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Gender Perspectives in Hinduism: Contemporary
Practices in the Community School of Miklajung
Rural Municipality, Nepal



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Abstract

Gender discrimination issue is one of the major topics of discussion in the Hindu community of Nepal. The old culture of Hinduism regarding gender discrimination among schoolgirls has gained attention for researchers over the years. To investigate their status, this research is mainly concerned.

The base of this research is the field observation of school, the residences, and the community of the area. The researcher has sought data from the students, parents, teachers, local people, and priests. As the secondary source, local newspapers, the portfolio from local FM, TV health related organizations, and religious committees were also consulted. The data collected are analyzed and presented in the explanatory form in adherence to the hegemonic masculinity theory.

From the observations, questionnaires, focus group discussion, semi structure interview showed that there is no legal problem related to gender discrimination in Nepal, yet domestic and cultural influences lead to gender discrimination in Nepal. The result of the research also revealed that in Hindu cultural practices, gender-based discrimination is privileged in the Nepalese education system: overt or covert.

From the equality perspectives in the Hindu community, the research emphasizes the need for wide exposure of people and communities who practice the respect of women and equality. The suggestion is also highlighted that the crux of the inequality which is in the family and community level. The intervention has to be initiated from the family level, through awareness; launching the educational program to tie up into income generation and IT access in the rural areas. The research recommends the formulation or amendments of gender friendly policies from central, provincial and local levels, assessment of frequent monitoring and evaluation mechanism of the gender related issues and assurance of proper functioning of rules and regulations through awareness in households, communities, and schools.

Keywords: *gender, discrimination, Hinduism, education*

List of Abbreviations

AD	Anno Domini
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
DOE	Department of Education
ECA	Extra Curricular Activities
FFE	Food for Education
FM	Frequency Modulations
GIP	Gender Parity Index
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOHP	Ministry of Health and Population
NPC	National Planning Commission
SMC	School Management Committee
SSDP	School Sector Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organizations
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
FSP	Flexible Schooling Programs
SOP	School Outreach Program
PTA	Parents Teachers Association
CLC	Community Learning Centre

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1 Introduction

Gender is the cultural and social differences between males and females. It is an ascribed role of the culture, the way of life of people. In the Hindu religion of Nepali culture, certain roles are ascribed for males and females. Such attributions influence the everyday behavior of people, including the education of Nepali women. The choice of school, the attendance, the school assignment, parent's behavior, everyday activities, cultural functions (marriage, religious, ceremonies), school leadership, local assistance of scholarship, treating the individual and school children by teachers, job status and, etc. are influenced by the way the religion they follow. Specifically, how gender is practiced at home, school, and community, and what the influence of that gender perception is in further education.

Most of the researches conducted concerning gender in Nepal are found in and around the urban areas or cities like Kathmandu. The reality of Kathmandu and the remote areas is different because the exposure, interest, educational level, and the job status differ in those places. Thus, the researcher showed interest in conducting the research in this area.

Furthermore, this area is the area of Hindu followers, yet with poor literacy, income and job status. The study of such an area helps to identify the ground reality of the area and helps to foster equality and respect the human rights of females as well.

This research, thus is organized with providing general information of Nepal, followed by Hinduism in general, gender and education in Hindu cultural practice in the Nepali context in particular. Then it digs deep in the contemporary practices of gender in Hindu family, community and schools both traditionally and in modern days. The research seeks deeply into the micro-level of analysis regarding the gender, right from an individual, family, community, school, and finally to the rural municipality in relation to Connell's hegemonic masculinity theory.

1.1 General Information about Nepal

The country Nepal is a combination of mountainous, hilly and Terai (plain) region. The southern part of the country is known as Terai and commonly understood as the store of food grains as well. Administratively, the country is divided into five development regions,

fourteen zones and seventy-five districts. Kathmandu is the capital city as well as the principal urban central (UNESCO, 2010). The people of the hilly and mountainous regions are not in access to utilizing the varieties of facilities. Nepal is a developing country and a secular nation with radical reformations in political and legal aspects.

Rodríguez, Muñoz, & Rubio (2015) speak that Nepal is a small ethnically diverse south Asian country, landlocked between Asian giants China and India and Nepal has almost one-third of its population living under the poverty line. The decade long Maoist insurgency and the political transition period that ensued after the 2006 armistice, have characterized Nepal with gender and social inequality and political instability (p.1). The gender and social inequality were there before to the Maoist insurgency, while political instability increased then.

Table 1: National and province wise social data

Description	Nepal	Province 1	Province 2	Bagmati	Gandaki	Province5	Province 6	Far west
Caste	125	124	118	119	93	101	54	78
Language	123	94	63	83	50	45	35	53
Religion	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Literacy	65.16	49.54	74.85	74.81	66.43	62.77	63.48	65.90

Source: CBS, 2011

The table mentioned above shows that Nepal is a multicultural cultural country with diversity, ethnicity, language, and religion. Hindu castes system promotes four major castes viz *Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya* and *Shudra* (Subedi, 2011). Each of these castes is further divided into many other castes like *Adhikari, Gautam, Rai, Tamage, Sharki, moche*, etc. And the government of Nepal has recognized all these castes as separate. Thus, CBS has officially recognized one hundred and twenty-five castes. The average literacy rate of all caste is 65.16 percent according to the central bureau of statistics 2011; however, the literacy rate at present is gradually increasing day by day.

Nepal has a variety of cultures. The people are somehow guided by a cultural and indigenous concept. Nepal is largely diverse in its culture; its population can be divided roughly into two

language groups, Indo-Aryan and Tibeto-Burman. The Indo-Aryan group is politically and culturally pre-dominated and mainly Hindu living in most cases in hills and Terai regions. The Tibeto-Burman group is mainly Buddhist and lives in the hills and mountains regions of Nepal. It has been argued that women have more freedom of mobility and a somewhat higher social status in this group. The Indo-Aryan parents desire their daughters to get married external to their villages at an early age and demand them to have children soon. “The socio-cultural norms and values related to women are commonly conservative among the Indo-Aryans. Particularly girls and women from the high castes and rich families are expected to work at home being modest, obedient, patient, and sexually faithful” (Levin, 2006 as cited in Adhikari, 2013, p.5).

A comparison of siblings within families shows that a sister is at a disadvantage in terms of years of education when compared to her brother (Bose, 2012, p 86). In the rural areas especially in the mountainous and hilly regions in Nepal, the girls could not be able to manage time for their study since they have to be highly engaged in the household works. However, across all Nepali cultural groups, females are expected to perform domestic duties and they have very limited opportunities to work outside the household because of early marriage tradition, which is quite common among Nepalese women, especially in rural areas (Choe et al, 2005 as cited in Adhikari, *ibid*, p.5).

The people in rural areas of Nepal are comparatively poor therefore, the family might be facing many problems. They cannot afford the cost of schooling. The parents think that if they educate males in the family, they can contribute economically to the family. Therefore, the family gives more emphasis to educate boys rather than girls. Here is a similar kind of example of gender inequality due to poverty in Ghana. Senadza (2012) very strongly mentions that there are significant spatial disparities in education in Ghana. From a pure economics point of view, gender disparities in education may be attributed to poverty. If families are poor, they try to use their limited resources in educating boys rather than girls which leads to the fact that girls' labor is more beneficial around the house or farm. On both counts, there is gender inequality, which has its roots in poverty and because of the mutual dependence between education and poverty, the gender gap persists. The wealthy family may give equal opportunity to girls or females in the household, while for poorer households, males may be preferred over females.

Men and women can equally contribute to society. However, the rights and opportunities accorded to women have never been in parallel with the rights and opportunities according to men of the societies. Panday (2006) puts the view that the differences in the opportunities found between men and women have compelled women in many contexts to bear a subordinate status. This can be seen in several sectors, namely the economic, political, social, and cultural life of each society. I strongly support this statement because in the rural areas of Nepal, though they are more members of the family, the women are only limited to domestic work. They are forced to remain inside the house, not letting them be exposed in the outside scenario. In the traditional Hindu society, women are placed in an oppressed position because they bear many evil characteristics (Wadley, 1977). The saying and argument have still prevailed in the uneducated rural areas. The society is male dominated. The famous book, *According to the Laws of Manu*, women have to be subject to her father in her childhood, in youth to her husband and to her sons after their husband is dead; a woman must never be independent and for seeking pleasure or devoid of good qualities, a husband must be constantly worshipped as a god by a faithful wife. (Basharat, 1994 p. 243). Similarly, (Kishor, 1995 as cited in Bose, 2012) has very good evidence of Hindu cultural belief. The sons are thought to be the saved property of the future. The sons are in a way taken as the pension. Discrimination against daughters is often because of the direct consequence of son preference. For women, in particular, sons are regarded as sources of immediate and future power and well-being. Culturally, sons are preferred because of religious and social reasons. Sons are necessary for many Hindu rituals and particularly those that ensure the well-being of the soul after death.

Panday (2006) mentions a similar kind of thought that within the household, girls receive the unequal distribution of resources and care in terms of nutrition and health services, leading often to higher malnutrition and mortality pocket money, entertainment and playtime, and household work burden. The reason for unequal treatment is the discriminatory practices against girls and women which are deeply rooted in the Nepalese society. The patriarchy is an institutionalized system of male dominance that ties to the ownership of property, access to political power, and the attainment of social status pushing women and girls to have unequal treatments. The discriminatory factors such as the tradition of early marriage, son preference, viewing girl as others property limit the girl's enrolment and school attendance undermining the importance of girls' education as compared to that of boys. The discrimination against

women and girls is a historical phenomenon are supported by the ideological contents of culture and rules and regulations of society.

1.2 Introduction to Hinduism

According to Warrier (2006):

There is no systematic evidence to confirm the ancient established date of Hinduism and the ancient civilization of the Indus Valley. Following the rather sudden decline of this civilization between 1800 and 1700 BCE, there arose the civilization of the Aryans, and the history of Hinduism as we understand it today is the history of the next 2,000 years of Aryan culture in the Indian subcontinent (p.1).

Hinduism, according to many scholars, is the world's oldest religion. It roots its history back to four thousand years. Presently, with about nine hundred million followers, Hinduism is one of the largest religions. It is difficult to trace its origins and history because religion has no specific founder. However, it is distinctive in that it is not a single religion but an assemblage of many customs and philosophies.

According to the Census of Central bureau of statistics (2011), 81.3% percent of Nepali follow Hinduism. The followers are scattered throughout the country. Mahavidhya (2008) interprets that Hinduism is a complex religion and unlike many western religions, it is also a way of life. Family can play an important role to preserve culture and religion. Women are revealed in the sacred scriptures as presenting a duality of being benevolent and lent exposing her with great contrasting powers. In times of prosperity, Goddess of wealth, Laxmi who entrust prosperity in the homes of men whereas in times of misfortune, she becomes the Goddess of misfortune, and brings about ruin Because of this changing power that women possess it is rational that man should want to control this mysterious power.

In the Nepalese context, it is seen that the females are more responsible to educate the children and to do all household works including the religious and traditional practices. In a way, it shows the domination of males over females. Women should not only engage in daily domestic roles or more than just caring for the household but also, they have to be involved in religious rituals, though only Brahmin men can do the Vedic rituals women. The wives of Brahmin priests can act as assistants to their husbands on ritual occasions because there are no

scriptural sanctions against such female ritual behavior, but society has made discrimination for performing all ritual tasks.

The scenario is changing now in comparison to the past decades. Now, the women are given the opportunities to learn Vedas and other religious books which were striated to only men of a certain class and caste. This is an initiation of a new era for the upgrading and developing the religious and all-round educational status of women. Women are much more able to think and act independently of what they choose to. Mahavidhya (2008) argues that women can educate themselves not only the religious text like Vedas, *Ramayan*, *Mahabharat* along with the better performance in domestic affairs. The women can play a crucial role to frame the family like a heaven.

Although most Hindu women will probably continue to follow their tradition and be a ritual wife which has created possibilities for those women who want a different lifestyle involving religious power or as a businessperson, for example, should they choose it.

Hindus allow themselves to worship the divine in multiple forms, the three hundred thirty-three gods of legend are merely a reflection of the infinite aspects of divinity. God becomes present and absent everywhere inside and outside of our minds and heart. God has no beginning and no end but equally has no shape and no form. God can, therefore, be imagined in a myriad way, and all conceivable shapes and forms, since there is nowhere that God is not, and nowhere that God cannot be. The highest form of God is the *Bramha*, the absolute, the universal soul that suffuse all creation (Tharoor, 2018, p. 14).

The religion possesses some of the fundamental beliefs. It opposes the single organized religion because it assumes *Bramha* as the initiator of humans, *Bishnu* as the grower and *Mahadev* as the destroyer. Therefore, followers of it trust multiple paths to eternity. Hindus believe in the ubiquitous soul, which is never lasting. Death is the end of the body, but the soul remains animate all the time. Thus, the soul of living beings passes to generation to generation by birth and rebirth. Hinduism lays its foundation that people's thought and action determines their current and future lives. It thus encourages followers to cultivate good thoughts and actions so that the heavenly path of the soul after demise becomes uncomplicated. It has set some moral conduct for both men and women. Such moral conducts guide family, community, school, society and even nation. For example, *Gurus* (teachers) are regarded as the agent to God. Students, therefore, have to respect them. Similarly, *Om* and

Swastik are the major symbols of Hindus. In the same way, cow is regarded as the holy animal; the mother of human beings, and the next name of Goddess *Bishnu*.

The religion is guided by the holy book called the *Veda or Ved*. Timilsina (2016) discusses that Hindu or Vedic civilization has seen changes in its history from *Satya Yug* to the current *Kali Yug*. There had been equal rights and duties of both men and women at the beginning. It is, therefore, expected in the Hindu philosophy to follow the family regulations and duties. Hindus have faith in the dogmas of *samsara* (the continuous cycle of life, death, and reincarnation) and *karma* (the universal law of cause and effect). Similarly, one of the significant opinions of Hinduism is to believe in *Atma* (soul). This philosophy holds that living creatures have a soul, and they are all part of the ultimate soul. The goal is to achieve *Moksha* (salvation) which ends the cycle of rebirths to convert part of the unconditional soul. The principal foundation of the religion is the idea that people's actions and thoughts directly determine their current life and future lives. Family regulations, which is a code of living emphasizing good routine and morality.

1.3 Gender Inequalities in Nepal

According to the definition of WHO (2020), "Gender refers to the roles, behaviors, activities, attributes, and opportunities that any society considers appropriate for women and boys, and women and men. Gender interacts with, but is different from, the binary categories of biological sex." Chaudhry & Rahman (2009) expresses an identical definition as WHO:

The difference in roles and responsibilities among women and men stems from our families, societies, and culture. The concept of gender includes our expectations about the characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors of girls and boys, and is significant in facilitating gender analysis. The various roles, rights, and resources that both the genders have in society are important determinants of the character and scope of their inequality and poverty. Inequality in access to resources between girls and boys is commonest in poor and developing countries. Gender inequality refers to inequality in conditions among women and men for realizing their full human rights (p. 174).

According to various scholars, gender inequality is a very serious prevailing social problem in many developing countries like Nepal, as a result, it creates many problems in different sectors. Persons who are victims of gender inequality are suffering in many areas. They may not be able to get an appropriate situation to heal themselves from a different kind of crisis

rather they have been suffering more which pushes the society into a more complex and incurable condition. There are many reasons to be concerned about existing gender inequalities in various dimensions such as education, health, employment. “From a well-being and equity perspective, such gender inequalities are problematic as they lower well-being and are a form of injustice in most conceptions of equity or justice” (Klasen & Lamanna, 2009, p. 91).

“Among its neighboring countries in South Asia, Nepal is a country characterized by persistent poverty, slow economic growth, and wide differences in school attainment between girls and boys. Gender is the single strongest determinant of school participation among rural youth in Nepal” (Stash, & Hannum, 2001, p. 356). Gender inequality is an epidemic in the southern globe. South Asia is one of the males dominated territories in the world where more than half of the women are suffering from society just because of their identity as girls and females. Although women's educational status and social mobility have expanded and/or changed positively, they still lag behind men. Because of insignificant changes in gender relations, women are obliged to get unnecessary burdens and violence. The tendency to share household obligations among young working men with working wives has increased. However, in most cases, men share household obligations because their wives even have earning jobs, and there is an absence of another adult woman at home (Koirala, 2013). In societies like Nepal, it is a culture and a part of religion and affects the production of the academic outcome.

In the case of the Nepalese context, there is a gender-biased community and the schools of rural areas where boys are given better education providing the opportunities to use maximum resources rather than females are forced to be bounded with the households' works. This issue of female education has been neglected since the 1950s. There is extreme inequality in the literacy rate between men and women. In Nepal, there is a more male literacy rate than women. According to the record of the central bureau of statistics the percent of male literacy rate is 75.1 and the percent of female literacy rate is 57.4 (CBS, 2011). This is a staggering inequality for women's education. The trend of gender inequality makes the girls less motivated to get an education, which results in poor performance and opportunities for them. Although legal reformations are made enough favorable for women and girls, their education is still prevented by discrimination within the family. For example, many parents in the community regard investment in education for a daughter is the waste because they marry and

go to others' houses. Rather educating sons is to strengthen the future for parents' sustainability.

In a research titled "A Study on the Status of Gender Equality in School" carried out by the department of education had the following findings:

- As per the local people, in Hill locations, hunger is a critical issue, education is a secondary issue in comparison to hunger.
- Less awareness about the importance and use of girls' education.
- The curriculum and textbooks are not gender equity friendly.
- The numbers of female teachers are comparatively very low.
- The major causes of inequitable gender status in the school level are male dominated society and less awareness for girl education in the indigenous community.
- The general perception about education has been changed, many of concerned say that education is the best tool for employment creation, income generation, knowledge and, better life.
- Educated parents advocate that more education for girls is needed rather than boys.
- Financial and material assistance is highly demanded under scholarship programs.
- The parents who have entered in a new profession or who are diverted from traditional profession to a new profession, they are found more conscious about girls' education.
- The main causes of fewer enrollments and dropping out are financial crisis, less friendly environment, less awareness in parents and students themselves, early marriage, earning compulsion for family members, heavy work in the home and, so on.
- In community-based schools, the ratio of girls is comparatively better. Very few numbers of schools have a code of conduct for teachers and students.
- In comparison to boys, the very small size of girls has chosen math and science as optional subjects (ratios 69:31). The main causes of this are being weak in class, less confidence in being successful and time to be given for domestic work.
- The representation of female members in the school management committee is very poor, only legal provision has been maintained.

The improvement in the status of women could not be achieved much due to various reasons. It is because the traditional outlook of the society towards women is not improved as expected. The expected improvement in the legal framework had not been introduced in

gender discrimination. The government investment in some areas of the social sector remained low. The emergence of competitive atmosphere in economic activities emerged due to globalization and the limited access of women to the new technology, development and utilization are also contributing factors for a such situation. The Majority of women are enforced to work at minimum wages in unsafe working conditions. No improvement has occurred in their domestic as well as a social condition. Their access to economic resources and opportunities are also limited (NPC, 2002).

1.4 Motivation for the Study

According to national women commission (2018), the different national and international organizations in Nepal have been giving good attention to eradicating gender inequality in education, even though their status has not been improved in the desired manner. Many of the girls are compelled to stay at home rather than going to school and even the dropout rate is high. Therefore, I express a desire to contribute to finding out the causes of gender inequality and its immediate and long-term effects on the girls. I also try to discuss the measures to overcome the gender disparity in the government schools of rural areas in Nepal. This piece of research will also be concerned about the experiences of parents, daughter and some of some renowned persons of that particular area. The main aim of my study is to reveal the impacts of Hinduism on gender inequality in the government school mainly in the rural area in the Morang district of Nepal.

In the Nepalese context, it seems that gender biases prevail in public and private areas like schools, homes, etc. Even the teachers do not treat the girls and boys equally at school. It is not only teachers who have a gender biased mindset, but it is the students themselves because the children boys or girls grow up with a mindset that boys are superior to the girls. Even though times have changed and the society we live in takes a lot of positive approaches in bringing gender equality for all. Girls have been brought up in a society that gives social evidence that they are men who dominate in and outside of the classroom. In the span of working myself in different schools as a teacher in the multi-cultured and multi-ethnic rural areas, I have seen and experienced a severe inequality in terms of gender. Gender inequality was seen as a social issue because of poverty, illiteracy, etc. Gender equality has prevailed in every caste. The parents think that invest in the education of the girls is useless because they

go to other houses when growing up. The girls are discriminated in different stages; first by the family members when they are born, in the society and schools or workplaces when they are grown and also by the husband and his family members, etc. Therefore, the girls have been victims in every step of life. Therefore, I myself as a researcher am attracted to the issue to reveal the causes of it and to provide the solutions. Therefore, I believe that this study will be a strong source for understanding and revealing the impact of gender inequality and the causes and factors of discontinuation of the girls to the school mainly in the rural area in the Morang district of Nepal. In Nepal, the boys are taken as an intellectual superior entity of the society and are given most of the rights. The females are discriminated. Even not letting them go to school to study. Females need to do the entire household task so that they cannot manage time for their study. As a result, they cannot perform well in the result.

Acharya (2012) mentions that women are facing legal discrimination regarding the most fundamental rights. Women representation in political and decision-making bodies has not improved much either except at the grassroots level. Besides, the traditional practices like dowry, son preference, and social acceptance of domestic and public violence against women, polygamy, and early marriage continues, particularly in rural Nepal. As Nepalese society is patriarchal, there is a huge domination of males in every sector. However, there are females in the high level of constitutional organs i.e. president, chief justice and speaker of the parliament, the discrimination is not reduced. It seems that the relation between male and female is similar to the relation between colonized and colonizer. Unless the colonizer allows, the colonized is not allowed to go outside. Even the parents highly engage their daughters in maintaining household tasks because they think that daughters will go to their husbands' homes and need to learn household work first. Nepalese holy book Gita, in Adhikari (2013) speaks that parents have the conservative concept that sons are the preserver of their ancestors and the existence of their life even after their death. Because of this, they think that sons should eat well, be better cared for, have to be strong and healthy and should get an education because of having all the cultural and religious responsibilities over their parents, whereas a daughter is considered as a member of other's family. That is why, girls get little value in their own family, which creates challenges for them to continue their studies. Everyone has his or her discourse to struggle in this world. Everyone, either girls or boys with diverse cultural backgrounds should have equal educational opportunities; they should not be penalized for their cultural and gender identities. Siegel (2004) acknowledges that:

Cultural differences ought to be acknowledged, valued and respected in educational contexts rather than denied, trivialized, ignored or decried, or the members of minority cultures oppressed by the hegemonic dominant culture and the claim is that all students should be so treated, in all educational contexts, in all cultures (p. 133).

The situation of women in rural areas of Nepal has not improved very much though many organizations have made many attempts. The number of girls going to school is not satisfactorily improved. Breidlid (2013) mentions that gender and education policies were promoted by the publication of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000 through the education for all goals that legitimized the focus on gender equality and education. (Sharma, 1974, in Pandey, 2011, as cited in Adhikari, 2013) has made a research where they did a field study on parental reasons for not sending their children for primary schooling Pokhara, Nepal. The finding of this study reveals that parents do not see value in education for their daughters. In contrast, they viewed it more valuable to get education for boys, where the study demonstrates that not only males but more female parents as well were not in favor of female education. According to her findings, female literacy appears to be closely related to the overall status of women in various geographical regions of the country as also to the availability of the educational facility. Access to secondary education is still greatly limited for girls. Therefore, female education is an emerging issue in Nepal.

The recent changes in Nepali socio-political ground have yielded in the various changes in Nepali cultural ground and religion. Many researchers have focused the attention in the cities regarding gender issues. To assess the real ground of the rural areas in relation to Connell's hegemonic masculinity, the researcher is motivated to conduct the research. Hopefully, this research recommends the gender-related behaviors to be conducted for the women of the remote area of Nepal.

1.5 Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this research is to reveal the current practices of gender perspectives in Hinduism in the government-owned (community) school of Miklajung rural municipality, province one of Nepal. In order to meet the objectives, the following research questions have been designed:

- a. To what extent, does Hindu religion influence on girls' education in Morang?
- b. How is gender perceived and practiced at home, in the school, and the community?

