Dynamics of gender and their impact on girl education: a case study of public schools in Rautahat District, Nepal

Ujwol Thapa
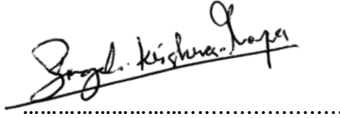
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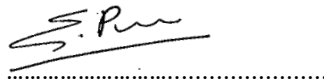
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Declaration

I hereby declare that the report entitled "Gender Dynamic and its potential impact on Girl Education: Case of public schools in Rautahat District, Nepal." is solely the result of my own efforts, and it has not been previously submitted to any other academic institution for any degree or purpose.

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Abstract

This research endeavor stands as a substantial and thorough exploration of diverse gender dynamics within public schools in the Rautahat Districts. Centered on comprehending the intricate factors that give rise to varying educational experiences among students, the study employs a meticulous mixed-methods research design. By harnessing the potency of quantitative data derived from surveys and augmenting it with the profound insights gleaned from focus group discussions and observations, the research presents a comprehensive perspective on the factors influencing individual dynamics.

Encompassing five schools within Yamunamai Rural Municipality and an additional seven schools in Durgabhagwati Rural Municipality, this research initiative spans an extensive duration of five months, thus guaranteeing a meticulous and comprehensive examination of the subject matter. The substantial sample size of 600 participants, thoughtfully balanced to include equal representation from both genders across grades 3 to 8, significantly bolsters the study's robustness and overall representational quality. Built upon the esteemed capability approach pioneered by eminent scholars such as Amartya Sen, Martha Nussbaum, and Mario Biggeri, this research is firmly anchored in a robust theoretical framework. By dissecting dimensions that mold gender dynamics, encompassing factors such as age, gender, grade, and ethnicity, the study skillfully unveils the intricate tapestry of gendered experiences within the educational landscape.

The quantitative data analysis, deftly conducted through meticulous tabulation and descriptive methodologies, offers a lucid and compelling portrayal of indicators pertinent to social inclusivity and exclusivity. By probing into students' preferences concerning their time autonomy, personal agency, leisure pursuits, and the bedrock for their future aspirations, the results divulge an all-encompassing perspective of the educational terrain within the Rautahat district. In addition to the quantitative findings, the careful examination of qualitative data from detailed field notes provides a deeper level of understanding of the research. The identification of recurring themes enhances the study's depth, allowing for a more nuanced exploration of students' experiences and perspectives within the school environment.

Acknowledgment

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Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ECA	Extra Curricular Activities
EFA	Education For All
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
HDI	Human Development Index
INEE	Inter-agency Network for all Education in Emergencies
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/ Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Plus
OXFAM	the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief
PCI	Per Capita Income
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SS	Stratified random Sampling
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
WEF	World Economic Forum

Introduction

1.1　Background of the Study

Education plays a crucial role in shaping the lives and livelihood opportunities of individuals. It is a fundamental human right and a key driver of socio-economic development. However, gender dynamics and disparities persist within this system, affecting boys' and girls' educational experiences and outcomes. Gender dynamics refers to the ways in which gender roles, expectations, and power relationships interact and influence social relationships and interactions between individuals and groups. It encompasses various social, cultural, and behavioral expectations that are associated with gender and can have a significant impact on education. This also influences the students' individual experiences, learning outcomes, and educational and future opportunities. The interactions between genders are multifaceted, reflecting a combination of social, cultural, economic, and political factors. Understanding gender dynamics is essential for fostering equality, inclusivity, and social progress.

Gender dynamics encompass the intricate interplay and impact of gender roles, expectations, and power dynamics on social relationships and interactions within and between individuals and groups. Notably, dynamics have affected the overall educational experience for both boys and girls. These dynamics also give rise to various stereotypes and biases, which could adversely affect the educational experiences of students. As expressed, *"students at risk of being stereotyped may fear confirming a negative stereotype. This feeling has a negative impact on test performance" (Lyons et al., 2018)*. The statement highlights the negative impact of fearing confirmation of negative stereotypes on test performance that can arise when students are at risk of being stereotyped. In Nepal, as in many other countries, gender disparities in education persist despite efforts to promote gender equality. Although notable advancements have improved access to education for girls, significant gaps and challenges remain. In particular, girls in Rautahat District continue to face various obstacles that hinder their educational opportunities and overall educational outcomes.

Persistent inequalities pose significant challenges in the pursuit of gender equality in education. Deep-rooted social and cultural norms frequently prioritize boys' education over girls', thereby perpetuating gender disparities within the education system. These disparities are a significant obstacle to achieving equitable educational opportunities for all. Additionally, limited resources, including inadequate infrastructure, a lack of qualified teachers, and financial constraints, further exacerbate the gender gap in

educational opportunities. Recognizing and challenging stereotypes, biases, and discriminatory practices that limit educational opportunities for certain genders is essential. Consequently, girls are disproportionately affected, facing barriers that hinder their access to quality education and impede their academic progress.

Similarly, gender disparities in education are also influenced by various social dynamics such as marriage practices, household responsibilities, and the gendered division of labor. For example, in some societies (especially in rural communities), girls may expect to prioritize domestic responsibilities over education. Gender dynamics limit girls' education due to societal expectations, especially in rural areas. Practices like early marriage and household responsibilities hinder their opportunities. Traditional norms prioritize girls' domestic roles, leading to early school dropouts and unequal access to education compared to boys. Girls in rural areas often face a disproportionate burden of household responsibilities, including cooking, cleaning, and caring for younger siblings. These responsibilities consume their time and energy, leaving little room for pursuing education. Consequently, girls may struggle to attend school regularly or have sufficient time for studying. Moreover, traditional gender roles assign girls domestic responsibilities, such as household chores and caregiving, which often take precedence over their education. These societal expectations and obligations imposed on girls limit their time, energy, and ability to attend school regularly and fully engage in their studies, thereby impeding their educational progress and hindering their overall academic engagement.

Through a comprehensive analysis of existing literature, FGDs, and a sample survey with the students, this research seeks to identify the specific factors and mechanisms through which gender dynamics and disparities affect education in public schools in Rautahat District, focusing especially on two rural municipalities: Yamunamai and Durgabhagwati rural municipalities. The research examines the influence of four key variables, namely time autonomy, personal autonomy, leisure activities, and aspirations, within the capability approach. These variables serve as essential dimensions in understanding and evaluating gender dynamics and disparities in education.

Moreover, by employing the capability approach, which emphasizes the freedom and opportunity for individuals to lead lives they value, the research investigates how time autonomy, personal autonomy, and aspirations intersect with gender dynamics within the education system. The research aims to investigate the interplay between gender dynamics and the variables of time autonomy, personal autonomy, leisure activities, and aspirations within the context of education. By uncovering these issues and challenges, it aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted ways in which gender dynamics intersect with education. It seeks to highlight the complexities and nuances within the gender and education discourse and provide valuable insights.

1.2   Problem Statement

In the context of public schools in Rautahat District, Nepal, gender dynamics and disparities present significant challenges to girl education. The essence of the problem lies in gaining a comprehensive understanding of the underlying factors contributing to gender dynamics and disparities, as well as discerning the specific consequences these dynamics have on girl education in public schools. Despite efforts to promote

gender equality in education, gender dynamics and disparities persist within the system, especially in terms of the level of educational attainment, creating significant challenges for girls' education. In many countries, including Nepal, there is a persistent gap between male and female literacy rates. According to the data provided by the National Population and Housing Census 2021, the current literacy rate in Nepal for males is 83.6% and for females is 69.4%. While the data shows that the literacy rate is relatively high for both males and females in Nepal, there is still a disparity between the genders, with a higher literacy rate observed among males compared to females. This problem could potentially stem from societal expectations, cultural norms, and discriminatory practices.

