# GENDER INEQUALITY AND THE PROBLEM WITH GIRLS' SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IN NEPAL:

A Qualitative Perspective of Patriarchal Nepalese Practice

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**DEDICATION**

**I would like to dedicate this work to:**

*UNIVERSITETET I NORDLAND- BODØ, NORWAY,*

*STUDENTSAMSKIPNADEN I NORDLAND, BODØ, NORWAY*

*AND*

*BODØ SANITETSFORENING, BODØ, NORWAY*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations have been used in this project.

| | |
|---|---|
| BEFP | Basic and Primary Education Project |
| BPFA | Beijing Platform for Action |
| CIRID | Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development |
| | The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women |
| DEO | District Education Office |
| DWO | Dalit Welfare Organization |
| ECA | Extra-curricular Activities |
| EFA | Education for All |
| GBD | Gender Based Discrimination |
| GBV | Gender Based Violence |
| GoN | Government of Nepal |
| GPI | Gender Parity Index |
| HICODEF | Himalayan Community Development Forum |
| HSEB | Higher Secondary Education Board |
| IRIN | Integrated Regional Information Networks |
| ILO | International Labor Organization |
| INGO | International Non-governmental Organization |
| MOE | Ministry of Education |
| NFE | Non-formal Education |
| NGO | Non-governmental Organization |
| RD | Regional Directorates |
| SLC | School Leaving Certificate |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Program |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNFPA | United Nations Population Fund |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| VDC | Village Development Committee |
| WATSAN | Water and Sanitation |
| WOREC | Women's Rehabilitation Centre |

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# GENDER INEQUALITY AND THE PROBLEM WITH GIRLS' SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IN NEPAL: A Qualitative Perspective of Patriarchal Nepalese Practice

## Abstract

*Although gender inequality is often cited as a barrier to the girls' school attendance in Nepal, practically little attention has been directed at understanding how patriarchal socio-cultural practices influence the girls' attendance and why they don't complete their education in secondary education. This thesis attempts to explore the girls' experience and perception of factors influencing their school attendance, including parents', teachers, and key persons' views on it. In doing so, the study identifies and discusses the factors leading the girls to discontinue their study in a Nepalese context. The focus is on how patriarchal socio-cultural practices influence the girls' participation and drop out of the secondary education system. It also aims to investigate some possible interventions that could reduce the girls' school dropout. For the purpose the researcher has used a qualitative approach and collected data from both primary and secondary sources. Primarily, the empirical information has been gathered from students, parents, teachers and NGO key persons. Secondly, the reports and the students' dropout records from school administrations, VDC office, DEO and NGOs including all other published, unpublished and electronic materials have been consulted to accomplish the task. Theoretically, the study encompasses four lenses of relevant social work theories namely self- identity, social stigma, intersectionality and Anti-oppressive practice basically focusing to empowerment approach.*

*The main findings of the study indicate that the reasons for girls' school dropout is a complex phenomenon and a result of interplay of structural, cultural, religious, social and economic factors. The most important constraint was gender inequality, where gender is perceived in terms of religion and economy. The interventions can therefore be of various kinds, aiming at different factors which influence girl's participation and drop out of school.*

*In conclusion, almost all girls reported being interested in continuing school, but many forces combined to spell an end to their education and no girl returned after dropping out. Interventions to keep the girls in school deserve the continued support from family, school and organizations like NGOs, INGOs including the government. Also, there is need for more research on this topic and it can be hoped that this project will arouse for the further works contributing to the study of schooling and gender in south Asia.*

**Key words:** girls' secondary school attendance, affecting factors, gender inequality, intervention strategies

# CHAPTER- 1: INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality and girls' school discontinuation is a critical social problem in many developing countries crossing cultural, geographic, religious, social and economic boundaries. In societies like Nepal it goes unreported and is still accepted as a part of culture and religion. It is a complex phenomenon and a result of the intersection of different kinds of factors at different levels. Thus the aim of my thesis is to reveal how the gender discrimination and "patriarchal" attitudes are manifested in different contexts and in different ways resulting in girl's secondary school dropout. Also it endeavors to show how gender inequality is connected to other mechanism for social inequality like class and caste.

South Asia is one of the male dominated regions in the world where about half of the females suffer at home and in society some time in their lives because of being a female. A study on gender differences in education in Nepal reveals that more than half of the girls experience gender inequality both at home and at school (Bhusal, 2011). As in Nepal, girls' school dropout is high in other developing countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. There is a wide gender disparity in the literacy in these countries, even if the female literacy in the countries has gone up (See Groot, 2007; Jacoby, 2011; Madhura 2011; Ismail, 2013 and Solotaroff et al, 2012). For instance, in India, it has gone up by five times since 1951(Sharma et al, 2007). The situation is more or less similar in many African countries (Okediji, 2012).

In Nepal, although gender inequality is often cited as a barrier to keeping the girls in schools, practically little attention has been directed at understanding how patriarchal socio-cultural practices influence their school attendance. Girls' secondary school dropout is critical for uplifting the women's educational, social and economic and political status in Nepal today. The effective policies to improve school progression and reduce the number of girls' dropout are critical to achieve the goal of education for all. In Nepal, yet the girls start primary school in greater numbers, the rate at which they leave school is very high (Lewin and Sabates, 2011).

Many factors at different levels are interrelated and connected to the process of girls' school dropout from secondary education. Socio-cultural factors and the economy are the major factors and also structural factors related to the school locations, design and organization

including its rules and regulations. The socio-cultural factors relate to how girls and boys are treated and valued in the society and how people behave in social relations and networks and social classes. And the economic factor concerns how poverty interplays with other factors in order to pull out the girls from schools. Therefore the contribution of my study concerns exploring the complexity of factors and how they are interrelated. In doing so, this will provide an answer to why many girls do not complete secondary education in Nepal. Also the study attempts to bring forth on its intervention strategies and carry out a scientific study to depict a picture of gender inequality and girls school attendance in Nepal. Recently girls' school dropout has become a much debated issue in the field of education and social science; however there are limited academic studies in this area. The majority of them, for example: such as Levine, 2007; Sharma et al, 2007; Bhusal, 2011; Oxaal 1997, Pandey, 2011, have emphasized on presenting the dropout rates and the causes of it. And very few of them have discussed intervention approaches. Generally, no studies were found on girls' experience and perception of their school dropout, especially from Nepal. It might be because most of the past studies on this issue are quantitative. This study therefore builds knowledge on the framework of social theories by covering the experience and perception factors involved in the girls' participation in education; the girls themselves, their parents, teachers and key persons.

Generally, education is central for human socialization and survival of the society in modern society through which every generation hand on social heritage to the next generation. Thus, we can possibly find many solutions on our everyday problems in education. It is the key mechanism for the general development of the individual and raising cultural values and practices in them. In this sense, socio-cultural and eco-political development and the level of individual's education are strongly inseparable in any nation.

In conclusion, gender differences in education and girls' school discontinuation are the fundamental concepts of the study. These are the complex phenomena, and have the internal relation to each other as described above by showing how gender determines the girls leading out of school in Nepalese context. Even if education is important for the overall development of an individual and of a nation at large, and there might be political will to improve the situation, the problem concerning women and education is entangled in so many factors like social, cultural and economic. Therefore, the problem must be addressed at many levels.

## 1.1 Nepalese Culture and Society.

Nepal is a multicast and multicultural country situated between two big countries, China to the north and India to the south, covering 0.03% land in the world with 23.15 million people. The country is characterized by a high population growth rate. In contrast, the economic growth is very low with a poor social and economic infrastructure and an increasing gap between rich and poor where the majority of the people are living in poverty. It ranks 144 out of 182 countries in the human development index (HDI) and 119 in the gender-related development index (GDI). Ecologically it is divided into three Zones, the Terai in the south covering about 23% of country, hills in the middle comprising 42% and High Mountains in the north covering 35% of the country land. Administratively it is divided into five development regions, 14 zones and 75 districts. A majority of people (85%) live in rural areas following the agriculture as their main occupation. It is a secular state; however an overwhelming majority of people are Hindus with minorities of Buddhists, Muslims and Christian. Politically, it has been a democratic republic country after ten years of civil war between the army and a Maoist insurgency in 2006. But due to the uncooperative behavior among political parties, its political situation is still unstable affecting every sector, education in particularly due to the frequent strike announced by the different political parties. They agreed to draft a new, democratic constitution to replace the interim one within 2 years in 2008, even if the constitution has not been written yet.

As it is one of the poorest countries, the government itself depends on foreign donor agencies. People pay tax to the government based on their income but they do not get it back for their security as in welfare state, e.g. Norway. It is lacking the social welfare system, and there is no social security for families and single women from the country. It is also difficult to get a job and live alone, particularly as a single woman. It is therefore the family itself is an important factor for providing economic and social security to its members, particularly the women in Nepalese society.

Nepal has a traditionally rigid caste system as an impact of the ancient and orthodox Indian caste system, which is influencing the social stratification as a method of ordering an individual's role in the society (Burbank, 1994). Each caste has own language and culture. So, they perform the traditional ceremonies, i.e., births, weeding, funerals in their own way. The caste categories are hereditary, which is regarded as the dominant and ruling philosophy of Hinduism linking power and social order, as the inherent superiority of some castes and the

inferiority of others is one of the Hinduism's central elements. Also, while a person is born into a particular caste, it is not possible to change one's caste to another. As the people are relegated to do the caste-based work, higher caste people work in higher level, i.e. chief, officer, manager, and lower caste people do the lower works, i.e. tailoring, shoe making, street cleaning considering low social status. They are humiliated by higher castes to do the same work as they do. Higher caste people do not hesitate to beat the lower caste (Dalit) in public places if they are found to break Hindu norms and values (Dalit Welfare Organization, 2010). In this practice, lower caste people are less privileged to education and thus they have lowest level of literacy, which limits their opportunity to get a job. Moreover, people, mostly the higher caste practically prefer to appoint/choose an employee from higher cast particularly in private sectors. But the government has prioritized the governmental job opportunities to lower caste people with the purpose of people's equal participation in every sector and reducing the cast discrimination. Also, the interim constitution of 2007 and other regulations prohibit any form of discrimination on the basis of race, caste, sex and religion, but lowest caste people are still being dominated in all important spheres of life including religion and culture. They are not allowed to practice Hindu rituals, norms and values in the same manner as they do. In such a way, Nepalese society still functions under this strict caste system mainly in rural areas. But this practice is decreasing today.

Mainly, there are four major castes associated with certain professions. They are: the Brahmans, who are regarded as the priests, Kshatriyas (soldiers), Vaisyas (merchants or farmers) and the forth is the Sudras (laborers). These castes are divided into more than 100 sub-castes on the basis of their occupation. Brahmins are the highest cast and Sudras are the lowest. Brahmin people ranking high in the cast hierarchy refuse to accept water and food from the lowest cast group. In other words, the Brahmin and Kshatriya have the highest status, so they have access to fertile lands, power and authority. The Vaisyas come second and they are the ones who do business. Then the Sudras are the last amongst all and are called impure, untouchable and Dalit. On the other hand, people from lower cast have slowly risen to the higher position with possibility of their economic independence and gradually taken to many other professions including their involvement in high profile government jobs. It shows that caste system is slowly being abandoned in Nepal due to the legal and social awareness (Malla, 2005, gonepal.eu:2012).

Further, there are many castes in Nepal amongst various communities mainly in the hills, valleys and the plains. The communities living in high mountains do not follow the caste

system, because they are the Tibetan migrants and they practice communal ownership. Similarly, the ethnic Nepalese indigenous do not have cast system because they practice Buddhism. Only the Indian migrants who practice Hinduism follow this system.

Nepal is a multilingual country with about 92 different languages (not including dialects) with Nepali as its official language. The other minority languages are recognized by the constitution, but are not for official use (Toba et al, 2005 in Groot, 2007). It is a Hindu country comprising 86% of the population. Similarly 8% people are Buddhists, 4% are Muslims and the remaining 2% people belong to the other religions. Likewise, about 90% people speak Nepali as the official language.

Nepal is largely diverse in its culture; its population can be divided roughly into two language groups, as: 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 somewhat higher social status in this group. The Indo-Aryan parents prefer their daughters to marry outside their own villages at an early age and wish them to have children soon. Thus, the socio-cultural norms and values relating to women are commonly conservative among the Indo-Aryans. Particularly girls and women from the high castes and wealthier households are expected to work at home being modest, obedient, patient and sexually faithful (Levine, 2006). But, the Tibeto-Burman prefers to marry within the same village, which allows the women greater access to family and economic resources after marriage. However, across all Nepali cultural groups, females are expected to perform domestic duties and 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).

Nepal is one of the highest indices of son preference country in the world (Pandey, 2011). In this practice, boys pass on the family name and support to their parents' future economy because it lacks there a welfare and social security system from the state in their old age. Also they carry out the important rituals after their parents die. But the girls are considered only as a member of her husband's family. Regarding household composition, the majority of communities in Nepal are patriarchal living in a joint family with a low economic status, where commonly parents live with their children (sons, their wives and unmarried daughters)

and grandchildren together in one household under the authority of one of the members (Malla,).There is also the tradition of keeping household worker in many wealthier families in order to get help from them in household chores ( Burbank, 1994).Generally, men work outside the house  and women work at home and are considered less important to educate (UNDP, 2004). The son lives with his parents after marriage and inheritance is equally distributed only among the sons. Such practice therefore has empowered the men providing authority over property and disempowered the women making them economically dependent on men.

Marriage is one of the social institutions that are embraced by culture which is done differently in different cultures. There is a significant difference on what constitutes marriage between western countries and the developing countries like Nepal. Although marriage is regarded as a social institution for regulation of rights and duties in relation to inheritance and succession due to the patriarchal socio-cultural and religious practice of early marriage, it gives no rights and duties to inheritance and succession for girls in Nepal. As stated by Keesing (1998), marriage is regarded as a contract between kin groups, not individuals in a Nepalese context. This tradition cuts girls' childhood and deprives them for the opportunity of education compromising on their fundamental human rights. They are therefore premature to decide and also have no choice about timing of marriage and their partner. According to Government, thousands of Nepali girls leave school every year to get married missing out on their education. Hence, the girls' dropout is high in Terai region, where more than 50% of marriages involve girls under the age of 12. And more than 240,000 children do not attain school; most of them are girls, especially those who were married at a young age ((IRIN, 2012)). It leads the girls to take on roles for which they are not psychologically or physically prepared contributing a series of negative results both for girls and the society as a whole. Also there is dowry system still practiced in which the girls brings with her valuables at marriage in the name of dowry[2] to satisfy her husband's family. That is considered as a burden for the family, especially family with low economy.

In Nepal, the average age for marriage begins from the late childhood, and the possibility of first pregnancy starts with marriage (Pandey, 2011). Although UNICEF has defined the marriage under 18 as an early marriage, 51% of Nepalese girls marry as children (UNICEF, 2011). Such practice carries with it devastating results for young girls' health and wellbeing

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[2] Dowry is the property that is given to a daughter at her marriage in principle it is her property. This practice is common in Terai communities, and it also prevails in the Hill communities (Acharya, 2007).

yet the social economic and cultural pressures connected with the tradition makes it difficult to end. Officially it is against the law to marry under the age of 20 but these laws go ignored particularly in remote areas (Ingber, 2011).Various factors interact together to result in an early marriage such as the search for economic survival, protection of young girls, family pressure, controlling female behavior and sexuality and socio- cultural and religious values. More than half of Nepal's 29 million people live on less than $1.25 a day, and poverty often compels parents to marry their daughters early. Similarly, parents are not aware about the risks of child marriage. When a girl marries in Nepal, she traditionally moves into the home of her husband and in-laws.

Many Asian countries have experienced remarkable changes toward later marriage and delayed childbearing in recent years (Singh & Sharma 1996 in).  However, early marriage and early childbearing persist among women in many south Asian countries including Nepal (ibid). Now the government and human rights groups are working together in this issue in order to reduce the practice. Thus the number of girls who were married by the time they reached 15 has dropped from 25% to 7%, yet the system is still common among poor rural families (English Online, 2012). As the girls are sent to their husband house through marriage, they are considered as a part of other family, this possibility starts when they reach at teen age, and it can take place any time. From these many perspectives, females are more disadvantaged than male in Nepal, particularly in education and economic status.

In conclusion, Nepal is one of the poorest countries in Asia where the prevailing socio-cultural norms and values have made it a patriarchal country. The patriarchal authoritarian family structure has been common in Nepal, where men are considered superior to female dominating in every aspect of their personal, social and domestic life (Gyawali, 2006). That is why the Nepalese women socially and economically depend on the authority of men. They are mostly assigned to perform the traditional roles, i.e. household chores, child bearing and caring while naming a few. However the practice is common in both high and low cast family; it is more prevalent, in the high casts. That is why the incentive to educate girls is weaker. Levine (2007) argues that though the caste and socioeconomic status are also determining factors for girls' school attendance, gender is centrally important to pull them out of school, as the parents regard schooling desirable only for sons, to whom they would look for economic support in old age.

## 1.2. Education System in Nepal

Education in Nepal has only recently started to develop. The Rana regime (1847-1950) has suppressed education so much that it was never encouraged in the country. Thus the modern school in Nepal began after the establishment of the first school in 1853 which was open only for the ruling families and their courtiers. This did not change until 1970s (CERID 1997; Bista 2001). The schooling for the public started after 1951 when a popular movement ended the autocratic Rana regime and initiated a democratic system. Starting from about 300 schools and two colleges with about 10,000 students in 1951, there now are 49,000 schools, 415 colleges, five universities and two academies of higher studies (Pandey, 2011). After the popular revolution against the autocratic Rana regime in 1951, it was attempted to establish a national education system. Then, in 1975, the primary education was made free and the government was responsible for providing school facilities, teacher and free educational materials, however the majority of the children, mainly the girls were out of school because the education for females was viewed unnecessary. And the education was mainly the urban-based. Hence, the majority of schools were built only in urban areas. So, if families wanted to educate their children they had to send them away to city area which was very expensive. Today most programs seem to integrate a literacy component which represents that the gender gap in school enrolment has declined and literacy programs are widespread in the country (Tuladhar, 2005). A government report from Nepal showed that the rate of girls' dropouts has increased by 6 percent in the span on seven years, where the girls' dropout rate in 2001 was percent 6.5 percent while it rose to 12.5 in 2007.According to UNISEF (2007), the literacy rate in south Asia has increased where 74% of primary school age children are enrolled.

Nepal has faced and is still facing a lot of obstacles to meet its educational goals. Besides the prevailing socio-cultural and religious values and poverty, the political instability has affected it much. After more than a decade of Maoist insurgency, disturbances have again been created by Madhesi and ethnic minority-groups. They are protesting for their equal rights and participation in every sector of the country. Mainly, they are demanding for a separate state. This has a direct impact in education making schools less accessible for children due to the frequent bunda (strike) and increasingly feared travelling to school. That is why; the high repetition and dropout rates, late enrolment, gender inequity and lack of quality seem as the major problems (Groot, 2007).

The formal school system in Nepal officially spans a period of 12 years which is structured as: primary, lower secondary, secondary and higher secondary. Primary education lasts for

five years (grades1-5), which generally begins at the age of 6 and lasts until the age of 10. It is the largest sub-sector of mainstream education in which about 55% of the government's education budget is allocated. Among government efforts, the Basic and Primary Education Project (BAEP) is one of the long-term educational programs of the Ministry of Education in Nepal. The overall program is aimed at improving the accessibility of primary education. As a result the literacy rate in Nepal increased from 49.6% in 1990 to 70% in 2000 (Government of Nepal, NPC &UNDP, 2005). As primary schools still follow the formal education tradition and the staff who teach in this level are called teachers and as a regulation they must be an SLC graduate (School Leaving Certificate)  with a total of ten years of education in order to be a teacher (Tuladhar, 2004). They are mostly hired by the government but in many schools, the number of teachers sent by the government is not enough. In such situation, the school management committee can also appoint a teacher as required who are paid from the income source of school which is very less.

Secondary education comprises three cycles such as: 3 years lower- secondary (grades 6-8), 2 years upper -secondary (grades 9-10) and two years of higher secondary education (grades 11-12), generally beginning at the age of 10, 13 and 15 and lasting until the age of 13, 15 and 17 respectively. Then, the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) Examinations are nationally held at the end of upper secondary school. It is taken as the gate way to higher education commanding full attention of all concerned students, their parents, teachers and their institutions. They are taught the actual SLC courses in class 9 and 10, and are required to pass the qualifying examination popularly called Sent-up Test at the end of class 10 to be eligible to appear in the SLC exam. The SLC, however as the policy makers claim is now a matter of only a year because after the full, nation-wide implementation of the 10+2 system then from 2013, the present SLC examination will be replaced by a regional level class 10 examination. Then, the Higher Secondary Education Board (HSEB) only will organize the national level 10+2 (Higher Secondary level) examination to certify the students having completed their secondary school education. Further, the majority of the schools in the country followed the traditional education system, with the curriculum greatly influenced by India and United States models. Therefore, they have not been still able to reach and maintain the expected educational quality standards in the Nepalese context addressing the needs of the society.

Similarly, higher education in Nepal consists of bachelor, master and PhD levels. Some universities offer M Phil and post-graduate diplomas. The higher education in the country like

elsewhere is the sole responsibility of and administered by universities and institutions of higher learning. Currently, it has six universities where 5 are public and one is private.

Nepal has legally a dualistic school system with both public and private schools. Education in private schools is expensive and typically affordable only by the higher class family. Most private schools have English as the language of instruction and many also use computers in the curriculum. Private schools in general have better facilities and are better managed and have been showing a much better performance in the SLC examinations, however the quality in these schools are as well not consistent. 'A level' private school are well managed and run by charity organizations, companies and trusts, on the other hand, so- called private schools operated by business minded people in semi-furnished residential housed. Government (public) schools are directed, owned and funded by central government and private (institutional) are owned by individuals, religious organizations and non- government sources. The third type of school is a community school run (managed and supported) by the local people, which does not get the regular financial support from the government and also has no other sustainable financial sources. Over all, the government controls the system of education and overview in all perspectives focusing on the quality. Thus, private schools, colleges, universities all have to be approved by the government. The system is carried out under the Ministry of Education and the Higher Secondary Education Board (HSEB).

The ministry of Education (MOE) is responsible for educational planning and management as well as in improving service delivery system across the country aiming to produce healthy citizens who are familiar with the national tradition, culture and social environment in daily life and aware of scientific issues creative, cooperative and able to contribute to economic development (Tuladhar, 2004). The ministry, as a part of government bureaucracy, providing the political leadership, is headed by the Secretary of Education and consists of the central offices, various functional offices and offices located at the regional and district levels. Also the ministry has established five regional directorates and 75 district education offices in five development regions and 75 district respectively which are responsible for overseeing non-formal and school level education activities in their respective areas, where as Regional Directorates (RD) are mainly responsible for coordinating and monitoring and evaluation of education activities and the district education offices are the main implementing agencies. In addition, NCED, an apex body for teacher training, has been running 34 Education Training Centers in order support the teachers in pedagogical areas by implementing Teacher Education Project to train the pre-service and in –service teachers all over the country.

Women's education in the country is disappointing. However, the following table on literacy shows a positive development from 1991 to 2001.

**Literacy Rate in Nepal in Different Census Years**

| Sex | 1952/54 | 1961 | 1971 | 1981 | 1991 | 2001 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male | 9.5 | 16.3 | 24.7 | 34.9 | 54.5 | 63.85 |
| Female | 0.7 | 1.8 | 3.7 | 11.5 | 25.0 | 38.7 |
| Total | 5.3 | 8.9 | 14.3 | 23.5 | 39.6 | 51.27 |

(Census Reports, Bureau of Statistics, 2002-Kathmandu, Nepal)

 According to UNESCO Institute for statistics (2002), literacy in the population from 15 years and above is 63% in 2005 and 67% in 2007. Similarly, Nepal Living Standards Survey (NLSS-III, 2010-11, shows that most recently Nepal has an adult literacy rate of 56.6% with a disparity between males and females, where the male literacy is 71.6% and female is only 44.5% with a Gender Parity Index (GPI) at 0.62 women lagging behind men by whopping 27%. In a sense, this is an impressive achievement However, in Nepal, women's low participation in educational activities whether in the formal sector or in the non- formal sector is still striking. Also, the participation of girls in vocational, higher and technical education is very low where most of the dropouts occur during middle and high school level. According to the census report (2001), the literacy rate of 6 years and above is 53.7 % (65.0 % for male and 42.5% for female).The literacy rate of 15 years and above is 48.8 % (62.7% for male and 34.9% for female).

To sum up, the literacy rate in Nepal varies significantly according to gender. Thus, the female literacy rate in the country is 42.8% whereas male literacy rate is 65% (Tuladhar, 2004). As education levels increase, women school attendance decreases while 77 women had primary education per hundred men with similar level of education in 2001, only 43 had SLC certificate. In addition, as education is a key in the continued economic and social development of the country, Nepal has been making efforts to provide access to primary as well as secondary school to children through various programs in order to achieve the goal of Education for All (EFA). Despite efforts such as literacy campaigns and free education for children, education is not accessible to all due to its indirect cost (ibid). Therefore, even basic education is still a privilege enjoyed only by a segment of population regardless of cost. Almost 14% of children of primary school age are still not enrolled (GoN, 2006a).Thus the country is still facing the challenge to achieve EFA.

## 1.3 General Picture of Gender Discriminatory Practices in Nepal

It is fact that gender discrimination is still a global social problem, especially in developing Asian and African countries, which is not only affecting the human civilization and present world economy but also each step to come in the future with the new generation. Sociologist Burkitt (2008) argued that people should be treated not as things, as means, but a person with absolute right and duties. Females are treated as a thing and as a means rather than a person in Nepalese society because; gender inequality starts here in the womb and remains up to the tomb. Not only the uneducated and jobless women but also highly educated and professionals are abused due to their gender (Pandey, 2011). They never feel free to do, talk to and go whatever, whoever, wherever and however they like. For instance: during an interview (Image T.V., Feb. 29. 2012) Ansari, a member of national women commission Nepal, noted that if a girl goes out for an hour, she should inform to her guardians and take permission for this, but a boy should not do this all. They are free as well as safer than girls to go out of home. This evidently reflects the female situation in Nepal.

Women are discriminated from the birth firstly by their own parents and by her husband and his kin after marriage. They are facing legal discrimination regarding the most fundamental rights, such as citizenship and inheritance. Women representation in political and decision making bodies has not improved much either except at the grass roots level. Despite some progress since 1997, monitoring and evaluation of gender issues still remain the weakest point in the mainstreaming exercises. Also, the traditional practices like dowry, son preference, social acceptance of domestic and public violence against women, polygamy, early marriage still continue, particularly in rural Nepal (Acharya, et al, 2007). The reason behind this is that gender is the primary motive of violence in Nepal where 38% of women are experiencing Gender-Based Violence (GBV), which goes mostly unreported and under reported (Poudel, 2007). It is really a great challenge for women to improve their situation crossing male dominated culture and gender related stigmas and stereotypes.

