therefore, its knowledge is important in different fields as hydrology, climatology, biological processes agriculture and most applications concerning the utilization of renewable energy resources (Kunwar & Poudyal, 2017).

Sufficient amount of energy is one of the important factors of economic growth and development. Today's world is facing increasing energy consumption, giving rise to more use of fossil fuels that is responsible for the global warming phenomenon. Most countries in the world are introducing renewable energy projects to reduce dependence on the fossil fuels. Renewable energy sources are clean and widely available in different parts of the world (Yakuba & Medugu, 2012). The amount of energy emitted by the sun in one hour is sufficient to cover the world's energy need for one year. The sun discharges an enormous amount of energy but the earth intercepts an average of 1367 watts per square meter is called solar constant. The energy received by the earth depends upon the thickness of atmospheric layers (Janjai et al., 2011). With the rapid use and degradation of fossil fuel in the world, they create negative impact on economy and environment. The construction period for the new power generation projects takes long time and rapid improvement of energy supply cannot be expected. On the other hand, the biomass energy does not work well in cold high altitude region. Although in Nepal there is high probability of Hydroelectricity, it costs high and needs huge infrastructure to construct and operate. All above mentioned facts show that it's

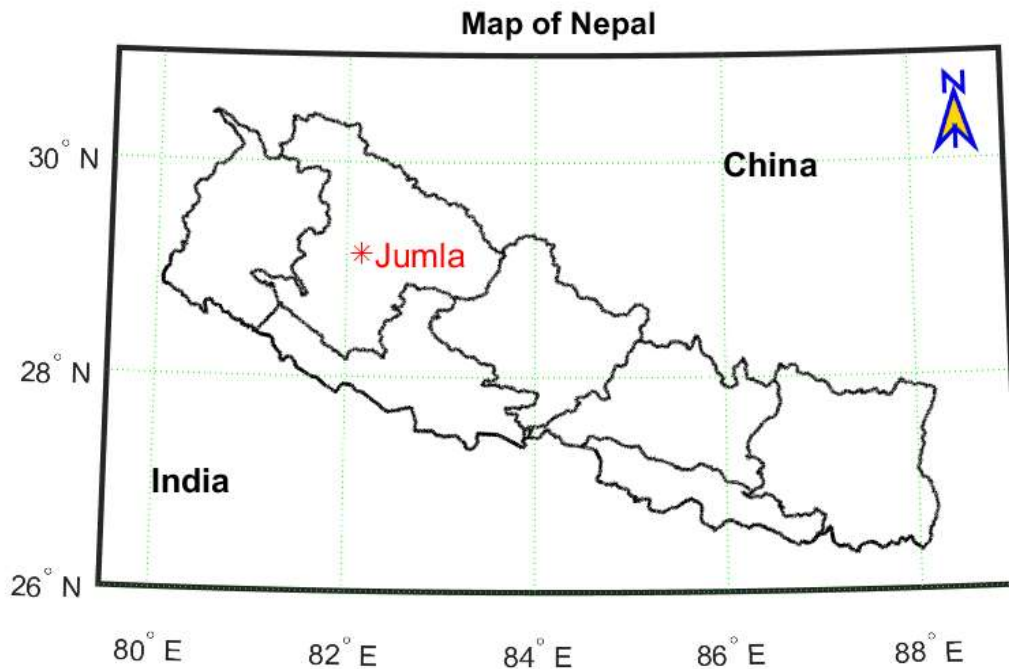
time to shift towards more clean and sufficient alternative form of energy i.e. solar energy (Kondratyev, 1969).

### Material and Method

Jumla is located in Himalaya Region of Karnali Province, Nepal. It is shown in Figure 1. Its geographical coordinates are 29° 15' North, 82° 15' East and altitude is about 2514 m from the sea level. The total area of Jumla district is 2,531 km<sup>2</sup> the average lowest temperature varies from -7.8°C in winter to 30.8°C in summer.

#### Figure 1

*Map of Nepal (Survey Department, GoN,2020)*



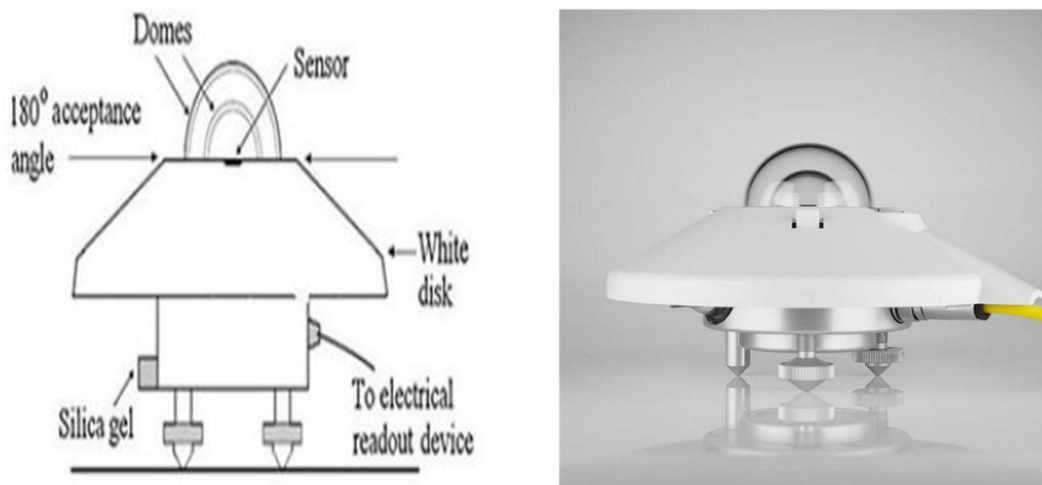
The annual average global solar radiation is 3.6 – 6.2 kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/day and the sun shines for about 300 days in a year. It lies in between cold climate to alpines. This region is wet, cloudy with windy in summer and chilly cold and dry in

winter. Its total precipitation is about 670 mm to 967 mm per year. The topography of Jumla is steep (Kipp & Zonen, 2008).

The CMP6 Pyranometer is used to measure global solar radiation as shown in Figure 2. It consists of thin blackened surface supported inside a well-polished case. The spectral range of this instrument is from 285 nm to 2800 nm. The operating temperature is from  $-40^{\circ}\text{C}$  to  $80^{\circ}\text{C}$ . The main components of Pyranometer are two glass domes, metal body, black sensor, radiation screen level and cable. There is a sensor that is designed to measure the GSR flux from a field of view of  $180^{\circ}$  (Poudyal, 2015).

**Figure 2**

*CMP6 Pyranometer and its Internal Structure (Kipp & Zonen, 2008)*



**Working Principle:** When solar radiation falls on this surface, the temperature rises until its rate of loss of heat is equal to the rate of gain of heat by radiation. The black coating on the thermopile sensor absorbs the solar radiation and is converted into heat. This rise in temperature sets up a thermal e.m.f. which is measured on recorder. The thermopile sensor generates a voltage output signal

that is proportional to the solar radiation. So we get the global solar radiation directly in  $W/m^2$  (Kipp & Zonen, 2008).

### Theory

Global solar radiation can be estimated using two different methodologies: empirical models and parametric models. Empirical models need a large database and they are best for local applications. Parametric models are of general use and need a large information on atmosphere composition (Tiwari & Tiwari, 2016).

#### Angstrom-Prescott Model

Various empirical models have been developed to calculate global solar radiation using different parameters. The equation postulated by (Angstrom, 1924) and modified by (Prescott, 1940) is given by

$$H = H_o \left[ a + b \left( \frac{n}{N} \right) \right] \quad (1)$$

Where,

$H$  = Incoming daily terrestrial global solar radiation ( $MJ/m^2/day$ )

$H_o$  = Daily extraterrestrial radiation ( $MJ/m^2/day$ )

$n$  = Bright sunshine hours per day (hr.)

$N$  = Astronomical day length (hr.)

The astronomical day length  $N$  is calculated as

$$N = \frac{2}{15} \cos^{-1} [-\tan \phi \tan \delta] \quad (2)$$

Where,

$\phi$  = latitude in degree

$\delta$  = Solar declination angle in degree

$H_0$  is determined by using equation defined by Duffi and Beckman (1991)

$$H_o = \frac{24}{\pi} I_{sc} \left[ 1 + 0.33 \cos\left(\frac{360n}{365}\right) \right] \left[ \cos \phi \cos \delta \sin \omega_s + \frac{2\pi\omega_s}{360} \sin \phi \sin \delta \right] \quad (3)$$

$I_{sc}$  = Solar constant

$\omega_s$  = Sunset angle

### **Gopinathan Model**

The empirical coefficient a and b can be estimated using Gopinathan (1988) model as follows,

$$a = 0.265 + 0.07z - 0.135 \frac{n}{N} \quad (4)$$

$$b = 0.401 - 0.108z + 0.325 \frac{n}{N} \quad (5)$$

Where, z is altitude of the site in kilometer. To compute the estimated values of global solar radiation, the values of a and b are used in Equation (1) given by Angstrom.

### **Olomiyesen and Oyedum Model**

A two parameter – based empirical model is developed by Olomiyesan and Oyedum (Olomiyesan et al, 2017) to estimate global solar radiation and is given by,

$$\frac{H}{H_0} = a + b \frac{n}{N} + c \frac{\Delta T}{N} \quad (6)$$

where,



$\Delta T = T_{max} - T_{min}$  is the temperature difference and a, b and c are empirical constants which are to be determined.

### Results and Discussion

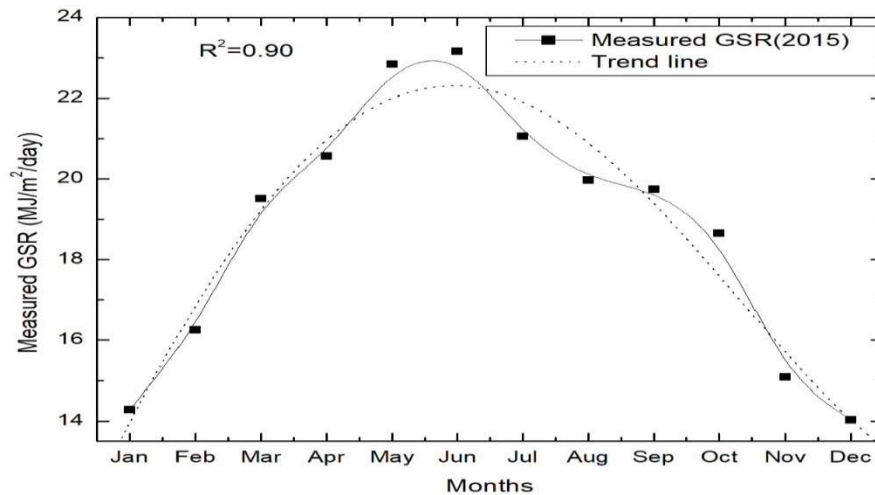
The measurement and estimation of Global Solar Radiation of Jumla has been carried out in this thesis work. Data are measured with CMP6 Pyranometer and necessary meteorological parameters are available from Department of Hydrology and meteorology (DHM). There are so many empirical models for the estimation however three different linear models are selected based on sunshine hour, relative humidity, altitude and temperature to predict the GSR for the year 2015 and 2017.

#### Monthly Mean Variation of Global Solar Radiation

The variation of monthly average GSR for the years 2015 in Jumla is shown in Figure 3 below.

**Figure 3**

*Monthly Mean Variation of Global Solar Radiation*



Maximum and minimum value of measured GSR is observed to be 23.17 MJ/m<sup>2</sup>/day and 14.02 MJ/m<sup>2</sup>/day in June and December respectively in Jumla.

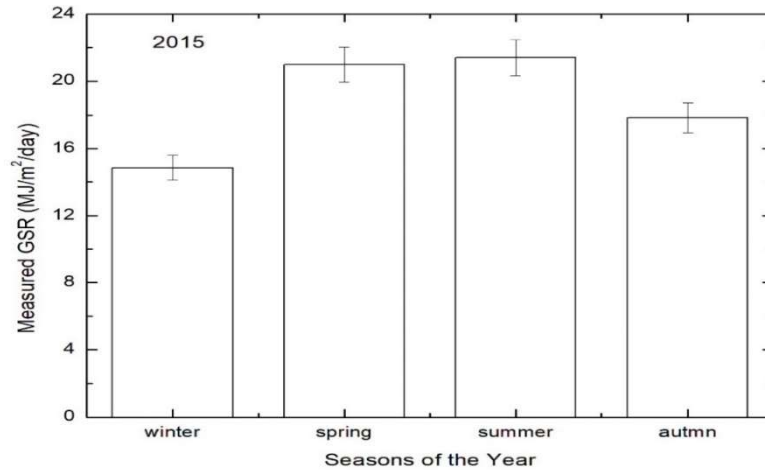
Similarly, the annual average measured value of GSR is  $18.76 \text{ MJ/m}^2/\text{day}$ . The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) is 0.90 which signifies that 90 percent of the data are closer to best fit.

### Seasonal Variation of GSR

Figure 4 and 5 show the seasonal variation of measured solar radiation and predicted solar radiation in Jumla for the year 2015 and 2017 respectively. The obtained values of GSR in winter, spring, summer and autumn are 14.84, 20.97, 21.39 and  $17.91 \text{ MJ/m}^2/\text{day}$  respectively for the year 2015. The maximum value of GSR is found in summer than in spring because of cloudy and rainy days. In 2017, the average GSR in spring is greater than summer because of spring in no more cloud and rain in comparison to summer season.

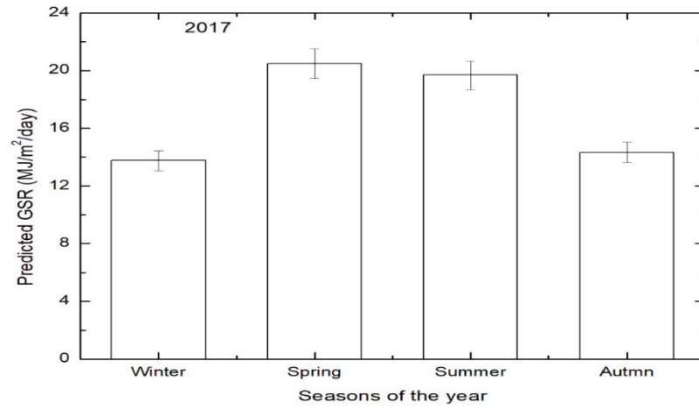
**Figure 4**

*Seasonal Variation of GSR in Jumla for 2015*



**Figure 5**

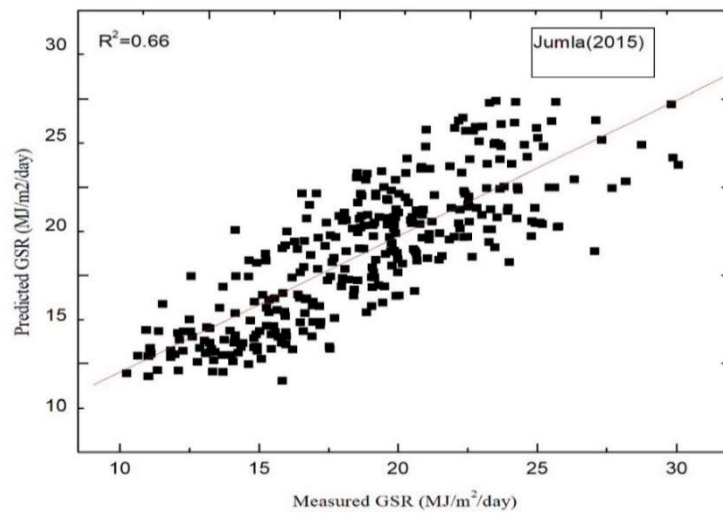
*Seasonal Variation of GSR in Jumla for 2017*



The predicted *and measured global solar radiation* using Angstrom, Gopinathan and Olomiyesan and Oyedum Model for the year 2015 is shown in the Figure 6, 7 and 8 respectively. Among three models the Olomiyesan and Oyedum Model is better than other models.

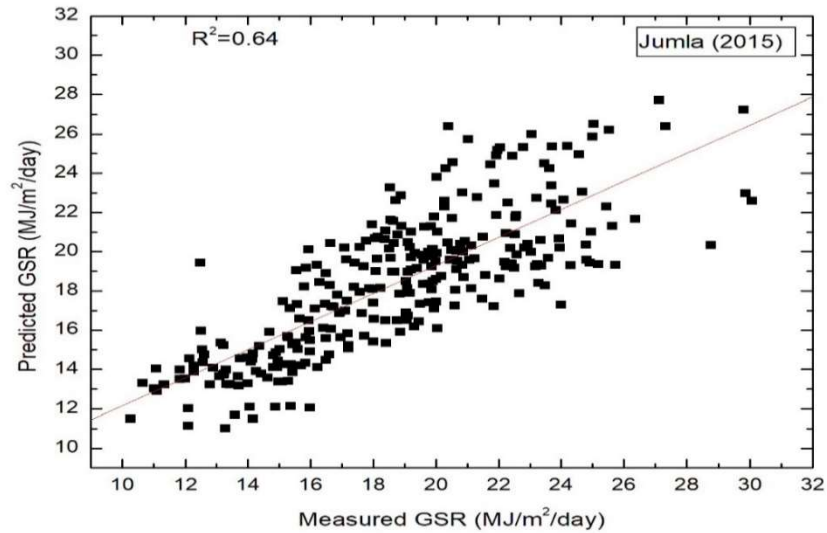
### Figure 6

*Measured and Predicted GSR in Jumla for 2015 by Angstrom Model*

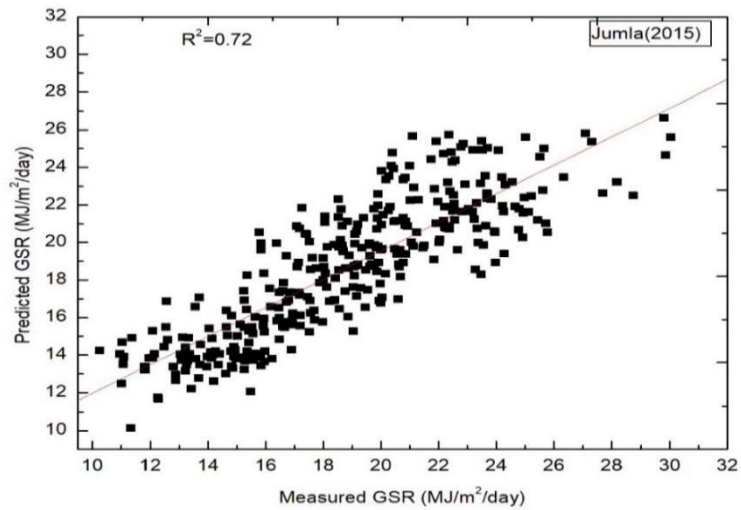


**Figure 7**

*Measured and Predicted GSR in Jumla for 2015 by Gopinathan Model*

**Figure 8**

*Measured and Predicted GSR in Jumla for 2015 by Olomiyesan and Oyedum Model*



**Table 1**

*Validation of the Models Using Different Meteorological Parameters Under Statistical Tests in the Year 2015*

S. No.	Statistical Parameters	Angstrom – Prescott model	Gopinathan model	Olomiyesan and Oyedum model
1.	MBE (MJ/m <sup>2</sup> /day)	0.17	0.16	0.08
2.	MPE (%)	1.98	2.12	1.77
3.	RMSE (MJ/m <sup>2</sup> /day)	2.96	3.19	2.55
4.	R <sup>2</sup>	0.66	0.64	0.72

The three linear models have been used to estimate the GSR and the regression coefficient. Thus, obtained regression coefficients from the year 2015 are used to estimate the GSR for the year 2017. Analyzing the errors as given in previous table, we conclude that these linear models can estimate the GSR with some errors. From the above finding empirical coefficients are compared with the result obtained by Adhikari et al. (2013), Shrestha et al. (2021), and KC et al. (2020). These finding results are very much closer to the results obtained the from present study. Thus, it is confirmed that there is sufficient amount of solar energy available in our research site.

### Conclusion

The values of regression coefficient ‘a’, ‘b’ and ‘c’ are calculated using the data for the year 2015 for all three models. For model 1, a=0.39 and b= 0.29 and for model 2 we have a=0.34 and b=0.35 whereas for model 3 we have a=0.38, b= 0.10 and c=0.09. The obtained values of regression coefficients were used to

estimate the values of GSR for one year. The trend of estimated GSR with measured GSR as given by the scatter plots suggests that the models can well predict the GSR values. The presented three models were compared on the basis of statistical tools such as RMSE, MBE, MPE and  $R^2$ .

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### **Mental Health as a Global Development Challenge:**

#### **A Critical Analysis of the Case in Nepal**

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#### **Author Note**

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**Abstract**

This paper builds on primary literature to provide a critical analysis investigating mental health as a global development challenge in the context of Nepal. First, the Nepalese mental healthcare context is introduced and reviewed. Second, challenges for mental healthcare progress in Nepal are examined, and solutions are suggested. Third, this analysis considers the critical role of Nepalese traditional healers in the solution to its mental healthcare challenge. Further, community development is discussed in the context of mental healthcare, and finally, suggestions are devised for global mental health promotion.

*Keywords:* Nepal, mental health, traditional healers, healthcare

### **Mental Health as a Global Development Challenge: A Critical Analysis of the Case in Nepal**

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of mental health promotion for global development. In addition to the severe negative impacts on the physical health of populations globally, the pandemic has had profound implications for mental health (Hossain et al., 2020). While a comprehensive mental health epidemiology of Covid-19 is lacking, Covid-19 has been described as both a physical pandemic and a mental health epidemic (World Health Organization [WHO], 2022a).

To illustrate, one clear trend has been the dramatic 25 percent rise in rates of depression and anxiety globally linked to the impacts of social isolation, job loss, and challenges accessing community and social support (WHO, 2022a). Additionally, the pandemic exacerbated existing social inequities, whereby women and people with pre-existing physical health conditions were more likely to be affected by mental health disorders (WHO, 2022a). Furthermore, according to the WHO (2022a), mental healthcare services, including vital suicide-prevention care, have been among the most disrupted services during the pandemic, shedding light on disparities and gaps in care.

The case for improving mental healthcare in global development is clear. One of the most critical outcomes of psychiatric disease is suicide, with estimates upwards of 90 percent (Arsenault-Lapierre et al., 2004; Bertolote & Fleischmann, 2002). Although most people with mental disorders do not commit suicide (Brådvik, 2018), a recent metanalysis found that mental disorders were significant predictors of suicide, with estimates of 2 to 8 percent for dysthymia and 8 to 14 percent for major depressive disorder (Moitra et al., 2021).

Suicide is one of the leading causes of death among young adults, and individuals with severe mental illness die an average of two decades earlier than

those without these challenges (WHO, 2019). In addition to the association between mental health and suicide, globally, mental health problems account for 7.4 percent of disability-adjusted life years and 22.9 percent of years lived with disability (Whiteford et al., 2013). Thus, mental health reaches beyond individual private considerations and needs to be on the agenda for national and global development. A major recognition of the importance of mental health for global development, mental health is the inclusion in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) (United Nations - Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2022), subsumed under the third goal. Mental health is included in target 3.4, with the reduction in suicide mortality rate as the associated outcome indicator.

The definition of mental health has evolved substantially and continues to change. Mental health is understood as an important part of overall health. Early conceptualizations merely viewed health as an absence of illness; and, therefore, mental health as an absence of mental illness (Larsen, 2022). Manderscheid and colleagues (2010) go beyond this definition by positing wellness and illness as two separate dimensions. In their definition, they include the development of autonomy as a dimension of wellness – a notion that lends itself to individualist perspectives.

To Galderisi and colleagues (2015), a globally applicable definition of mental health needs to capture a wide variety of social and cultural backgrounds. In contrast to earlier definitions, these authors define the concept in more depth than simply describing it as an absence of mental illness. An attempt to create a culturally inclusive in-depth definition of mental health is articulated in the following:

Mental health is a dynamic state of internal equilibrium which enables individuals to use their abilities in harmony with universal values of society. Basic cognitive and social skills; ability to recognize, express and

modulate one's own emotions, as well as empathize with others; flexibility and ability to cope with adverse life events and function in social roles; and harmonious relationship between body and mind represent important components of mental health which contribute, to varying degrees, to the state of internal equilibrium. (Galderisi et al., 2015, pp. 231-232)

According to this conceptualization, mental health encapsulates a complex, dynamic process of functioning in society. Contrary to this conceptualization, however, mental health does not play a central role in the SDGs (2022). Instead, adopting a narrower definition in this framework, mental health is subsumed in one of the targets of SDG goal three, and the associated indicator is the suicide rate. This appears to reflect a return to an earlier definition of mental health as merely an absence of mental illness (Larsen, 2022). This critique has been reinforced by Votruba and Thornicroft (2018), who forcefully argue for a distinct, clear mental health target with its associated indicators in the SDG framework.

Stafford-Smith et al. (2016) also advocate for a separate mental health target that is well integrated with the existing framework to maximize implementation success and avoid jeopardizing progress on alternative SDGs. A useful indicator in this realm might be the treatment gap, the percentage of people with a mental disorder that is left untreated. Cross-country summary research estimates that for most mental disorders in most countries, more than 40 percent of the population does not get adequate treatment (Kohn et al., 2018). This consideration is particularly important in Low and Middle-Income Countries (LMIC) where the disease burden attributed to mental health is high, resources are limited, and accurate data is scarce (Rathod et al., 2017).

Nepal offers a unique window of opportunity for researchers and practitioners interested in assessing the impact of SDG goal three on mental

health promotion. Like in other LMICs, mental health resources in Nepal are scarce and, when available, are largely concentrated in major urban centers (Luitel et al., 2015). This treatment gap has both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, a large treatment gap allows researchers to easily identify and distinguish measures for improving treatment outcomes. From the practical standpoint, the presence of a treatment gap highlights the urgent need to implement measures to close treatment gaps to improve mental health outcomes in Nepal.