In this research, as a researcher, I have adopted a comprehensive approach to understanding the current problem by considering two key variables: external factors and internal factors. This analytical framework allows us to delve into the multifaceted nature of the problem and gain a nuanced understanding of its dynamics. The problem at hand is influenced by a myriad of external factors that encompass the external environment, systems, and social structures. Among these influential elements are social factors, which include gender roles, societal expectations, gender-based discrimination, early marriage, gender-based violence, and prevailing societal stereotypes and biases. Additionally, economic factors play a significant role, with issues such as economic disparities, limited financial resources, inadequate infrastructure, and the challenges posed by poverty exacerbating the situation.

Furthermore, political factors come into play, where policy frameworks, local governance, and the insufficient allocation of resources impact the problem at hand due to the inadequate implementation of policies. Lastly, cultural contexts exert their influence, as cultural beliefs, practices, and traditions, as well as deep-rooted norms and gender stereotypes, contribute to the complexities of the issue. These external factors interact and shape the problem's dynamics, calling for a comprehensive and holistic approach to addressing the challenges they present.

The persistence of gender dynamics and disparities in the education system, particularly in terms of educational attainment, creates substantial challenges for girls' education. These challenges stem from societal expectations, cultural norms, and discriminatory practices that hinder girls' access to education.

On the other hand, internal factors refer to the individual-level characteristics, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that play a role in the problem. These internal factors can include personal motivations, aspirations, self-perceptions, cognitive processes, and socio-psychological aspects. Analyzing internal factors allows us to explore individual agency and internal dynamics that contribute to the problem or shape individuals' experiences within the given context. Several internal factors can greatly impact girls' educational outcomes. *Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in his or her capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments (Bandura, 1977).*

Self-efficacy could positively impact girls' motivation, resilience, and academic performance, leading to improved educational outcomes. Aspirations and goal-setting play a vital role in driving educational attainment, as personal ambitions propel girls to strive for success. Additionally, the influence of peers and family can significantly shape girls' educational choices and experiences. Equipping girls with proper time management skills is also crucial, as it enables them to focus on their studies and pursue their interests effectively. By fostering self-belief, setting clear aspirations,

nurturing supportive relationships, and developing effective time management abilities, girls can achieve improved educational outcomes and thrive in their academic pursuits.

Comprehensive analysis requires examining the interplay between internal and external factors and recognizing their mutual influence. *"Dispositional barriers are less often investigated in surveys and thus are frequently underestimated (Rubenson, 2011).* Various research papers tend to focus more on external or observable barriers while neglecting to thoroughly examine the internal barriers that individuals may face. By acknowledging and understanding the influence of internal factors, such as dispositional barriers, I can shift my focus towards a more people-centric approach. It is crucial to comprehend students' prioritization and their ability to balance various daily activities such as school, tuition, leisure activities, household chores, and more.

By examining the interplay between external and internal factors, I can gain insights into the root causes of gender disparities and inform interventions and policies that address the specific challenges faced by girls in public schools in the Rautahat District. In approaching this issue, I observed a gap in our understanding of how both external and internal factors contribute to gender disparities, especially in rural areas. My thesis aims to bridge this gap by delving into the intricate interplay between external factors (like socio-economic conditions and school infrastructure) and internal factors (such as individual attitudes and perceptions) that influence girls' educational experiences. By examining these factors in tandem, I hope to uncover nuanced insights into the root causes of gender differences in education.

1.3   Objective of the Study

The study aims to explore the various factors and mechanisms through which gender dynamics and disparities affect the educational opportunities, experiences, and outcomes of girls in the public school system. The study focuses on two different rural municipalities in Rautahat District, namely, Yamunamai rural municipality and Durgabhagwati rural municipality. The primary goal is to identify the barriers and challenges that hinder girls' educational progress and achievement. Through a comprehensive understanding of these obstacles, this study intends to inform the development of targeted interventions and policies that address the specific needs of girls within the context of public schools in the Rautahat District. Furthermore, in this study, we will be analyzing and exploring key variables such as access to education, educational attainment, academic performance, and sociocultural factors that influence girls' educational experiences and outcomes.

1. To examine the underlying factors contributing to gender dynamics and their impact on educational attainment.
2. To explore external and internal factors hindering students education
3. To examine the types of leisure activities and study how leisure activities influence students' educational experiences.

1.4   Research question

1. What factors drive gender dynamics in education, and how do they impact students' educational attainment?

2. What are the internal and external factors that hinder education attainment in rural public schools?
3. What is the influence of leisure activities on students' educational experiences and academic performance?

1.5   Significance of the Study

This study aims to investigate the underlying factors and issues through which gender dynamics and disparities impact girl education in the specific context of public schools in Rautahat District, Nepal. By adopting the novel Capability Approach, which centers on individual capabilities and freedoms for development and well-being, we gain a fitting framework for studying gender disparities in girls' education. The research findings from this study could potentially contribute to the development of evidence-based policies, interventions, and practices that promote gender equality and empower girls in education. By shedding light on the specific barriers and mechanisms at play, the study can inform efforts to enhance educational opportunities, create supportive environments, and address societal norms and expectations that limit girls' access to education. The research insights could strengthen gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) practices by providing nuanced perspectives on how societal norms impact educational opportunities. Overall, this research study thus aims to provide insights into the complexities of gender dynamics and disparities in girl education, with the ultimate goal of fostering equality, empowering girls, and promoting social progress.

1.6   Limitations of the Study

When conducting a research study, it is crucial to acknowledge and address the limitations that may impact the validity and generalizability of the findings. The study encountered several limitations during the field visits and data analysis, which need to be acknowledged. In the context of this study on gender dynamics and disparities in girl education, several limitations have been identified and are outlined below:

- **Language and cultural barriers**

  One of the limitations faced during the field visits was the language barrier, as not all respondents had a clear understanding of the Nepali language, and we were unable to communicate effectively in their native languages, such as Bhojpuri or Bajika. These barriers may have influenced the quality and accuracy of the data collected. The language barrier posed a challenge for both the researchers and participants, requiring repeated clarification of questions. This affected the quality of the data collected and subsequently impacted the thoroughness of the data analysis process. Another notable challenge arose from cultural differences, as some questions in the questionnaire did not effectively align with the participants' specific cultural context and experiences. However, this challenge provided us with a valuable learning experience and an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' cultural context, enabling us to improve future research and better tailor questionnaires to their specific cultural perspectives.

- **Early Closure of Schools Due to Heat**

  Due to the unfavorable climate conditions, most of the schools at our research site would typically close around 11 a.m. This limitation impacted the researchers' ability to gather data or conduct observations beyond the limited school hours, potentially restricting the comprehensiveness of the study. Due to the early closure of schools, we could not extend the students' time for our research purposes. As a result, we conducted surveys during the earliest available hours before students returned to their homes.

- **Exclusion of the LGBTQIA+ community**

  In this specific research paper, the inclusion of LGBTQIA+ community members were not possible due to limitations in reaching out at the community level. The study focused primarily on students present in the school, and the researchers did not have sufficient access or opportunities to connect with individuals from the LGBTQIA+ community who may not have been part of the school setting. The topic is still a sensitive issue, and we as researchers could prepare questionnaires in favor of the community. This exclusion highlights a limitation in the scope of the study, as the experiences and perspectives of the LGBTQIA+ community are important to consider in understanding gender dynamics and disparities in education.

- **Inadequate representation in the sample size**

  Due to the equal representation of students of diverse ethnicities, a potential bias report could be made, which means that the group of students selected for the study may not adequately represent the full range of ethnic backgrounds present in the larger population. In other words, the results could be skewed towards the experiences of the ethnic groups that are overrepresented in the sample while underrepresenting the experiences of other ethnic groups.