1.6 Delimitations of the Study

All studies or researches have limitations of some kind. A single study for certain purposes may not be generalized, universalized and explained. It covers the sampled households and respondents of province one of Nepal. It is carried out for the partial fulfillment of a master's degree in the faculty of International Education and Development. Therefore, this researcher is limited to the sampled households of the municipality and the school. In this sense, the conclusion drawn through this project might not represent the entire geo-political areas of the country. But it shows some processes and mechanisms which probably will have validity in other places.

The research is confined to the responses provided by the sampled populations primarily. Secondly, the research covers the print/electronic media and some secondary information provided. The output is based upon what information is provided. I as a researcher, had just stimulated the concerned to generate the data, I neither manipulated nor indulged in any sort of biases as far as possible.

This research does not cover the whole country; neither does it represent the whole women of the country. It is the study related to the culture and practice of human beings, which is ever-changing. It must be understood keeping the time boundary in mind. The data is collected in 2018 and 2019 AD. Whatever the information is observed and has been provided by the respondents, the research has to base upon the same. The researcher has explained the observation of the field and has explained or analyzed in the same way.

With the pace of time, the culture and the behavior of the people get changed. The legal provision and the monitoring mechanism might also enforce to change. To put it succinctly, the situation of gender discrimination might be different in five years than what it is at present. Similarly, the central or local government might feel the need to address the situation and might introduce the measures to interventions. Or people themselves might realize and

begin to change the scenario from the household level. Thus, this research is limited to the time-bound, the information provided from the informants and the observation in the field.

1.7 Chapter Summary

Located in south East Asia, Nepal is linguistically and culturally diverse and rich since more than one hundred twenty castes speak different languages. The official data shows that around eighty percent of the total population follows Hinduism, yet the country is declared as a secular state on religion. The religion, people follow here has turned out to be their culture, a way of life. The livelihood of people is determined by their ancient gender roles. Both male and female members are assigned certain role and regulations, which they have been following for long. These roles determine their daily lives including education, literacy, etc. This research examines the extent to which the people in the densely Hindu populated areas promote gender equality and to assess the impact of gender roles in education and related issues. This research is conducted in the remote and rural areas of Nepal with the informants of sampled teachers, students, priests, and local people. It is conducted in the limited geographical boundary in a limited time. The review of related literature follows the next chapter.

2 Review of Literature

In this chapter, I have incorporated the review of the related research works along with the constitutional and legal provision of the Nepali education system which could provide the base for the present study. It talks about the three major issues on Hinduism in the domestic context, education, and the gender discrimination practices in school education and in the family life.

2.1 Hindu Religion in Nepal

Knott (2016) defines Hinduism as a religion which is followed and practiced by millions of people throughout the world. It is more often defined as a way of life which is largely noticed in Nepal, India, and Mauritius. "To call Hinduism a religion raises the question, 'What is a religion?'. The term 'religion' is western in origin. It comes from Latin and originally meant the bond between people and their gods" (as cited in Puri, 2017, p. 26).

Puri (2017) describes that the caste system divides Hindus into four major categories which are as follows: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and the Shudras. In the Hindu society, Brahmins are often known as priests, Kshatriyas as warriors and rulers, Vaishyas as farmers and merchants, and Shudras as unskilled workers. According to *Shruti* (which was heard) tradition, the division of mankind falls into four classes. It is also believed that when the cosmic man was sacrificed Brahmins were made from his mouth, Kshatriyas from his arms, Vaishyas from his thighs, and Shudras from his feet. Among these four types, Brahmins are regarded as the high caste and Shudras are treated as low caste. Furthermore, *Shudras* are defined as untouchables. They are regarded as so-called lowest rank in the caste hierarchy.

Hinduism is a major religion that Nepali people follow. It is reported to be the religion of 81.34% of the population followed by Buddhism (9.04 %), Islam (4.38%), Kirat (3.04 %), Christianity (1.41%), (CBS,2011). The trend of religion follower is almost static in the previous census to the present: the Hindu followers, according to CBS 2001 were 80.45 percent.

Table 2: Eleven major ethnic/caste groups following Hinduism

Ethnic groups	Total, population, 2001 census	Ethnic groups following Hinduism with population and percentage 2001 Census	Total population by ethnic groups, 2011	Ethnic groups following Hinduism with population and percentage 2011 Census
Chhetri	3,593,496	3,547,976 (99.5)	4,398,053	4,365,113 (99.3)
Brahman	2,896,477	2,887,317 (99.7)	3,226,903	3,212,704 (99.6)
Tharu	1,533,879	1,497,516(97.6),	1,737,470	1,632,546 (94.0)
Magar	1,622,421	1,210,276 (74.6)	1,887,733	1,490,611 (79.0)
Newar	1,245,432	1,047,561 (84.1)	1,321,933	1,155,134 (97.4)
Kami	895,954	866,296 (97.7)	1,258,554	1,212,674 (96.4)
Yadav	895,423	893,427 (99.8)	1,054,458	1,051,165 (99.7)
Damai / Dholi	390,305	381,739 (97.8)	472,862	456,179 (96.5)
Thakuri	334,120	332,107 (99.4)	425,623	422,679 (99.3)
Sarki	318,989	312,277 (97.9)	374,186	357,791 (95.6)
Teli	304,536	302,056 (99.2)	369,688	368,151 (99.6)
Total population following Hinduism 2001& 2011 Censuses	18,301,201 (100.0)	13,278,548 (72.6)	21,551,492 (100.0)	15,724,747 (73.0)

Source: CBS, 2011

The above table shows the highly populated castes of Nepal, who follow Hinduism, in the comparative forms of the two census, 2001 and 2011. There is only a slight change in the major Hindu population, but the rank remains the same. The *Chhetri* remains at the top and the Brahman remains in the second. To observe the Hindu followers in the table, *Brahmins* and *Teli* lie at the top having 99.6 percent people following Hinduism. *Magar* lies at the bottom of following Hinduism having only 79 percent.

Hindu religion is also called the *Vaidik* religion that denotes the religion, which is deeply emerged from the Vedas, the holy book of Hinduism. The Vedas are of four types, viz, *the Rik Veda, the Sam Veda, the Yejur Veda, and the Atharva Veda* (Sharma, Pandit, Pathak & Sharma, 2013). To sum up the proposition according to Hindu Community Organization

(2020), the religion has these features. Firstly, religion has a belief in one, all-pervasive Supreme Being who is both immanent and transcendent, both Creator and Unmanifest Reality. Secondly, Hindus regard the divinity of the four Vedas, the world's most ancient scripture, and venerate the Agamas as equally revealed. These primordial hymns are God's word and the bedrock of *Sanatana Dharma*, the eternal religion. Thirdly, the acceptance that the universe undergoes endless cycles of creation, preservation, and dissolution, we human beings are just the follower. Fourthly, the consideration in karma, the law of cause and effect by which each individual creates his destiny by his thoughts, words, and deeds. Whatever comes in front of people is due to our destiny. Fifthly, the trust that the soul reincarnates, evolving through many births until all karmas have been resolved, and moksha, liberation from the cycle of rebirth, is attained. Not a single soul will be deprived of this destiny. Sixthly, the affirmation that divine beings exist in unseen worlds and that temple worship, rituals, sacraments, and personal devotionals create a communion with these devas and Gods. Seventhly, the belief that an enlightened master, or *satguru*, is essential to know the transcendent absolute, as are personal discipline, good conduct, purification, pilgrimage, self-inquiry, meditation and surrender in God. Similarly, they hold that all life is sacred, to be loved and revered, and therefore practice ahimsa, no injury, in thought, word and deed and the lastly, no religion teaches the only way to salvation above all others, but that all genuine paths are facets of God's Light, deserving tolerance and understanding (HCO, 2020).

2.1.1 Some typical practices

It is not just a religion or philosophy, but it is a practice of a way of life of people. Right after birth, it starts and never terminates it even after the demise of a person. Each activity relating to family and the roles of the members of the family perform in the unique way of social behavior (Koirala, 2013). Although, Hindu cultural practices vary from place to place, following rituals are common in rural areas with others:

- a) *Nwaran (Naming Ceremony)*: - In Nepali Hindu culture, it is the name-giving ceremony for newly born babies. It is done on the 7th, 9th or 11th day of the birth. Generally, the boys' names are given on the 11th day of the birth and girls on the 9th day. Be the boy or the girl, the family name is after the father, not the mother. Thus, the discrimination begins from here.

- b) *Bratabandha (Thread giving Ceremony)*: - This is the second ceremony performed only for boys. On this occasion, the boys are provided the holy thread. They are supposed to wear until their demise. The age to perform this ceremony is at the age of eight. However, such restrictions are being diminished these days. But every male member does this ceremony because it provides them eligibility to do religious tasks. Equivalent to this for girls is marriage. It is only for boys, and is perhaps, the best example of gender discrimination.
- c) *Marriage*: -Traditionally, love marriage was not allowed in Hinduism. It is the belief that girls must get married before their first menstruation. The first and the last sexual relationship is supposed to be only with their husband. The second marriage is not entertained. In Nepali Hindu culture, if the second marriage is performed, the babies born from her will be at the lower cast than herself. However, this practice is diminishing day by day.
- d) *Menstruation*: -The girls are considered as untouchable for five days of their menstruations. They are neither allowed to touch male members who have not done their *Bratabandha* nor are allowed to touch the food. They have to be given by other members of the family. The girls, as a rule, are not allowed to touch the books and papers. Thus, many girls drop their examinations.
- e) *School initiation*: - Schools are regarded as temples of Goddess *Saraswati*. *Saraswati Pooja* is celebrated in the Nepali month of *Magh* (February). It is regarded as the best day for starting school. It is also regarded as a holy day for performing the *Bratabandha* or any other religious functions. The head of school is expected males, thus, 'head sir' is pronounced.

2.1.2 How girls are perceived

The Department of education also researched Teacher Management in Inclusive Education in 2007. The inclusive schools educate the disabled, minority ethnic groups. The findings of the researches were noted as; a) Problems in teachers Training, combat against the exclusion, teachers, student ratio, etc.

Kapur (2018) says that the roots of Hindu religion are in the Aryan society of the patriarchal system. The family unit was regarded as a significant one. In the past, the people lived with the joint family. The joint family system is referred to as the family system in which two or more nuclear families are residing under the common roof. This family system comprises of grandparents, parents, children, grandchildren, siblings, aunts, uncles, and cousins. In the Aryan family, the birth of the son was welcomed to a major extent. The individuals were influenced by this viewpoint that male children would concentrate an effective contribution in encouraging the prosperity of the micro level of family and community. On the other hand, women were provided for freedom. In Hindu Dharma, there is a prevalence of the view that man and woman represent the two aspects of one person. Scriptures say that Lord Shiva consists of the body in two halves, one is of the male and the other is of the female. A woman is considered to be more powerful and is regarded as Goddess of *Shakti* (power). It thus was governed by certain recognized standards and customs in the area.

The Ramayana is the main holy epic of the Hindu religion. The Major female character of the story is *Sita*. She left her palace and chose to stay with her husband in the jungle for 14 years as an exile. She was abducted by *Ravana*, a demon. When Ram freed her from war, he asked Sita to prove her purity through *Agni Pariksha* (a purity examination by jumping into the fire). Sita was confirmed pure as she was not burnt down by fire because of her purity. The same Sita was represented as the most model wife for the Hindus (Young, 2002, p. 12).

From the facts of the Hindu epics mentioned above, female characters are also regarded as influential model characters. Females have been put in one of the two major components of the smooth running of life, the other being males. Goddess Saraswati, Durga, Devi, Laxmi are regarded as the supreme female characters. Their female character is highly appreciated.

2.1.3 Composition of family

In a traditional Hindu family, the joint family was the common practice. Due to the lack of health and the family planning access, parents possess many children (more than four). The average family size according to the census of 2011 is 4.6 per family. On the contrary to the current family composition trend is different in Nepal as well as in this rural municipality. According to the municipality record, the average family composition size is 4.01 at present.

The change in the composition of the family has yielded the change in religious belief as well as on education. Nuclear family: family with parents and children, is more sensitive to education issue and are found better behaved than that of the joint family. The recent change on separate staying has provided children with the opportunities of much care from the parents.

2.1.4 Cultural factors

In Hindu cultural practices, various activities that are deeply rooted. Some of them are untouchability during menstruation period, only the son is required for the funeral of parents, marriage is not based on the choice of a girl, girls should not laugh and dance in public places, parents have to control their daughters and prevent keeping a relationship with boys, etc.

However, day by day, such practices are changing with the pace of time. Reproductive health is introduced in the school curriculum. There are a lot of supportive programs for girls to support in school education. Educated parents support their daughters on their healthy growth and promote education. Thus, the cultural aspect is also changing and ultimately, it is moving towards equality.

It is, therefore, expected in the Hindu philosophy to follow the family regulations and duties. In various forms of Hinduism are henotheistic tradition has become a culture. Henotheistic means they respect a solitary divinity, known as Brahman. They still recognize other gods and goddesses. Followers believe there are multiple paths to reaching their god. Hindus have faith in the dogmas of samsara (the continuous cycle of life, death, and reincarnation) and karma (the universal law of cause and effect). Similarly, one of the significant opinions of Hinduism, according to teachers is '*Atma*' or the belief in the soul. This philosophy holds that living creatures have a soul, and they are all part of the ultimate soul. The goal is to achieve 'moksha,' or salvation, which ends the cycle of rebirths to convert part of the unconditional soul. The principal foundation of the religion is the idea that people's actions and thoughts directly determine their current life and future lives. Family regulations, which is a code of living emphasizing good routine and morality.

In Hindu culture, certain dress codes are recognized. Dhoti for males and sari for females. But only a few people follow the dress codes at present in this area. Most of the people start to

follow the western dress: shirt and pant (Skirt or *Suruwal* for girls). The school has also recognized the shirt and pants for girls at school. Thus, the dress code has dramatically changed here.

Variety is seen in food habits as well. Fresh and homemade food was the major food habits of Hindus. But these days, noodles and junk food habits are seen in children. Due to excessive use of junk food by students, schools have initiated to forbid junk food on school premises. Purely indigenous technology was used in Hindu cultural practice as technology: such as bells, *Shankha* (conch shell), *Damaru* (pellet drum), *Madal* (double-headed drum), *Diyo* (a lamp or a light that works by using burning oil or gas), etc. However, such technologies at present have become rare even in villages. Modern technology is introduced and is substituted by the indigenous and traditional Hindu culture.

2.2 Genders in Hinduism

Bhasin (2004) mentioned that gender refers to the Socio-cultural definition of men and women, the way societies distinguish men and women and assign them social roles. The term 'gender' was first coined by psychologists and used by feminists to get away from the biological inferences of the word 'sex'. Gender is a shortened term that encodes a very crucial point that men and women are socially constructed rather than based on fixed biological characteristics. In other words, the term gender is used to analyze the roles, responsibilities, constraints, opportunities and needs of women and men in all areas and any given social context.

Women were historically discriminated under Hindu rulers. The old constitution intensified the discriminatory practices against women and even the 1990's democratic political change failed to eliminate these practices. Accordingly, women remained and remain second class citizen even legally, despite the constitutional declaration of formal political equality and not discrimination based on caste, ethnicity, sex, and religion (Acharya, 2012, p. 3).

According to Malla (2011), language and idioms play a noteworthy role to endure and reinforce women's domination and limitations. The manners of cultural transfer from one group to another are influential in their aptitude to influence their addressees. In the Nepali context, such words are used to discourage women and remind them of their current position.

Girls are made to go to other houses (*Aimai vaneko Arkako Ghar Jane Jaat*) is one such common metaphor in Hindu communities. Malla (ibid) has listed some more gendered metaphors:

- a) The birth of a son paves the way to heaven (*Chhora Paye Swarga Jaane*).
- b) If a son is born, it is celebrated by sacrificing a goat, if it's a daughter, a pumpkin is enough (*Chhora Paye Khasi, Chhori Paye Pharsi*).
- c) A wife is the dust of the foot (*Srimati Bhaneko Paitalako Dhulo*).
- d) A daughter as an auspicious gift (*Kanya Daan*).
- e) If a daughter dies, we can say she has been married into a rich home (*Chhori Mari, Thulo Ghar Pari*).

Lawoti (2010) concluded that these types of myths, idioms and metaphors helped cementing patriarchic cultural-social traditions which are rooted in patriarchic Hinduism. As a result, Nepali women are strait jacketed and tamed. They are constrained to accomplish definite religious actions and to take part in political, economic and social accomplishments (as cited in Dhungana, 2014, p. 31).

In Hinduism, however, gender is considered as the major parameter to measure one's capacity to perform the task. Parents frequently said to their daughters “You cannot do that; you are a girl”. Likewise, in school, one of the primary girls’ grumbles, “Can't girls become the first in the class?” On the contrary, the second boy's father says, “You can't win that girl, shame on you!” Dhungana (ibid) said that there are such various prejudiced practices in Nepali Hindu cultural practices and such prejudiced remarks are prohibited, they are heard very frequently in the community.

2.2.1 Gender discrimination

Gender discrimination is the main factor that reflects the whole scenario of the nation in terms of educational, socio-economic as well as political and environmental development. In the developed country, there is less gender gap but in third world countries i.e. developing countries there is a vast gap between women and men. It reflects the situation of gender discrimination. Gender discrimination is a crucial part that has a great role in retarding the path of development. In education, the gender issue is a major trouble in Nepal.

The issue of gender in Hinduism is a much-discussed phenomenon. Many researchers are conducted regarding the issue of the gender perspective in Hinduism. Both positive and negative sides are portrayed in the researches regarding gender in Hindu philosophy. However, as we have experienced in the Nepali context, the following observation is found with regard to gender discrimination in Hinduism. The discrimination begins from birth. Generally, the first baby is expected to be the boy. It is deeply rooted in the Monarchy, where the first son becomes the king. The tradition of the monarchy is somehow expressed in society as well.

2.2.2 Impact of gender discrimination

In a research finding, Pokharel (2008) mentioned different types of discrimination practices at the household level. She said that women perceive discrimination in various aspects such as property, education, and mobility. The study findings suggest that the perception of discrimination varies between married and unmarried women. The married women feel more discrimination in property, occupation and education comparing to unmarried women. It is believed that property, occupation, and education help an individual to become independent in society. Women feel more discrimination in property, occupation and education since lacking such things makes them dependent in the society. Most of both married and unmarried women feel the discrimination in mobility, as there is a culture of not allowing women to move freely in the name of protection.

According to researchers mentioned above, gender discrimination causes various problems in society. Particularly, the girls are mostly victimized from there. As observed in the field, the following main issues related to gender discrimination have been observed in schools.

Choice of Schools: - Good schools for boys and worse schools for girls.

Regularity in schools: - Girls irregular at schools in comparison to boys.

Results or performance: - Boys securing better grades than girls.

Access on Games and Sports: - Girls seem less participative than boys.

Performance on ECA: - Boys participated much on ECA and perform well.

Besides these mentioned above, various other direct or indirect variables play a role in gender discriminations.

2.2.3 Elderly people's remarks

According to the elderly people, Hinduism is the way they learn from their forefathers: what they learn from the elders, they have been doing the same. Nobody is seeking the reason behind what is being practiced and performed. The religion has become a culture and everyday behavior of some people, such as visiting temples, performing puja at home, etc.

Firstly, the old people above the age of sixty remarks that the school was beyond their reach. Even if the schools were there in the cities, women were not allowed to go to school because educating women means making them bitch. An old woman said, "I had never been to school, if I had gone to school, who would look after the cattle?" In Vedas, Women have also been quoted as warriors, particularly in Rig Veda. Thus, they were trained to become warriors, nothing else. They report us that they hear of *Mudgalini* winning a battle, *Vishpala* who lost her leg and *Vadhrimati* who lost her hand in battle. *Vadhrimati* and *Sasiyasi* are also stated for their heroism in the battlefield. Thus, the role of women was considered as the sideliners, but deterrent. The same shadow is visible in the modern age too.

Historically, females are regarded as mediocre members of society in Nepal. My grandmother was illiterate, and while asking why she did not go to school; she used to answer 'girls were not allowed to go to school. If they go and learn to read, they don't obey their husband or family.' This shows the scene of domination to women some eighty years back. In recent years as well, the shadow of such dominance is found. According to Adhikari, (2013), some parents of Nepal still do not send their daughters to schools as they send their sons to expensive private English boarding schools. While talking about the cause of prejudices against women, unpublished "Education for Values in Schools" put that the mass media also play a significant role. The traditional images of women, for instance, is probably going to form the young learner, instead of teaching that each one citizenry is equal, and all men and women are equal, grow up with prejudices injurious to women and society. Tahira Basharat of the University of Punjab, Lahore concludes as close to our old people's remarks.

From the old conventions of *Sati Pratha* (system of burning the wife alive with the dead body of their husband), illiteracy and being an asset of the males, the women have made a huge comeback. It is this feeling that eventually has ousted the conventionalism from the hearts of the people and especially the women themselves. In addition to that, over my stay, I scrutinized the trends amongst the women of India and have concluded that

many women have now managed to resist the opposition of the male dominated society and are towards the completion of the path of development. Moreover, there were even women who have not only managed to achieve liberty but also stuck to traditionalism, values and conventionalism. All in all, with these developments and controversial society in mind, it can be said that people now believe that Hindu women will be an even greater political south Asian studies and religious force in the years to come, not only in India but also around the world (Basharat, 1994, p. 244).

People argue that that woman empowerment in society not only points towards their material development but is oriented towards mere economic growth which generally plays an important role in the overall developmental strategy. Adhikari (2013) argued that woman empowerment is the base for the development of their identity and economic development holds the keys to their real development. Therefore, woman's empowerment has to be a local or national issue.

From the researchers, it can finally be agreed that there are a lot of positive things in Hinduism related to gender. For example, untouchability during menstruation period is to be seen positively. Girls or women get weak during that time. Not letting them touch things in the kitchen and not telling them to fetch water helps them instead. Therefore, it prevents them from heavy work and provides time to take a rest.

2.3 Education in Hinduism

Thapa (2011) discusses that the education system of Nepal was guided by Hindu culture. In its very beginning, it was the home system. Slowly it was transferred to Gurukul seminary, where learned persons called Guru were responsible for teaching and they decided themselves what to teach and how to teach. Education was formally established in Nepal after the establishment of the first school in 1853 AD. Within the education system of Nepal, there are two types of system imparting the formal type of education all over the country. They are public (government schools) and private schools. Ministry of Education of Nepal categorizes public schools into two types: i) Aided community (public) schools, which receive a regular government grant for teacher's salary and other administrative purposes; ii) Unaided community schools, which do not receive a regular government grant, but are financed with support from the community, donations from other sources and school's resources.

In an ancient educational system of Hinduism, *Vedas* was the source of knowledge. Teachers needed to possess the knowledge of Vedas and education was considered as sharing the knowledge of Vedas in the residence of teachers. Teachers were considered as only the source of knowledge. Students have to obey what teachers tell them to do. Teachers, in the Hindu community, play a pivotal role to disseminate knowledge (Dhungana, 2014). They are not just the knowledge provider they are also the agent to social change.

Through continuous movement against patriarchy, Nepali Hindu women succeeded to make some space in the political and social arena, their movement is not very much focused against religious and cultural aspects as it was rightly started by Yogmaya in the early 19th century.

Hindu women's movement supported by their social and political movement against oppression (karma) and increased education and literacy (*gyan*) prepared a ground for starting transformative movement in Nepal. So far, some Nepali women, who have been able to occupy some space in education, politics and wealth, are succeeded to change their less-valued condition *Aimai* (women) to the improved condition *Mahila* (women). However, a large number of women are still living as *Aimai* as they lack basic education, wealth and political space. Women's political movement, literacy and access to some productive resources are insufficient mainly for transforming the patriarchic Hinduism - the major barriers of women's liberation in Nepal. Despite a few positive changes in the lives of Nepali Hindu women, emancipation is still a far-off status as they have to pass through a long thorny path of liberation (Dhungana, *ibid*, p. 52).

Thus, the empowerment of women liberation, according to Dhungana is associated with politics and literacy or education. The major troubles faced by Nepali women are initiated from domestic gender roles and ascribed hegemony of males upon females. Particularly, it is visible in micro and meso level of the society.