In this paper, we critically examine mental healthcare challenges in Nepal in the context of the SDGs. To honor the uniqueness of the Nepalese context, traditional modes of healing are introduced as important determinants of healthcare delivery. We conclude with suggestions for enhancing mental healthcare in the context of community and social development in Nepal.

### **Mental Health in the Context of Nepal – Challenges and Solutions**

An analysis of how to improve mental healthcare delivery in Nepal must begin with a thorough understanding of the local context. While an exhaustive description of the social context of mental healthcare delivery in Nepal is beyond the scope of this paper, in the following, we outline some key developments that have impacted mental health services and access to these services over the last few decades.

Currently, Nepal faces a complex mental healthcare challenge. The mental healthcare system is comprised of multiple care providers operating at the federal, provincial, and local levels, each of which plays a unique role in providing services (Ministry of Health and Population, 2022). Specialist mental health services such as psychiatrists are limited to major hospitals at the provincial level and there are no specialized mental healthcare institutions specifically for children and the elderly (Luitel et al., 2015). Additionally, a large portion of the population

lives in rural areas in Nepal, while most of the treatment resources are concentrated in urban areas (WHO, 2022b)

Historically, system change has been slow in Nepal. In 2020, health expenditure amounted to only 2.4 percent of the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP), of which mental health expenditure is a subcategory (Government of Nepal Ministry of Finance, 2020). According to WHO (2022b), Nepal's mental health expenditure is 0.05 USD per capita – a fraction of the total health expenditure of 25.40 USD per capita. The decade-long civil war in Nepal, which ended in 2006, affected every sector of health services delivery and healthcare infrastructure (Luitel et al., 2015). Further, healthcare infrastructure was a strategic target of the war efforts in Nepal, severely damaging its emerging mental health infrastructure (Luitel et al., 2015).

Since the end of the civil war, Nepal has focused on decentralizing its primary healthcare system to fulfill a primary goal of the first National Health Policy in 1991 (Ministry of Health & Population, 2012). This approach is targeted at improving healthcare access for rural populations as healthcare services had previously been centralized and access had been largely focused on serving city populations.

The creation of 3,129 Sub Health Posts (SHPs) that serve as the first low-barrier contact points of the population appears promising in this respect. Mental health services are now being integrated into their repertoire to minimize barriers to access (Luitel et al., 2015). However, according to Luitel and colleagues' (2015) analysis, one major criticism of the SHPs is their inability to dispense necessary psychotropic medication to help-seeking individuals. Also, challenges remain in training health assistants in SHPs on evidence-based, culturally embedded mental health service delivery (Luitel et al., 2015; Rathod et al., 2017).



Further gaps are evident in the government's mental healthcare service delivery. Nepal developed its first mental health policy in 1996, which commits the government to provide essential mental health services to the population (Luitel et al., 2015). A comprehensive review of its implementation by Upadhaya in 2013 identified several challenges, of which two of the most urgent ones are analyzed in the following. The first objective of the policy, to provide minimum mental health services to the population, lacks implementation regarding the most vulnerable and oppressed communities, according to Upadhaya (2013). Upadhaya (2013) further identifies that although most regions in Nepal have seen increased availability of mental health services for the population partly due to the policy, the availability of mental health services has overlooked the far-western and remote hill regions of the country. Furthermore, while Nepal's Ministry of Health and Population provides free medication for medical conditions, it does not offer common psychotropic medication free of charge, frequently leaving lower caste and socio-economically disadvantaged individuals and communities underserved (Upadhaya, 2013). Taken together, these efforts have helped Nepal achieve significant improvements in health levels and standard of living since the end of the conflict, however, some challenges remain, particularly in the availability and accessibility of mental health services. To address the pertinent gaps in mental health service delivery, the Community Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Programme, a national Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) was established in May 2003 (Centre for Mental Health & Counselling-Nepal, 2022). The program aims to integrate mental health and psychosocial services into district hospitals, health posts, and primary health centers (Centre for Mental Health & Counselling-Nepal, 2022). It targets community mental health through awareness training and community education in 16 rural communities. In 2020, the program had achieved significant reach, providing mental health services to more than

8500 people in 192 municipalities (Centre for Mental Health & Counselling-Nepal, 2022).

Efforts directed at mental health care have also been made at the community level, often considered a strength in LMICs such as Nepal (Rathod et al., 2017). For example, Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHVs), were introduced in 1988 by the Government of Nepal (Ministry of Health and Population, 2022a). The FCHVs provide a critical linkage of communities to healthcare services such as dispensing commodities and providing referrals (Khatri et al., 2017). Currently, there are more than 50,000 FCHVs with more than 89 percent operating in rural communities (Ministry of Health and Population, 2022a). Importantly, as FCHVs are not trained mental health professionals, their effectiveness in improving outcomes is dependent on their ability to detect individuals in distress and refer them to the appropriate resources. The possibility of FCHVs to detect victims of gender-based violence (GBV) has shown promising results regarding FCHVs' willingness to provide services as well as community acceptance (Betron et al., 2020). GBV is a worldwide pandemic, particularly in low-and-middle-income countries and in humanitarian crises St John and Walmsley (2021) indicate that “survivors are left with a combination of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety,” which lead to further morbidity and mortality (p. 792399). While few interventions have been developed for this population specifically, Khatri and colleagues (2017) point to the need for a comprehensive reorganization of the fragmented role of FCHVs to improve their effectiveness in health promotion.

Traditional healers are the preferred first contact for mental healthcare in Nepal (Gupta et al., 2021a). Hence, their role needs to be considered when reorganizing mental healthcare solutions. The advantages of traditional healers may complement those of psychiatric and psychological practitioners in line with a biopsychosocial-spiritual model of care (Pham et al., 2020). The

biopsychosocial-spiritual model of care acknowledges that it is critical to understand patients' spiritual symptoms to improve health outcomes (Katerndahl, 2008). Crucially, Katerndahl (2008) found that spiritual symptoms are correlated with life satisfaction and healthcare usage and describe a complex interconnection between psychological and spiritual symptoms that cannot be ignored. The following section briefly examines the role of traditional healers in the mental healthcare context of Nepal.

### **Traditional Healers in the Mental Healthcare Context of Nepal**

The global mental health discourse carries an inherent inconsistency: it is often pointed out that the cultural context matters for effective mental healthcare but fails to implement local knowledge in practice, instead favoring purely biomedical perspectives (Chase et al., 2018). The DSM-5 (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual; American Psychiatric Association, 2013) introduced the *cultural formulation interview* as a 16-item semi-structured instrument to elicit cultural understandings of mental illness and care and adapt the treatment accordingly (Aggarwal & Lewis-Fernández, 2015). More specifically, the instrument aims to obtain information on cultural perceptions of the problem, support, help-seeking, and coping from the patient's perspective (Aggarwal & Lewis-Fernández, 2015). While the inclusion of the cultural formulation interview is an important step, it does not address bigger-picture concerns of how culture permeates mental healthcare systems and practices (Gopalkrishnan, 2018).

Traditional healing is embedded in many cultural practices worldwide to facilitate healing within communities. They are the most popular first point of contact for mental health concerns for the Nepali people within their communities, with 28 percent of patients utilizing them as their first resource (Gupta et al., 2021a). A recent scoping review examining the role of traditional healers in most major regions of Nepal found that even within the boundaries of

Nepal there exists great diversity in traditional healing practices (Pham et al., 2020). Traditional healers utilize a wide variety of diagnostic tools that “[...] included pulse checks, social interpretation, and magico-religious divination, recitals, and offerings” (Pham et al., 2020, p. 7). They often combine diagnosis and treatment.

To understand the role played by traditional healer more clearly, it would be important to shed light on the five realms of the self in Nepali ethnopsychology: 1) *ijjat* (social status), 2) *dimaag* (brain-mind), 3) *man* (heart-mind), 4) *saato* (spirit), and 5) *jiu* (body) (Kohrt & Harper, 2008). These five realms are interconnected and deeply ingrained in the understanding of mental health and how it is communicated in the communities of Nepal (Kohrt & Harper, 2008). In all ethnopsychologies, the realms of self are intricately linked and interconnected – imbalances in one aspect potentially throw other realms off balance, too. However, Gurung, Lohorung Rai, Newars, and other ethnic groups in Nepal have differing mind-body conceptions, the examination of which is beyond the scope of this paper (Kohrt & Harper, 2008).

Traditional healers explain suffering mainly through the lens of the *saato* (spirit) and speak to the need to connect with symbolic and spiritual forces (Korth & Harper, 2008; Pham et al., 2020). Korth and Harper (2008) explain that disruptions of the *saato* cause distress. For example, traditional healers diagnose how fear and shock can disrupt the *saato* and even result in *saato gayo* (the loss of the spirit from the body). Further, when the *saato* has left the body, it is more vulnerable to supernatural forces that may enter the body and is more susceptible to physical illness (Korth & Harper, 2008).

Some critical implications can be drawn from the brief analysis of traditional healing and bodily realms in Nepal. Crucially, psychiatrists and psychosocial workers interpret the suffering in terms of different facets of the

bodily realms than traditional healers (Korth & Harper, 2008). Having alternative explanations for illness without interconnection is challenging both individually and on a systems level. Individually, it makes help-seeking difficult and tedious: if individuals are not satisfied with a given explanation, they need to seek a different care provider which is associated with renewed wait for treatment, potentially long travel time, and travel costs. Additionally, help-seeking decisions are mediated by supernatural beliefs that influence when and which care provider is sought, particularly in individuals with schizophrenia (Gupta et al., 2021a).

In the context of Nepal, traditional healers stand to provide care alongside other mental healthcare providers such as psychologists and psychiatrists (Gupta et al., 2021b). For Gupta (2021b), individuals seek out diverse care providers with no systematized referral system, potentially further complicating help-seeking. For instance, a study in Nepal demonstrated that longer, more complex pathways to care are associated with longer durations of untreated disease in individuals with schizophrenia (Gupta et al., 2021a). This situation may be further exacerbated by potential rivalries between healthcare providers: a dualistic competitive view of either traditional or Western modes of care is against the need to meet the holistic healthcare needs of Nepalese people. Further, such a conception overlooks the inherent strength of traditional healing that is embedded in cultural practices and belief systems (Pham et al., 2020) and their shared complementary goal with Western psychiatric practice to improve mental health outcomes. In general, practitioners and policymakers are faced with the complex challenge of avoiding the so-called category fallacy (Kleinman, 1987) of imposing Western psychiatric diagnoses in contexts with low cross-cultural validity.

Interesting parallels can be drawn between Nepal and Cambodia, which also saw major impacts of war on population health, including mental health (Somasundaram et al., 1999). Cambodia's path of starting mental healthcare

facilities in an environment with predominantly traditional modes of healing has striking similarities with the Nepalese context. In Cambodia, the implemented program aimed at minimizing interference with traditional healing practices and, on the contrary, encouraged their usage (Somasundaram et al., 1999) alongside newly introduced healthcare provision following a Western model. While Somasundaram et al. (1999) are hesitant to make concrete suggestions, a fruitful theme in Cambodia's case was the recognition that both traditional healers and Western model care providers each carry their unique strengths, which may be complementary and improve overall population mental health outcomes.

This section presented a brief introduction to faith healer practices and traditional perceptions of mental health as well as Nepalese ethnopsychology. Future work is needed to investigate concrete implementations that harness both traditional and non-traditional modes of care. In the following section, Community Development (CD) is introduced as an under-investigated practical approach to introducing mental healthcare within local communities.

### **Community Development Approaches to Mental Health in Nepal**

Community Development (CD) in the context of mental health is often ill-defined and broad: ranging from interpretations of CD as “individual self-help to radical collective action” (McCabe & Davis, 2012, p. 508). In this paper, we adopt O'Donnell and Karanja's (2000) transformative view of CD, which posits transformation as a central concept of community practice. These authors further advance that this approach to CD “best encapsulates the process by which people come to know their own internal spirit and strength in order to develop alternative visions of themselves and their community” (p. 75). Like other forms of community practice, CD aims to strengthen social ties within the community. Social connectedness has been demonstrated as a key protective factor for mental health (Saeri et al., 2018).

However, CD has been largely neglected as a method for promoting community mental health. Research by McCabe and Davis (2012) identifies three core barriers to achieving CD that promotes mental health. They assert that community models of mental health are often rooted in narratives of pathologies and not community strengths. Furthermore, these researchers challenge the notion of CD as a value-free approach, it overlooks structural inequities and barriers to mental health. Finally, policy objectives need to be aligned in that CD is an iterative reflective process aimed at the long term, while mental health interventions often target the short term.

Community developers can more effectively support community-level mental health if they aim to directly overcome these barriers with the view of bridging gaps between CD and mental health. They need to openly discuss and align the underlying objectives of CD to the needs of the local communities. For example, community developers must view mental health as a concern for CD and become equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to address mental health in vulnerable communities (McCabe & Davis, 2012).

Recognizing community strengths for mental well-being and rooting CD in these assets appears to be another avenue of achieving community mental health promotion from the bottom up. This idea is in line with the asset-based CD approach, the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) model (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). ABCD emphasizes community strengths and assets. Instead of building communities from the top down, this model stresses community strengths and building strong communities from the inside out by giving community members a central role in the development process (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Interestingly, one may view Nepal's efforts of using NGOs to fill crucial gaps in the mental healthcare system as a deficiency-based approach. An ABCD approach to CD that instead includes and builds upon the strengths of local communities may stand to improve mental health outcomes.

For CD to be effective in the Nepalese context, it needs to overcome challenges of cross-cultural validity. As Laing (2009) points out, classical models of community practice, such as those developed by Rothman (1974) lack cultural sensitivity or altogether exclude the cultural forces that shape communities. A recent comparative review concluded that Facilitation for Empowerment and Social Transformation, a theory of community development based on Freire and redesigned and introduced in Nepal in 1996, is an “effective tool to help the community people experience the possibility of having meaningful development change through mutual collaboration and actions, promoting the effective and sustainable use of local resources” (Malla, 2021, p. 23). This model requires in-field quality studies, and its effectiveness, mental health specifically, has not been evaluated (Malla, 2021). Further, deciding on the single most applicable model of community practice in mental healthcare in Nepal is challenging as, to our awareness, there is no current research on the effectiveness of alternative or local CD models directed at mental health in Nepal.

### **Conclusion and Future Directions**

In sum, this paper investigated the state of mental healthcare in Nepal from an SDG-informed perspective. We identified diverse mental healthcare providers and pathways to care and devised suggestions for strategic improvements, such as the utilization of FCHVs and further integration and harmonization of providers.

In Nepal, CD approaches offer promise but are yet to be integrated into mental healthcare promotion. One challenge persists in harmonizing diverse culturally shaped interpretations of suffering and subsequent solutions and treatments. In Nepal, traditional healing practices coexist with Western modes of care, such as psychiatry. This paper recognizes the potential to commit the category fallacy (Kleinman, 1987) and suggests potential remedies for the



integration of traditional and non-traditional modes of healing as a remedy. Further, we outlined potential synergies in Nepal as illustrated by the case of Cambodia (Somasundaram et al., 1999).

On the global level, mental health is increasingly understood as important in sustainable development as it is therefore gaining more recognition and investment (Scorza et al. 2017). Three-quarters of the 1 billion people with mental disorders live in LMICs, and their number is projected to increase (Patel et al., 2016). Although effective and low-cost interventions are available, governments often lack the funding to address mental disorders in LMIC countries (Iemmi, 2019). The inclusion of mental health in the SDGs as an official development goal was a major milestone for global mental health. However, there remain challenges to the integration of mental health targets into programs supporting other SDGs (Scorza et al., 2017; Stafford-Smith et al., 2016). Finally, further effort is required to devise more detailed mental health indicators and targets to channel efforts into the most effective measures and to understand how this might be integrated and evaluated in the context of Nepal.

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**Vulnerable to Precarity: COVID-19 and the Experience of Difference by  
Newcomers, Immigrants, and Migrant Workers in Canada**

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### Abstract

When COVID-19 struck Canada in 2020, immigrants, newcomers, and migrant (agricultural) workers were among those most vulnerable to the pandemic. Their experiences of the pandemic were accentuated by an exacerbation of pre-existing racial and other forms of discrimination. The article emerged from a systematic review and thematic synthesis of the broadly defined literature on immigrants, newcomers, and migrant workers' experiences of multifaceted challenges amid the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada. We established inclusion criteria and systematically searched for articles in databases, including JSTOR Journals, Social Work Abstract (EBSCOhost), PsycINFO, and other grey literature published between March 2020 and January 2023. The findings suggest that immigrants, newcomers, and migrant workers in Canada experienced systemic inequalities, which worsened their socio-economic status, placing them at higher risks of poor health outcomes. The following themes that underscore the experiences of immigrants, newcomers, and migrant workers in Canada were identified: a) that immigrants, newcomers, and migrant workers in Canada experienced negative socio-economic impacts due to COVID-19, b) that immigrants, newcomers, and migrant workers in Canada experienced aggravated precarious and inequitable employment during COVID-19, c) that immigrants, newcomers, and migrant workers in Canada experienced COVID-19 related racial discrimination, and d) that COVID-19 negatively impacted immigrants, newcomers, and migrant workers' mental health and well-being. Important directions for future research, including for studies that prioritize new immigrants, are provided.

*Keywords:* COVID-19, Canada, newcomers/new immigrants, employment discrimination, racial discrimination, marginalization, access/barriers to social support, mental health, and well-being

### **Vulnerable to Precarity: COVID-19 and the Experience of Difference by Newcomers, Immigrants, and Migrant Workers in Canada**

At 0.5%, Canada has one of the highest population growth rates among the industrialized nations of the world (World Bank, 2022). This rate is spurred by immigration (Statistics Canada, 2021a, World Bank, 2022). For example, Statistics Canada (2022) revealed that over 8.3 million people, representing nearly 23.0% of Canada's population, were immigrants. The projection by Statistics Canada (2022) is that the immigrant population could reach somewhere from 29.1% to 34.0% of the Canadian population by 2041. From 2016 to 2021, a little over 1.3 million new immigrants were reported to have settled permanently in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2022). Of this number, 748,120 were admitted into the country under the Economic Class. In 2019, Canada admitted 341,175 permanent residents, granted study permits to 401,050 international students, and 368,730 temporary work permits (Feenan & Madhany, 2021). According to Feenan and Madhany (2021), international students injected about \$22 billion into the Canadian economy and supported about 170,000 employment opportunities. In October 2020, the government of Canada introduced Canada's Immigration Levels Plan for 2021-2023. According to this plan, Canada aimed to welcome 401,000 new permanent residents in 2021, 411,000 in 2022, and 421,000 in 2023 (Government of Canada, 2020).

Similarly, in November 2022, the Federal government released Canada's 2023–2025 Immigration Levels Plan, which aimed to admit 465,000 new immigrants in 2023, 485,000 in 2024, and 500,000 in 2025 (Government of Canada, 2022). Furthermore, in August 2022, the federal government introduced a policy that allowed former international students whose post-graduation work permit expired or will expire between September 20, 2021, to December 31, 2022 to extend their work permit for another 18 months or apply for a new one for a

similar length of time (Government of Canada, 2022). Prior to this new policy, former international students whose post-graduation work permits expired before they could transition to permanent residents were expected to return to their home countries. All these changes and relaxations in Canada's immigration policies created a positive impression of the country both locally and internationally as an open and welcoming country for newcomers. However, an important reality is that Canada has, for a long time, depended on immigrants to meet its labor market demands. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic slowed down the inflow of immigrants and greatly impacted the country's ability to fill employment vacancies. For example, Statistics Canada (2022) reports that towards the end of 2021, job vacancies in the country were 80% higher than they were before the pandemic hit in the first quarter of 2020. This shortfall in the supply of labor meant the government of Canada had to find ways to incentivize foreign nationals to come to the country or for those who were already in the country on a temporary basis to regularize their stay as permanent residents. For the purpose of this review, newcomers refer to immigrants who have lived in Canada for five years or less.

Despite the significant contribution of newcomers in terms of the population growth and economic prosperity of Canada, they are exposed to systemic inequalities and intersecting forms of oppression during their quests for employment and integration in Canada. Furthermore, at the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Canada lost three million jobs between March and April 2020. Thus, economic activities came to a standstill over this period (Atlin, 2020). When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020, immigrants, newcomers, and migrant workers were among those most vulnerable to the pandemic. This review aims to provide an in-depth understanding of immigrants, newcomers, and migrant workers' experiences amidst the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada. A systematic review and thematic synthesis (Popay et al., 2006) approach was employed for

this project. The key question that guided our exploration of the literature and analysis of extracted data was: What were the employment experiences of immigrants, newcomers, and migrant workers to Canada during the COVID-19 pandemic?

### **Methodological Approach**

To answer our stated questions, we identified, collected, and screened extant publications on new immigrants' job search and employment experiences in the Canadian labor market during COVID-19. Shortlisted publications were critically reviewed and analyzed for this paper. Webster and Watson (2002) suggest that, in order to conduct a literature review, it should start by searching for relevant studies in leading journals. We searched databases, including JSTOR Journal, Social Work Abstract (EBSCOhost), and PsycINFO. In addition, we obtained grey literature from Google Scholar to complement empirical literature. Keywords used to conduct the search were: "Newcomers," "new immigrants," "temporary migrant workers," "COVID-19," "employment challenges," and "employment barriers." These key terms were searched individually and in combination, along with the phrase "in Canada." For this review, the search focused on peer-reviewed journal articles published in the English language between March 2020 and January 2023. Again, a qualified article must be based on the labor market experiences of newcomers or new immigrants in Canada. During the preliminary search of the terms listed above, we identified 39 related articles. Upon initial review of the titles and abstracts, we eliminated articles that did not meet the foregoing predetermined inclusion criteria. Articles that met the inclusion criteria were included in the final pool that was reviewed for this paper. Overall, a total of 17 articles were included in the pool that were reviewed and analyzed. In order to build context and ensure a robust discussion of our findings, we relied heavily on grey literature from Government of Canada publications, including those from Statistics Canada and Immigration, Refugees and

Citizenship Canada. In all, our analysis generated four major themes, which we present and discuss subsequently.

### **Socio-Economic Impact of COVID-19**

The COVID-19 pandemic, which began in China sometime in November 2019, quickly assumed the status of a global crisis with local consequences in Canada by March 2020, when social and economic activities came to a nearly complete standstill. It created unprecedented job losses across the provinces and territories of Canada. Hou et al. (2021) indicate that, in Canada, three million jobs were lost between the months of March and April 2020. Accordingly, Ivanova (2020) states that in the province of British Columbia (BC) alone, more than 590,000 workers lost their jobs or work hours due to the pandemic. The onset of the pandemic accentuated the already worsening systemic inequalities in the Canadian labor market for immigrants, especially for those who were new to the country. More workers who were engaged in precarious employment (e.g., temporary, part-time, low-paid positions) lost their jobs compared to workers in secure and highly-paid jobs. It is imperative to note that most of the workers in the former category are immigrants who are mostly new to the country (Karki & Moasun, In Press). Ivanova (2020) argues that the disproportionate impact of the pandemic among BC workers needs to be understood in order to design effective and equitable solutions for rebuilding the provincial economy post-pandemic. Helps et al. (2021) suggest that the “*structural inequities have persisted despite the government and society in Canada re-imagining such workers as essential during the pandemic due to their indispensability within Canadian food chains*” (p. 161).

In Canada, the COVID-19 pandemic tested the safety nets of federal, provincial and local unemployment systems for immigrants and newcomers in an unprecedented way due to the pace and extent of layoffs resulting from the

pandemic. Gelatt (2020) indicates that many of the immigrant workers in frontline industries, despite being hard-hit, were classified as non-citizens and were unable to access safety-net support and services. Studies have demonstrated that a limited number of newcomers, despite widespread financial difficulties, reported receiving social benefits that were purposefully created to cushion residents against the effect of financial hardship. For example, Atlin (2020) found in a study that about one-third of respondents received social benefits in June, which was up from 13% in April. However, 48% of respondents among newcomers who believed they were eligible to receive social benefits began to receive support in June.

Hou et al. (2021) argue that the pandemic affected newcomers more than Canadian-born citizens. The COVID-19 pandemic affected more newcomers with no social connections than those who had been residing longer in Canada. The core argument by Hou et al. (2021) is that because newcomers are most often employed in precarious and low-paying jobs, they are more likely to be laid off or experience cuts in work hours during an economic downturn. Beland et al. (2020) found that immigrants reported a compromised ability to meet financial obligations and were more concerned with losing their jobs than Canadian-born individuals. Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted newcomers' ability to meet financial responsibilities and essential needs, and were more likely than Canadian-born citizens to fear losing their jobs (Beland et. al. 2020).

LaRochelle-Côte and Uppal (2020) argue that for most newcomers, their economic well-being is a paramount concern, and therefore, it is possible for them to stress more about finances than those who are born in the country. Studies suggest that the economic downturn engendered by COVID-19 had a devastating effect on the finances of newcomers in Canada. For example, Atlin (2020) conducted a survey among newcomers to Canada and found that more than 15 % of the respondents reported losing their jobs during COVID-19, while 24 % of



immigrants who were self-identified as Canadian residents and 22 % of migrant workers had fluctuating experiences of job losses at one point during the pandemic. Further, about 24 % of permanent residents could not afford to pay either rent, mortgages, or utilities (Atlin, 2020). The author also found that there was a great fiscal impact of the pandemic among international students. It was established that up to 26% of international students lost their primary sources of income, and 34% were unable to either pay for their rent or utilities.

Guttman et al. (2020) found that environmental conditions seriously impacted the health and well-being of newcomers during the pandemic based on how immigrants resided in communities where there was a problem of overcrowding. The authors indicated that newcomers were more susceptible to catching the COVID-19 virus itself due to overcrowding and the inability to maintain social distancing. This position is affirmed by Amoako and MacEachen (2021), who equally make the case that much of the immigrant population in Canada reside in overcrowded housing arrangements and poorly maintained neighborhoods, which make it impossible to maintain physical distance from other community members. Bowden and Cain (2020) argue that the reason cities such as Toronto and Montreal became the epicenters of COVID-19 in Canada was that there were significant newcomer populations who resided in areas of the cities dominated by substandard housing. As a result, the virus was able to quickly spread among them.