Indeed, there might be no female who has not been suffered at one time by this practice. However, there are no laws addressing it in Nepal (Marasini, 2008). They are still under the male authority and the justice system. For instances: a female is killed by her husband and his family for not bringing dowry at marriage, a female is raped by the driver in travel, a widow is raped and kicked out of village in the name of justice, a secondary school girl is raped and killed by her own teacher just mentioning a few (Imagetv: 'Bhandafor', *29th.Mar.2012 at* http://canadanepal.net). This proves that violence against women is not given much attention.

Because of this, women keep silence, though they are in violence. Thus, such cases are not brought to court, where most of these cases go unreported. This represents the women's situation in Nepal reflecting discrimination, oppressions and violence against them. I presented here the general present situation of girls and women because my study focuses on women and their education issues through a gender perspective.

## 1.4    Motivation of the study

The increasing attention has been given worldwide to decrease the gender inequality in education mainly in developing countries; however it does not seem to be improved in Nepal very much. Therefore, I wish to contribute to reducing the girls' school dropout by identifying the reasons behind their incomplete school career. Also I will discuss prevention strategies on their dropout through my present study. This work which concerns the girl's experiences of their school discontinuation is a research project not just to fulfill the master degree requirement. It is also the result of my personal and professional experience and perception with the perspective of Gender Differences (GD) in school attainment during my field work while working as a social worker and now as a social science researcher. The central aim of my study is to explore the girls' experiences and perceptions including parents', teachers' and key persons' opinions on their school discontinuation and gender difference in education influenced by the social context and cultural value by identifying and discussing the factors influencing gender differences in education.

In a context of my country, the problem with girls and women's security and their education respectively comes at the front because they are neither secured at home nor at school. The issue of female security is therefore important in the context because they cannot study unless they feel themselves secured in these places. Female security and their education are the most significant fields of social work because 29% school children from 10 to 14 are economically active among which 62% are engaged in agriculture or other related works (Pant and Nepal, 2010) but Nepal government has not given emphasis to the issue. In course of working as a social worker with the marginalized people and their children in a multicultural community, I have learned some lessons which boosted me to do something more in order to change the people's conservative culture and thoughts towards their daughters' schooling. There is a combination between caste and gender as the social problems. However gender issue seems more critical because caste discrimination is between higher caste and lower. But gender discrimination is found more or less in every caste and class either that is higher caste Brahmin or untouchable Dalit. Parents think it is less important to educate their daughter,

which limits the girls' access to education. In other words, gender is the primary motive of discrimination whereas caste is the secondary. Females are discriminated and dominated from the birth, firstly by their own parents, then by their husband and his family. While the issue of girls' discontinuation in education has attracted the growing attention of social and educational researchers, only limited works have been conducted to explore the factors causing gender difference in education in patriarchal context. Moreover, most of them have been done in a quantitative way which can rarely access the depth of the problem from the informants' point of view. I have not found studies that aim to explore the girls' experience of dropout and factors causing gender differences in education involving the parents, teachers and key persons while reviewing the existing literature. Therefore, I believe that this study will be a strong source for understanding how the girl dropouts experience and perceive the effects of their school discontinuation and their sensitivity of continuing and leaving school in their own words which can also be helpful to understand the situation.

## 1.5    Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

Mainly, the purpose of my study is to explore the girls' experience and perception of their school discontinuation from a gender perspective and identify the factors leading them out of school in traditional Nepalese society like Nawalparasi. Also, it aims to provide some social implications on its intervention. For the purpose, the study offers an understanding of gender discrimination and a discussion of factors that causes gender difference in secondary school attendance. The key question in my study is: *How does gender influence the girls' dropout from secondary school in a Nepalese context?* Some other empirically grounded questions are formed below aiming to initiate the meaningful interview with the informants and collect valid and reliable data as far as possible.

- How is the girls' experience of their school discontinuation?

- How do they perceive the effect of their gender to push them out from sec. education?

- What are the major factors leading them out of school? How?

- What causes the gender differences in education?

- What do they do after leaving school?

- What strategies can be applied to reduce the girls' secondary school dropout?

The questions above were very general for many different kinds of actors such as girls, parents and teachers and NGO key persons participating in this study. Thus, those questions were specifically modified and asked them in different way which can be seen in interview guide (see Appendix B).

## 1.6    Organization of the Study

This thesis consists of seven chapters. *The first chapter* is a brief introductory and background part of the study including the discussion of why I found this study interesting and relevant by covering the research problem; objectives questions and motivation of the study. *The second chapter* deals with the review of literature related to the study. It deals with the conceptual discussion of study issue, studies on gender differences in education and reasons of girls' dropout. Similarly, *the third chapter* provides the relevant theories and ideas that underpin the study providing the necessary underlying theoretical insights and the foundations. *Chapter four* covers the methodology. It discusses with the methodological approaches applied in the study to address the gender differences in education and girls' school discontinuation. *Chapter five and six* respectively present the analysis and interpretation of main themes that emerged from the empirical data.

*Chapter five* intends to provide an understanding of gender inequality in education by discussing what causes gender differences and how and why it leads the girls to drop out of secondary education. In doing so, the chapter analyzes the girls' experience and perception including the personal and professional experience of teachers and key persons, also mentioning the girl dropouts' parents' words concerning their daughters' study. Likewise, *chapter six,* attempts to provide the girl dropouts' experience and understanding on their self. Also the study intends to shed light on how the experience of their school discontinuation has impacted on the construction of their self-identity including the importance of education for their identity, for their possibility, i.e. for getting a job and its consequences. In doing so, the study also analyzes the activities that the girls are doing after leaving school and provides some implications for the interventions.

 Finally, *chapter seven* contains the concluding remarks of the study in which the final discussion and conclusion of the study are presented.

# CHAPTER- 2: REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

In this chapter, I have incorporated the review of the related research works and the explanation of differences among them and the proposed study including some of the background of the study.

## 2.1    Studies on Gender Differences in School Attendance

Generally, I have not found studies that aim to explore the girls' experience of secondary school discontinuation and factors causing gender differences in education while reviewing the existing literature; however there are studies about gender and dropout which are mentioned below. All these studies illustrate relevant background knowledge to the present work because they talk about the causes and consequences of drop out but these studies do not refer to the girls' perceptions and experiences. Scholars from various parts of the world have called attention to school dropout issue as a big social problem; still the researches addressing this topic in a Nepalese context are not too many. However, some investigations related to the studies have been done; few of them are reviewed as follows.

Acharya, et al (2007) carried out a research on gender equality and women's empowerment in Nepal. Her study demonstrates that gender plays a major role to produce unequal access in education. The primary reason behind this is the social obligation for parents to marry their daughters preferably late in teens or early 20s. Therefore, gender difference in enrolment has not been yet achieved even at the primary level. The gross enrolment parity rate was 0.91 and the net enrolment parity was 0.97 in 2004. Progress is much slower at higher levels of schooling, mainly in secondary level. The nation's overall gross enrolment in 2004 was 74% and 86% for girls and boys respectively (MOES/DOE, 2004) .Also the study exhibits that gender difference is higher in rural areas, where gender disparity in literacy in urban was 19%, but it was 23% in rural area. According to UNESCO (1993), almost a quarter of the world's adult population illiteracy is more striking in south and west Asia where it is estimated that  three-quarters of female aged 25 years or over cannot read or write. For these women illiteracy is a major contributor to their marginalization and low status in life.. Another study undertaken by Sharma et al (2007) concludes that even with a large number of

developmental programs focusing on achieving hundred percent literacy in the coming years, there will still exist instances where girls do not complete their secondary education due to the patriarchal culture. The body of literature has demonstrated that the long historical neglect of education of girls has left very high illiteracy rates, especially among women in rural areas (CERID/WEL project, 1984 in Bhusal, 2011). Likewise, Oxaal (1997) explains the persistence of gender gaps and indicates how the combined effects of poverty and gendered culture reduce the educational opportunities for girls. In his study, he argues that early marriage and teenage pregnancy lead the girls and women to be illiterate, dependent and unsafe. He has also suggested that a gender perspective on poverty and education highlights several possible strategies to tackle the disadvantages that women meet in education. Similarly, Hunt's (2008) comprehensive review of the international evidence on why children drop out of school discusses a combination of factors such as house hold income and limitations placed by household finances both for direct and indirect costs of schooling concluding the impact of poverty on children school dropout. Moreover, Kamal in IRIN report (2 may, 2010), an education specialist with the UN Children Fund (UNICEF) noted that many girls drop out at secondary level and only 30 percent of the cohorts reach the 10 grade. In the same way, Nepal Ministry of Education noted that the literacy rate or female stands at just 44.2% as opposed to 67.7 % for males. Further, Acharya noted (IRIN, 2010) that most public schools in Nepal still practice gender based discrimination and thus the girls are often harassed by their male counterparts. To avoid humiliation especially teasing by school boys- the girls would rather go home. This is one of the reasons why they lose interest in going to school. Similarly, in rural Nepal, girls cannot afford sanitary pads or tampons and sanitary facilities are generally not available at schools as well. In most schools it was reported that girls took leave from school if they menstruated. According to the available literature no dropped out girls had return back to school ((ibid).

Alike, Levine (2007) carried out an ethnographic research in the Kathmandu Valley of Nepal to identify factors that determined school attendance among Nepali female. Her study showed that gender, cultural prejudice, cast, poverty and rural residence prevented a majority from going to school. Of those who went, most regardless of academic talent were pulled out in order to work at home as wage labors and domestic servants or to enter arranged marriages. The majority of parents of the girls viewed a daughter's education as a poor investment relative to a son's, since in a patriarchal society, a son stayed with his parents and contributed to the household economy where as marriage of a daughter transferred the benefits

accumulated from her education to her husband's family. This study seems very close to the present study, but still there lies some differences, for example: time gap, study design, area and community. This study was done in the urban area, i.e. capital city, in the Newar community in 1997-98, where the researcher has analyzed only the women's experience of their basic schooling focusing to the patriarchal culture, whereas the present study has been done in the remote Nepal exploring the young girls' experience and perception of their secondary school dropout including their parents', teachers' and key persons' views and experience concerning their school discontinuation. In doing so, my study has mainly focused on the family and the school factors influencing the girls' participation in secondary education. In the same way, Khatri (2000), who has studied on Dalit's education specially the girls' participation in education, found out that in Dalit community caste as well gender are constraints to girls' continuation of school because of the gender discriminating socio-cultural environment. An important point in these studies is an emphasis on the combination of factors such as gender, caste and locality.

Another study conducted by Groot (200) explains that the question of enrolment and attendance in Nepal should be looked at in the context of the country. This study highlights that the gender gap in school enrolment in Nepal has declined, it still exists, and increases as the children get older. Besides this, literacy rates varied among regions and districts across Nepal, where the low enrolment rates in the Terai are caused by the low enrolment of girls in these areas. Further, the study discusses that there is not a sole reason for a child to be out of school but there is a combination of many factors leading them out of school. In addition, Sharma (1974, in Pandey, 2006) did a field study on parental reasons for not sending their children for primary school in Pokhara town. 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 male but more female parents as well were not in favor of female education. Further, Acharya (1994 in Pandey, 2011) analyzed the condition of the female education. According to her findings, the 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 educational facility. Access to secondary education is still greatly limited for girls. In her analysis she has described the female education as an emerging issue in Nepal.

Finally, CERID (1984) reported that both girls and boys are dropping out of secondary school throughout the country in which girls' dropout rate is higher. In the report, household work, lack of awareness in parents and illiteracy, their traditional attitude to see a girl have been shown as the main causes of girls' school dropout in rural Nepal. The present study contributes to analyze the girl's own experience and perception presenting a general female situation in Nepal. In doing so, the study includes the girls' condition after dropping out from school, understanding and exploring the factors affecting their school attainment in different context and cultural settings thorough the study. This might contribute to making appropriate strategies in order to reduce this problem.

## CHAPTER-3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Theory refers to frameworks that seek to explain a phenomenon and guide our social practice. In this sense, a good social researcher must have a better understanding of theoretical perspectives as well as the professional codes, ethics and standards. It is not trouble-free to picking up a suitable theory to shape a specific social case because as stated by Smith et al (2008), there can be many diverse approaches to address the same issue in different contexts. Indeed, the choice of approach depends in the purpose and mainly the context. On this basis, while contemplating on which approach it could be appropriate to understand the girls' situation, I became more inclined on these theories mentioned below.

This chapter is aimed at providing the insights and discussions into the four relevant social theories and ideas that underpin the present work, naming construction of self-identity, Stigma, intersectionality and anti-oppressive approach with the key concept of empowerment which have helped to understand and interpret the informants' stories and their situations in this project (Howe, 1992:151). The study also attempts to show how different dimensions like ethnicity, caste, gender, class and religion, depending on the context contribute to social inequality.

### 3.1. Theories on Self-Identity: A Conceptual Framework

Semantically, 'identity' refers to the self -meaning in a role we have on who and what we are, and then 'self' refers to the interaction of an individual's self -conception, which is emerges from the social interaction of human. This study is mainly based on Goffman's *Self presentation* (1959) and the ideas further supported by the work of Brukitt's (2008) *Social Selves* and Berger and Luckmann's *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966). The main purpose of applying this theory is to provide an understanding of how the girls pulled out from secondary school understand themselves and how they define and construct their self from the numerous colloquial identities provided by the socio-culture and religious norms and values. And further, how they actualize and keep on an integrated and steady self-concept concerning continuing and discontinuing their schooling in Nepalese society.

'Identity' and 'selfhood' are terms used throughout the human sciences that seek to analyze and describe the character of everyday life experience. It is a multi-dimensional construct that refers to an individual's perception of self in relation to any number of characteristics such as, gender roles and sexuality racial identity, ethnicity, class, where gender has been an important factor in the formation of self -identity.

Indeed, every human being seems to persist in being themselves, so wish to construct an individual identity, because as stated by Berger and Luckman (1966:194), identity is a key element of subjective reality. In this sense, developing the personal identity is completely a social phenomenon. It is accordingly maintained, modified and reshaped by social relations. People want to see their self -image upon other members of society, which is reflected back in term of words, attitude, expressions and actions (Brukitt, 2008).

In addition, self-concept is a social issue of self -consciousness, self-awareness and self-esteem on one's self or it is an internal model which comprises self-assessment that includes not only the present selves but also the past and future. Also the individuals expect to develop a self -identity in response to their social context since their childhood (Mead, 1993). According to Giddens (1991) self -identity is a routinely created phenomenon which sustains through the reflexive activities of the individual. It is also considered significant to elevate the ability of individual to keep a narrative going. It is therefore, self -identity is linked to what people do.

The purpose of applying the theory on self-identity in present study is to discuss the girls' understanding of self on 'who am I' and 'who do I want to be', what is my social status and identity among the boys', and what is my future'. Similarly, the theory of self-concept has been valuable to discuss the self -positions and identities the girls are ascribed in their socio-cultural context, where power has been an important dimension of gender and is related to the concept of patriarchy (Connell, 2002). In other words, the concept of self -identity is useful in this study for understanding how the young girl dropouts have understood themselves in comparison to the boys and how they have constructed their self, and how they have defined them and their social status in the process of constructing their self -identity in their society. 'Construction of self -identity' is based on symbolic interactionism of Goffman's (1959) self -presentation, which is in addition enhanced with the ideas of Brukitt (2008) on social Selves and Berger and Luckmann's (1966) the social construction of gender reality. In addition, while addressing the self -identity, the study shares some ideas with Goffman's (1963) stigma

theory because the concepts are interlinked to each other. In doing so, the study discusses the stereotypes and prejudice and its impact on the construction of self -identity of girls pulled out of school.

### 3.1.1   Symbolic Interactionism

As argued by Charon (2001), symbolic interactionism has been used as an important idea of this work in order to observe and explore on how the informants perform and react their experience and perception of themselves in their everyday environment through the in-depth interview aiming to bring out the fact through symbols that is not reflected in words, where the work of Goffman (1959) has been valuable in conceptualizing the meaning and developing concept on self -identity.

The symbolic interaction perspective, mainly originated by George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) and also by Max Weber (1864-1920), emphasized the subjective meaning and human behavior, social process and pragmatism. Blumer is responsible for coining the term 'symbolic interactionism' as well as for formulating the most prominent version of the theory (Blumer, 1969). It is based on how people develop a complex set of symbols to give meaning to the world (La Rossa &Reitzes, 1993). The understanding of these symbols is important in understanding human behavior, because human develops a concept of larger social structure and also of self- identity through interaction. Individuals are not born with a sense of self but develop self -concepts through social interaction.

Similarly, Blumer (in Nelson, 1998) defines the theory of symbolic interactionism as the process of interaction in the formation of meanings for individuals, which is one of the major theoretical framework in sociology, that focus on the subjective aspects of social life, rather than on objective macro-structural aspect of social system. According to him the individual sees himself´/ herself as a social object during the process of social interaction. Goffman (1958) argues that the meaning and construction of self -identity is developed as a sense through social interaction. During this process the individual attempts to perform a sense of self which is accepted by others. He discusses roles dramaturgically using an analogy to the theater with human social behavior seen as more or less well scripted and with humans as role taking actors (Mead, 1993). He further argued that self -identity if formed and managed through the symbols, signs and language mediating and directing the combined social group activities. By applying the concept of Symbolic interactionism, this study through the in-depth

interview and informal observation intends to determine how the girl dropouts perceive, reflect and act in the situation they are in, and how their parents, teachers and key persons view on this.

The present study aims to analyze the girls' understanding of self -considering their situation during the process of their school dropout through social interaction in a traditional society. In doing so, the study also analyzes parents', teachers' and key persons' opinion on girls' situation and their understanding on self. That is why; the key concept of self -identity has been more valuable in the study, which is linked to the positions and identities that the girls are ascribed in a Nepalese socio-cultural and economical context. Symbolic interactionism has been applied to relay the symbolic meaning that the informants reflect during the in-depth interview by addressing the subjective meanings that the girls impose on their experience. For example: why the girls discontinue their schooling, even if it is important to complete for them.

### 3.1.2   Social Selves and the Social Construction of Reality

As mentioned earlier, mainly the theories of   social selves (Brukitt (2008) and also the social construction of reality of Berger and Luckmann (1966) have been basically used in this paper to discuss how self -concept is constructed through the socio-cultural interaction. In other words, as stated by Brukitt (2008), the study attempts to seek answers from girls on 'who they are', and 'who they consider themselves to be and how'. In doing so, the study explores on their understanding and perception on their self as formed in social relations and social activities. Constructing the self -image is a social process, because human reality is socially constructed (Berger and Luckmann, 1966).

The identity is both a personal self-definition and also a definition in relation to the world outside, where culture and identity goes together in a dialectical inter-play and identity becomes a product of relations (Giddens, 1991). Considering this in my study context, a boy is ascribed socio-culturally, religiously and economically higher value than a girl from all these perspectives. So that, male enjoys a privileged status from his birth whereas a girl is often ignored or isolated from the social interactions. Therefore they are not granted the same opportunities, i.e. in education and also other basic rights where the society expects women to live with her husband's family and men  with their parents throughout their lives.. Hence, culture and identity work in an intersection and the identity becomes a product of social

relations. Based on this, the girls' identity is connected to the roles, positions and identities they are assigned in their socio-cultural context representing the limitations for interaction and management of their self -identity. Self can be defined as the reflection of the past experiences as well as a means of creating the future in the forms of plans, hopes and dreams (Brukitt, 2008). He has presented the three aspects of 'me'. The first is the 'material me' that externally endeavors to identify the self -referring to the body. The second is the 'social me' that refers it as the recognition of individual perceived by the others. And finally, the 'spiritual me,' the third aspect of me, that consists of the individual's qualities by which they define their sense of self image in their society. How these three aspects of me is related to my study is that the first 'me' represents the sex (gender), i.e. girls and boys, of the informants (girls) and the second 'me' refers to the recognition of them perceived by others, e.g. someone's daughter and wife. Then, the third aspect of me is what the girls and women are struggling to construct in the study context.

Further, the construction of the self -concept is a dialectic process in social relations contributing between objectively assigned and subjectively appropriated identity (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). The informants' expressions on this view provide the additional bases to define how the self- image of girl dropouts produced and reproduced before and after their school discontinuation.

To sum up, social position and identity are attached to one's social status that individual holds in a social hierarchy. One can earn this either by their achievements or this can be placed in the socialization by their inherited position that can be fixed for a person at birth as son or daughter (gender), rich and poor (class). In this way, ascribed roles exist in every society including those bases upon sex, age, race, ethnic group and family background. It is therefore individuals are given many roles as they are socially positioned into a family. That is why people cannot choose their own social identity, but they are dependent on the acceptance of others. In the study context, the problem that many of the young women are confronted with their personal identity how they think about themselves is not confirmed and accepted by their parents and others. Instead they are ascribed a position and identity as a subordinate daughter or wife through how they are treated in interaction. Based on the above, the theoretical frameworks applied in this study have been helpful to understand and discuss the girls' perceptions and their attitude on constructing their self-identity considering their value at

school and family among their brothers or other boys. This is what the reason why the girls are in dilemma in developing and understanding their sense of self.

## 3.2. Stigma

This study is also aiming to shed light on the consequences of stigma (Goffman 1963) and its influence on the construction of self-identity of girl school dropouts. It will provide an understanding on how the young girls cope with stigmatization or how their gender shapes their sense of self and how it stigmatizes and constrains their life choices. The idea has been further supplemented by the work of Link and Phelan (2001) emphasizing the stigmatized circumstances of the girls including stereotypes and discrimination that affect multiple domains of their life and future.

The term stigma, firstly explored by French sociologist Emile Durkheim, originally means a bodily sign or branding mark but now it is used more to refer to the disgrace itself than to the bodily evidence of it, which is relatively and contextually interlinked with society' ways of categorizing in social interaction .In this way, stigma is a special kind of relationship between attribute and stereotypes (Goffman, 1963). We can talk about stigma when elements of labeling, stereotyping, separation, status loss and discrimination occur together in a power situation. The underlying idea is that stigma is dependent on socio-economic and cultural power (Link and Phelan, 2001). In this sense, stigma is understood as undesirable and discrediting attributes which create a discrepancy between virtual and actual social identity that might lead people to social exclusion, violence and discrimination.

In addition, to understand the stigma concept better, it is important to understand the five components of stigma stated by Link and Phelan (ibid), such as 1: distinguishing and labeling human differences; 2: linking human differences with negative stereotypes; 3: separating 'us' and 'them'; 4: status loss and discrimination; 5: power and stigmatization, where Link and Phelan (ibid) have focused on the stigmatized situations including negative stereotypes and emotional reaction. They further claim that the linking of labels to undesirable attributes lead to a perception that the negatively labeled persons are different from those who do not share the label different types of people.

Goffman (1963) states the three types of stigmas, where the first type of stigma relates to the abominations of the body, as overt or external physical deformations, such as deafness, blindness. The second type of stigma concerns to individual character that is perceived as weak, deviations in personal traits, such as mental disorder, alcoholism. Similarly, the third type of stigma is the tribal stigma of race, nation, religion which can be transmitted through lineage and equally contaminate all member of the family (Goffman, 1963). Also, it is argued that stigma devalues self-consciousness which contributes to discrimination and loss of identity (Heatherton et al, 2000). The idea implies that stigmatized people lose their self-confidence comparing to other members of society. Then, in some cases they might be involved in various kinds of coping activities to minimize the impact.

Stigmatization develops when pejorative and condemning assessments of a group affect ideas about every representative individual of this group, occurring in many different forms. Most commonly it deals with the culture, gender, race and diseases, which is produced as an undesirable attribute that individuals poses reducing their moral status in society which leads them to social exclusion and discrimination and stigmatized identities are constructed as flawed and less than fully human to some extent where as stated by Heartherton et al (2000) stereotyping and prejudice are central. According to Goffman, stigma is closely connected with stereotype, where both evoke from unconscious expectation and norms acting as unseen arbiters in all social aspects. The stigmatized circumstances and processed including stereotype, status loss and discrimination that affect multiple domains of people's lives.. Similarly stigmatization has a dramatic bearing on the distribution of life opportunities such as economy, health and education and freedom. As stated by Link and Phelan (2001), the linking of labels to undesirable attributes leads to perceive that negatively labeled persons are different from those who do not share the label-different types of people, because the labeled persons are claimed to be more exposed to status loss and discrimination (ibid). The underlying idea is that stigma is to a large extent dependent on socio-economic and cultural power.

## 3.3 Intersectionality

This study presents intersectionality as a way of framing the various interactions of cast, class, gender and religion in the content of gender inequality in school attainment. My focus on the intersection of these factors highlights the need to account for multiple grounds of identity considering how gender inequality is constituted in society analyzing its impact in school

attainment. As the study issue closely relates to the concept of feminism and the fact that gender is going to be discussed in the context of culture, I have applied the concept (Crenshaw, 1989). The application of this idea has been valuable in the study to provide an understanding on how socio-cultural and economic factors including ethnicity, social class, religion and cast interrelate together to result in social inequality.

The concept of intersectionality was firstly coined by Crenshaw in 1989, and then the idea was reintroduced by the sociologist Collins in 1990. In the beginning, it was introduced as an intersection in the American sense of the word to indicate the black people crossing gender (Crenshaw, 1989). American researchers criticized the gender-based research for producing diversity in gender but homogenize race. In feminist studies women and men were analyzed as different and heterogeneous across and within the female and male categories. Although, when it came to the question of race, the race-based critics argued that woman and men were all white and the entire same western race. In the American concept of intersectionality the focus was on race and gender. Since the studies concentrated on the poor and marginalized colored population, the class dimension was often implied in the theoretical reflection and analysis (ibid, 1995).

Recently, it is emerging in feminist studies in Nordic countries, which tries to catch the relationship between socio-cultural categories and identities. Thus, it is a theory to analyze how these factors intertwine, pointing to the significant of multidimensional analysis of power structures. It is thus an idea often used in critical theories, the ways in which oppressive institutions (caste, class, religion, ethnicity and gender) are inter-connected and cannot be examined separately from one another that power and oppression rest upon. In addition, the intersectionality concept is specifically used to address the experiences of people who are subjected to multiple forms of subordination within society, where it claims that gender as the primary factor determining a woman's fate. It is therefore a methodology of studying relationships among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relationships and subject formation. Intersectionality theorists argue that it is complex to apply intersectionality theory due to its multidimensional nature which explains the way where socially constructed categories of inequality interplay to result social hierarchy. To catch this complexity implied in intersectionality, American sociologist McCall (2005) operates with three approaches. Anti-categorical complexity is the first approach, integrated to feminist post-structuralism and deconstruction, which rejects or destabilizes race, class, sexuality and gender. It also states

that inequalities are rooted in relationships that are defined by race, class and gender. The second is inter-categorical complexity that addresses the fact that inequality exists within society, concerning the nature of relationships among social groups how they are changing and document inequality across multiple factors. And then, the third approach is intra-categorical complexity in between, recognizes the apparent shortcomings of existing social categories and it questions the way in which they draw boundaries of distinction. Mentioning this, she defines intersectionality as the relationship among multiple dimension and modalities of social relation and subject formation.