2.3.1 Girls education

The Department of Education, Sanothimi Bhaktapur, Nepal researched the effectiveness of the girl's scholarship program in 2011. The research examined the perceived changes as well as the changes in key educational indicators demonstrated in the school statistics. The girl students and the parents expressed that the girls' scholarship had supported to continue their study (84.5% girls and 78.6% parents), to be regular in the class (63.3% girls and 52.9% parents), to do better in examination (58.5% girls and 52.9% parents) and to enhance their motivation in learning (52.2% girls and 58.6% parents). Moreover, 49.1% girl students and

34.3% parents were of the view that girls' scholarship had enhanced their confidence, dignity and self-respect in the family and the community. However, with an increase in the economic quintile of the family, parents and the girl children's perception regarding the contribution of 100% girls' scholarship on educational achievement declined. The participants did not mention any direct changes in their health and hygiene behaviors as a result of the girls' scholarship.

The trend of girls' enrolment over the past three years (2016 – 2018) shows a slight increase in the proportion of girls' enrolment, from 2016 to 2018 (from 50.8% to 52.8%). However, in comparison to 2016 BS figures (53.6%), there does not seem an increase. However, the GPI has remained consistent (1.15 in 2016 BS, 1.03 in 2017 BS, and 1.11 in 2018 BS). The school statistics record a small increment in girls' enrolment. Many key informants questioned on what actually contributed to this increase. Some headteachers and SMC attributed the increment to other programs such as the school admission/ welcome campaign, changes in parental attitude over the education of their daughters, provision of female teachers at each school, school meal program, food for education (FFE) and girls incentive program (GIP), and stationary and other scholarship support programs (DOE, 2017).

According to Ghimire (2012), the classroom interaction between students and teachers takes place very frequently with boy students and quite nominal with girl students. Girl students (from the Hindu community) were found having no voluntary interaction with teachers. Children of high school graduated parents were found having much interactions with teachers rather than those of the illiterate ones. He further puts the conclusion that the frequency of interaction is seen directly proportional to their performance in the test. The more they interact with teachers better their result (or the grade in examination) seems to be the major challenge of the school is to ensure the participation of girl students in interaction.

Gautam (2019) in her master's thesis concluded that girls in Morang are enrolled to schools very late, as they had to be busy with domestic tasks in early stages. Some out of school women are enrolled the literacy champion of the government to be literate. She further concluded that educational programs are yielded by various institutions and organizations besides the formal system of schooling, such as NGOs, CBLCs (community-based learning centre), CLCs (community learning centre) and mother's group, etc. Presently, the trend of education system is totally changed. Many girls go to school for formal education and access

to education becoming wider. However, the indulgence of public even in the *Chure* area is on private schools. For the future betterment of education, the collaborations with government (local/central), local schools, teachers and political parties is also required.

Dhungana (2014) mentioned that education is the medium of enlightening a person which enables anyone to distinguish right and wrong. If the females are educated, they can distinguish what is right and wrong and identify their self-dignity. Simultaneously the study area is fully concerned with educating observing the girls' education on the gender perspective. In Nepal, private English medium boarding schools are considered as good institutions and public community schools are considered as worse than private ones. Therefore, the boys are sent to English medium school and the girls are sent to the government school. This signifies that their parents are not much more conscious and serious about educating their daughters. It is due to the consequences of the whole system or structure of society. They do not want to invest over girls who are considered as going to other's house after marriage. Thus, males are more prioritized than the females in the context of education in Hinduism faith. Even at home, daughters perform domestic tasks, but sons sit idle. This is one of the clear examples of gender discrimination.

In the same way, Pokharel (2008) presents that societal discrimination exists in male dominated society. Women are conscious of discrimination practices reception at home and society also. They perceive more discrimination practices at the societal level comparing to the household level. The study findings suggest that the perception of discrimination varies between married and unmarried women. The married women feel more discrimination in property, occupation and education comparing to unmarried women.

As per the researches mentioned above, the condition of Nepali women and girls is not as easy as it should be. The social perception of women, the access to education, the job opportunity and the overall living standard of females are the major issues. Besides, the cultural practices of people regarding religion intervenes all facets of equality for girls or women. Therefore, the hegemony of males over females in relation to Hinduism becomes a researchable issue in eastern Morang of Nepal.

2.4 Constitutional and Legal Provision of Nepali Education System

The education system of Nepal traces back to the traditional religious preaches by the priests. The religiously motivated Gurus or priests used to deliver the speech in the mass people. They tell moral stories, anecdotes and examples for the following good conduct. No schools were established that time and education was purely religiously motivated and limited around religious places like Stupas, Temples, etc. The first formal school was established in Nepal in 1953. According to the department of education, the total number of schools in 1960 reached 300 and adult literacy was five percent. But after the downfall of the autocratic Rana regime in 1951, the establishment of schools began skyrocketing. The total number of schools from pre- primary to secondary level increased to 67,978. And the total number of students reached 8,502,287 (MOE, 2015).

After the declarations of the republic in 2015, Nepal has made a lot of reformations in the education system: redefining the national goals of education, reformation of institutional and governance and systematizing the educational service delivery. Such major shifts in the educational system in Nepal are discussed here below (MOE, 2017). The contemporary functional Constitution of Nepal (2015) has the following provision as a fundamental right in part three of article 31. The constitution states:

Right to education: (1) Every citizen shall have the right to access basic education. (2) Every citizen shall have the right to compulsory and free basic education, and free education up to the secondary level. (3) The physically impaired and citizens who are financially poor shall have the right to free higher education as provided for in law. (4) The visually impaired person shall have the right to free education with the medium of brail script. (5) Every Nepali community living in Nepal shall have the right to acquire education in its mother tongue up to the secondary level, and the right to open and run schools and educational institutions as provided for by law (p. 5).

Similarly, the present constitution in part four-under directive principles, policies and responsibilities of the state says:

Policies regarding the basic needs of citizens: (1) Making education scientific, technical, professional, skill-oriented, and employment and people-oriented to prepare the human resources to be competent, competitive, moral, and committed to the national interest. (2) Increasing the investment of the State in the educational sector and regulating and managing the investment of the private sector in it to make education service oriented. (3) Making higher education easily available, of high quality and

accessible, and gradually making it free. (4) Establishing and promoting information centers and libraries for the personality development of citizens (Constitution of Nepal, 2015, p. 15).

Additionally, the Education Act (including the eighth amendments) has the provision of free and compulsory education at the basic level (grades 1-8) and compulsory education up to secondary level, grade 12. Education regulation is also effective that has explained how the procedures of education go with the school management, students, teachers, and guardians.

The fifteenth plan projected by the National Planning Commission of Nepal has formulated the following Policies related to Education. It says, "Education is the foundation of development. It is the base for employment happy quality life. For the sustainable peace and prosperity of the nation, knowledge-based society should be the major target of education." (NPC, 2004). The following figure, according to the National Planning Commission's approach paper indicates the national figure of education:

Table 3: Information related to education

Particulars	Data of the Current Year (2019)	Target of the five Year
Literacy Rate percent (15 Years +)	58	90
Literacy percent Rate of the Youth	85	99
Gross Enrollment Rate percent (Grade 1-8)	92.3	99.5
Gross Enrollment Rate percent (Grade 9-12)	43.9	65
Gross Enrolment Rate (Higher Level)	12.4	22

Source: NPC, Nepal

The National Planning Commission of Nepal has stated the following challenges of education in Nepal:

1. Lack of access on quality education including the targeted out of school children.

2. The inability of students to achieve the targeted goal and discontinuity of school.
3. Subject wise teachers' management in schools of different geography of the country.
4. Inability to ensure vocational and technical education to the students of rural area.
5. Inability of making university education fully research oriented.
6. Lack of sufficient contribution to economic development from educated youths.
7. Lack of quality and technical manpower to contribute to national development.
8. The inability of making sufficiently public oriented school governance.
9. Brain drains of human resources.
10. Gender and other types of discrimination in school education.

The major highlights of the challenges in the education system mentioned above concentrate the issues related to physical infrastructure, school governance, manpower management and gender related issues.

2.4.1 National goals of education

The newly declared twelve different national goals of education according to the ministry of education (2017) are as follows:

- a) Help to foster inherent talents and therefore the possibility of personality development of each individual.
- b) Help prepare citizens with good conduct and morals for a healthy social and collective lifestyle by promoting supreme human values inherent in each individual, national culture and dignity, social values, beliefs and knowledge.
- c) Help prepare productive and skilled citizens competent to undertake local, national level jobs and also capable to international job market if it requires to.
- d) Consolidate social integrity through socializing individuals.
- e) Develop and prepare human resources to reform the nation by assisting in the modernization of the society.
- f) Help conserve and exploit natural environment and national resources/heritages.
- g) Be insightful to social equality and justice and develop conduct accordingly to assist in creating an inclusive society.

- h) Foster the emotions of peace, friendship, goodwill, tolerance and fraternity in local, national and international context and adopt one's conduct accordingly; and prepare citizens capable enough to resolve any types of conflict.
- i) Prepare globally competent human resources knowledgeable to modern information technology and use it.
- j) Prepare citizens respectful to nation, nationality, democracy, judicious, creative, self-honored, respecting others and feel pleased being Nepali.
- k) Help prepare citizens committed to conserve and promote Nepali art, aesthetic values, ideals and other specialties.
- l) Prepare sensitive citizen able to minimize the risk of natural disasters and hazards/Calamities.

As stated by the ministry of education science and technology, school curriculum and textbooks of all levels have gradually been changed to meet the national goals of education. In the central level the curriculum development center functions as the sole authority to design and develop the curriculum and textbook of the school level. In provincial and local level, education related technicians bridge the school and central level.

2.4.2 Modality of education system

Three major forms of education in Nepal are as follows:

- a) Formal Nepali education system of Nepal is based upon school and college enrolment with specific criteria, curriculum, timing, evaluation and procedure of promotion in the next grade, etc. According to the national curriculum framework, the age of students for basic and secondary education is six and sixteen years respectively. School education follows the curriculum framework introduced by the national curriculum development center, Bhaktapur. Further to that, three to four years of bachelor's level, two to three years of masters, three years of M.Phil. and three to five years of doctorate degree lie in the hierarchy of formal education. It has been divided into basic (grade 1-8) and secondary (grade 9-12) education.
- b) Non-formal education was headed by the non-formal education center, which was dissolved and was unified to the center for education and human resource

development as a division named ‘non- formal and alternative education division’. It is responsible for preparation of policy and practice of non-formal education. Local governments of the federal system are responsible for the implementations of such programs. The major non formal and informal education systems (DOE, 2017) are: 1) open and alternative schooling program (this program is conducted in designated community schools targeted for 15 years above people who left schools), 2) traditional schooling (this program is a support package of education in the temples, churches, *Gumbas* and *Masjids* to promote literacy) and 3) literacy Nepal campaign (this is a massive literacy program targeted for the illiterate people above the age of 15 years). Other programs of literacy are, Flexible Schooling Programs (FSP), School Outreach Program (SOP), etc. Besides, there are various other educational programs conducted by NGOs and INGOs.

- c) Apart from formal and non-formal education, informal education has also contributed a lot to the Nepali education system. According to DOE (2017), “Informal learning is self-directed, incidental and the way of socialization. Children learn religious values, norms, morality and gender roles through informal education from colloques and parents (p. 11).” The DOE further mentions that the education beyond the planned formal curriculum and specific objective is regarded as informal education. It does not regard providing the degree and diplomas. It is hidden curriculum and supplementary to both formal and non-formal education. The department of education has categorized informal education as the learning from visits, mass media, participating from domestic affairs. The mutual learning from friends, co-workers and etc. fall under informal education. Therefore, in the Nepalese context Ghimire (2012) mentions that informal education is the learning through close observations of seniors, children learn to perform everyday activities including the gender role. This sort of education provides ample amount of exposure for interaction both sons and daughters attempt the copy the behaviors of parents or seniors and ultimately get accustomed to gender role in family and society. Hence, he argues that the contribution of informal education should not be ignored.

The Ministry of education science and technology of Nepal has declared the school education system of Nepal to have been divided into two parts: basic level education and secondary level education. The basic level comprises pre-primary to grade eight and the secondary level

ranges from grades nine to twelve. After the completion of grade twelve, follows four years bachelors, then two years each of the masters and M.Phil. Finally, the research-oriented doctorate of two years is the highest formal schooling degree.

To handle, all these educational activities in Nepal, the ministry of Education science and technology lies at the top. The center for education and human resource development, education review office, curriculum development center, teacher's service commission, schoolteachers' record office, national examination board, etc. function as central level agencies. These agencies plan and prepare education-related tasks. Education development and coordination departments function as the district level units to implement the program. Education officers of all local levels coordinate the schools and headteachers and perform the tasks.

It has not been a very long history in the development of education in Nepal. “The popular movement for democracy ended the absolute autocratic Rana regime from Nepal in 1951, contributing to school education is open for the general public. In 1952, the Ministry of Education was established for the development of education in the country, mainly school education” (MOE, 2015. p. 10). The country established a national education system and the education made free for the primary level initially and the books and other teaching materials were provided to the children and the teachers by the government. The government realized the cultural and geographical in educational and social strata. As a result, Female education, education for the rural people, education of people with different vocational needs was realized. Some formal schools and vocational training programs for girls, special schools for people with disabilities, mainly blind and deaf, were initiated. Though the government established some of the schools, they became urban centralized or the majority of schools were established in the urban area. The majority of male students were sent to the urban area to get an education, but it was not accepted to send the girls quite far from their homes.

Table 4: Years of schooling of men and women in urban and rural areas

Years (age) of Schooling	Urban (percentage)		Rural (percentage)	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
0 to 10	55.12	44.88	61.43	38.57
11 to 20	65.78	34.22	72.34	27.66
Above 20	70.69	29.31	77.41	22.59

Source: CBS, 2011

The above table clearly describes the educational scenario both in the rural and urban areas. Both in urban and rural areas, girls' enrolment is comparatively low. The table shows the deplorable number of girls' enrolments in the rural areas. The families wanted to educate their children.

2.5 Impact of Globalization

Globalization has increased the awareness of gender equality in different sectors including gender and education. Globalization has paved the way for women's employment opportunities increased. It has also contributed to family expenses which support the creation of new resources and raise the level of income of the family. The financial strength has made women more powerful and on decision making and enabling themselves to combat segregation based on gender. Globalization has helped for the improvement of the social choices of women. Resulting in giving them more self-confidence and increase their morale. To help remedy worldwide gender disparities, the UN's millennium development goals prioritize gender equality and the empowerment of women. Politicians and scientists stress the opportunities of an international division of labor to increase the prosperity of nations and individuals (Bose, 2012).

The era of globalization has accelerated the pace of migration, both internally and externally, in the last 15 years. The trend of outsourcing and supply of cheap labor mainly from the Asian labor market to advanced countries like America, Europe, South Korea and Australia

has been increased. Such movement has brought about import and export of the values and norms from one place to the other. Subedi (2011) empirical figure shows that out of total female migration, 47 percent are for the job and 15 percent are for higher study.

Comparatively far larger proportions of females have made Europe, the Americas, other countries and the Pacific as their destination than that of males. One out of five female has gone to West Asia while the corresponding proportion is two out of every five among male (Stash, & Hannum, 2001).

In an international development scenario, the issue of women's development is highlighted. The Millennium Development Goals Report, 2010 finds various challenges of women in the enrolment of education and empowerment. One of them is extreme poverty, which has hindered a lot. Besides, the geography of the rural areas is another, females are less likely to complete any type of schooling. "Poverty remains the most significant factor in education imbalance. As indicated by Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) study of twenty-four low income nations, just thirty four percent of girls in the poorest-quintile households' complete primary school, compared to seventy two percent of girls in the richest-quintile households" (King, 2013 as cited in Kirfi, 2015, p. 3).

UNESCO introduced sustainable development goals (SDGs) in September 2015, after assessing the achievements and declaring the new targets after MDG. Accordingly, quality education lies in the fourth priority that follows gender equality in the fifth. Internationally, quality education and gender issues are highly prioritized. Education is also considered as a multi-faceted component of development. It is considered as a primary agent to render social change. The promotion of gender equality is equally highlighted in the international scenarios. Pradhan & Karki (2019) mentions that Nepal has committed to achieve the SDG by integrating in national policies and plans. The realization of SDG gets easier through capable institutional framework, adequate resources and innovative method of implementation in real Nepali ground. Thus, the synergy of education and gender is proportionately focused in Nepal as well.

Recently, the impact of globalization has contributed to develop the education systems in developing countries like in Nepal. The educational opportunities have increased in recent years, because of the impact of globalization and women's active participation. The demand of such skills has created an apt environment for people in education. Various cultural

practices have been imported due to the movement of people from Nepal to the developed western countries. Besides, a lot of changes have taken place in family life, particularly in education and equality. As a result, many young people trying to leave their families and live alone when they get 18 years old, (traditionally, they were supposed to live together with their parents taking care of them) and the extended family tends to become smaller than before (Pandey, 2006).

Mass media and globalization have many benefits in developing countries. The benefits were reflected in cultures, traditions, beliefs, and practices of many developing countries through globalization and became imitate other cultures. For example, those people who have resided in Europe for more than a year and resume back to our Hindu community, they begin to treat female and school children a more friendly way than before. Similarly, in developing countries, large disparities in inequality and poverty can be attributed to differences in the role of government. “Government is related to the goal of greater parity if salary and wealth were coped with the means of redistributive tax and welfare guidelines. However, the most successful East Asian nations have placed on emphasis on poverty alleviation rather than on reduction of inequality” (Kim, 2000 as cited in in MOE, 2011, p. 55).

2.6 Human Right Perspectives

Human rights are the basic rights and freedom from birth until death that belong to every person in the world. They apply regardless of where the person is from, what he or she believes or how h/she chooses to live life. They can never be taken away, unless a person breaks the law, or in the interests of national security. The foundations for these basic rights are shared values like dignity, fairness, equality, respect and independence.

In the international scene, the true foundation is the right to gender equality and education. The initial milestone of the declaration of human rights in an international scene is 'The Universal Declaration of Human Rights' declared on 10th December 1948. Declaration number two says, "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms outlined this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, and, etc. and the declaration number twenty-six says, “Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free” (Acharya, 2012).

Similarly, in Nepali constitution (2015), the following provision regarding the right of women is mentioned:

Right of women: (1) Every woman shall have the equal rights to lineage without any gender discriminations. (2) Every woman shall have the right relating to safe motherhood and reproductive health. (3) There shall not be any physical, mental, sexual or psychological or any other kind of violence against women, or any kind of oppression based on religious, social and cultural tradition, and other practices. Such an act shall be punishable by law and the victim shall have the right to be compensated as provided for in law. (4) Women shall have the right to access participate in all state structures and bodies based on the principle of proportional inclusion. (5) Women shall have the right to special opportunity in the spheres of education, health, employment and social security on the basis of positive discrimination. (6) Both the spouses shall have equal rights in property and family affairs (Constitution of Nepal, 2015, p. 25).

The independent constitutional body, 'National Human Rights Commission' has been working to ensure the fundamental rights and to enable the apt condition of standing as human. It has been working in two major approaches: proactive and reactive ways. Similarly, the National Women Commission (NWC) is a functional institution to establish women's right. The major objectives of women commission (NWC, 2018) are: "To ensure the rights of women, to mainstream women to the development activities through empowerment and inclusion, to ensure gender justice and overall personality development of women and to monitor or evaluate the treaties where Nepal has signed regarding women" (p. 12).

Besides, the local government, cooperatives, religious institutions, like temples also play a significant role in gender equality. Schools are another major changing unit: the curriculum, textbooks and evaluation system, etc. do not allow the deliberate gender discrimination in Nepal. However, the radical changes in legal provision do not necessarily change the habit of the people in day to day life.

2.7 Chapter Summary

After the political change of 2006 and the promulgation of the new constitution in 2015, Nepal has introduced three layers of service delivery to the people: federal provincial and local levels. The constitution of Nepal has introduced education as the fundamental right for the first time. However, the prerequisite to the smooth functioning of the constitution is still on the way. It has been a long time since gender issues in the Nepali education system are

raised. Many researchers conclude that in Hindu cultural practices have some gaps for treating the girls or females. This unique culture was also revealed through pilot observation in the field, where the girls' education lied in the second priority. Local old people mentioned that the investment in education for girls (who marry and go away with others), is just the waste of money and time. However, recent researches are showing more optimistic results relating to gender discrimination and education in the Hindu community, particularly in the urban areas. Thus, this present study fills the research gap showing the rural scene of gender religion and education. The next chapter represents the theoretical framework of the research including the process and procedure.

3 Theoretical Framework

This chapter presents the concept of philosophical aspects such as positivism and interpretivism and theoretical framework which applies in my research to analyze the findings of the research. The theory refers to frameworks that explains a phenomenon and guideline to our social practice. In this sense, a good social researcher must have a knowledge of ta theoretical perspective as well as professional codes and ethics. As Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, (2008) states that it is not such an easy task to pick a suitable theory to address a similar case in different scenarios rather. In fact, the choice of approach or theory depends on the purpose and the context. On this ground, the researcher has sought the appropriate research theory for maintaining trustworthiness of the research findings.

The theoretical framework holds or supports the structure of the study. The perspective of the theory also provides the orientation through which the world view is perceived. Additionally, the investigation in social science is naturally, wider than others and requires various interpretations. According to Suppes (1974), the relevance of research theory is an argument by analogy, reorganizations of experience, device for recognizing complexity.

This chapter is aimed at providing the insights and discussions into relevant research theory and ideas which support the present work, naming hegemonic masculinity to recognize and interpret the participants' responses.

3.1 Philosophical Consideration

Philosophical consideration of research refers to the conviction about how data about a phenomenon should be gathered, interpreted, analyzed and used for generating the research. It is the base on which the whole research project relies upon. It is a system of vision and assumptions about the knowledge in the related field. The knowledge might be of new knowledge or it could be of the different excising, nonetheless, it could be the base for seeking scientific knowledge.

Ontology might be described as 'the science of being' or the relationship between different aspects of society like cultural norms, values, or social structure. The thing of ontology is to

work out what the reality is. “Epistemology is the science of knowledge, which is the theory of how we know that which we know. Epistemology is by nature recursive. Axiology is the science of moral choice, of fundamental values” (Engle, 2008, p.10).

3.2 Research Philosophy

Research Philosophy is concerned with what the source, nature and development of knowledge are all about. It is the assurance about how the incident is observed conceived, perceived and utilized. The knowledge of the research philosophy helps a researcher to correlate the research task to the theory of knowledge. Research philosophy is a crucial part of the research methodology. Philosophy provides what the knowledge of the field is all about and what has further been sought. It helps the researcher to be more creative and exploratory in their method of research. Research philosophy is assessed as ontology, epistemology and axiology. These philosophical approaches enable to make a decision on which approach should be adopted by the researcher and why, which is acquired from research questions (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009).

3.2.1 The positivism

Positivism is defined as a scientific research project approach that employs empirical methods, make extensive use of quantitative analysis, or develop logical calculi to create formal explanatory theory. It is as rigorously considered scientific as the natural sciences since the data must be observable. The procedure of data collection for this sort of research is related to statistical. This school of philosophy claims to assure the objective and trustworthy data which claims to be reliable and generalizable. Positivists believe that reality is stable and can be observed and described from an objective viewpoint (Levin, 1991).

This philosophical thought related to positivism portrays the arrangement that social entities subsist in reality exterior to the social sectors concerned with their existence. It is under the ontology of philosophy: taking its base theory of reality. "Positivism has a long and rich historical tradition. It is so embedded in our society that knowledge claims not grounded in positivist thought are simply dismissed as a scientific and thus invalid" (Hirschheim, 1985, p.33). All the empirical studies were positivist in approach. Positivism has also had a very

successful association with the physical and natural sciences. There has, however, been much debate on the difficulty of whether or not this positivist paradigm is entirely suitable for the social sciences (Hirschheim, *ibid*).

According to above mentioned remarks of the scholars, the positivism is more factual and is suitable for quantitative data calculation. This research, however, is designed as per the qualitative data through the subjective judgement of the people: their viewpoint and behavior. As this study focuses on human behavior: the combination of gender and religion, the feelings, emotions and behaviors are rather subjective. Hence, they are impossible for statistical calculation. Therefore, the researcher contrasts it with the interpretive philosophy, which in turn, is qualitative.

3.2.2 The interpretivism

Interpretivism, also known as interpretivist, includes researchers to know elements of the study, thus interpretivism integrates human interest into a study. This philosophy conceives that our knowledge of the world is socially construed. Therefore, knowledge is not 'objective' and 'value-free' but is transmitted to us through ideas, discourses and experiences. We view the universe through the glass we wear. Accordingly, "Interpretive researchers assume that access to reality (given or socially constructed) is merely through social constructions such as language, consciousness, shared meanings, and instruments" (Myers, 2019, p. 45).