Mo et al. (2020), in their comparative analysis, found that immigrant women were more prone to social and economic disparities due to a myriad of intersectional factors, including race, gender, and immigration status, than their Canadian-born counterparts. Amoako and MacEachen (2021) posited that immigrant women, due to systemic inequalities, were subjected to racial and gendered barriers in employment, experiencing limited opportunities. Women entrepreneurs among the newcomers had their businesses hit harder than

Canadian- born businesses (Turcotte & Hango, 2020). This experience suggests that the financial impacts of the pandemic on female immigrants and newcomers can exacerbate social concerns and disrupt family and social relationships due to financial difficulties and loss of business opportunities as well as employment.

The COVID-19 pandemic interrupted the services that supported the economic, social, and cultural integration of newcomers in Canada. Barker (2021) posited that the ability of newcomers to form social connections allows them to develop social capital and foster the links of social bonds which migrants form among families or people from the same ethnic background and religious or political associations. The social bridges represent the newcomers' abilities to build an inclusive community in partnership with other racial minority groups, while the ability of newcomers to perform their civic responsibilities toward the state and community is referred to as the social links. However, the pandemic hindered social networking among immigrants, particularly newcomers, who were in the most disadvantaged position due to the lockdown and travel restrictions imposed by the government. Against the dominant discourses of improved access to services by immigrants to services, Ghahari (2020) also raises the issue of housing insecurity, arguing that many newcomers do not have a family member or close friends they can live with if they lose their accommodation.

### **Precarious and Inequitable Employment**

The COVID-19 pandemic created uneven (im)mobility for citizens of different countries. The implementation of lockdowns, border closures, and other travel restrictions was applied unevenly by different Nations across the world. Trans-national traveling was negatively impacted, with nations determining who was permitted to enter their jurisdictions and who was not (Caxaj et al., 2020; Hamilton et al., 2022). Within countries, the labour force was categorized into essential and non-essential, with only essential workers allowed to move,

sometimes out of their homes and only for the purposes of work during the peak of the pandemic when lockdowns were in effect. This categorization and the subsequent restriction of non-essential workers from going to work had dire consequences for newcomers and migrant workers in Canada. Dempster et al. (2020) posited that over 60% of the newcomers worked in highly impacted sectors compared to their Canadian-born counterparts. As a result, there was a widespread loss of employment and an increment in the level of poverty among newcomers. The loss of employment was compounded by the inability of many newcomers to access government-sponsored social benefits.

The Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) was the government's flagship social support program that was rolled out immediately following the announcement of the nationwide lockdown decision by the federal government. CERB involved a \$2,000-a-month support for those who stopped working because of COVID-19. In order to qualify for the CERB, one must have lost his/her job due to COVID-19 related reasons; must have earned at least \$5,000 in 2019 or in the 12 months prior to their CERB application; and must not have quit his/her job voluntarily (Jingco, 2020). The CERB conditionalities had negative consequences for newcomers on different grounds. First, newcomers who were unemployed at the time of the lockdown were automatically excluded from accessing the CERB facility. Again, a newcomer who might have recently been employed prior to the onset of the pandemic and who due to the low-paying nature of his/her job would not have been able to earn up to the minimum \$5,000 could not meet this threshold to be able to access CERB. While we acknowledge that these conditions affected newcomers, Canadian citizens, and long-term immigrants alike, our argument is that with no social network and existing family support in Canada, many newcomers, including international students became stranded and suffered physically and mentally (Hargreaves et al., 2020; Jingco, 2020)

Studies have demonstrated that immigrants and newcomers are overrepresented in the lower end of the job market. Immigrant workers are disproportionately overrepresented in jobs such as hospitality, retail, care, and manufacturing which placed them at risk of the pandemic (Guttmann et al., 2020). Further, many immigrants made up for their low-paying jobs by taking on extra shifts and hours. Hence job-related restrictions significantly reduced migrant worker shifts and their ability to take on more hours to increase their income, adding to the impoverishment of newcomers and migrant workers. Again, travel restrictions imposed by the government of Canada prevented newcomers and migrant workers who were adversely affected and would have wanted to return to their home countries in order to escape from the harsh realities of COVID-19 imposed hardships from doing so. This meant that many newcomers and immigrants lived in perpetual fear and uncertainty, which had implications for their physical, psychological, and mental well-being.

Barker (2020) posited that systemic barriers that excluded newcomers from access to social and other support services were responsible for the creation of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ between the newcomers and the Canadian-born citizens. Newcomers, in contrast to the Canadian-born population, were often denied some rights and privileges, such as access to healthcare. The nature of the jobs of many newcomers and migrant workers, including those working as personal support workers or live-in caregivers, meant most did not have the opportunity to work from home. This did not only leave them working in fear of contracting the virus as some of their employers continued to work as essential workers, but also, it meant that live-in care workers were prevented by their employers from seeing their families because of the fear that they would be exposed to the virus if they were allowed to frequent their homes. Some live-in care workers complained of not seeing their families, sometimes for months (Migrant Rights Network, 2020). They were not paid for their overtime hours and had no access to social and

personal support networks. Migrant Rights Network (2020) indicates that most care workers in Canada lived with their employers and kept working while everything was at a standstill, which contributed to the high level of care worker workload and exploitation during the pandemic. The migrant care workers were unable to help their families who relied upon them for sustenance during this period because they were not being paid while they continued to work for their employers, looking after their children, and providing care for the seniors during COVID-19 (Learning Network, 2020).

Caxaj and Cohen (2021) assert that Canada usually grants over 50,000 visas under the temporary migrant worker program to foreign nationals on a yearly basis which represents a substantial portion of Canada's agricultural industry labor force. However, Canada does not appear to put commensurate measures in place to care for migrant worker populations. The lack of support services for migrant worker populations in Canada was heavily exposed to the onset of COVID-19. Our analysis of the literature suggests that temporary migrant workers had the largest exposure to COVID-19 outside healthcare facilities in Canada (Caxaj & Cohen, 2021). Despite the known risks and barriers faced by migrant workers, there were no established procedures to prevent and/or provide quick responses to positive COVID-19 cases among migrant workers (Caxaj & Cohen, 2021).

In sum, COVID-19 caused high levels of unemployment among newcomers, with those who qualified to become welfare-dependent while those who did not qualify found themselves in abject struggles. Some of those who remained in employment lost significant hours and became underemployed, while others were de-skilled because they were only employed in jobs that were not commensurate with their educational and professional qualifications.

### COVID-19 Related Racial Discrimination

The outbreak of COVID-19 in Canada was also accompanied by racial prejudicial exclusionary and discriminatory behaviors towards newcomers. This was exacerbated by the pervasive discriminatory assumptions about who needs public protection and who does not (Caxaj & Cohen, 2021). Caxaj et al. (2022) found that Mexican migrant agricultural workers in British Columbia reported:

high rates of experiences of threats and violence by employers, [had] limited faith in the follow-through of both Canadian and country-of-origin authorities when reporting concerns, and a unanimous lack of knowledge in how to file a claim of a legal matter (p. 139).

Furthermore, Sonnenberg (2020) posited that migrant agricultural workers were made the scapegoat amidst the pandemic across the country because some health units and employers actively blamed migrant agricultural workers with the excuse that migrant workers did not comply with the request to be tested. However, Mojtehdzadeh & Keung (2021) report that migrant agricultural workers complained of being exposed to COVID-19 when multiple workers had to be transported by one bus to their various farm locations. As expressed by one migrant worker: *“We cannot continue a plantation system of labour where Black and brown workers are subjected to deadly dangerous and dirty work because no level of government will take the necessary steps to protect workers”* (para. Mojtehdzadeh & Keung, 2021, p. 33).

Individuals from racial minority groups experienced discrimination due to their skin colour or countries of origin. Statistics Canada (2020a) indicates that most newcomers were more than likely to be exposed to racial harassment, attacks, and stigmatization as opposed to the dominant groups, which added to their stress levels. Caxaj et al. (2020) argue that using the race of migrant workers to classify them as non-belonging is in-tune with the prevailing racial discrimination which was responsible for the hostility migrant workers faced from

their host communities. Racialized individuals, including Chinese, Koreans, Southeast Asians, Blacks, and Indigenous women, reported experiencing race-based discrimination during the pandemic (Statistics Canada 2020b). At the onset of the pandemic, many Chinese migrants and other individuals with Asian backgrounds were scapegoated and discriminated against on the pretext that they were the origin of the virus (Barker, 2021; Liu et al., 2020). The knee-jerk reaction of the government in enforcing the travel ban and health screening of newcomers further reinforced the anti-newcomer sentiments held by the general public (Omidvar, 2020). The government's reaction only buttressed the opinion of the dominant narrative that newcomers are less deserving of rights and respect even at a time when everyone faced the same virus, and the virus did not discriminate against race, ethnicity, or nationality.

COVID-19-related racial discrimination has thus contributed to the disproportionate experiences of negative impacts of the pandemic by racialized minorities, particularly immigrants, migrant workers, and, more significantly, newcomers to Canada during the pandemic. For the avoidance of doubt, Learning Network (2020) reports that newcomers, immigrants, and racialized individuals were less likely to have access to health care when they contracted the COVID virus. As a result, disproportionately more COVID-19 related deaths occurred among newcomers, immigrants, and racialized population groups (Statistics Canada, 2021a). The quote below, though characterizing the impact of COVID-19-related racial discrimination in the US, typifies the situation in Canada:

Race doesn't put you at higher risk. Racism puts you at higher risk. It does so through two mechanisms: People of color are more infected because we are more exposed and less protected. Then, once infected, we are more likely to die because we carry a greater burden of chronic diseases from living in disinvested communities with poor food options [and] poisoned air and because we have less access to health care (Wallis, 2020, para. 4).

It is important to note that these disparities did not begin with COVID-19 but have only been exacerbated by the pandemic (Abbott, 2021; Learning Network, 2020). Again, it is imperative to note that COVID-19 related racial discriminations are not exclusive to Western countries such as Canada and the United States. In India, for example, Chakma (2020) reports on attacks on individuals from the Northeast of the country amidst the pandemic based on racial discrimination. The individuals were called derogatory names and were openly glared at in public. Chakma (2020) argues that some Indian citizens who have mongoloid looks were subjected to name calling such as “Coronavirus,” “Corona,” “Chinese,” and “Chinki” while going about their lawful duties. They were not allowed access into eateries or apartment complexes or coercively isolated despite having negative COVID-19 certificates because they looked Chinese - the presumed sources of the COVID-19 virus.

The India case was not different from how migrant farm workers were treated in Canada, where members of the public would approach migrant workers demanding they should put on their masks or go back to the farm whenever they venture out from the farm into the community. Craggs (2020) asserts that migrant workers in southern Ontario were issued identity (ID) cards which they were expected to carry along with them whenever they entered the community, to prove they had complied with the two-week mandatory quarantine requirement before they could move around in the community. Such labeling is a form of othering that points to them as different and so deserving to be treated differently. Hennebry et al. (2020) argue that advocates considered such practice as racial profiling because the policy was targeted at migrant farmworkers and not other groups. D’Arcangelis (2017) argues that the practice fits into the dominant discourses and stigma of blaming foreigners as carriers of disease who need to be sanctioned. Camp (2004) and Ginsburg (2007) likened the use of ID cards to the



way the Canadian government required indigenous people to show a permit to allow them to travel outside their reserves.

### **COVID-19 Pandemic and Mental Health and Well-being**

In this final section of the article, we discuss, in some detail, the mental health and well-being implications of the experiences of COVID-19 related discrimination among immigrants, newcomers, and migrant workers. The spread of the virus among newcomer populations had more implications for their well-being than the usual health implications. With the levels of fear and stigma of the disease at the earlier stages, it meant many of them stood the risk of being neglected, which explains the disproportionate COVID-19 related deaths among immigrants and newcomers in Canada (Statistic Canada, 2021a). Immigrants constitute 20% of the Canadian population younger than 65 years. However, immigrant COVID-19 related deaths within the same population bracket nationwide were disproportionately high at 30%. The distribution varied among various provinces. For example, in BC, immigrants constituted 28% of the population aged 65 and under. However, immigrant COVID-19 related deaths constituted 41% of deaths in the province (Statistics Canada, 2021a).

Prior to COVID-19, newcomers to Canada were exposed to poor health and poor housing conditions due to systemic racial and economic inequities (Waldron, 2010). The COVID-19 pandemic has only come to aggravate this and worsen the impact on the mental health and well-being of newcomers arising from intersecting forms of oppression and discrimination (Learning Network, 2020; Mensah & Williams, 2022; Wallis, 2020). Such discrimination has often triggered psychosocial stressors among newcomers, thereby complicating their health and also hindering them from making use of healthcare resources (Amoako & MacEachen, 2021). A discriminatory healthcare system amplifies health

complications among marginalized populations (Amoako & MacEachen, 2021; Thomas, 2021; Waldron, 2010).

In line with the above findings, CBC News (2020) reported a story about a migrant worker Bonifacio Eugenio Romero who died in his hotel while in isolation. His death exposed the risk placed on migrant workers as they are expected to overcome the challenges of the systemic barriers confronting them solely by their own efforts. In light of the above case, Caxaj and Cohen (2021) argue that the pandemic has exposed systemic structures that depended on the temporary status of people who help to feed the nation from a system that put a unique responsibility on them to safeguard the needs of Canadians but fails to address the needs of migrant workers. Thus, the adverse effects of the pandemic on the mental health and well-being of newcomers are engendered by racial discrimination, and immigration status is unparalleled (Mensah & Williams, 2022; Wallis, 2020). Nakhaie et al. (2020) argue that newcomers develop mental health problems at a higher rate than other individuals who are permanent residents and the Canadian-born population. Newcomers were unable to access mental health support during the period of their vulnerability when all necessary support was needed for their successful integration into Canada.

Newcomers to Canada faced a unique set of barriers, such as the lack of community support and language barriers during COVID-19. Ghahari (2020) states that these barriers affected newcomers' access to information. Similarly, the stress of having family members overseas exposed newcomers to the risk of mental health issues. It is thus critically important to develop additional support that is necessary for newcomers. This situation is worsened by the fact that amid the pandemic, many newcomers lacked healthcare insurance. The lack of health insurance and paid leaves impacted the health of newcomers and their well-being disproportionately, coupled with the challenges of school closures, immigration removals and emergency medical care (Cholera et al., 2020). Further, due to the

loss of cultural and religious practice, language barriers, lack of social protection, and limited access to healthcare, newcomers' mental health significantly deteriorated (Choudhari, 2020).

### **Conclusion**

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, immigrants, newcomers, and migrant workers in Canada faced intersecting systemic inequalities and oppression in their bid to make a living. These struggles are in spite of the significant role they play in advancing Canada's socio-economic development. Across the country, there are systemic barriers embedded in legal, administrative, and social structures which negate the principles of human rights as expressed under various Canadian Laws (Feenan & Madhany, 2021). These barriers, some of which are invisible, compel many immigrants, newcomers, and migrant workers to work in jobs below their potential, education, and experience in Canada. For many newcomers and migrant workers, the opportunity to find employment that is commensurate with their qualifications and skills is critical for their socioeconomic well-being (Henderson, 2004; Udah et al., 2019a, 2019b). With regards to newcomers, successful integration into the Canadian labor market helps increase their sense of fulfillment, empowerment, and esteem. It upgrades their social standing and financial independence, which together contributes to their overall health and well-being.

The overrepresentation of immigrants, newcomers, and migrant workers in precarious employment has the propensity to trap them in economic and social marginalization. Dempster et al. (2020) suggest that policymakers should input and implement economic inclusion and equitable labor force policies so that newcomers have access to employment that is compatible or commensurate with their skills and educational qualification. Extant literature suggests that the Canadian labor market is divided between immigrants and Canadian-born

citizens. Such hierarchy and discrimination in employment opportunities are what Heikkila (2005) refers to as 'labor market dualism.' Thus, blue-collar jobs (or precarious jobs) are reserved for immigrants, while more stable white-collar jobs are reserved for Canadian-born and often White citizens. In this context, race, nationality, and immigration status predict the types of jobs immigrants and newcomers may get in the labor market (Herring et al., 2004; Vickers,2002).

Social justice targeted at eliminating systemic barriers and employment discrimination of newcomers in Canada was established from the extensive reviews of scholarship on the topic, which is the subject of this paper. As Guadagno (2020) and Barker (2021) suggest, an inclusive approach that guarantees and upholds the rights of Canadians, immigrants, newcomers, and migrant workers to health and well-being would allow our societies to build back better and reduce the risk of similar challenges in the event of a future pandemic.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

We note that this is a systematic review of available literature, which limits our ability to discuss in-depth the differential experiences of immigrants, newcomers, and migrant workers as separate categories. Thus, in this paper, we discussed common experiences of immigrants, newcomers, and migrant workers as pertained in literature. It will be prudent for future research to consider the differential experiences of these heterogeneous groups.

The scholarly works that were analyzed leading to this article have indicated that immigrants and newcomers have less favorable outcomes in the labor market. However, it is our view that a large sample with longitudinal quantitative research be conducted to establish the role intersecting factors such as gender, race, and migration pathways play in immigrants' and newcomers' labor market productivity. The outcome of such a study will lead to the development of evidence-informed immigrant and newcomer-friendly labor market policies.

Finally, the dominant discourse in Canadian society is that immigrants are drawers of net social and economic benefits. Such a discourse entrenches the notion that the Canadian government has provided enough services for this population to successfully enhance their well-being, while this is not the case. Future research is needed to deconstruct such discourses in order to reposition immigrants, newcomers, and migrant workers as essential contributors to Canada's socioeconomic development who deserve equitable employment, respect, and recognition.

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### **Rethinking Madhesi Politics of Recognition**

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### Abstract

A gradually emerging dissension in the micropolitics of the Madhesi community has not received the attention it deserves in scholarly discourse. This article makes an effort to understand the contexts and processes that made pan-Madhesi identity intrinsically problematic and seemed to be rife with internal conflicts. Drawing on the lived experiences collected through ethnographic interviews with the Madhesi people who belonged to the low-caste groups and admitted to being poor, it is argued that while overemphasizing the socio-cultural recognition of the Madhesi community, Madhesi politics of recognition undermined the issues of economic inequality prevailing within it for a long time. As a consequence, over time, the ties of low-caste groups with the elitist leadership of high and middle-caste groups in terms of socio-cultural and economic aspects resulted in certain fissures or divisions in the Madhesi community. This prompts us to rethink the Madhesi politics of recognition and to argue that pan-Madhesi identity was not a cohesive identity that guaranteed parity of participation of the Madhesi population irrespective of their caste and class position.

*Keywords:* pan-Madhesi identity, politics of recognition, caste, class, economic inequality

### **Rethinking Madhesi Politics of Recognition**

In the aftermath of the Madhesi Uprising of 2007, a surge in Madhesi identity politics dominated Nepal's political landscape. It rapidly rose to the apex of the national discourse, attracting the attention of academics, researchers, and political commentators. The firmly held belief that the Pahadi ruling elites misrecognized the Madhesi community and systematically excluded them from the national mainstream served as the foundation for the politics of recognition (Pandey, 2022; Sijapati, 2013). Put differently, historical exclusion and marginalization, and systemic structural discrimination of the Madhesi people set the conditions for the rise of the collective consciousness of a pan-Madhesi identity at the macro-level (Hachhethu, 2007; Jha, 2017; Mathema, 2011; Sah, 2017; Upreti et al., 2013). However, a gradually emerging dissension in the micro-politics of the Madhesi community – the political, economic, and socio-cultural cleavages and confrontations posing problems to the pan-Madhesi identity – has not received the attention it deserves in scholarly discourse.

Even though scholarly literature acknowledges heterogeneity in the Madhesi community in terms of language, culture, class, caste, and other socio-political aspects, it has not received enough attention from the Madhesi forces themselves (Tewari, 2012). The issues of multiple identities emerging in the Madhes and social inequalities rooted in the caste system have not been studied adequately (Rajak, 2017). Viewing the politics carefully at the local level, one could discern that the pan-Madhesi identity has cast a shadow over the heterogeneity in the Madhesi community. Nevertheless, any attempt to draw attention to the differences that exist within the Madhesi community is met with whataboutery accusations (Gurung, 2016). As a result, the existing studies on Madhesi identity issues are 'ethnographically thin' and have led to 'ethnographic refusal,' a refusal of the thickness (Ortner, 1995).

Against this backdrop, this article makes an effort to understand the contexts and processes that made pan-Madhese identity intrinsically problematic and seemed to be rife with internal conflicts. The principal question that is grappled with is why and how the socio-political rifts or divisions, particularly at the level of caste and class, made the pan-Madhese identity contentious. In doing so, it transcends the "top-down" approach that treats politics of recognition as identity politics—claims for the recognition of cultural difference in the pursuit of political gains—and favors the "bottom-up" approach that seeks an alternative politics of recognition that can overcome the reification of identity and displacement of politics of distribution.

Drawing on Fraser's (2003a) analysis of social groupings as two-dimensional categories—a combination of both class dimension and status dimension—I look at how the Madhese peoples belonging to the lower strata in the spectrum of caste and class have been suffering from both economic and socio-cultural impediments in their everyday lives within the Madhese community. Contrary to the 'identity model' of recognition (Honneth, 2003; Taylor, 1994) that undermines the issues of political economy, class, and distributive justice, Fraser's (2003a) 'perspectival dualist' analysis or 'two-dimensional' conception of justice deserves utility for the discussion of emerging discontents within the Madhese community. For both Taylor (1994) and Honneth (2003), recognition is concerned with self-realization, i.e., identity. But, for Fraser (2003a), there is no single conception of self-realization that is universally shared. So, she urges understanding recognition as a question of status and examining its relation to economic class. Her thesis that distribution and recognition are co-fundamental and mutually irreducible dimensions of justice seems genuinely insightful in analyzing the micropolitics in the Madhese community. Building on this idea, it will be argued in the succeeding paragraphs that the Madhese politics of recognition overwhelmingly eclipsed the economic inequality that has been



prevailing in the Madhesi community for a long time. In other words, it will be illustrated that the Madhesi politics of recognition could not involve the issues of land rights, equitable distribution of economic opportunities, and access to social goods as aspired to by grassroots Madhesi people.

### **Methodology**

This study is based on research conducted in Birganj, the main city in central Tarai, Nepal, in 2018. As an ethnographer, my aim was, as Malinowski (1922) says, to grasp the native's point of view, their relation to life, and their vision of their world. To accomplish this, I conducted ethnographic interviews with Madhesi individuals from different walks of life, such as local political leaders, social activists, movement participants, peasants, laborers, and students, particularly those who belonged to low-caste groups and admitted to being poor. The lived experiences of such Madhesi individuals vis-à-vis Madhesi identity politics remained my primary ethnographic sites. In addition to the firsthand qualitative data that were collected by conducting ethnographic fieldwork, secondary data have also been used to substantiate the arguments. An inductive mode of analysis has been adopted to discuss how research participants described their experiences of being Madhesi and how their understandings of identity politics changed over time.

### **Ethnographic Context**

The Madhesi community is divided into numerous castes that are organized in a hierarchical manner along the socio-economic spectrum (Gaige, 2009 [1975]; Rajak, 2017; Rakesh, 2015). With reference to the data of the 2011 Census, Dahal (2014) mentions that 48 Madhesi castes have been categorized in a distinct hierarchical structure reflecting four Varna systems - Maithil Brahman (Brahman), Kayastha (position not clear) and Rajput (Chhetri) are placed at the top of the hierarchy, 30 caste groups are placed at the middle in Vaishya category,

and 15 groups are placed at the bottom in Sudra category. The significant number of Madhesi castes was, in part, due to the more complicated economic system that has emerged on the plains over the previous millennium and continually divided occupational castes into more specialized groups (Gaige, 2009). Because Madhesi society is openly caste-based, caste culture, which has been practiced for millennia, has a significant impact on the social, economic, and political status of the population (Rakesh, 2015). Indeed, caste is the primary determinant of all aspects of Madhesi's social life (Rajak, 2017). One could observe that caste-specific occupations, responsibilities, and obligations still exist in the Madhesi community, notwithstanding the penetration of modernization. Madhesi groups are still segregated in everyday socio-cultural and economic activities based on where they fall on the caste continuum.

In Tarai-Madhes, social interactions are governed by caste distinctions, which also heavily influence political decisions and frequently influence economic stratification (ICG, 2007). Caste factors continue to significantly influence local and regional politics (Gaige, 2009; Upreti et al., 2013). While high-castes and some middle castes, such as Yadavs in the Tarai-Madhes, enjoy cultural, political, and economic privileges (Basnet, 2019), low-caste Madhesi have faced indignities of untouchability and social ostracization (Tewari, 2012). Though caste is perceived as a socio-cultural aspect and class as an economic phenomenon, as Sharma (2014) notes, both are not antithetical formations. It becomes evident (as discussed below) that there exists a proximate caste-class nexus in the Madhesi community. Caste-class nexus implies the observation of caste and class as mutually inherent phenomena - caste has always inhered class, and the latter has never been devoid of caste (Sharma, 2014). Viewed in this way, the high-caste groups (Maithil Brahman, Kayastha, and Rajput) belong to socio-economic level 1, middle-caste groups belong to socio-economic level 2, and 15

low-caste groups, also called Madhesi Dalit belong to socio-economic level 3 (Dahal, 2014).

Rajak (2017) argues that the life-world of the Madhesi people has been significantly affected by what appears to be a causal relationship between caste and class. In a similar vein, Ahuti (2018) explains that the caste system in Nepal plays a significant and determining role in how a class is constructed. The caste system in Nepal, according to Bista (1991), gives legitimacy to the class structure. With a few notable exceptions, most of my research subjects believed that their economic circumstances were influenced by their place in the caste system—that is, the higher one's caste status, the better one's economic circumstances, and vice versa.