Literature Review

Chapter two provides valuable insights into a diverse range of literature reviews that have been carefully selected for their relevance to this research. This chapter involves the thorough examination and synthesis of various academic sources, including research studies, articles, books, and other scholarly works.

2.1　Defining Gender and Gender Dynamics and Disparity

Gender refers to the social and cultural roles, behaviors, expectations, and attributes associated with being male, female, or other gender identities. It is often distinguished from sex, which refers to the biological characteristics that define male and female bodies. Gender is a complex concept shaped by various factors, including social norms, cultural traditions, religious beliefs, and individual experiences. These factors can influence how people perceive their own gender identity and how they express it to others. It is a social construct that is learned and reinforced through socialization, and it is not necessarily determined by biology. Gender should not limit an individual's identity to being male or female.

Here, a broad sense of understanding and acknowledgment should be justified. *"Gender is the social meaning attached to the biological differences between sexes, which vary from one culture to another and change over time. (West & Zimmerman, 1987).* This definition of gender highlights the idea that gender is not an innate or fixed characteristic but rather a social construct shaped by cultural and historical contexts. *"Gender signals something about the attributes of the person while acknowledging that these are changeable and entail freedom and agency as well as the constraints of constructed social relations" (Frasier, 2002).* This definition of gender also implies that gender itself is a dynamic and complex term that not only focuses on the biological aspect but also the structural foundation of our culture and traditional values. While individuals have the freedom and agency to express their gender in a variety of ways, they are also constrained by the expectations and norms that exist within their society.

In different societies, gender is often shaped and perceived in ways that reflect the specific cultural, social, economic, and political contexts of those countries. Traditional cultural practices and beliefs continue to play a significant role in shaping gender perceptions in Nepal. Traditional cultural practices and beliefs, as well as poverty and a lack of access to education and resources, can contribute to the marginalization and oppression of women and other marginalized gender identities in these countries.

Traditional gender roles and stereotypes are still prevalent in many parts of Nepali society, which can limit the opportunities and choices available to individuals based on their gender.

Gender dynamics refers to the ways in which gender roles, expectations, and power relationships interact and influence social relationships and interactions between individuals and groups. Gender dynamics can vary across cultures and over time, and they can have significant implications for individuals and societies. Understanding gender dynamics is important for promoting equality and social justice and for creating more inclusive and diverse societies. Gender dynamics can be influenced by a range of factors, including culture, history, and social norms. These dynamics can be both explicit and implicit and can affect various aspects of life, such as education, employment, and relationships.

> *"Gender disparities in Nepalese society are deeply entrenched and multifaceted. They are the result of a complex interplay of historical, cultural, economic, and political factors, which have combined to create a social system that is deeply unequal and exclusionary. Patriarchal norms and values, a gendered division of labor, limited access to education, early marriage and childbirth, and violence against women are among the key factors that contribute to gender disparities in Nepal" (Shrestha & Gartoulla, 2017, p. 3).*

These factors can create significant barriers to educational access and success for girls and women, which also limit their opportunities for personal and professional growth. Gender dynamics can also intersect with other forms of social identities, such as ethnicity, age, class, and sexuality, to create complex and overlapping experiences of privilege and oppression. For example, a girl belonging to a middle-class family may experience unique forms of discrimination and unfairness that are different from those experienced by a girl belonging to a rich family.

Traditional cultural practices and beliefs that prioritize men over women have contributed to gender disparities in Nepalese society. For instance, the practice of dowry, where the bride's family is required to provide a significant amount of money or property to the groom's family, perpetuates gender-based violence against women. "

> *The fact that education will help reduce social problems like dowry is proved wrong by the statistics, as well-educated people are more likely to give and take dowry. The higher the level of education of the groom, the higher his dowry demand will be. Doctors, engineers, and bankers are given more dowries in comparison to other people. In the case of girls who receive higher education, they have to pay more dowry as they have to get married at an older age, and so more dowry is asked by the groom's side in order to get married to older girls. Due to this reason, many parents do not provide higher-level education to their daughters. (Adhikari, 2021).*

In many cases, families in rural areas are unable to afford the dowry demanded by the groom's family, which results in girls being pulled out of school and forced into early marriage. Moreover, the financial burden of the dowry may cause the family to pull their daughter out of school in order to save money for the dowry payment. In the context of education, such gender-based disparities in Nepal are evident in terms of unequal access to schooling and other educational opportunities. This eventually results in girls being denied access to education and missing out on important opportunities for their growth and development.

2.1.1 Evolution of the Concept of Gender and its Impact on Societies

Throughout history, the concept of gender has significantly evolved, and it continues to be a dynamic and evolving concept in the present day. In the past, the concept of gender was often associated with the biological sex of a person, whether male or female. However, in recent decades, gender has been viewed beyond the biology of a person. It has been associated with the social and cultural aspects that characterize a person's sense of belongingness. Lorber defines gender as "social institutions that organize human society into two or more categories based on perceived biological differences between males and females. (Lorber, 2011). "Gender" is a social institution that influences many aspects of our lives and provides opportunities to grow as well. However, it is important to note that gender is not necessarily determined by our biological selves.

Having self-consciousness and awareness is a step further in imparting the idea and concept of gender and how it has come to be in modern society. It is often said that one's gender is not determined by birth but rather, through a series of social and cultural aspects of society, one chooses their gender and challenges the gender restrictions. Simone de Beauvoir, a feminist writer, has argued that *"one is not born but rather becomes a woman. (de Beauvoir, 1949).* This particular statement from her book "The Second Sex", argues the idea that gender is not solely determined by our biological sexes but is determined by various social and cultural factors that are dynamic in nature and change over time. The term "gender identity" has emerged to describe an individual's self-awareness of their own gender, which may or may not align with their assigned sex at birth. This joint consciousness has challenged the traditional view on how gender should be defined and has provoked the underlying gender roles and stereotypes that allude to gender dynamics in our societies.

Overall, the evolution of the concept of gender has been reflected in the growing understanding of the complex and dynamic nature associated with human identity. A positive impact of the evolution of understanding gender can be seen in the fields of education and political and economic institutions as well. Historically, various educational institutions have often reinforced traditional gender roles and expectations that have affected equitable access to education. Nepal, being a traditionally patriarchal society, has a deep-rooted belief that prompted certain gender roles and expectations that resulted in significant disparities in equal access to education and other opportunities between boys and girls.

In Nepal, there was significant progress in ameliorating gender disparities in the three decades prior to the project (Nepal Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women Project). During that time, female literacy increased fivefold, fertility dropped by half, and female life expectancy increased by 11 years. (ADB, 2016). The progress made in improving the current situation of gender disparities in Nepal with such projects suggests that efforts have been made to overcome traditional gender roles and expectations. However, it is important to note that even with these improvements, there may still be significant disparities and barriers for women and girls in accessing education and other opportunities, particularly in rural areas. In recent years, the ever-changing concept of gender has helped developing countries like Nepal overcome various gender disparities in different sectors and lenses to observe at the local level.

2.1.2 Understanding gender dynamics and education in rural settings

There are various social and cultural norms and expectations in societies that influence various gender dynamics in the context of access to education and academic performance. Gender dynamics also impact an individual's ability to make choices and decisions. Its impact can be seen in the field of education as a gender gap in access to education, especially in various developing countries. In many rural areas, the majority of girls are more likely to be out of school. *In 2021, nearly one in five young women were married before the age of 18 (SDG report, 2022).* Early marriage is a major reason many girls are taken out of school. Girls marrying at such an early age have limited access to education and other economic opportunities as well. The practice of child marriage is a major issue of gender disparities in many developing countries.