The development of interpretive philosophy is predicted on the critique of positivism in social sciences. Accordingly, this philosophy emphasizes qualitative analysis over quantitative analysis. The sort of objective and scientific social science, which positivists' attempt, is just impossible. Therefore, attempting to get facts wastes time that would be spent assessing to know how different people interpret the world. Hence, for attaining the validity of research, the interpretive philosophy is considered as the best in this research.

3.3 Rationale for Selecting the Philosophy

Interpretivism is predicted on understanding human nature and their varying role as social role performers. It construes the social roles of other individuals following our own set of

meanings/perspectives. This particular arrangement has been taken by a researcher, who is keen on analyzing human emotions and social roles. As an example, interpreting the socio-educational settings of the people and therefore the gender perspectives of the local people residing within the east part of Nepal. Naturalistic use of methods like, interview, observation and analysis of data, the qualitative approach is applied interacting with individuals to collaboratively construct a meaningful reality (Rowlands, 2005).

The researcher studies the socio-educational aspect of the people residing within the eastern side of Nepal. The research comprises the research methodology of observing the field and dealing and handling with the respondents in the real ground. The methodology of that kind includes the qualitative analysis of data. Consequently, the interpretive philosophy most closely fits for this research and tailored as equivalent. The qualitative research methodology most closely fits the interpretive philosophy, since it's related to dealing with the citizenry, identifying their inherent ideas of social values. The target view of society, in this regard, is nearly impossible. Thus, for subjective analysis, this philosophy is remarkably applicable to choose.

The in-depth study of the socio-educational construct is feasible with interpretive philosophy. While collecting the data subjectively, the researcher has got to seek an in-depth of the phenomenon, probably from the respondents. Therefore, the preferred philosophy of interpretivism suits best for this research project.

In this research project, the main source of data is primary. During the collection of primary sources of data, the data collector visited the field and met the respondents very frequently. In social science research, the data has to be generated in such a way how the respondents' subjective view is a major concern. Therefore, the apt modality for this research is to follow interpretive philosophy. Finally, and most significantly, interpretivism makes the base for valid data that are generated following the high level of validity. It's because the data in such studies tend to be trustworthy and honest. What the primary informants inform about the issue is far better than the texts read, and other people asked. Thus, the interpretivism fits best in this project.

3.4 Theories of Research

3.4.1 Overview of the theory

Raewyn Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity (2013) is an analytical instrument to identify those attitudes and practices among men that carry on gender inequality, involving both men's domination over women and therefore the power of some men over other (often minority groups of) men. "The concept has been widely used and debated, and over the years refined with the essential concept of hegemonic masculinity is 'a culturally idealized form' and is both a personal and a collective project" (Donaldson, 1993, p. 645). During a recent review, a 'usual' conceptualization of hegemonic masculinity is described as:

A set of values, established by men in power that functions to incorporate and exclude, and to arrange society in gender unequal ways. It combines several features: a hierarchy of masculinities, differential access among men to power (over women and other men), and therefore the interplay between men's identity, men's ideals, interactions, power, and patriarchy (Jewkes & Morrell, 2012, p. 40).

Hegemonic masculinity denotes the dominant sorts of masculinity that a society views as most important to being male and which add the relationship to elements society views as being antithetical to maleness. In North America, hegemonic masculinity is closely related to a variety of what could be considered positive and negative attributes including, for instance, physical strength or resilience, wage labor and therefore the ability to supply, heterosexual desire and potency, fatherhood, and emotional stoicism balanced with appropriate displays of aggression. As Connell (2005) vividly puts that change is frequently something that occurs to gender roles that impinges on them. It comes from outside, from society at large, as in discussions of how technological and economic changes demand.

Hegemonic masculinity signifies culturally normative and influential ideals of masculinity. As such, masculine hegemony is often viewed as a role, status set, perspective, behavior or personal characteristic. Although not all hegemonic men embody all aspects directly at once, they will possess particular elements. For instance, both a knowledgeable athlete and a CEO (chief executive officer) of a major corporation incorporate differing elements of hegemony. The athlete embodies physical strength, whereas the CEO symbolizes authority and prestige. In this way, hegemonic masculinity is represented via discourses of appearances (e.g.,

strength and size), affects (e.g., work ethic and emotional strength), sexualities (e.g., homosexual vs. heterosexual), behaviors (e.g., violent and assertive), occupations (e.g., valuing career over family and housework) and dominations (e.g., subordination of girls and youngsters (Pringle, 2005).

According to Connell (2005), “Gender can be well-defined as how the ‘reproductive arena’, which comprises of ‘bodily structures and processes of human reproduction’, organizes practice at all levels of social organization from identities, to symbolic rituals, to large-scale institutions” (p. 71). As a central feature of gender relations, Connell (2005) defines masculinity as “Simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices on bodily experience, personality and culture” (p. 71).

According to this definition, we can summarize masculinity as having three components. Firstly, it is a social position that individuals, regardless of gender, can move into through practice. Secondly, it is a set of practices and characteristics understood to be ‘masculine’. Thirdly, when these practices are embodied especially by men, but also by women, they have widespread cultural and social effects.

As these discourses shift over time, so too do the norms of hegemonic masculinity. Scholars have recognized that masculinities are also contested due to generational differences in gender attitudes and practices, as well as structural changes in society. Generally, whenever hegemonic masculinity is challenged, a new hegemonic form emerges. Hegemonic masculinity actually becomes more powerful due to its ability to adjust and confront change (Connell, 2005 as cited in Ricciardelli & Clow & White, 2010). Yet, whatever its form hegemonic masculinity remains an ideal that is not realizable for most men although it represents a benchmark against which men scrutinize their identities (Donaldson, 1993). Not surprisingly, contemporary men report body dissatisfaction through comparison with images of agreed upon standards of body ideals associated with hegemonic masculinity (Lorenzen et al, 2004 as cited in Ricciardelli, et. al., *ibid*).

Demetriou (2001) believes that the introduction of Connell’s social theory of gender established him as one of the leading theoreticians in the general area of gender relations and more particularly, in the emerging field of sociology of masculinity. The formulation of the

concept of Hegemonic Masculinity represents the most influential and popular part of his work. It has been used as the empirical research in related areas (p. 337). Joseph & Black (2012) defines, “Hegemonic masculinity is something to which men aspire. It is a moving target that is rarely reached and not easily maintained. It is therefore, better thought of as a perpetual quest whereby men are ceaselessly at risk of being considered insufficiently masculine” (as cited in Shumka, Strega & Hallgrimsdottir, 2017, p. 4).

3.4.2 Hegemonic masculinity

With the evolution of human development, males gained the upper rank of hierarchy than females. Gender doesn't, however, affect families' lives in isolation. Various factors contribute to females being subordinated of men. More research is preparing to explore how gender interacts with other characteristics like race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and social class to affect diverse family experiences (Kofsky, 1998). Historically, the domination of females by male members of the society has the basis from the traditional gender roles. The domination isn't just by orientation, but operation. In the Hindu cultural phenomenon, whether the ladies are dominated by the superiority of men is the main concern of this study.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity was utilized in education studies to understand the dynamics of classroom life, including patterns of resistance and bullying among boys. It had been used to explore relations to the curriculum and therefore the difficulties in gender-neutral pedagogy. It had been used to understand teachers' strategies and teacher identities among such groups as physical education instructors (Skelton, 1993).

The well-established term hegemonic masculinity is that the basic term for the study of gender roles. The idea is for in a variety of contexts, but primarily it is well known to discuss the male domination within the context of multiple dynamics masculinity. Masculinity, in this context, isn't just the singular entity, but a wide range of embodiments, behaviors, practices, relationships, and ideologies that are used to define who men are, and who they are not. Consequently, it is widely agreed that certain masculine embodiments are valorized over others. Therefore, in this context, the researcher studies the masculinity in Hinduism and gender roles in education. Gender role in education regarding Hinduism encompasses all relevant components which may occur in family life, like a choice of schools, attendance, performance in schools, the physical infrastructure of institutions, family assistance, etc. To

be more specific, the researcher seeks the all gender related issues to hegemonic masculinity about the faith.

In this research, all the findings are discussed in reference to hegemonic masculinity. Specifically, I am using hegemonic masculinity to analyze the school going girls within the context of the Hindu religion. All analysis hovers around the domination of males or the females' plight of being subordinated. It's revealed altogether sorts of data analysis; from the observation, questionnaire, focus group discussion, interview and, etc. To sum up, everything which has relevancy to gender role, social practice and education within the Hindu community, is discussed in the findings as per the Connell's (2005) definition, gender is the way during which social system is ordered.

3.5 Chapter Summary

This research is concerned with the investigation of socially constructed knowledge, which is interpretivism instead of that of empirical and objective reality, positivism. Since it utilizes qualitative methodology, the data collected from the people are discussed, described, analyzed and interpreted. The research seeks to identify the gender equality in the Hindu community; thus, the hegemonic masculinity theory of Connell is presented here. All later analysis is related to what extent is the hegemony of males is promoting the gender issues within the Hindu cultural practices rural area. This chapter follows the Methodology.

4 Methodology

This unit deals with the design of the study; population, sample and sampling strategy; study areas/field; data compilation tools and techniques; data collection procedures; data analysis and interpretation procedure respectively. It also talks about validity, reliability and the ethical consideration of the research.

4.1 Design of the Research

According to Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2018), “There is no single blueprint for planning research. Research design is governed by the notion of fitness for purpose. The purpose of the research determines the methodology and design of the research” (p. 97). This study is based on qualitative design. It explored and investigated the educational status of girls. It focused to explore their gender related issues. More specifically, it investigated to seek the impact of education for girls concerning the religion and issues of gender discrimination.

As it is the qualitative research, the non- numerical data for this research were collected and analyzed mostly from observation and interview. This descriptive research, therefore, studies the preferences, attitudes, practices and concerns of the local resided people. The map of the area is included in the appendix.

4.2 Population

In the research literature, the population is a set of elements which can be a person or object that possess some common characteristics for the sampling criteria established by the researcher (Cohen Manion & Morrison, 2018). Thus, the population in research is generally a large compilation of individuals. For the choice of population, the researcher had undergone three stages. Firstly, the identification of individuals in the study area who had the basic attributes implied by the research goal and assumptions. Secondly, the removal of people who did not satisfy the selection criteria, such as students or teachers of primary level, non-Hindu local people, etc. Thirdly, removal of those qualified people who could not contribute or did not show a willingness to participate.

4.3 The Sample and the Sampling

In research terms, a sample is a group of individuals, objects, or items that are taken from a bigger population for data collection procedure in research. The sample should be representative of the population to make sure that we will generalize the findings from the research sample to the population as a whole. “A sample is a certain part of a statistical community whose properties are studied to gain information about the whole” (Webster, 1985 as cited in Mugo, 2002, p.1). When dealing with respondents, it can be defined as a set of people selected from a larger population for a survey (Mugo, *ibid*). Purposive sampling is employed to access knowledgeable people about particular issues, maybe under their professional role, power, access to networks, expertise or experience (Ball, 1990 as cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018, p. 219). It is a sampling of a particular group (e.g. highly effective teachers, highly talented children) in which the sample provides the clear examples of the issue in question (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018, p. 219). Purposive sampling is a strategy in which particular settings persons or events are selected voluntarily in order to provide important information that cannot be obtained from other choices (Maxwell, 1996, as cited in Taherdoost, 2016, p. 23).

All these hundred samples were decided from purposive sampling strategies. Among one hundred samples for the study, twenty-five girl students from grades nine to eleven were sampled. Similarly, twenty each teacher and parents were sampled for the research. Additionally, five local priests who are over seventy years old and thirty local people were also sampled. With the permission of schoolteachers, the interested girl students from grade nine to twelve were requested to gather in a hall, making sure approximately five students from each grade. Voluntarily, they were provided the questionnaire to fill and submit. At the moment, the researcher discussed regarding the research issue with the students and their remarks were noted down. At the same time, twenty teachers both males and females, were requested to fill up the questionnaire. Similarly, parents’ households were observed and visited for data collection purposes. The sampled teachers and parents were requested for focus group discussion. They agreed to conduct the discussion in the school hall. All the participants gave comments regarding the issues for approximately seventy minutes. As a researcher, I just played the role of facilitator and noted the major points down. Finally, the researcher had a field observation with five local priests one by one and received their

comments regarding the religion and gender issues in education. The participants of the research are listed in table five below:

Table 5: Number of research participants

Students (Grade 9 to 11)	Teachers	Parents	Priests	Local People	Total
25	20	20	5	30	100

4.4 Study Field

This research concentrated its area as the Morang district of the province one. This research investigated to explore and examine the educational status of Hindu girls from the perspective of gender discrimination in Nepal. To be more specific, it appraised to seek the influence of gender discrimination on education.

Of the total population of Nepal 26,494 504, the Morang district has 965,370. (of them, 498,658 are female and 466,712 are males). It occupies 3.64% of the total population of Nepal. The gender parity index is 93.59, which means there is gender discrimination (as the ideal index should be 100). The following table shows the basic scenario of the Morang district and its correlation to us.

Table 6: Social data of Morang district

Description	Data
Total households of Morang (number)	213,870
Average family size (persons)	5.02
Annual population growth (percent)	1.35
Under 14 years children (percent)	32.22
Female literacy (percent)	63.13

Source: CBS, 2011

According to above mentioned table, the total households of the area is noticed as more than two hundred thousand. An average family size of the district is more than five under the same house. The Annual population growth of the area is 1.3 percent, which is a bit more than the

national indicator. The population of under fourteen year's children is 32.22 and the female literacy is only 63.13, which means, 37.87 percent of women are illiterate. The community schools in the districts are five hundred thirty-one. A detailed description of the study area will be discussed in chapter five.

4.5 Tools and Techniques

Tools refer to the device used to collect data for the research. In other words, it is the mechanism through which the required information is sought. Tools may vary as per the type of research. In this research, the researcher utilized the following tools and techniques.

4.5.1 Primary sources

“Primary sources of data have been described as those items that are original to the problem under study” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018, p. 193). A primary source provides immediate or firsthand evidence about an incident, object, person, or work. Primary sources include historical and legal documents, eyewitness accounts, and results of experiments, statistical data, pieces of creative writing, audio and video recordings, speeches, and art objects. Interviews, surveys, fieldwork, and Internet communications via email, blogs, list serves, and newsgroups are also primary sources.

In this research, the researcher directly visited the household. I observed the household, recorded the observation, and collected the fact. I met students, their teachers, observed the school premises, visited the guardians, and got the idea from them. I organized the focus group discussion with teachers, parents and local people. The role of the researcher in this regard was just to facilitate the people involved. He neither interfered with the informants nor did he intervened in what people put the opinions about. Similarly, the researcher provided the questionnaire and helped them to fill up. Additionally, the researcher also got information from locally available people, local leaders or people's representatives. He also got some information from educated persons of the area, like researchers, local community movement heads, etc.

Both I as researcher and the participants speak the same Nepali language and share an identical culture. Therefore, the knowledge of language and culture of the site became quite beneficial both for discussion and digging the issues deeply. I also asked for help from the graduate people of the area for noting down the main points from the informants. I put the probe questions in the beginning and assisted by the follow up questions and exit questions. Thus, my role was just a facilitator. A wide range of experience was gained from the authentic informants from the real ground regarding gender and education.

4.5.2 Secondary sources

Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2018) define that “Secondary sources are utilized in historical research include quoted material, textbooks, encyclopedias, other reproductions of material or information, prints of paintings or replicas of art objects” (p. 194). Secondary sources describe, discuss, interpret, comment upon, analyze, evaluate, summarize, and process the primary sources. Secondary sources are often article in newspapers or popular magazines, book or movie reviews, or articles found in scholarly journals that debate or evaluate someone else's original research.

As a secondary source, I consulted local newspapers, (*such as the Blast daily, the Purba Sandesh daily*, etc. FMs, TV, and village profiles of the districts. I also sought the information from local communities like health issues related to local organizations, religious committees or like. I also consulted previous researches related to this from different libraries. Old people, priests and local people also provided useful secondary information regarding the issue.

4.6 Procedures of Data Collection

The base of this research for the process of data collection is field observation. As a researcher, I visited the field and directly observed the family community, school, students, teachers, priests, local people and etc. The observed facts were systematically recorded for the analysis and interpretation. The researcher also formulated interview questions for the collection of data. Additionally, the list of questionnaires was provided to the population of generating data. If the respondent could not answer them, the researcher himself helped them

to make the questions understand. Open-ended questions were also asked, so that much information could be identified for research. Additionally, the focus group discussion was conducted and the main points from the discussion were noted down. Though the researcher had an interview guide, he asked other questions generated spontaneously based on the response of the participants.

Additionally, the researcher generated information from local schools, community learning centers and financial institutions like banks, cooperatives and income related institutions. The data was not merely be made a heap, rather, the authenticity of it was cross checked and the validity and reliability was attempted to establish.

4.7 Interpretations and Analysis

The raw data generated both from primary and secondary sources were firstly categorized into the related topics. Then, the data decoded and interpreted as per the topic and the chapter draft. During this procedure, the researcher combined both primary and secondary information. After interpretation, information was recorded roughly. Gradually, the researcher wrote information from the response and began to write the first draft. The draft was changed as per the need, then I chose the explanation of the description. The research is qualitative, and the description of the data is the major procedure of analysis. Hence, the exploration, presentation and the description of the themes of the findings were categorized and synthesized in different chapters, sub chapters and paragraphs.

4.8 Validity and Reliability

A research task is regarded as valid when it seeks what it intends to search. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) stated, “while all research must have 'truth value', 'applicability', 'consistency', and 'neutrality' to be considered worthwhile” (as cited in Dangal, 2012, p.15). Testing of the validity in research is truly the testing of the soundness and appropriateness of the instruments in question. It sought to assess the accuracy of the research process correlating to the objectives designed. Additionally, the authenticity of the response gained from the respondents was analyzed further. This particular research is qualitative and primarily dependent upon the observation of the field; thus, the validity remains a higher degree.

According to Silverman (2015) "Qualitative research is concerned with behavior- how people interact with one another in particular settings. It often studies a phenomenon in the contexts in which they arise through observations interviews or the analysis of the contextual material" (p. 6). It is a way of assessing the quality of the measurement procedure used to collect data and analyze it during the research procedure. Particularly in qualitative research, it assesses the exact explicability of the processes and the results. "A good qualitative study can help us understand a situation that would otherwise be enigmatic or confusing" (Eisner, 1991, p. 58).

The two key factors: validity and reliability in this research are pursued to meet as far as possible from the data collection to the analysis. Both validity and reliability, however, should be understood in a subjective way. In this postmodern society, nothing is absolutely valid or reliable. The way the native people of the area provide data is to be considered as valid information for our purpose. According to Winter (2000), validity in qualitative data might be achieved through careful measures like honesty, depth, scope and richness of data, the appropriate respondents, the extent of triangulation and the disinterestedness of the researcher. Although it is not possible to be hundred percent valid, this, however, can be improved through careful sampling, precise instrumentation and appropriate treatment of data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018).

The researcher left no stone unturned to ensure the validity and reliability of this research. The primary data gained from the field were cross checked with schoolteachers, the local social workers and the ex-students of the locality. Additionally, the data generated from students and parents were correlated and matched each other with the data gained from teachers. To be more specific, the respondents' responses were cross checked and helped to maintain the validity of the research. Finally, all this information was verified with the information gained from the secondary sources.

4.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical consideration in research is one of the major social components that has to be visible in each phase of the research process. Initial ethical issues are related to the auspices, funding and directions of research, in which conflicts of interest and influence may arise between funders or sponsors and the principal investigator (McLaughlin, 2007, p. 59). This is,

undoubtedly, the identification of relevant research procedure. What is the motive for selecting what to study? “In light of social work’s mission and ethical norms, are the project’s results likely to generate important information that will enhance social work’s ethical duty to assist people in need” (Reamer, 2001, p. 432). “This has implications for the study design and sampling ‘social workers must ensure that their samples sufficiently represent diverse groups and clientele consistent with social work’s ethical obligation to address issues of diversity and social justice” (Reamer, *ibid*, p. 434). “The choice of methods can be framed ethically, considering research methods that ‘seek to empower service users to promote emancipatory research and work with disempowered groups, individuals and communities” (Butler, 2002, p. 245).

This research takes its base from the vernacular area of Nepal in the Far East. It is the place with diversity in many respects; such as language, culture, religion, ethnicity, economy, education and the like. Care was taken for handling the diversity of culture, specifically during the process of data collection. Thus, the researcher promised to address the following ethical consideration for this research project.

Firstly, the researcher centralized to ensure the quality and integrity of this research. As far as possible, the validity and reliability of the research were estimated to ensure. The data collection, analysis and interpretations were made as genuine as possible. Secondly, the informants or respondent's consent was gained before collecting data. Without their agreement, no information was generated. Thirdly, the researcher kept the fact in mind that the confidentiality and anonymity of your research respondents were met. Fourthly, the researcher ensured the participants had participated in research voluntarily and confirmed to have no harm for participants. Lastly, the researcher ensured that the research work was independent and impartial. Besides, the quality standards could be maintained from research and the researcher's perspective and no harm could be made to anybody during the whole procedure.

The researcher attempted to reduce the biases in this research. To reduce biases, the researcher had used multiple people (people with the knowledge of research in general, and gender-related issues in particular) to code and decode data. The participants were also shown the data they had provided for the research. The participants reviewed their say and the researcher finalized the result. Additionally, the researcher cross checked the raw information

provided by the participants with the field observations and other informal informants. Finally, the researcher had a discussion with the peer colleagues relating to these issues in general. The peers provided the information and suggestions relating to the research. To sum up, the researcher tried to as much as possible to minimize the possibilities of biases in this research.

4.10 Chapter Summary

The population of the research was from the remote area of the rural municipality and the researcher collected the data by sampling them. The observation, questionnaire, focus group discussion and interview were the major sources of data. The data was collected from the students, teachers, parents, local people and priests. They were sampled purposively. Besides primary sources, the secondary sources of data were also utilized. The data was anonymous and voluntary from the respondents' side. Those carefully collected data were analyzed considering the validity and reliability of the research. Finally, the researcher had enough attention to maintaining ethical consideration of the research. The next chapter concerns the discussion and findings of the research.

5 Findings and Discussion on Gender Practice at School

This chapter is concerned with the empirical observation or the field visit by the researcher. Me myself as a researcher visited the site; the secondary school, villages and people of the area. I conducted the focus group discussion with teachers, parents and local people. The main purpose of the field visit was to observe, note, discuss, analyze and appraise the gender practice inside and around the school premises. This chapter only portrays the observation in the field. The questionnaire and interview follow the next chapters. The discussion of gender role in school premises, student's enrollment and dropouts, teachers related issues, parents' remarks in gender roles, school management committees and their parts from gender perspectives in relation to Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity are major discussion in this topic.

5.1 General Background of the Studied School

The school was established on September 21, 1970 (Aswin 5, 2027 BS) as a primary school. The catchment area of the school is *Miklajung, Chulachuli* and a few areas of *Damak* municipality (School Journal, 2019). This is at the center of the area where many people follow the Hindu religion as their cultural practices.

The current principal of the school is Gopal Acharya (name changed). He is the 11th principal of the school. So far as gender is concerned, none of the principals are females till the date. Similarly, Mr. Mukunda Bhandari (name changed) is the 13th chair of the school management committee, neither of the management is headed by females so far. After the legal provision of the Educational Act (with the latest amendment), a female is to be compulsory in the management committee. Thus, a member in the current management committee is female, but not as the head. All nine members of the school management committee are from the Hindu community. Among twenty-one teaching staff, only seven of them are females. Among them only one is the secondary female teacher and all others are primary teachers.

5.2 Observation of Hinduism and Gender Role in School Premises

Schools represent the true picture of the society because of two reasons: schools lie around society and provide the platform for interaction about society. Of course, it is an agent to social change. However, social norms and values seem changing slowly. This is what the observation of schools of the rural municipality shows relating to the gender biases of school premises. The findings generated from observation will also be presented submerged herewith.