Similarly, Crenshaw (1991) states three types of intersectonality in her article, firstly the structural intersectionality as the way in which the location of women of color at the intersection of race and gender. Secondly, the political intersectionality, in which she analyzes how both feminist and antiracist politics have often helped to marginalize the issue of violence against women. Then, thirdly, she presents the representational intersectional discussing the cultural construction of women of color.

Howe (2009:139) states that the injustices and inequalities suffered by females are the result of socio-political rather than the personal troubles. Feminist theories apply powerful insights to make sense of women's experiences, including their oppressed position in society. It is therefore using the feminist theory, women (school dropouts) might understand how social structures affect their lives resulting gender inequality at the intersection of the above factors. Further, Dominelli (2002) identifies some of the principles of feminist practice as, valuing female's strength and recognizing their diversity understanding social structure to define their experiences and helping them to do things together with male. Based on this, I hope that the use of intersectionality, a feminist theory will help me in order to tackle the gender inequality which exists in Nepalese society.

To sum up, I have used the concept of intersectionality to present the various ways in which race, gender, class and religion intersect to shape the multiple dimensions of girls' school dropout experience intending to provide an understanding on how these dimensions including socio-cultural and eco-structural factors interplay multiply to cause gender inequality and how this inequality leads them out of school influencing to the construction of their identity (Crenshaw, 1991). In another way, I have applied the idea to discuss the complex accounts of gender relations and forms of gender justice by showing how different social and cultural dimensions contribute to gender inequality. In addition, gender discrimination in education

cannot be explained only through the specific framework of caste, gender and religion considered here, but the factors I address such as caste, gender and religion are often critical in shaping the young girls' experiences in Nepalese context. My focus on the intersections of cast, gender, class and religion only highlights the need to account for multiple grounds of inequality considering how gender is constituted.

## 3.4    Anti-Oppressive Approach

Apart from the aforementioned concepts, my study has been guided with the ideas of anti-oppressive theory with the concept of empowerment in order to understand the situation of the young girls pulled out of secondary school, specially the gender discrimination against them as a phenomenon of traditionally rooted gender based socio-cultural system rather than created by the girls themselves.

Originally, anti-oppressive approach, as a crucial social theory came in practice in late 1980s and 1990s from Britain, Australian and Canada drawing on a range of critical traditions including radical social work, feminist social work and anti- racist social work. It was a new social movement which increased emphasis on clients' participation and empowerment where the primary role of the social worker is to work with individuals and communities to eradicate oppressions. Philosophically, the approach assumes that there are multiple forms of oppression and each is harmful. Social structure and oppressive cultural practice affect every part of social work practice; various forms of oppression interact with one another. ).

The anti-oppressive approach is a form of social work practice which addresses social divisions and structural inequalities. The approach aims to provide more appropriate and sensitive services by responding to people's needs regardless of their social status. It embodies a person-centered philosophy, an egalitarian value system concerned with reducing the harmful effects of structural inequalities upon people's lives. This approach is a methodology focusing on process and outcome and a way of structuring social relationship between individuals that aims to empower the girls and women by reducing the negative effects of hierarchy in their immediate interaction and the work they do (Dominelli, 2002:6, in Healy's Lecture Note, 2010). Relating this to the study context, a boy gets more power than a girl because of the unequal power structure of patriarchal Nepalese society.

As noted by Healy (2000) and Mullaly (1993) in Healy (2005), the world is divided into two groups whose interest is opposed. On one side there are members of privileged groups with professional status and access to institutional power and on the other side there are service users who are relatively powerless and suppressed. Hence it is a core in social work practice to raise consciousness of users by assisting them to see the cause of the problem leading them to the injustice social structure. Further, the critical social work has been crucial to empower the users to act collectively in order to facilitate social change which is envisaged as a means of making a society free from all forms of oppressions and domination (Fay, 1987 in Healy, 2005).

Anti-oppressive perspective has become a dominant theory within the modern critical social work practice over the past decade. The theory aims to empower the users providing more appropriate and sensitive services with response to their needs not considering their social status in which social worker principally work with individuals and communities to wipe out oppression (Healy, 2010: lecture note).

To sum up, I have applied the anti-oppressive approach with the concept of empowerment approach in order to understand the real meaning of my informants' situation because it was an effective method to bring out the reality occurring in the situation, where as an anti-oppressive social researcher, I understand that social justice is the core of all social work activities (Healy, 2005:188). In another way, the idea has been identified with an attempt to provide an insight on what causes the gender differences in secondary education, and how the girls are discriminated at home and school. For the purpose, the study sheds lights on how the girls can be empowered to raise their voice against the discrimination, social oppression and injustice.

### 3.4.1 Empowerment Theory
This study has employed anti-oppressive perspective in order to understand the girls' situation and gender based discrimination (GBD) against them at home and school, where empowerment approach has been central in combating girls' school dropout practiced by the NGO. Among the five key social work theories  pertinent in modern social work practice discussed by critical social scientist Healy (2005),  I have chosen the anti-oppressive approach to analyze my informants' (the girls') discriminated and oppressed situation yet all these

theories to some extent seem suitable to apply within the empowerment perspective. In my study, the word empowerment can be understood as a way of developing confidence in their own capacities in order to uplift their life by raising awareness on their right to schooling and giving them voice against gender differences in education by advocating and sensitizing the community.

Broadly, empowerment is an approach and practice that deals with issues of power, powerlessness, and oppression and how they contribute to individual, family or community problems and affect helping relationships. The goal of this theory is to increase personal, interpersonal or political power so that, individuals families or communities can take actions to improve their situation (Guiterrez, De Lois & Clenmaye, 1995 in Healy's Lecture Note, 2010). In addition, Arai (1996:36) defines the term empowerment as a process of involving the change in individual capacities, whereas Tesoriero (2010) defines empowerment as a means of ensuring that people have all resources, opportunities, vocabulary, knowledge and skills to increase their capacity to determine their own future and to participate in and affect the life of their community. Similarly, Kabeer (2005) explains the concept of empowerment as an ability to make choices. The theme of empowerment was originally drawn from 1970s and 1980s which has been considered as the accomplishment of third world feminist movement in order to balance the imbalanced power relations in human society. This strategy includes the personal strengthening and enhancement of life chances and collective participation in  efforts to achieve equality of  opportunity and equity between different genders,  ethnic groups, social classes and age groups enhancing human potentiality at individual and social levels of expression (Hall, 1992:83).There is a strong emphasis on empowerment approaches of service users' participating in defining the problem and finding a solution to them in reflecting on practitioners' approaches to empowerment. Guterriez et al (1995:539) asserts that all agencies representatives emphasized the need for client participation from collaboration in treatment planning to rule making and enforcement to representation on the board of directors. According to (Acharya, et al, 2007), the final goal of empowerment is to transform the ideology and practice of domination and subordination to challenge and transfer existing power structures, systems and institutions which have upheld and reinforced discrimination.

To sum up, as my study is based to the idea of self- identity, it is relevant to link it with the concept of empowerment as it is meant later to help the girls and women improving their situation and developing their identity (Payne, 2005). Thus, the enhanced capacity allows them to determine their future and actively participate in their society. Thus, in the study, the idea of empowerment can be understood as the process of empowering the girls and women which help them to achieve equality of opportunity and equity between different genders and reach at the social justice by challenging oppressions and taking charge of matters affecting them. Empowering women is an indispensable strategy for advancing development and reducing poverty monitoring progress towards gender equality. Women empowerment is therefore more important in Nepalese context. But due to the lack of confidence over their capacity, it is not easy to empower and assure them to realize that they are not powerless (Healy, 2005:185).

# CHAPTER-4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## 4.1 Introduction

Research refers to a process of well-organized and in-depth study of any specific subject of exploration to understand it better and develop theories about it. In other words it is a systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of information to answer a scientific question, where methodology is the core with its overall plan and process. In this study I have used a qualitative research approach. This approach is grounded in a philosophical position where how the social world is interpreted, understood and experienced are central issues.

The purposes of this study is to explore the girls' perception and experience of their school dropout in terms of gender difference in school attendance including the parents', teachers' and key persons' views on it. In this sense, the study can be discussed to be within the domain of interpretive paradigm which intends to reflect the girls' expression and their actions in a descriptive way presenting their situation as closely as possible to their experience.

## 4.2. Study Design

In my study, I have applied a qualitative research method with in-depth interview in order to analyze the girls' experience and perception of their school discontinuation. The work has consisted of both primary and secondary sources of data collection; however, the primary source has been the basic. The main primary sources of empirical data were interviews with the students, parents, teachers and the key informants from a local NGO. A qualitative standardized in-depth interview was conducted including informal observation and conversation to gather the empirical data. Similarly, the reports and other informative documents from school administrations, VDC office, and DEO including different text books, journal articles, websites and other additional published and unpublished materials have been consulted as the secondary data for the successful completion of the work.

The choice of a research design depends on the purpose of the study. On this basis, qualitative research was more convenient and reasonable to apply in this study because I was going to explore and discuss the girls' experience and perception of their school dropout with gender

perceptive and the factors affecting it. For doing so, I chose an empirical approach with in-depth interview method, the most commonly used approach in the field of social science.

Generally, the research method is scientifically selected on the nature of problem to be investigated. Therefore, I have taken the qualitative design to access the girl's experience and describe the factors that lead them to stay out of school. The reason was that in this method the objectives of the study are seen and understood in their own context. It is truly a strong method to produce vivid and rich accounts of human experience, that emphasizes depth of understanding, attempt to subjectively tap the deeper meaning of human experience and intend to generate theoretically rich observations (Babbie et al, 1993:145).

Mainly, I want to investigate the participants' own points of view on their experience which is only possible by qualitative method because in quantitative method, there are more rigid close-ended questions, which cannot permit me to grasp the deep feelings of my informants. Similarly, I have selected the in-depth interview method for my work, which is regarded as one of the mostly used method of data collection in the field of social science research. Byrne suggests that it has been particularly attractive to researcher who wants to explore voices and experience which they believe have been ignored, misrepresented or suppressed in the past (Byrne, 2004:182 cited in Silverman, 2006:114).

Qualitative method is powerful because of its ability to explore the people's real world directly in their own context. It studies the human behavior, attitudes and experiences in particular times and describes how people organize their world and produce meaning to their life. Through an interview, the interviewer can get closer to the interviewee and collect the empirical data in detail. Thus, still I will use only a single method; it is appropriate and sufficient to explore the women's experience according to my project purpose.

 It is believed that a researcher with ready-made questions either open-ended or close-ended cannot expose people's perception, understanding and experience and enter into their emotional expression. Thus, it is the in-depth interview which leads the researcher to reach in-depth of people's world and produce a wealth of valuable data. Likewise, I have used the key questions to guide while interviewing. It has contained several points and I was led by those points in order to lead the interviewees during the conversation. So that, I could modify the questions when needed because it was flexible, thus I was free to change or formulate the questions required to situation that arose. Furthermore, I have applied the grounded theory as

the methodological approach to analyze and interpret the data in my study, because this approach was seen suitable to find meaning in the interview data of the study.

### 4.2.1 Site selection

As the location of my study area, I have chosen the Nawalparasi district, one of the 75 districts lying in the central point of Nepal, situated about 200 km far from the capital city, Kathmandu. I chose the district because I have spent some of the important phase of my life there. Therefore, I know about it's geographical, cultural and tradition, social structure, norms and values which has helped me to produce a good work.

### 4.2.2 Selection of informants

The term sampling simply talks about the selection of informants or the population of the study. It is the process of selecting a small group as the representative of the whole population in which a relatively small number of study population or measures of units is selected and analyzed in order to find out something about the entire population from which it was selected. Briefly, it is a procedure of collecting information of whole population by investigating only a part of it, where as stated by Robson (1993:135), we make judgments about people, places and things on the basis of fragmentary evidence. Hence, it is a key in research which helps to save time and labor, reduce expenditure and lead the measurement of greater scope to produce greater precision and accuracy, yet there might exist the possibility of an error in the outcome of sample to the entire population

Twelve respondents were interviewed in this study. Among them, six were the girls from 16 to 19 years old who have quitted Secondary School, and two were their parents, two were secondary teachers in social study and next two were the key persons from a local NGO. The NGO representatives were mainly interviewed in order to get the general information on girls school dropouts including the information about the programs conducted to support the girls to keep continue and re-continue their schooling. Likewise, the criteria for selecting the teachers were that they should be the secondary teachers in social study from the public schools in Kawasoti. It is because the social teachers are expected to have more knowledge on social issues or social problems than the teachers in other subjects. Therefore, in this study, they are expected to express their opinion on girls' social status and their situation at home and at school influencing their school attainment in secondary level. In this way, the study has different actors for the sources of data. The rational in doing so was that a purposively

selected diverse sample offers the high possibility of identifying the full range of factors connected with secondary school discontinuation. It also creates many possible experiences of an event. So, it was important to interview different actors representing their views and situations to build up a broad understanding of the topic in my paper (Strauss and Corbin, 1990:109).

Prior to the start of the project, I made contact with the school administrations to find out the girls secondary school dropped out and their address including their parents. I also got the mobile numbers of three of them but others had no telephone and mobile to contact online. Selecting this appropriate sample size the paper has involved a trade –off between breadth and depth of my thesis (Patton, 1990)

Here, I would like to clarify that it was not so difficult to visit the dropped out young girl students in the study context because most of them stay at home engaging in domestic works or get marriage. Thus, I observed and interviewed them and their parents at their homes, workplace and other places where they carried out their daily activities in order to get a real picture of their school discontinuation and their parents attitude to it in a natural way, because as suggested by Hull (2005), the great strength of qualitative design is its naturalism, its intimacy with real people in real situation to understand the people how they act in their daily life.

While interviewing, it was observed the informants (girls) appearance, facial expression, gesture and posture with the purpose of understanding their feelings and perception about their school discontinuation and their view on themselves, which more or less has a contribution in the study. All the respondents of this study were interviewed applying the prepared interview guide with qualitative open ended questions (See Appendix: B).

## 4.3 Process of Data Collection

First of all, I have had an intensive detailed study and collected a lot of knowledge and information about the study topic and study area including the study design, methodology and field. Then, I prepared the in-depth interview guide with qualitative unstructured (open-ended) questions. After that, I traveled to the field i.e. Nawalparasi, Nepal. Firstly I sent the written approvals to the selected schools and to the local NGO taken in the study. Then, I contacted to all school administrations and got the drop out records for last three years. There,

I also got the contact details of dropout girls in 2011 and their parents from schools. After this, I set the plan to visit them and interview by collecting their consent agreement. Then, the purposively selected dropped out students and their parents were interviewed considering the research ethics by providing the written approval and reading it out.

In addition, I would here like to clarify that the sample questions in interview guide were repeated (see interview guide in Annex B), because repeating the same question in different versions is used to test the reliability of the answers (Kvale, 1996). In this sense, I was able to grasp the consistency of the answers to my questions asking them from a variety of angles. For example: some actors provided much information with explanation within a single open-ended question, so I should not ask another question listed in the guide in order to get information. Similarly, in some interviews I didn't get as complete answers as the study was seeking for. So, I had to ask some cross questions in order to fill up the information gap or get the required data, which in addition has increased the possibility of validity and reliability determining the generalizing capacity of the study. Further, the one selected parent who could not read even Nepali but could speak and understand it a little bit. As I was good in her mother tongue, Tharu, I used Tharu while interviewing her in order to ease her feel comfortable and natural to participate in the conversation and provide information. The teachers and NGO key persons were interviewed providing approval by their headmasters and program leader as the door keeper/opener respectively. During the field work, I followed up the concerned participants, where it was optionally their own choice to response in each step of data collection procedures. While talking about the interview time, it took around one to two hours. The entire interview was recorded and noted by collecting consent from them. Further, it was also informed and taken consent to translate and transcribe the data into English.

### 4.3.1 In-depth Interview: The Method

It is more convenient and reasonable to apply in-depth interview in subjective studies like experience in order to dig the emotional, expressive and sensitive data with detail information. In other words, applying in-depth interview approach I got an opportunity to tap into the richness of girls' thoughts and feelings about their schooling, themselves and their environment in general including the parents', teachers' and key persons' views on this (Mishna et al, 2004:451).

### 4.3.2 A Brief Presentation of the Respondents and Representatives

All the selected informants were from Terai region of Nepal except one (who was from hilly reason). Regarding cast, they were from Brahmin and Kshatrya (higher casts) and Vaisya (ethnic/indigenous) families. Religiously, the majority of them were from Hindu background. Before interviewing, it had been collected the consent agreement from the participants and provided them the voluntary informed consent by door keepers with written approval, respecting their privacy rights, maintaining confidentiality and ensuring their anonymity. The girl respondents have been termed as a case, then parents, teachers and key persons have been numbered as 1, 2 , in order to ease the data entering and analyzing in the project.

**Case 1**: **Devi**, 16, from Dalit Hindu family was pulled out of school nine months ago after passing class 8. She left school because of her parents' pressure. She was an intelligent student and was keen to complete secondary level. She is presently working in a restaurant in the day and involved in prostitution in night time in the same restaurant. This was her father's decision. Her father is a carpenter, so he has a good income, but he is a drunkard. The mother is a house wife. Her father is literate, but mother cannot read and write even her mother tongue. Also she has two brothers and two younger sisters who go to primary school.

**Case 2: Gita,** 19 is from higher cast Brahmin Hindu family with middle class economy. She discontinued her study ten months ago after passing class nine because she failed many times in the school exams due to the house hold, lack of study materials, and parents' negative attitude to daughter's education,. Occupationally, her father has a weekly market business; mother is house wife, but works also in agriculture. She has three brothers, one is a government officer and another is in Nepal police, and the younger one goes to boarding school. Likewise, she has two sisters who got married early. One completed primary education and another left school during studying in lower secondary level. She is learning to sew clothes after leaving school.

**Case 3: Foolmaya**, 15 is from an ethnic (Tharu) Hindu family with low economic status. She was pulled out of school one year ago during studying in class nine. Her mother is a house wife. As her mother could not bear sons even after three daughters her father, who is a farmer, left her and married another lady. After this, her mother thought that Foolmaya's study up to class nine is now enough. Then, she forced her to leave school and sent to work as a domestic child worker at a rich family where she has physically and psychologically been abused by the female house owner and sexually by the male owner many times. The man has

closed her and her mother's mouth with little money. She is not so fluent in Nepali. So, as I was good in Tharu, she was interviewed in her mother tongue.

**Case** 4: **Manmaya**, 15, from a higher cast Brahmin Hindu family, with middle class economical background; left school one and half year ago after completing lower secondary level education from Sec. School because of her parents' concept of sons should be sent to school and daughter should give Kanyadan in time and be sent to her husband's home. She has three sisters and two brothers, where she is the youngest daughter. Her younger brother goes to private English school and big brother goes to college but her sisters got married early after primary school. She was married in the age of 14 and now she is pregnant, where all sort of household duties and responsibilities are assigned to her and she is tortured physically, mentally and psychologically by her husband and his family for not bringing dowry. Hence, she wanted to be a nurse but she does not see any possibility to restart her school in this life.

**Case 5**: **Durge**, 17, from an indigenous (Adibasi) Hindu family, studied up to class nine from Sec. School and then left school one year ago due to the  work load. It was not parents' decision to quit her study but due to the peer group influence she left school as well. Economically, her parents were from middle class family and occupationally they were farmers. They were not so negative to her schooling up to SLC. Most of the girls do not go to school in her village, and her close classmate girls' friends also left school, so she left as well and one day she married without informing her parents as one of her best friend as well did so. But the boy she married was not a real husband rather a girl's trafficker. Fortunately, while she was being sold to Mumbai, India, police rescued her on the way to Kathmandu including other two girls and sent back to their home. Now she lives with parents and works as a sweeper in a hospital near her village, also in that fault marriage relation, she became pregnant. Due to this pregnancy she has to be stigmatized in her family and society.

**Case 6**: **Sangita**, 16, from a middle class ethnic family. She eventually dropped out of school after passing class 9 and also going 2 more months to class 10. However, her parents have two sons who to go school and they are not so rich; they want her to pass SLC and get marriage, so that she could guide her children with their preliminary study in future.

Along with those 6 secondary school girls, purposively selected two of their parents and two teachers including two key persons from a local NGO had been also interviewed in-depth in the study. A brief presentation of them has been mentioned here:

**Parent 1: Goma, 55,** mother of Gita is an illiterate house wife. She mostly remains busy in the farm and field expect household. Due to the lack of awareness, she has a negative attitude to girls' education.

**Parent 2: Suntali**, 45, mother of Devi has also the similar attitude to Goma on the importance of her daughter's education. Occupationally, she was an uneducated house wife as well as she goes for a daily labor work because they do not have much land for farming.

**Teacher 1**: **Chetnath, 35,** from a higher cast Bramin Hindu family from hilly region, living in Kawasoti for about 30 years. He is teaching social study for about ten years, in Secondary School. He is also the vice-principle in the school at present.

**Teacher 2: Pusparaj**, 46, from a higher cast Brahmin family, living in Kawasoti for about 7 years , but teaching social study for class nine and ten for 13years,. He believes that socio-cultural challenges including the early marriage, environmental and peer influence are the leading cause of girls' secondary school dropout.

**Key person 1: Surbir**, 44, from an ethnic family, has been working as the education team leader in a local NGO for 20 years with the school children concerning the educational issues. He was orginally from Hetauda, a popular industrial city in the eastern Nepal.

**Key person 2: Kamala, 33,** from an ethnic (Janajati), middle class Buddhist family, a field motivator. Regarding her qualification, she has formally got bachelor in education. She has been working for 7 years in the same NGO with school children, mainly the girls in (with risk to be out) and out of school. According to her, she was the first girl to pass SLC in her village. Thus, she is very interested and feels her lucky to support the girls who have discontinued school to restart or receive skills and counseling.

## 4.4. Ethical Issues

In research, whether it is qualitative or quantitative, an ethical guideline must be considered. In all countries, research studies mostly include human or animals. While researching on these subjects, the researcher has to consider the high ethical standards set by various ethics committees to protect the privacy and dignity of the respondents.  As a social researcher, I was responsible to follow each ethical code which has also been presented in the recruiting procedures.  I carefully followed the ethical standards designed to protect the dignity, rights

and welfare of participants along with the researcher's obligation to the study area. I tried to play a positive role and had no bias to them as far as possible from my side. Likewise, I informed them well about the study purpose, process and analysis.

In the beginning of the interview, I collected the informed consent (see annex-A) from the respondents with their signature before starting the interview to use the tape recorder during interview.  Similarly, it was informed that it was voluntary to participate and that they could withdraws any time during interview. For this, I had gone through the voluntary informed consent to the participants by door keeper with written approval, respecting the privacy rights of the informants maintaining confidentiality and ensuring them anonymity. I have followed all the codes of research ethics in Norway even though the field of my data collection was out of Norway.

## 4.5 My Role as a Researcher

Research is a scientific search of an event or phenomenon using systematic and objective methods to understand it better in a specific context and develop theories on it. Therefore, the individual involvement of researcher in the work is significant to select, collect, analyze and construct theory. Thus, I, as a researcher have played an important role in my study in many ways. For instance: from the very beginning of my teenage to till today I have keenly been involved in teaching and deeply curious to know more the field of education. This curiosity indeed boosted me to undertake this work in this area having much knowledge and experience of teaching from kindergarten to bachelor level both in public and private schools in rural and urban Nepal. That made me confident, comfortable and systematic while interviewing the teachers, parents and the girl dropouts.

Further, I have worked a social worker in a local NGO with the responsibility of empowering the children (more than 90% were girls) and advocating their right to education who were out of school in the village by raising awareness to their parents on the importance of education for their children. Thus, my previous knowledge on the topic was important to raise the meaningful questions in a way the respondents can understand easily (Merrium, 2009), rather than doubting in terms of reliability and ethical considerations during the work.

In addition,  I am as a female from the so called higher caste Brahmin Hindu family with middle class economical background,  I have experienced gender inequality at the

intersections of race class, gender and religion against female in patriarchal Nepalese society (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005) where as stated earlier all these different dimensions interact together to contribute social inequality (Crenshaw, 1989). My role as a female from a middle class Brahmin Hindu family and my experiences of gender difference in education at home as well as at school have affected the meeting with my informants and to understand their situation. This has played a significant role in the production and interpretation of qualitative data in my paper (Denscombe, 2003:268). Further, being a young female researcher with experience of working among secondary school children, they trusted me (Banks, 2006:11).Therefore, they felt comfortable to share their experience and perception of their school dropout with me. I understood that the role of gender has been one important factor affecting the way I interviewed the girls on their situation. I realized that if I had been a man I would not have been accepted by the girls with trust on the first encounter with them.

## 4.6 Validity and Reliability of the Study

There are some aspects of measurement to evaluate our works, objects and situation from qualitative and quantitative perspectives. Among them validity and reliability are the major ones. If the tool of measurement can assess what it is supposed to measure, it is considered valid.  Similarly, if the measurements have consistency from one observation to the next, it is considered to be reliable (Frankfort, 2000). At the same time, the subject of validity and reliability are complex and controversial. Since the integrity of qualitative research depends on attending the issue of validity and reliability, it is important to discuss how valid and reliable an investigation is. In this regard, I have designed a qualitative study to explore the girls' experience and perception and identify the factors that causes gender differences in education, where it concerns to the accuracy and truthfulness of its findings.

As suggested by Kvale and Mason (1996; 2002), the researcher is the primary instrument while collecting and analyzing the data. The reliability and the validity of the study therefore depend upon the researcher's quality. Hence, an important aspect in qualitative method is that the data is produced in the relationship between researcher and the informants. Therefore, it is impossible to reproduce the interview with another researcher. That is why; different researchers will get different stories from the same informant. But that does not mean that one story is more true that the other. It is because there are different ways to present the same event and experiences. Hence, the significant thing about reliability is that the informant can

agree about the presentation of the story but not necessarily agree about the interpretation. In accordance with this, I cannot guarantee but I strongly hope that my study has carried out the valid and reliable findings, because the research territory is my own locality where I grew up, studied and worked for many years. As stated by Patton (1990), I was very careful in constructing instruments, i.e. interview guide, to be sure that the instrument measures what was supposed to measure applying the qualitative standardized open-ended in-depth interviews to analyze the problem. it was interviewed not only to the girls pulling out from school but also their parents, teachers and the representatives from a local NGO who could be the authentic sources of valid and reliable data  for this study.