Gender dynamics can influence an individual's performance and their expectations in society. Various gender stereotypes and biases can lead to differences in access to opportunities and achievements in education, where a boy's education would be given more priority than a girl's education. Such disparities can be found all over the world. Gender and public education in rural settings are important issues that have received increasing attention in recent years. Rural schools face unique challenges in promoting gender equality and inclusive environments for all students. These challenges are often related to issues such as limited access to various resources, geographic location and isolation, and different cultural norms and values associated with language barriers, cultural differences, and so on.

Gender stereotypes and cultural expectations can limit a girl's access to education, particularly in a patriarchal society.

One of the key issues in rural education is the intersection of gender with other social identities, such as race, class, and sexuality. *"More women in Nepal are receiving some form of education, but there are vast disparities among castes, ethnic groups, and regions. Among the Tarai Madhesi Dalit, 85% of women are without any education, compared to 46% of men; among Tarai Madhesi other castes, 75% of women and 25% of men lack education; and for Muslims, the figures are 78% for women and 42% for men (ADB Report, 2010).* In the context of such disparities, students from low-income families or marginalized racial or ethnic groups may face additional barriers to educational opportunities. They may be more likely to experience discrimination or harassment based on their gender identity or expression.

Despite these challenges, there are strategies that rural schools can use to promote gender equality and create safe and inclusive environments. These include promoting gender-sensitive teaching practices, developing gender-inclusive policies and procedures, providing training and support for educators and administrators, and engaging with community members to promote greater awareness and understanding of gender issues in rural contexts. Addressing various gender disparities, the Government of Nepal initiated an education initiative called Education for All (2004–2009) that aimed to meet access, equity, and quality goals for primary schooling while expanding education coverage (ADB Report, 2010). The government also established various policies and programs to address the specific needs of disadvantaged marginalized groups, including girls, ethnic minorities, and children with disabilities. However, despite various applaudable efforts made through such education policies, significant challenges remain in ensuring access to quality education for all children in Nepal, particularly in rural areas. Challenges remain in the form of geographical constraints, economic depreciation, sociocultural barriers, etc.

Research consistently shows that girls tend to perform better academically than boys at all levels of education. However, there are still gender disparities in education, with girls being more likely to drop out of school or be excluded from certain subjects or career paths.

2.1.3 Gender stereotypes and biases associated with education

Gender stereotypes and biases refer to preconceived notions or beliefs about various roles, behaviors, and assumed traits of individuals based on their gender identity. UNHCR defines gender stereotypes as *a generalized view or preconception about attributes or characteristics that are or ought to be possessed by women and men or the roles that are or should be performed by women or men" (UNHCR, 2014).* This sort of perspective on gender stereotypes causes differential treatment in terms of one's gender identity.

Stereotypes and biases can lead to assumptions and expectations about how men and women should behave, act, and pursue themselves in different fields of life, including education, work, and even relationships with other individuals. These ideas of how one should act or be are deeply rooted in our societies and may lead to discriminatory attitudes and behaviors toward individuals who do not conform to traditional gender norms. It can have a negative impact on individuals' self-esteem, opportunities, and outcomes. Our assumptions about individuals are based on their association with a particular group, which could potentially lead to negative or unfair treatment. However, we cannot completely assume that these stereotypes and gender-expected roles have negative impacts. Stangor implies that *"stereotypes matter because they are a part of our everyday lives; they influence our judgments and behaviors towards individuals, often entirely out of awareness" (Stangor, 2009).* Stereotypes and gender prejudice are common in our lives and affect how we perceive and behave toward others even without our conscious awareness.

In the education field, gender stereotypes can have a consequential impact on both teachers and students. These stereotypes segregate and create differences in one's learning experience. Gender stereotypes and biases can influence how teachers perceive and treat students, which can affect their academic outcomes. Its influence can be seen in an individual's wants and interests when making a certain decision in school. Boys may be discouraged from pursuing careers in the humanities and creative arts because these fields are sometimes seen as more feminine or woman-oriented subject choices.

Similarly, girls may be discouraged from pursuing careers in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields due to the belief that society views these fields as not appropriate for girls. The SHE+ Report 2022 relays the gender gap in the IT field and focuses on organizing workshops to help increase female students' interest in pursuing careers in the IT field. According to the survey, *"out of 164 female respondents, only 5–30% knew basic computing skills, while 2-4% had knowledge about coding, app development, or had the ability to code (SHE+, 2022).* The workshop report concluded that with adequate training and equal access to opportunities in the education field, the gender gap in education could be minimized.

Teachers' behavior and attitude can be influenced by various gender stereotypes and biases that can affect an individual's learning experience and academic outcomes. For instance, a teacher may subconsciously give more attention and interact more with a

particular gender group during class. This could result in the discouragement of other fellow students' learning enthusiasm in the class. Research has shown that various gender stereotypes can affect the way teachers interact with students and could lead to differential treatment of boys and girls in the same classroom.

A study by Sadker and Sadker (1994) mentions that *teachers tended to give more attention and interact more with boys than girls during math and science classes, which could potentially discourage the female students from showing interest in those subjects" (Sadker and Sadker, 1994).* A teacher's role in a student's life is essential so that they can gain further academic progress, and when teachers do not provide enough feedback to female students, it can negatively affect their academic outcomes and create discouragement. Thus, it is very important for teachers as well as students to be aware of various gender stereotypes and biases in the classroom setting and be able to address those issues.

2.2   An Introduction to the Development and Capability Approach

Development has always been associated with technological advancement and monetary growth rather than the lives of people, how they've been living, and their contribution to society. According to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), development is defined as *"a process of enlarging people's choices. The main objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy a long, healthy, and creative life" (UNDP, 2019).* In recent years, the concept of development has become more people-focused, and various development projects strive to improve the quality of life of people. Development has been heavily measured in terms of a Human Development Index (HDI), per capita income (PCI), gross domestic product (GDP), and other measures to evaluate growth and development.

The Normative Framework for Development by Sabina Alkire and Séverine Deneulin states three different assumptions that discuss economic growth and human flourishing, where the first assumption states, *"A high GDP per capita is necessary for human flourishing." The first assumption is that economic growth is desirable, in part, because it raises people's income, hence their quality of life. In many circumstances, this is true, but not always and not necessarily" (Alkire and Deneulin, 2007).* Instead of focusing on the annual income of a person and the GDP of a country, development should focus more on the people's freedom and opportunity. Aristotle argued that *"wealth is evidently not the good that we are seeing, for it is merely useful and for the sake of something else" (Nicomachean Ethics Book 1, chapter 5).* In his words, wealth is not the end goal or what we must strive to achieve. It is a mere tool to achieve something that has more value in our lives. *"The usefulness of wealth lies in the things that it allows us to do and the substantive freedoms it helps us to achieve" (Sen, 1999).* The capability approach then shifts the focus of development from material gains and resources towards their ability to achieve the goals that they value the most. The ultimate goal, or primary goal, of development should be to expand people's capabilities. Wealth is only valuable to the extent that it enables people to achieve substantive freedom. Having said that, it is high time that we shift our focus from evaluating the physical possession of recourses and assets towards our freedom to make our own choices and decisions.

Development is traditionally understood as a process of social and economic growth and transformation that aims to improve people's quality of life. However, development

should be more than just that; it should strive to improve people's lives in a holistic sense where various factors such as health, education, social justice, and environmental sustainability must be considered and given more importance. As times have changed, development is seen as more human-centric and focuses on what people value. The unit of analysis has shifted from the economy to people. When the unit of analysis changes from economy-centric to people-centric, *"it puts people first. In this view, a healthy economy is one that enables people to enjoy a long and healthy life, a good education, a meaningful job, physical safety, democratic debate, and so on (Alkrie and Deneulim, 2012).* The objective shifts to expand what people are able to do and be and look into what might be the real freedom for individuals.