5.2.1 Physical aspects of school

As observed in the school area, the school comprises of the designated area in the northeast side, which is allocated for the Goddess *Saraswati*, the Hindu Goddess to be worshipped for better education. Many students are seen going there to worship the Goddess *Saraswati* before commencing their morning prayer. There is a *Peepal* tree (scientific name as *Ficus religiosa*), which is regarded as the holy plant related to God Vishnu. The Hindu students are not allowed to touch that tree at least for four days of their menstruation. During this time, they neither put *Tika* (act of marking color on the forehead) nor do they touch the food in the canteen. They are required to stay (sit) in the designated area in the canteen, quite far away from other people. This particular tradition has made the life of schoolgirls miserable in schools.

Most of the girls are seen coming to school relatively later than the boys. When asked the reasons for this delay, teachers reported that they had to accomplish their many domestic tasks before setting out for schools. In comparison with their brothers, girls have to even clean the plates of their brothers after breakfast. Girls reported reluctantly that it is their plight that they have to work much harder than their brothers before coming to school.

The observation displays that many students come to schools from the distance that takes them one and a half hours of walk. These geographical hindrances have also made the students difficult to cope up with. Additionally, many students have been observed coming from the area where they have to cross the wood and streams. During rainy seasons, the streams flood and that disturbs their timely arrival of school. In the Hindu community, the

girls are ascribed performing their kitchen works by themselves. Generally, boys do not cook and clean the pots. This extra load has made the duty of the girl even more difficult than boys.

The school building is located at the center of the school compound. There are two types of buildings: one story and two. In each of the buildings, there are more than two classrooms. Each class has two rows of the benches. In the observation, the girls and boys are found sitting in different rows. Boys have a choice to sit in the rows, girls sit in the place where the choice is left by boys. This must be the reflection from the family affair because brothers always have a choice at home and girls have no choice at all. Girls have to get satisfied with what is at their sides after boys. This is the bitter tradition of the Hindu family in the East of Nepal.

The school has got a big playground. In the break time (1 to 2 PM), everyone comes out to play different games. During the observation, almost 90% of the ground is occupied by boys. They play football, volleyball, running, 'touch me', and others. But girls are seen sitting at the corner of the ground watching their brothers playing. The occupancy of girls is seen as just about 10% of the total area of the ground. Girls are seen playing skipping, basketball, badminton, etc. They enjoy indoor games. This shows the picture of Hindu girls being segregated from boys in the Hindu community.

In the observation, the toilet is seen at the side of school buildings. Toilets are allocated for boys and girls. Boys' toilet has urinal where more than ten boys can go there at a time. However, girls' toilet has only a singular dory place where only a girl can go there at a time. Due to this composition, a long queue of girl students is seen there in the break time. Those girls who have menstruation have problems to change their pads. The girls grumbled about their trouble related to this particular problem due to the lack of sufficient numbers of toilets.

Regarding the drinking water, only a few students bring water bottles, many of them drink the water of the school premises. The students have two choices: they can use hand lift pumps for water or use the tap water that is stored in the tank lifting from underground. According to Hindu culture, girls are not allowed to use or touch the water until their fourth days of menstruation. Some girls were found hesitating of touching the water tank because of their so-called 'untouchability'. This domestic tradition is still visible at schools as well.

A room is allocated for lab work for science, probably for chemistry. The area is narrow, yet a few types of equipment related to science labs are seen in the room. In observation, it is found that boys run and take their seats in the labs, but girls stand at the side and observe. This type of gender discrimination is also seen in school labs. This must also be the reflection from the home affairs, where 'brothers' lie in the front sides of their tasks and sisters remain bystanders. Obtaining and maintaining status and power in society and interpersonal interactions involves the objectification or dehumanization of others, particularly women, and a need to control others and hold power. This involves a distrust of others and a willingness to manipulate them (Levant et al., 2010 as cited in Smith, Parrott, Swartout, & Tharp, 2015).

Therefore, the following remark by (Levant et al., 2010) is worth mentioning as "Desire for dominance and power is central to hegemonic masculinity and refers to men's need to control others in order to achieve status according to oneself, as well as in society as a whole." The observation in the area shows that hegemonic masculinity is truly privileged from their remarks and observation. It is deeply rooted both from the family circle or community and school practices. Therefore, the male members possess the idea they are dominant socially in comparison to females. Boys in school and at home explored the expectations of their masculinity and stand as a 'normative conception' as mentioned by Connell to which men are held accountable. It is prevailed through boys' domination on the physical infrastructure of school as playing ball, using the lab instruments.

5.2.2 Psychological aspects of school

Besides the physical troubles of the girls in school premises, a lot of psychological dilemmas of girl students can also be identified in school premises exposed to Hinduism. Some of them are discussed below.

Initially, many girls lack confidence in doing the tasks. For example, when the bell for the break time rings, many boys of the senior classes run to the ground, but girls get out slowly. The researchers approached the girls and asked why they did not run to go out, they answered they are not boys or brothers to do things first. This shows that girls have to let boys first and have to follow. This sort of inferiority feeling could be visible in every sort of activities, girls do at schools. This is, definitely, the reflection of their parent's treatments at home.

In the observation, some girls were found to be forwarded in many activities equally with boys, such as playing games, running, etc. However, they were being humiliated by their friends, both boys and girls. Most of the girls are found to have possessed inferior feelings, such as letting the boys do something before girls. This is the reflection of the Hindu culture deeply rooted from home. In the result of the school terminal examination, a girl was ranked in the first position. Her competitor boy was ranked second. After the result was published and the marksheet was provided to the students, the second boy's father said to the boy, "You can't even win over a girl." This is the scenario of the domestic influence related to hegemonic masculinity as stated by Rudman & Mescher (2012), that further, men who have internalized and adhere to this particular masculine norm are more likely to take extreme measures (e.g., violence and aggression) in order to maintain their dominance in society. Consistent with this theory, adherence to the dominance norm has been positively associated with rape-supportive beliefs and men's perpetration of sexual aggression both directly and indirectly in combination with other risk factors, such as acceptance of interpersonal violence against women and adversarial sex beliefs.

In this way, numerous guardians see girls' educations as a waste investment, since daughters typically live at their husbands' houses. According to Bista (2004), the guardians think not to invest to the girls because they go to somebody's house when grown up. It means they take girls as useless asset. It can be one of the causes of gender biases. As a social construct, the avoidance to girl's' facility and equity is argued to be the basis of hegemonic masculinity ideology because it energizes the support of male pre-dominance in public arena by placing the feminine role as subordinate as something to be avoided. Accordingly, the built-up connection between anti-femininity and sexual aggression is hypothesized to be mediated by male's desire for pre-dominance (Malamuth et al., 1995 as cited in smith, parrot, Swartout & Tharp, 2015, p. 6).

Although girls have immense potential to grow, the lack of an enabling environment along with 'conservative social-cultural values still deprive those in rural Nepal of their educational rights' (Gautam, 2017). This states that the resources are not gendered friendly, they are seen to be friendly for males, not for females. Therefore, the hegemonic masculinity is recognized by the attitude of boys over girls.

5.2.3 Enrollment of students and dropouts

The enrollment of the students in the school when observed in 2019 was recorded as follows.

Table 7: Enrollment of students in the current year 2019

Grades	Boys	Girls	Total
9	29	53	82
10	28	52	80
11	42	61	103
12	38	58	96
Total	137	224	361

Note: Developed by the researcher

According to the table mentioned above, the number of girl students in each class is higher than that of the boys. In the secondary level (grades 9-12), the enrollment of the girls is also higher than that of the boys. Equally, the dropout rates of the girls are also remarkably higher than the boys. Gautam (2017) stated that girls said that it was difficult to use toilets and they do not want to come to school when they have their periods because there is no private space (p. 9). One school principal noted in a local newspaper that almost all school dropouts were girls, and that they mainly leave after the eighth grade, often because of their physical changes, and because the schools lack proper sanitation facilities.

Males, however, do not face any such problems related to gender issues, because most of the physical infrastructures are friendly enough for them. There exist numerous theoretical explanations for men's perpetration of sexual aggression toward female friends. Research has demonstrated that the avoidance of femininity may be achieved via dominance over others, particularly women, within interpersonal interactions' (Malamuth et al., 1995 as cited in Smith, Parrot, Swartout & Tharp, 2015). Major causes of dropouts of girls, according to local people are the lack of female friendly infrastructure, less priority to girls' education and domination in school and at home.

5.2.4 Attendance of students in school

According to the school's attendance record, the number of girl students exceeds the boys. The following observation is noticed in the field about the attendance of students in school. This indicates the weekly average absentees of students.

Table 8: Number of attendances and absent students' record

Number of Attendances of Students				Weekly Percent of Absentees		
Grades	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
9	29	53	82	9	12	21
10	28	52	80	4	7	11
11	42	61	103	13	16	29
12	38	58	96	6	13	19

Note: Developed by the researcher

The table here discusses the number of students of secondary level (grades 9-12) and their average weekly absence in school. The data shows that in all grades, the absentee's percent is greater among girl students on the contrary of boys. But on average, the absentees in grade 10 is the least in number.

The researcher sought the reasons behind this trend. The teachers and local learned personalities mentioned that the trend of absentees is less in grade ten simply because of the board examination. Parents compel children not to stay home and to go to school. Just opposite to this is the trend of absentees in grade eleven. After the board examination of grade ten, students negate going to school in grade eleven. In grades nine and eleven, the trend is almost similar regarding the absence of students in school.

The most alarming of all, however, is the fact that in each class, the average absentees of girl students have risen in an observation. There are two major reasons behind the absentees of girl students in school. The first is the parents' demand regarding the domestic task. Almost all families of this area are based upon agriculture for livelihood. School going children also help their parents to perform daily domestic affairs. Major domestic tasks are cattle feeding, irrigation in the fields, collecting firewood, working on the farmland, selling goods in the

markets, helping neighbors, etc. Parents say that girls grumble because of menstruation pains, lack of schools' facilities of water and toilet, canteen's food, etc. Secondly, they are absent because of their own accord. Students seek the reasons to tell parents and stay homes. Most of the reasons are the student's own. Frequent absences can become a long-term habit. Even if there are some social functions in the neighborhoods, such as a wedding, parties, etc. Sickness is another major reason for becoming absent. A long time absent is the major reason because of sickness. Teachers mentioned that senior boys also have the problem of bullying. Thus, to avoid the consequences of it they become absent. Bullying is limited to boys. According to teachers, some major causes of absentees is also the result. Some students with lower grades in the examination result also get absent for few days after results. Regarding masculinity, “The Gramscian hegemony was current at the time in attempts to understand the stabilization of class relations. In the context of dual systems theory, the idea was easily transferred to the parallel problem about gender relations” (Connell, 2005).

Therefore, the choice of schools in this area is male dominated: the male members decide the choice. Teachers said, “Sons are sent to the expensive private boarding schools whereas the daughters are sent to public schools.” Therefore, the attitude of prioritizing the boys for the choice of schools is seen as an extreme example of domination over of girls.

5. 3 Hinduism and Gender Issues related to Teachers

Undoubtedly, teachers (both males and females) are observed to be very much sensitive regarding the gender issue. Theoretically, they are very much fair regarding the treatment of students in school. However, the following behavior is observed in the school:

- a) *Proximity*: - While discussing with students both inside and outside the classrooms, the male teachers are observed to be closer to boys. On the contrary, girl students are seen a bit far away with male teachers. However, there is only one lady teacher at the secondary level, who is not frequently seen close to students. Culturally, the Hindu community in this area prohibits males from approaching closer and touching girls. Apparently, this is the reflection of gender roles in Hinduism.

- b) *Counseling*: - As observed, counseling starts from the assembly. Teachers speak something after the assembly. The speech of the teacher is mostly related to the daily activity and the moral lesson the students should follow. For example, the teacher orders students to be obedient, sincere and hardworking for their study; and respect teachers and elders, love juniors. Counseling is also gender specific: for boys; it is associated with avoiding quarrels, being punctual, etc. and for girls; it is related to dress, hairstyle, nails polishing, etc. The counseling is done by male teachers only, mostly the one, who is assigned to the duty of discipline in-charge, who is male. This counseling practice is closely associated with the Hindu philosophy.
- c) *Health issue*: - As observed, the female teachers talk about the health issue with students, specifically when they have menstruation. The lady teacher is in charge of the concerned issue. The school has a container having sanitary pads. The girl students have to consult the lady teachers for it. However, the teacher complains that most of the girls in their first menstruation do not ask for the pad, as they feel shy. This is closely associated with Hindu Culture. They approach the teacher and stand without speaking, the teachers have to understand that the girl needs pad. This is because of the Hindu culture the girls have deeply rooted from home. Even the lady teacher does not openly talk about the issue.
- d) *Result distribution*: - After each of the terminal tests, the result is distributed in the presence of parents/ guardians. As observed in the field, female students come to collect the results on time, but the males come late. It is observed that girls perform better in the results and come to collect results earlier than boys. If boys perform worse results, their parents grumble for not being able to win '*Keti*', girls. This is, deeply rooted in the Hindu culture, where boys have to win every competition. However, the letter grading system is newly introduced in the educational system that has reduced the 'unhealthy' competition.

From the above remarks, we can conclude that despite these segregation behaviors against females, the present study addresses crucial gaps in the research related to men's perpetration of sexual aggression against women. Given the findings and theoretical premise of this study, future research and prevention strategies could benefit greatly through the use of programs and perspectives that work to further examine how men's adherence to traditional male role

norms and experiences of gender role stress uniquely relate to different forms of intimate partner violence (Smith, Parrott, Swartout & Tharp, 2015, p. 14). Therefore, not just the school, the family circle is also biased with the girl students, in various issues. Therefore, the hegemonic masculinity theory resembles the situation here, as the females are just minor in all activities here.

5.4 Parents' Role in Gender Issues

Parents play a pivotal role in the Nepali education system. The Parents Teacher Association (PTA) is mandatory in each school for the smooth running of the school. The PTA is formed with the representation of the parents, ward chairpersons, educationalists and the headteacher. The major roles of PTA are to assure the regularity, systematic running and quality of school's teaching learning activities. At least one mother is mandatory for the association.

The researcher conducted a number of discussions with the PTA members about the education system in general and the education in the school specifically. Even me myself as a researcher, also visited the households of the guardians of the schools. From the observation, the following facts are noticed:

While observed in the households, girl students were found to have been working with domestic affairs, such as feeding cattle, cooking, or washing plates. On the contrary, boys were found absent at home. Parents say that they have gone out for playing with their friends. Here, parents' role is significant, as they were seen biased. In addition, it was also noticed that school going aged girls did not go to school. When asked about the reason, the parents answered it was due to the girls own accord. Parents claimed they were not biased against daughters. The girls, on the other hand, denied telling the reasons in detail but simply responded that they were girls. This shows the extreme condition of gender biases.

In an observation of meeting register of parents' attendance in a school day, the attendance of mother or female guardians is just nominal. Almost eighty percent of the guardians attended the meeting in school were male parents. This shows the reality of parents' involvement in school affairs. Similarly, while observing the school attendance of parents, most of the female parents did not sign their names like the male parents did, it was because they could not write

their names: they are illiterate. They rather provide their thumbprint instead of their signature because of illiteracy. This proves the fact that women's education is the burning issue of the area.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity as used in education helps to assure the dynamics of classroom life, including how girls are dominated in the area. Significantly, however, Connell maintains that the majority of men don't live in the model of hegemonic masculinity and that masculinity (as femininity) has internal contradictions and historical ruptures because what is hegemonic is determined in a mobile relation (Connell, 2013). Above all, Connell is concerned with the changing patterns of hegemony; the dominance of particular cultural patterns of masculinity over others.

5.5 School Management and Gender Issues

The school management committee is the major assisting committee in school to make it well functional. It is the body with eleven members, representing the guardians, school establisher or fund providers, leading luminaries of educational sectors, ward chairpersons including two teachers: headteacher (member secretary) and a subject teacher. The committee is responsible both for the financial and academic aspects of the school. The committee holds its meeting once in two months.

Discussions regarding the gender issue in the educational sector of the school were made during the period of discussion involving the members of the school management committee. The focus group discussion also shows that the committee should be involved in fixing norms and standards to recruit teachers on contract, temporary and part time) in a transparent way, monitoring and ensuring incentive to the good teachers, exploring financial resources to provide services to the schoolteachers. As regards the resource mobilization, the members of the school management committee mentioned that though the local government must be active in mobilizing resources for the school management, the federal government and provincial government both should be more responsible in the beginning of the new structure to prevent the deterioration in school management. Having focused the issue from the gender perspective, the following observations have been made:

Firstly, there is the legal provision of participation of female guardians in the school management committee, yet the names of females were found but they were almost absent in the meetings organized by the committee. Similarly, the school could not have done anything about gender issues in the practical level during the period of investigation, such as the formation of the gender audit committee and like. In the history of the school, none of the committees are headed by the females, so the school management committee has not been able to introduce and endorse the concrete and practical issues to promote gender equality. “Schools do not simply adapt to natural masculinity among boys or femininity among girls, they also create institutional domination. They are agents within the matter, constructing a particular embodiment of gender and negotiating relations between them” (Connell, 1989, p. 291 as cited in Skelton, 1993, p. 2).

To sum up, it can pithily be concluded from the observation and focus group discussion that there are some practical problems of women. Considering the issue of hegemonic masculinity, females have no choices than perform as dominated agents in the family and schools. Legally, there are not any difficulties, yet practically, a lot of hindrances are there regarding the gender issue in the Hindu community.

5.6 Chapter Summary

The findings of this chapter are from the field observations. Having observed, the school is male dominated, none of the principal or management committee so far is female. Although the enrolment of girl students is high in community schools, it is reportedly because of the first choice of boys in good private schools. The physical infrastructure, teachers' and parents' behavior and the overall environment of the school is not female friendly. Even the school management has not been able to make major interventions for girl students to ensure equality in school areas. Even the lady teachers themselves have been facing the gender related problems in schools and homes. Therefore, despite enough reformations in rules, deeply rooted hegemonic masculinity in the area is exhibited in these findings. The next chapter is about the trend of girl education.

6 Findings and Discussion on Trend of Girls Education

This chapter is concerned with the teachers', students', parents' perspective on girl's education. This also represents the current cultural practices of gender in Hinduism. This chapter represents the practice from the observation, focus group discussion and also from the questionnaires provided by teachers, students and parents. This chapter explores to analyze the version of teachers' voices, students' remarks, and priests' perceptions of gender and education in relation to the hegemonic masculinity.

6.1 Position of Teachers

In the studied rural municipality, densely populated with the Hindu culture follower, a teacher is considered 'a mentor' who should guide students through the thorns of education. Teacher 'A' (name not disclosed) declares:

A teacher plays a crucial part in the society's growth, as they help to outline the mindset of the village, province and the whole nation. In other words, there is a personal responsibility for every teacher, as they play a momentous role in the students' lifespan and education. Teachers in this area are considered the personality of the agent to social change and conflict manager. (Interview: teacher, 22/12/18)

Teacher 'B' (name not disclosed):

A modern teacher should be a counselor. This should be a person with a vision and fortitude to devote themselves to educating the upcoming cohort. It is not just expected from him/her enough to deliver information, as all information now can be found online. The main teacher's job is to display how to use this information and why to use it. (Interview: teacher, 23/12/18)

The qualities of teachers provide the insights into the roles they have been playing and the consequences in gender related issues. According to the respondent teachers, qualities a contemporary teacher should have in the area are discussed here. The following remarks are drawn from the discussion focus group discussion with teachers, interview and questionnaire.

Goal Demonstrator: - A teacher, in this area of Hindu culture followers, is considered and the goal demonstrator who should tell what stream and subject one can study after they cross secondary education examination of grade ten. In the observation, it was seen in the field that many guardians come in a row to ask what subject their wards can opt for to become a certain subject professional. According to them, great teachers should be determined to their goals. A teacher without a passion cannot succeed, as only passion can spark an interest in student's minds.

Agent to social change: - The society of rural areas is becoming quick responding and liquefied. A great teacher, therefore, has to lead the society and community and should constantly adapt to change a society. People perceive a teacher not just the source of knowledge, but also the change initiator.

Source of updated news: - In this area, teachers have to answer various social questions of the people. Much international news to local rumor, it is a teacher of the area who has to answer their queries. For example, if any political change occurs in the future, villagers ask teachers what is going to happen in the future.

Technology master: - In this area of Morang district, the changes in technological development is growing rapidly. When the facility of electricity reached in the villages, people begin to access the TV, computers, tabs, mobile phones, etc. With no or little knowledge of these gadgets to the villagers, teachers are required to assist if any problems occur. Thus, teachers are regarded as a 'knowledge bank' in this area.

Feedback provider: - The teacher is viewed as a constant feedback provider to students, the path viewer and the commenter of the learning process. This can help them to see the weaknesses and avoid them in the future. Feedback also encourages the students for better performance in the future.

Hegemonic Masculinity should be seen as the ideal that men in a particular culture at a particular historical time are expected to value. It is an exemplar. The rules of hegemonic masculinity are so stringent and the monitoring and enforcement by society so strict that the quest for hegemonic masculinity is a constant performance (Beasley, 2008). Thus, it is often supposed that in the Hindu community, a teacher is considered to judge what students can do

and what they need to learn to do what they cannot do at the moment. The teacher's role in students' life is also defined as psychological in this research site. In the discussion with parents, the conclusion was made that a teacher is also an educator and psychologist who has to read children's emotions, help students overcome their fears, shape learners' minds. A respectable teacher can instigate, while a poor one can kill the learners' stimulation. It is the expected value of the teacher that the ideal one should possess according to hegemonic masculinity. From these above arguments, we can conclude that the role of a teacher is even more significant than we can imagine.

Connell's conceptualization of hegemonic masculinity has the central idea of locating the males' domination upon females not only at micro level such as the individual behavior of parents, teachers and family, etc. but also in the meso level of public interest like gender and education. The theory recognizes to have influenced in family level and workplace as well the educational institutions including the classroom dynamics, the psychology of superiority of males and interplays the virtual monopoly of men on decision making procedure. Hence, the role of teachers is influenced by the psychology of dominating girls from the family level.

6.2 Summary of the Focus Group Discussion with Teachers

The teachers had a focus group discussion with the researchers regarding gender equality and its impact on education in the Hindu community. Based on the discussion, the following summary is familiarized.

6.2.1 Current status

Teacher 'C' says:

The gender violence in schools has reduced in recent years and when I was a student, most of us were school students, we had only one or two girls in the class of around 100 students. Girls were in a heavy minority at that time, but the trend is changed now. The majority of the students in the secondary grades is girls. Then the boys cannot dare the gender-based violence and sexual harassment in schools. If such activities occur, they are punishable. (Interview: teacher, 11/12/18)

Teacher 'D' puts the mentions:

The local government has started to invest in education locally to make the new system function which has resulted to minimize the gender violence. If complaints related to gender discrimination are reported in the police office, it is punishable to parents, and or concerned culprit. However, so far as the information is concerned, no such complaints are registered in recent years. Nevertheless, this is a formal legal change without actual consequences. (Interview: teacher, 11/12/18)

Girls frequently face insulting behavior or molestation from male teachers and boys peculiarly during menstruation. Girls often do not complain against such behavior to the school administration because they fear they will be humiliated further. Ultimately, they drop out (Adhikari, 2013). On the other hand, the lady teacher may not be available because of the lesser number of female teachers with whom they can share these problems. When girls have issues related to their health, particularly about body changes and menstruation, they often need to share them with someone in school, because, as mentioned above, the subjects are taboo, at home. Not surprisingly, girls prefer to share them with female teachers (Gautam 2017).

Connell (2013) says that hegemonic masculinity ensures male dominance; all men benefit on some level even though most of them don't have to be 'on the front lines. The hegemonic practice and characteristics serve to make females inferior or subordinated to men. According to teachers, girls sometimes complain about their physical changes to their lady teachers. They also grumble on gender related issues like a priority to boys in games and sports, the use of school resources and, etc. On the contrary, boys never complain on issues like girls. It is because the boys get much benefit of hegemonic masculinity from home and in Hindu culture.

Teachers concluded that despite the legal protection and reservation for girls, various domestic troubles regarding gender have been observed in rural areas. However, such domestic discrimination is decreasing day by day. Only a few complaints have been registered in the school administration. The newly introduced curriculum has stressed on gender equality, but it takes a few more years to be implemented in the secondary level.

6.2.2 Challenges of girls' education

Based on the focus group discussion and interview with teachers, the following challenges have been observed in the area:

Inequality on domestic Task: - Although the legal provision does not permit to do so, girls have a heavy load of work both inside and the outside home premises. They have to fetch water, cook food, serve, eat at last when everyone is done, wash plates, and do all domestic tasks. However, boys do not have an opportunity to do so, as they are just outsiders and roam around houses. This typical culture of the Hindu community in this region has introduced gender inequality at home.