At the local level, the majority of Madhesi landlords and business classes are from high and middle-caste families (Hatlebakk, 2007; Upreti et al., 2013). A substantial difference in how wealth and resources are distributed reveals the caste-class nexus in the Tarai-Madhes. Low-caste Madhesi, also called Madhesi Dalit, who make up about one-fifth of the population of Madhes Pradesh, are the most marginalized and impoverished group (Nepali et al., 2018). The poverty incidence or headcount rate for Madhesi Dalit is 38.2 percent, compared to 18.6 percent for Madhesi high-caste groups and 28.7 percent for Madhesi middle-caste groups, according to the Nepal Human Development Report (NHDR, 2014). Madhesi Dalits have the lowest per-capita income of any caste or ethnic group in Nepal (NHDR, 2014). Land ownership has a significant impact on the Madhesi communities' economic standing, and the distribution of land is closely tied to caste status (Hatlebakk, 2007). As revealed by my research participants, the Madhesi Dalits are severely landless. For survival, this group is engaged in either traditional caste-based occupation or as farm and non-farm laborers. When compared to other groups, this one is the most exploited in terms of their wages. Even now, Madhesi non-Dalit and Dalit households maintain some feudalistic

forms of patron-client relationships. The majority of Madhesi Dalits are impoverished and live in poorly run families where they are unable to afford even the most basic goods and services. Low levels of education, as well as social and economic exclusion, translate into limited opportunities in economic and political spheres (NHDR, 2014).

Preceding discussions, in some ways, illustrates how deeply ingrained caste and class rank are among the Madhesi people. Such a context has triggered to produce fragmentations or ruptures in the Madhesi identity politics. In what follows, drawing on ethnographic data, I discuss why and how contestation over Madhesi identity politics occurred at the local level.

### **Ruptures in the Madhesi Politics of Recognition**

“Which Madhesi are you referring to? Whose identity are you talking about?” A local-level cadre of a Madhes-based Party belonging to a low-caste group put a counter question to me when I asked him what encouraged Madhesi people to engage collectively in identity politics. He asserted that throughout Tarai-Madhes, there are various Madhesi groups that range in socioeconomic spectrum from lower-caste to upper-caste, landless to landlords, and poor to rich. He further contended, “Low-caste Madhesi who are mostly landless and poor experience prejudice, oppression, and exploitation within the Madhesi community in everyday life. But, such a reality was put aside in the course of the struggle for identity by the political leaders mostly representing high and middle caste.” According to him, low-caste Madhesi has not been given space at the local level to represent themselves politically in a meaningful way. He shared with me that he wanted to become a candidate as a ward chairperson in the local-level election held in 2017 but could not get a chance to compete in the election because of his inability to make financial expenses. As the date of nomination of candidates was approaching, he realized that ‘money’ was not only of utmost importance for

getting the victory in the election but also for being nominated as a candidate. “It is almost impossible for the low-caste Madhesi who mostly have a poor economic background to become representatives in the leading positions in the local levels because the election turned out to be a matter of money and muscles,” he alluded. He accused high and middle-caste Madhesi elites of their static tendency to undermine the political and economic aspirations of low-caste Madhesi.

In a similar vein, a recently graduated student belonging to a low-caste claimed that it is difficult to comprehend the Madhesi category when all Madhesi are included in the same status group. He observed that despite some positive changes in the Madhesi people's self-esteem and others' perceptions of them brought about by various Madhesi movements, high and middle-caste Madhesi have continued to keep quiet about the socioeconomic injustices and discrimination faced by the low-caste Madhesi. He said, "What about the dignity of those Madhesi who are at the bottom of an extremely stratified Madhesi society?" He issued a warning that an internal uprising against the socio-political domination of Madhesi upper castes is likely if the socioeconomic problems of Madhesi Dalits are ignored. He stated, "Although they have not yet formed a political organization, organizing among young educated Madhesi Dalit has begun. They have now started to challenge the notion of inclusion and representation in the Madhesi community." He further added that the new generations of Dalits have started to perceive the Madhesi community differently by opposing the norms and ideals of the unequal and unfair Madhesi society.

Another member of the low-caste, who worked on a daily-wage basis in Birganj, vehemently expressed his dissatisfaction with Madhesi identity politics. According to him, high and middle-caste elites and politicians utilized “Madhesi identity” as a ploy to seize political control for personal or factional advantage. He anticipated that Madhes *Andolan* (movement) would also be concerned about the livelihoods of individuals who were forced to rely on day-to-day wage labor

for the lack of access to the land for cultivation and economic opportunities. Although he acknowledged that dignity, respect, and recognition are also necessary, he believed that ensuring economic opportunity is more important for a decent living.

Similar complaints about Madhesi identity politics were made by an adult member of the Tatma sub-caste group who lives in Chhapkaiya, Birganj, and works as a laborer there. He also anticipated that the Madhesi *Andolan* would be a turning point in resolving the issues faced by the common people. Over time, he came to understand that the leaders had organized the people to make them a ladder to negotiate for political power. In his opinion, the Madhes *Andolan*, over time, disrupted the daily life of poor families. Many poor Madhesi lost their *roji-roti* (means of livelihood) and had difficulty for the survival. He didn't think that focusing merely on identity would likely be sufficient to address the hand-to-mouth issue faced by both rural and urban poor. He stated that identity politics alone cannot secure the progress of the people if resources and economic opportunities are not easily accessible.

The repetitive cry of Madhesi leaders for identity was criticized by a member of the Chamar sub-caste group who was engaged in shoe policing and stitching on the side of the road close to the Ghantaghar. "Madhesika pahichan" and "Madhesika adhikar" (identity and right of Madhesi) sounded as if the Madhesi leaders opened their mouths while giving a speech, but they rarely discussed the *vikas* (development) of Madhes, or the economic advancement of common people, according to him. The politics of Madhesi identity was only on the agenda of those Madhesi leaders and elites who owned *bigahas* of land, industries, factories, and business, not of the *aam* (common) Madhesi people who had to work extremely hard on a daily basis to survive.

A Birganj-based journalist echoed the aforementioned accounts. In his understanding, too, the common Madhesi people were less concerned with identity politics and more interested in a fair distribution of resources. He pointed out that while Madhesi leaders and activists turned identity into a political negotiating tool, they failed to convey to the majority of the grassroots population how their identity struggle translates into viable political and economic changes that affect the Madhesi community's very fabric. Instead, in his observation, the leaders squabbled about political issues, ignoring the problems with economic redistribution.

In a nutshell, a shared experience of the Madhesi people with whom I had a conversation in Birganj was that the Madhesi people were ardent participants in the successive movements of 2007, 2008, and 2015. But, as the disruption in routine life and border blockade continued becoming the last resort in the movement against the promulgation of a new constitution in 2015, grassroots support progressively decreased, and Madhesi identity politics started to lose its momentum. Identity politics simply became a business for politicians and their passionate followers in later days. Violent clashes between protesters and those who opposed them happened in Birganj. The majority of the Madhesi people were looking for alternate strategies to continue their movement because the lost income, especially for the poor, had a significant negative influence on their way of life.

These narratives imply two caveats: the furtherance of political marginalization and economic inequality among low-caste Madhesi people. Madhesi Dalits are the most politically marginalized and are hardly ever represented in the top echelons of political parties, whether they be national or Madhesi (Tewari, 2012). For the Madhesi Dalit, their state of disproportionately lower political representation and exclusion from the executive positions in the provincial and local governments is the embodiment of caste ideology by political

parties (International Alert, 2019). Madhesi Dalit contends that Madhes movements over time have politically empowered high and middle-caste groups, and there is no compatibility of political interests and goals between upper castes and low castes. As Basnet (2019) has argued, Madhesi politics merely reflected the struggle between high-caste and middle-caste groups, particularly the Yadav, for political domination of the southern plains. Thus, the experience of political marginalization has fueled a sense of discontent and disappointment among the Madhesi Dalit communities (International Alert, 2019). Given the stronghold of the caste system and its ideology in everyday life, the rise of the middle caste as the dominant political group and the exclusion of the most marginalized groups from the spheres of government can generate conflicts at the Tarai-Madhes (Rai, 2019).

It is to be noted that the gap between the economic expectations of low-caste and impoverished Madhesi and their actual achievements has deepened. The Madhesi movement could not change the situation of Madhesi Dalits, who were forced to live with the uncertainty of food, shelter, and clothes. Poverty entangled with landlessness seems rampant among the Madhesi Dalit because of the structural disparities or exploitation maintained by high and middle-caste groups. Upreti et al. (2013, p. 113) noted that there is no substantive difference between the past and present of Madhesi Dalits in terms of their livelihood stress, exploitation by elites, and structural inequalities. While the high-caste groups form just a minuscule proportion of the Madhesi population but have the highest human development indicators in the whole country (Tewari, 2012), the overall socio-economic condition of Madhesi Dalit is deplorable, and they are the most vulnerable group owing to ingrained discrimination and rigid social system and religious dogmas (Chaudhary, 2015). The Madhes movement largely centered on identity and did nothing for the poor, homeless, and landless people, as the Madhesi leaders were not willing to give power and resources to them (Upreti et



al., 2013). While focusing on political rights, the Madhesi parties have failed to interfere with the political economy of Madhes in order to ensure that all Madhesi participate in the political and economic process and their general economic and cultural development (Subedi, 2016).

This implies that understanding identity politics as solely a politics of recognition is problematic. It becomes evident that identity politics no longer adequately reflects the interests and demands of Madhesi people belonging to the low caste who strive for equality—the capacity to take part in or be included in sociopolitical processes under conditions equal to those of dominating groups. While Madhesi has undoubtedly been misrecognized by Pahadi in general, Madhesi from lower social classes and castes, in particular, have been ignored or misunderstood. Many low-caste Madhesi who also identify themselves as poor has felt that dominating groups rarely represent their ‘image’ in their words and deeds.

Marginalized Madhesi people have perceived that the Madhes uprising was a struggle for political representation and leadership positions rather than for social and economic changes in Tarai-Madhes (Hatlebakk, 2007). As a result, Madhesi people, especially those lying at the bottom of the caste and class hierarchy, have been furious and frustrated not only with the government and national level political parties for denying Madhesi people's rights in general, but also with Madhesi parties and their leaders, in particular, for their inability to be effectively organized and united among themselves and to persuade the Madhesi people that their ultimate goal is a just society socio-culturally, politically, and economically.

Yadav (2013) argues that the Madhesi leaders who revolted earlier for their rights began to be divided by internal revolt due to their lust for political power, resulting in a series of establishing political parties under their own

leadership. Less agreement existed among the Madhes-based political parties and their leaders over the tactics to be used to mobilize the Madhesi people behind a common cause than in political negotiating regarding participation in government. Madhesi leaders 'opportunistic' behavior and conduct have become apparent through their ambition to seize political power and continual engagement in politics. The factionalism and dissolution of Madhesi political parties have been facilitated by their indulgence in bickering over the number and kind of government ministries as well as, more significantly, who must represent in the government and assume leadership. Although Madhes-centered parties and their leaders agree that the Madhesi population is overlooked and thus excluded from the national mainstream politically and socially, they lack coherent ideologies and agendas that are likely to bring them together. Factional politics and deep divisions in the Madhes have been perceived by common Madhesi as a sign of the leaders' weakness, shortsightedness, excessive competition, and changeable leadership as well as their desire for political power, conflicting personal interests, and lack of a unified vision. As different Madhesi political parties experienced internal conflict and lacked consensus on short- and long-term strategies, the path taken by Madhesi identity politics seemed like 'a rebellion without a roadmap' (ICG, 2007).

Theoretically, though Madhes-based political parties advocate for the inclusion of all Madhesi irrespective of caste in the state affairs, high and middle-caste people dominate in practice, and hence the frustrated minority caste groups have started to raise their identity issues being away from just Madhesi (Upreti et al., 2013). Low-caste Madhesi acquired this consciousness as a result of their experiences of discrimination and subsequent exclusion from high and middle caste dominated local and regional politics. Despite having a significant impact on elections, the low-caste Madhesi are not allowed to participate in local politics. In light of the diversity in Madhesi society, the organizational structure of Madhes-

based political parties appears to be exclusionary. The notions of inclusion and representation for low-caste Madhesi have become a myth. However, in recent years, though in tacit forms, the political representation of the Madhesi Dalit by upper caste groupings is being questioned and challenged.

Thus, it becomes apparent that Madhesi identity politics is under attack from Madhesi groups, particularly those who are socio-economically and politically repressed and disenfranchised. Chaos and misunderstanding have developed among these communities as a result of the ambivalent viewpoints taken by Madhesi elites and leaders regarding the movement's applicability as well as their disparate interpretations and representations of it. The pan-Madhesi identity exaltation of the elitist leadership has outpaced the emergence of many identities linked to various socio-political and economic problems of various groups. Low-caste Madhesi tends to diverge from the upper-caste elite-led Madhesi identity politics in recent years. Over time, they have come to understand that the Madhesi identity politics dictated by their traditional overlords may not always fulfill their needs, demands, and aspirations (Guneratne, 2009).

Subedi (2018) argued that Madhesi identity politics became a powerful force when the bourgeoisie and middle class fought for their due share in national forums and opportunities. The upper caste Madhesi elites use community identification as a means of furthering their personal agendas (Dahal, 2008). Additionally, they are attempting to impose a pan-Tarai identity on a geographical area that is divided in numerous ways as part of their strategy (Dahal, 1992, 2008). Such a tendency clearly implies that the cultural forms, values, and practices of ethnic groups become political resources for elites in competition for political power and economic advantage (Brass, 1991). Madhesi elites managed to turn Madhesi identity politics into a mere strategy to compete over political power for their own sake.

### **Reification of Identity and Displacement of Economic Inequality**

In light of the discussions made in the preceding paragraphs, it becomes evident that equating the politics of recognition with identity politics encourages both the reification of group identities and the displacement of the politics of redistribution (Fraser, 2003b). The major political actors in Tarai-Madhes have simply associated identity politics with recognition politics. Even though certain Madhesi leaders in the succeeding Madhesi uprisings brought up the subject of redistribution, their focus was on ensuring political representation. They were therefore charged with emphasizing identity too much while disregarding the public's demands for economic equality. The leaders shouted out more in favor of addressing social, political, and cultural inequalities while remaining silent over economic inequities that disproportionately affect the Madhesi people.

Because most political actors in Madhesi politics were members of upper and middle-caste families, wealthy landowners, or both, it was evident that they rarely discussed the economic disparity that they attempted to maintain to some extent in order to maintain and control their influence over the region's politics and economy. Since upper-caste households make up the wealthiest households in a relatively affluent area of Nepal, Hatlebakk (2007) was correct to claim that the main demands of upper-caste landlords have not been economical. For their own advantage, they favor increased autonomy in Tarai and political representation in Kathmandu (Hatlebakk, 2007). However, this pattern was not exclusive to the Madhesi. Lawoti (2007) noted that the associations of different groups have primarily highlighted cultural and political issues, while their community members are concerned about economic opportunities as well.

Leaders and elites from the Madhesi community hold conflicting views on how to interpret the link between identity and economic disparity. Madhesi elites and leaders have faced a 'redistribution-recognition dilemma,' in the words

of Fraser (1995). When considering politics at the local-level, there is an underlying tension between local development requirements and larger identity issues (Karn et al., 2018). Since the rise of the educated middle-class and rising bourgeoisie gave rise to the Madhesi identity politics (Subedi, 2018), the grassroots population appears to be relatively resistant to identity politics, as their main concerns have been accessed to land ownership, economic opportunities, services, and facilities for health, education, drinking water supply, sanitation, and other infrastructures.

According to the status model proposed by Fraser (2003a), what requires recognition is not group-specific identity but rather the status of individual group members as full partners in social interaction. The struggle for recognition, as understood by the marginalized Madhesi, has not only been concerned with self-realization but as a matter of justice. As Fraser (2003a) notes, misrecognition is wrong and unjust that some individuals and groups are denied the status of full partners in social interaction simply as a consequence of institutionalized patterns of cultural value in whose construction they have not equally participated, and which disparage their distinctive characteristics, or the distinctive features assigned to them. The narratives of low-caste Madhesi people imply such a corollary.

Because of the historically institutionalized pattern of the hill-high-caste values that always subjugated the Madhesi culture in Nepal, the Madhesi people, in general, never participated in national social and political affairs as full partners. Low-caste Madhesi people, in particular, had to witness the same situation at the local level due to the Madhesi high-caste values and institutions dominated by them. So, provoking a pan-Madhesi identity does not address the sub-identity of the low-caste Madhesi people since they are completely excluded from or denied their involvement in the local politics and culture.

Despite this, the call for justice made by low-caste Madhesi appears to be ‘three-dimensional’ – the political dimension of representation, the economic dimension of distribution, and the cultural dimension of recognition (Fraser, 2007). Marginalized Madhesi believes that placing too much focus on identity politics has encouraged the reification of Madhesi identity while simultaneously sidelining the politics of redistribution. The dominance of a few predominant groups cast a shadow over the Madhesi community's fight for equality. One may argue that Madhesi is looking for what Fraser (2003b) offers: a different politics of recognition, a non-identitarian politics that can correct misrecognition without encouraging displacement of redistribution and reification of recognition. Low-caste Madhesi people rejected the existing trend of their leaders and elites to reify Madhesi identity and believed that their political and cultural status should be seen in connection to their economic class.

### **Conclusion**

While Madhesi are battling the Pahadi-dominated Nepali state for recognition and representation at the national level, there are internal conflicts at the local or regional levels as the many excluded communities try to establish their own unique identities and spaces (Tewari, 2012). There are still unresolved contradictions between the pan-Madhesi identity and the Madhesi sub-identities, as well as between identification and redistribution. Low-caste Madhesi has experienced double marginalization: they have been excluded from state programs, which are often reserved for upper castes, as well as from socioeconomic and political privileges that are available locally and regionally. Low-caste Madhesi rarely has access to the socioeconomic and political privileges that are available locally or regionally since upper and middle-caste groups have a firm hold on those privileges.

Obviously, diverse groups of Madhesi deserve the right to equality, dignity, and full citizenship overthrowing the centuries of oppression and humiliation not only by the Pahadi-dominated state but also by rich and high-caste Madhesi groups. Marginalized Madhesi desires equal dignity not only in the arena of cultural politics but also in the arena of the economy. Denial of equal access to economic resources, income, and employment opportunities and their cultural subordination within the Madhesi community has further marginalized the poor and Dalit. In particular, the low-caste Madhesi groups have been suffering from unequal access to political power, resources, and life opportunities within the Madhesi community for a long time.

Low-caste Madhesi poverty, subordination, and social isolation are caused not only by governments' negligence but also by the dominant caste system and class system in Tarai-Madhes. Therefore, unless it is coupled with economic development, a focus on pan-Madhesi identity alone is likely to be useless for the just Madhesi community that marginalized Madhesi people want. One could argue that 'identity' needs to be understood beyond the limited sense of identity politics, with which it is frequently confused (Rai & Shneiderman, 2019). As emphasized by Fraser (1995), the injustice faced by low-caste Madhesi is simultaneously cultural and socioeconomic; both are rooted in the processes and practices that have systematically disadvantaged these groups of people vis-à-vis high- and middle-caste groups. Drawing from Fraser, it can be put forth that the socio-economic injustice of low caste Madhesi rooted in the political-economic structure of Nepali society in general and Madhesi society in particular, gives rise to exploitation, economic marginalization, deprivation, and cultural or symbolic injustice is rooted in social patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication which give rise to cultural domination, non-recognition, and disrespect (Fraser, 1995).

There have been emerging many internal tensions and contradictions in the ties between people from various castes and social classes and the elitist leadership resulting in certain fissures or divisions in the Madhesi society. Put differently, contradictions and tensions abound in the socio-cultural and political-economic exchanges or relationships between the groups that are situated at the opposing ends of the caste hierarchy. This prompts us to rethink Madhesi identity politics and to argue that it was not a cohesive identity that guaranteed parity of participation of the Madhesi population irrespective of their caste and class position.



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### **Exploring the Fundamental Cause of Social Crime: A Study of Sexual Violence, Mass Murder, Burglary, and Corruption**

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### **Abstract**

There are effective police mechanisms administered by the governments in each country, for instance, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in India and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) of Nepal Police in Nepal. The authority claims its mechanism is intact and highly alert to find convicts, but they appear to be walking out in the street freely. This indicates that the police mechanisms have been unable to control the crimes despite their high alerts. This article explores the fundamental causes of social crimes that are increasing alarmingly. The study shows that the fundamental cause of crime is the inherent weakness of a person who cannot control emotions of jealousy and anger. The uncontrolled anger of a person leads them to the stage of crime. The criminal may also have a psychological disorder leading to accidental crime. Several types of social crime are prevalent, but this study discusses the causes of sexual violence, mass murder, burglary, and corruption. The study has applied the psychoanalytical approach to investigate the issue.

*Keywords:* anger, counseling, police mechanism, psychoanalysis

### **Exploring the Fundamental Cause of Social Crime: A Study of Sexual Violence, Mass Murder, Burglary, and Corruption**

Governments of many nations have spent a large amount of wealth, energy, and time to prevent, control, and deter social crimes. Likewise, researchers have systematically investigated the causes of crime and suggested measures to mitigate them. Yet the crime rate has not decreased significantly. It is thus interesting to know why crime has not diminished. Have the controlling mechanisms become weak in implementing the laws effectively, or is it because of the inherent nature of human beings?

Legal historians, who focus on changes in laws, have researched the operation of the criminal justice system in the eighteenth century (Donovan, 2010). This is the twenty-first century, and thousands of criminal justice systems have been implemented. The developed countries have spent a lot of money in the field of research. As Hostettler (2009) says:

In the main, three objectives of punishment are usually, and have been for some time, put forward. First is deterrence, both for the criminal and potential criminals. Secondly, rehabilitation of the offender, and thirdly, retribution or vengeance with incapacitation. Many people accept the validity of one or two of these but rarely all three. Deterrence is part of the utilitarian traditional belief that discouraging people from committing a crime, by one means or another, makes for a stable society. (p. 146)

It is assumed that although punishment and prisons have not controlled crime according to international practices, deterrence seems to be satisfactory for discouraging people from committing a crime for a stable society. Rehabilitation and retribution have helped prevent crime to some extent. But the majority of the criminals seem to have been controlled by deterrence.



Violating the regulations has been a common practice. Maintaining peace and order by controlling criminal activities is the primary responsibility of a nation, and every government is trying its best to minimize crime. Lessening crime has become a big challenge to even developed countries. Some poor people get involved in criminal activities such as theft for survival, whereas even some high-class people get involved in crime for aggression. Predominantly, the victims suffer from their friends and relatives. Young people seem to be responsible for crime compared to other age groups.

There are various types of crime. As Ndlovu (2008) points out “that [t]he crimes include murder, extermination, and enslavement” (p. 233). A murder of a person occurs for a petty interest, but extermination or mass killing occurs in wartime for a broader interest. Accordingly, there are several types of criminals because there are different sorts of crimes. They can be found locally, nationally, and internationally. For instance, a serial killer, Charles Sobhraj, was arrested at the Vikram Hotel in Delhi (Neville & Clarke, 2020, p. 246) in India, although he came from another country.

Criminals commit crimes for different reasons. Individuals may commit crimes when they are in a financial crisis. An individual, for instance, with low economic status, usually commits crimes like robbery, thieving, etc. Their crime turns into a profession for a livelihood forced by the obligation to meet the dire needs of everyday life.

A pervasive theme in sociology criminology has always been that law violation is linked to the individual position in the social structure (Tittle, 1983). He argues that [c]riminal behavior is seen to vary inversely by social status, with particular concentration in the lowest economic socioeconomic stratum of any society (Tittle, 1983). The lowest economic socioeconomic stratum is responsible for instigating crime though this is not only the cause. Greed and over-temptation are other responsible factors or causes of crime. Except for rape and sexual

violence, murdering, scamming, thieving, robbery, and corrupting are all because of the socioeconomic stratum.

A criminal may commit a crime due to their psychological disorder also. An individual has a coherent organization of mental processes called his ego, which controls the discharge of excitations into the external world and supervises its constituent processes (Ajvazi, 2021). Their ego loses the balance between the id and the superego. Sometimes, there is no coherent organization of mental processes. This happens in some individuals who cannot control the excitation that results in the crime. He risks his life career for whatever results as his/her id becomes overactive and his ego and the superego become passive. The individuals commit the crime at this time. The culprit does not account for the social prestige or the possible consequence. The revenge motive triggers the crime.

Any person may commit a crime, but someone may sometimes commit an unforgivable crime. The criminal is guided by different psychology, a kind of mental illness that differs from normal people. Lombroso (2006) argues that criminal psychology involves the study of the passions, writings, jargon, religion, morality, education, and mental illnesses of offenders, as well as of the influences of history, climate, heredity, and nutrition on crime. In addition, crime is caused by different conflicts. According to conflict theory, no human product could ever be unlimited in magnitude (Marx, 1955), and because of limited resources, people fight for survival. Sometimes, this fight turns into a big crime. There are hundreds of crimes; however, the study delimits the unforgivable crimes like murder and genocide, rape and sexual violence, robbery or burglary and thieving, corruption, and scamming.

#### Research gap

Some instances of the research cited above show the various causes of crime, but they have not adequately delved into the fundamental cause of crime. This research, therefore, attempts to explore human psychology as a primary

cause of social crime. Some questions are still pertinent to ask. What makes a man over-aggressive? Is it because of certain food items, or does global warming cause it? Or is there any valid reason for crime?

### **Statement of Problem**

The crime rate has not decreased as expected. A new variety of crimes, like cybercrime, organ trafficking, etc., has appeared in society. With the development of science and technology, crime has changed its route also. The old police mechanisms cannot control crime until there are updated mechanisms. There is no significant decrease in crime despite the use of ultra-modern technology like the CCTV camera. It is also likely that influential people can manipulate the control mechanism. In such a context, it seems that effective mechanisms for controlling crime can be found only through systematic research into the essential causes of crime. This research, therefore, delves into the core aspect of research about social crime.