## 4.7 Scope, Delimitation and Limitation of the Study

In this part, I have mentioned the boundaries of the study with reference to its scope by specifying the areas to which the conclusion have been confined and the procedural treatment including the sampling procedure, the techniques of data, the development of measuring and their use in the study. The scope of the study has been limited to the exploration of the girls experience and perception of their school dropout and the factors pulling them out of education including the parents', teachers' and key persons' views on it. Thus, this study has focused on these two perspectives where in addition it sheds light on the possible intervention strategies to the problem. Hence, this study has reflected the socio-cultural and family perspectives of one district in Nepal, where among the secondary schools in the district it has purposively been selected and analyzed only the three public schools. So that, it does not correspond to the situation of whole Nepal, as its people live in diverse culture and socio-economic conditions. 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.

## 4.8 Data Analysis

Data analysis, as the core of a research gives an overview of the study analysis and interpretation of the findings. Thus**,** it is a process of bringing order, structure and interpretation to the mass of collected date (Marshall and Rossman, 1999), where it finds the meaning in data that gives an answer to the particular research questions in qualitative design (Merriam, 2009). In other words, data analysis involves the process of organizing what have

been seen, heard and read. So that researcher can make sense of what had been learned. On the ground of data, researcher describes, creates explanations, poses hypotheses, develop theories and link one's story to other stories (Glesne, 2006:147). As mentioned, data analysis in qualitative research is a search for patterns and relationship in data through constant comparing between individual, stories, experiences or meanings attached to their experiences.

In the present study, the taped and noted data generated from in-depth interview have been translated, and transcribed into English from the respondents' language. Then, the empirical data have been analyzed and presented by using the grounded theory as the methodological approach. The approach is suitable for finding meaning in the interview data.

While analyzing the qualitative data, there is not only one best way, though this paper has applied some elements of Grounded theory. This  includes the reading and re-reading the transcribed interviews and examining the interviews in order to led to emerging the themes, coding, building analytic categories and constant comparisons, because the basic idea of this approach is to read and re- read (Borgatti, 2005). This makes it possible to reduce and systematically work with the data. Hence, date analysis followed some ideas from the theory, as the whole of this study is based on constructivist grounded theory approach that studies people in their natural setting. Similarly, critical analysis and discussion of these categorized themes have leaded to make comparisons and to identify contrast among the respondents. Further, while analyzing the raw data, the study has applied a set of theoretical ideas.

As gender inequality and school dropout both are understood as complex phenomena, data were therefore examined through interrelated processes. In brief, the procedures emerging from the interview guide were categorized as: Understanding gender differences in education in Nepal, girls' experience and perception on their school dropout and their understanding on self out of education in patriarchal society, which has helped to reduce the lengthy amount of data summarizing them under the specific categories. The information collected from the respondents on their experience over gender inequality and school dropout phenomena were read, re-read and compared to create familiarity and contradictory information.

# CHAPTER-5: HOW GENDER DETERMINES THE GIRLS' SECONDARY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IN NEPAL

This chapter presents the empirical material, the analysis and the interpretation of the main findings. The empirical material has been organized under two main headlines discussing the different factors categorized under them. The first level is related to the family and the second is related to the school and education system within a social, cultural and economic context in Nepal. I have chosen to organize the text this way in order to present the data more logically and easier for the readers to go through. For the purpose, I have explored the social phenomena that cause gender differences in school and factors influencing the girls' participation at secondary level through a gender lens, where the chapter demonstrates the reasons of girls' school discontinuation by analyzing their perception and experiences. It will also analyze the teachers', parents' and key person's experience and attitude concerning working with the girls dropped out of school. Particularly, this section endeavors to discuss and describe the different mechanisms and processes, how and why they happen and combine which result a situation where many girls do not complete their secondary education. Different factors and different processes interact and are linked with the result is that the education is over for the girls the empirical material shows that a range of interrelated factors intersect to influence girls' dropout from secondary education in Nepal. In addition, gender role refers to the rights, responsibilities, expectations and relationship of men and women with the behaviors that individuals acquire in course of socialization. Concerning gender role in Nepalese society, females hold low position in decision making and choice of freedom in many aspects of their life. Therefore, it is here mainly discussed how gender role plays a multiple role to keep females out of school and lead them to subordination, (intersecting with other social dimensions.)

## 5.1 Factors Related to the Family

In general, family is understood as a group of persons who are related through blood as well as by means of adoption and marriage (Sangrola, 2001). Concerning a child's education, the family is considered as the arena for socialization of every child, which is a part of the informal education. Therefore, the family is a significant factor for the socialization and primary education of every individual. Moreover, the family is more important for providing economic and social security to its members in a society like Nepal, where the social security system is lacking, and it is difficult to get a job and live alone particularly for females. Thus,

in a Nepalese context, parents have important duties and responsibilities towards their children. For this, parents need to give equal education to their children as their basic need together with their food, clothes and health. But parents think about and treat their children differently in terms of their gender, mainly in rural areas like Kawasoti. Hence, in this study, family has been considered as the main factor influencing girl's school attendance.

### 5.1.1 Sons Are Staying and Daughters Are Marrying out

In Nepalese culture, parents have the perception that they must have a son to have a successful life before and after their death. So, while waiting for a son, it might result in a large family. This can create difficulties for giving good care and equal opportunities to all their children. Hence, as the importance is given to sons, parents choose their son(s) to go to school and the daughter(s) to stay and work at home. Hence, family size also plays an important role in choices about 'whom to keep in' and 'whom to keep out' of education. According to the family system, as women work at home and men out of home, men get money for their work but women are not paid even working hard fulltime. That is why; a boy gets higher value in a family than a girl. Gita (case: 1) argues on this:

*"Our culture allows a boy to perform all religious rituals but not to a girl. So, parents think that they need a son both before and after their death, but a daughter is taken only as a part of another family. Hence, they give less value to a daughter and seem to be serious about a son's education."*

Indeed, similar statements as of Gita's were reflected by other girls as well. Also, the key persons and teachers expressed the similar comments in this regard. Supporting this, Surbir (key: 2) provides a justification on this demonstrating the impact of family value up on girls' education through socio-cultural and religious lenses:

*"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 education because of having all the cultural and religious responsibilities over their parents, where as a daughter is considered as a member of other's family. That is why; girls get little value in their own family which create the challenges for them to continue their study"*

This sub-section attempts to show how the patriarchal socio-cultural norms and values influence the girls to pull out from secondary education in Nepal. In doing so, it discusses the role of gender in Nepalese society which is seen influential in constructing the girls' self-identities. While addressing the factors influencing girls' school attendance in a Nepalese context, all most all the informants commented the socio-cultural aspect as the central factor causing gender gap in education. Manmaya's (case: 4) statement provides an example of this:

*"I think it is because of our culture a girl has to face a lot of obstacles. Being a girl, I also had to drop out my school. It is not that my parents do not love me, but it is because of culture. Many parents are like them in our village."*

Taking her view into account, parents love their children equally; but they follow the gender discriminating patriarchal culture. Thus they treat them differently. They want their son to achieve higher education as sons are their supporters and stay with them throughout their life, but a girl should go to her husband's house, and then parents cannot get much support from them.

Indeed, Nepal has been facing a lot of social problems due to the discriminating norms and values between men and women, where a woman is considered incomplete without a man. In addition a girl's education is additional cost for her parents. Kamala (key: 2) adds:

*"Our society perceives a girl and a boy differently from the birth. They are taught differently and grow up in different environment, where a son stay all life with parents and becomes the heir of parental property, and a daughter is sent to her husband's home and get no part of it.*

Throughout the interviews, it was noted that gender role plays a multiple role in keeping the girls out of school. The statement of Manmaya (case: 4) provides an example on this:

*"My father said, 'you are a girl, you have to help your mother. You should not go to school and sport as your brothers. You should look after the brother, clean the house and make food."*

This concerns the different expectations of boys and girls. Durge also reveals on this relevance in the following way:

*"Now my mother wants me to learn sewing skills and wish to send me for its class. But my father does not want this, and mother alone cannot make a decision for this. It is only up to my father to decide what to do and what not to do in the family."*

This is about a father's authority which indicates that a mother has no role in making decision which to some extent limits the girls' (daughter's) access to schooling or to participate in skill learning. In addition, commenting on the gender role and its impact on girl's school dropout, Pushparaj (case: 2) further reinforces on this:

*"In-depth rooted patriarchal Nepalese culture restricts the girls in many things, mainly in education and similarly it frees the boys in many perspectives prioritizing their education"*

Gender discriminating culture seems to be a core reason causing gender gap in education in the Nepalese context, The key idea of the above mentioned statements is that girls cannot get the equal opportunities to go to school and keep their education continue

To sum up, son holds deeper socio-cultural, religious and economic importance for families belonging particularly to the Brahmin caste, whereas daughter gets less value from all these perspectives. According to traditional belief it is only a son who can give deliverance to the ancestors and perform unreal rites. This belief has led many families to abandon their girl children in many cases. Due to this practice, women face much discrimination through their life time. That is why gender discriminating family values is one of the major drawbacks in Nepalese culture, where boy enjoys a privileged status from his birth but girls are often ignored and isolated from social interactions. Because of why, they are not granted the same opportunities, i.e. in education and also other basic rights where the society expects female to inhabit with her husband's family and son with his parents throughout the live having full authority on his parental property both before and after the death of parents. By the result, a son can be independent because of having economic power but daughters are dependent having no right on parental property. This practice therefore result a situation where parents do not think it is positive to get much education for girls. It is not an investment, but a waste of money for them. Hence, in Nepal, its cultural values, for instances: the value of education for women, gender roles, family values, religious beliefs and , the economic context, all these practices inter-relate and produce gender differences in education.

### 5.1.2 Parents' Attitudes

As mentioned above, the role of parents for their children is highly important. Therefore, it is interesting to present the parents' attitudes towards education, which is a one of the factors related to girls' secondary school dropout (Chowdhury et al, 2002; Nath et al, 2008; Levine,

2006; oxaal 1997; Sabates, 2010). The present study demonstrates the impact of parental illiteracy on girls' school discontinuation linking it with low parental income which likely to cause girls dropping out their study. While exploring the perceived value of education among my informants, the majority of the parents revealed that a daughter's education was as a poor investment compared to a son's. It is because a son stays with his parents and contributes to the household economy, whereas at marriage a daughter transfers the advantages accruing from her education to her husband's family. Thus, families perceive that a girl's education will only benefit her husband's household, not her parents'. Some parents believe that girls do not need an education for their roles as wives and mothers, that education undermines cultural practices and it teaches them to ignore tradition. Therefore, the important for girls is to learn household and get ready for marriage. Gita's (case: 2) statement provide an example on this:

*"My parents do not want to spend money for my education because they think that education is not necessary for girls."*

Since the literacy programs are widespread in the country, the statics based on the national literacy rate is very disappointing. More than half of the females are still deprived of education, where the girls' secondary school dropout is very high. Therefore it seems significant to prevent the girls' school dropout encouraging them to stay in school, where the role of parents is crucial. Surbir (key: 1) comments:

*"The role of the parents importantly comes first in order to prevent the girls school dropout because in most cases the secondary girls leave school because of the family factors. It has indeed made challenging for NGOs to return the dropouts back to the school."*

The comment above illustrates that parents' attitudes are important to keep the girls' school continue because the parents can pull their daughters out of school for their use in house hold and agriculture. Based on the empirical material, mainly, due to their poor education, most of the parents are less aware of it, some of them discourage their daughters to take much education, and as they said during the interview, some of them do not want to be changed. Therefore, they follow the conservative tradition and do not bring change in their patriarchal practice, it is because they see less benefit for girls in schooling than in other activities, i.e. learning household, getting marriage. As a result, they think education is less important to girls. They also think that a daughter is a member of other family after marriage, so they do not want to invest in her schooling because they have concept that input in girls never gives

output, thus in their mind set, it is only the waste of money. During the interview, the girls were asked about what caused them to leave school and how. In their replies, they revealed their parents' traditional attitude to their schooling as one of the reasons of their school dropout. Gita's narration provides an example on this:

*"There are many reasons that constraint me to leave school. My parents' conservative attitude to my schooling is the main. I have faced a lot of challenges due to their illiteracy when I was in school. It is because they do not understand the importance of exams. Thus, they want me to be engaged in household work even during my exam week. Therefore, I could not prepare better for exam and I failed it. If anyone can help, I request them to help me raising awareness in my parents."*

In the above narration, Gita emphasizes the lack of understanding for the importance of preparing for an exam and lack of help at home with school work because of her parents' illiteracy. Similarly, Devi (case: 1) and Manmaya (case: 1) also have the same answer that lack of awareness among their parents was the main cause of their school discontinuation. As Devi (case: 1) expressed:

*"Due to the lack of awareness to the value of education for girls, my parents forced me to leave school; however I was good and interested in my study."*

Concernin this, Manmaya (case: 4) says:

*"I do not know why parents treat their children differently as a boy and girl in the name of gender. I think it is because of their illiteracy and lack of social awareness."*

Most of the girls during the interview emphasized the different treatment of boys and girls, as a factor causing gender differences in education. Pushparaj (teacher: 2) further adds on this:

*"I think that the main reason of girls' low school attainment is the lack of awareness among their parents to the importance of education for girls."*

Concerning the parents' attitude to their daughter's education, Goma (Parent: 1), mother of Gita has a negative attitude to girls' education. She expressed in the interview:

*"Gita can read and write now. That's enough for her. She must feel grateful to us because we sent her up to grade 8. Our parents never sent me school, yet I am living happily. It is wise for daughter to learn household work rather going to school. Even if they get education, they*

*have to bear babies and care for them and the family and run the household. That is why, education is not necessary for them?"*

The parents' attitude and expectations towards their daughters is that they are future mothers and housewives, and in these roles they do not think it is necessary with more education than the most basic knowledge. From their point of view, they have been generous permitting her to stay at school until the grade eight.

Suntali, (Parent: 2) mother of Devi, has the similar attitude to Goma (Parent: 1) on the importance of her daughter's education; she said:

*"Devi left school because she is a girl. So, no more schooling is wise for her. In addition, her father earns good but spends much in alcohol. Thus, I couldn't afford to pay her school cost because she has four siblings who also go to school. Two of them are sons who must go school."*

Commenting on their views, parents cannot afford to send all their children to school, and the boys are prioritized, where both of these parents are illiterate and house wives. They expressed a positive view to the basic education for girls but they seem negative to the continuation of schooling longer after this level. It might be because of their illiteracy and poverty. Also it might be the influence of the socio-cultural structure. It is because firstly they believe it unnecessary for daughter to get higher education due to their lack of awareness to the value of higher education for girls. Secondly, even if they are aware of it, they cannot send their daughter for high education due to their poverty and the costly education in Nepal. Then, finally, even if they are aware and can also afford the cost, they do not want their daughter to educate much. It is thus, marriage is important for the future economic support for women. That is why, parents think about what is practically and culturally possible options for their daughters.

### 5.1.3 Early Marriage
Across all Nepali cultural groups, marriage is as a social contract between clans rather than a personal one between individuals, and then females are expected to perform domestic duties including child bearing and caring. Similarly, the females are more disadvantaged than men in education, economic resources and non-agricultural employment in every cast groups. Surbir (key: 1) commented on this issue in the following way:

*"Most of the parents, especially from Brahmin Hindu background have the notion that a girl has to be taught household chores and discipline in the parents' house. Then, she has to be sent to their husband's house without delay. Therefore, the basic education is enough for them because their main duties in future are to bear babies and manage the household, and also work in agriculture if necessary. If they get higher education, it becomes difficult to find a husband for them. On the other hand, they have less opportunity to find job even if they have education. Moreover, they are not free to choose any job as a boy does, which create limitation to utilize their education. Hence, education is viewed not so valuable for girls."*

The prevailing socio-cultural practice has made Nepal a male-dominated country, where a woman is considered incomplete without a man. Therefore, marriage is necessary for making a woman complete and is thus considered as a benefit for a woman. Education cannot make a woman complete in the same way as marriage does. Maybe on the contrary; education might make the woman less attractive for marriage. In addition, a girl's education is additional cost for her parents. Kamala comments on this:

*"In a Brahmin Hindu family, parents think it is better to give a daughter' Kanyadan[3] before menstruation. Therefore, they are not positive to invest in their daughters' further schooling. All these socio-cultural and religious issues combine to pull a girl out of school in the Nepalese community."*

This concerns the kind of future parents see for their daughters. Marriage is the only future career they see, and in this context more education than the basic is not necessary. If there are no alternative careers as single with education in the labor market and as an acceptable position for a woman, it is also an explainable strategy for parents. Concerning marriage arrangements, only the arranged marriage is commonly accepted. Parents themselves are considered culturally and religiously responsible and lucky to arrange and perform their daughters' marriage ceremony. They prefer to do it early, if possible before the first menstruation. It specially happens in Hindu Brahmin families because it is a matter of honor for them to have their daughter married (Acharya et al, 2007). It is more positive if they can do this before a girl menstruated because a girl is considered impure after her first

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[3] The term 'Kanyadaan' is associated with the marriage system which refers to a ritual in the Hindu marriage namely 'the gift of a virgin' symbolizes, the rights over girl being transferred to her husband (WOREC, 2010)-

menstruation. Also parents must give dowry in a daughter's marriage (ibid).This practice result a situation where parents do not think it wise to invest in their daughters' schooling, where sons are perceived as the parents' future, and daughters as a part of other's family to whom parents have a single responsibility that is to give them Kanyadan.

Kamala (key: 2) says:

*"In our community, early marriage plays an active role to pull out a girl from school."*

Parents do not seem serious about their daughters' education as about their sons. Suntali (parent: 2) comments on this:

*"When we are old we will need support from our sons. Also they have a lot of responsibilities even after our death. Thus, we should care for them better. Daughters go to their husband's house, and then we can get no more help from them. My parents also did the same to me. I married in the age of 9. Now I have my own family and I am happy. Hence, it is better to send daughters to their husband's house early. It is our culture and we have to follow it."*

Taking her view into account, she considers this way of doing things as positive; it is a good thing for her daughter to be married early. Also, she refers to tradition and culture as something to be followed. Chetnath (teacher: 1) argues in this concern as:

*"The same conservative and male dominated culture is still being followed, mostly in rural areas, which reinforces the parents to educate their sons and arrange the early marriage of their daughter."*

His argument also concerns about following the tradition. The early marriage system has a crucial role in leading the girls out of school before completing their secondary education cycle. Supporting this, Oxaal (1997), states that early marriage and early pregnancy are among the main factors reducing female education. Providing an illustration to the patriarchal society Manmaya (case: 4) retrieves:

*"When I had just begun in class 9, my parents forced me to leave school in order to take care of my younger sisters and brothers. At the same time I am forced to learn household chores and get ready for marriage. Unfortunately, I was married last year in the age of 14. Now, all the possibilities to restart my school are finished."*

Indeed, the experience of Manmaya demonstrates how social acceptance of women is linked to getting married It reflects that early marriage and early pregnancy seem to be the problematic issues in keeping the girls' school continue in the study context. Her statement also shows how the cultural practices concerning early marriage discourage the girls to think about their life and future. Arranging an early marriage for their daughter does not mean that parents do not love their daughters. They love and want to see their daughters' good future and happy life. But due to the traditional concept and lack of education they cannot understand that a daughter's future is better with education compared to early marriage like Suntali (above) says.

The environment for girls both in and out of home as well as school is unsafe and they are often in risk of being raped (see Sangita, case 6), trafficked or abused in many forms of gender discrimination and stigmatization (see Durge, case 6) (see chapter 2.6 for background information). That is why parents are in a hurry to arrange marriage for their daughters. They think that girls are safer with a husband than being single. No matter whether the marriage is arranged or she has chosen her husband herself, when a bride leaves her own house and goes to the house of her husband's family she finds herself in a highly ambiguous position. She is valued for her domestic labor and as the future mother of sons on the other side. But she is also on the lowest rung of the domestic ladder (Levine, 2006). The case of Manmaya (case: 4) reflects this situation. She was firstly forced to quit her study after completing class 8 and starting class 9 in order to care her younger sisters and brothers and then she was married in the age of 14. She recalled this:

*"After dropping out of school, I got married and came to my husband's home. I was sad and I did not know what to do and what not to do when I was at his home. Because of why, I was frightened about if I make something wrong and the family complained on it. Slowly, I became used to it. Now the family is expecting a son from me because I am pregnant. However, I should do all the household work, and also work in farm and field during planting and harvesting seasons. Except daily housework, I do whatever I am ordered to do, but I have no part in decision makings."*

Commenting on this, it is really a big challenge for girls to live in her husband's family. Similarly, her case reflects the early marriage system in Nepal and also the traditional practice in which family make women work hard even during pregnancy. Surbir (key: 1) explains:

*"Due to the male dominated culture and early marriage system, females are socially, culturally, economically, politically and academically disadvantaged in Nepal. As a result, they are psychologically dominated from the childhood in the environment they grow up and the lessons of gender inequality they are taught."*

Due to the patriarchal family system, females are disadvantaged in many aspects of life which influence them psychologically to think that they do not hold equal position in their society because they are not males. During the field work, Goma, (parent: 1) commented in the following way when asked to give a reason why her daughter did not continue her school:

*"What is the benefit of completing secondary education for a girl..? Now she can read and write Nepali, and that is enough for her. Better for her successful life is to learn housework, marry in time and have children early."*

Taking her statement into consideration, it can also be illustrated as an example of parents' patriarchal perception, attitude and belief towards their daughter in Nepal, where there are no more possibilities for girls in the context of the political, economic, social and cultural situation.

All in all, the study concludes that early marriage resulting in teenage pregnancy covering the age of 10-19 seems as a common social problem that directly affect the girls to be out of school. It is considered as one of the key reasons of girls' secondary school dropout (see Manmaya, case: 4). Parents pull out their daughters from school and arrange their marriage at an early age with the wish and blessing on their daughter to have children as soon as possible.

Many factors discussed above are interrelated to one another in the process of a girl's school dropout. Thus, they always come combined. Following the combination, it is here highlighted on early marriage, as one of these factors causing gender gap in education in Nepalese context, where most people follow the patriarchal culture in which man is perceived superior and woman is inferior. Similarly, a daughter is considered for marriage and parents traditionally follow the early marriage system mainly in remote Nepal. Therefore, there are no more possibilities for girls to make their career. Also, there are some alternatives to marriage or to delay marriage such as, keeping study continue or having a job and helping the family economy. But they are not attractive but rather challenging in practice. It is because when a

girl postpones to marriage, both she and her family will be stigmatized for being unable to marry in time with some blames, doubts and rumors like having boyfriend, involving in prostitution or having some social (characterless), physical and mental (having diseases) defects, that might be true in some cases but false in many cases (Bhusal, 2011). This would make it difficult for her family to arrange her marriage later. As a result, the young girls and their family are lead into the dilemma whether making career or arranging marriage.

### 5. 1.4 Factors Related to the Economy

Nepal is a country characterized by a relatively high population, low economy, a poor socio-economic infrastructure and a big gap between rich and poor with a majority of population living in severe poverty occupationally depending on agriculture. And thus, it is not surprising that parents cannot afford school costs and they expect help from children. On the other hand, parents have certain expectations from sending their children to school. They often expect quick returns from education, for example, getting a job and start earning money just after finishing a certain level of education. But it is less possible in case of a girl, who is also highly needed for household work. Based on the empirical data, poverty is a commonly cited factor by the girls, parents, teachers and key persons besides many other interrelated factors including gender inequality for keeping girls out of school. However education is free up to primary school, the costs are increasing from lower secondary level, and many families instead choose to spend their money on other needs (see Devi, case: 1) (CERID 2005:21). Foolmya (case: 3) does provide an illustration on this:

 *"My father said that it is costly to go to school and he cannot afford it longer, however I do not ask for pocket money for my food at school."*

Taking their experience into consideration, parents cannot afford school cost for all their children due to poverty and the girls understand it. Therefore, they also try applying some strategies to manage it by minimizing cost, i.e. not asking for pocket money, in order to convince their parents to continue their studies. But traditional education system with theoretical curriculum does not guarantee a chance of employment in Nepal**.** As a result, parents seem passive to invest in education, especially for girls.

The majority of the girls come from a socio-economic background where the parents belong to joint families involving in agriculture with a middle and low income. Similarly, their educational level was low and the majority of the mothers were illiterate housewife and some fathers were illiterate too and some were just literate. During the interviews, most of the

parents reported poverty as a reason for their daughters' school dropout, and some parents revealed that education is important for boys, as they can give output. It is not necessary for girls because it does not give back the financial benefit.  Based on this, the study illustrates a clear combination of patriarchal socio-culture into girls' school dropout which associates sons with economic and social advantage and the daughters as burdens (WOREC, 2009).In the study context, culture is connected with the girls' low school enrollment and high dropout, where involves their parents' economic status. Devi (case: 1) expresses her experience concerning this in the following way:

*"My parents were not positive to my schooling. Thus, as I had just started class 9; they obliged me to leave school and work at home, because they could not afford my school cost…."*

In addition, as stated earlier, Nepal is one of the poorest countries, which is in the bottom of social, economic and educational indexes of development in the world. Thus poverty is indeed a reason of girls' school discontinuation (Rao, 2000). Hunt's (2008) study indicates a strong link among parents' income, gender and dropping out, whereas relating to Hunt (ibid) to some extent, the present study reflects a core reason that concern on the gender matter, because to pay for girls' education is an uncertain investment in which parents were not interested (see Gita, case: 2). Also, they should go to another's house, so they cannot be a part of economic support for parents in future which decreases the girls' social and family value as well in the context. The majority of girls reported pressure from their parents which lead them out of school because they understand the parentss' poverty influencing by the gender discriminating culture in their society, where they have very rare possibility to rejoin their school. Pushparaj (teacher: 2) comments in this regard as:

*"I think the government should do more to encourage the girls from struggling families to stay in school and create more employment opportunities for them."*

The lack of work opportunity especially for girls is seen as a structural as well as a gender problem discouraging parents to invest on their daughter's education. Most of the parents agreed that it was better for the whole family if the girls worked at home and learned household work rather than attending further school.  In rural areas people have no source to cash income compared to urban people. Goma's statement (parent: 1) provides an example on this:

*"We are farmers and our occupation is agriculture. Mainly, we produce banana and custard in the farm, and paddy and wheat in the field. From this, we can only manage the school cost for sons*

Based on her statement, the cash flow from agriculture does not make much cash to save. When it decreases the parents income, then they cannot send all their children to school because of high school expenses, then they have to choose whom to send to school and whom to ask to stay at home. Then obviously, it will be girls to leave school because they always deserve the second position in Nepalese society. The experience of Devi (case: 1) provide an example on this:

**"***I was continuing my school even after the NGO discontinued its support (scholarship) for my study. But my parents earned not enough to send five children to school including me. Thus, they convinced me to leave school. As I was still keen to complete at least SLC exam, they pressed me to quit my school. They explained that they have little money. That is why; they can only pay for brothers. They want to send them to school because education is more important for boys rather than girls. Many of the parents in my neighborhood also forced their daughters to leave school. One of my friends, who left school because of the same reason as I did, works in a hotel now nearby the weekly supermarket."*

Poverty influences the girls' schooling more than a boy in Nepalese context because it follows tradition close behind the poverty (see Gita, case: 2). parents manage money for sons and they plead poverty when it is turn to buy school materials for daughters.. Similarly, her story reflects that the support from the local NGO, HICODEF (see Economic Support from NGOs), had been a source of motivation for girls to continue their school and do better in their study strengthening their self- confidence and helping to get families support and acceptance to continue their education. However, after the discontinuation of NGO support, the parents' discriminating behaves at them was again not less than before. This indeed made them feel discouraged to keeping their school continues. This provides an example that economic support helps girls to stay in school.