Poverty: -Some people in this area are compelled to work for their survival. They have to work on other's fields and have sustained the family from the physical work. The trend of heavy working in the field is associated with girls. It means many girls and only a few boys are sent to work in the field of others. Poverty, in this way, has hindered the educational aspect of girls in this area.

Dropouts in schools: - Even though the enrollment of girls is higher in each class, the dropout rate is also higher among girls. According to teachers, no significant reason is needed for dropout, girls leave schools on their own accord. Poor performance in the exam, quarrel among friends, long time sickness, marriage proposal from parents and etc. are the major causes of dropouts among girls' students.

Early marriage of girls: - Marriage in the Hindu community is not just associated with family practice, it is a cultural and religious practice as well. It is deeply rooted that daughters should get married as early as possible. This tradition has still made people's conception traditional. Even a teacher of the area forces the daughter of 12th grade to get married. There is no legal discrimination, discernment in practical level is still existing in the field level of the rural municipality. Gautam (2017) presents a similar opinion which shows the real scenario of girls' status as; "Girls who are married said that it was very difficult to attend school and manage a house and cannot perform to score the good position in a school. Early marriage also leads to early pregnancies, which minimizes their chance of returning to schools" (p. 35).

Physical condition of girls: - Teachers report that girls abandon school because of their physical condition. Menstruation among girls is the major one. Most of the secondary level students have problems and pains. It is reflected through their absences during that time.

Hegemonic norms accompany institutional power and are related to men in power. Hegemonic masculinities are relational, meaning that they're always compared with other masculinities and all other femininities. Those women are expected by society to strive for emphasized femininities assists in keeping hegemonic masculinities in control because emphasized femininity focuses on being subordinate to men (Beasley, 2008, p. 90).

The teachers discuss about the girls' education and concluded that in the Hindu community, it is full of challenges. Discussion and critique of masculinity have developed in women's studies, critical men's studies, and sociology, to name a few, as a response to the privileged invisibility of masculinities (Beasley, *ibid*).

The challenges of girls' education in the study site are associated with the family matter at the micro level such as freedom of domestic task for boys and loaded work for girls. The observation reveals male priorities on every respect and leftover for females both in school and at home. Therefore, the hegemonic masculinity operates through the challenges of school enrolment and the timely completion cycle of secondary level for girls.

6.2.3 Opportunities for girls' education

Regarding Gender and education in the Hindu community, according to the teachers of the school, there are opportunities as well. Gautam (*ibid*) says that the government has prioritized girls' education in its policies and programs and is trying to attract girls to school by providing them with free textbooks, scholarships (although there are not nearly enough), and school uniforms and also, many development agencies run programs for girls' education and empowerment. These opportunities for the upliftment to girls as mentioned by teachers are discussed below:

Scholarship provision: - Both from the central government and the local government, the scholarship packages are provided for girls and marginalized community girls. It has provided the girls' opportunities for education. Of course, there are some of the issues to be addressed for the effective delivery of the scholarship.

Job opportunities: - In some public vacancies, girls are provided special opportunities for jobs. The constitutional provision has ensured the thirty-three percent of reservation quotas for girls. It has germinated the positive attitudes for investment in girls' education. In almost vacancies, it is mentioned that girls and people from marginalized community are highly addressed. This has undoubtedly, provided great opportunities for girls.

Reservations seats for public transports: - It is mandatory that public transportation has to provide some reservations to girls. Nice and comfortable seats are allocated for girls. If boys seat on those allocated seats, and girls stand, it is punishable to the transportations service providers.

Income generating programs: -Many government programs and non-government programs are operating to generate income in the area. These income generating programs are limited to females only. Council for technical education and vocational training (CTEVT) provides training for females on income generation, such as scientific farming, beekeeping, animal husbandry, etc. This is also a great opportunity for the girls studying in this area.

Deduction on tax: - After the new constitution of Nepal, a new provision is introduced in Nepal. It is the provision that property in the name of the females is low taxable. The registration charge of land and house is twenty-five percent off for females. Therefore, this is the opportunity of the girls.

Province government programs: - In province two, the government has introduced the program to educate girls, called '*Beti Padhau Beti Bachau*' (teach daughters and save daughters). In province one as well, there are various such programs in the pipelines of government. It introduces the protection of girls and ensuring their educational rights. It also empowers them to combat against early marriage and deadly dowry system.

Insurances for daughters' birth: - The birth of girls in this area is considered as the beginning of unhappiness (to some ignorant families). Thus, to overcome such wrong beliefs, health insurance of daughters is introduced in this area as well by the local government. Besides, many social organizations distribute the educational materials to girls.

Men cannot help it when they act in the ways of hegemonic masculinities. It makes a clear sense to diminish the male hegemony is the cultural practice to be initiated from an individual, family and the society. However, the practice to alter in real fields has still some difficulties, according to teachers.

6.3 Students Perspectives

As a researcher, I inquired the students in person or in groups regarding what the teachers and the school administration expect from them. These responses help me identify the role of students in the Hindu dominated community. For the research purposes, the responses of students were seen as follows:

Obey teachers: - Students of secondary level in this area are expected to obey teachers. Teachers are expected to command students' good habits in the Hindu community, so they are expected to obey a teacher's command or order. Obey teachers means, listen to them carefully and function what they order.

Keep the class quiet: - Traditional Hindu class was considered as quiet and peaceful: only the teachers spoke; students had to listen to what teachers tell. Speaking loudly with teachers is not desired in the classrooms. Even when the teachers allow for group discussion, one has to speak in turn. Teachers put remark 'good students' for them who speak less and keep quiet.

Personal and school cleanliness: - The major thing teachers notice in school is the cleanliness of students. It includes dresses, bags, books, exercise books, even classrooms and the whole school premises. Every day, the teachers check the dress, nails and, all hygiene related things. Thus, the school always wants students to maintain the cleanliness of oneself and belongings.

Abide by rules: - The educational regulation has mentioned the rules for schools, students and, teachers. Besides these, it is mandatory that the school management committee can also announce the rules for students and teachers. No matter who announces the rules, it is expected that students have to follow them. In the culture of the area, students always must be obedient and be abide by rules.

Helpfulness among friends: -Another major expectation from students is the sharing among students. This type of sharing has to be on the practice of subjects like math, language, science, etc.

Greetings to elders: -Teachers expect students to greeting them in the first meet every day. The greeting shows respect. If some of the students do not greet teachers or seniors, which the discipline in-charge notices; it is punishable. Thus, it is necessary to greet seniors.

Punctuality of task: - Every day, a home assignment is provided to students for revision tasks or so on. Similarly, weekly, monthly and some practical assignment is given to students with the deadline of submission. Such assignment tasks have to be performed on time.

Participation of activities: - School organizes various cultural or extra-curricular activities both inside and outside school premises. The participation is, of course, volunteer. But voluntary participation is expected to ensure that everyone has a chance. Teachers expect is to ensure everyone's participation this time or that. Thus, participation is prioritized in this school.

Regularity at schools: - Teachers expect students to become regular in schools. In case students get absent, they not only miss the classes, but it is difficult for them to maintain their absence. Thus, teachers encourage students to become present in the class and not to be absent.

Good result: -The school and teachers are considered good in this area, only on the basis of the result, students score in school. Not only for teacher's and schools' honor, is the expectation of good results for students themselves. Thus, the teachers expect them for good results and performance.

As Gautam (2017) mentioned:

To create an enabling environment at home and school, parents and teachers first need to understand the barriers and provide girls with the necessary support. Currently, they do not treat girls and boys equally, balance the workload among the family members, give extra support during exams, or engage girls in household discussions. For their

part, schools could provide sanitary supplies, build separate toilets, teach about gender issues, and stop any harassment (p. 5).

From the above-mentioned remarks, we can conclude that schools or teachers expect much moral behavior from the students such as punctuality, helpfulness, hygiene, obedience, etc. All these expectations are related to the Hindu/ Vedic education system, which was the summary of moral teaching. These expectations also represent the Hegemonic Masculinity because it refers to a particular set of practices and societal norms that are seen as masculine and that are dominant in society. Masculinity is the set of norms or expected behaviors and abilities that society prescribes to men. It is not hardwired biologically (Beasley, 2008).

The shade of behavior to be expected from students hold the position of perceiving their gender role and cultural practices. Often, such practices are influenced by their religious belief and family conception. Ultimately, the students' perspective exhibits their moral behavior to perform in school.

6.4 Parents' Perspectives

Having asked what parents expect from secondary level children shows a significant level of agreement about what is essential to them. Their expectation exhibits the religious and gender related issues. The theme of their (gained from interview and questionnaire) view includes the followings. Parent 'B' says:

We expect a committed and effective teaching staff and a safe teaching environment: No bullying or harassment in schools. Parents expect earthquake free physical building, snake bites free classrooms and playground, etc. Similarly, we expect individual attention to students from teachers. As a result, parents want to feel confident that an expectation that the democratic values of multicultural Nepali society will be actively present at school. (Interview: parents, 05/12/18)

Parents' expectation in this area is to provide an environment in which their child can develop social competencies they want the young adult emerging from secondary school to be articulate, to be able to make and keep friends and to know how to behave appropriately in different situations. Parent 'C' tells:

The schools will have to take positive steps to create a place in which staff and students treat each other with respect. No verbal and corporal punishment occurs. Quite ironically, some parents punish their children at school in front of their teachers on result distribution day for poor performances (Interview: parents, 05/12/18).

Parents in this area expect no or fewer expenses in the school from their daughter. If the schools demand children to bring money for a picnic or Puja or something, parents hate it the most, they said. This sort of extra financial demand from school provides students to cheat, schools might have asked for hundred rupees, the students may demand 200. Thus, parents expect schools not to demand money from parents.

The high reputation of the school is what most of the parents expect in this area. Parents of the girls expect no segregation to their daughter students based on the gender, culture, race and ethnicity. They expect the school to be famous in and around areas. In conclusion, parents expect schools to adopt an optimistic atmosphere that will inspire their child's intellectual and emotional development.

Parent 'D' tells, "Many parents also reflect it indispensable to look around for the best available fit school, just in case the obvious choice is not the right one. Perhaps they have a desire for a particular ethos or social environment, or a special need that can't be met in their local area" (Interview: parents, 05/12/18). In this regard, Gautam (2017) presents that:

Attempting to shift some attitudes, facilitators met with teachers, parents, female community leaders, representatives from the district education office and the Ministry of Education, and local health workers to get them to support girls' education. The facilitators and female officials from the local areas moderated the discussions, where girls, parents, and teachers were encouraged to ask questions; most parents asked about health and nutrition issues and how girls received support in other countries. Local health workers explained what services were available to help girls. Often, girls do not visit health facilities since they hesitate to share their problems with the health personnel, who are usually male. The reply from the girls was that 'they had the feeling of domination in family and school (p. 9).

Connell (2005) retains that there are several kinds of masculinities but that there is always one that is hegemonic to the rest and marginalizes others in a gender system which is the kind of masculinity that is in a superior position. No matter what, each culture will prefer one kind of masculinity over others. Therefore, the hegemony of males is visible in this area. Sometimes, the parents' remarks are quite paradoxical as they do not want to invest their daughters for

education rather, they expect good jobs from them. Hence, it is the deeply rooted Hindu culture that influences on the hegemony of males upon females on gender issues.

6.5 Priests' Perspectives

The major concern of the priests is related to the discipline of school going children. The priests mentioned that after the new federal system, children have become less disciplined from a religious point of view. Based upon the discussion, observation, and information from the local priests, following conclusive remarks are drawn from them. Priest 'C' said:

Youths have played an agent to destroy the Hindu culture. In the past, people gave a good response to priests. They used to greet priests, smile when they see them, ask for suggestions, ask to read horoscope, etc. But the present generation neither respond nor greet the priests. They do not visit the temples, do not perform Puja, they just talk about human right. This is a very pitiful change in Hindu culture here. (Interview: priest, 15/12/18)

The response of priests was also concerned with the Vedic gender roles of the Hindu religion. Priests mention that it is good to educate girls, but the gender roles of girls have to be mentioned. For example, the priest has to be male members, not females. Recently, according to the priests, the changes in this area are unreasonable. Such as girls performing the roles of boys and boys the roles of girls (especially in dressing up and leading the mass) during the funeral ceremony, or other religious tasks. It is not good because this sort of breaching the religious rule leads to the Hindu religion to the religious crises and even arise the questions against the existence of it. Priest 'D' mentioned:

Girls now work in the kitchen during the menstruation times and sometimes I have heard they go to temple during this time, but it is against the Vedic culture. Even scientists are concerned with taking the rest during the bleeding time. Thus, girls or women should be isolated during that time. There must be rules and regulations both in the temples. Females in Hinduism are regarded as the symbols of Goddess. Thus, they must be respected. (Interview: priest, 16/12/18)

Gramsci (2006) specifies:

Hegemony as winning and retaining power that forms and destroys social groups in the process. Hegemonic masculinity relates to how masculinity constructs dominance and remains in control. This involves persuading a large portion of the population and often

appears normal and goes unquestioned. The norms and practices that constitute hegemonic masculinity assist men in maintaining social control. In short, hegemonic masculinity is what it takes to be a real man in society (as cited in Beasley, 2008).

To sum up the priests' remarks, they are anxious about the current dramatic changes in the religious faith and diminishing the cultural practice of religion. They said that in the names of modernization, good ancient practices should not be minimized. The priests seem to favor that the traditional culture has to be followed. It means they are in line with the hegemony the male members have to exhibit in the society: it is religiously ordered in the Hindu documents. Gender roles are defined therefore both males and females have to act accordingly.

6.6 Cultural Perspectives

The researcher analyzes the Hindu religion related to the education of girls from the information recorded in the field. The information was generated from the observation and questionnaire. Accordingly, the following outcomes are found:

The composition of family matters here. The trend in the family is nuclear here. Generally, after marriage, the couple separate with parents in the condition that if there are other younger brothers to look after parents. Daughters go to their husband's houses, sons bring the wives. The priority is given to the family rather than education. This is a major discrimination between sons and daughters. Similarly, decision making in the family is centered to male members only. The female members of the family are just helpers.

The Nepali language has borrowed many vocabularies from the Sanskrit language. These days, the influence of English is seen in the use of language. The language used by educated and uneducated people is visibly different. There are some vocabs in the Nepali language, they are used to abuse girls, such as, *Boksi* (witch), *Chorni* (thief), etc. Similarly, the dressing habits of men and women are different. While celebrating festivals, girls were seen doing the cooking and indoor works for a long time while boys did outdoor works only for a certain time. In an observation, it is found that most of the job holders are male members of the family. Females are busy doing domestic tasks. However, in the younger generation, it is getting changed with few opportunities for women on jobs. Gautam, (2017) says that the literate girls with the knowledge of computer typing get jobs in the press more easily than

those of computer illiterate. Therefore, education provides them with the prerequisite to seeking jobs.

The age difference of the married couples is remarkably high. Sometimes, the boys are found more than fifteen years older than girls. It is reported that girls have no choice but to obey marriage. Due to this practice, many widows are observed than widowers. After marriage, the first pregnancy is reportedly crucial in Nepal. The government has banned gender disclose in the pregnancy x-ray test. It is because everyone expects the baby to be the boys. If the girl is seen, they might do abortion deliberately. The abortion cases are alarming in this area.

Boys are sent to private boarding schools with heavy fees, but girls are sent to the public schools. Boys proudly say that they are studying English medium private schools whereas girls hesitate to say they are studying in such schools. Similarly, during the religious rituals, girls are not allowed to perform *Pujas* (an act of performing a religious task) during their menstruation time. Fasting on the day of *Teej* (a specific festival for Hindu women) is compulsory for all girls. During menstruation, girls do not fast either. But there is no special day for boys to fast. All these roles are related to gender performances. A gender performance implies that gender is not innate or tied to sex characteristics but is a set of expectations held by society and its citizens, and a set of actions by individuals and institutions. The performance of people is measured against the hegemonic masculinity ideal. All gendered beings can police and shame gender performances, but those in the dominant position are most expected to police other's gender (Rudman & Mescher, 2012).

Finally, it is to mention that in Hindu cultural practice, there are various discriminatory indexes in this area, they are associated with the idea of Rudman & Mescher, (2012), gender performances of hegemonic masculinity. Despite no legal acceptances, the deeply rooted discriminatory practices are not wiped away. Definitely, they are getting diminished slowly, yet there are a lot of things to do on education and gender aspects in Nepal.

6.7 Girl's Education Outside School Premises

As observed in the field, basic literacy programs targeted for women and school dropout girls have been found in the winter season. The municipality has also supported such programs that

promote education outside school premises. Major running programs that have been observed in the study site are as follows:

Flexible schooling program (FSP): - It is the educational program, the purpose of the FSP is to enable children between 8 – 14 years who are not attending school into Grade six. FSP achieves this aim by completing the curriculum for five years of primary school education in just 3 years. After the completion of the Alternative Schooling Program (ASP), the students can be admitted in grade six in the formal school. The subsequent sorts of children between 8 to 14 years of age may enjoy participating in an FSP class: 1) Children who work and people who don't attend school because of full-time responsibilities in their home. 2) People from marginalized groups (such as children from minority ethnic groups) who have financial/economic and social disadvantages 3) Children who failed to attend formal schooling at the proper age 4) Children who dropped out of primary school before attaining a basic standard of education.

School outreach program (SOP): - The SOP focuses on teaching children between 6-8 years aged who are not enrolled within the formal school system. In SOP classes, the formal textbook from Grade one, two, and three are used but using Non-Formal teaching techniques. Upon successful completion of SOP, children are often enrolled in Grade 4 within the formal schooling system. The following types of children between 6 – 8 years aged who may benefit from participating in an SOP class: 1) Children who are bereft of access to basic primary education because they live a long way from school. 2) Children who are unable to go to school because of problems caused by crossing bridgeless rivers, geographical remoteness, walking through forests.

Cinema hall: - There is a cinema hall named *Shushila Takij* in this area. It not only introduces the films but also the awareness programs related to gender and education. Many people gather there for watching it.

Addressing the need for non-formal education Gautam (2017) says that girls had to be encouraged to take part in educational activities, particularly, the activities of literacy, income generating and modern farming. These activities ensure females' livelihood getting better.

Hegemonic Masculinity and Women Hegemonic masculinity may be a relational approach to gender. When studying gender, researchers explain that it is important to maintain the target on males and females in how they construct gender for men. Regardless of patriarchal society is seen as subordinating women, women are integral to the system of hegemonic masculinity. Most men and women are in many ways complicit in support of hegemonic masculinity, helping to keep powerful in power (Beasley, 2008).

There are various other non-formal literacy programs. Some women gather themselves around the public areas to learn to read and write with the help of their children, teachers or any others who could help them. Girls also take some tuition classes with the teachers with some extra amount of payment. The most widely used type of learning is in homes with family members. Radio or TV education programs are also practiced here in the area. All these educative programs however designed, developed and conducted by the choice of males who are in decision making level. No significance interventions can be made by females. After all male hegemony is observed.

6.8 Girls Education with E-Technology

Based upon the observations, questionnaire, and discussions, a lot of changes have been noticed in the past few years. As the access to electricity followed by cable television in the area recently, the education went beyond the school and domestic premises. Most of the educational access with e technology are discussed here.

Radio and television: - Randomly observed in the area, access to radio and TV reached around eighty percent of people in the area of our study. They listen to radio news, agricultural programs, dramas related to family planning and health issue, etc. and watch TV programs broadcasted on the same issue. Radio Nepal and Nepal Television broadcast the series of classes designed for tenth graders or secondary education examination appearing students. Reluctantly, the program is broadcasted in the evening, many of the girls miss it because of the kitchen work they have to at the same time. On the contrary, boys have time to watch/ listen to the program. This is the pitiful condition.

Computer and laptop: - Roughly calculated, around fifty percent of people have access to computers and laptops in this area. They utilize it for education and entertainment. Such devices, as informed, are guided by father; and hardly got provided to children. It is because of the fear of damage or misuse from students' hands.

Mobile phones: - The easiest access to the device in the village, at present are mobile phones in this area. Even if it is expensive in comparison to other countries, people carry it and use it as daily life. Minimum one mobile phone is possessed in each household in the area. But students up to grade twelve are not allowed to use a telephone inside the school. Mobile phones with students are strictly prohibited in the school area. However, students can use them at home with parents' permission. This has made students easy access to friends for discussion.

Internet: - It is not many years back this rural municipality had no access to the e-technology. Still in some wards of the hilly area does not have any access to electricity. In the area where there is access to electricity, the internet was introduced in the village. Only a few households (roughly fifteen percent) use the internet. The ministry of education has provided online courses for students, they get benefited from internet access.

Multimedia: - In an observation, the rural municipality and the school have multimedia projectors. The school uses it during the parents' assembly, or annual school functions when they have to address the mass. Besides, when two or more classes combine to get certain information, they use it. Thus, this technology also assists people in education.

To sum up, densely Hindu populated areas of study, it is still back in education. Although access to education is optimistic, there are various hurdles in the concept of the people residing in the area. Despite no legal obstruction of female education, many girls are facing troubles in the area. It is due to the cultural perspectives of perceiving girls as dominated gender in the Hindu community. It is improving gradually, but there is a lot to do in this sector.

Connell (2013) tells that “A more complex example is the technology of household machines like vacuum cleaners or washing machine are equally suited to be operated by men or women.... This arrangement happens to be provided by the conventional sexual division of

labor and not be any other likely or practicable arrangements (p. 102).” Therefore, the technological development could be able to minimize and abolish class inequality. According to the local people and teacher, the change is the consequence of the level of technology. As the hegemonic masculinity is getting changed with the pace of time, so is the cultural practice of the rural area. The technology is introduced in this area and the traditional concepts and beliefs are getting changed day by day.

6.9 Chapter Summary

Teachers are considered as the next kin to God in Hindu culture. Their roles are immense in social reformation, yet they are influenced by the components of hegemonic masculinity, such as dominating females. Consequently, girls have been facing a lot of challenges in the area due to the inborn Hindu culture of considering females as the subordinate fellow. Students also have reported that they feel discrimination in schools and at homes because of various reasons. Both parents and priests show the influences of old male dominated culture that seems to be hidden but still functional, like using offensive words for girls, ruling them, etc. The extensive girl education program is introduced by the government. Quite surprisingly, the IT (TV, internet, mobile phones, etc.) friendly family exhibit relatively fewer instances of gender discrimination and male hegemony than those of lacking IT access in modern technology. The next chapter talks about recent changes in religious faith.

7 Findings and Discussion in Recent Changes on Religious Faith

This chapter focuses on changes in the religious context in the past few years. This chapter deals with the factors that made such changes in religious faith based on the information from the respondents. Here, I have sought the information provided by the local people, teachers, and students. The secondary sources of data, such as, the information from the mass media, old people, and priests of the area are also investigated. All such shreds of evidences have been correlated to hegemonic masculinity and the conclusion is drawn.

7.1 Changes on Religious Faith

This area is populated with the mixed community ranging from *Brahman* (the highest rank in the social hierarchy) to, *Chhetry*, *Janjati*, and so-called *Dalits* (the lowest and so-called untouchable people in the hierarchy). Even in such a mixed community, visible changes have occurred in the last few decades. To show the major religious and cultural changes in Hindu religious practice, three cases have been introduced here. The first case represents the first generation of eighty-two years old woman, the second exemplifies the middle-aged married women as the second generation and the last reveals the modern realization of the gender perspective in this area. From the remarks of three cases, I acknowledge some changes in gender related issues.