Likewise, Amartya Sen has provided a framework known as the Capability Approach to understand development that emphasizes the importance of expanding people's capabilities or freedom to live a life that they actually value. Developed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, Nussbaum defines the capability approach as *"a theoretical framework for the evaluation of individual well-being and social arrangements that places the notion of human capability at the center of its analysis" (Nussbaum, 2011).* The ability to make choices and pursue one's goal is the most fundamental aspect of human freedom, but this freedom is then limited by unique opportunities and the availability of different resources. Capabilities are the real opportunities that people have to do or be what they value most. These end products depend on various factors, such as personal characteristics, social institutions, and the natural environment. Capabilities refer to the potential to achieve, whereas functionings are the achieved outcomes of an individual. In the 1999 book by Amartya Sen, Development as Freedom, he provides three correlated concepts used to evaluate individual well-being and social arrangement: functioning, capability, and agency.

In the capability approach, *"functioning is defined as the various things a person may value doing or being", "capability refers to the freedom to enjoy various functionings, and "agency refers to the ability to pursue goals that one values or has reason to value" (Sen, 1999).* Hence, a person's well-being is not only determined by their material wealth or income but also by their ability to function in society and pursue activities and goals that they value the most. It focuses on freedom, choices, and the various opportunities that a person has to acquire what they value most. This theoretical framework helps to evaluate an individual's well-being and freedom to achieve certain functions that they value. In order to achieve valuable functioning and pursue goals, it is crucial to expand people's substantive freedom and opportunities that are linked with an individual's capabilities and resources.

Simply put, capabilities refer to the potential to achieve, whereas functioning are the achieved outcomes. In order to achieve valuable functioning and pursue their goals, it is crucial to expand people's substantive freedom and opportunities that are linked with individual capabilities and agencies. Sen has provided two normative assumptions in the capability approach; they are as follows: The assumption is that freedom to achieve well-being is of primary moral importance. The second assumption is that freedom to achieve well-being must be understood in terms of people with capabilities. (Sen, 1999).

From the given assumption regarding capability and its approach to development, Sen has given emphasis to evaluating various development policies and programs based on their ability to enhance people's capabilities and freedom instead of focusing on the measurement of economic growth and monetary possession of a person. He describes

capabilities as an opportunity or freedom that a person can achieve that is considered valuable and recognized by society. Having opportunities and freedom alone is not enough; it is crucial to analyze the amount of achievement or measure the actual outcomes of those capabilities.

According to Sen, the *"capability approach is an intellectual discipline that gives a central role to the evaluation of a person's achievements and freedom in terms of his or her actual ability to do things a person has reason to value doing or being" (Sen, 2009)*. Thus, the capability approach evaluates the actual freedom to do things and become someone. It indefinitely gives an alternative or an option to define development and focus on different dimensions of development as well.

2.3 Capability Approach in Education: Education as a functioning itself and as a facilitator for other functioning

Education is a valuable function with its own value for different people. Having access to education is important for individuals because it provides them with opportunities to enhance their capacities, improve their capabilities, and also be involved in various activities. However, it is not the end of functioning; rather, education is seen as the facilitator for other functioning as well. *"To be educated is a capability in itself, while education is also made up of a number of separate but intersecting and overlapping constitutive capabilities" (Walker, 2007)*.

In the capability approach, education is essential as it provides individuals with different opportunities to pursue things that they think are worth their time, such as acquiring knowledge, expanding their capabilities, and so on. It enables people to view education as a means to acquire other functions such as access to health care services, employment opportunities, being involved in activities, taking part in social arrangements, etc. In this way, education overlaps and intersects with other capabilities. Education is seen not as an end but as a beginning to pursue other goals that have now become possible to achieve because they are now educated or aware of other capabilities around them.

Figure 2.1 Education and its Intersection with Other Functionings
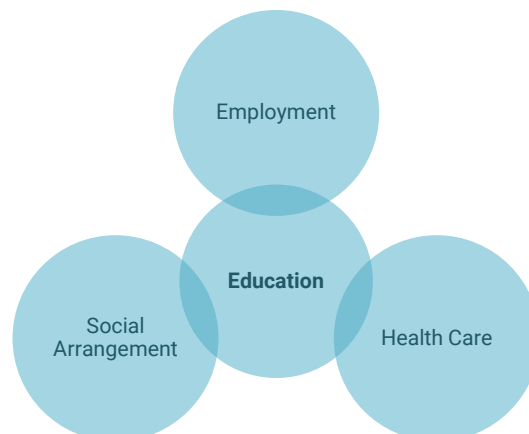
Thus, in the capability approach, education should be able to ensure that it is accessible to everyone. In such conditions, policies and interventions should be

designed to address various issues related to education improvement, minimize and remove barriers, and ensure that everyone has access. Education should then be able to help individuals promote other capabilities to achieve certain functions that are valuable to them.

If we are concerned with measuring gender equality in education, one way to theorize about capabilities is through the lens of Amartya Sen's capability approach. According to this approach, people have different capabilities and opportunities to achieve different functions that are more or less influenced by various factors such as health, socio-economic factors, personal traits and characteristics, and even several life experiences. Melanie Walker highlighted that *"while the functions of the students are the same, their capabilities are more or less different"*.

Aligning with this statement, here is an example extracted from the same reading to further clarify:

"Two 13-year-old girls in Kenya participating in an international study of learning achievements fail mathematics. For one, despite attending a well-equipped school in Nairobi with qualified and motivated teachers offering ample learning support and a safe learning environment, a major reason for her failure was her decision to spend less time on mathematics and more time with friends in the drama club and other leisure activities. For the other, from a school in Wajir, one of Kenya's poorest districts, despite her interest in mathematics and schoolwork generally, her results were largely due to the lack of a mathematics teacher. The subject was taught by an English specialist. Private after-school tuition was available, but her parents could not afford it for all their children. They decided to prioritize their son and require their daughter to perform housework and childcare. She had little time to prepare for the examinations" (Walker and Unterhalter, 2009).

In the context of education, the functioning of students is the same, i.e., to study, gain knowledge, and do well in examinations in order to proceed further to higher education. However, their capabilities to achieve that functioning are heavily influenced by various external factors surrounding those students.

Figure 2.2 Same functionings but different factors influencing student's capabilities
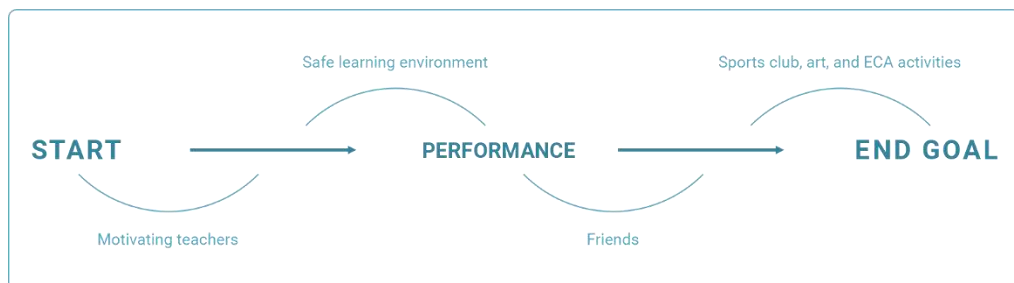
In Fig. 2.2, there are lots of opportunities as well as distractions that could alter the outcomes (failure in examination). Even if there are excellent opportunities, various distractions could divert attention from the end goal. It affects the functioning of the students. Despite having motivating teachers, amazing opportunities to learn in the class, well-trained teachers, etc., the major reason for the failure could be various distractions, such as spending more time in ECAs than their studies. In this regard, their ability to perform well in their examination is influenced.