To sum up, the section demonstrates that family poverty is linked with girl's dropout but it is not just an apparent reason of it. Based on data, many girls from poor family have experienced the gender constraint to their education. Hence, the role of family with its acceptance and financial support is valuable for girls to keep their school continue.

### 5.1.5 Property Transference

Even if the constitution of Nepal has addressed the equal rights to inherit the parental property for both girls and boys, the boys often take over the property because of the prevailing socio-cultural norms and values. Also the girls are entitled to claim the property belonging to their husband after marriage, but if the marriage is terminated in any case, they are deprived from this right too (Sangroula, 2001). All the property belonging to parents is socio-culturally and religiously transferred to their son when the parents are too old or they pass away. If more than one son is involved, the property is equally transferred to all of them. This practice makes the women economically dependent on family, particularly father and husband due to which girls and woman get lower value than men, and thus they have no authority in many things, for example: making decision about continuing and discontinuing their school, plan making for future etc. which creates uncertainty about their future. The property transference is therefore an important factor affecting the girls' education. In the interview, some informants viewed that equal right to property would reduce the gender differences in education. However that would not be before parents had died and the girls would be grown up, it influences their schooling. It is because the girls are treated at present on the basis of future. Thus they would be equally powerful through the economical perspective, if they are also considered to have the equal right to parental property from the birth as it is practiced with a boy. Then they would have high probability to decide their selves about keeping their education continue or not. Manmaya (case: 4) argues on this providing an illustration as:

"*I think that property is power. As our culture allows the parental property only to sons, they are powerful and girls are powerless having no right on it. If a girl and boy are born from the same parents why only boy gets right to parental property..? I do not understand this. I think it would be justice of both of them have equal right to the parental property[5].*"

The similar statement is expressed by Gita (case: 2). She explains on this as:

"*It is true that we can do many things if we have money and we cannot do anything if we have no money. Thus, a boy can do many things that they like because all the parental wealth culturally belongs to them. On the other way, girls get nothing. Moreover, their own parents behave them as if they were temporary members of their family and give them less value. I think if parental property was equally distributed to both son and daughter, there would be no*

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[5] 'Parental property' refers to all the properties, i.e. cash, land that belongs to the parents (Bhusal, 2011).

*gender discrimination and girls should not quit their school even being interested to their study"*

Property transference practice contributes to the gender differences in education, since it occurs late in their lives, not when they are young and going to school. It is because differences and discrimination took place from the birth. When a boy is born he is perceived as the owner of his parental property. But if it is a girl, she is perceived as a member to be given to other's family later. This tradition therefore determines more opportunities, i.e education to a boy allowing more power due to his economical backup and this goes opposite to a girl. It is thus this practice as many other factors mentioned in the study influences girls' education and many other aspects of their life due to their economic dependency on parents or brothers. The study shows that the practice of parental property transformation is mostly done by parents themselves and their family relatives in the name of tradition. However it is addressed in law the equal right to parental property for both daughter and son it is not followed in practice because cultural practices are mostly transmitted informally in Nepal which internally affects the girls' access to education and also on their future.

### 5.1.6 Organization of the Household

There are many factors interacting in the process of girls' secondary school dropout which emerge from their household situation such as child labor, caring for siblings and poverty. Manmaya (case: 3) expressed it in this way:

*"I am an elder sister of my six younger sisters and brothers. My parents are farmers and both are illiterate. They told me to stay at home when they needed my help. Therefore, caring for my sisters and brothers including the household chores always constrained me from going to school."*

Her argument is also supported by the key person. Surbir (key: 1) noted that:

*"Household chores and siblings' care are the major family issues which constrain the girls to get access to education."*

The position in the sibling order could also be crucial because it has a direct influence to pull a girl out of school, but it does not influence for boys, because only the girls are forced to take up the responsibilities of house tasks at an early age and that affect their education in term of dropping out (Sharma, 2007).While talking about the factors leading the girls out of school,

Pushparaj (teacher: 2) strongly agreed that the family was an influencing factor to pull the girls out of school. He said:

*"The girls miss on class frequently. They mostly do so during the period of planting and harvesting crops."*

According to him, girls miss class often for helping parents in agricultural work, which is seasonal during planting and harvesting the crops. Gita with watered eyes, (case: 2) said:

*"I don't like to do household chores. I prefer to study. I feel very tired because of workload at home. My parents always want me to work at home and help them with work in farm and field. They become happy when I work a lot, but they became angry when I insist to go school. They do not think seriously about my education."*

Hearing her experience and knowing about her situation, it is manifested that the parents do not pay attention to girls' education. They expect their daughters to help them with house work and farming rather than schooling. The daughters want to go school but cannot perform better at study as they are tired due to workload. Durge (case: 5) also has nearly the similar experience. She expressed:

*"I was happy with friends at school rather than at home, although I left school myself because I was very tired due to household workload, and also I did not have time to do homework. Similarly, I mostly missed school when there was much work either at home or in the field especially the agricultural seasonal works."*

Parents want to use their daughters as their helper or labor but they do not think seriously about their education. For this reason, girls get tired and frustrated. They cannot actively participate in classroom learning activities. Then the girls quit their study themselves. Devi (case: 1) answers the question about the reasons of her school dropout concerning family factor in this way:

*"If I have had support from my family, I would do something good in my life. But they have no understanding that a girl also needs education and she can do better if she gets education. They become happy when I am busy involving in household. Now I am very sad to be out of*

*school. If I get chance from somewhere or from someone I want to restart my school. If my parents refused it, I will try my best to convince them."*

Her experience reflects that girls want to continue school even among challenges and want to search a better future. Also her statement demonstrates that apart from poverty gender discrimination is a key reason for her school dropout. Throughout the interviews, it was noted that almost all the girls were keen to go school. Nevertheless they were vulnerable as they were engaged in households and with no support and no motivation from family. This has eventually made them to discontinue school. In the context, girls combine their study with work at home and away from home in order to satisfy household needs (Admassie, 2003).

This study demonstrates that the patriarchal organization of household is a cause contributing girl's low educational achievement. When they are culturally assigned all household responsibilities, on one side they have no time to spend with their study and on the other hand, they are tired and cannot concentrate in study. Both of these reasons de-motivate them to continue their studies.

Chetnath's (teacher: 1) comments further demonstrates how the duties concerning household affects the girls to stay out of secondary education.

*"More than a quarter of the girls are pulled out of school because they are needed at home in the situation such as: if a new baby has been born, and the older sister, who had been taking care of younger siblings, has got married , or someone in the household had become chronically sick."*

Concerning this, Foolmaya (case: 3) expressed her experience as:

*"Even when I was going school, I had to drop my class frequently. Mostly, I had to miss class when my younger sisters, brothers and my parents fell sick."*

Children whose parents and siblings fall ill might be expected to be caregivers for them, at times causing them to miss or drop out of school. This is especially the case for girls (Case and Ardington, 2006; Kane, 2004).

Indeed, the girls' experience reflects how the girls are assigned to household duties and how the boys are kept far from it. Moreover, her narration also provides evidence that the causes of girls' school dropout are not restricted only to the family economy but also to the prevailing

socio-cultural structures. In addition, household and child care by girls as young as 7 years of age is referred to by Hodfar (1986) and Khafagy (1990). While both sons and daughters have household task the demand for girls' labor is higher, and this unequal demand for household labor translates into educational disadvantage of girls (Guhl, 1990). The other common cause for girls' secondary school discontinuation in Nepal is the arrival of a marriage proposal connecting with the household.  For this purpose, they think it most important to learn household chores before marriage. Therefore, in most cases, parents pull out their daughter from school and engage them in household.

As mentioned, parents want to invest only on son because they are like their life insurance. In contrast, they think that girls should get marriage, bear children, so education is extra for them.  In fact, parents do not think it important for girls to go to school. The majority of the informants have expressed that they discontinued their study because of the heavy load of household. However, some of them were interested in continuing their study even managing household, but their parents forced them to quit their study because they need their daughters to work whole day or to involve in labor for money. The study shows that the organization of household is a factor contributing to gender differences in education. It is because the household duties and responsibilities are culturally assigned to the daughter. Therefore, girls are kept at home within the household chores and boys are sent to school for education.

### 5.1.7. Economic Support from NGOs

 In the previous topic it has been discussed on the importance of economy for keeping the girls in school. Here in this sub- section it has been attempted to go further into that topic discussing on NGO's support to keep the girls' school continue including some strategies preventing their school discontinuation and encourage the continuation. Many NGOs are activating their efforts to empower the girls and women to stay in school and preventing dropout. Economic support and raising awareness are the NGOs' central activities. In this sub section, my attempt will be to bring forth a discussion of some activities undertaken by NGO. As referred in chapter 3, the empowerment concept has been defined as a way of developing confidence in girls' own capacities in order to uplift their identity, social and family value by raising awareness on their right to schooling and giving them voice against gender differences in education by advocating and sensitizing their family and community. More simply, the key idea of empowerment has been understood as the process of empowering the girls and women who were deprived from their right to continue education and in disempowering conditions.

Despite the parents' negative attitude to invest in girls' education the NGO's 'Friendship Scholarship' and frequent free distribution of study materials have really supported the girls to continue their study.. In addition, its activities in raising awareness among their parents on the importance of education for girls have indeed contributed the girls to continue their education. It also motivated the girls to develop their self-esteem and feel pride, as these facilities were especially for girls, which further help to strengthen the girls' self-encouragement and self-empowerment which was the most important element in the recovery of gender stigmatization and discrimination. Related to this Pushparaj (teacher: 1) expressed:

*"When the girls were getting the economic support (Friendship scholarship) from NGO, their dropout rate was less. Later when the support is discontinued, girls' dropout rate went higher again."*

Based on the above statement, it seems that the economic support from the NGO was helpful to keep the girls in school. Also it shows that economy is an important factor affecting girls' schooling. The girls have responded that studying with support of NGO was a better experience than before. Devi (case 1) expressed here:

*"I felt better both at home and at school when I had got financial support from NGO through its friendship scholarship program. Before I got this support, my parents used to get angry while asking money for school materials, and they mostly rejected to give it. After I used to bring material from school given by NGO and also shared it to my junior brother, my parents were happy at me."*

The story narrated by Devi reflects that parents are less negative to their daughters' education if they get financial support. That is why, after the NGO couldn't continue supporting long term for the girls who were at risk of pulling out of school, were forced to discontinue their study by their parents. After pulling out the girls from school, parents focused them to learn household and get ready for marriage. This practice deeply disempowered the girls because they were still interested to   stay in school.

To sum up, the economic support provided by the NGO have strengthened the girls and helped them to stay in school.  However, the discontinuation of support from NGO has leaded them feel disempowered (to stay in school). Depending on the girls' expressions, most of

them have experienced disempowerment rather than empowerment concerning staying in school when the support suddenly stopped due to the NGO's weak economy.


**5.1.8 Role of NGOs**

More than 2500 NGOs are already working and more are in the moment to be started in Nepal (Timsina, 2010), even if no such a big progress can be seen. Therefore, it seems not easy to change culturally printed people' attitudes. Again, only 48.6% people are just literate (Shields et al, 2008). In this sense, it is challenging for NGOs to work in the context.


The role of organization like NGOs has been valuable in preventing a lot of social problem, mainly the education in Nepal as in other developing countries. As this study shows that the girls stay in school when they were getting financial support from NGO but when NGO stopped providing support, then immediately girls left schools. It proved NGO's role in combating girls' school dropout is crucial. Pushparaj (teacher: 2) clarifies this as:


*"Indeed, support from our local NGO, HICODEF has been significant not only for students, especially for girls but also for teachers. The head teacher including its administration and management committee are getting effective training frequently to their related work issues. NGO's efforts to encourage girls' school attainment providing financial support, home visit service in order to raise awareness among their parents has been really valuable. If NGO could continue these supportive activities, I believe that it would play a vital role in reducing girl's school dropout in this locality."*


Pandey (2011) found out that 32 % children leaves school because of family issues like household, siblings' care, helping parents in agriculture due to the parents' illiteracy and lack of awareness rather than poverty pull the girl out of education, therefore NGO's effort of raising awareness in parents seems more valuable. The education team leader, Surbir (key: 2), explains the NGO's contemporary activities as:

*"Our effort is to continue to provide financial support/scholarship to vulnerable girls as much as possible. Except that, currently we are focusing awareness programs in reducing the gender discriminatory practices in education including early marriage and early pregnancy along with empowerment-oriented programs according to the geo-cultural context of our*

*locality. Similarly, we are running non-formal education at the grass root level. In addition, our focus is also in building girls' toilets and make sanitary pads available in school."*

Taking this into consideration, it can be justified that local NGO's role in preventing girls' school discontinuation is indeed significant in Nepal. The scholarship and study materials support from NGO including raising awareness among parents for the importance of girls' education and home visit services are seen significant to motivate and encourage the girls to stay in school. This also helped them to some extent in developing their understanding on self and hope for future, but unfortunately when the NGO's support stopped, the girls' schooling also stopped. Then, the future of those girls has been pushed into the dilemma. Taking this case into account, the study concludes that the role of NGOs is important concerning keeping the girls' in secondary school and successfully complete it, so as developing their self - identity and their future with hope, dreams and plans.

**5.1.9 Gender Inequality in the Debate between Education and Poverty**
The majority of the studies (Oxaal, 1997, Bhusal, 2011, Levine, 2007; Lewin and Sabates, 2011; Sharma et al, 2007; Pandey, 2011; Groot, 2007; Fleisch's 2010) show that much of the debate on girls' secondary school dropout is set against the backdrop of economy, yet as stated by Crenshaw, K. (1989) in her intersectionality concept, different aspects intersect and produce a situation of inequality and subordination. One factor is not given priority to another. By implementing the concept, this study demonstrates that the interplay between gender and poverty produce gender inequality in education causing girls' school dropout determining their fate. Gender is seen as the primary motive and poverty as the secondary to address the girls' experiences who are subjected to multiple forms of subordination in their society. Thus, the study has discussed the gender perspective as an important issue in education, which creates a gap in it differentiating between a girl and a boy in the name of gender, typically in concern of their education. the majority of the informants thought that there are mainly two factors i.e. gender discriminatory culture and poverty including other sub-factors combined with them as stated earlier, such as family, school, socio-cultural and economic factors, affecting them to continue their study, where they concluded gender inequality as a key reason of their school dropout. The narration of Gita (case: 2) provides an example on this:

*"I think it is more gender discriminatory culture rather than poverty that made me to leave school because my parents sent all three brothers to school. My big brother completed his MA*

*and now has a government job. Similarly, my second brother also has college education and he works in Nepal police, then my younger brother goes to boarding which is very expensive. On the other side, my big sister married after primary school in the age of 13, and my second sister left school during lower secondary. Now I am forced to quit my study during secondary. If my parents want me go school, it is not that they cannot afford because presently they have got financial support from my brothers and also they have income from my father's little business and from agriculture, still they point to poverty when it comes my turn to continue school. Hence, it is sad to be a girl in Nepalese society."*

According to this narration, poverty is not just an apparent reason of girls' secondary school discontinuation, but is the parents' negative attitude to girl's education due to the influence of patriarchal culture and lack of awareness on the important of education for their daughters. The study reflects that many girls from middle class and poor family have experienced the gender constraint to their education. In addition, a study conducted in Egypt (Hammy, 1994, in Pandey, 2006) provides an example of the attitudes of parents and others towards the education of girls. Most of the women who cited economic reasons in the study were members of large families and given the attitudinal constraints girls face are more likely to given lower priority in education, such a disadvantaged situation of girls extend the factors contributing to their lack of education in Nepal. Supporting Gita (case: 2), Surbir (key: 1) further shows this in the following way:

*"However my parents found money to pay a son's school cost; they showed poverty when it comes to a daughter's turn continuing in school."*

Gender inequality is seen in the mainstream debate on education and poverty, where gender affects internally and poverty affects externally on the girls' demand for education. Further, Devi (case: 1) expressed:

*"My parents are a middle class family with six children. It is their poverty to constraint me from my schooling, still I have realized that the reason is their negative attitude to girls' further schooling more than poverty. If they are positive to my schooling in the same way as they are to my brothers schooling, I think that they can manage it."*

In addition, concerning economical factor and girl's school dropout, Kamala (key: 2) further reinforces:

*"The girls who dropped out of secondary school are not only from poor family. Also, the girls from middle class and in some cases also from higher cases families pull out their daughters from secondary level education"*

This provides evidence that the reason of girl's school dropout is not limited to the economic factor, but parents' excuse is poor economy. Maybe that is a more legitimate reason than saying that they are not willing to use the money on her education because she is a girl. It is because we can see that the girls who dropped out of secondary school are not only from poor family. Some of them obviously are from poor families in such developing country, but poor does not mean that they are poorer who cannot even afford their children's public school cost. Also, the girls from middle class and in some cases also from higher cases families pull out their daughter from secondary level education. Considering this, the girls' interest in study and economical condition of the family including their less positive attitude to invest on girls' education play together an important role in leading the girls out of schools. Concluding the gender debate on education and poverty Chetnath (teacher: 1) stated as:

*"It is sad to have a situation whether girls are entitled to or not to go school. It is indeed set that while we are entering into the twenty first century, we are still debating what girls deserve or not."*

All in all, the above mentioned statements of the respondents exhibit the gender as the primary incentive of girls' secondary school discontinuation and poverty as the second, because parents found money to pay a son's school cost; they pleaded poverty when it came to a daughter turn continuing in school (key: 1). While the few girls are influenced by the financial burden (see Foolmaya, case: 3), most of other are influenced by the patriarchal socio-cultural practices including parents' negative attitude to girls' schooling, their lack of awareness, yet they were sensitively fastened with their daughters. The girls have also experienced gender discrimination both at home and school as they were treated unequally to boys by their own parents and teachers. By the result, the girls have perceived their roles less important than boys in many perspectives in family as well as in school. Moreover, factors such as social and cultural attitudes and policy priorities are significant in reducing girls' school dropout because poverty is not a single cause of it rather it is the result of intersection of many factors including poverty such as family, school and patriarchal socio- cultural and religious norms and values.

## 5. 2 Factors Related to the School

In this section, how different aspects of the schools as an institution affect girls' education will be discussed. It concerns both material aspects of the school building, where it is located and how it is built. It concerns teachers' and students' attitudes and behavior and how the teaching is organized including the gender of the teacher. These aspects are important to investigate because these are the fundamental bases which determine the children keeping them inside or pushing them out from the school gate. Many studies show, school related factors contribute to girls' incomplete education (see Sharma 2007, Pandey 2011, Bhusal 2011, Sabates 2010; Groot, 2007).

### 5.2.1 The Material Aspect of the School: Location and Building

The distance to school concerning girls' physical safety while travelling between home and school, is often given as a reason for keeping the girls out of school in Nepal. Hence, in this section, I will demonstrate how school location and insecurity in getting to and returning from school influence the girls' school attendance. As mention earlier (in chapter 2), rape of girls occurred on the way to school and even at school. Girls are raped on their way while going to school (see Sangita, case: 6), on the way to market (see a case of teenage gang rape) and they are also punished at school and they died (see a case of Manju, some are raped and killed by their own teacher after rape (see a case of Khyati) while mentioning a few. (These cases can be seen on Bhandafor news, 29 mar. 2012) *at:* http://canadanepal.net/*).*

Most of the cases concern secondary school girls indicate the young girls' unsafe situation in and out of school by representing risk to be raped, i.e. on the way to school. Supporting this, Panos (2003) argues that for many young girls the most common place where sexual coercion and harassment are experienced is in school. Similar to the  unsecured school distance, old and incomplete school building with poor foundation, e.g. having no door, water leaking roof etc lacking sanitary facilities (toilets and sanitary pads) also affect the girls school attainment. In this sense, unsafe school location and building can be considered as an important factor influencing girls' secondary school dropout. In this study, school location means an unsecured condition of young girls on the way to school rather than long distance. During the interviews, the parents expressed that they do not want to send their daughters to school because their daughter cannot be safe. Goma (parent: 1) provides one example:

*"..Also it is not sure that a girl who goes to school, comes back to home safely or not"*

It is because in some cases they are abused by their own teachers (see Sangita, case: 6) and teased by their boys classmates (see Durge, case: 5). on this basis, it is possible to claim that girls' unsecured situation is an important reason of girls' school discontinuation.

The geographical condition of Nepal has also influenced the education sector. In some cases, there are no enough schools available in rural areas. So children have to go long which is more risky particularly for girls to be sexually abused on the way. The experience of Durge (case: 6) does provide an illustration of this situation:

*"It takes about an hour to reach at school. I do not have transport, i.e cycle. Also I have no friends. Sometimes, while walking alone, school boys and other young men try to tease me on the way. I am scared of them. And sometime, I got late to reach school due to this. Then the teachers punish me for being late. Therefore, I do not want to go to school."*

In her story she mentions long distance to school, fear of being teased or abused, lack of transport and teachers' punishment due to the late arrival at school seem to push the young girls out of school. Further, according to the parents, in Nawalparasi, it is not so long distance to go to school, however many incidents are seen to be occurred on the way to school with girls. Sangita's statement can provide an example on this:

*"Yet the school was only in about half an hour distance, I was attempted raped on the way to school in a banana farm 2-3 times. By that, I am frightened on the way to go school every day. Then after, I hardly passed class 9 and left school just in the beginning of class 10, although I was interested in study."*

Taking her experience into consideration, school distance primarily concerning the girls' physical security on the way to school can be considered as one of the school factors influencing the girls' secondary school attendance. In addition teachers' behavior also affects the young girls to stay in and out of school, which will be discussed in the next section.

### 5.2.2. Teachers' Behavior

Many forces interact together to spell an early end to education for girls. One among them is teachers' behavior. Parents during the interview argued that teacher's discriminating as well as abusive behavior was also responsible for their daughters' school dropout, for instance: Sangita, (case: 6) reveals her experience on this as:

*"I had my first menstruation at school. Knowing about it, my friends, especially the boys teased me. From the same day, one teacher also started to tease me ridiculously and tried to touch me in a sexual manner when he met me alone. I am really discouraged by this all to continue my school."*

The girls are considered young and not a child any longer after her first menstruation. Then, some teachers behave with their girls students in a sexual manner without their consent. In this way, the onset of puberty is a significant factor which affects the girls' education because it increases their vulnerability and may therefore make parents decide to withdraw their daughter from school. Hence, girls may drop out of school when they feel frustrated due to their teachers' behave and boys' teasing**.** Durge (case: 5) commented on this:

*"Teachers also behave differently to girls. When the boys tease us we comment to them but some teachers scold us rather than punishing the boys, and some teachers just ignore it. So, boys tease us again and again"*

Therefore, the girls feel discouraged to continue their study due to the teachers' discrimination and problem avoiding behavior which supports boys to tease the girls at school. Mentioning this Acharya noted in IRIN report (2009) that most public schools in Nepal are co-ed and girls are often harassed by their male counterparts. Therefore, the role of school comes in the front to minimize such school reasons of pushing the girls out of school and has to play a vital role in attracting the girls' school attainment.

Further, the girls expressed their discomforting experience at school, because schools exercise a powerful influence on children school dropout, girls in particular. Teachers' behavior and school environment can shape the perceptions and attitudes of a child towards the importance of education either in a positive or in a negative way. Girls in the beginning of the secondary level come to school with great enthusiasm, but later when they are treated badly by their own teachers, they lose their self -confidence and also lose interest to continue the class. As an example, we can see Sangita's case mentioned earlier (case: 6), where she faced even more challenges from her friends, especially boys classmates and also from the teachers in the period when she had menstruation and later. By this, she felt harassed from the school environment, and then she discontinued her study. Foolmaya (case: 6) adds:

*"Friends used to laugh at me when teacher punishes me for not doing homework and not answering his questions. That is why; I did not feel pleasure to go to school."*

The girls are punished and feel humiliated. Hence, some secondary school girls who have already entered in early maturation stage prefer to stay at home rather than going school due to the fear of being ridiculed and stigmatized by their own male teachers and classmates, specially the boys in many cases, during menstruation. It is because male teachers cannot understand the problems with female body in the same way as a female teacher. So the girls in such cases do not like their teachers' behavior which affects the girls to attain their class regularly.. They feel shy to share their individual physical problem to male teachers and in Nepal it is not so often found female teacher in secondary level in remote localities. Similarly, some of the male teachers have the abusive behavior to girl as mentioned in the case of Sangita (case.6). Thus, due to the lack of female teachers and male teachers' abusive behavior girls are discouraged to continue their school. Therefore, a female teacher is preferred at school and the problem with lack of female teachers will be discussed in the next section.

### 5.2.3 Lack of Female Teacher

According to the teachers, schools lack an adequate number of female teachers, which has affected the girls' school attendance. And it is highly agreed by the parents as discussed in earlier section. The statics shows that at secondary level, the share of female teacher is only 7% (Government of Nepal, 2005:17), reflecting the high need of female participation in teaching profession. Concerning this issue teacher Chetnath (teacher: 1) noted as:

*"The number of teachers appointed by the government is not enough and the case is the same at our school as well, however SMC (School Management Committee) has managed it. We have two female teachers in primary level. Now our need is a female teacher in the secondary level, because it is believed that a lady is important to connect with young girls students in their teenage problems, i.e. menstruation."*

Taking his explanation into account, the teachers provided by the government are not adequate in schools. Moreover, there is a lack of female teachers at all levels, mainly in secondary. . Though on the average there is one female teacher in each primary school, in reality there are more than 10000 schools that do not have a single female teacher. (MOES 2004 in Acharya, M. et al (2007). schools wish to appoint a female teacher at every level with the purpose of providing a comfortable environment for girls to share their teenage problems.