Case 1

While talking with a grandmother, Kunta (name changed), 82 years of ward no. 08 of the rural municipality, she shared her experiences of the past in the following ways:

When I was five years old, I started following my mom to rear cattle in the jungle. Then, I learned to cut grass, clean pots, wash clothes and to do various domestic tasks, as I was a girl. My mother used to say that I had to marry and go to Parai Ghar (others' house), so I must have learned domestic tasks as much as possible. There were no schools at that time. Even some Sanskrit schools were far away from our homes. Girls were not allowed to read and write. If they did, that would have been against the culture. Parents must provide their daughter to boys before they are 8 years old (girls must marry before their first menstruation). In the first menstruation, girls were neither

allowed to touch anything, even water nor were permitted to stay at home. They used to go far away in the cowshed for more than seven days. In each menstruation, girls and women were supposed to be untouchable for 5 to seven days. Touching books, food, fruits, or vegetables in the garden were not allowed. Watching the face of boys were not allowed. These days, people begin to destroy their culture. Hindu culture is twisted. People say men and women are equal: that's impossible. If so, boys have to go to the girls' houses in marriage. (Smiling) Can you give birth to a baby like a woman? No. (Interview: local person, 20/12/18)

Case 2

Similarly, Gita (name changed) 30 years old respondent from ward no. 02 of the rural municipality speaks:

I have studied only up to grade 11. When I was in grade 11, my parents forcefully proposed me to get married. My mother said that she got married when she was just thirteen: before her first menstruation. She never worked out except the domestic tasks. Having observed all my mom's trouble, I tried to deny the proposal of marriage, but I could do nothing against my grandparents, parents, and all my neighbors. I got married. My brother, however, went to school and studied up to masters. He is now a college teacher, but he is still unmarried. Although I am happy now, I left many things behind because of my culture of early marriage. Now my two children are going to school, I have begun resuming school education. This year I got re-admitted in grade 11 after more than a decade. Now I have planned to study up to a master's degree and wish to serve in school as a teacher. (Interview: local person, 19/12/18)

Case 3

Similarly, a 15 years old student, Snehi (name changed) from ward no. 05 of the rural municipality says:

I started school when I was five years old. I study in a public government school whereas my twin brother studies in a private boarding school. He does not do any work at home, but I have to help my mom in domestic affairs. Parents scold me for tiny issues never reprimand my brother simply because he is a boy. (Timidly) I will be free only for five days in a month (referring to her menstruation time). But that's nonsense! The rest of the time, I have to fetch water, look after castles, cut grass, cook, wash plates, and do many other tasks. Brother goes out to play with friends but not me because none of the girls are allowed to come out like boys in the evening. If we go out, some naughty boys may use some vulgar words to us or may attempt to touch or may....! So, parents do not send us outside. I think I can tackle such boys, but parents do not send us to school. I want to study up to Ph.D., but parents say, it is expensive. I don't know! (Interview: student, 20/12/18)

Burchardt (2018) puts the view that hegemonic masculinities tend to oppress them; women play a role in their formation. When boys are still small, it is the women who teach them how to be boys and/or men in speech and in action, behaviors, expectations, assumptions, and attitudes that are expected from a boy and/or a man. The findings are aligned with this concept of hegemonic masculinity. In my observation as well, from these remarks of three generations, we can conclude the fact that there are some discriminatory parameters or hegemonic masculinity. However, such practices have been getting changed day by day. Such changes are:

Incensement in educational opportunities: - The trend of educational opportunities has been changed in comparison to the past. Schools are established in even remote areas. The access to education at present (on the basis of school enrollment) is remarkably increased for females. At least up to a basic level, girls go to school. It is also because of the liberal promotion (nobody fails and repeats the class) system practiced in school. Consequently, the dropout rate of the school is dramatically nullified at the basic level (grades 1-8). Therefore, the educational opportunities of the people are really changed in this area.

Awareness against gender discrimination: - Although girls could do only a little in making a significant decision against the cultural practices at school and home, they possess the concept of gender equality. It is the result of what is introduced in their secondary curriculum: gender and discrimination. Besides, children and adults have now an ample amount of exposure to the mass media. The social campaign in school is also introduced. Thus, the awareness of equality is observed in the above remarks of respondents as well.

Confidence in being able to work: - Women in the area are seen as more confident in having paid jobs. Some years ago, women used to mention that they are only assigned the tasks of home. Male member or father occasionally went to cities and bring some money, but females or moms never did so. However, the establishment of schools in the local area and due to heavy migration from the hilly area made this rural municipality a densely populated area. Therefore, Women also have the confidence of work.

Courage of speaking against old practice: - The women and the girls of the area begin to speak against the discriminatory practices against them. They have wider exposure regarding the issue of gender. School going girls at grade eight study the constitutional provision of

equality and start to speak against the possible discrimination for them. Even at home, they do not tolerate exclusion. In the above remark, the girl dared to speak against parents' behavior of favoring the brother and excluding girls.

Others: - Besides mentioned above, there are other changes regarding gender. The empirical observation has proved in the village that the family having the income of women is relatively more prosperous than that of the rest. The decisive roles of women in family matters have made the family peaceful. Consequently, the members of the community agreed that women's decision-making power has raised due to their income-generating activities.

Talbot & Quayle (2010) have argued that “Women also play a key role within the production of masculinities. Women aren't simply resources for men to draw into their own constructions of masculinity, but active agents within the production of acceptable and thus hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity” (p. 2).

As they opine that masculinities are socially constructed, therefore they can be changed and transformed for the good of society at large if found to be dangerous. The argument which Talbot and Quayle have put here is applicable in the Nepali Hindu society. Though there are still some malpractices, such practices are getting refined day by day.

7.2 Factors Contributing to the Changes

Both from the observation and the questionnaire, the researcher has concluded the fact that there are a lot of changes in religious practices and gender discrimination in Hinduism over the few decades. These changes are visible as the consequences of various factors in society. Factors contributing to such changes are listed below.

7.2.1 Literacy rate

According to the respondent teachers, a lot of changes have occurred relating to literacy. The case is the same there as well. Every year the literacy rate is increasing here. Teacher 'E' remarks:

Many women go to literacy school and followed by income-generating programs. Additionally, there is a public library, newly established at the center of the municipality. Many students, parents, and local people have found going there to read and get engaged in the papers. This engagement has dramatically facilitated people's literacy activity. (Interview: teacher, 13/12/18)

Respondents also mentioned that many NGOs and INGOs are functioning to promote literacy programs in the area. Undoubtedly, the incensement of the literacy rate has supported gender equality and. In an observation in the library, many girl students along with middle-aged women were found in the library.

7.2.2 Economic activities

Local person, 'A' puts the thought:

The main occupation of the people living in this area is agriculture. Almost all economic activities are based upon agriculture. Every Monday is the local market day. Almost all the goods sold and bought are related to agriculture, such as fertilizers, seeds, local honey, fruits, vegetables, rice grains, etc. are bought and sold." Local person 'B' says, "Every Monday, (market day), this area has become the hub for economic activities. Local people mentioned that the involvement of women in the economic activities is dramatically increased. (Interview: local person, 21/12/18)

Teacher 'A' says, "In the past, females were responsible only for domestic affairs and males at the center of economic activity." Based on our observation, now a days, some of the females were found engaged in financial earning. They go to the market to sell the agricultural products which they produced at home like vegetables, crops, animal products and etc. This was found as one of the indicators for the positive changes in the women's status.

7.2.3 Migration

Although this is the area with the possible natural calamities (landslide, floods, river cutting, snake bites, etc.), many immigrants from the eastern hills enter here each year. Even within the rural municipality, many people come to the local market area (*Madhumalla Bazar*) from the ward number one and two. According to the municipality record, the trend of migration of family inside to outside is at the ratio of 30:19 per month. It means, thirty families migrate inside this area but only nineteen move out of here. Local person 'E' says, "This trend of

migration has brought a dramatic change in this rural municipality area, as it has provided the opportunities for cultural amalgamations among various castes and ethnicity. Consequently, the firm traditional concept of religious dogma has turned out to the modern humanitarian agenda. It has undoubtedly, helped the girls' schooling.”

7.2.4 Technology and mass media

Parents ‘E’ shared the experience, “Ten years ago, in this rural municipality there were no access to electricity, telephone towers, and television. Daily newspapers used to arrive after three days. On the contrary, this rural municipality has now access to electricity, mobile towers, and TV cable lines.”

Teacher ‘B’ urged that mass media in the area has played a unique and important role in the shaping of a society where men and women enjoy equal rights. Awareness-raising programs from radio, TV, social media, etc. are frequently broadcasted in this area. Human rights issues are also broadcasted as advertisements these days. The access to the internet and mobile data has paved the way for the outer world. In this way, technology has changed the lifestyle of people here. The set of qualities defined as hegemonically masculine varies from one place to another, over time, and culturally. These changing factors in Nepali culture have also rendered for socio-cultural changes, the change in the belief of hegemony in gender roles. According to the people's responses and field observation, the factors in the country paved the way for changing the whole socio-cultural and educational aspects.

7.2.5 Youth clubs and new generation

In this rural municipality, various youth clubs are functioning. The clubs are also functional in the school area. The clubs mainly perform the following programs: a) Child rights issues, b) sanitation and hygiene issues, c) entertainment programs d) capacity development programs, e) debate or speech programs f) quiz contest programs g) awareness issues h) literacy support programs, etc.

To sum up, all these programs have helped in the promotion of gender equality and support in educational programs. “Though groups of boys in schools often have a dominant or hegemonic pattern of masculinity, there are usually also other patterns present, a number of

which involve more equal and respectful relations with girls” (Connell, 2005, p. 181). Slowly and gradually, the scene of hegemony is changing, yet there are tons of visible discrimination in the Hindu community in gender.

7.3 School Attending Girls Remarks on Religion

In this research, the researcher generated data from secondary school girls who are attending school. The students were asked a few questions about religion and their perception of it. The questions and their remarks are as follows.

Table 9: Girls’ remarks on religion

Questions	Response Percent (Yes)	Response Percent (No)
Are you aware of the Hindu Religion?	45	55
Do you follow the practices of the Hindu religion at home?	80	20
Do your parents force you to follow cultural practices?	60	40
Are you satisfied with the cultural practice you follow?	49	51
Do you notice gender biases in your culture?	85	15
Does your cultural practice help your school study?	40	60

Source: Developed by the researcher

According to the table mentioned above, the majority of the school going girls are aware of the Hindu religion and practices. The response shows that the majority of the parents compel their children to practice the culture related to Hinduism. The majority of students, as the response indicates, are dissatisfied with the culture they are following. Eighty-five percent of the respondents notice that gender biases occur in their culture. Finally, sixty percent of students respond negatively to the help of cultural practice in their education.

In conclusion, based on the data generated from the students, it is concluded that the supposition that gender-based baseness occurs there. Parents' enforcement is also present there, that majority of students hate most. They also mention that their cultural practice is hindering them in their study. All the above-mentioned instances exhibit that hegemonic masculinity occurs in this area.

7.4 Changes in Religious Belief

Hinduism, according to the teachers, embraces many religious ideas, such as cleanliness, discipline, food habits, performing Puja. Because of this reason, it is sometimes denoted as a 'way of life' or a 'family of religions'. According to the teachers, perception regarding the shift in religion is rapid and noticed in schools. These changing remarks have been noted from the observation:

Changes in belief: - Based upon the observation of the teacher, the religious belief changed in eastern Nepal. Let alone other beliefs, students sometimes do not even greet teachers. Teachers are considered as God in Hinduism; however, this belief is changing. Similarly, a cow in Hindu religion is considered as a sacred animal. But the belief change has occurred in Hindu philosophy, cows are not worshiped by the young generation.

Change in practice: - The change in belief has paved the way for changing the practice in Hindu philosophy. Food is an important part of life for Hindus. Most don't eat beef or pork, and many are vegetarians. However, the young generations do not strictly follow it. Getting up early and taking a bath every day is another practice related to Hinduism, but the young generation never follows it.

Change in humanity: - In Hindu culture, humanity counts the most. Respecting elders, keeping the distance between females by males, loving and caring Youngers, providing beggars with food and money are the major examples of human culture in Hindu philosophy. According to teachers, these activities are getting changed in reality. Girls are misbehaved and are raped in the community; old parents are misbehaved by elders in the society. Thus, the humanitarian system is also changing day by day.

Change in educational practices: - Educational practice in Hindu philosophy was based upon the moral teachings. The relationship between students and teachers was regarded as parents and children. But the practice these days is beyond the basic philosophy. The curriculum, according to teachers, is designed in such a way that no moral education is taught in school, teachers and students are considered as having the relation of friendship. Thus, modern days teaching and schooling are totally away from the basic principles of Hindu education.

Religion free belief: - The most upsetting fact of all in religion and the religious fact is that most of the young generation is free from religious belief. Young generations currently do not act as they are associated with many religions, they act religious philosophy only with the culture they follow. Additionally, their religious practices which are difficult for them to conduct are diminishing day by day. This sort of change is visible in school as well.

Peace and conflict resolution: - In School education of the Nepali curriculum, peace and nonviolence are introduced from the early stage. Children learn peace education at an early age, establishing patterns that will serve them throughout life. Some learn that fists, force, and angry words are the way to work things out. Children are taught that diplomacy and kindly speech, that serves the same purpose more effectively and yield longer-lasting results. Children pick up these things largely through the examples in the home, by witnessing how mom and dad work out their differences. However, such practices are getting diminished day by day.

The idea that the concept of masculinity marginalizes or naturalizes the body (because it is supposed to rest on a sex-gender dichotomy) is perhaps the most startling of the claims in this critique. Startling, because the interplay between bodies and social processes has been one of the central themes of masculinity research from its beginning (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 837).

The religious beliefs are psychologically organized in the field beyond the traditional Hindu concept. Both from the observation and people's remarks, the visible in the last decades are noticed regarding the moral behavior beyond the Hindu dogma. Thus, the changes are the consequences of society, not of the body.

7.5 Students' Perception of Changes

According to the response of parents and local people, students in this area do not follow their parent's behavior regarding the Hindu religion. However, the students have their own claim.

The following observation is found regarding the student's remarks on religion:

Table 10: Girls' remarks on cultural changes

Questions	Response percent (Yes)	Response Percent (No)
Do you read Hindu Holy book like <i>Geeta</i> ?	10	90
Do you take a bath daily?	41	59
Do you go to temples for praying daily?	18	82
Do you believe in the caste system?	04	96
Do you perform puja daily?	10	90
Do you help your parents on religious functioning?	80	20

Source: Developed by the researcher

From the remarks mentioned above, we can safely conclude that younger generations or students are getting a bit detached from the religious philosophy. The majority (90 percent) of students do not follow puja in the Municipality. One of the girl students said, "Boys have to follow the religion, not girls in Hindu culture; because priests must be boys, the Puja performer must be boys and everywhere the boy is dominant in religious rituals." Thus, girls are seen as inferior in the area whereas boys are seen dominant. This shows that hegemonic masculinity is perceived in the notion of the villagers' concept.

7.6 Parents' Perception of Changes

Parents of the rural municipality put the remarks that the most important virtue of Hinduism is respecting parents. That is the reason why the religion has placed parents in the first position,

and they are regarded as God. However, parents perceive a dramatic change in Hinduism in the past decade. Such changes are listed below:

Parents were grown in a bit stricter cultural practice of Hinduism, however, with the pace of time, the strictness turned out to be leniency. To be more specific, students were expected to cover their books, keep them safe, and greet books before they start to study, but parents complain that the children do not respect books. They throw books even in the dirty areas. This habit of disrespecting books has made the study a mess and the quality of education is diminishing.

According to parents, another change in Hindu culture these days is girls and boys walking together holding each other's hands and talking loudly about their love affair. This is against the Hindu cultural practice; it is really a social taboo for parents and old people. Even around thirty years ago, marriage was at the choice of parents not of the boys and girls. Thus, such a change of walking together with proximity is indigestible for parents. From the facts mentioned above, currently, the dramatic changes have occurred in Hindu cultural practices these days. Regarding the cultural changes, Connell & Messerschmidt (2005) say:

Every ethnography discovers a distinctive gender culture, every life-history study uncovers unique trajectories of men's lives, and every structural analysis defines new intersections of race, class, gender, and generation, it is logically possible to define a thousand and one variations of masculinity. This surely is also true of claimants to hegemony (p. 845).

The cultural aspect of hegemonic masculinity, the dominant social roles of males in the society is seen here. Parents also complain about the dressing habits of girls in the summer seasons. In traditional Hindu culture, girls are expected to put on the dress that completely covers their bodies. However, parents complain that girls have started wearing the dress: only above knees. Thus, dressing habit is also a part of the change in Hindu cultural practice.

Some Parents complain that students go to school from home but get lost on the way. It means they bunk the schools and go to the cinema or market areas for wandering. This is against the cultural tradition of Hinduism. Telling a lie is strictly forbidden in this culture, but many youngsters do so. Parents explain this is the recent change. Another recent change in the Hindu culture of this area is eating habits. Eating pork, buff, beef, etc., and drinking

alcohol are not considered good in Hindu culture. But the young generation has begun to eat whatever they like to. Mostly young students' attraction is towards junk food, which schools to prevent such foods on school premises. Parents 'A' said:

The way the people speak reflects the society they live in. In Hindu culture, speaking politely, using respectful words to elders, and speaking in soft tones are the major parameters. But the new generations do not follow the codes of conduct relating to the use of language. In each sentence of their language, English words are mixed. The major changing issue of parents regarding the Hindu culture is related to the daily activities of eating, dressing, food, language, friendship, etc. (Interview: parents, 16/12/18)

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) maintains that hegemonic masculinity was distinguished from other masculinities, especially subordinated masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity wasn't assumed to be normal within the statistical sense; only a minority of men might enact it. But it had been certainly normative. It embodied the currently most honored way of being a male, it required all other men to position themselves concerning it, and it ideologically legitimated the worldwide subordination of women to men. Men who received the advantages of patriarchy without enacting a strong version of masculine dominance might be considered showing complicit masculinity as cited in Broqua & Doquet, 2013). Therefore, parents also admit that changes in Hindu religion has resulted the changes in the students' behavior. Their reaction to the stimuli as well as daily habits of children.

7.7 Priests' Perception of Changes

Priests of the local temple put the remark that some decades back, a long queue of people could be seen in the temple who come here for praying. But these days, the temple becomes peaceful with only a few people, many of them are seen women, in the morning. Those who come for praying are old or middle-aged people. This shows that the change in religion is seen these days. Priest 'A' opines:

The major culture of Hinduism is to help others, provide some food and money in the temple. The trend, according to the priests, is changing in comparison to the decades back. The temple visitors either offer very nominal amount or just a flower, these days. Comparatively, females offer much money than males. In the past, priests were regarded as holy people in Hindu culture. They used to approach, greet, respect, and give a high value to priests. But the present trend is different. Most of the people

visiting temples neither greet priests nor do they want to speak with them. (Interview: priest, 16/12/18)

Priest 'B' tells:

In Hindu culture, shoes/ sandals are regarded as dirty and are not allowed inside the temple. In each temple, including the great Pashupatinath temple, shoes are not allowed inside. However, the school-going children, if they appear in the temple, enter inside with shoes. They do not care about our culture either do they dare to read the notice of not allowing shoes inside. This also shows that Hindu culture is changing. (Interview: priest, 15/12/18)

Some priests, with tears in their eyes, said that temple is now turning out to be a dating spot or smoking zone. The priest got very much disappointed with the current changes that no new generation is sensitive to the religion and culture. This has to be deeply realized by the local government. In theoretical terms, As Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) state, "Cultural consent, discursive centrality, institutionalization and the marginalization or legitimation of alternatives are widely documented features of socially dominant masculinities" (p. 846). Therefore, priests play crucial role in cultural transmission in religion. While having discussion with them, they highlighted the role of males in society but never talked about the role of females. This justifies the Hindu religious influence of male domination upon females.

To sum up, there are a lot of changes in religious beliefs about the religion and culture in the Hindu community in this area. The changes are on tradition, culture, beliefs, values, language, food, and many other habitual things. The rapid change is seen in this rural municipality areas including the schoolteachers, students, and all people concerned. Yet, the change is very slow, and the hegemony of masculinity is perceived in the area.

7.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter concerns with recent changes in religion and its consequences in gender and education. The mentioned cases show that the instances of gender discrimination issues have been changing from a generation to the other: old people in the Hindu community faced a lot of challenges than those of the new ones. With the rise of literacy, economic growth, migration, mass media, the exposure to the wider world have yielded the changes of faith relating to gender. The majority of school going students do not show a strong commitment to

religious faith, as they have been exposed to the new curriculum in school that talks much on equality. Yet, local priests and old people are against the change, their concern is to preserve the tradition. The last chapter concerns summary conclusions and recommendations.

8 Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

This research is conducted in the rural municipality, one of the remote and underdeveloped areas of the Province one of Nepal. This area is the remote place of Nepal with a significantly low density of population and lacking infrastructure of development. This area is the range with a dense population of Hindu people. Most of the research conducted in Nepal regarding gender and education were directed around the urban areas, like, Kathmandu valley or the easily accessible areas; there had never been any researchers related to this topic of gender and educational issues. This is the noble area of study. To find out the true reality of religious belief, gender, and equality on educational aspects of school going girls of this area, this research is conducted in this zone. The theoretical base for this research is hegemonic masculinity i.e. the notion that men are ranked high and play a significant decision-making role in the society upon women as the subordinated part. Hegemonic masculinity incorporates “The tradition of gender domination within cultural representations of males, reflecting normative behavioral ideals for males in a culture in a particular period (regardless of the actual prevalence of such behavior in that society” (McVittie, Hepworth & Goodall, 2017, p. 139).

This research, therefore, concerns to explore males as the ruling class and establishes and maintains the dominations through persuasions or performance upon females. It is for our purpose, is understood as specific strategies for subordinating women through breadwinning and manhood of males. The findings, therefore, concern to the Hindu cultural perspective of gender and education.

The researcher visited the field and observed the field extensively. During his visit, the researcher met students of secondary schools, their teachers, and parents together with local people and priests of the local temple. The raw information was gathered and analyzed in descriptive ways: keeping headings and subheadings into various chapters in interpretive methodology relating to hegemonic masculinity.

In conclusions of the research, the major parameters of conclusions are Hinduism, gender, and girl education. Besides, the interpretivism as the philosophical base is kept in mind together with hegemonic masculinity as the base of theory. The issues to be addressed in the

conclusion are the stratification theory of segregations, female dominations, empowerment, human right perspectives are kept in mind. In other words, the issues related to such philosophical and theoretical backgrounds are addressed with a lot of emphasis. The other components, which come together are also considered, yet much focus is provided to the foremost components.

8.1 Summary

The summary of the research is discussed in the following paragraphs.

8.1.1 Summary of the research findings from observation

In observation, the school premise does not possess a toilet that is friendly enough for girls. Boys' apartment of toilet has urinals where more than ten boys can go to the toilet at a time. On the contrary, girls' toilet is a single room where only a girl can go there at a time. Ironically, the number of girls exceeds boys. This shows that the physical facility is not girls' friendly in the School. Similarly, Boys' domination is seen there, as the concept of boys' parents in this area is that, it should be the boys who have to hold the position. It is always the boys who have to win girls. This is deeply rooted in the Hindu culture of the boy's domination and girls should be the followers of what boys do. This scene is related to Connell's hegemonic masculinity which he says, "The configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (Connell, 2005, p. 77).

It was also observed that the enrollment of girls in the so-called 'worse' community public schools is higher but just the opposite to that enrollment of boys in so-called 'good' private English medium schools is low. This shows that there is gender discrimination in the Hindu community in the east part of Nepal. The teachers' proximity with students, as observed, is that while doing counseling and giving suggestions, the teachers were found very close to boys and far away from girls. The language used in the assembly is addressed only for boys, not for girls. This shows that there are gender biases in the community where the majority of Hindu people live. Thus, the Connell's lines relating to the hegemonic masculinity justifies it

as: “All forms of femininity in this society are constructed in the context of the overall subordination of women to men” (Connell, 2013, p. 187).

While observing the tendency of absentees, the absence of girls is associated with their menstruation time. It is noticed that in the first days of their menstruation cycle, they are found absent. It must be because of the lack of a clean toilet, sanitary pads, and water facilities in the school. Additionally, inside the school premises, boys are seen to have been playing outdoor games. For most of the instruments of the game, the boys have access. Girls have only the leftovers of the boys. According to teachers it was the tradition from long ago, developed as a culture. Thus, it is the practice rooted in the Hindu culture of domination girls. Connell’s notion of masculinity and hegemony says, “Domination masculinity is simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 836). Therefore, the long term of gender role of dominating females is found in this area.

So-called ‘untouchability’ during menstruation is still privileged in this area. Girls do not pray or go to the temples for four days. This is associated with Hindu culture. Although schools, teachers, parents, etc. do not say anything regarding this issue, there are a lot of such cases of discrimination in school areas and homes. On the other hand, the number of female teachers is remarkably low in community schools in this area. The domination is of male teachers only. It is because of the lack of equal opportunities in education between males and females. The hegemonic masculinity "Organizes practice at all levels of social organization from identities, to symbolic rituals, (including the gender roles function) to large-scale institutions” (Connell, 2005, p. 71). Thus, the gender role has associated the hegemony and masculinity.