Figure 2.3 same functionings but different factors influencing student's capabilities
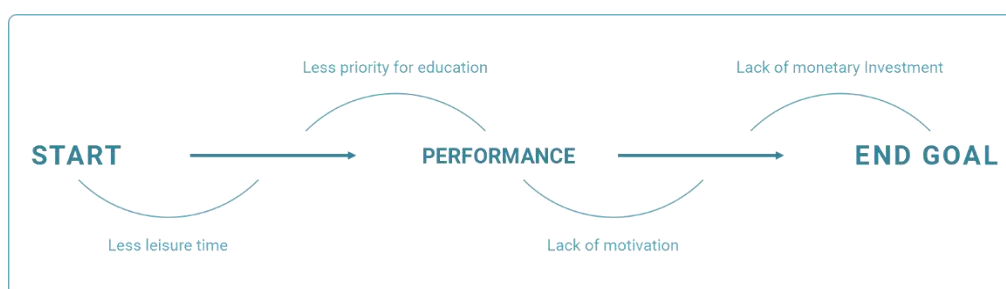
Whereas in Fig. 2.3, despite a student's wanting to study and attend classes, various internal factors such as economic crisis or difficulties, less leisure time to do extra study, etc. could delay the opportunities that affect the end result of their educational journey. In both scenarios, the end result from the perspective of the process is very different. *"The capability approach requires that we do not simply evaluate the functioning but the real freedom or opportunities each student had available to choose and to achieve what he or she valued" (Walker and Unterhalter, 2009).* Thus, evaluating functioning alone is not enough. It is imperative to evaluate and analyze students' real freedom and the opportunities that each of them has.

2.4   Gender Equality in Education: through Capability Approach

Measuring inequalities in education should not just look into the data; rather, our attention should be focused on the question of "how do we even define equality in education? Quantitative studies provide substantive data and statistics that enable us to visualize gender disparities in education. One of the limitations of such quantitative data lies in the ability to understand the differential experiences of girls in school that affect their ability to gain an education. Another would be the insufficiency of exploring complexities relating to gender and gendered experiences. Victoria Foster says, "*Limits of existing measurements mean we must first look more closely at the ways in which inequality can be a social construction due to differing ideas about which aspects of education require equal distribution (Foster 1996).* It would mean that the way society defines and measures inequality is not necessarily objective and may be influenced by different ideas and beliefs about what should be considered equal.

Inequality is not simply a matter of having unequal access to educational opportunities or unequal distribution of education resources; it is also shaped by different ideas about what aspects of education require equal distribution. When it comes to understanding education from a gender perspective, it can be understood what each female student values the most. According to this approach, gender equality in education should be assessed by the extent to which women and girls have the capability to access and use education to enhance their well-being and achieve their full potential.

Quantitative data can provide a snapshot of the current state of education, including issues such as access to education, enrollment rates, completion rates, achievement levels, etc. *"The Dakar Framework for Action is a reaffirmation of the vision set out in the World Declaration on Education for All in Jomtien a decade ago" (UNESCO, 2000).* The Framework was a global agreement to achieve the goal of "Education for All" (EFA) by the year 2015. Many countries, including Nepal, used this framework as

the basis for their own education policies and different initiatives. Having said that, quantitative data are important to highlight various educational disparities. It helps to compare past and present situations and to make predictions about the future state of the situation.

This approach emphasizes the importance of assessing the opportunities and resources available to individuals to determine their capabilities, rather than just their achievements or outcomes. In education, this means assessing not only the number of girls and women enrolled in schools but also factors such as the quality of education, the availability of infrastructure, and the cultural and social norms that may limit their access to education. In this regard, the capability approach can be used as a framework for understanding and measuring educational inequalities. That's when we shift our focus toward an individual's well-being and freedom.

It is possible to gather and analyze data from quantitative research, but I don't think that school attendance and completion rates after accessing education alone may give an accurate representation of an individual's level of agency and well-being. Education is an important means of enhancing an individual's capabilities. However, education is the only factor that could define a person's well-being and control over their lives. It is important for a child to participate in education and knowledge-gaining, but it is equally important for them to utilize that knowledge for their own benefit. In the article, Equality in Education: An Equality of Condition Perspective, Kathleen Lynch and John Baker stated that "equality in education is associated with equal empowerment and enabling conditions for people to pursue a good life" (Lynch and Baker, 2004).

It is important to focus on women's empowerment and leadership. Empowering women requires more than just providing education; it involves challenging gender norms and addressing the power dynamic that shapes gender relations. According to Amartya Sen's perspective, *"the capability approach is more than simply a proposal to focus on people's capabilities; it also entails a critical engagement with all social, cultural, and other factors that shape people's preferences, expectations, and perceptions and thus influence which choices are made from the freedoms that we have. (Walker and Unterhalter, 2007)*. For example, in a traditional society, women are expected to prioritize their roles as caregivers and homemakers over pursuing further education. Ingrid Robeyns has argued that "the egalitarian literature dealing with inequality in welfare economics and the inequality literature in analytical political philosophy are rather limited in looking at what equality means" (Robeyns, 2002).

Most measurement methods focus on quantifiable data that does not consider social and cultural factors. So, Ingrid suggests the capability approach framework, which emphasizes the importance of creating conditions that enable individuals to achieve their full potential. It is important to address the extent to which female students have the freedom and opportunities to access and utilize education to further enhance their well-being and achieve their full potential. For this, we must move from just focusing on access to education to evaluating the quality of education and also various cultural and social factors that may affect girls' active participation in schools and later future achievements.

One of the major advantages of using the capability approach framework is that researchers and policymakers would be able to focus on people and their actual capabilities that are aligned with what the capability approach theory focuses on, identify the various capabilities that people have, and find ways to enhance them. Additionally, the capability approach recognizes that gender inequality in education is

often intertwined with broader social and economic factors that affect women's opportunities and choices. This means that policies and interventions to promote gender equality in education should address these underlying structural factors rather than simply focusing on increasing the number of girls in school.

Figure 2.4 Correlation between CA goals, agenda, and individual capabilities
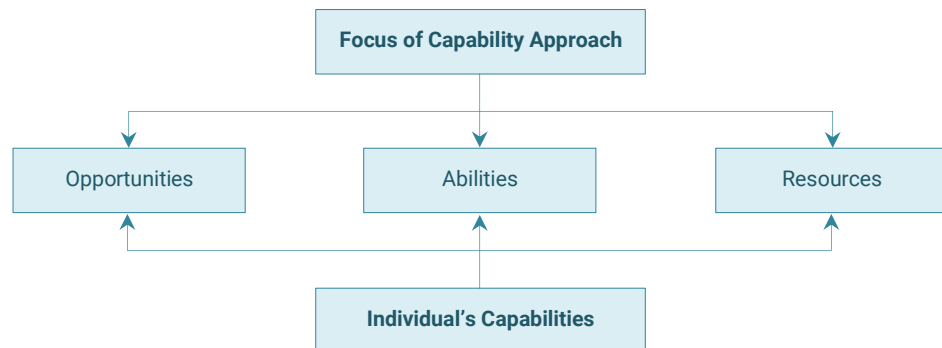
The capability approach recognizes that people have different needs and interests and helps to improve those capabilities. Capabilities are shaped by a complex interplay of social, economic, cultural, and political factors. Gender equality in education is not simply about increasing the number of girls in school but also involves addressing the broader economic, social, and political factors that shape their opportunities and choices. There is a heavy emphasis on the importance of expanding girls' capabilities and freedom to choose rather than simply increasing their enrollment rates. Quality education should then be viewed as the ability to make students productive, make sure that they are able to enhance their capabilities, and set goals to ensure that their knowledge is not wasted.

Elaine Unterhalter has used the capability approach to explore the ways in which the experience of attending school may be detrimental to an individual's capabilities. In her work on the capability approach, Unterhalter has explored how attending school can be detrimental to an individual's capabilities, particularly in the context of developing countries. The capability approach is a framework for understanding human development that emphasizes expanding people's opportunities and freedoms to live the lives they value.