### **Research Questions**

This research attempts to answer these questions: what is the primary cause of crimes? Do people commit social crimes for their interests, or are they forced by circumstances? Can there be any remedy to mitigate them?

### **Objective**

The major objective of the study is to explore the fundamental causes of social crime and suggest possible measures to mitigate them. More specifically, it aims to investigate the causes of four areas of crime: *sexual violence, mass murder, burglary, and corruption and how they are forced by circumstances to commit crimes.*

### **Significance of the study**

The conclusion of this research can be effective in mitigating social crimes if taken seriously. It can contribute to making and implementing laws by the government and crime-controlling mechanisms at work. It can also contribute to

developing an ideal society with a culture of no crime or reducing it to the minimum.

### **Methodology**

This study adopts Freud's psychoanalytical approach to analyze the primary causes of social crime. Moreover, Marx's conflict theory and Lombroso's criminology theory have also been employed, but the major discussion is based on Freud's approach. This research uses methodology is qualitative, and it analyzes the data collected from different book chapters, journal articles, and websites relevant to the thesis statement.

According to Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis theory, the id, ego, and superego network play a vital role in every person's activities. He says that id is an animalistic part of the mind guided by the pleasure principle, whereas the ego part of the mind is guided by reason and logic that does not force him/her to commit a crime. And superego is the parent, and it tries to balance between the two. Freud divided personality into three structures: the id, the ego, and the superego. He states that his analytical study has a major role in one's personality and how it influences the individual's actions (Ajvazi 2021). Those who have no good balance between these three can commit a crime sooner or later. Or if a person's id is overactive and his ego cannot balance, s/he may commit a crime. This is a kind of illness. People suffer from illness, like speaking a lie or so. This type of crime is negligible. But in the language of criminology, telling even a lie is a crime.

### **Discussion of the Results/Findings**

Society attempts to minimize the crime rate, but it has not decreased significantly. When crime seems to decrease, another kind of crime, such as cybercrime, appears. Crime might have started with the use of working tools and developed with the discovery of explosive machines. Even a simple device like a knife instigates, especially the crotchety-minded person. When a crotchety-

minded short-tempered person has a weapon with him, they can attack the other person with whom they have a row. This crotchety-minded person does not account for any social values and norms. A person's aggressive nature or uncontrolled anger leads him to an abnormal state, and when his conscience does not work correctly, he performs any bloody crime. This is because of the accessibility of ultra-modern weapons within reach of ordinary people. In the case of an over-aggressive state head, war with another country takes place for a simple boundaries debate. Both the governments and the individuals are equally responsible for the crime. The overproduction of weapons has instigated criminal activities. This research locates the four major areas of social crime.

### **Murder and Genocide**

Mass murder or genocide is killing mass people at once, either by an atomic bomb or by using poisonous gas. Especially during WWI and WWII, there were 75 (20 million+55 million respectively) million deaths. World wars, civil wars, and different ethnic conflicts are responsible for fostering crime. Holocaust or mass killing, or genocide is an unforgivable crime. The people who are war-mongering love killing. Most superpower countries seem to have warmongers, and they wage war, for instance, the war between USSR and Ukraine. The following is the proof of mass killing:

By genocide, the murder of hostages, reprisal raids, forced labour, "euthanasia," starvation, exposure, medical experiments, and terror bombing, and in the concentration and death camps, the Nazis murdered from 15,003,000 to 31,595,000 people, most likely 20,946,000 men, women, handicapped, aged, sick, prisoners of war, forced labourers, camp inmates, critics, homosexuals, Jews, Slavs, Serbs, Germans, Czechs, Italians, Poles, French, Ukrainians, and many others. (Rummel, 1992, p. 1)

Nazis were a monster as well as a devil who devoured millions of people.

Likewise, Stalin and Hitler were other devilish figures who killed millions of

people. The killing of thousands of students in Tiananmen square in China is an unforgettable incident. Mass killings in the years between 2009 and 2020, the horrific scenes of mass shootings have haunted the nation's collective conscience. Each breaking news alert floods the nation with grief and anger at this senseless, preventable violence (Mass Shootings in America, 2021). America is the last destination for a number of people from different parts of the world because this is the country of system and law. But America itself suffers from such nasty crimes. World's most civilized people reside there, but this country is also not free from crime. Since 2009, there have been 277 mass shootings in the United States, resulting in 1565 people shot and killed and 1000 people shot and wounded (Rummel, 2021). This sort of bloody crime is all because of the crotchety nature of people. Unnatural deaths and wounded have been common in many modern societies.

A culprit denies the charge they are accused of. No culprit realizes their mistake at the beginning. In "Tell-Tale Heart," for instance, Edgar Allan Poe (2009) presents a criminal character who never accepts that he is a culprit. More or less, the nature of the culprit is so. In the story, the culprit is in prison. He has been waiting there for a long as per the law. But he never accepts his crime. He disagrees, "True!—nervous—very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am: but why will you say that I am mad?" (Poe, 2009, p. 109). Others say he is mad, but he does not agree with this charge.

The criminal activity is a madman's business. The culprit claims that he has been blamed. Normal people do not commit bloody crimes. The madman can do anything, whether it is a bloody crime or a minor crime. The normal person applies their conscience. The abnormal person does not count this and that. Likewise, the prisoner is no more ready to accept the accusation for which he has been imprisoned. He knows all the stories about how he killed the old man for no

reason at all. The reason is not a big one. The boy lived in the old man's house like a father and a son.

This is a brief story. The old man loved the boy very much so did the boy. But the old man had a vulture eye, and the boy would go nervous when his eyes fell upon him. To get free from this problem, the boy decided to take his life, and he did it. Still, the boy is not ready to accept his crime. The boy, who is the culprit, claims that he is not a madman. He says that he went to the old man's room so cautiously. He did it for seven long nights (Poe, 2009, p. 110). He murdered the old man on the eighth night. He told this story. Despite the heinous murder, the boy wants to prove himself innocent. This is what a culprit tries to dramatize. The main thrust of the story is that crime speaks for itself. Poe seems to make criminal-minded people aware of severe punishment. The crime rate has not gone down, no matter whether research has been done and several solutions have been invented. Murder crime, rape, and sexual violence crime are other most common crime society faces.

### **Rape and Sexual Violence**

Mass murder is occasional, but rape and sexual violence as such are frequent in many societies. Although every crime is sensitive, rape is much more sensitive. Generally, the rapists in gangs rape the girl and murder her. For instance, Nirmala Pant's case is still pending or on the verge of dismissal. She was raped and murdered. The whole media sensitized her issue, but there was no result.

Pamela Singh, one of the sufferers or victims, has a trauma that she has had from the perpetrator. Her experience of rape by a stranger who infiltrated her apartment in Canada . . . showing that rape and abuse happen everywhere, in developed Western nations as well as in poor, developing ones. These crimes are a global phenomenon demanding global attention (Chatterjee & Orenstein, 2016).

Likewise, there is another case that the uncle sexually harassed his own niece. The narrator tells her own daughter's experience:

My daughter complained to me about the sexual harassment which she got from my husband's brother. Because of his bad behavior, she was feeling depressed, nervous, and frightened. As it was from my family member, I could not say anything to the perpetrator, and I was compelled to keep such a crime within two persons: my daughter and me. (Gyawali, 2020, p. 83)

Sexual harassment is an unforgivable crime that has been going on among family members in such a manner.

Sexual harassment is not only seen as a social crime but also has very severe effects on human physical and mental health that was found responsible for increasing stress, anxiety, and depression, reducing the confidence and internal creative potential of the victim (Gyawali, 2020, p. 84). The victim's trauma has multiple negative effects. Some sufferers also commit suicide. Rape is more common in underdeveloped countries. The third most concerning subject of the study is robbery and thieving. This crime has victimized many little girls, young girls as well as age-old women. The perpetrators are all males of different age groups. Not only young boys or young men but also males of about seventy over are responsible for committing this crime.

### **Robbery and Thieving**

Burglary and thieving are primarily due to unemployment problems. Exceptionally, some people, who are good for nothing and over-ambitious, involve in robbery and thieving. Livelihood has become so costly that these days that the regular income source does not support modern necessities. Usually, the employed people do not involve in such bad work. Some unemployed people do involve in the burglary. Bank robberies are relatively uncommon: only about 2 of every 100 robberies are of a bank (Weisel, 2007). Another type of burglary or



robbery might be easy access, but bank robbery is a bit challenging. Despite the difficulty of bank robbery, the robbers risk it for a good amount of money. This problem is not only in Nepal; it is happening in developed countries like the United Kingdom and the United States. In U. K., banks suffer the highest average losses from armed robberies. In the U.S., bank robbers net over \$4,000 per robbery; this represents about 60 percent of financial losses from commercial robberies (Weisel, 2007). Most robbers think that bank robbery is a low-risk target for them but more beneficial. Such countries' security system is unquestionable, but they face financial losses from commercial robberies. The United States could not have controlled it as they had expected. The fourth concern of the study focuses on corruption and scamming as the last one.

### **Corruption and Scamming**

Last but not the least is corruption and scamming in this discussion section. Like robbery and thieving, corruption and scamming are frequent activities. These crimes have become very common now. People are inclined to corruption only because of the devilish nature of the monetary matter. Very few high officials have been nominally punished for corruption. The law does not seem to be very effective. Some officials still attempt to violate the law despite the punishment provision. Many officials have succeeded in hiding their corrupted money, so the rest also seem to try to do that. The corrupted people are tagged as criminals in criminology. All these criminals have not been put under the law, and they have not been fined yet, although they have a lot of extra earnings. There is no such mechanism that checks the official's real income transparently. So, corruption by high officials will be higher in countries where courts, prosecutors, and police pose a low level of integrity and substantially low risk of punishment to would-be embezzlers and bribe-seekers (Gupta et al., 2018, p. 48). Because of the substantially low risk of punishment, corruption seems to have been fueled up and sprouted. There are rates confirmed by the middlemen in

many government offices. In this regard, Nepal has been trapped or stuck in the quicksand of corruption. It shows that Nepal will never be corruption free so far. During the Year between 2005 and 2015, the Central Development Region had the highest annual number of corruption and improper complaints registered (Gupta et al., 2018, p. 1). Sometimes, corruption occurs in the eastern region and sometimes in the west, but it never gets discouraged. It has been a big challenge that corruption has been developed institutionally as a kind of culture. The corrupted people think that it is not a crime; they think that it is their right.

The root of corruption has been badly deepened in developing countries like Nepal. There has been a kind of competition to have more money, the illegal black money, either from the office budget or from the clients. This trend has been well-sprouted. So, corruption crime has not been controlled yet. The nation has made strict laws like the Prevention of corruption act to control corruption. The Prevention of Corruption Act 2002 is the principle of anti-corruption legislation. It criminalizes corruption, bribery, money laundering, abuse of office, and facilitation of payments in the public and private sectors (Gupta et al., 2018, P. 274-275). Whatever the act or bill is passed to control corruption, the corrupted people easily violate the rule without caring about the penalization. They think that everything is dealt with by money. If they are found red-hand, they will be suspended for some days or months, but all of these accused people are not punished harshly; they are forgiven. If they have corrupted a million rupees, they are ready to spend half of it because it is not the money they have earned.

Scamming is another dangerous crime that is continuously going on in societies. Many youths have been homeless, and thousands have been bankrupt because of fraudulent manpower companies. Not all, but some manpower companies work fraud. For example, Bheri Overseas Manpower has been found to have swindled youths out of Rs 300 million, promising them lucrative jobs abroad (Khadka, 2021, p. 1). There are many other Bheri Overseas Manpowers

that have swindled many youths out of millions of Rupees. Some youths go abroad but do not find a job there. They have to hide from the police as they have gone there illegally. Foreign rules are very strict for such illegal entries. When the police arrest the youths, they are put into jail for months. Some youths die of depression and hunger. And some youths are helpless at the airports. Some get back to Nepal after their relatives send them air tickets. The murder of twelve youths in Iraq is an unforgettable event.

This paper has discussed these four main areas for analyzing criminal activities and exploring the causes of crime in society. So far as the objectives mentioned above are concerned, the study attempted to explain them respectively. While exploring the inherent causes of social crime, the early imprisonment of children is the most remarkable. Sir Eardley Wilmot, a magistrate for the county of Warwick, concluded that early imprisonment of children was a direct cause of crime (Hostettler, 2009, p. 191). When the government sentences the children, they get a chance to learn about committing a crime from the seniors in prison. Then they may become more dangerous criminals. Once they come out of jail, they become more skilled. A prison is a complicated place for the pastime. Narrow space, dirty and unmanaged as women, children, and other men, are assembled like animal husbandry. This makes the prisoners irritated and crueler than they were ever before. They may well become more hardened and anti-social, and return to the freedom that must come someday, firmly pledged to prey rather than cooperate (Downes, 2021, p. 40). The prisoners get irritated by the bad behaviors of jailers and police. This instigates the prisoners to commit more crimes. Therefore, the government mechanisms have to behave the criminals not inhumanly because they may change. If this concept is developed, crime will be minimized.

The government mechanism has to hire psychologists as good counselors to convince the culprit not to commit a crime again. This can minimize the crime rate in societies:

The military tribunal that was established to prosecute war criminals under the London Charter indicted 24 persons, all of whom were German. Of the 22 who were prosecuted, 3 were acquitted, 12 were sentenced to death, 3 were sentenced to life imprisonment, and the rest were sentenced to terms of imprisonment ranging from 10 to 20 years. One defendant committed suicide at the end of the trial. (Çakmak, 2017, p. 23)

Either during or in the aftermath of the war, the hostages are captured and sentenced to death or sentenced to life imprisonment. These two ways might be the middle path of ultimate solutions of minimizing the crime rate for whatever nature of the crime. It depends on the nature of the culprits. So, the counselors must be real counselors.

Another way to minimize crime is a mutual understanding between police mechanisms and local authorities. Home Office Circular 44/90 encouraged local areas, notably police and local authorities, to adopt partnership-based strategies to prevent crime (McCarthy, 2014, p. 36). For the management of crime as permanently as possible, every government has to create the condition that everyone should respect the law (Pohlmann et al., 2020, p. 156) and strategy for better solutions to criminal activities in societies. After this strategy, crime can be reduced.

### **Conclusion**

This study concerned these issues: murder and genocide, rape and sexual violence, robbery and thieving, and corruption and scamming. Although there are thousands of crimes in societies, the researcher found these four areas worth researching because they are more frequent than the rest. This paper assumes that there will be peace and silence if these four crimes are controlled. The criminals

of all these are to be effectively counseled so that they would realize that crime is always a crime, never a prize. After all, the crime management problem has to be sorted out by hiring psychologists and counselors, not only by hiring.

The crimes addressed in this paper are mass murder, bank robbery, sexual violence, corruption, and scams. The one-sentence solution is the life imprisonment of the murderers with good counseling by highly experienced psychologists in the prisons because some are highly intellectual culprits, too. Strict implementation of the laws and severe punishments for the culprits might not control criminal activities. According to psychologist Sigmund Freud, whatever type or category of crime is, there is all because of a person's crotchety nature and psychological disorder or the consequences of his abnormality. Human nature is almost of a similar type. Everyone possesses anger and emotion, and this pushes a person toward some destructive activities. But if the id, ego, and superego network are in balance, crime is less if not naught. Sometimes, the effect of criminal activities is minor, but sometimes it goes beyond the imagination, like in the destruction of Nagasaki and Hiroshima. The study, which applies the psychoanalytical approach for the discussion and analysis, concerns the frequent criminal activities that society is suffering from. Close friends and relatives are the most responsible for the criminally inflicted suffering.

There are very few cases of crime that strangers have caused. Man-to-man crime is deadlier than animal-to-animal crime. Animal killing is made for food, whereas man's killing is a highly political and revenge motive and has more to do. One most relevant reason for the crotchety nature of man might be because of global warming and junk food, and only this is not responsible, but mainly the person's psychology. The uncontrolled overaggressive nature of a person instigates criminal activities. Although it is not easy to control the crimes, they can be minimized by changing the nasty habits of chemical aggression in foods, schools, colleges, villages, and in working places and generating employment

opportunities. First, we should change the world mentality by saying "NO WAR," "NO SEXUAL VIOLENCE," "NO ROBBERY," "NO SCAMMING," etc. In the case of mental preparation, anything can be made possible. Secondly, the superpower countries should lead the world strictly for this, but the problem is that they seem to have been violating international law. For instance, was war necessary between the USSR and Ukraine? Thirdly, the developing, developing, and undeveloped countries should follow in the footsteps of the big brother countries. They should not think that superpower countries have dominated them. The superior or inferior complexities also work that they should be neglected. The reason is too minor, but the result is too big. If all the countries start thinking from this angle, reform is possible, peace is possible, the crime rate can be lessened, and peace and silence can be maintained even if it is the most challenging task.

Increasing the number of prisons and sending criminals to jail is not the ultimate solution; increasing employment opportunities has also not been a solution; making a strict law, and effective police mechanism has not been a solution.

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## **Experience and Expectation of Socialism: Principle versus Practice in Nepal**

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### Abstract

This article discusses Nepali people's experience with socialism and their expectations by addressing these questions: What is socialism? Which socialism do Nepali people expect? Why do they expect socialism? How does the principle go against the practice in the context of Nepal? Qualitative secondary sources are critically analyzed as methodological tools to reveal the present experience and expectations of Nepali people. It presents the disparity between principle and practice demonstrated by the Nepali political parties. *The Constitution of Nepal 2015* has formally promised that the guiding political-economic principle of this state is socialism-oriented. However, the sayings and doings of major political parties in Nepal have a big gap. In their doings, they are highly influenced by liberal capitalist principles, and they continue implementing neo-liberal policies. They put forward liberal bourgeois policies and programs that suited the interest of the comprador bourgeoisie. Thus, we have seen a contradiction in their implementation of the socialist principle, which goes against the expectation of the Nepali people. By pointing out this gap, this article highlights the need for serious discussions on achieving socialism as stated in Nepal's constitution and expected by the people while also drawing the attention of the political actors to take immediate and radical actions to correct their behaviors in time in order to achieve the goal of a Socialism Nepal.

*Keywords:* capitalist, comprador bourgeois, constitution, green-socialism, Marxism, means of production, neo-liberalism

### **Experience and Expectation of Socialism: Principle versus Practice in Nepal**

After a long and glorious history of revolution, Nepal overthrew the autocratic King's rule and established a republic by promulgating a new constitution in 2015 (2072 BS) through a newly elected Constituent Assembly. Nepal is a country of multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-cultural, and diverse geographical features. Regarding all these characteristics, the new constitution of Nepal has promised to end discrimination relating to class, caste, region, language, religion, gender, and all forms of caste untouchability to protect and promote unity in diversity, social and cultural solidarity by ensuring equitable society by way of economic prosperity and social justice. In the preamble, the *Constitution of Nepal 2015* has committed, "Nepal is an independent, indivisible, sovereign, secular, inclusive democratic, socialism-oriented federal democratic republican state" (p.1). This statement shows that all parties of Nepal who were involved in historical people's movements in different periods of the country have embraced socialism in Nepal by adopting democratic norms and values such as good governance, civil liberty, fundamental rights, human rights, complete press freedom and an independent, impartial and competent judiciary and the concept of the rule of law. Theoretically, this constitution has committed to realizing the long-held aspirations and dreams of the Nepali people.

Now, Nepal has become a socialist state as inscribed in the constitution with all-party consensus, although it was the agenda of only Left parties in the past. At the moment, it has become the responsibility of all the political parties, whether they are leftists, centrists, or rightists, to implement the agenda of socialism, especially making a socialist-oriented political-economic system in Nepal. However, the implementation of socialist agenda is not easy. Although it is very challenging, they need dedication and commitment because they have agreed to abide by the constitution. However, despite the documented commitment to a socialism-oriented state, the present constitution of Nepal has not given further

explanation concerning the specific type of socialism that the country expects in its social, political, or economic provisions. It has not been clarified whether the country aims for liberal capitalist socialism or state-sponsored scientific socialism.

Generally speaking, socialism refers to the philosophy and political-economic system aiming at the overall development of humanity by establishing a welfare state. In socialism, the production and distribution of goods and services are the shared responsibility of a group of people or state or government. In such a system, the basic needs, especially food, cloth, housing, education, health, and employment of the citizen are taken as the state's responsibility and regulated by the government. While every government needs to serve the need of the individual citizens, socialism encourages cooperation rather than market competition because its agenda is not private ownership. It encourages collective ownership over means/factors of production, such as any machinery, tools, farms, factories, infrastructures, land, labor, capital, and natural resources. Socialism inspires egalitarian society as stated also by Nepal's constitution: "we also express our determination to create an egalitarian society on the basis of the principles of proportional inclusion and participation" (p.1), in which the governments of different parties in Nepal mean socialism differently. The leftist parties promise a commitment to equal rights and opportunities for all people by equal distribution of goods and services only in their sayings. The centrist and rightist parties superficially take the agenda of equal distribution of goods and services and raise loud voices about human rights to show that they are genuine political actors. Besides, in a socialist state, the government controls the means of production and market price. There is no unfair, biased, and exploitative situation in the distribution of goods and services in the market. In Nepal, the practice is quite the opposite. There are monolithic, unfair, and prohibited business activities in the market. Market monitoring by the government is not meaningful and effective. To

implement the agenda of socialism in Nepal, the government should take radical action. Market prices should be controlled by facilitating the supply system, especially by distributing essential daily commodities through food trading companies. Government officials should analyze the price of goods on the basis of customs gate price and industry gate price. They have to punish the wrong advertisers. However, there is a huge gap between the policies and practices in Nepal. The market price rises, and the government officials visit and say that the work has been well done in every sector, but the customer-people do not get benefits.

In a socialist welfare state, the government makes a central economic and investment plan by collecting and using national capital and national resources to establish various types of industries, including farm and livestock industries. The goal of socialism is to transfer the means of production from private ownership to the ownership of an organized society, i.e., the state. The Socialist system considers every worker as a producer and speaks for their role in the decision of what to produce and how to produce. According to Mishra (2019), “Socialism considers private ownership of property as the root cause of social pollution and evil. To uproot private ownership is essential for establishing socialism” (p. 25). In other words, public ownership of the means of production is the basis for socialism. In a socialist state, the government discourages the practices of share market and remittance because they are not productive, although there is no restriction on importing raw materials. Then any surplus or profit resulting from the citizen-owned means of production should be shared equally with those same citizens.

### **Historical Features and Models of Socialism**

The term ‘socialism’ comes from the Latin word *sociare*, which means to combine or to share. The ideas and principles that underlie socialism have deeper

roots and can be traced back to ancient times. For example, in ancient Greece, the philosopher Plato in his *Republic* around 375 BC, advocated for a society in which resources were shared equally and private property was abolished. His *Republic* “depicts an austere society in which men and women of the ‘guardian’ class share with each other not only their few material goods but also their spouses and children” (as cited in Ball and Dagger, 2023). Similarly, early Christian communities practiced forms of communal ownership and distribution of resources. Utopian socialism developed earlier in both literary and philosophical traditions than the more politically developed system as proposed by social theorists like Pierre Leroux, who presented socialism as an alternative to liberal individualism based on shared ownership of resources. But Karl Marx and Frederick Engels developed socialism as a complete economic and political system. However, there is a big difference between utopian socialism, as stated by Thomas More in *Utopia* (1516), and Marxist socialism, as stated by Marx and Engels in *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848). According to Marx and Engels, “The significance of Critical-Utopian Socialism and Communism bears an inverse relation to historical development” (1848, p. 41). Communism is also called scientific socialism. In this regard, Schumpeter (1994), in *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, argues, “The badge of Scientific Socialism, which according to Marx is to distinguish from Utopian Socialism consists in the proof that socialism is inevitable irrespective of human volition or of desirability” (p. 56). It means that the theory of scientific socialism was first developed by Karl Marx while speaking against capitalism. In a capitalist society, an individual is encouraged to own the means of production privately and is free to make a profit by exploiting the proletariat/workers. Equal distribution of means of production and services is an inevitable part of socialism but “social inequality is an inevitable dimension of the capitalist world system” (Baer, 2016, p. 12). In fact,



evolution is the foundation of socialism. Charles Rappoport, a Russian-French politician, advocates the transformation of present society:

A socialist is a new man who is obliged to live within an old society which he condemns and deplors, if he is a real socialist. From there come many troubled consciences and personal struggles of great sorrow. Sometimes the socialist needs an extraordinary force of character and reason, as well as very favorable external circumstances, to emerge victorious from such a struggle. (as cited in Wright, 2017, p. 30)

It demonstrates that socialism is not in favor of a stagnant society. The central concern of socialism is to understand the struggle in modern culture and society between living in the present and looking to the future. Uprooting private ownership in the process of human evolution is essential for establishing socialism. It demands a strong and all-determining government in the state. In socialism, the state is seen as the most effective vehicle for coordinating and administering all needs.

Communism and Socialism arose in protest against the exploitation of the working class during the age of the industrial revolution (1760 -1840). Both advocate public rather than private ownership, especially of the means of production, distribution, and exchange of goods. Both value the idea of cooperation. However, the distinction between socialism and communism is that socialism aims to only socialize production, while communism aims to socialize both production and consumption. This is summed up in Marx's phrase that "socialism's allocative rule is 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his work' while the more advanced stage of communism was defined as one in which distribution would be not according to work but need" (Roemer, 2008, p. 15). It means that those who work receive more because they need more. Under socialism, all citizens share equally in economic resources as allocated by a

democratically elected government, and people make decisions for the people, whereas under communism, most property and economic resources are owned and controlled by the state rather than individual citizens.