Similarly, during the in-depth interview, the girls also revealed that they would like female teachers at their school. Sangita's (case: 6) expressed it in this way:

*"When I get problems such as headache, stomach pain at school, I feel shame and I was also scared to explain it to a male teacher in order to ask for leave. I think it would be good if there was a female teacher, but our school has female teacher only in primary level."*

Similarly, Manmaya (case: 4) seems completely agreed to Sangita. She adds:

*"It is not easy to share ladies' problems, i.e. menstruation, to a male teacher. But my school has no female teachers in secondary level. That is why, we must tell it to the male teachers. Also sometimes they avoid listening about it and sometime they respond it as if they did not understand. Therefore, it would be easy for girls if there is a female teacher in secondary level as well."*

The girls' statements above have shown that they would like to have a female teacher at their school to whom they feel it easier to share their teenage problems than to a male teacher, because they feel ashamed talking about such problems to a male teacher. Also their statements reflect that they feel embarrassed to share such problem to a male teacher when they avoid listening about it. Moreover, the parents also revealed the lack of female teacher as a school factor affecting their daughters' school discontinuation. Goma's (parent: 1) expression provides an illustration on this:

*"There are only the male teachers teach in higher level. I do not know how they behave with girls. It is heard that teachers themselves misuse the young girls. So, it is not good for girls to continue school when they are young."*

This shows that also parents would like to have female teacher in secondary level. They think their daughters are more safe and comfortable with female teachers, as there are many cases where male teachers abuse teenage girls at this level, which the story Sangita told (page 77) illustrates.

All in all, almost all the responses mentioned above demonstrated the lack of female teacher as a factor influencing the girls' secondary school attendance. But due to the parents' negative attitude to girls' education in the combination of many other factors as mentioned, there are

still very few female teachers particularly in secondary level, which is affecting the girls' school attainment mainly in rural Nepal. Therefore, it is important to have female teachers in every school and in every level in a Nepalese context. It is because there is lack of toilets and sanitary pads at school on one hand and on the other hand they are misbehaved by their own male teachers and peers because of their menstruation issue. They prefer to share such problem only with female teachers but due to the lack of female teachers they cannot do so. Then, this all de-motivated them to continue their study. Because of the same reason, in most cases parents also prefer to send their daughters to school if it has female teacher even in secondary level. In addition, if the school has a female teachers, parents get motivation to send their daughter to school or they can be more positive to educate their daughter thinking that daughter also can be a teacher in future. Then, the investment on girls' education will not be a waste.

### 5.2.4 Failure in School Exams: A Gateway to Dropout

In the previous section, the lack of female teacher and its effect on the girls' secondary school attendance was discussed. In this section, it will be argued how failure in school exams is a gateway to dropout. Poor educational achievement and failure in school exams has also been considered as a school related factor to be an obstacle for the girls in continuing their education in Nepal.. The experience of Durge (case: 5) is an illustration of this:

*"Working at home and equally helping parents in agriculture, I had no time to read and do homework at home. Therefore, I failed exam. Thus, I felt anxiety to be teased by friends and scolded by parents. Then, I lost my interest in repeating the same class and left school."*

The work pressure from parents result the lack of timework for their study and exam preparation which results failure at school exams, and that leads to the girls' withdrawal from school, where time for going to school and do homework are the crucial factors which are related and combined in such ways and in a process to lead the girls out of education. Further, Gita (case: 2) has also expressed nearly the similar experience. She narrates:

*"Though I tried my best to do better in the exam, I failed the exam last year in class 9. As I am assigned to do all household chores, I cannot manage time for my study. Hence, I could not prepare better and I failed the exam this year as well. Then, I hesitated to go in the same class, and left school."*

It does not mean that girls are poorer in learning than boys. Some studies (see Chaudhari, 2011; Pandey, 2010) show that girls are not weaker. But in some cases, they are more talented than boys.

To sum up, the study demonstrates that problem with girls' education is further compounded if the school is in unsafe long distance and it lacks basic physical facility, i.e. toilets and sanitary pads, available at school. According to Brock and Cammish (1997:47), distance to school and the lack of female toilet facilities can be factors contributing to such a decision at this age. Similarly, it is not always the parents who pull a girl out of school. When teachers and peers behave her in a discomforting way or the girl experiences discomfort within school, she herself decides to come out of school, e.g. Sangita case: 6). Some of the girls as well as their parents reveal that the one of the factors in girls' secondary school dropouts is lack of safety. Also lack of female teachers is highlighted as a reason influencing girls' school attendance in the combination of other factors. Based on the interview data, failure in school exams is another factor which pushes the girls out of school. The factors behind the failure are complex but the result that they fail and cannot continue their education because of that reason. In such a way, the study shows that girls' school dropout is a complex phenomenon where intersect many factors to lead a girl out of school

### 5.2.5 Problems of the Female Body
There are many school related factors as discussed in the previous sections which are linked at different levels and interact together in a process to push out the girls from school. Among these issues, menstruation is an important issue which contributes to push the girls out from school. For example, girls cannot share their problems concerning menstruation to a male teacher but it lacks female teachers, then they do not come to school during their menstruation because there is a lack of sanitary facilities (toilets and sanitary pads) at school. Because of that they miss class and important lessons, with the result that they fail exams. And they avoid school because of harassment. Therefore, in this sub-section, I will discuss how biological bodily processes are handled practically, and how the conservative attitudes and behaviors on menstruation culturally influence girls' participation at school. In rural Nepal, menstruation is still not perceived as a common biological process in female body because there is a lot of a socio-cultural and religious perceptions and taboos concerning menstruation, mainly in Hindu

families for instance: it is sin to enter the home, see and touch males during menstruation because a female is considered dirty and impure during this period.

On the practical side; due to the lack of sanitary pads, girls use the pieces of rags. By which they cannot handle the process properly. Reflecting on this, some girls in interviews revealed on it as the gender related individual factors to push them out of school. Sangita's (case: 6) narration below provides an illustration of this.

*"After I had menstruation first time in class nine, it was not easy for me. It was bleeding too much, and I did not have the sanitary pads. it was not available at school as well. Then, blood came out, wet my skirt and it was a shame for me. My friends teased at me. All teachers and other students also knew about it. Then it became more shame for me to go school again. Because of this, I quitted my school. If I were a boy I would not be menstruating, then perhaps I would not face this situation."*

As expressed by Sangita indeed if she was a boy, she would never encounter these types of problems and humiliated her to leave school. Therefore, menstruation has been considered in as a gendered factor pushing the young girls out of school. Also, her narration reveals the lack of sanitary pads at school. She further continues her experience in this concern as:

*"I do not feel well during menstruation. Thus, I used to drop out school for some days during this week. Unfortunately, this problem continued repeating. Due to this, I felt boring to keep my school continue."*

Manmaya (case: 3) also has the relevant experience, but her experience differs to some extent from Sangita. It is because Sangita is from an ethnic group where menstruation is not taken as strictly as among Brahmin Hindu and therefore she did not meet the same restrictions as Manmaya concerning entering into the house. In ethnic community menstruation is not taken so strictly in the name of culture and religion as in Brahmin Hindu community. Manmaya was from Hindu Brahmin family background. Manmaya, (case: 3) expressed it this way:

*"During menstruation I have to sleep in shed, and I afraid of snakes, thieves and other bad men in the village to be attacked while sleeping in the shed. Thus, I cannot sleep all night and then I cannot concentrate in class tomorrow. Also, I sometimes become like sick and do not*

*go school. Then the teachers punish me the next day for this absence. They also ask the reason of absence but I feel shame to say the cause of menstruation because all friends laugh if I say this cause. Moreover, it's not allowed to go inside of home during menstruation. Due to this tradition, I sometimes did not carry the course book and homework copy which are kept inside of the home and in case there is no one to bring it out for me. By that, I am tortured all day in school to be beaten by the teachers."*

Due to the impact of conservative cultural and religious values concerning menstruation along with the lack of sanitary pads, girls have to face a lot of challenges like sleeping in the shed, which creates a lot of physical and psychological problems leading them to dropout their school. Similarly, it is related to the female body which is considered dirty and impure during menstruating period. Concerning this, purity and impurity are central elements in the cast system, and it is strictly followed in Brahmin Hindu families. When a girl enters into the menstruation process, she is kept in the shed, which leads them to lose their interest and confidences to continue school. Further, based on this, menstruation has still become a subject of girls' school dropout in Nepal, particularly in remote areas. Kamala's (key: 2) statements offers some more arguments on this:

*"A lot of girls drop out of school due to their menstruation in our community. When the girls in Brahmin Hindu families are hidden in shed for 15-22 days, they miss class at this period and this process is repeated every month. Also, the girls face problem due to the lack of toilets and sanitary facilities at school. Therefore, some girls lose their interest to continue their school after this gap. Again, even if they continue, her friend gossip about her menstruation as a cause for her absence at school, which is a shame and anxiety for them. This finally, leads them to discontinue their study."*

The girls are gossiped and humiliated by their own classmates, mostly by the boys concerning their menstruation in class and also among other friends at school. By this, the girls experience shame, anxiety and harassment. In general, this humiliation is connected to sexuality considering a girl being sexually matured. Lack of basic physical facility at school, highly affects the young girl to leave school before reaching or completing secondary education (IRIN, 2009). Girls who are menstruating in Nepal are less likely to attend classes due to the lack of toilets at school premises undermining their prospects for completing their education (IRIN, 2010). The report (ibid) shows that 59 percent of public and community

schools across the country do not have any toilet which is contributing to the increase rate of girl to discontinue their secondary school per year

In addition, girls in rural areas cannot afford sanitary pads or tampons and instead use rags, which if not properly cleaned can result infections. In this way, they cannot hide that they are menstruating. A women empowerment officer, from a local NGO, said when we talk about girls' education, we cannot only focus on building toilets. We need an integrated approach that involves gender sensitivity among teachers and the need to educate their mothers also on the issue of menstrual impact on girls. Such awareness was needed not just for male teachers, but also to the school management committees and parents as well.

## 5. 3. Discussion

This chapter has looked at the different mechanisms and processes which result in the girls' incomplete school career in the intersection of different factors that interplay multiply to influence girls' school attendance, which has been divided into two levels. The first level incorporates the factors related to the family such as patriarchal socio-cultural and religious practice, parents' attitude to girls' education and economy pulling out the girls from secondary school system. The second is 'the school factors' such as school location and lack of safety, sanitary and female teacher; teachers' abusive behavior and failure in school exam that push out them from school in a Nepalese political, social, cultural and economic context.

 The empirical material shows that some factors lead the parents to take the girls out of school, others push the girls out of school and some factors make the girls withdraw from school. These factors and mechanisms interconnect in a process and work together embedding at different levels of society, where the girls can quit or withdraw from school and the school can push them out because they fail exams; they fail exams because they are pulled out of school by their parents because they need them to work at home. Also the education system requires payment and they are poor and find no money to pay for their education. Even if, they have money they do not want to invest it in girls' education because they think it waste of money. Or because the girls don't have enough time for homework and exam preparation; because they have stayed home because of menstruation and have missed school or have avoided school because of harassment, lack of sanitary facilities and female teachers; because

they are teased by boys and abused by the male teachers. As a result of this complexity, many girls do not continue their education while they reach at the secondary level.

The study on the other way proves that if the girls receive material support from NGOs, if they are treated better at school by the teachers, and if the risk for rape is reduced, the parents are less negative concerning their daughter's education.  That is why, as mentioned, there is never a single reason behind all this. Different mechanisms for production of gender inequality intersect and cannot be isolated factor by factor. Therefore, the gender aspect of being a girl is different from being a boy; or a girl from high cast and high class family is different from a low cast and low class family (Crenshaw, 1989). Many of these factors structurally, culturally, religiously, socially and economically interact to each other to spell an end to girl's education. If these factors are tackled practically, the strategy might contribute to keep the girls in schools.

The study exhibits gender as the primary and poverty as the secondary incentive of girls' school dropout because parents found money to pay a son's school cost. They pleaded poverty when it comes to a daughter's turn continuing in school. They love their children equally; but following the gender discriminating culture, they treat them differently. Omari and Mbilinyi (1996) argue about the cultural difference between girls and boys that parents want their son to achieve higher education as sons are their supporters and stay with them throughout their life, but daughter marry at an early age. After a girl get married she lives with and serves her husband's household and then parents cannot get much support from them. Therefore, parents do not want to invest in girls' education rather they want them to work at home and marry early. because it lacks possibilities for women to support themselves and live alone, where the socio-cultural and religious values are connected to families, women and marriage give more values to boys. This de-motivates the girls to continue their studies. Hence, to motivate the vulnerable girls for keeping their school continue, it should be emphasized on their family environment (Simon, 1994). Similarly, according to Saleebey (2006) the historically oppressed girls and women should be empowered by assisting and directing energies to overcome their above mentioned problems.

In some case, although they are keen to continue their study even handling the household chores, their parents force them to quit school in order to work out, i.e. in a restaurant (see at case: 1), in others' home as a domestic child labor (see at case: 3) for earning extra money. According to the UNDP report (2010), two thirds of all children shut outside the school gates

are girls. Such practices carry with it devastating results for young girls' health and wellbeing yet the social economic and cultural pressures connected with the tradition makes it difficult to end because the traditions are powerful. But in recent years, Many Asian countries have experienced remarkable changes toward later marriage and delayed childbearing (Singh & Sharma 1996 in).

When the girls reach at the secondary level they have to face these difficulties which cause their frequent absence at school and later unfortunately it turns to their school dropout forever. Other obstacles for girls' education include challenges about their safety both in school and journeying between home and school (Oxaal, 1997). Therefore girls should be empowered to confront such obstacles in order to gain access to education (Payne, 2005). For this it needs the more effective programs, i.e nationwide campaign. Also, by implying the concept of intersectionality, it needs to understand the relationship between education and reproduction of gender relations examining how race, class and gender combine to school curriculum, formation for gendered and cast identities from a feminist perspective in order to continue to nudge and push for inclusion of gender perspective in educational fore. Also it needs to revise textbooks to eliminate gender bias and stereotyping; and the training of teachers towards greater gender sensitivity placing gender equality through education as a social and political commitment of the state. (Manjrekar, 2003).

Gender discriminating culture seems to be a core reason causing gender gap in education, where son holds deeper socio-cultural, religious and economic importance for families belonging particularly to the Brahmin caste, whereas daughter gets less value from all these perspectives. According to traditional belief it is only a son who can give deliverance to the ancestors and perform unreal rites. This belief has led many families to abandon their girl children in many cases which stigmatizes the girls disempowering them in all perspectives of their life (Hennink & Simkhada, 2004).That is why, it needs to provide social justice to the stigmatized girls facing poverty and oppression (Lee,2001). Their participation in education is only possible when they equally participate in their society because the attitudes and expectations of family and society towards girls is that they are future mothers and housewives, and in these roles they do not need much education. It is because gender is a way to categorize people about norms and values connected to the gender categories and gender as identity.

The study reflects that family poverty is linked with girl's dropout but it is not just an apparent reason of it, because many girls from middle class and poor family have experienced the gender constraint to education. Hence, the role of family with its acceptance and financial support is valuable for girls to keep their school continue. It reflects that the economic support from NGO is helpful to keep the girls in school which also helps them to some extent in developing their understanding on self and hope for future. In addition, a study conducted in Egypt (Hammy, 1994, in Pandey, 2006) provides an example of the attitudes of parents and others towards the education of girls. Most of the women who cited economic reasons in the study were members of large families and given the attitudinal constraints girls face are more likely to given lower priority in education. such a disadvantaged situation of girls extend the factors contributing to their lack of education in Nepal, but based on Crenshaw's (1989) intersectionality theory, there involve multiple factors in a process behind all this. The empirical material shows the interplay between gender and poverty to produce this situation where many girls stay outside the secondary school gate in Nepal.

Likewise, most of the cases concern secondary school girls indicate the young girls' unsafe situation in and out of school by representing risk to be raped, i.e. on the way to school. Supporting this, Panos (2003) argues that for many young girls the most common place where sexual coercion and harassment are experienced is in school. Long distance to school, fear of being teased or abused, lack of transport and teachers' punishment due to the late arrival at school seem to push the young girls out of school. Due to these challenges, they felt harassed from the school environment, and then discontinued their study. The girl is considered young and not a child any longer after her first menstruation. Then, some teachers behave with them in a sexual manner without their consent. The onset of puberty is a significant factor which affects the girls' education because it increases their vulnerability and may therefore make parents decide to withdraw their daughter from school. Girls in the beginning of the secondary level come to school with great enthusiasm, but later when they are treated badly by their own teachers, they feel humiliated and lose their self -confidence and interest to continue the class. Hence, some girls who have already entered in early maturation stage prefer to stay at home rather than going school due to the fear of being ridiculed and stigmatized by their own male teachers and classmates through which the school itself contribute to push the girls out of education Therefore, they would like to have female teachers at their school to whom girls feel it easier to share their teenage problems, i.e.

menstruation than to a male teachers, because they feel ashamed talking about such problems with a male teacher. Also their statements reflect that they feel embarrassed to share such problem to a male teacher when they avoid listening about it. Parents also would like to have female teacher in secondary level because they think their daughters are more safe and comfortable with female teachers, as there are many cases where male teachers abuse teenage girls at this level. Because of why, for combating girls' school dropout, the school should offer an attractive environment to the girls, which keeps them motivated to attend school daily and complete secondary level. For this it is important to provide supports in order to remove the direct causes dropping out the girls from school. This includes for example: female teachers, economic incentive, safety and sanitary facilities, because when a girl once becomes discouraged towards education due to the uncomfortable environment within school (teachers' behavior, peers' teasing) she decides herself to come out of school.

By applying the concept of intersectionality, it is concluded that the main structure of oppression is gender intersecting with caste, class and religion with unequal gender relations and power imbalances limiting girls' school attainment (Crenshaw, 1989). This is the instrument of patriarchy (Connell, 2002). The study exhibits that perceptions of gender, gendered society and gender institute restricts girls' education discussing the persistence of gender gaps and indicates how the combined effects of culture and poverty reduce education opportunity for girls. Moreover, the illiterate and uneducated parents from rural Nepal regarded secondary education as desirable only for sons to whom they would look for care and economic support in their old age. Most of the girls reported that their brothers are going school and parents have planned to give them higher education as far as possible. Girls even from higher class and higher cast i.e. Brahmin; could rarely get chance to complete secondary education cycle. Most of the girls reported that they are interested to complete the secondary school. Regardless of academic talent, many were kept out of school to assist house work and in agriculture. In some cases, girls work for their brothers' expenses and wellbeing (Pandey, 2011). Many parents still viewed that the more schooling a girl continued, -the more complex problems are created, like difficult to find her husband and problem herself to adjust in his house, chances to make boyfriend and have self/love marriage, raise voice at them. Their conclusion was that it does not suit at girl to be cleverer, because that may result badly or against their socio-cultural and religious beliefs, which stigmatizes the girls themselves and their family disempowering them in all aspects of their everyday life (Goffman, 1963). However the schools have been constructed all over the county since 1990, in spite of the

radical social problems, Nepalese society restructuring itself along class lines education leading to employment is seen as the noteworthy phenomenon of class and gender issues. So, middle and higher class parental attitudes towards girl's education have undergone an insightful change.

The section as a whole discusses the different factors which are linked to different levels of society overlapping in a process. An important point in the context is that the factors are interrelated and there is no easy solution. The positive findings of the study is that some of the girls during interviews seemed optimistic and they positively expressed if girls get socio-cultural, religious and economical value including all other opportunities equal to a boy, they can also do the work that a boy can do. Similarly, though the majority of parents reported that girls' schooling is less important than boys', some parents, i.e. mother of case: 6 during interview seem turning positive to it and expecting economic help as well from their daughters. It reflects that even Nepali mothers who had sons recounted that investing in the education of a daughter whom typically would remain emotionally close to her parents after marriage might be better long-term strategy (Levine, 2006).

## CHAPTER-6: THE GIRLS' UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR SITUATION

In this chapter, it is primarily intended to explore how the girls understand their self and the situation they are in. Construction of self-identity concerns the girls' experience of staying in and out of school by highlighting their personal perception to a specific image of self. The main purpose of applying this theory is to provide an understanding of how the girls have created their sense on themselves and how they define and construct their self -identity. In addition, the section strives to discuss the girls' perception on the importance of secondary education to complete for them and their activities after leaving school connecting it with the discussion on their future.

### 6.1 Understanding the Self

'Self-identity' is a term used throughout the human sciences seeking to analyze and describe the character of everyday life experience as a multi-dimensional construct that refers to an individual's perception of self in relation to any number of characteristics such as, gender roles and sexuality racial identity and many others, where gender has been an important factor in the formation of self -identity. Indeed, every human being seems to persist in being themselves. That is why they want to construct their individual identity. It is because identity is a key element of subjective reality which is centrally concern with the dialectical social relationship (Berger and Luckman, 1966:194). Also, as explained by Mead (1993) individuals are expected to develop their identity in response to their social context since their childhood. During the process of the interview, the girls revealed that they want to be independent but they thought it much difficult to construct their position without completing their secondary education. Gita (case 2) commented on this in the following way:

*"I wanted to be a teacher and construct my own social identity but now I left school even without passing SLC. Therefore, how can I be a teacher? The possibility to change my dream into reality is now finished. At the same time, the possibility to construct my identity has finished as well."*

An important point here is the conflict between how Gita understands herself and the expectations of others. This kind of consciousness about the injustice could be seen as gradual change of the society and cultural norms, because they will probably give other possibilities to their daughters than they got. This provides evidence to argue that the girls' understanding of self has been changed after being pulled out of school, which has made them feel hopeless, weakening their self- confidence, motivation and positivity to their life and future. Further,

the problem that many of the young women are confronted with concerning their personal identity is that how they think about themselves is not confirmed and accepted by their parents and others. Further, Manmaya (case: 4) emphasizes this by saying:

*"I wanted to be a nurse and wanted to be known by my own work. Unfortunately I had to leave school without completing the secondary level. Therefore, like other girls and women in this society, I also will be known as someone's daughter, wife or sister."*

Manmaya's (case: 4) expression corresponds to a large extent the idea of Mead (1993) illustrating the importance of symbols and signs in mediating and formulation of self-identity. This leads the girls and women to their development of interpersonal relationship, where their father, brother and husband contribute to identifying them about who are they. In other words, following the second aspect of me (social me) presented by Brukitt (2008), the recognition of them is perceived by others as someone's daughter and wife. Also the empirical material shows that girls create their image in accordance with the behavior performed to them by their family, school and other people in their society. It is because social position and identity are attached to a social hierarchy (ibid). They are ascribed a position and identity as a subordinate daughter or wife through how they are treated in interaction. This is the reason why girls and women are in a dilemma in developing and understanding their sense of self. On the other hand, some of the girls are not even conscious to their self -identity. Foolmaya (case: 3) says:

*"I have not thought more about myself. I am a girl, so not equal to a boy. I think if I were a boy I could go to school, and similarly I would have my property i.e. house or at least I should not work at other's house and be abused."*

Taking her expression into consideration, she accepts more the general norms about gender differences. She has internalized the norms in a different way compared to some of the other girls who emphasize how unfair it is that boys and girls are treated differently in the previous quotation.

In chapter five, I analyzed on how the girls are affected to discontinue their study and how they cope with gender based discrimination at home and at school. Here it has been demonstrated how these experiences associated with stigma have influenced in constructing their self-identify. Gita's (case: 2) expression is an example here:

*"I have been restricted to make my choices and decisions because of being a girl. I am treated differently and discriminated by my own parents and also to some extent at school.  Hence, it is not easy to be a girl in this society."*

During the interview, the respondents expressed that they had experienced gender discrimination, stigmatizing and humiliating in every perspective of their daily life. Most of the girls have become used to the situation and some of them tried to raise their voice against it, but did not receive any positive response.  Gita (case 2) provides one example:

*"Sometimes I get angry facing my parents' discriminating behavior at me and my brothers. Then I say if my brother can go to boarding school why I cannot continue my study even in public school why it is always me to do housework and why my brothers do not help me. Then my parents replied at this that I am a girl and it's not wise to give more education to a girl."*

In this comment, Gita is raising questions at the gender discriminating cultural norms and practices. She has understood the norms in a different way compared to some of the other girls because she is aware of the socio-cultural injustice in the name of gender. As a response to the question concerning the girls' understanding on self, Sthapit (key: 1) expressed:  that:

*"As the girls have grown up in patriarchal environment and taught this lesson from their childhood, they mostly understand their self differently than boys. The culture they are exposed to is to understand their 'self' lower than boys. Hence, the girls and boys are treated differently both at home and in school due to the prevailing socio-cultural and religious norms and values; however the differences at school are less than at home".*

The aforementioned statements reflect how the girl dropouts perceive, reflect and react on the situation they are in, which is linked to the positions and identities that the girls are ascribed. As argued by Charon (2001), in his Symbolic interactionism theory, the girls see themselves as a social object in the process of interaction with boys, there the girls becomes a social object as a result of the action of family and school performed towards them in this process of social interaction (Blumer 1969). Further, while observing the girls' situation upon them through the activities they performed in action with no words and sounds, it came to know that girls attempt to a certain sense of self which is accepted by others (Goffman, 1959). In addition, the girls' situation is a critical situation which is creating a dilemma and is problematic to them concerning their self-identity. Pushparaj's (teacher: 1) statement provides an example on this:

*"When the girls' own parents treat them differently, they enter into dilemma on their identity and some of them do not understand the impact of socio-cultural structure. Similarly, a boy from the birth gets high value with all possible opportunities and authority to parental property as well. But a girl gets nothing. It is because the parents' house is not a permanent shelter but a temporary option for girls. Also, it is also not certain to get a permanent shelter even in husband's family in the future in some cases".*

To be a girl in patriarchal society is to have a restricted life. In this society, girls have to search each possibility under the challenges. The following is an example of how the girls express their dilemmas:

*"When I hear people, mostly the men and also some women talking about their success and pleasure at present and plan to the future, I sometime look at myself and think who am I and what is my identity; and where is my future. I know that I will not get a place in my parent's house any longer and have to go to someone's house but whose house is unknown, and it is also uncertain that I will really get long term shelter there or not(Devi, case:1)."*

As discussed, the girls who are pulled out of school have faced a lot of gendered stigmas and discrimination in continuing their education, which has built up a kind of inferior feeling about the girls themselves and their self-identity when comparing with boys. As stated by Pockett and Giles (2008) the significance of gender emerges as an important consideration, affecting the way that the situation develops. Accordingly, the feeling of frustration and humiliation is seen as one of the major component differentiating them from boys in patriarchal Nepalese society. Manmaya (case: 4) expressed on this:

*"I feel myself different than my brothers because I am a girl. As this society gives less priority to a girl, I think I can never be the same as a boy. Anyway, I feel deep pain because my parents discriminate between me and my brothers."*

To conclude, the understanding on self helps the individuals to achieve a long-term concept of their aliveness by raising their capacity to know themselves and build up a logical sense of self. But the young girls are facing a lot of challenges created by gender based discrimination. This has impacted to their understanding on self. Also that has stigmatized them to weaken their self-confidence and motivation to future. As stated by Goffman (1963) the girls are coping with their stigmatized situation in a number of ways, which has been a big problem influencing them to discontinue their education.