According to Unterhalter, attending school can be detrimental to an individual's capabilities in a number of ways. Firstly, the experience of attending school may not be conducive to learning, particularly in settings with poorly trained teachers, overcrowded classrooms, and inadequate resources. This can result in students failing to develop the knowledge and skills they need to achieve their goals and aspirations. Secondly, attending school can be detrimental to an individual's capabilities if it reinforces social inequalities and exclusion. For example, girls may face discrimination and harassment in school, limiting their opportunities and constraining their choices.

Similarly, children from marginalized communities may not have access to quality education, which can perpetuate poverty and exclusion. Finally, attending school can be detrimental to an individual's capabilities if it fails to prepare them for the changing world of work. As the global economy becomes more competitive and knowledge-based, individuals must be equipped with the skills and knowledge to succeed in a

rapidly changing job market. However, many schools may not be providing students with the relevant skills and knowledge they need to thrive in the modern economy.

To summarize, Elaine Unterhalter's work highlights the importance of considering the ways in which attending school can either enhance or detract from an individual's capabilities. Adopting a capability approach to education policy and practice may create more inclusive and equitable education systems that support the development of human potential.

2.5 Understanding gender and education through the education policy of Nepal at the local level

Education policies are shaped by different factors that vary across societies. Various policies are formed with regard to addressing various issues related to economic development, social inequality, etc. Policies are shaped by identifying problems and issues as well as the socio-cultural formation of society. The impact of various education policies on gender dynamics can be complex and multifaceted. Policies can either reinforce or challenge gender stereotypes and norms. Those impacts might also vary and depend on various factors such as cultural context, socio-economic status, and geographical location. There is definitely a complex impact of education policies on gender dynamics. The influence of traditional gender roles and the division of labor within families is a significant factor in shaping education policies. Due to various social and cultural factors, "the scope of women was considered a limited one: go to their husband's home, give birth to children, and do household chores. On the other hand, the role of men was considered a little broader—go outside for work and manage the financial aspect of the family.

The social division of work between men and women was accepted and acknowledged by every member of the family" (Acharya, 2017). This particular statement highlights the traditional gender roles and division of labor that are found within families, where women are expected to primarily focus on domestic responsibilities and men are expected to be the breadwinners. The perspective of labor division based on gender roles also influenced the formulation of various policies that incorporated and perpetuated gender stereotypes and biases within the policy framework. As a result, gender inequalities in terms of access, resources, and opportunities have been observed, with educational resources often favoring boys over girls. Education policies reflecting traditional gender roles have often created various forms of gender inequality in terms of access, resources, and opportunities. This could be seen in the allocation of educational resources, such as funding and infrastructure, favoring boys' education over girls' families and schools.

Additionally, societal attitudes and biases may have influenced the expectations and treatment of girls within educational institutions, leading to disparities in academic support, encouragement to pursue future guidance, and even guidance. There are various provisions and facilities mentioned in different plans and policy frameworks. "The constitution of Nepal has guaranteed the right to access to basic level education and free education up to secondary education (The Constitution of Nepal, 2015, Article 31).

1. Every Nepali citizen has the right to access basic education.

2. Every citizen shall have the right to get compulsory and free education up to the basic level and free education up to the secondary level from the state.

In addition to the rights mentioned in the Constitution of Nepal, 2015, it is essential to note that ensuring equal access to quality education for all citizens, regardless of gender, socioeconomic status, or geographical location, is crucial for promoting inclusive and justifiable education systems. This constitutional provision is a crucial step toward ensuring equal access to quality education for all, regardless of gender, socioeconomic status, or geographical location. Policies should strive to reduce different barriers to education that may hinder certain groups, particularly girls and marginalized communities, from accessing and completing their education. Societal attitudes and biases also play a role in shaping education policies. These biases can influence the expectations and treatment of girls within educational institutions, leading to disparities in academic support, encouragement, and guidance. However, it is important to recognize that various provisions and facilities have been incorporated into different plans and policy frameworks to address these issues.

Likewise, the current 15th Three-Year Periodic Plan Nepal focuses on developing public education through universal access, the development of proper infrastructure, equitable access and assurance of quality, reconciling and redistributing teacher-student ratios, enhancing educational good governance and accountability, etc. (15th Periodic Plan, 2020). One of the major problems with the current situation of the public school (education) system in Nepal is the failure to provide full access to quality education for every child. This includes failure to reduce dropout rates in rural areas, difficulty in effectively managing teachers across different areas and subjects in all schools, enhancing good governance and accountability in the education sector, etc.

Another challenge regarding public education is the lack of technical training and skill development courses. In the Constitution of Nepal 2015, Article 31, Clause 5, states that *"every Nepali community residing in Nepal shall have the right to get education in its own mother tongue and, for that purpose, to open and operate schools and educational institutions in accordance with the law. (The Constitution of Nepal, 2015, Article 31, Clause 5).* It acknowledges various linguistic barriers as well as challenges. However, challenges persist in the public education system, including reducing dropout rates in rural areas, improving teacher management across different subjects and areas, and enhancing overall governance and accountability. Technical training and skill development courses are also seen as lacking in many parts of the rural areas of Nepal. Thus, it is very important to address the need for education policies in Nepal to address the complex interplay between gender dynamics and the education system.

In 2018, the Nepali government announced a free and compulsory education policy for children up to the age of 14. However, the implementation of the policy has been slow and uneven, with many children still out of school. This is partly due to inadequate resources but also to weak institutional capacity, a lack of political will, and poor monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Annual monitoring and evaluation systems are essential to track the progress of policy implementation, identify gaps, and address challenges.

Policies that promote gender equity in education, such as providing equal access to education and reducing gender bias, can help to close the gender gap in education. Eliminating gender disparity (20 percent) *"The focus has been on scholarships for Dalits and poorer girls, developing a gender-sensitive curriculum, and recruiting more women*

teachers. Similarly, scholarships for girls are distributed in most schools, with just a few cases where the school management has decided to allocate the fund for different purposes. But it is common to find that these scholarships are not targeted according to need, as intended, but according to other factors such as educational achievement and social connections. In some cases, this reflects a lack of direction given to the schools and, in others, 'capture' by elites. The problem is not simply a lack of resources but a lack of vigor and commitment to implementation" (EFA Nepal, 2006).

2.6   Defining Gender Disparity

Gender disparity refers to *"reasons or contributing factors (such as poverty and traditional and cultural practices) behind the gender gap in education (and in other public areas) for girls in comparison with boys. Generally, gender disparities persist in enrollment and retention rates for girls at all levels of education" (INEE, 2010).* Gender disparity arises from a multitude of factors that result in unequal access to resources, differential status, and varying levels of well-being between men and women. It manifests in various contexts, including poverty, historical legacies, social norms, and stereotypes, as well as policies and strategies.

- **Historical factors (socio-cultural aspects)**

  Our societies have been constructed in ways that assign different roles, responsibilities, and even different power dynamics among men and women. In Amartya Sen's book *"Persistent Inequalities", he says that "specific patterns of sexual divisions and female specialization can be seen as being reflective of the traditional within household divisions related to the established arrangement, which differentially bias the cultivation of skill and tend to sustain asymmetry and opportunities offered for acquiring untraditional skills" (Sen, 1990).* Sen argues that specific patterns of sexual dimensions and power dynamics can be seen as reflective of traditional mindsets within household activities. Various household divisions could lead to resources and opportunities as well. This historical division of work between men and women can be observed in the present context, which could have contributed to the persistence of gender disparity.