In the first half of the 19th century, early socialist thinkers like Henri de Saint-Simon, Robert Owen, and Charles Fourier presented their own models for reorganizing society along the lines of cooperation and community rather than the competition inherent in capitalism, where the free market controlled the supply and demand of goods. When Marx came up with the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* with his collaborator Engels, he argued, “The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle” (1848, p. 9). Following Marxism, democratic socialism was implemented and practiced by Bolsheviks under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin, with the Russian Revolution of 1917 in the Soviet Union until its fall in 1991. Today, democratic socialism exists in China, Cuba, North Korea, Laos, and Vietnam, but real Marxist/communist socialism has never existed till now, as Marx had proposed. Even Lenin could not implement communist socialism in his time because the distribution of skills was extremely heterogeneous, and the need of the people were unlimited.

In Europe, social democratic systems are found in the five Nordic countries: Norway, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, and Iceland. They have successful capitalist sectors and follow policies of social democracy. There is a difference between a social democratic system and democratic socialism. Social democrats believe in implementing welfare programs through a democratically elected government, while the supporters of democratic socialism believe in the nationalization of the means of production in running the economy through a democratically elected government. According to John E. Roemer:

Social democrats, however, were not primarily concerned with the elimination of capitalist exploitation, but rather with achieving a more

equal distribution of income than was associated with laissez-faire capitalism. The model that was implemented in the Nordic countries, with great success, used taxation rather than nationalization (2008, p. 15).

Similarly, many European and Latin American countries have adopted socialist programs believing that workers should control the majority of the means of production without avoiding the will of the free market and the capitalist classes. They have practiced socialism by democratic process rather than revolution.

One of the main features of socialism is ‘anti-capitalism.’ Anti-capitalists are those who want to replace capitalism, capitalist policies, and ideals with another type of economic system like socialism or communism in that the working class/proletariat would inevitably triumph over the capitalist/bourgeoisie and control the means of production, forever erasing all classes. Marx’s socialism is a revolutionary socialism that originated as a reaction to the industrial revolution. Marxists often refer to socialism as the first necessary phase on the way from capitalism to communism. They want to abolish private property, private ownership over the means of production, competition, etc. They reject individualism and liberalism, which is “the key value in a capitalist society” (Salvadori, 1968, p. 5). In anti-capitalist ideology, competition in economic activities is replaced by cooperation, preferably voluntary but compulsory if need be. International Workers’ Day, also known as Labor Day, is a celebration of laborers and the working classes on May 1 as an anti-capitalist movement every year since 1889. May Day has become an annual event for all Socialist Party Organizations and Trade Unions.

‘Economic, social and political equality’ is the second basic feature of socialism and is identified with justice. According to a British-Italian historian and anti-Fascist writer Massimo Salvadori (1968):

For run-of-the-mill socialists, who count in the socialist movement more than sophisticated intellectuals, equality simply meant uniformity; uniformity in economic standards at the level of practical activities, uniformity in ways of thinking at the level of intellectual activities (p. 6).

It means that there is inequality and discrimination in society because of divergent economic interests that result from private ownership of property. When private ownership is abolished, there may be uniformity in the way of thinking.

The third feature of socialism is 'fraternity.' Socialists' ultimate aim is to establish an affluent society without divisions and hence without tensions composed of happy and contented individuals cooperating voluntarily for the common interest. In socialist eyes, harmony in society can be achieved through the elimination of capitalism. With prosperity, there would no longer be any motives for quarrels, divisions, and conflicts because these are due to scarcity and the greed of the strong exploiting the weak. Brotherhood and pacifism are the dominant socialist themes. Socialism accompanies the triumph of equality, brotherhood, and peace, and the socialists see in the abolition of capitalism the most radical step ever taken in the progressive transformation of mankind.

The fourth feature of socialism is the maximum social 'welfare state.' It means that there is no scope for exploitation of the labor class. The government keeps a close eye on the needs of the poor masses while formulating plans. In a socialist economy, work is according to ability/skill and wage according to need. The socialist government plays a positive role in decision-making. The government has complete control over economic activities like distribution, exchange, consumption, investment, and foreign trade. All types of decisions regarding the central problems of an economy are taken in the economic plans. There is a central planning authority that plans for the economy.

The fifth feature of socialism is ‘no competition but productive social relations on a cooperative basis.’ Gilbert (2020), in *Twenty-First Century Socialism*, argues:

The basic claim of socialism is that the world should not be run by a tiny clique of capitalists who act solely in their own interests, but by all the people on the planet, as they work and think together for the common good (p. 17).

The fact is that humans have only ever survived and prospered in cooperation. Capitalists want workers to compete for jobs because capitalists can offer workers lower wages. Capitalists also compete with each other to maximize those profits. In such a situation, there is exploitation and injustice.

In the world, there are several models of socialism. Different socialist countries have different models based on their geographical location, cultural and ideological inspiration, and economic and political influence. Though there are various models, I have mentioned only the major models in this article.

The first and most well-known is the ‘scientific socialism model.’ This model is also called revolutionary or left-wing socialism and is oriented toward communism. It was predicted by Karl Marx and was attempted to implement initially by Vladimir Lenin in USSR. In this model, working-class struggle and technological change play a central role in the dynamic social change and revolutionary transformation of human society from the domination of the capitalist mode of production. The leading agent of the change is the mass movement of downtrodden heavy-industry-based proletarians.

The second is the ‘democratic socialism model.’ In this model, the means of production are nationalized and under the control of the democratically elected administration. The vital goods and services are distributed through centralized planning, but the free market is used to distribute consumer products. After

Russia's fall, China, Cuba, North Korea, Laos, and Vietnam have tried to implement this model in their countries. However, they have not completely achieved it yet because now democracy has become the pervasive institutional desire and essentiality, at least in developed countries. Moreover, the increasing technical sophistication of the capitalist production process has been expected and accepted by the majority of people to increase and expand their horizons of individual knowledge and power.

The third is the 'social democratic model.' Under this model, the social democrats are not "primarily concerned with the elimination of capitalist exploitation" (Roemer, 2008, p. 15); rather, they refuse to interfere and regulate the free market policy of capitalism. They want to implement social welfare programs to establish a welfare state by the maximum distribution of goods and services to their citizens in order to avoid exploitation and abolish class division. In such a model, the individuals of the free market system decide how resources should be distributed. The individual workers are free to accumulate private property. Such a model is now found in Scandinavian countries like Norway, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland, and some other Latin American countries. The fourth model is the 'bourgeois socialism model.' It is also called libertarian or conservative socialism. This model works on the assumption that every individual is always rational, self-determining, and autonomous. The phrase 'bourgeois socialism' was used by Marx and Engels in *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* to rebuke the capitalist economic system. Marx and Engels (1848) say, "The bourgeois has torn away from the family its sentimental veil, and has reduced the family relation to mere money relation" (p. 11). This right-wing socialism is compatible with capitalism in which rather than abolishing class divisions, the socialists of this group wish to simply raise everyone up to be a member of the bourgeois class to allow him/her the ability to endlessly accumulate private capital. Free market policy, individualism, market

competition, social hierarchy, etc., are their key economic policies. America, Britain, Canada, Australia, Japan, India, Bangladesh, South Korea, etc., are liked to be called by this model of socialism but not by the name of capitalism because now they have realized that it is only socialist economic and political system that can present welfare state, absence of exploitation, rejection of discrimination, the establishment of justice, equality, human rights, and egalitarian society.

The final and twenty-first-century socialism model that I like to include is the 'green socialism model.' It is also called eco-socialism or environmental socialism. This model motivates the protection of natural resources. Large corporations in such a model are owned and run by the public. Green socialism promotes the development of locally grown food. The production process is focused on ensuring that every member of the community has enough access to basic goods and the public is guaranteed a sustainable wage. According to this model, the present crisis of climate change, ecological and environmental crisis, psychological depression, anxiety, economic pollution, etc., are the causes of capitalism. In such crises, green socialism has twofold advantages. The first is it can weaken the power of capitalists. The second is it can enhance the power of the people as citizens and as workers. The key aim of green socialism is to empower the local people to protect the ecology and environment to get equilibrium in the ecosystem. In this regard, Gilbert (2020) maintains:

Today we need governments to take the lead in organizing the transition to a system of energy production, transportation, city planning and manufacturing that would produce very low or zero carbon emissions, while linking this aim to a broader program of social justice, welfare reform and wealth redistribution (p. 61).

Using the green socialism model, the socialist, progressive governments of this century should actively seek to encourage cooperative models of ownership and

control of enterprises outside of the public sector and the socialization of enterprises and services at local, municipal, and national levels where this is appropriate. They have to prefer small local companies and encourage the cooperatives and local communities to run enterprises on the basis of participatory democracy.

### **Principle versus Practice in Nepal: Which Socialism?**

After the promulgation of the *Constitution of Nepal 2015*, which has guaranteed Nepal as a socialism-oriented democratic republican state, the expectation of the Nepali people is high because the basic character of Nepali society has changed with the end of the feudal monarchy after the seven decades of people's struggle culminating in the peaceful revolution of 2006. Since then, Nepal has changed its course to socialism constitutionally. With the change, people have demanded to implement the true spirit and aspiration of socialism by the elected governments. They have expected to achieve Nepal as a socialism-oriented state through major political parties like the Nepali Congress, Nepal Communist Party (Unified Marxist-Leninist), Nepal Communist Party (Maoist Center), Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Socialist), Janata Samajbadi Party (People's Socialist Party) and many other smaller Leftist, Centrist, and Rightist parties and even from the new emerging Rastriya Swatantra Party (National Independent Party). In their formal documents and election manifestos, they refer to the Nepali constitution and their commitment to implementing socialist agenda because the Constitution is the common document of all parties, and they have all signed it. Even in their formal speech and slogan, they highlight socialism. In the "Nine Point Agreement between the CPN-UML and CPN (Maoist Center)," published in *My Republica* (2023), the two largest Communist Parties promised:

to take initiatives to form a national consensus government with the objective of creating favorable environment to implement the constitution



and for socio-economic transformation and to carry out the tasks of formulating necessary structural and policy works for implementing the constitution (p. 1).

However, It is not clear what type/model of socialism they mean to adopt. The Constitution has not specified it either. Is the model of socialism promised by all parties a common agenda? The people in the country are confused because the major parties' behavior and treatment of common people are contradictory to the principles of socialism. Whereas they have promised to fulfill the basic needs of health, education, and employment, their political and economic characters seem to be contrary to their documents.

It is essential to understand whether the political parties of Nepal are not clear on the model of socialism or if they pretend to implement the programs and policies of socialism. Are they ready to uproot private ownership and transfer the means of production from private ownership to the ownership of an organized society/ state? It is true that public ownership of the means of production, such as land, labor, capital, instruments, infrastructures, machinery, and natural resources, is the soul of socialism. Man, as a social animal, cannot exist without the cooperation of society. Moreover, in this globalized world, every human is entangled economically, culturally, or politically with the other human in the world. In this sense, Albert Einstein, in his essay "Why Socialism?" very clearly expresses the value of society:

It is 'society' which provides man with food, clothing, a home, the tools of work, language, the forms of thought, and most of the content of thought; his life is made possible through the labor and the accomplishments of the many millions past and present who are all hidden behind the small word 'society.' (1949, p. 2)

By this, Einstein means that an individual always depends on society. He cannot abolish it, just as in the case of ants and bees. An egalitarian society is a synonym of socialism.

I argue that the Nepali Communist Parties, large or small, are not ready to follow scientific socialism as assumed by Marx and Engels and later attempted to apply by Lenin. The formal documents of the Nepali communist parties are evidence of this opinion. CPN (UML) changed its course after Madan Bhandari's *Janatako Bahudaliya Janabad* (People's Multiparty Democracy). CPN (Maoist Centre) has also adopted the principle and practice of a multiparty system accepting periodic elections and elected government. In a document of The Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Socialist) published in 2022, the immediate goal of the party is:

to build the foundation of socialism with social justice and democratic values by defending the achievements of the revolution and developing national capital alongside the economic and socio-cultural transformation of the country toward socialism by peaceful and democratic means. (p. 2).

However, the above three large communist parties of Nepal have not clearly said what model of socialism they follow. The non-Communist parties like Nepali Congress are capitalist in their characters even though B. P. Koirala added one agenda as *prajatantrik samajbad* (democratic socialism) in the party's guiding principle by being influenced by the flow of Marxism in Eastern Europe after the Second World War.

After analyzing the documents of all the Communist Parties of Nepal, it can be concluded that theoretically, they have followed the democratic socialism model as many Communist Parties in the world today. The other rightist and region-based parties, like Nepali Congress and Janata Samajbadi Party, have also added a socialist agenda in their principles, policies, and programs. As stated

above, democratic socialism is the mishmash of socialist and capitalist theories in which social justice and welfare state policies of the socialist movement are combined with individual freedom and market competition of the capitalist agenda. It does not abolish private ownership and production profit. In this model of socialism, the capitalists who make large profits out of their investments pay certain taxes to the government, and the tax is used to uplift the status of marginalized and powerless citizens in the nation. Thus, this model is applied in many countries in the world by both leftist and rightist wings. In Nepal, all political parties have compromised in this model and negotiated their agenda in the Nepali Constitution.

We have got a bitter experience with the democratic socialism model in Nepal. In 1959, a democratic government was formed with a two-thirds majority under the premiership of Nepali Congress leader B. P. Koirala. But the government could not implement plans and policies of democratic socialism because the dominant party principle of the Nepali Congress was capitalism. Although this party had theoretical agenda of democratic socialism, practically, it was capitalist. Then the Koirala government was removed from power after one and a half years by the then King Mahendra, and Nepal experienced a partyless *Panchayati* autocratic ruling system for about thirty years.

After thirty years of experiencing the King's autocratic rule, the Nepali people re-established Multi-party democracy with a Constitutional Monarchy in 1990. King Birendra was the head of the kingdom. Then the leftist and rightist parties formally participated in the general election in Nepal. Nepali Congress became the ruling party for many times. Even at that time, this party adopted democratic socialism in its formal documents, but it began to implement the Western capitalist system of individualism, privatization, free market policy, etc., in practice. It ignored its guiding principle of documents and Nepali people's expectations and aspirations.

Nepali people experienced several popular movements for socialism. There was also a people's movement in 1990 led by CPN Maoist that established democracy which lasted for 12 years until 2002. In 2002, King Gyanendra referring to the Maoist uprising in the countryside, began taking over different aspects of the government with the army's assistance. He finally took over as the head of the government in 2005, after which the CPN Maoist joined political parties like Nepali Congress and CPN (UML) with a 12-point agreement to dethrone the king and restore democracy. In 2006, all powers of the 239-year-old monarchy were removed, making Gyanendra a civilian king.

Nepali people also experienced the minority and the majority governments of the Communist Party. The first communist government in Nepal was Mana Mohan Adhikari's government. The first Communist Prime Minister, Man Mohan Adhikari, and his nine-month government from 1994 to 1995 were very hopeful of implementing socialism, but it could not rule for sufficient time because it was the minority communist government of CPN (UML). In the general election held in 2017, the Communist Parties of Nepal brought a majority in Federal Parliament as well as in Provincial Assembly. The alliance of the two largest Communist Parties, CPN (UML) and CPN (Maoist Center), obtained nearly a two-thirds majority in parliament and formed the first majority Communist government under the leadership of K. P. Sharma Oli. They later merged as the largest Communist Party, named as Nepal Communist Party (NCP) in 2018. This left alliance's political and economic documents with 174 seats in the 275-member Parliament also stated the aim of establishing socialism in Nepal. The formal reports of 2018 of the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) clearly specified that establishing socialism through peaceful movement and democratic exercise is possible in the current condition of Nepal as the Nepali constitution has guaranteed it.

On behalf of the Left parties, KP Oli led a nearly two-thirds majority government elected by the erstwhile parliament. Nepali people were hopeful of achieving the goals of socialism in Nepal. They expected that the majority-led government of the Communist Party would implement political and economic socialist agenda, plans, and policies and implement them practically, such as strengthening the circulation of productive national capital and promotion of industrialization to generate and secure high employment, rule of working-class people, end of exploitation of working class, promotion and production of capacity, equal distribution of mode of production, assurance of social justice, government's guarantee on basic needs, health, and education, employment, the commitment of equal rights and opportunities, unfair distribution of goods and services in the market, ecological and environmental protection, control of youths going to the Gulf counties for cheap labor-employment, etc. But their expectations became worthless because the majority-led Communist Party government followed the Western neo-liberalist model of socialism, but it was essentially capitalism which has economic anarchy as Albert Einstein claims, "The economic anarchy of capitalist society, as it exists today, is, in my opinion, the real source of the evil" (1949, p. 3). Moreover, the internal conflict between the prominent leaders became the immediate cause of the dissolution of the largest Communist Party government.

Thus, the people's expectations and aspirations have remained the same till now. Even the Communist government has lost its golden opportunity to implement the agenda of democratic socialism. When the Nepali Communist Parties go far from their roadmap to meet the mission of socialism, what can people expect from other right-wing parties? It is the helplessness of the Nepali communists not to fight against the comprador bureaucratic capitalist economic system. When asked, they confess that there is the domination of comprador capitalism in the Nepali economic system. The comprador capitalists are

supported by powerful politicians and bureaucrats who obstruct the promotion of national capital. A recent example is the adoption of the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC). In such a situation, how can Nepali people expect socialism in the country and believe that the Nepali political parties follow the trail of socialism promised by the constitution? It is thus important to understand that Nepali people are living in baseless assumptions, empty assurance, unpractical lofty promises, and false beliefs.

### **Present Positions and Challenges of Nepali Socialist Parties**

Socialism is the primary principle and agenda of communist parties. Nepal, as one of the South Asia countries, has some similar problems to South Asian socialist parties, which are inclined to communism. The common problem of socialist parties in South Asia is their existence. The Cold War Period was their flourishing time. The dissolution of the USSR in 1991 was the main cause of the collapse of socialist parties and profoundly changed the geopolitical environment of South Asia. Moreover, there was the rise of Americanism, neo-liberalism, and Western hegemony through economic, political, and cultural globalization by various international institutions and multinational and transnational companies such as IMF, World Bank, Migration Policies, etc. The intense hegemony of the Western technological networks slowly and gradually caused to deviate the communist parties of the Third World countries and then influenced from the communist cadres and made it obligatory to follow their ideological systems. Because of these activities, the communist parties of South Asia transformed from realism to idealism by romanticizing Western imperialism in the fields of communication technology, education, culture, economic support, and much more, such as the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC). In such a situation, the scientific application of the Marxist-Leninist ideology, organizational procedure, programs, and policies are the main challenges to the communist parties of Nepal, including all South Asian countries.

From the above-mentioned evidence, we have found that there is a decline in the popularity of the communist parties in South Asian countries, excluding Nepal. In Nepal, more than sixty percent of people support communism, but due to their division and splitting attitude, they seem to be in the minority position. The main reasons for the deteriorating position of communist parties in South Asia are that most of the communist leaders have false consciousness. They do not accept criticism and self-criticism. They romanticize people's problems and lack coordination, integrity/honesty but focus on self-interest. They are unable to change them and solve the common problems such as mass poverty with its attendant evils of ignorance, ill health, and technological backwardness, territorial disputes among the major states, internal polarizations that threaten peace and integrity in almost every state, and the lack of mutual trust among its constituents. In Nepal, the socialist parties and their leaders have a feudal concept and an intense desire to get personal power which is also the other cause of their fall. Even when they reach the leading policy-making position of the government, being head of the state or executive of the government, they misuse the power with bad governance and create unfavorable relationships between themselves and the people. Bad governance encompasses a variety of situations, from corruption, deceit, and to the passing of unfair policy. Moreover, unlike their theory and doctrine, their practical behavior promotes opportunism, factionalism, egoism, nepotism, favoritism, etc. So, they fail in their agenda of equal economic distribution. These all happen because of ideological deviation and their desire for hedonism. A recent example of such a government in Nepal is K. P. Oli led a nearly two-thirds majority of the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) government which was dissolved in 2021 because of the party leaders' characteristics.

**Conclusion: A Wide Gap between Principle and Practice in Nepali Politics**

Nepali people think and expect positively. But their experiences, as stated above, evidently clarify that even the Communist Parties of Nepal are not able to

fulfill people's expectations and aspirations of socialism, let alone the Nepali Congress, which has been misleading people in the name of democratic socialism. For the establishment of socialism, powerful political leaders should support the abolition of private ownership. But it is found in Nepal that instead of abolishing private ownership, the leaders of communist parties, who have theoretically committed to making the journey of socialism and reaching up to communism, are found to be the owners of huge private enterprises. They know very well that socialism cannot be achieved unless private ownership is stepped down, but they have invested huge amounts in private institutions like hospitals, schools and colleges, industries, land and housing, and many other service sectors being comprador bourgeoisie. The leaders who had to promote socialist culture in society were found to be heavily influenced by capitalist culture. So, it is clearly seen that there is a wide gap between principle and practice in Nepali political character.

True socialists are revolutionists. They are progressive, so they have to believe in objectivism and realism. Their strength is people and social change for human evolution as a long revolution. With the class-consciousness, they have to evaluate who their friends are and who are enemies. They have to think objectively. The future of the socialist parties in Nepal is bright because the Nepali people understand that only socialists can solve the problems of the proletariat, marginalized people, and subalterns. If they correct them in time, looking at other communist countries like China, Cuba, Vietnam, Laos, etc., remodeling their political institutions, economic systems, and social patterns, there is still the possibility of their rise in the days to come in this region.

To sum up, the present Nepali society is fundamentally capitalist in character. When the Nepali Communist Parties are on the road, their slogan for socialism is very high. When they are in the government, they lower their voice and become silent. This is the basic character of the present Nepali Communist



Parties. Thus, the Nepali Communist Parties should be clear about the principle, policy, and program of socialism, whether they are on the road or in the government. They must be able to resist the Western neo-liberal economic policy and fight against the capitalist comprador bureaucratic character. Otherwise, their promise to socialism in the Nepali Constitution will be a false promise to deceive Nepali citizens. If they do not apply their principle in practice, they will not remain communist in the true sense. They will be communists only by name. But Nepal is a fertile land for socialism and communism. The leaders of genuine communist and social democratic parties should minimize their ego, prejudice, and selfish ambition and sacrifice their personal interests by uniting and making a powerful communist force for the country's and its citizens' sake. If they apply their guiding principles of scientific socialism in practice and minimize the gap between theory and practice, their goal is not very far.

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**The Preparation and Implementation of School Improvement Plans (SIPs):  
Its Implication in Improving Learning Outcomes**

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### Abstract

In the last two decades, Nepal's community (public) schools have been preparing, implementing and reviewing School Improvement Plans (SIPs) periodically. Schools submit SIPs to the Local Government (LG) to get disbursed school funds annually. One of the components of SIP includes learning outcomes (MoE, 2017). In this context, there is a general lack of research on the process of making SIPs and its effects on learning outcomes. To fill the existing lack of knowledge in this field, this research aims to answer two interrelated questions. First, what is the policy process of preparing SIP and how it is practiced? Second, what are the effects of teaching and learning process as envisioned in the SIPs on students' learning outcomes?

This research applies qualitative methods, analysing content of selected SIPs of three community schools of Kailali district from the far western region, especially focusing on the plans to improve learning outcomes. Building on these findings, case studies are conducted in the schools using semi – structured interviews by taking into consideration experiences of teachers, students, parents, SMC/PTA Chairs and members, resource persons and LG authorities (ten interviews in total) in July 2019, exploring how SIP has been understood and realized in practice on the ground. It is generally observed that the process of preparing and implementing SIPs has positive correlation with learning outcomes even if it is minimal over the time. In fact, the will – power on the part of school stakeholders is the key for the quality SIP, and the policy as envisioned at the centre has partially been implemented at grassroots.

*Keywords:* school improvement plan, community school, decentralization, learning outcomes, policy and practice

### **The Preparation and Implementation of School Improvement Plans (SIPs): Its Implication in Improving Learning Outcomes**

In the last two decades, initiatives have been taken to decentralize the school education sector of Nepal through several acts and regulations (MoE, 2017). Stakeholders of the sector, such as the school management committees (SMCs), Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), and head teachers (HTs) assume various roles and responsibilities in improving schools, including better teaching and learning outcomes. The SMC, as a school's governing body, undertakes the function of overall management, while the PTA engages with parents to promote their involvement in school activities.

The Constitution of Nepal 2015 and the Local Government Operation Act 2017 have conferred powers and functions relating to the overall management and functioning of the school sector to the local governments (LGs). But, some ambiguities in jurisdiction still remain among different levels of the government.<sup>1</sup> As the policies of LGs should not contradict those of federal and provincial governments, LGs are reluctant to formulate education policy on their own given that there is no federal Education Act. This state of affairs has led to confusion among different levels of government. This confusion is also because of a conflicting provision in the constitution. In Schedule 8, the power of basic and secondary education is mandated to the LGs, but in schedule 9, education is listed as a concurrent power of federal, state, and local levels. However, policy initiatives show that powers and functions regarding education are gradually being devolved to the local level in recent decades, even if the extent of such power varies.

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<sup>1</sup>For more on this, see, Shak Bahadur Budhathoki, 'Address Local Educational Issues', *The Rising Nepal*, December 23, 2019, <https://risingnepaldaily.com/opinion/address-local-educational-issues> and Shak Bahadur Budhathoki, 'Making Local Education Policies', *The Rising Nepal*, November 11, 2018. For details, see, *The Constitution of Nepal* (2015).

As part of devolving powers and functions to schools, existing government policy envisions that schools prepare and implement periodic plans called SIP. The SIP is a document that covers plans for a school's functioning and development for five years, and its work plan section is annually updated after reviewing the previous year's progress and bottlenecks. The SIP consists of the school's introduction (historical, geographical, school's catchment area<sup>2</sup> and its population composition<sup>3</sup>, programs implemented in the school), analysis of the school's context (in terms of its physical infrastructure, management, and administrative aspects, economic condition and so on, its major challenges and solutions to them), framing of plans (school's vision, objective, identification of school's priority, identification of five years' activities, budget estimates), and annual implementation as well as monitoring plan (MoE, 2017).