## 6.2 Importance for the Girls to Complete Secondary Education

In this sub-section, I will discuss how the girls themselves think about the importance of education. While explaining the importance and relevance of education, the girls expressed it as a means to improve their life. It would enable them to learn and make a good future, for example getting a job. Similarly, the basic skills learnt in school would make them more independent in many aspects, such as, while travelling in a new place, managing family and at work, where they can use their learned knowledge and skills. Being educated, it would open up for more opportunities. During the in-depth interview, talking about the value of education, Manmaya (case: 4) briefly comments:

*"It is a big thing to get education, because it gives us knowledge and idea that we can use for many things i.e. at work, in travel... Also, it teaches us good lessons in order to be a good person."*

Likewise, Durge (case: 3) expresses on it as:

*"Schooling is valuable. It gives us opportunity to learn many things and play with friends."*

Further, Devi (case: 1) adds:

*"Education is an important thing. It gives us good future if we have education. So, it is luck to get a chance of going school"*

Commenting on the above statements, the girls think that the value of education is high. In addition, regarding the importance for the girls to complete secondary education, Chetnath (teacher: 1) commented:

*"It is obviously important for girls to complete secondary education, as it is also said that if a boy is educated, an individual is educated but if a girl is educated a whole family is educated and it is a fact, but due to the prevailing socio- cultural and eco-religious factors involving parents' low and no awareness, they are likely more to ignore the issues related to their daughter's schooling, which is a big challenge this community is facing."*

As stated above, almost all the girls said it was important to complete their secondary level education, so they might have dreams and plan for the future, but it is uncertain if they would come through. Gita's (case: 2) statement can be an example in this regard:

*"I think it would be better if I could pass SLC, so that I might have a chance to find any small job in the future or run a small business or even do something more if I have education. Due to the lack of illiteracy, my parents think it is less important to study for girls. Also they follow a lot of conservative gendered and religious stereotypes. Accordingly, I think if I have education I could not be the same as my parents, I could understand others' feelings and maybe manage my family life better."*

Gita hopes that she might have some other opportunities if she can take more education than without it. She has not only pragmatic reasons. She also think that education can change her as a person; educate her on a personal level. Based on her narrative girls and women in Nepal can make their life better in some aspects if they can take more education, for example at least up to SLC. People's attitudes towards education have changed, and the young women will probably give their daughters better opportunities. The attitudes they present and the ambitions some of them show indicate a change and a possibility and a potential for more empowerment among women in Nepal.

To sum up, the data presented shows that girls have certain ideas about different aspects of education such as education as a social arena, an arena for learning things, education as a process where one develops as a person get more understanding and also education as something that might give them a source of income. This is reflected in the trend that most girls tried to continue their study. Almost all the girls responded positively about the value of education and the importance of completing their secondary level education, so they would have dreams and plans to future

## 6.3 The Power of Gender

In recent times, the connection between gender and power is at the center of debate across the social sciences examining their relations within the specific context of women's lives. Considering this, the girls' and women's experience will now be discussed in the context of power which influences them in the way they relate them to men; and how they are gendered in all aspects of their daily life allowing them less power such as social, cultural, political and economic. Women are oppressed by men because of these power imbalances traditions in their roles and relations (Healy, 2005). It is because tradition is powerful which gives stability, trust, continuity and consistency to a family and society. It also provides a sense of identity and security helping its people to identity 'who they are as an individual and a family'

making them unique as a group. As human beings people like to have patterns and order in their lives. The way things have always been done weather in family structure and in communities they get used to a pattern from their childhood and associate it with comfort, safety and emotions. It is therefore power of tradition is important.

During the process of in-depth interview, majority of the girls reveal the power issue as a factor leading them to gender inequality. Further, Brukitt (2008) argues that self- identities are influenced by the power relation within a given social structure. It is relational which requires one person to dominate and the other to subordinate. Considering this, the statement of Manmaya (case: 4) can be argued as a consequence of the prevailing patriarchal society in the following way, where, male as a dominant sex class understand the domination as a power over female.

*"In my parents' home, all the family power and authority was in my brother hand after father. So, I must get his order to do anything. He always restricted me to go out alone and do thing without his permission. Doing so, he thought that he was more powerful because he was a boy. Thus, I was always under him. Again after marriage, more strictly my brother's role is played by my husband over me. So that, I sometime think what special is there in gender!"*

Manmaya's experience provides evidence to argue that the cause of gender discrimination is the socio-cultural and structural power assigned to men by society. Power is a human phenomenon which is socially constructed. Bourdieu (1998) introduces culture in the understanding of power. Considering his introduction, in patriarchal socio-cultural context of Nepalese society gender is mostly stigmatized, where it has tradition that only men have power (Payne, 2005: 251). Similarly, Connell (2002) argues that power has been an important dimension of gender and it is related to the concept of patriarchy. Taking these views into account, in patriarchal Nepalese culture, discrimination begins from the birth. A boy is perceived as the owner of his parental property from the birth and a girl as a member to be given to other's family later. This tradition therefore determines good care, good food and good education to a boy allowing more power due to his economical backup and this goes opposite to a girl. It is thus this practice as many other factors mentioned in the study allows less power to girls and women influencing many aspects of their life, i.e. personal, social, educational and economical due to their economic dependency and subordination connecting their status to the social and economic position of men, mainly father and husband in their

production. Therefore, they are largely confined to performing traditional roles limiting their access to education, which devalue their self-esteem among men and lead them to the loss of their identity (Heatherton et al., 2000).

In addition, Nussbaum (1999) states that in many traditions women are portrayed as less important than men. Women are seen to be less deserving of basic life support and other fundamental rights. Moreover, cultural traditions are apparently posing number of obstacles to women (ibid). The Human Development Report has acknowledged the fact that the majority of the world's women population receives fewer opportunities and benefits compared to their male counterparts (ibid). The informants' (girls) situation in the study is also worse, as the majority of them have been deprived of fundamental rights, particularly the educational right and right to decide marriage time and choose their husbands. Tesoriero (2010) further argued that the obstacles in exercising power must be understood, addressed and overcome. And, to achieve empowerment of the vulnerable groups' three widespread strategies has been proposed including 'policy and planning', 'social and political action', and 'education and consciousness raising'. Majority of the girls formally and informally expressed their wonderings about why in everything and everywhere from every perspective boys get priorities and why not this to girls. Example:

*"I feel surprised when I think about what is there so powerful in male gender that makes everything easy and positive for men in this society; and just oppositely, what is there in female that unfortunately makes them everything difficult (Gita, case: 2)".*

On the other hand the girls themselves answered that a boy is free to do everything whatever he likes but a girl is restricted in many things. In this sense, they have experienced that there is power in gender. While exploring the power issue in the study context; it is gender power provided by the prevailing socio-culture which is exercised in the intersection of religion, culture, economy and the social structure as discussed in Chapter 5. The society itself legitimizes power to men through the interplay of these aspects allowing the dominant positions to them over women. Women participate in this power structure as a subordinate economically depending on men. It is because religion, culture, economy and the social structure are the fundamental sources allowing power to its people in the society, where culturally installed male domination suppresses the woman to have power. However, power is also relative. Therefore, not all men have power. By applying the concept of intersectionality,

men's situation can be analyzed in the intersection of many different factors, mainly their cast and class. The men from the lower cast and class get socio-culturally, structurally, politically and economically less power than the men from the upper cast and class. Hence, the inherent superiority of higher cast and class and inferiority of lower cast determine to allow more and less power to men. It is because of the dominant and ruling philosophy of Hinduism in the context directly linking to power and social order. It is challenging to go ahead/progress for lower cast people, because they are relegated to do caste-based work as black/goldsmith, shoemakers. According to DWO (2010) higher-cast people do not hesitate to beat lower cast Dalit in public places. They are less privileged to education and politics and thus fewer possibilities to get a good job due to prevailing caste divisions and social order and hierarchies developed on the basis of religious and cultural values. As a result, in the intersection of above mentioned factors, men from lower cast and class deserve less power, where lower cast women are more vulnerable facing the double oppression subjected upon them. They are already victim of cast-discrimination; in addition, they are discriminated due to their gender, which suffer more than a form of it (Healy, 2005:181). That is why, it needs to empower them to overcome the cultural, institutional and personal challenges limiting their life chances raising awareness and helping them to gain more control over their lives. The school age girls in the district have understood that they are not equal to boys and they also know well the causes of discrimination. Their likes and desires are limited only to their dreams. Hence, they narrate on their situation as: if I was a boy, I would go school, get more love and care from parents, relatives and villagers. Then, I would have owned land, home and property and could go to city, also go abroad get good job and etc. From the childhood they are socio-culturally, religiously and psychologically taught, grown up and prejudiced that they are not equal to boys, and the culture always discouraged them to think in a way a boy can think. The study discusses the gender stereotypes and prejudice and its impact on the construction of self -identity of girl dropouts, where as stated by Heartherton et al (2000), stereotypes and prejudice are central to stigmatizing them. Further, Brukitt (2008) argues that self- identity is related to social class through many perspectives. Social class is the material constraints influencing the life chances of people such as access to education and social participation.  Considering this, most of girl dropouts in the study were from poor and lower cast (Dalit and ethnic groups) families. This background of them had influenced their access to education. At the same time it had affected in the construction of their self- image. It is because one can develop his/her social status either by their achievements or this can be

placed in the socialization by their inherited position that can be fixed for a person at birth as son or daughter (gender), rich and poor (class), higher and lower (cast). As stated by Berger and Luckmann (1966) self-concept is constructed through the socio-cultural interaction. In other words, as stated by Brukitt (2008), understanding and perception on self is formed in social relations and social activities because it is a social process and human reality is socially constructed (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Further, Brukitt (2008) argues that the social institutions like family school, social class, gender, ethnicity and the cultural belief and values have impact on the way individuals develop their 'self', where the individual attempts to search for their hidden identity in a given social setting. Thus, the construction of self depends on the judgments by the people around them. Based on this, self is developed through the mutual interaction where one's conduct is judged by others' eyes. Therefore, Brukitt (2008) explains the society as a mirror through which people identify their self -image.

All in all, the study reveals that gender inequality in Nepalese society is a result of power imbalances between men and women. It is because this practice socio-culturally, economically and religiously allows the dominant position to men. Also, the study shows that economic opportunities are a means of avoiding gender inequality as an alternative in education. As discussed earlier, parents accept to send their daughter to school as long as they got financial support (scholarship) from the NGO. Thus, economy has been identified as a factor both for the girls and their parents. So, it is significant for girl dropouts to develop skills for future economic independence, and equally important to provide them more educational and work opportunities for this. This will contribute them to develop power, self-esteem and self -confidence building up their status in the society.

## 6.4 The Girls' Life after Leaving School

While studying girls' school dropout, it is significant to study their activities after leaving school, which might create a lot of social problems in future such as girls trafficking, early marriage, and child labor including many forms of child abuse and violence against women. Concerning this, the girls think that they will be married early after dropping out from school with no more education which might determine their uncertain future. Then, they will have a traditional life similar to their mothers and they might also be victimized by conservative culture, male-dominated social oppression and injustice.

Based on the respondents' comments, the study has found that most of the girls are married in their early age after pulling out from school (see case: 4), and those who are not married as stated by Adhikari (2011), entered into the risk of prostitution (see case: 1), rape and trafficking (see case: 5). The statement of Surbir *(*Key: 1), further justifies this:

*"I have seen that almost 90 percent secondary school girls entered into early arranged marriage after leaving school. Those who did not get marriage due to any reason, i.e. not finding candidate, she entered into the risk to be* prostituted, *raped and trafficked."*

The best options of parents for their daughter after leaving school is to send them to their husband' house, because when they are young and stay at home it is risky for girls, i.e. to be trafficked or get love marriage which affects the reputation of their family in this context, because such activity could challenge parents' social prestige. Hennink & Simkhada (2004) argue that the family of such girls is also subjected to stigmatization. The family members are therefore afraid of the adverse consequences in their social status that may arise by keeping daughters at parents' house for more years. Supporting this, Durga (case: 5) recalled:

*"I was in an affair with a boy, when I quitted school we got marriage and later he trafficked me."*

Taking her statement into account, trafficking seemed as an outcome of girls' school dropout, and false marriage is seemed as a common phenomenon in girls trafficking in Nepal (Adhikari, 2011). Also the situation reflected by case: 5 exhibits that among people involved in trafficking, about 44% of traffickers were already familiar to the trafficked girls *(*Hennink and Simjkhada, 2004). During the interviews, the girls were asked about their activities after leaving school. Making her attempt to answer this Foolmaya (case: 3) expressed:

*"I am working in a house after being pulled out from school"*

The statement of Foolmaya provides a basis to argue that girls after being pulled out from school are involved in domestic labor, which makes them more vulnerable to many forms of child abuse. Similarly responding on the aforementioned question, Sangita (case: 6) said:

*"I just stay home and work at home after being pushed out from school."*

The above statement illustrates that girls after dropping out from school are involved in household chores in most cases. As revealed by Sangita, abusing the girls involving them in household seemed as a consequence of girls' secondary school dropout. In addition, poverty can force them to trade sex for money to supplement family income or pay school fees (Panos, 2003). Reflecting on this, Devi's (case: 2) expressed that:

*"When I left school my father sent me to work in a local restaurant in order to earn little money due to our poverty. But the work was not easy because I am forced for sex there besides cooking and washing".*

Fortunately, Gita (case: 2) did not have such experience like others even after living school. She has only been the victim of gender discriminatory socio-cultural norms and values.

*"Gita is learning to stitches clothes but I am not sure how important it will be. Perhaps after marriage, she will have no time for this being busy in bearing babies, caring family and running household management. I also doubt that if her husband and her family do not like her to do this job, there will be no meaning of learning it. In this meaning, I suggest her not to learn that skill which has no certainty to get benefit in future (Goma, parent: 1)."*

Taking her view into account, her mother does not approve of her daughter's skills. The fact behind this is the patriarchal norms and values embedded on the females' position allowing them less power in the society which indeed demonstrates an example of parents' attitude to their daughter's learning and future in Nepalese society.

To conclude, the analysis demonstrates that the girls and women are involved in the following activities after leaving school and as the consequences of their school dropout. Prostitution (see, case: 1), domestic child labor (see case: 3), girls trafficking (see case: 5), household chores (see case: 6) and skill training, i.e. sewing clothes (see case: 2). their situation with such consequences determines the limitations around their life making them more vulnerable.

## 6.5 No Plans, No Dreams: The Uncertain Future

Making plans is a process in which the person who is planning has control over some resources or factors which can influence the future and in addition it requires a view of the future as something which can be changed, that it is not the fate. As the idea of self-identity

has been valuable in this study, as suggested by Brukitt (2008), it is significant and equally interesting in my study context to answer the question like 'who I want to be' but 'what shall I be', in order to discuss on how the girls connect their understanding of present self with their identity to be constructed in future. Further, it is here crucial to highlight the girls' future aspect in order to identify the further strategies to combating girls' school discontinuation, which has been mentioned in the following topic.

Due to the gender discriminating socio-cultural and religious practices, the girls have collected much bitter experience with the perception of their dominated gender role and less valuable position in the family and at school comparing to their boys counterpart, In addition, the girls' harassment and pessimism about their future has pushed them into the identity dilemmas reflecting their uncertain future with no dreams and no plans. During the interviews, the girls pulled out from school were asked about their future aspiration. As stated earlier, most of them expressed pessimism about their future. The statement of Gita provides an example:

*"To have job, earn money and have good future, I must have higher education. But I could not even pass SLC. Therefore, I do not have any plans for the future. I do not think that I would have a happy life. Maybe I have to face with discrimination and socio-cultural stigma and stereotypes in life."*

Gita's statements justifies that the future for a girl who doesn't finish school is grim. Durge (case: 5) has a bit different case, so she has a bit different, but relatively similar view on future. She expressed on her future as:

*"I only see a dark future ahead because I cannot go beyond the culture and this culture on the basis of my trafficked past will be hurting not only me, but also my child and family"*

As explained by Goffman (1963) stigma, attached to the girls can be transmitted equally to all members of their family, where the girls are scared of the impact of their stigmatizing past to their family. That is why the girls and women with such past experienced low self -esteem and uncertainty to their future. Further, according to Brukitt (2008) , self as the reflection of the past experiences as well as a means of creating the future in the forms of plans, hopes and dreams, but the girls' situation in this study context is such that have no self -confidence and no basis to their future and create future plans and dreams. In addition, if the girl is accepted by her husband and his family after marriage, she will have culturally good life, and similarly

if she can bear son, she will have better life. Otherwise, she will have an uncertain life. She nowhere gets a good place to shelter. In such situation, she stays at unaccepted relations either at husband's or at parents' home, where she is physically, mentally and socio-psychologically discriminated, violated and stigmatized. After leaving school, Gita (case: 2) is learning clothes stitching skills but doubt to be completed or not due to her parents preparation to search her husband. Anyway, Gita seems a bit hopeful to her future if she could complete the skill learning. It is because the skill will help to generate money. Then money can create some more possibilities to improve her life in general. Just opposite to Gita, Devi (case: 1) as involved in labor, is fully uncertain and hopeless to her future.

**6.6 Discussion**

In this section, the study has demonstrated how the girls dropped out of secondary education understand themselves including their dilemmas about who are they and what is their identity concerning their future by analyzing their present situation. The study demonstrates that girls and women wish to construct their individual identity, because identity is a key element of subjective reality (Berger and Luckman (1966:194). therefore, they seek for their self -image upon their family and school which has been reflected back in their words, attitude, expressions and actions (Brukitt, 2008). Also the study has attempted to analyze the root of the girls' school discontinuation and all sort of domination against them analyzing the connection between culture, discrimination and power in gender. In doing so, the study has also focused on the components that encourage and discourage the girls concerning continuing their education

People often look upon others to perceive their self-image (Burkitt, 2008). In line with this view, most of the girls have understood their self differently and lower while looking and comparing themselves to boys. They have therefore a restricted and uncertain life. Constructing self-identity is a complex phenomenon for girls in their society. Similarly, few of them are not conscious to it. The informants mostly have the similar experiences on the issue of identity. They have faced the multiple forms of discrimination, socio-psychological and physical violence, torture and humiliation because of being a girl. This has impacted their understanding on self and pushed them into more dilemmas while discovering who they are (see Fulmaya, case: 4; Devi; case: 1 and Durge, case: 5).

Regarding their activities after leaving school, the body of literature shows that girls are leaded to the risk of trafficking including early marriage, sexual abuse and child labor and

made them more vulnerable after they are pulled out of school (Adhikari, 2011; Bhusal, 2011, pandey, 2011).

While reflecting about the future, most of the girls presented have a pessimistic attitude to their future. However there has been a radical improvement in the literacy of women and their education during the last generation. The girls have understood the importance of education. Hence, they will probably give their daughters better opportunities. Some girls also seemed hopeful to the future, which indicate a change and a possibility for more empowerment among young girls and women in Nepal. However, the support from NGO and from government empowered the girls to continue their study. But the parents' ways of treating sons and daughters differently disempowered them. Hence, their own frustration and humiliation due to getting no support from family influenced them to come out of school. The study shows that most of the girls are positive to the importance of education, most of their parents are opposite of them. It is mainly caused by the traditional socio-cultural structure to gender role and priority to education on the basis of gender, lack of awareness and education among parents, which leads the girls to prostitution, domestic child labor, early marriage, and early pregnancy as their activities after leaving school. All these factors above, directly and indirectly impact the girl's understanding on self which has weakened their confidence to create hope and dream for future.

# CHAPTER-7: Concluding Remarks

This study is meant to explore and analyze the girls' experience and perception of gender impact in their secondary school attendance including the parents', teachers' and key persons' opinions by identifying and discussing the factors leading them to discontinue their schooling in patriarchal Nepalese context. It has also endeavored to investigate some strategies for combating the girls' dropout. The study has drawn the causes of gender differences in education particularly analyzing the gender factors responsible for low attainment of girls in secondary education cycle and their understanding of their situation.  It is therefore the main topic of this study to discuss the mechanisms and processes which produce a situation where many girls do not complete their secondary education by analyzing how these different factors and mechanisms work together and how they are embedded in different levels of society to result in an incomplete secondary school career for women.

The study findings demonstrate that there is no single reason, but it is a complex phenomenon and a result of interplay of structural, cultural, religious, social and economic factors, which are linked and overlap each other. The main constraint behind this is gender inequality because the perceptions of gender are parts of the structural, religious, social and economic factors, where men and women are perceived unequally from all these perspectives. As stated by Crenshaw (1989), the interaction of these factors creates a great challenge for girls and women in discovering who they are, which can be analyzed as an indicator of their general situation in Nepal.

The study has outlined mainly two categories of pull and push factors interacting together to influence the girls' school attendance in Nepal. The first category presents the pull factors related to the family. The second includes the push factors related to the school in a Nepalese political, social, cultural and economic context. Parents pull the girls out of school, the girls quit or withdraw from school and the school can push them out. These different dimensions are interrelated which work together embedding in a process. Their parents take them out of school because they have to help at home. This is one factor which contributes to pull them out of school. The process behind this is complex. Parents pull them out of school because they do not think it is a good investment to let the girls take much education as they perceive that a girl's education will only benefit her husband household, and not her parents. Also, parents believe that they do not need education for their roles as wives and mother, that education undermines cultural practices, and it teaches her to reject tradition. Again, they

cannot afford to send all their children to school and the boys are prioritized because the socio-cultural and religious values are connected to families, women and marriage which give more values to boys. Due to these practices, in some cases parents do not pull them instead the girls quit themselves. In other cases, the schools push them out of education. It is because the work pressure from parents results in little time for preparation at school. Then they fail exams or they have stayed home because of menstruation and have missed school or have avoided school because of harassment, lack of sanitary facilities and female teachers. As a result of this complexity, many girls do not continue their education.

In this way, as discussed by Crenshaw (1989) a range of interrelated factors overlapped to produce power imbalances causing gender inequality in education such as the situation in the labor market for men/women. It lacks the possibilities for women to support themselves economically and live alone. Similarly, the lack of a welfare system makes them depend fully on the family where the family itselfhas to play a role as a provider for social and economic security for them. The religious values, mainly in Indo Aryan communities give boys particular value in relation to the parents' death, the impurity of women. These are the other factors leading them out of education. It is because the girls are considered as a part of another family, and thus the parents want their daughter to learn household work and marry early instead of continuing school. This is because marriage is important for their future economic support which is practically and culturally considered as the only possible options for their daughters. Moreover, according to Hinduism, it is believed that girls have to be sent to their husband house before they enter into the menstruation process, as menstruation is considered as impurity. Because of this, they experience shame, anxiety and harassment which are connected to sexuality. Becoming a woman is related to the impurity and purity and impurity are central elements in Hinduism. Hence, the so-called tribal stigma as mentioned by Goffman (1963) is attached to them due to their religious belief that can be transmitted equally to all members of the family and contaminate. Therefore, the girls and women are to some extent aligned to this type of stigma, as they are worried of being an extra burden to their family. Due to this, they experience uncertainty and low self-esteem among men, which influences the construction of their self -identity disempowering them in all these perspectives of their everyday life. As a result, a daughter is considered for marriage. And parents traditionally follow the early marriage system mainly in remote Nepal Therefore; there are no more possibilities for girls to make their career. On the other hand, there are some alternatives to marriage or to delay marriage such as, continue studying or having a job and

helping the family economy. They are however not attractive, but rather challenging in practice. It is because when a girl postpones to marriage, as argued by Hennink & Simkhada (2004) her family is also subjected to stigmatization. Concerning this, Goffman (1963) also argues that stigma might grow up within the individuals and it affects to be stigmatized to the other members of their family as well. This study to some extent underpins his argument as the study points to the consequences of stigma to the girl dropouts and their families. The family members are therefore afraid of the adverse consequences in their social status that may arise by delaying to arrange their daughters' marriage. Also parents have to find suitably qualified grooms with higher education for their daughters with education. The grooms with higher education demands higher amount of dowry particularly in Terai region. Therefore higher education requires the greater price in the form of dowry. This makes it more burdensome for low class families to have girls. Because of such kinds of open oppression, both parents and the girls are caught in their situations in different ways. The girls are in many ways damned if they take more education and also if they quit school. They are caught in a cultural and social situation with few or no alternatives. This leads the girls and parents into dilemmas whether arranging marriage or continuing their education.

In addition, as parents do not benefit from a daughter's labor after she married, tend to see girls as a lost investment. Again, they feel pressure to marry off their daughter early. Therefore, 51% of Nepalese girls marry as children (UNICEF, 2011). It is because parents do not want her to be home all day. If she is left home alone, she can have a premarital affair, and this could ruin the family's reputation stigmatizing the girl as well as her parents (Goffman, 1963). Also she could be a victim of abuse, raped or even trafficking. Another, the parents think that the same might happen even if she is in school because of the unsafe school environment for example: unsecured school location and teachers' abusive behavior (Panos, 2003). Hence, the girls in this context are considered less attractive when they are delayed to marry. There are therefore many such reasons why the tradition of early marriage is still practiced in Nepal. On the other hand, high socioeconomic status families are motivated for religious and prestige reasons to get their daughters married at an early age, preferably before menarche. It is because to live being a single or unmarried even having a good job is not a common practice for female in Nepal. And it does not create good possibilities for them, instead it creates a lot of challenges in terms of their protection and social honor because it is risky for them to live alone as there is possibility to be raped and abuse, and there is also a possibility to face social isolation as this is culturally not a common practice. By which the

girl and her family as mentioned can be subjected to stigmatization (Hennink & Simkhada, 2004). This happen most in Hindu family. According to the IRIN report (2012) parents considered their daughter old enough for being attractive for marriage when she reaches 17. Thus education, occupation and age at menarche are the most powerful factors in deciding the timing of marriage in Nepal (Aryal, 2007).An important point in the context is that the factors are interrelated and there is no easy solution. However, there are many factors which can improve the girls' possibilities like more economic support for girl's education, better school facilities, more female teachers, etc. In sum, these changes could contribute to more education for girls. Just getting a bit more education would improve the girls' self-image and self-confidence.