In an observation in school, it was noticed that a guardian was looking for teachers in the teachers' staff room. There were lady teachers, but the guardian was saying that he was looking for teachers. Female teachers said that they were also teachers, still, the guardian was asking for teachers. This shows that the guardian's conception of teachers is only male members: females were not considered teachers. What could be the more severe case of discrimination than this? Female teachers are not merely regarded as teachers. Similarly, during the field visit, every girl student in the visited households was working in the fields, helping their mothers. Boys were seen outside playing with their friends. Most of the girl students said that they lack time for the assignment because of kitchen works, but boys have

more than enough time to perform the task of school and go out to play. The masculinity according to Connell (2005) composes having three components: first, 'social location and practice', second, 'set of behavior and characteristics understood to be male' and third, 'wide embodiment of cultural practices to follow both for men and women'. Hence, these consequences of hegemonic masculinity are truly visible in this research.

In each class, there is the provision of nominating/ electing class captain and assistant captain: of which, one must be female. However, in all classes, the class captain is male, and the assistant captain is female. The same is the case in national politics: constitutional provision says that, in all local levels, the mayor or deputy mayor, one must be female. However, all the municipalities are headed by males. Females are just the deputy head. This shows that the main leadership is not provided or there are hindrances for females to lead. The same scene is seen in schools and family as well. While observing the attendances, both girls of school and females of the school management committee have relatively less attendance than boys. Many girls get absent in school. Many female members get absent in the school management committee meeting. This shows gender inequality on the school and school management committee. Connell (2013) opines "Many of the institutional and psychological issues about gender can be understood in terms of the structures of labor and power. The institutionalization of power has different effects in shaping the femininity and masculinity" (p. 97). Connell (2005) discusses that masculinities and femininities can be "gender practices" in the life of every people, on their daily lives and refer to features of or specific kinds of people in the society.

As observed in the parents' meeting on a school day, many male parents were present than that of female parents. The most important of all, however, is the fact that female parents put thumbprint for their signature. It is because of their inability to write. They lacked the opportunity of going to schools in their times. This shows the gender inequality in the area. Consequently, in the history of schools in the area, there are no females as a school management chairperson. When asked the reason why so, two explanations are there for this: (1) Females themselves show an unwillingness to participate or, in most of the cases. (2) No opportunity is provided for females to head schools in this area. This scene represents what Connell (2005) represents as hegemonic masculinity. He admits that embodiment by at least some men over time and space, legitimates men's domination over women as a group". The female's voice mentioned above represents the fear of being females.

While reading the school meeting minute of the school management committee of one year, no significant decision made in the school management committee regarding female education and equality. This shows that the female representatives of the school management committee are just the 'yes' people of what male members impose them to decide. They have made no significant decisions and interventions relating to gender and equality. In the villages, on the other hand, even schoolgirls are forced to get married in their teenage in this area. Particularly from the remote areas (ward no.1/2) the early marriage of girls is deplorable. Girls are forced to get married with (sometimes) ten years older boys than them. It depicts not just the culture, but also the domination over females. Connell (2005) writes that one form of femininity is defined around compliance with this subordination and is oriented to accommodating the interests and desires of men. Thus, the females here are just the actors of what males tell them to do.

Succinctly, the observation has truly provided the base for taking into account of the people living there and their role on gender. It has provided opportunities for visualizing the strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats of the people living in there related to gender. The people shared the language with the researcher, and it was quite thought-provoking to dig deep into the daily life of the people. The hegemonic masculinity is vividly observed.

8.1.2 Summary of the research findings from questionnaires

According to teachers, in Hindu culture, they are the leaders of the students. The same is the case in this area. They claim themselves as the key role players in the society. Social changes take place with their strong involvement. They are assisting students by raising the awareness of gender and religion, mostly in speech, but sometimes lack in practice. Similarly, a family is considered as the first school, and parents are the first teachers of students. Family and parents can change the concept of the children. But in this context, children learn the culture of gender discrimination from parents indirectly, through the observation. Priests in the Hindu religion are divine people who perform religious rituals. Their say is regarded as god's say. They trust the documented sayings. They follow religious books such as the Geeta, the Mahabharat, etc. In most Hindu religious books, girls are regarded as the secondary part of the family. Thus, Hegemony relates to cultural dominance in a society as a whole.

There are a lot of legal changes have been made regarding equality, According to teachers. The first and the foremost of them is the constitution of Nepal promulgated in 2015 by the constituent assembly II. Besides, there are a lot of changes in rules, acts, and regulations. However, time is being taken to come to those regulations into practice. The federal government ensures both the basic (1-8) and the secondary (9-12) education is free and compulsory. But this declaration is taking time to come into effect in the remote areas alike this rural municipality. The enrollment of girl students in free community/ government school is remarkably high, the dropout is also the same. On the other hand, the enrolment and dropout of girls are low in private boarding schools. This shows that the girls go to public schools, still, there is a high dropout rate there in public school. Despite the legal provision, hegemony occurs in behavior. Hegemony, subordination, and complicity are aspects of the gender or cultural order, not the legal order. Thus, Connell offers marginalization to characterize the relationships among culturally powerful and powerless gender, the former being males and later females.

The gender-based violence is reduced to some extent, but it is not completely abolished. Some residual symptoms are still found in the village related to gender roles. Such as when guests come in the house, it is the male member to talk. Females had no chance to speak rather they had to cover their head with a piece of cloth while appearing in front of the people, this tradition is because of the preoccupied concept of Hindu religion. If they don't follow the rules, males scold them. Eloping, getting married without prior permission of parents, or love marriage is not considered moral in Hindu culture. The best form of marriage is choosing the bride/ bridegroom from parents and getting married. Thus, if parents notice some sort of love affair of girls, they chose another boy and get them married. This ultimately hinders education.

Committing violence against women in a prescribed, formalized and theatrical fashion, both in cases of honor-killing and forced marriage, is largely correlated to the fact that deviation from the norms of the league will cause a man losing his membership in the 'good society'. In this way the use of violence is ritualized and receives cultural support (Kordvani, 2002, p. 18).

Therefore, the male members in the family seem to be superior to the females. The family decisions and all other activities are related to females. Father is the head in the family, everything hovers around the decision of male members. The victim in sexual violence

becomes females. Females are reactive: males are proactive. Hence, the hegemonic masculinity is culturally deep in the Hindu patrilocal family of this area. Priests, on the other hand, put the remark that the change in religion and education is seen. People do not follow the worshipping style of previous days. They want to finish the worshipping as fast as possible. This tendency, according to priests, is seen relatively much more in boys than in girls.

The curriculum of the grade one to twelve is changed after the promulgation federal constitution. The religious and cultural parts in the curriculum are omitted, and the moral lessons are omitted. This has started making religious aspects disrespectful. Some literacy improving programs such as FSP/SOP are running in the area. These programs are designed for those girls/women who have missed their schooling. This also shows that there is discrimination in education, thus such programs are introduced to mainstreaming women. Due to the omission of the moral lessons, the school children have begun disrespectful. They do not take care of old people, do not respect teachers and priests. This aspect of Hindu culture is getting worse day by day in school. According to old people and the priests, schoolgirls do not follow the untouchability during the menstruation period. They do follow at home with parents and grandparents but not in schools. This shows that the girls are becoming aware of the fact. However, they could not change the system by themselves, they have to rely on traditional belief. Gautam (2017) says:

School curriculum included managing adolescent changes and sexual and reproductive health; but many teachers did not address them adequately in class since they are still considered taboo in various rural communities. Thus, any scaled-up programs will need to offer these subjects to help educate and empower secondary level girls in their studies (p.12).

Hence the need for initiation for curricular change is the demand of the day. This would ultimately render changes in the gender discrimination scene. In some households, the introduction of technology, such as TV, mobiles, internet, etc. have added ease in learning. However, this is a rural municipality and does not have enough access to e-technology. It is seen that women (graduated) have started raising the voice against discrimination. When women are aware of the fact that they are being discriminated, they begin to raise voices against it. Thus, education is an indispensable for them to make aware. With the pace of time, the religious faith itself is changing. New generations are seen as religion free nature; however, the cultural practice is at the side. If this changing tradition continues, equality gets closer. The

international exposure has added awareness to the people. The finding shows that discrimination on education is less in the family who has access to the e-technology and foreign exposure. This shows that hegemonic masculinity is gradually shifting because Connell himself admits that the theory is a subject to change. The research suggests in line with Connell (2013) as he has said “Focusing on what most men do will necessarily reveal how hegemonic masculinity is implicated in gender hegemony” (p. 79). Therefore, it is the long-followed tradition and what male members exhibit in the role is the rule to follow for females.

The discrimination is related to the economic condition of the family. If the family is stronger economically, the trend of gender discrimination is less. Thus, for the reduction of discrimination, the economic aspect of the family has to be strengthened. On the other hand, the size of the family also determined the discrimination in Hindu educational practice. If the family size is large, the discrimination is much because the old generations do not like girls to be free. But the nuclear family has much freedom. The result of the discrimination, in some cases, is because of the girls themselves. It means, if they do not raise the voices against discrimination, it gets difficult to be minimized.

Girl education in the Hindu community is determined by neighbors of the people. Most of the people in the locality backbite if the one or the two family members breach the rules. Thus, they mention that they don't want untouchability during the menstruation if society does not care. It is the legal responsibility of the local government to look after, yet the local government seemed less sensitive or almost inactive regarding gender and education issues. No or very few is done from the government side. The legal provision only does not work all the time. People's mindset has been working. Thus, the grassroots level is the germination of the gender biases. Due to the lack of international exposure, people of this area are passing through the message of what their forefathers are telling. Those households, with foreign exposure to the developed countries, have maintained equality better than those of the natively staying in the rural areas.

Religion and culture go together. The cultural message passes through generation to generation. Thus, the dominating girls in the Hindu religion is not a new practice. It is an old culture having been passed through generation to generation. The cultural practices take time to change, yet some positive signals have been seen in Nepali culture on equality. The human right era of the late decades and targets of the SDGs have enforced the government to render

changes in old and traditional cultures of segregation. The need is to reach in every household of the remote area to reform the concept and act to concentrate on changes.

8.2 Conclusions

This research is conducted to assess the gender equality perspectives of Hinduism and its influence on girls' education in the remote area of east Nepal. The research is based upon the field observation, focus group discussion, questionnaire, interview and information generated from the local students of the secondary level, their parents, local priests, and residents of the area.

As studied, a lot of legal reformation is made after the new constitution of (2015) federal republic of Nepal. This has guaranteed the right to education and the right to equality as the fundamental rights. Similarly, a recent amendment on educational act and regulation has guaranteed equality. The provision of thirty-three percent of reservation quota for government (public) employment is another move in law. The reformation of the school curriculum, textbooks, and materials are also the major revolutions. The declaration of a secular state, transformed through previously recognized as the Hindu kingdom, is another move: no religion is of the state, all religions are equal in law. Therefore, there are no legal or regulations related to government obstacle of gender, religion, and education.

The research concludes that not just the single reason interplays in the gender issue, but the complex phenomenon of conventional, structural, religious, socio-economic and gender roles have overlapped one another for gender issues in Hindu community. The main constraints in education as stated by Adhikari (2013), is the perception of women as having inferior in the community. Similarly, Gautam (2019) recommends that the gender discrimination is not just the issue related to women, it is the issue of empowerment, growth, poverty reduction and nation's development. Thus, she recommends the policy makers of Nepal to invest the sustainable income of women and education of girls. Thus, the findings of these researchers and my observation match in line with having discrimination in school going girls in the Hindu community. The research conclude that the discrimination is because of the influences of traditional gender roles or male domination privileged in Hindu religion.

Despite enough legal reformations, the practice is in the process of change. The political change of Nepal in the last decades was unpredicted, radical and very rapid. It did not intervene the cultural practice of people, neither did it render the drastic move of Hindu belief. The practice reality is different from that of the legal reformation. Because of people's religious belief, they follow the practices traditionally being transferred from a generation to the other. Thus, the gender inequality in the community, school and home is remarkably noticed because of Hindu religious belief. Various Hindu cultures promote gender inequality in the form of hegemony of males by dominating females. The gender related inequality is thus identified in the Hindu community of public schools in the following forms:

- a) *Choice of schools and enrolment:* - It is found that the discrimination for girls in the choice of schools i.e. boys are sent in the expensive private schools, girls in the free community schools.
- b) *Regularity and dropouts:* - As observed in the school attendance, the girls are irregular in school, and the dropout of girls in school is also high. Thus, there is discrimination for girls' regularity of schools, and many girls leave schools before they complete high school level.
- c) *Untouchability during menstruation:* - The center discrimination in the Hindu community is detachment during menstruation. This practice is still privileged in homes and schools of rural places.
- d) *Early marriage:* - If daughters leave schools, or if they fall in love, parents forcefully marry their daughter seeking a boy of parents' choice. In the Hindu community of east Nepal, a love affair before marriage is not considered good, mostly for girls. It is regarded offence of against moral behavior. Thus, for face-saving, parents enforce early marriage before love affairs arises.
- e) *Physical infrastructure of schools:* - The center of discrimination is school which is without the basic girl friendly infrastructures like toilets, playgrounds. The girls suffer to change their sanitary pads in schools, due to the lack of water in the toilets. Due to the influence of Hindu culture, girls could not speak freely about this issue.

- f) *Family support for girls:* - Girls have double loads: school assignments and kitchen work at home. Boys in this area of the Hindu community do not perform kitchen work at home. Boys, on the other hand, do not have to do domestic kitchen works. This shows the discrimination and it hinders the girl's education.
- g) *School management and teachers:* - In the history of the school, no school management committee chair and the headteacher so far are female. In this area, it is conceived that girls cannot run the institutions like schools. This shows that there is discrimination in assigning the leadership assignments for females.
- h) *Literacy of mothers:* - The literacy of forty years above women is deplorable in this area. Around fifty percent of women could not write their names. There are no such cases for the men of the identical age group. Thus, it is due to gender discrimination in education in the past.
- i) *Priests' perception* - The theme of all priests' remark was pessimistic. They said that the true religious culture is getting destroyed in the name of modernity. According to them, the cultural prospect has to be preserved. Such remarks have rendered inequality.
- j) *Issue of discipline:* - The matter of discipline in school has become a major concern of everyone. It is associated with the Hindu culture. In Hindu culture, students were expected to obey teachers. However, the trend is different these days. As observed and informed, the boys are more mischievous than that of girls; girls seem more disciplined in schools. It is associated with enforcement to girls at home.
- k) *The transition of implementations:* - Nepal is still in the cultural transitional phase. In this phase, the reformation of legal aspects seems earlier than the practical aspects. The discrimination is still privileged as the transitional phase of change.

According to Connell (2013), "It is rational for women to accept a subordinated position rather than exhaust themselves in a competition for power when they are constantly dragged down by their hormones" (p. 70). Thus, the research conclusion is that the hegemonic masculinity is highly functional in this area. Nevertheless, from the legal ground, there are only a few hindrances regarding gender and education in Hindu cultural practices. However,

the gap is seen in the practical aspects mentioned above. Hopefully, with the pace of time, the law will reach the practice of remote households in Nepal.

In this research, I have pieces of evidence of gender inequality in the Hindu community of the study area. The gender related gap between boys and girls is observed not only in school but also in the community and households. In schools, inequality is based on male dominance the 'ruling culture' in Connell's word. The gender role that interplays in the household has direct influences in schools, and the Connell's hegemonic masculinity is embodied and linked to power structures as well. The consequences and learnings of parents' domination upon daughters are reflected in school through the behavior of boys against girls. All these behaviors of males against females have been percolated down to the community and is reflected through culture. Thus, the hegemonic masculinity reveals through gender roles in schools.

The research portrayed the shreds of evidence of males' winning or holding power upon females in all decision-making processes and gender roles. The male's power hold is seen in the formation and distribution of social roles, such as males have the decisive roles in the family for any type of the choices, and females have no choice than what they are required to do. Males are honored as being men and holding the hegemony. While hegemonic masculinity of Connell is often regarded as a configuration of gender practices, it has also sometimes been observed in the field as the cultural ideal of long run practices of people. Schoolgirls, therefore, have been found reluctant to follow the gender discrimination ascribed to them.

8.3 Recommendations

The recommendations of the research are subdivided into policy-related, practice-related, and implication related as follows.

8.3.1 Policy related

The policy-related recommendations are as follows:

The provision of providing headship for females (at least once): school management chair, headteacher, caption in the class, club chair, etc. has to be the legal provision. It is because the practice of choosing the principal and school management head is male dominated only. In the history of the schools in this area, no female teacher is the head of the school nor is the lady teacher the head of the department.

In each meeting of the rural municipality, school management, and the teachers, the provision to assess the gender issues has to be made mandatory. The gender related complaints have to be addressed by the local government.

The mechanism to audit the gender issue has to be made. At least, the responsive mechanism of hearing the complaints of girls has to be developed in public areas. The 'complain box' system has to be made functional or the 'nominal' complain box of the school has to be made 'functional' to ensure the complaints are welcome. The involvement of students or the local people themselves is required for better functioning.

The coordination mechanism among the federal, provincial, and local level have to be made to manage, foster, and implement gender and discrimination related issues. The federal system of the government is a new practice in Nepal: no strong mechanism and foundation are created so far for coordination among different levels of government. When the mechanism is created, the gender response mechanism has to be made so that the issues will be properly addressed, problems are solved.

The government has to introduce the plan and policy of programs that provide people with access to IT (internet, mobile tower enrichment), that minimizes the discrimination issues. The central government has an agenda to make the rural municipality touched with access to the internet. Similarly, the local government has to cheapen the price and introduce internet access in each village.

The trend of providing loans for high school graduates females have to be initiated. As observed in the villages, the economically sound women with jobs face relatively less or no discrimination relating to gender. One of the major causes of gender discrimination is observed relating to economic sustainability. Therefore, the loan will ensure the education, ultimately, economic progress reduces the chance of discrimination.

8.3.2 Practice related

The conception of students, teachers, guardians, parents, priests have to change with the pace of time. For example, in a Hindu epic *Swasthani Bratakatha*, the 80 years old Shiva Bhatta married eight years girl, Goma. Such a practice has to change with time. All concerned, including the family heads, have to be aware of practicality. The early marriage of girls has to be discouraged by enforcing the law at the local levels.

Females in the households of this area are dominated form male members as well as the elder female members. The practice of watching the females as 'subordinate' is to be changed from the micro-level, from the family. This psychological phenomenon has to be changed with massive social mobilization. The local government has to organize it, the local government has to implement, and the households have to support it.

Frequent monitoring and evaluation mechanism of gender issues has to be made at the local level so that if any breaches are found, the mechanism recommends the police for necessary action. The support mechanism of the local government has to be agreed on both by the central government and family/ community. This leads the success to further planning and implementation of the gender related issues.

The programs to promote female decision making has to be introduced to the community level. It can be done from the government and non-governmental level, through NGOs and INGOs. It is better to be conducted from the family level. Rather than completely abandoning the love affair of the teenage students, the schoolteachers and parents have to initiate the extensive counseling mechanism for the same. This paves the way for psychological cases of students and systemizes the marriage in the future.

The practice of the age gap in marriage has to be strictly identified. The age difference between boy and girl for marriage has to be noted, and the monitoring mechanism has to be developed to report, recommend, and to take action. The social exposure visits in the country and outside have to be managed. As observed, gender discrimination is less in the family where they have access to equality. So that people learn equality practice from other places through media. This would, no doubt, help from respecting females.

8.3.3 Implication related

The implementation related recommendations are:

The practice of literacy improvements like SP and SOP have to be made more extensive and inclusive in the remote areas, so that it could help Promote empowerment and consequently the equality. The literacy improvement is the improvement against segregation and discrimination. Social awareness and family education have to be implemented effectively. The awareness has to be conducted in family, schools, temples, and other public gatherings of the people. This awareness of people leads to the foundation for equality. To reduce dropouts of students, frequent joint meeting with parents, students, and guardians have to be conducted. The causes and consequences of the dropouts have to be discussed and analyzed. The discussion paves the way for improvements. It, ultimately, reduces the dropout of girl students and promotes equality.

In most of the family, the head of the family in this area is generally males. The economic activities are seen as decisive of male members. The family head practice has to be changed through awareness or incentive providing programs or the intervention from women themselves so that the change could be seen. Economic growth and gender equality are closely related. The research proved the relation: higher the economic growth of the family, lower the gender biases/ discrimination. Therefore, the economy boosting activities have to be performed by the local government, so that the women become strong enough to combat against segregation. The research confirmed that the educated job holder women face no troubles related to gender discrimination.

The new trend of the loving nuclear family has to be encouraged: as this research is concluded that there observed less or no gender discrimination in nuclear families. Therefore, the nuclear family practice has to be encouraged in the villages. Finally, this research recommends the concerned authority to mitigate gender discrimination and to act render positive changes of the school going Hindu girls, families, and the cultural practice of east Nepal.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaires cum Interview Questions for the Study (Field Observation Form for Local People)

(The data collector briefly describes the purposes and function of the data generation)
General Information*

Name of the respondent:				Address:		
SN	Name	Age	Sex	Marital Status	Qualification	Occupation
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						

*This is the subject of privacy; thus, the information is optional. The language could be Nepali.

1. How long have you been living in this area?
.....
2. Do you find this area comfortable for residence? Why/ Why not?
.....
3. Which religion do you follow?
.....
4. Which Language do you speak as mother tongue?
.....
5. Could you kindly tell me about the problems of community schools here?
.....
6. Tell me how teachers treat your female children at school. Do children complain teachers' behavior?
.....
7. Do you think your daughters could not do what your sons could? What are they?
.....
8. How do you have any idea about the school's enrolment of the girls?
.....
9. Do all girls of this area go to school?
.....

10. Are there any troubles of going to school?
.....
11. What is your overall impression upon your scenario of girl's education?
.....
12. Are you happy about your observation related to Hinduism and gender? Why/ Why not?
.....
13. Could you tell something to about relationship education and religion you follow?
.....
14. Other relevant questions...or unscheduled questions...
.....

Questionnaires for Teachers

1. How long have you been teaching here?
.....
2. How many female teachers are here in your schools?
.....
3. What is the student's and teacher's ratio in this school/ in your class?
.....
4. Which Religion do most of the students follow?
.....
5. Do girls complain about gender discrimination at home or school?
.....
6. Briefly describe the Hindu perspective of education to girls.
.....
7. Are the women of your neighborhood literate? Tell briefly their educational status...
.....
8. Are there any instances at schools, when Hindu girls are discriminated in comparisons to boys?
.....
9. What contribution can you make for the improvement of educational status of girls in this area?
.....

10. Could you tell us some ideas about overcoming the gender discrimination?
.....
11. What do you expect from the (local) government to foster the educational status of girls?
.....
12. How does education support for combating gender discrimination?
.....
13. What suggestion would you provide for local people to make this area gender biased free?
.....
14. Do you provide some visual classes related to gender awareness program?
.....

Questionnaires for Students

1. How long have you been studying in this school?
.....
2. How many girls are there in your class? What is the Total number of students?
.....
3. Do you sit with boys or with girls in your class?
.....
4. Which Religion do most of the students follow in your class?
.....
5. Do you feel any gender discrimination at home or school from teachers or parents? Or have you experienced such incidents?
.....
6. Briefly describe the how your teachers treat you differently than boys.
.....
7. Do your friends (both boys and girls) have any experiences about discrimination?
.....
8. Are there any instances at schools, when Hindu girls are discriminated?
.....
9. What changes do you expect in schools related to gender?

.....
10. Could you suggest any ideas about overcoming the gender discrimination?

.....
11. What do you expect from the schools and home to foster the education status of girls?

.....
12. How can we make boys and equal at schools and at home?

.....
13. Do you watch films related to gender discrimination?

.....

Appendix 2

Observation Field Book Titles

1. Gender related
2. Education Related
3. Practice Related
4. Changes of the Trends



Figure 3: Students preparing for the morning assembly
Source: Field Observation



Figure 4: Students playing in the ground
Source: Field Observation



Figure 5: Girl students of grade nine participating in classroom activities

Source: Field Observation



Figure 6: Teacher staff of the school

Source: Field Observation