School stakeholders chart out their strategic plans in the SIP. Nepal's community schools have been preparing and implementing SIPs mandatorily since the fiscal year 2001/02 (Budhathoki, 2021; CERID, 2003; MoE, 2014). The SIP should be aligned with existing government policy provisions, but the stakeholders, the SMC, the PTA, and the HT, take school-specific context into consideration as they understand their context better (Barrera-Osorio et al. 2009).

Globally, the trend of decentralizing education began in the 1970s, and the reasons for this were the disintegration of centralized governments, financial globalization, and the emergence of new information and communication technologies to control systems (Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009; Welsh & McGinn, 1999), and the SIP has been considered to be a tool for education decentralization. Over time, there have been different experiences of education

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<sup>2</sup>School's catchment area refers to the geographic area where a school is supposed to provide its services and from where children come to the school to acquire formal education.

<sup>3</sup>The population composition refers to disaggregation of different groups of people in certain geographical areas such as percentages of ethnic and caste groups Tharu, Brahmin, Chhetri and so on.

sector decentralization across the world. It is hard to generalize such dynamics in their totality as they often manifest differently depending on country contexts. But, it is important to review the contextual factors to determine why and how education decentralization has been successful in some contexts and not in others.

This paper attempts to contextualize Nepal's education decentralization process, taking the case of SIP preparation and implementation with a focus on teaching and learning processes and students' learning outcomes. Two decades after its introduction, the process of SIP preparation and its quality varies from one school to another. As observed, the willpower and initiatives of the HT and teachers play a crucial role in preparing a SIP. In general, these school stakeholders perceive that SIPs play a key role in improving the overall school education. The policy, as envisioned by the center, is only partially implemented on the ground, and Nepal's experience is similar to that of other countries to some extent in decentralizing the education sector.

The next section of this article provides a brief description of the methodology adopted for this research and then moves onto the introduction of SIPs and policy provisions governing them, and their implementation in the frontline, followed by analyses of SIPs of three selected schools and their subsequent effects on students' learning outcomes. Finally, conclusions are drawn based on the findings.

### **Methodology**

This research uses qualitative methods. Content analysis of SIP documents of three randomly chosen public schools of the Kailali district was conducted. Of these, two schools were located in rural areas and one in urban areas. In doing content analysis, the SIP framework, as provided by the Government of Nepal (MoE, 2017), has been taken into consideration, and the focus has been on teaching and learning outcomes.

While doing the content analysis, the plans and activities as set out in SIPs for improving the learning outcomes were studied, and then their feasibility, relevancy, and usefulness were observed, assessed, and contextualized to generate meaning. The purpose of doing the content analysis was to see if school stakeholders follow the policy framework as envisioned at the center, contextualizing it in their context, including the process undertaken to come up with the plans and policies. Moreover, an attempt has been made to draw a pattern of portrayal of learning outcomes as depicted in the SIPs.

Based on the information generated from content analysis of SIPs, case studies of the schools were also conducted to understand the process of SIP preparation and implementation. The author participated in the SIP preparation and review meetings in two of the schools, which allowed them to observe and understand the context better. Then, semi-structured interviews were conducted with HTs, teachers, chairs, and members of SMCs and PTA (ten respondents in total) in July 2019. The interviews lasted about thirty to forty minutes and were concerned with the process of SIP preparation and implementation, how they envisioned learning outcomes, and their subsequent effects on students' actual learning outcomes. After the interview, a general pattern is extracted by situating the findings in the school context and generating meaning. The limitation of this research is that it is conducted in the three schools of the western Terai region of Nepal. Therefore, the findings may be little generalizable in other parts and contexts of the country, such as hilly and mountain regions.

### **The Concept and Objective of SIP**

Nepal's education sector was decentralized during the decade of 2000s with the seventh amendment of the Education Act 1971 conferring different powers and functions to local stakeholders, mainly school administration, i.e., the HT and the SMC. As power was distributed between the HT and the SMC, they would make key decisions on financial, administrative, and educational issues.



Therefore, Nepal's education decentralization tilts towards a mix of political-administrative models since it gives authority to school administrators as well as an elected body, the SMC, in operating schools.

In the changed context of federalism in Nepal since 2015, schools submit SIPs to LGs annually to get their funds. Hence, LGs should take account of problems, programs, and plans in the SIP while preparing educational policies and plans (MoE, 2017). This is an example of a bottom-up planning approach as envisioned in the seventh amendment of the Education Act of 1971 and Education Regulation of 2001 (CERID, 2003). As recent legal and constitutional provisions are in the process of implementation, how much decentralization initiatives will translate into practice in the upcoming years is yet to be seen.

The SIP has been practiced in Nepal's community schools as a tool for education decentralization since 2001/02 as a part of Basic and Primary Education Programme II (Budhathoki, 2021; CERID, 2003; CERID, 2005). Enhancing the learning environment is one of the major components of SIPs. For instance, the government's book designed to support SIP-preparation states, 'The major objective of SIP is to ensure better school, better teaching, and better learning for improving quality of education. SIP is a means to support schools to improve the quality of education with their own initiatives' (translated from Nepali) (MoE, 2017, p. 2).

The practice of planning has increased the engagement of local stakeholders in schools and brought about positive results. The government's guidebook further elaborates, 'Making such plans has enhanced stakeholder participation and capacity building. The concern, participation, ownership, and accountability of the local community have increased in making and implementing plans and mobilizing resources' (translated from Nepali) (MoE, 2017, p. 2). In the two decades since its implementation, the SIPs have resulted in

some positive outcomes at the local level. Yet, it is important to verify and validate context-specific outcomes.

In theory, schools should align SIPs with the policies, programs, and priorities set out by the federal, provincial, and local governments.<sup>4</sup>

Concomitantly, LGs should also include problems, concerns, and programs of SIPs in their education policies and plans (MoE, 2017). This is how bottom-up planning should be implemented in the decentralized context, but, in practice, it was observed that it was implemented only partially.

The SMC is required to form a taskforce of five members to prepare the SIP—the HT, representatives of SMC and PTA, a teacher, and a local educationist—from among the stakeholders (MoE, 2017). The taskforce holds consultation meetings, reviews the previous year's work, and comes up with new priorities. Then the action plan is updated in the annual section of the five-year SIP. Once the SMC approves the plan, a copy is submitted to the LG for the disbursement of school funds. The HT takes the lead role in implementing the plans, while the SMC monitors, evaluates, and reviews the progress (MoE, 2017). However, this policy provision is operationalized differently across schools for a variety of reasons. The next section makes a detailed discussion on how SIPs are prepared and implemented at the school level based on case studies of three schools.

### **The Practice of Preparing SIPs**

At the local level, school stakeholders come together to write SIPs, form task forces, and share responsibilities as envisioned in the existing policy. This exercise had slightly improved in comparison to the practices in the previous years in the three schools where the case study was conducted. The SIP writing

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<sup>4</sup>One HT shared that the finalisation of the SIP was on hold because the provincial and local governments asked them to wait for their policies and programmes (Interview on 5 July 2019 in Dhangadhi, Kailali).

process has gradually become a collective effort in recent years, which is a good change in many ways.

As it is observed, teachers and HTs can formulate good SIPs if they have the willpower and commitment. In one school, there were a few teachers who worked hard to produce a good SIP. A teacher at that school searched for the government's guidelines for writing SIPs online.<sup>5</sup> With this small initiative, the teachers were able to accomplish much. In another school, a newly appointed HT engaged proactively in preparing the SIP by asking HTs of other schools with experience in preparing SIPs and learning how to write them. In an interview, a recently appointed HT said that he contacted 40 to 50 HTs to inquire about the process of preparing SIPs and the contents to be included in them, as it was the first time he had been directly engaged in preparing one. He was able to develop a good SIP for the first time in the school's history, working hard and in cooperation with other stakeholders. As indicated by the evidence, it is the HTs and teachers who are mostly engaged in preparing SIPs (Budhathoki, 2021; CERID, 2003). This scenario has not changed much over the years.

Most respondents said that data collection is a daunting task in the course of preparing a SIP. The schools need data regarding students' subject-wise and grade-wise learning outcomes of previous years, population composition of students by ethnic groups, number of school-age children, number of children with disability, and so on in the school's area. As it takes time to collect specific data, the writing too, therefore, often gets delayed.

The recently appointed HT struggled to gather data, and he had to visit the ward office and meet key authorities who had been involved with the school from the early years, as the school had no system of record-keeping. The previous HT

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<sup>5</sup>The SIP Preparation Guidebook 2017 is available in the website of the Department of Education, Government of Nepal. Although the book mentions that it would be available to schools in physical form, most schools do not have access to it.

did not make a complete SIP as specified, and hence the required data was not available. Thus, the new HT had to start from scratch. The HT worked hard to collect correct information on the history of the school.<sup>6</sup> All schools come across such hurdles, though they may differ in degree. Literature suggests that the process of data collection burdens teachers as ‘planning requirements often have the unintended effect of overloading teachers and administrators’ (Levine & Leibert, 1987).

It appears that need-based institutional support to write SIPs is lacking. For example, the recently appointed HT said that earlier, he had to copy another school’s SIP as he had to work entirely on his own. Of the three case studies for this paper, two HTs received a short orientation on writing SIPs from the LG,<sup>7</sup> but whether they were useful remains questionable as the content of such training was unclear. In some cases, cooperation and coordination between schools and local and provincial governments in writing SIPs are observable. Still, there is no specific mechanism set out in this regard except the requirement that LGs should collect SIPs from schools. In cases where there is cooperation among them, it is primarily because of the initiatives of HTs. One of the case study schools cooperated with local and provincial governments to align the SIP with their policies and programs to make it easier for them to get some funding for the specified programs.<sup>8</sup> To do this, the HT of the school has maintained a very good relationship with local and provincial governments. However, the coordination was possible because of the efforts of the HT rather than the institutional mechanisms in place.

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<sup>6</sup>This is based on an interview with a recently appointed HT on 5 July 2019 in Dhangadhi, Kailali. According to him, there were disagreements about when the school was established, but he got the correct information after talking to key authorities who were associated with the school in its formative years.

<sup>7</sup>Based on an interview with an HT on 6 July 2019 in Dhangadhi, Kailali.

<sup>8</sup>Based on an interview with an HT on 5 July 2019 in Dhangadhi, Kailali.

The policy for writing SIPs has been implemented only partially. In particular, the participation of some stakeholders, such as parents, has been unsatisfactory, partly because they are unaware of these processes. Although there have been recent initiatives to promote parental engagement, only a few parents participate, and even when they do, they hardly voice their concerns.<sup>9</sup> This is mainly because of existing power dynamics in public schools where parents are perceived to be inferior to teachers partly in relation to their low educational qualification in some cases.

As discussed above, the increased participation and engagement of stakeholders in preparing SIPs at the school level is a positive indication of the process of education decentralization. In fact, this process needs to be deeper and wider to address “school concerns” and “for relevant and appropriate engagement or interventions to occur” (Cleveland & Sink, 2018, p. 5). The more stakeholders take part in such processes in schools, they develop a better understanding of the school context, resulting in preparing better plans. Further, this process is likely to be more relevant and context-specific as stakeholders better understand the school context.

### **The Portrayal of Learning Outcomes**

In this section, a brief discussion will be made on learning outcomes as outlined in the SIPs of case study schools. The term 'learning outcomes', which is an essential component of the SIP, generally refers to a statement on what the learner is expected to be able to do or know about and/or value at the completion of a unit of study and it is expressed in numbers in SIPs.

There is a great variation among schools on how they depict learning outcomes in SIPs—some schools do it impeccably, while others miss out on some

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<sup>9</sup>The author spent seven hours at a school attending the SIP preparation meeting. He found that there were very few parents in attendance, and they had almost no say, mainly because they were not literate about such processes. So was the case in another school, where parents had hardly any idea on how to share their ideas and feedback for the SIP.

points or do not follow all the procedures for a number of reasons, including the capacity of the school leadership. For example, when asked about parents' concerns regarding learning outcomes, teachers said that most parents are highly concerned about their children's learning outcomes. This means parents are aware that children should learn better in school. Therefore, it is important to how such issues are included in SIPs and how stakeholders address parents' concerns.

One rural school presented detailed plans for students' learning outcomes at two levels. First, they provided data on grade-wise learning outcomes to be achieved in five years. Second, they presented data on targets of learning outcomes, expressed in percentage of the total achievement expected to be achieved every year for each grade and each subject. They used illustrations to show clear targets on the percentage of learning outcomes to be achieved for the upcoming years.

In the annual implementation plan section of the SIP for the following year, the school had provided students' learning outcomes to be achieved, expressed in percentage, on the basis of marks received by the students of each grade for every subject in the previous year. This enables everyone to compare the students' performance based on the academic result of the previous year. In this school, there was an average increase in the examination scores in all grades by about 3 to 4 percentage points except in grades 6 and 7. This means that the school achieved the target, though partially. Finally, the SIP also set a target for achieving 2 to 6 percent growth in learning outcomes for the current year. In this way, the plan seems to be rigorous, systematic, and achievable for the upcoming years.

In fact, this school did a wonderful job because it produced a good quality SIP which included all the contents as required, including fitting in data properly and reliably, even though the HT hardly took any leadership responsibility for the task. Instead, it was the vice-HT who took the lead role in this regard. For the last

few years, the teachers<sup>10</sup> of the school have been preparing and finalizing the SIP. But this year, the SMC formed a task force that invited stakeholders to review and identify issues to be included in the SIP.<sup>11</sup> As an invitee, the author had an opportunity to participate in and observe the meeting.

The next school presented the current scenario of learning outcomes of students of each grade for every subject based on the mark ledger of the previous academic session. The school reviewed action plans of the previous years to improve learning outcomes for four subjects, Mathematics, Social Studies, Science, and English, and found that there was an increase in learning outcomes of up to 2 percentage points in a year. Analyzing the data, it was pointed out that students performed poorly in English in the lower grades and in Mathematics in the higher grades. The reason behind their 'poor performance', as mentioned in the SIPs, was traditional teaching methods that made it difficult for students to conceptualize learning. By the term 'traditional teaching methods,' they generally meant teacher-centric teaching methods, which predominantly involved giving lectures and rote learning.

Although the SIP consisted of plans to increase students' learning outcomes for five years, they were not disaggregated subject-wise, unlike in the previous school. The plans were, therefore, a little vague. The SIP also included plans to increase students' learning outcomes by providing additional classes for students performing poorly, holding interactions with parents regularly, rewarding/penalizing teachers based on their performance, preparing and using local teaching materials, and so on. In short, the plan entailed an exhaustive list of action plans to improve students' learning outcomes in the following years.

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<sup>10</sup>One of the teachers used to take the responsibility of writing the SIP in the previous years and he used to be paid for it. But this year, they have taken collective responsibility. This is based on an interview on 9 July 2019 in Dhangadhi, Kailali.

<sup>11</sup>Based on an interview with a teacher of the school on 9 July 2019 in Dhangadhi, Kailali.

The third school outlined students' learning outcomes of the previous year for each grade for every subject, but it is unclear whether the learning outcomes were based on the mark ledger of the annual examinations or something else. The available data were not interpreted substantially, even though it was mandatory under the existing policy. Thus, it was difficult to understand the SIP.

Furthermore, it set the target of achieving growth in students' learning outcomes from 49 to 80 percent in five years without disaggregating present subject-wise learning outcomes of each grade. This made the target unreliable. Hence, the SIP of the school targeted growth in students' learning outcomes on a weak basis.

SIPs discuss little on challenges and opportunities in improving learning outcomes. They do not contextualize issues while setting priorities. Some schools list out priorities, while others set specific targets to be achieved annually. Thus, schools show great variation in preparing and implementing the SIPs. As discussed earlier, there are a number of contextual reasons for this state of affairs, including the pro-activeness of its stakeholders—mostly teachers and the HTs.

In order to make the planning and implementation process effective, school stakeholders must come together on a regular basis to reflect and review what they have achieved thus far, what remains to be achieved, and what measures are required for that purpose. Voort (2014) stresses the need to “allocate the necessary time and opportunity to reflect constantly on the improvements they have implemented, evaluate the effectiveness thereof to reach the intended outcome” (p.5). In fact, this review and planning process should be meaningful, participatory, and transparent to really affect the overall school condition in the short and long run. The collective efforts at the school level are critical for planning and achieving the goals as set out.



### **The Effects on Learning Outcomes**

The existing literature on the relationship between SIP and students' learning outcomes has two dimensions. First, it is argued that SIPs have positive outcomes as 'Some saw benefits in developing them [SIP], particularly administrators and teachers in leadership positions at their school' (Mintrop & MacLellan, 2002, p. 289). The system of preparing SIP could, directly and indirectly, contribute to students' learning outcomes and school atmosphere. Achieving what has been set out in the plans may be difficult to realize within the timeframe, but some components of the plans could be achieved by different means.

However, many argue that preparing SIPs have little effect on improving students' learning outcomes as it may be used as an excuse for the ineffectiveness of school leadership. Levine and Leibert (1987) state:

In some cases, individual school plans seem to serve the latent function of providing administrators with a means to legitimate low student achievement. That is, since all the steps in the planning process have been followed and a plan for improvement has been approved by central office personnel, how can the principal be criticised when improvement does not occur? (p. 399).

This shows that preparing the plans but not implementing them effectively may not result in positive outcomes as envisioned in SIPs.

The issue of whether SIPs are translated into action or not is an under-researched phenomenon, as there is inadequate empirical research dealing with this topic. In addition, the "published literature on the impact of planning on performance produces few results" (Fernandez, 2011, p. 343). Although planning should generally produce good results, little evidence supports this idea.

In discussing how provisions in SIPs affect students' learning outcomes, it should be mentioned that one of the three schools planned learning outcomes

targets poorly and did not interpret data as required in the ministry's guideline. Given this context, it is hard to believe that the school implemented what was written down in the SIP. Yet, two schools successfully fit in data in the required format in detail, and therefore, they could say that what they had envisioned had been achieved. Further, since they consulted with relevant teachers in preparing the plans, the teachers had a sense of ownership of the set targets. Reactions and results in terms of the effects of SIPs on students' learning outcomes is, therefore mixed.

The SIP preparation process involves discussions on students' learning outcomes. As a result, this issue gets incorporated into the SIPs, and some HTs instruct teachers to achieve the targets set out. In some schools, there was a practice that subject teachers provided detailed data, expressed in percentage points, of learning outcomes they intended to improve upon in the upcoming years. Such practices should have positive effects on improving students' learning outcomes, as planning is critical to improving such outcomes (Angelle & Anfara Jr., 2006).

SIPs mention many zero-cost activities that could be implemented in schools with the purpose of improving students' learning outcomes. For instance, adopting student-centric teaching and learning methods, taking attendance at the beginning and end of each day to reduce the number of absentees, preparing and utilizing local teaching and learning materials, and holding meetings with parents on students' learning outcomes periodically are some of those activities. These activities could be useful for enhancing students' learning outcomes, provided that they are duly implemented.

It is generally observed that preparing and implementing SIPs positively correlate with improving learning outcomes. Yet the way the SIP process gets implemented can have a vital role in this regard. Specifically, how SIP envisions and incorporates teacher participation in teaching and learning processes is critical

because they have a major say in regard to real. This is in line with Chu Ho (2005) in context of Hong Kong, who focuses on the importance of teachers taking the initiative, “teachers who build strong relationships with their students and support their learning create a positive disciplinary climate and a greater sense of belonging among their students, which in turn will likely improve students’ academic achievement” (p. 61). Therefore, teachers assume a vital role in improving students’ learning outcomes, meaning their responsibilities need to be clearly positioned in the SIPs.

### **Conclusion**

This article explored and contextualized the policy and practice of preparing and implementing SIPs in Nepal’s community (public) schools. In recent years, the process of preparing SIPs appears to have gradually been systematized in the schools of case study after two decades of its introduction as parents, teachers, students, SMC and PTA chairs and members, and ward chairs are involved as envisaged in the policy provision. However, the influence of parents is still negligible as they are little vocal and are less powerful than teachers in terms of educational qualification in the school contexts to voice their concerns. This article showed that preparing and implementing SIPs at the school level positively correlates with improving learning outcomes because school stakeholders set targets for the same and mobilize available resources such as teachers, school infrastructure, and so on. This is also because school stakeholders prepare these plans that inculcate ownership and make them responsible for realizing the set goals. Moreover, the local stakeholders would take account of available resources in formulating plans that would make plans more contextual, relevant, and achievable.

### **Implications**

After two decades of policy implementation, the contextualization of SIP making process is still in its early phase in schools, indicating that it takes a long

time to translate policy into practice in a real sense. Thus, this suggests that formulating policy alone is insufficient, but the focus should be on its implementation on the ground. Similarly, consideration needs to be given to making policies that are contextual, relevant, and flexible so as to adapt them in a creative and innovative way.

In the decentralized context of the education sector, there should be a system whereby school-level plans and policies are taken into consideration by the existing government mechanism in the planning process, such as at the local and provincial governments. By doing this, SIP making process will be meaningful, and school stakeholders will be hopeful and see the reason for writing their plans in contexts. It is also important that there is a system to provide required technical support to schools for preparing and implementing plans and policies on a regular basis.

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**From Rescue Mission to Colonial Ambitions: A Reading of Stanley's *My African Travels***

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### Abstract

This study examines Henry Morton Stanley's *My African Travels* through a post-colonial lens in order to explore how Stanley's mission of rescuing a missing explorer turns into his colonial ambitions in the interior of Africa. Primarily with a project of finding the missing missionary and explorer David Livingstone by name, Stanley sets out on his African journey in 1871. But after finding Livingstone, Stanley's eyes fall upon the plenitude of natural resources and backwardness of the native people that instantly stimulate in him a sense of the possibilities of commerce and Christianization of the natives. Consequently, he makes more explorations, draws maps and fills them with names, fights the locals, and establishes stations at different locations that ultimately turn into European colonies. This study analyzes and interprets his *My African Travels* as a colonial discourse in that it operates as a tool for the European colonial enterprise. The study employs conceptual terms related to colonial discourse for analysis and interpretation.

*Key words:* colonial discourse, othering, monarch-of-all-I-survey, appropriation



**From Rescue Mission to Colonial Ambitions: A Reading of Stanley's *My African Travels***

This study explores Henry Morton Stanley's colonial ambitions in his *My African Travels* (1886/2009), which documents his journeys to different locations in the interior of Africa from 1871 to 1884. Stanley commences his first journey in January 1871 with a mission of finding the missing British missionary and explorer David Livingstone. Livingstone, who has been in central Africa for missionary activities and scientific exploration, has been reported missing in the wilds for three years. The Royal Geographical Society officially sends a rescue team in search of Livingstone. Parallely, the editor of the *New York Herald*, sensing a viable story for commercial purposes, pays Stanley handsomely and deutes him for the search operation of Livingston. Stanley luckily happens to trace Livingston in the village of Ujiji on Lake Tanganyika. After the meeting, both of them conduct explorations together for four months. Stanley recorded his discovery and rescue of Livingston in his famous book, *How I Found Livingstone* (1872). Stanley's assigned rescue mission gets completed there.

But the finding of Livingston does not put an end to Stanley's travel in Africa. The profuse prevalence of African natural resources in different forms like fertile land, dark forests, beautiful lakes and rivers, and many other precious materials temptingly triggers his mind with a sense of high possibilities of prosperous trade. Further, the observations of the condition of the native people, supposedly backward, allows him to infer that they are awaiting Christian doctrines to be civilized. Thus, fueled with such commercial and Christianizing ambitions, Stanley continues exploring the deeper interior. He partakes in launching surveys of the geography, draws maps and fills them up with mostly European names, encounters the natives and attempts to control them, sets up different stations at appropriate places, and makes route connectivities. The

stations he sets up later turn into the colonies, and the experiences, observations, and information that he captures in *My African Travels* become tempting stimuli, at large, for the European and American powers to commence penetration into the African interior for commerce and land acquisition as well as a civilizing mission with Christian doctrines.

As regards the assistance of *My African Travels* in the opening up colonial project in Central Africa, this study reads it as a colonial discourse. The rationale behind selecting this text is that, although Stanley's other texts have received critical responses from this perspective, this text is under-researched yet. The study focuses its analysis primarily on Stanley's depiction of the plentiful natural resources and supposedly savage people and his call for Western intervention in the African interior for commerce and Christianization. For the analysis and interpretation, the study employs conceptual terms and rhetorical tropes related to colonial discourse, such as othering, savage, appropriation, monarch-of-all-I-survey, etc. The study first analyzes the theoretical terms, then analyzes and interprets the text in question, and finally offers a conclusion with a claim that the text underpins colonial ambitions.

### **Theoretical Perspective**

Travel and narrations of travel experiences are ancient phenomena having a parallel history with human existence. Human beings always moved from one location to another for this or that reason and loved to narrate their travel stories. While reading world-famous mythical and classical writings such as Mesopotamian *Gilgamesh*, Homer's *Odyssey*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, Indian *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, Herodotus's *Histories*, Athenian *Anabasis*, Pausanias's *Guide to Greece* and so on, one finds the travel theme in the center. The travel theme gets space in many later writings, too, whether medieval, early modern, or modern. Travel and its narrative part, whether oral or written, have been incontrovertibly connected for a long time. Interestingly, all civilizations of

the world have their travel writing of their own kind, but as Lindsay (2016) has remarked, Western travel writing has remained dominant over the others due to “privileges of mobility and representation which stem directly from Empire and which continue to be associated predominantly with the West” (p. 31).