Other factors hinder women's access to education such as location of residence, i.e. rural/urban.  The difference in male female educational access is higher in rural areas. The gender disparity in literacy in urban areas was 19% but it was 23 in rural areas. Similarly while there were 51 women with SLC certificates to each 100 men with similar qualifications in rural areas, this number was 70 for urban areas (Acharya, et al, 2007). This urban/rural differences are visible at all levels of education where one's caste or ethnicity is an important factor besides gender in determining educational access. Higher caste has much better access than the lower cast, i.e. Dalits particularly in Terai have the lowest access. Even in terms of decennial gains between 2001 and 1991, Terai Dalit women, with just 11% literacy rate in 2001. However, gender disparity is visible in all casts and ethnicities (ibid). The challenge for this is to break the hold of patriarchy[7] and the discriminatory traditional value systems, practices and structures.

The informants mostly have the similar experiences on the issue of identity.  They have faced the multiple forms of discrimination, socio-psychological and physical violence, torture and humiliation because of being a girl which have impacted their understanding on self and pushed into more dilemmas. By the result, as explained by Healy (2005:185) due to the lack of confidence over their capacity, it seems really challenging to empower and assure them to realize that they are not powerless, because from the birth they were shaped in such cultural,

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[7] Patriarchy is referred to the male dominance over women, supported by social and political institutions and preserves by the threat of punishment that allows husbands to use violence to control their wives, and men to use violence against women so as to maintain male domination (WOREC, 2010).

and structural social frame that they cannot normally think themselves equal to boys because Individuals are expected to develop a self-identity in response to their social context since their childhood (Mead, 1993). Therefore, they think themselves powerless and weaker than male in the environment they grow up. During the process of in-depth interview, the majority of the girls mentioned the power issue as a factor leading them to gender inequality. Due to the lack of power the girls and women are stigmatized, where the importance of socio-economic and cultural power is highlighted to stigmatize the girls and women (Link and Phelan (2001). Thus, the study reflects the interplay between patriarchal culture and poverty which produce this situation. Power is an important dimension of gender and is related to the concept of patriarchy (Connell, 2009). That is why; the patriarchal norms and values embedded on the females' position allow them less power in Nepalese society. The intervention therefore requires more intensive action to address the social, cultural and financial barriers that limit education opportunities for girls addressing the structural inequality and the ideology of discrimination and subordination between men and women; and making all the laws, structures and polices gender free in every institution (see Annex-C).In contrary, the study also proves that if the girls receive material support from NGOs, if they are treated better at school by the teachers, and if the risk for rape is reduced, the parents are less negative concerning their daughter's education.

By applying the concept of symbolic interactionism, this study through the in-depth interview and informal observation illustrates the girls,' perception, reflection and reaction on the situation they are in. This is linked to the positions and identities that the girls and women are ascribed in a Nepalese socio-cultural context, where they are portrait as less important than men (Nussbaum, 1999) . They are seen to be less deserving of basic life support and other fundamental rights. Moreover, cultural traditions are apparently posing number of obstacles to them. The study demonstrates that they have often been treated as an object abusing their rights and labor and exposed to gender based discrimination in the family and at school because of being a woman. It is because the men in a patriarchal society poses power over women, where the parental property is directly transmitted to men who also stay with parents and girls are marring out. Therefore they are socio-culturally and economically stronger and women are dependent, where social stigma has seen as a result of negative attitudes of the society to its members of a certain group, for example: girls and women. It is therefore they experience low self- esteem among boys which raise questions on their self-identity such as 'who are they', 'are they indeed different than boys', 'can't they live a life as a boy lives'.

Their answers on these questions have leaded to the way how they see at their self and how their understanding on their identity. To improve their situation, firstly it needs to improve their access to education because education enables them to increase knowledge about the world and develop positive self –respect, self- confidence, courage and internal strengths to face challenges in life. That is why; they should be empowered through good quality education. Combating their dropout or rather how to keep them in school is central for improving their access to secondary education. Girls are more vulnerable than boys everywhere, which discourage the girls to do something in life. Thus it is significant to change the gender discriminating culture for girls' wellbeing as well as the social development, which is only possible by accessing girls to education, raising awareness among their parents and sensitizing the whole community, and similarly making secondary education free and compulsory like primary; making laws and policies to send the girls to school through a strict practice. For the successful prevention of girls' secondary school dropout, not a single effort is possible. As mentioned, it requires systemic reform and active involvement by all stakeholders together through a gender lens, which can create a supportive learning environment for all children, especially for girls.

In addition, while exploring the power issue in the study context; it is gender power which is exercised in the intersection of religion, culture, economy and the social structure. The society itself legitimizes power to men through the interplay of these aspects allowing the dominant positions to them over women. Women participate in this power structure as a subordinate economically depending on men. It is because religion, culture, economy and the social structure are the fundamental sources allowing power to its people. In the Nepalese context, besides culture and religion, economy is a fact allowing less power to women. It is because firstly they are deprived to develop skills for earning money and strengthening their economic status, because of not having educational qualification due to school dropout without completing a certain level. Another, even having qualification they are given less opportunities to work and paid less than men. This leads them under the male authority and domination. Hence, patriarchal socio-culture and religion keep the women more vulnerable in Nepalese society, where power is held by men tending to lead the women as their subordinate to accept the status based on economic power. Based on Healy's (2005) anti-oppressive approach, the oppressed girls and women should be empowered to act themselves in order to overcome the cultural, institutional and structural constraints to control their lives and accomplish the societal change.

Broadly, according to the available data, no girl returned after dropping out. This also supports the girls' dropout as a complex phenomenon. It is because, due to the interplay of above mentioned mechanisms girls before marriage are took out of school. When they are pulled out once they have very rare possibility to return because of other social obligations after marriage such as expectation of early child bearing and caring including all responsibilities to manage husband's household. This practice put a cap on their chances to return back to their education. Girls face more discrimination in access to quality education, but boys everywhere are given better opportunities by parents, who send them to private schools or to cities while the girls have few of such opportunities because they pull out their daughters before completing secondary education. Parents even from higher class family mostly follow this tradition which causes the gender difference in education (Acharya, et al, 2007). They are discriminated from the birth firstly by their parents and by husband and his kinships after marriage. Thus their situation is narrow bounded due to these practices of patriarchy. They are oppressed everywhere. A common saying for the context is: to be born as a daughter is having ill fate. It is because gender is the primary motive of discrimination in Nepal where about 90% of females are experiencing Gender-Based discrimination at any time in life, but this mostly goes unreported (Pandey, 2011). Because of such oppression and injustice, the girls and women are facing many problems like gender inequality in education including prostitution, girls-trafficking, rape, crime and other form of violence and discrimination. Therefore, yet the girls are empowered by NGOs providing economical supports and raising awareness among their parents; they are disempowered to continue their study. By the reason, the girls' situation in the study is characterized by disempowerment linked to the combination of oppressing mechanism related to gender, caste, economic position and cultural values. Therefore, based on feminism, it needs to advocate for their rights and opportunities equal to men in order to capacitate them and amplify their voices in decision making by removing all forms of inequality, violence and oppression against them.

As mentioned above, there are various challenges for education of female not only in Nepal but in many parts of the world mostly in Asian and African developing countries due to the religious beliefs, marriage system, economic situation and the perception of women. For instances: Women's situation and their participation in education are more or less similar mainly in the rural areas of Nepal, India and Pakistan with a wide gender disparity in education. (See Groot, 2007; Oxaal, 1997; Jacoby, 2011; Madhura 2011). The situation of girl's education is grim in Pakistan where more than 40% of girls never enroll in school, those

who enrolled dropped out of school without completing a particular level due to the socio-cultural constraints and prejudices (Ismail, 2013). The educational level of women in India is also very disappointing where the dropout rate of girls is very high till date (Sharma, et al 2007). Similarly, female access to education is most limited in Afghanistan (Solotaroff et al, 2012). Then, poverty and gender inequality reduce girls' willingness to education in Bangladesh, where between 2007 and 2009, 34% of children dropped out of school were girls (Sabates, 2010). The condition of women and their educational status to some extent similar in many African countries, where the dropout rate for girls is still high because of the cultural practices in families and society and vulnerability to violence both in and out of educational settings. According to UNESCO (2012), of 50 countries in Africa 31 countries have gender parity indices of less than 1.0, and 16 have an index of 1.0 (Okediji, 2012). Likewise, there are also several challenges which are involved when one wants to change the situation of women because as mentioned above it is so embedded in all kinds of structures, practices, meanings and values. But still there seems a hope for future because many girls seem very prepared for making a change and oppose the cultural tradition if they have the opportunity. While remarking on informants' views, in the schools only providing sanitary facility is not a focal point, it needs an integrated approach that involves gender sensitivity among teachers and school administrations. For this, the role of school significantly comes in the front. Thus, the school needs to provide safe environment for girls in terms of its location, teachers' behavior and costs. NGOs are attempting to empower the girls to continue their secondary education raising awareness and providing them scholarships and other incentives which seem successful. Similarly, the government is operating its effort to launch the informal education policies and programs beside of formal education, however more than half of the children; especially the girls and women are still out of educational approach in Nepal. Girls' secondary school attainment based on the statics and national literacy rate is very disappointing which is seen as one of the critical problems mainly in rural Nepal. For its intervention, family, school, NGOs and government including all other stakeholders should empower them and their parents raising awareness on traditional norms and values which constraint girls' schooling focusing in rural areas, where education can help them to be politically socially, culturally and economically empowered. For doing so, addressing power imbalances between girl and boy is central depending on the social context.

Therefore, the parents including all other public and private-sectors, schools, media, health care providers and religious institutions must work together to develop comprehensive

strategies for combating girls' school dropout and encourage them to continue minimizing the above mentioned factors. Therefore, the study recommends for more research in this ground and it can be hoped that this paper will arouse for the further works. The study draws that however the girls' school attainment has been increased in Nepal; it is very slow comparing the situation to other developing countries, and such cases are yet there. The study demonstrates that most of the girl dropouts occur during secondary level (Acharya, et al, 2007). Therefore, sustained efforts are needed to attract them in the level and hold them until they complete their education. For this, special programs on media can play an important role in reducing the girls' school dropout. Also, factors such as social and cultural attitudes and policy priorities are significant in reducing girl's drop out because poverty is not a single cause but it combines with many other interrelated factors to produce this situation.

In this way, the study on one hand presents a very pessimistic and negative perspective of Nepalese society. On the other hand, it shows that there has been a radical improvement in the literacy of women and their education during the last generation. Male literacy in six year and above age group reached 65% in 2001 from 34% in 1981, and the female literacy rate from 12% in 1981 to 43% in 2001. The progress in literacy levels of the younger group is quite significant. The difference in male female literacy levels has declined by half than the 15-19 age groups. However in the younger age group the progress seems to be much slower. This difference has declined by only 2.4% between 1991 and 2001. Along with the state structures and the legal system which discriminate against women, cultural malpractices have emerged as major factors in unequal access to education and other opportunities. Nepal's current international commitments including MDGs and the declaration on Education for All (EFA), commit it to ensure equal opportunities in schooling for girls and those belonging to ethnic minorities by 2015. In this way, women's access to education and employment has increased, but men of traditionally powerful groups are moving much faster to take advantage of the new opportunities. Disparity in access to education has emerged as a major problem (Acharya et al, 2007). People's attitudes towards education have changed and the young women will probably give their daughter better opportunities. The attitudes they presented and the ambitions some of them showed indicate a change, a possibility and a potential for more empowerment among women in future.

The study reflects that women are far behind the average on all indicators of human development and empowerment. There has been some progress in women's access to

education, yet gender disparities in education continue, which increases steadily from primary level (Acharya, et al, 2007). Despite some progress since 1997, monitoring and evaluation of gender issues still remain the weakest point in the mainstreaming exercises. Women's representation in government administration is still miniscule. Therefore, it seems no more progress in women's access to the political or administrative power structure. The Parliamentary Declaration (May, 2006) has promised 33% reservation for women in all state organs is a landmark decision. Women face multiple inequalities. They are discriminated against in laws, acts, and regulations socially by patriarchal value systems and economically by limitations on their access to property. Nepal has signed in almost all international conventions on children's and women's right regarding their education health and poverty. Also, The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) commits Nepal to constitutional and legal equality in every sector, while the Beijing Platform for Action commits it to promoting women's empowerment and equality in economic social and political fields. However, women are not enjoying equal status in these areas. Also there seems no more progress on gender equality and violence against women till date. The law against domestic violence and violence in the workplace is silent. Therefore it needs a lot of practical laws and approaches to address gender equity in access to education and capacitate girls' and women' direct and active participation in the process of social development. Also the anti-violence laws should be constructed and implement them effectively in practice. Without this, there is no more hope of achieving a meaningful and sustainable development in the Nepalese society.

The conclusion is that Nepal is a very gender unequal society where the situation of girls and women is critical. In the context, gender inequality is produced and manifested in everyday life with the result of a high dropout rate of young girls. Another the perceptions of gender; the values connected to women such as ritual impurity, moral and religious issues act in combination with gendered social structures like the family, including marriage heritance and property relations and the education system to create practices in family life, in school and in the labor market which result in girls' secondary school dropout. Hence, there are many challenges for education of girls and women. Education is important for them and thus their school dropout should be avoided. However almost all the girls reported interested to continue school; they have been primarily lead out of school because of the impact of gender. Yet there is not a single reason, but different mechanisms for production of gender inequality intersect to lead them out of education. The study shows that this is a complex social problem and to

solve the problem a team approach from all the stakeholders responsible to this issue is required. That is why, the interventions for keeping the girls in school and improve their situation crucially deserve the continued support from family, school and the organizations like NGOs, INGOs including the government (see Annex: C for details) focusing on prevention by addressing the gendered cultural practice at home and school including gendered stigma and discrimination in order to provide a favorable environment for girls to complete their secondary education.

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## ANNEX- A

### Informed Consent to the Informants for a Master Thesis in Social Work

**Invitation to Participate in a Research Interview**

I am a student of the Master program in comparative social work at the Department of Social science, University of Nordland, Norway. The theme of my master thesis is *"Gender Inequality and Girls School Attendance: A Qualitative Perspective of Patriarchal Nepalese Practice"*. The research will be conducted fully within NESH guidelines. The master thesis that results from this work will be published in English and will be housed at the Nordland University, Norway.

I will kindly ask you to participate in an interview with me, where I ask questions connected to the theme of this thesis. The interview will be conducted in Nepali. I will ask you to allow me to use a tape recorder in the interview and the tape will be destroyed within 15th may 2012. This research will be conducted with a guarantee of confidentiality and will maintain the anonymity of the participants. Pseudonyms instead of your real name will be used in all stages of this study in order to protect your identity. I will share anonymousness data material for discussion with my supervisor.

When we meet I will read this consent information for you and ask you to confirm oral that you agree that I can use the interview with you on the conditions mentioned above. If we record the interview; I will ask for your confirmation to be recorded.

Your participation is voluntary and you also have the right to ask for more information about this study and to withdraw from the study any time during the interview without the need for providing any reasons and without any consequences.

I highly appreciate your valuable participation and kind co-operation in this study.

Thank you!

Bishnu Maya Adhikari

Mobile number: +47- 91723668
December, 2011
University of Nordland, Department of Social Science,
8049, Bodø, Norway.
(Please sign below if you want to participate in the interview for this research.)
Signature:

Print Name:

Date

## ANNEX- B

## Interview Guides

**I. In-depth Interview with the Girls (15-19 years old)**
1.  **Establishing Rapport**

- Introducing myself and the purposes of the Interview. Collecting consent agreement.

2. **Personal Background of the Girls**
- Name

- Age

- school

- Class (Dropped out)

- Number of siblings and their education

- Parents education and occupation

3. **Information on Their Experiences and Perception of Dropout within a Gender Perspective**

- When did you quit your secondary education? Why?

- Was it your own decision to drop out? If yes, why?

- If not, who/what made you to do so? How?

- What did you feel while leaving school?

- Please describe your situation or challenges you faced before and after you quit school?

- How has your gender shaped your sense of yourself, and how it shaped or constrained your life choices?

- How many students were there in your class? How many girls and boys?

- Do you know a bit about all of them are continuing or any of them dropped out? If any, do you know who (boys/girls) and why?

- In girls and boys, which dropped out ratio do you think is higher? Why (your opinion)?

- How the girls are treated at school and at home, equally to boys and differently? Why?

- What are you doing after leaving school? Why?

- What is your future plan?

- How important do you think it to complete sec. education for you? Are you still interested to restart your schooling? Why?

4. **Gender Factors Leading them to stay out of Secondary Education**

- Please describe the causes that you know which commonly lead the girls to leave school in your community?

- How do these factors affect them to discontinue their secondary education?

- Please tell me about an incident which made you to stay out of school?

**Additional:**

5. **Empowerment**

- Have you ever discussed at your family/parents for continuation of your school? If yes when and what response did you get from them?

- Have you ever been motivated/supported to continue your education by any person or organization, i.e. Family, school, GOs, NGOs, and INGOs, if yes, how?

- Do you have any message to school, family and the NGOs?

6. **Ending Guide**

- Reassurances about confidentiality and how the data will be used

(Please feel comfortable to express if you are willing to add any more about anything?)

Thanks a lot for your precious participation.

**II. Interview with the Teachers**

1. **Establishing Rapport**
▪ Introducing myself and the objectives of the Interview. Collecting consent agreement.

2. **Personal Background of the Teachers**
▪ Name
▪ Age
▪ sex
▪ School

3. **General Information on Girls' Secondary School Dropout**
• What is your qualification**?**
• How long have you been teaching social study in secondary level?
• What kind of experience do you have with school concerning continuation and discontinuation of girls' education?
• In your experience what causes gender differences in sec. education?
• How is the girls' sec. school dropout condition in your school?
• What do you do to motivate the girls keeping their school continue?
• What would be the school's response to a girl after she pulled out from school, i.e. contact, visit, aware, facilitate etc. to the girl and her family?
• What school factors do you know that does not encourage them to regular their class?
• How is the school environment, safety issues, resources and facilities for girls?
• What other specific reasons do you see pushing the girls out from sec. education?
• How is the gender discrimination situation in this community in regard of staying in and out of school?
• In your experience and observation, how have you found the girls' understanding on self in comparison to boys? Are they treated equally to boys at home and school or differently? Why?
• What are the most challenging and difficult aspects for girls in continuing their study in patriarchal Nepalese context?
• What are the major gender factors that affect the girls to stay out of school? How?
• In girls and boys, which dropped out ratio is higher? Why? (Your opinion)?
• What have you found the girls doing after being dropped out from school, for instance: early marriage, household, caring junior siblings, child labor, etc.?

4. **School Activities**
• What is the role of school in girl dropping out, for instance: school quality, process and practices?
• What activities/programs are conducted at school to reduce the girl's dropout ratio**?**

- What do you think can be done to motivate them to complete their sec. education from school side?
- How can it be raised awareness in parents on the importance of education for their daughters?

## 5.  Intervention  Strategies

- What processes are involved in dropping out from school?
- What strategies can be applied for the intervention of girls' sec. school dropout? Or how gender differences in education can be reduced?
- How the dropped out girls can be returned back to school in your view?

## 6.  Ending Guide

- Reassurances about confidentiality and how the data will be used

 (Please feel comfortable to express if you are willing to add any more about anything?)

Thanks a lot for your precious participation.

## III. Interview with the Parents

1. **Establishing Rapport**
- Introducing myself and the objectives of the Interview. Collecting consent agreement.

2. **Personal Background of the Parents**
- Name
- address
- Age
- sex
- Occupation

3. **General Information on Girls' Secondary School Dropout**
- How many children do you have? How many daughters and sons?

- Who go to school and who stay at home?

- Why did your daughter discontinue school?

- Was it her own decision or of parents to discontinue her study? Why?

- How is the school's response to you and your daughter after she discontinued schooling? I.e. have you got any contact or visit from school?

- How important do you think it to complete Sec. Education for your daughter?

- Who mostly does household chores, your son or daughter? Or, who do you think should do? Why?

- How being a girl supports and limits in continuing school in your society?

- What were the difficulties in continuing school for your daughter?

- What would you think happen if she was a son, could she continue school? Why?

- What are the major factors that cause your daughter to discontinue at school? How?

- In girls and boys, who mostly leave school? Why (in your opinion)?

- What is your daughter doing after leaving school? What would you like her do after school? Why?

4. **Ending Guide**
- Reassurances about confidentiality and how the data will be used

  (Please feel comfortable to express if you are willing to add any more about anything?)

  Thanks a lot for your precious participation.

### IV Interview with the Key Persons

1. **Establishing Rapport**
   ▪ Introducing myself and the objectives of the Interview. Collecting consent agreement.

2. **Personal Background**
   - Name
   - Age
   - Sex
   - Organization

3. **General Information on Girls' Secondary School Dropout**
   - How long have you been working in NGO with educational issues?
   - How is your practical working experience with NGO concerning keeping and returning the girl dropouts to school?
   - What causes the gender differences in sec. education? How?
   - What are the common gender factors of girls' secondary school dropouts?
   - How do the girls understand the self in comparison to the boys? Are they treated equally to boys in relation to their schooling?
   - How being a girl supports or limits in continuing school in this society?

   - In girls and boys, which dropped out ratio is higher? Why?
   - What have you found the girls doing after being dropped out from school?

4. **NGO's Activities on Intervention Strategies**
   - What processes are involved in girl school drop outs?
   - What strategies can be applied to militate against girls' School discontinuation?
   - What is the role of NGO in dropping out, for instance: action plan, process and practices on keeping and returning the dropouts to school?
   - What specific activities/programs are being conducted by your NGO concerning keeping and returning girl dropouts to school in your locality**?**
   - Can you remember an example in which NGO could return the dropouts back to school again?
   - What do you think can be done to motivate the girls to complete their sec. education from NGO side?
   - What a particular approach that helps to reduce girl dropouts in Nepalese framework?

5. **Ending Guide**
   - Reassurances about confidentiality and how the data will be used

   (Please feel comfortable to express if you are willing to add any more about anything?)

   Thanks a lot for your precious participation.

# Annex- C

The study, on the basis of its findings, briefly provides the following recommendations to the parents, school, NGOs and government focusing on their role in improving the girls' situation and combating their secondary school discontinuation through a gender lens.

### I Recommendations to the Parents

- Parents should treat their sons and daughter equally in practice creating and providing the equal environment mainly for their education. They should divide the household duties equally to both sons and daughters but not only to the daughters.
- They should invest in girls education as in sons' and support and motivate them to keep their school continue.
- It should not be thought enough only to send the children to school. Parents should go to school frequently and get information about their school activities, participation and achievement.
- Parents must be aware and play a key role in discouraging young adults to get early marriage and teenage pregnancy by encouraging them to stay in school.
- Parents should be responsible to raise the girls' self-esteem and confidence for future.

### II Recommendations to the School

- it is important to manage at least basis physical facility i.e. toilets, drinking water at school
- To raise awareness among parents about their girls' inborn child right to education and time and again conduct interactions between school and parents.
- To appoint a female teacher in secondary level like in primary.
- Male teacher's sexually abusive behavior has to be discouraged, and give trainings.
- To manage separate toilets for girls with water and sanitary pads.
- To educate the students on sex and menstruation, its process, impacts and symptoms, so they perceive it as a common/normal natural process.
- To continue effort keeping girl's school continue and return back the dropped outs.
- To reduce the gendered school practice and behave the girls equally to boys.
- To offer an environment that is attractive for girls to keep them motivated to attend school daily in order to complete secondary level.
- To motivate and encourage the girls to keep school continue and participate in ECA.

### III Recommendations to the NGOs and INGOs

For improving the girls' and women's situation and combating their secondary school dropout, the NGOs and INGOs should:

- NGO should develop confidence in their own capacities in order to uplift their life by raising awareness on their right to schooling and giving them voice against gender differences in education by advocating and sensitizing the community.

- Design and apply specific programs to encourage girls' participation in secondary level, particularly in rural areas.

- Implement scholarship and incentive programs more effectively.

- Make their programs more gender sensitive.

- raise consciousness on oppressive religious economic, cultural and family and legal practices

- sustain their strategies to keep the girls' school continue long term, raise awareness to their family providing home visit service, study materials and financial support

- Maintain a good coordination with schools of its areas and equally with other NGOs, GOs and donor agencies in order to combat girl's school discontinuation in its locality.

- Focus in family planning programs effectively.

- Provide non- formal education program and skill based training for those who are out of school, and has difficulty to rejoin school

- Increase personal, interpersonal or political power so that individuals, families or communities can take actions to improve their situation (Guiterrez, De Lois & Clenmaye, 1995 in Healy's Lecture Note, 2010).

- Ensure that they have all resources, opportunities, and skills to increase their capacity to determine their own future and to participate in and affect the life of their community (Tesoriero, 2010).

- Balance the imbalanced power relations in patriarchal Nepalese society.

- Deal with issues of power, powerlessness, and oppression and how they contribute to individual, family or community problems and affect helping relationships.

- Enhance capacity to allow them to determine their future and actively participate in their society.

- Empower them helping to reach at the social justice by challenging oppressions and taking charge of matters affecting them.

- Strengthen them to achieve equality of opportunity and equity between different genders, ethnic groups, social classes and age groups enhancing human potentiality at individual and social levels of expression (Hall, 1992:83).

- Address the issues of human rights violation of women and ensure their effective participation and presence in all phases of reconciliation, reintegration and recovery process, and entitle them to live in dignity and in freedom from domination.

## IV Recommendations to the Government

Nepalese government should take over the following responsibilities to improve the condition of girls and women:

- Firstly it is significant to raise awareness and understanding on the importance of female education and advocacy for their right to it among all the stakeholders including their parents.

- It is important to make laws and policies for making secondary education free and compulsory for girls, and practice it effectively.

- Secondary education budgets will need to grow and be used more efficiently.

- Most of parents refuse to send their daughters to school due to unsafe school environment, thus it has to be created the safe environment that can grantee the girls security at school.

- The equal right to education is addressed in law; it has to be brought in practice.

- It needs to reprioritize education expenditure and increase access to female education.

- It's important to improve return to education and Non-formal education has to be run effectively.

- It needs to build other more secondary schools in rural Nepal, so school distance as mentioned in study cannot push the girls out of school.

- It needs to address the gendered dimensions and capacitate girls' and women' direct and active participation in the process of social development. Without this there is no more hope of achieving a meaningful and sustainable develop in Nepalese society.

- It needs to construct the laws addressing gender equity in access to education and in the process transferring parental property and practice them.

- Make all the laws, structures and polices should be made gender free in every institutions.

- Address the structural inequality and the ideology of discrimination and subordination between men and women.

- Implement more intensive action to address the social, cultural and financial barriers that limit education opportunities for girls.

- Focus on gender training of teachers.

- Refine the curriculum to reduce gender stigma and stereotypes at home and school reducing gender inequality in education and unequal access to power structure and confront the patriarchal value system.

- Ensure the girls access to parental property and their right to equality in upbringing.

- Increase women's political power.

- plan, implement monitor and evaluate the government programs from the perspective of gender mainstreaming

## Annex- D: Map of Nepal Showing the Informants' District



**Source:** http://www.mapsofworld.com/nepal/nepal-district-map.html