The critical studies about Western travel writing began only after Edward Said published *Orientalism* in 1978. In this book, Said makes a sharp critique of Western travel writing, mainly written during the colonial era, claiming that it participated in the making and proliferation of Western imperialism in the form of colonial discourse. Said defines colonial discourse as an imaginary representation of other cultures, regions, and peoples. He has noted, “In any instance of at least written language, there is no such thing as a delivered presence, but a *re-presence* or a representation” (p. 21). For Said, colonial discourse does not underpin the fact (or presence), but instead the ideological bias (or re-presence) of the author. It rarely presents the facts about the others as they are but in a fabricated manner for “dominating, structuring and having an authority” over the others (p. 3). Like Said other scholars define colonial discourse as the “*representations and modes of perceptions*” (McLeod, 2002, p. 17), “the variety of textual forms” (Williams & Chrisman, 1994, p. 5), or “the system” (Ashcroft et al., 2000, p. 42) which the West produces to represent and dominate the non-West. Colonial discourse establishes an asymmetric relations between the West and the non-West where the latter is subordinated to the former and represented as its other.

Thompson (2011) has argued that travel writers produce two kinds of othering—general and pejorative—in their writings. In general othering, the travel writer merely presents the differences between members of two cultures, which is helpful to know each other. In pejorative othering, a writer depicts the differences between two cultures representing the other culture as inferior. Thompson illustrates:

In a weaker, more general sense, 'othering' denotes the process by which the members of one culture identify and highlight the differences between themselves and members of another culture. In stronger sense, however, it has come to refer more specifically to the processes and strategies by which one culture depicts another culture as not only different but also inferior to it. (pp. 133-34)

In colonial travel writing, pejorative othering is more pervasive. The colonial writers represent the members of non-Western cultures with othering tropes such as irrational, lawless, savage, uncivilized, and so on.

Besides othering the other cultures, colonial discourse also claims the surveyed territories. Pratt (1992) has contended that a traveling explorer makes a survey of the landscape and establishes an imaginative authority over it. She has termed it a monarch-of-all-I-survey scene that “would seem to involve particularly explicit interaction between esthetics and ideology, in what one might call a rhetoric of presence” (p. 205). This scene involves the author’s valorization of the aesthetics or the beauty of a landscape as well as his or her ideology. Pratt has further pointed out, “the relation of *mastery* [is] predicted between the seer and the seen” there (italics original, p. 205). The traveling author produces a verbal painting of the scene, judges, appreciates, and makes it available to the targeted audience.

Spurr (1993) has defined mastery of the surveyed territory as appropriation. Appropriation is one of the twelve rhetorical tropes Spurr has figured out in colonial discourse. By appropriation, Spurr has meant the explorers’ claims of the surveyed territories as their own. The European colonialists “saw the natural resources of colonized lands as belonging rightfully to ‘civilization’ and mankind rather than to the indigenous peoples who inhabited those lands” (p. 28). The European colonialists assumed it was their right to explore the indigenous

peoples' natural resources and exploit them with the pretension of bringing civilization.

After all, Western colonial discourses like travel writing misrepresent the non-Western peoples as the other for domination. The Western colonialists pretend it is their responsibility to uplift others as per the Christian civilization. Further, they also assume it is their right to explore, survey, and exploit the natural resources available in the territories of the non-Western peoples.

### **Colonial Aspirations of Stanley**

Bridges (2002) has remarked on Stanley as: "Certainly, Stanley easily made the transition from geographical explorer to land grabber and exploiter" (p. 66). Bridges is right in his statement about Stanley's transition from a geographical explorer into a colonizer. To his comment, though, I like to add that Stanley's transformation begins from a journalist that turns into an explorer first and then into a colonial founder later. Apparently, Stanley's first travel to the interior of the African landscape was funded by *New York Herald* for the purpose of tracing the whereabouts of the missing missionary and explorer, David Livingstone and producing a commercially profitable story about him. Stanley traces Livingstone alive in the market place of Ujiji village, which means his assigned task is complete, and he requires to go back home with the story. But he refrains from doing it and, instead, keeps traversing across the interior of Africa, for he gets deeply lured by the plentitude of natural resources. He senses the high feasibility of conducting commercial activities there. Besides, he also assumes that the native people, who he misconceives to be in backward and uncivilized conditions, can be perfect human resources for commercial purposes. These possibilities stimulate his mind with ambitions of acquiring the land and controlling the people.

Stanley's colonial ambitions seem to have been impregnated only after his first-hand observations of the African landscape and its people. Livingstone has

already provided him with the information about the viability of commerce, but Stanley takes him lightly. Regarding this, Stanley states:

For a second time, after considering the various countries about it, their natural resources and peoples, the conviction gradually came to my mind that Livingstone after all was not very wrong when he tried to persuade me that there were vast expanses in Africa. (p. 16)

The passage clarifies Stanley's belittling the worth of Livingstone's message about the possibilities for the white race to possess the wide expanses of the African landscape and settle there. Livingstone considers it a necessity even for the civilization of the black race. Stanley comes to acknowledge it only after his actual observations in various countries, their natural resources, and peoples. The more Stanley traverses, the more intense his colonial ambitions become into him. Wherever he goes, he imagines having discovered a new world fit for him. He feels of being at home there. The land was glorious in a variety of vegetation, herbs and leaves, fruits and flowers, deeply fascinating his eyes more and more. All this kind of marvelous landscape keeps his travels moving ahead. Stanley records:

I felt as though a witness of the creation of a new world, anxious that it should be a masterpiece to be hailed as the home of new nations. Glorious in vegetation, unequalled in tis tropical verdure, remarkable for its variety of herb and leaf, generous in its promise of unbounded fruitfulness, beautiful in its budding bloom, the land went softly gliding by our eyes, mile after mile, until a thousand miles had been counted. (p. 26)

The passage delineates the magnitude of the productivity of the land. It depicts how fertile it is and how comfortable home it can be for the new comers. Stanley keeps traversing across a thousand miles by surveying the magnificence of the African landscape.

Surveying geography in travel writing has a special significance. Pratt (1992) has stated that a traveling explorer creates a monarch-of-all-I-survey scene through the survey of the landscape. The surveyor involves “an interaction between esthetics and ideology” and establishes a “*mastery*” over the scene (p. 205). Stanley paints a monarch-of-all-I-survey scene of the landscape of the interior of Africa in his travel narrative. The scene is targeted at the Western audience. Calling for the Western presence in the African landscape, Stanley initiates a foundational set up for the colonial intervention. He strategically arranges the landscapes primarily for economic purposes. Spurr’s (1993) comment on Stanley is worth bringing here. Spurr has remarked that Stanley takes a “noble coign of vantage” and surveys “the scene below in such a way as to combine spatial arrangement with the strategic, aesthetic, or economic valorization of the landscape” (p. 17). As Spurr has claimed, Stanley takes a comfortable position as a surveyor and paints the scene of the landscapes strategically for commercial utility.

Preparing maps of unknown landscapes was of high significance for colonial explorers. It would help them to control and possess such landscapes though imaginatively. Maps, along with other documents like charts and scientific data, as Smethurst (2016) has stated, would provide “practical information for colonization, as well as revealing an imperialist mindset” (p. 232). Stanley as an explorer prepares maps of the territory he traverses. He records, “After a sufficient rest, I began the preparation of my map, in order to see what was the gain of our long journey” (p. 27). Along with the maps, he also calculates the gain that he has made from his journey.

While preparing the maps and tracing his gains, he also happens to realize his weakness of suspecting his precursor, Livingstone, who has already informed him about the value of Africa. Stanley admits this as:

You will remember that when with Livingstone, I was a strong skeptic as to the value of Africa, and though I deferred to his greater knowledge of it, with the courage of ignorance, I was prompt in giving proofs that to men equally ignorant with myself would have appeared unanswerable. (p. 27)

But only after Stanley prepares the map himself he realizes the worth of the African landscape, which has tremendously wide lakes, splendid rivers, countless tropical treasures, vast areas of fertile land, and so on. He explains:

When the map was finished, and I regarded the 30,000 square miles of lakes, and that splendid river, with its length of 3200 miles, which we had just descended, and speculated as to the thousands of miles of navigation which its noble tributaries would furnish over and above its own, and remembered the countless tropical treasures I had viewed, and the vast area of fertile land, great enough for a mighty empire. (p. 27)

While surveying and making maps of such a magnificent African landscape, Stanley gets tempted by an imagination of converting this vast landscape into an empire.

To this point, Stanley again feels guilty for ignoring Livingstone, who has rightly depicted the possibility of exploiting black people as laborers for the sake of empire. Stanley illustrates this as:

[I] thought of the millions of dark men I had seen, and considered what might be created by their muscles if rightly directed, then was I rebuked by my own work for my skepticism, for behold, I saw only the development and corroboration of Livingstone's ideas and words!" (p. 27).

Stanley corroborates the exact value of the African landscapes and its people only after some years of retaining first-hand experiences in travels. He also confirms that the land still lacks official control of any nation. So, he urges the rulers in England to take the necessary steps and proceed ahead in this matter. His urge goes this way:



You will proceed to annex it if you are wise, lest you be forestalled, for other nations are stirring and striving. It is a grand market for your cloth manufactures. Those dark millions require clothing and ornament, guns and powder, knives and needles, pottery and glassware, and they have rich products of ivory, and rubber, and dyes, and gums, and oils to exchange for them, and in barter there is great profit. (p. 28)

Stanley urges the rulers poignantly to proceed for annexing the African land for its potentiality for commerce. In this sense, he is a “tireless advocate of commercial and political intervention in Africa” (Driver, 1991, p. 137). Stanley enlists the valuable products available in Africa, such as ivory, rubber, dyes, gums, oils, and so on. The British could buy these goods from the natives and sell them products such as clothing, ornament, guns, powder, knives, needles, pottery, and so on. While trading, Stanley points out that the British can make high profits. But unfortunately, the concerned authority in England does not take Stanley’s urge seriously. Instead, the Belgian King Leopold immediately understands it. So, he calls Stanley to Brussels and assigns him a commission for the exploration into the interior of Africa, mainly the Congo area. Regarding this, Stanley mentions:

I was not greatly surprised that those concerned in England with such things were equally slow to learn. But across the Channel in Belgium, King Leopold was a great reader of explorations, and an earnest student of geography. He soon arrived at a conception of this case of discovery, and summoning me to Brussels, he placed in my hands a commission to return to the Congo to explore more closely the commercial resources of the country. (p. 28)

Commissioned by the Belgian King for the further explorations of the commercial resources in the Congo region, Stanley sets out again towards the destination on the 19<sup>th</sup> of January, 1879.

After reaching the place called Vivi, Stanley and his team occupy it by obtaining a concession from the natives. They established this place as the first station from where they could make route connections to different locations. Stanley states, “After a cession of the district of Vivi, duly made by the natives to us, we proceeded to erect our first station . . . and to make waggon-roads in the neighbourhood” (p. 28). Besides Vivi, Stanley’s team constructs many stations at different locations. They also arrange caravans for maintaining communication extending their influence across different locations, and obtaining “as much territory as possible from the native chiefs” (p. 31). Stanley strategically takes possession of the African land as much as possible.

The land acquisition process gets intense from the beginning of 1883. More than 400 native chiefs give up their lands to the Europeans by making stringent treaties. Finally, Stanley became successful in acquiring the vast area of the Congo banks from the natives for the Association International Africaine. Stanley mentions this as:

Over 400 chiefs had consented to treat with us, and to cede the government of their lands into our hands. The treaties were drawn up in the most stringent manner, by which the destiny of the Congo banks had been given to the Association. (p. 33)

Now the Congo basin comes into the hands of the Association. Later in 1885, at the Berlin Conference, the European Powers recognized the right of the Association to govern the Congo territories as a free and independent state. After a few months, the Belgian King receives the title “of the Sovereign of the Independent State of the Congo” (p. 34). Here begins the colonial authority in the interior of Africa officially. Stanley predicts the Congo basin “will continue to supply many a score of tons of ivory annually to the European market” (p. 42). With all this, Stanley turns out a colonial initiator or as Youngs (2013) has remarked, he is “a figurehead of new imperialism” (p. 57) in the Congo territories.

Stanley believes the civilization of the native people is equally important to the acquisition of the land. Unless the supposedly ferocious, lawless savage tribes are civilized according to Christian standards, it is always a horrifying threat to the white race's presence in the newly acquired territories. Immediately after he arrives at Zanzibar, Stanley wonders at the strangeness he observes among the black people. He describes: "all these black men were in a manner lawless; that many of them were savage; that some might be ferocious as wild dogs; that Africa possessed no theatres, newspapers, or agreeable society" (p. 4). Stanley considers black people to be savage, having no agreeable society and effective laws. Nor do they have any achievements of civilization, such as theaters, newspapers, and so on. They have rather aggressive behaviors like that of wild dogs. Representation of other races in such derogatory terms is what postcolonial thinkers like Edward Said term as a colonial discourse, which operates as an imperial tool "for dominating, structuring, and having an authority" over others (Said, 1995, p. 3). Representing the native peoples of Africa in such an uncivilized state, Stanley calls for the Western Powers to commence colonial intervention there for transformation.

Thompson (2011) has termed pejorative 'othering' for the traveler's judgment of other races as uncivilized and inferior. Thompson has argued that the use of such othering by travel writers is "ideologically motivated" and seeks "at some level to justify and encourage a particular policy or course of action towards those others" (p. 133). Stanley's portrayal of the natives in othering terms is motivated by Christian ideology. Although Stanley is reluctant to agree with Livingstone's suggestion: "Africa fit for the white man to live in, without which of course civilization for Africa was forever impossible" (p. 16), he gets convinced after gaining first-hand experiences by himself. So, he seeks the presence of the white race to intervene in civilizing mission in the supposedly savage communities of the vast expanse of Africa, "I advised the English man to

send a mission. . . . The Church Missionary Society responded the call” (p. 16). Stanley is quite sure that the development of the African peoples is possible only when they are civilized as per Christian standards. In this sense, he is, from the Western perspective, “the bringer of light, civilization, and commerce to the continent” (Whitfield, 2011, p. 234) and “the great pioneer and field marshal, blazing the trail for civilization” in Africa (Brantlinger, 1988, p. 183). So, his identification as “one of the great Pioneers of Christianity, Civilization, and Hope to that dark land of Africa” has been inscribed on his tomb stone (*Autobiography*, 2011, p. 517). But he is also a “geographical explorer . . . land grabber and exploiter” (p. 90), as Hulme and Youngs (2002) have argued.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, this study affirms Stanley’s *My African Travels* as a colonial discourse for underpinning his colonial ambitions in the interior of Africa. It explores the transformation of Stanley’s mission of finding and rescuing David Livingstone from the African wilds into his ambitions for commerce and the Christianization of the natives. It analyzes Stanley’s appropriation of the African territories, creating a monarch-of-all-I-survey scene. It analyzes how Stanley surveys the landscapes, prepares maps, tames the locals, sets up stations and route connections, and finally initiates a foundation for establishing the free and independent state of Congo. Finally, agreeing with Youngs’s (2006) assertion: “millions in Europe and the US had their image of Africa formed by Stanley’s writing, which still casts a shadow” (p. 3), the study claims *My African Travels* paints a fascinating image of Africa in the Western mind, which constantly gazes at it for exploitation. Along with this claim, the study expects to add a new critical response to the study of Stanley’s travel narrative.

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**A Story of an Untamed Woman Hero: A Book Review of Parijaat's *Shirish  
Ko Phool***

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*Shrish ko Phool* (Parijat, 1964) is a famous novel written by one of the most prestigious progressive writers, Parijaat. It is a story told from the perspective of a male narrator Suyogbir, a former soldier. The story opens with Suyogbir's narration of meeting with Shivaraj at a bar and how their friendship grew as a family friend. The narration becomes interesting when Suyogbir describes how he falls in love with Bari (Shivaraj's sister). Even if there are other characters, Suyogbir and Sakambari (who are called Bari) are the two main characters in this novel.

Suyogbir represents male psychology and the impact of war. His personality shows how a person lives with traces of the war and how the cruelty of war shapes their personality. Even after coming back to everyday life, Suyogbir has a dominating tendency that of a soldier. He thinks he should get victory over the things he wants. He has committed violence against women during the war, taking advantage of their emotions to fulfill his bodily desires. In the storyline, he narrates how he played with Matinachi's emotion in Burma just to quench his thirst, how he tempted a buffalo herder woman in Makhrig, and how he murdered a tribal girl and had sexual contact with her dead body. Contrasting with his feeling toward Bari, he thinks he has never loved any woman.

Suyogbir's character is shown just opposite to Shivaraj's character. Shivaraj is friendly and loves his sisters from his heart. Even though Bari makes him feel awkward with her sudden boldness in front of Suyogbir, his love for her does not change. He rather thinks that if something happens to Bari, he will commit suicide. Even if his sisters are of marriageable age, there is not any reference in the story where he is forceful toward them about their marriage. He even manages cigarettes for Bari when she demands. It shows he is a perfect brother and a man who is not influenced by the impact of war. He does not have any bitter memories like that of Suyogbir to feel guilty, although he also shares the characteristics of a free male in Nepalese society who freely wanders in the



bars in the evenings, gets drunk, and comes home late at night. But he respects Bari and is often scared of her scolding when he comes home late at night.

Unlike Shivaraj, Suyogbir, on the other hand, gazes at female bodies sensually and imagines their body sizes and ages. When Shivaraj invites him to his home, he shamelessly and lustfully stares at his friend's sisters. He even thinks of Mujura as a sensual and perfect wife-like character but finds Bari awkward and injuriously bold to his ego. At the beginning of the story, Bari becomes the most uninteresting and distressing woman character to Suyogbir as Bari never entertains his thoughts and opinions. How Suyogbir abhors Bari is cleared by a reference when Shivaraj accidentally drops Bari's photograph at Suyog's place, and after realizing it is Bari's photograph Suyogbir returns it to Shivaraj without even looking at it. However, as the story develops, gradually, he falls in love with Bari, but she never entertains his feeling.

Suyogbir often gives hints to Bari about his desire for conjugal life, but Bari reminds him that she has no such desire. This hurts Suyogbir's feelings, and he thinks that she has an "anti-humanistic component in her blood" (Parijat, 1964). In one incident, Suyogbir feels shocked and questions the existence of flowers when Bari says that she enjoys seeing a particular flower killing insects. To this, Bari replies, "One should bloom for oneself, flourish for oneself, and when one is compelled to wither one day, why should one have to entertain an insect? Why take a wound from an insect when one can wither alone, fall alone (Parijat, 1964)?" The more Bari mercilessly smashes Suyogbir's ego, the more Suyogbir feels trapped in her love, like the insect inside the poisonous flower. This one-sided affection makes him stranded and too cowardly to express what he feels to Bari. In this confusion, one day, he abruptly violates Bari, but Bari mysteriously dies without reacting to his act, and Suyogbir lives with guilt.

Even if this novel is marked as a pessimistic novel by many critics due to the death of Bari, Bari represents the poisonous orchid flower in my view. Bari's death traps Suyogbir forever and punishes him with unending guilt throughout his life. To focus on her death will be an injustice to her unusual, daunting, and rebellious character. Bari's part in the narration is the strongest and the most fascinating part that often makes other characters blunt. The way Bari lives her life is quoted as rebellious and challenging to traditional expectations regarding women (Wikipedia, 2020). Her character is too stubborn, cocky, and confident for Kathmandu's women in the 60s. She smokes cigarettes, does not adhere to the beauty norms, and confronts the men, unlike other women of her time. Suyogbir thinks she looks awkward in her thin body and 'unusually raised breasts' (Parijat, 1964), her height is average, she has deep black eyes with spectacles of Rolled Gold, her short, trimmed hair looks like that of old Hebrew military', and she speaks like a 'gunshot' (Parijat, 1964). The description from Suyogbir suggests she is too plain and undecorated, unlike other women of her age, but she is a woman with an 'abundant daring attitude' (Parijat, 1964) and a mysterious, unreadable face.

Bari's character is like that of a black sheep among the rest of the women. Unlike conventional women who wish and wait for a nice life partner, she thinks that "one can live alone" (Parijat, 1964). Bari is too independent and self-contained to desire a conjugal life. She is vocal about her opinions loudly, so the elders even suggest she be soft and polite, but she ignores those suggestions with her 'dry laughter' (Parijat, 1964). She enjoys watching flowers killing insects. Explaining this, she tells Suyogbir, "The insect suffocates and dies inside; it is so fun. Right now, there is no insect; otherwise, you would have seen it" (Parijat, 1964). Through her personality, Bari both hurts and haunts Suyogbir. She also incites the readers, and like a specter, she keeps hunting them even after the end of the novel.

The book is titled *Sirish ko Phool* (Parijat, 1964), which means Mimosa Sirisa flowers, which according to the book, withers just by the first touch of insects. The characteristics of this flower metaphorically represent Bari, who dies when Suyogbir kisses her without her consent. However, in contrast to this, I argue that Bari is rather a poisonous orchid flower that lives on trapping insects for food. Though Bari dies at the end before Suyogbir confronts her, the novel is not clear that her death is the impact of Suyogbir's act. There is no clarification from Bari's side regarding her sickness and death; thus, it can be unjust to such a Bold character to infer that she died because of Suyogbir's act simply because his act precedes her death. Nevertheless, like Bari's life, her death becomes a haunting mystery for the novel's characters and readers. Her specter, though, like Marx's specter (Derrida, 2012), keeps haunting Suyogbir and the readers alike even after the end of the story.

The writer has excellently characterized Bari as a unique woman character that does not fit into the conventional ideology of women. The novel is set in 1960s Kathmandu when the women's situation was lower, and the society was more conservative regarding gender issues. In that context, Bari stands aloof as a girl who seems revolutionary even in the present context. She is independent and clear in her philosophy regarding life. She is the head of her family as she handles her brother Shivaraj and often becomes strict with him if he comes home late and drinks too much. Moreover, she is not scared of death and wishes for 'timely death' instead of long life (Parijat, 1964). She is an atheist but still goes to temples to please her mother, and when someone reminds her that smoking might cause cancer, she says, "Cancer is welcome" (Parijat, 1964). She becomes more and more mysterious throughout the narratives, and at the end of the novel, she takes her mystery with her. In this regard, Bari is an extraordinary performer who deconstructs the ideology regarding women through her activities. Her face, too, is mysterious, which doesn't change, or she is quite able to cover her emotions,

and nobody can trace her feelings by looking at her face. In all conversations and even in shocking revelations, her face remains the same. Her eyes are compared to the “cat’s eyes” (Parijat, 1964), her long slender body is like that of a “snake” (Parijat, 1964), and she is unsmiling in normal situations, but her face sometimes brightens when she is passing harsh comments. All these characteristics make Bari an unusual, empowering, and impressive character. For the male ego, she might be a cold woman, but she stands as a strong woman throughout the novel and lives her life on her terms. Commenting about Bari, Suyogbir comments, “I always found her dry and selfish. She was fully grown at her age, but she never showed this in her behaviors, as if she did not have consciousness regarding her age. She is always at home and never seems to be interested in outside fun. She smokes consistently and thinks that cigarettes are the only luxury she has got” (Parijat, 1964)

Here, since Bari is vocal and often passes satiric remarks to Suyogbir, he thinks that she is selfish. His male ego is hurt due to her for the first time, as Bari is the only girl who does not give him value. He finds her face plain and “neutral” without traces of emotions which he regards as mysterious, and thinks “maybe she too has hidden mystery inside her” (Parijat, 1964). As the narrator finds Bari just opposite to his expectations and different than other women, he finds her challenging and equally attractive.

Through her character, Bari deconstructs the patriarchal idea of women by performing contradictory roles against the patriarchal norms. She is loud, direct, and bold in her expressions. She hurts the male ego of Suyogbir, taunting him about his soldier life as ‘sinful’; she also hurts him by saying that “flowers and soldiers” are contradictory and often calls him by names like “old man” and “alcoholic.” Every meeting with Bari becomes like facing a war with Suyogbir, and he confesses that “he didn’t have the guts to go to that house for the third

time” (Parijat, 19864). Suyogbir tests her by complimenting them and asking questions, but he finds her invincible every time. Once he asks what she will do if somebody tells her not to smoke, she answers, “I will then smoke ten cigarettes at a time” (Parijat, 1964).

On the basis of the above characteristics, it can be concluded that the novel heroically presents Sakambari as a strong female character who resists the patriarchal norms and is able to transform the cold-hearted soldier into a lover. And it would be discriminating just to see pessimism in the novel underestimating such a daring characteristic of Bari. The novel is equally successful in portraying how living a major portion of life in war makes a person cold and unsympathetic. Even though Suyogbir confesses in the novel that he is in love with Bari, his love is also like a war because rather than winning Bari’s heart, he forcefully violates the boundary that Bari had set between them. Like a soldier, he expected that Bari would surrender in front of him after his abrupt attack on her body without her consent, however, surrendering was against Bari’s character, and she gave the most ruthless punishment to Suyogbir- her unresponsiveness. Therefore, Bari, even after her death, preserves her dignity and chooses to remain untamed by her culprit’s intentions and activities. Like Phoenix, she rises above her death and lives more severely in Suyougbir’s mind.

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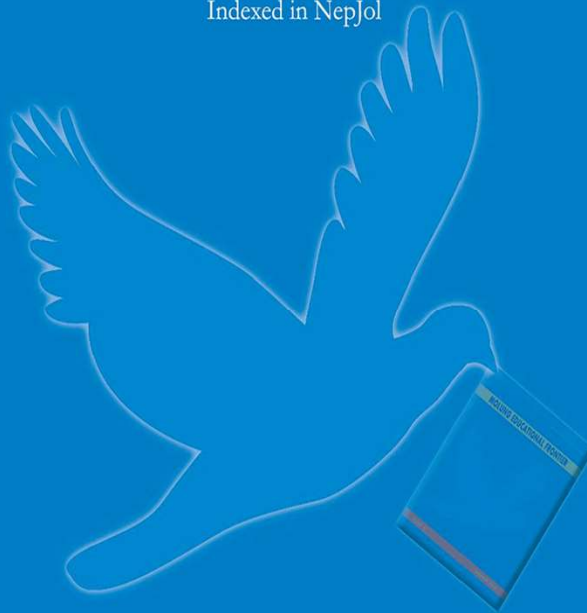
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