- **Social norms and stereotypes**

  Gender dynamics and differences are created by various societal expectations and stereotypes. Women have often been given caregiving and domestic responsibilities, while the same social values apply to men's professional and leadership roles, which has created different gender disparities. Such role expectations and the division of labor have reinforced various societal beliefs that women are primarily responsible for household chores, which could limit their opportunities for career development and even economic independence. *"Young children have to be minded 24/7. If a mother (or a father) of young children is engaged in an activity that is incompatible with child-rearing, Most paid work requires alternate arrangements for the care of children. Women reduce their paid work to care for their children; men tend not to do this". (Bianchi, Sayer, Milkse, and Robinson, 2012).* Thus, such social norms and expectations tend to limit

opportunities for women to pursue economic independence and other opportunities.

- **Intersectionality**

    Intersectionality in societies enables us to recognize that various aspects of identity, such as gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and ability, intersect and interact to shape an individual's experiences of privilege or marginalization. It acknowledges that individuals can face multiple forms of oppression or privilege simultaneously due to the intersection of their identities. In the traditional society of Nepal, intersectionality can prevent people from gaining access to resources such as education, health care facilities, drinking water, sanitation, etc. Gender disparity and discrimination are not experienced in isolation but intersect with other social identities and systems of power. A female student's gender disparity in terms of education could be influenced by factors such as her economic status, ethnicity, etc. Intersectionality allows people to explore the idea that gender disparities are not uniform in every society and that the experiences and challenges faced by individuals can vary based on their intersecting identities.

2.6.1 Gender Disparity in Education

Gender disparity in education refers to the unequal treatment, opportunities, and outcomes experienced by individuals based on their gender, which could be very different in the context of time, region, sociocultural factors, etc. It involves the differential access to schooling, participation, and achievement of boys and girls in educational settings. Gender disparities can manifest at various levels, including early childhood education, primary and secondary schooling, and higher education. This goes to say that place and various sociocultural factors play a huge role in enhancing various gender disparities in the context of education.

Gender disparity in education can be seen in the form of unequal access to education. Unequal educational distribution access could be the result of various factors such as cultural norms, societal expectations, economic constraints, personal autonomy, choices, and a lack of knowledge about various existing education policies. Some specific barriers to education accessibility are inadequate sanitation facilities in schools, long-distance travel to schools, a lack of safety inside the school or along the road, and various discriminatory practices within educational institutions. Another form of gender disparity is particularly evident in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education. Various studies have consistently demonstrated a significant underrepresentation of women in STEM-related subjects at higher education levels and in further pursuit of careers. The Global Gender Gap Report (WEF, published in 2020, stated that about 85 percent of men were involved in the engineering field and only 15 percent of women were involved (WEF, 2020). This goes to show the lack of representation of women in the STEM field. The multifaceted gender disparity in education goes beyond access and extends to the quality of education that students receive.

Various types of gender biases within the educational system could hinder female students' ability to develop their capabilities to the optimum level. Quality education should be accessible and also be able to challenge different gender stereotypes, biases

in teaching, discriminatory practices, etc. Gender disparities often lead to unequal allocation of resources, which could result in differential treatment between male and female students in the school.

2.7   Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework serves as a guiding structure for research studies by providing a theoretical foundation. It offers a systematic approach to understanding the research problem and provides a framework for data collection, analysis, and interpretation. *"The theoretical and conceptual framework explains the path of research and grounds it firmly in theoretical constructs" (Adom, Dickson, & Hussein, Emad, & Adu-Agyem, Joe, 2018).* The conceptual framework helps researchers conceptualize their study, identify research gaps, and formulate research questions. The conceptual framework for this study draws upon the capability approach, with a specific emphasis on four indicators: time autonomy, personal autonomy, leisure activities, and aspiration. And each of the components is analyzed by four factors: age, sex, grade, and ethnicity. This conceptual framework is fundamental because it provides a theoretical foundation and structure for this research study. It has also aided in identifying and formulating the research question to analyze various gender dynamics and their potential impact on the education of young students. These indicators serve as key dimensions through which the capabilities and functioning, along with the well-being of students, are examined.

Figure 2.5 Conceptual Framework to study gender dynamic and its Impact on Education
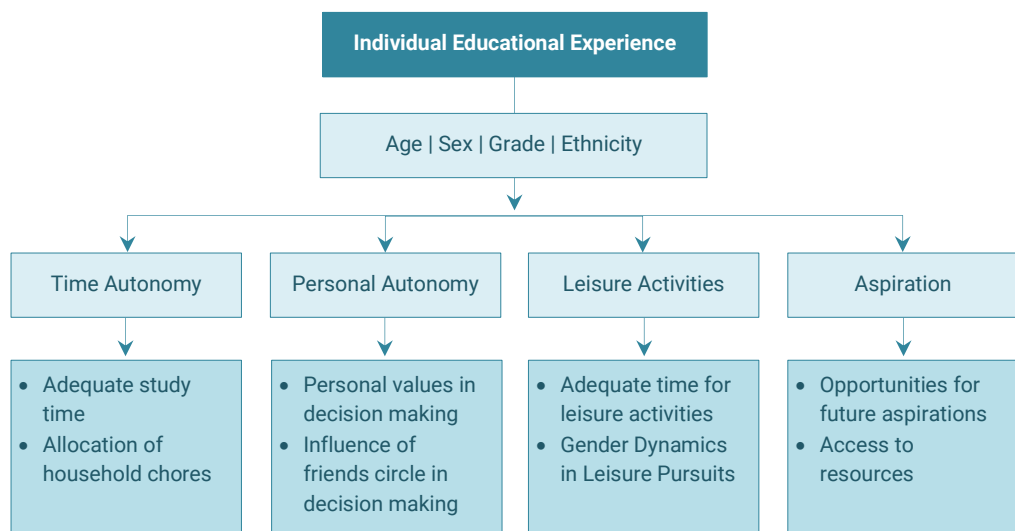
The Capability Approach, developed by Amartya Sen, emphasizes the importance of individuals having the freedom and opportunities to lead lives they value. By incorporating the Capability Approach into the conceptual framework, this study aims to understand students' capabilities in terms of time autonomy, personal autonomy, leisure activities, and aspiration. The framework recognizes the significance of age, grade, and ethnicity as factors that intersect with the indicators of time autonomy, personal autonomy, leisure activities, and aspiration. By considering these factors, the

study aims to capture the diverse experiences and perspectives of students from various backgrounds.

- **Time Autonomy**

  Time autonomy refers to the extent to which individuals have control over their time and can allocate it according to their priorities and preferences. It empowers individuals to make conscious choices and decisions about how they spend their time, enabling them to engage in activities that they prioritize. Due to the severe weather conditions, all public schools were forced to close by noon, granting the students an extended period of time to partake in a diverse range of activities. Emphasizing the significance of time autonomy, this framework acknowledges the students' authority over their time, allowing them to allocate it not only for academic studies but also for recreational pursuits and domestic responsibilities.

- **Personal Autonomy**

  This indicator pertains to individuals' freedom and agency in making choices and decisions that shape their lives. This research study aims to understand how personal autonomy is influenced by age, sex, grade, and ethnicity among students. It may explore whether certain groups of students face more constraints or have more opportunities to exercise their personal autonomy. Personal autonomy in this study encompasses various dimensions, such as the ability to make life decisions, the importance of close friends, parental roles, etc. It underscores the importance of individuals having the freedom to shape their own lives and participate in decision-making that affects them and their well-being.

- **Leisure activities**

  Engagement in various leisure pursuits could help students balance their academic and personal lives. Insufficient allocation of free time outside school activities can have detrimental effects on students, leading to increased levels of stress, burnout, and related issues. Participating in leisure activities allows them to relax, unwind, and recharge. By taking breaks and pursuing enjoyable activities, students can enhance their mental and emotional health, reduce anxiety, and improve their overall quality of life. The extent to which students are able to genuinely enjoy their free time serves as a significant indicator, allowing us to assess their freedom and overall well-being.

- **Aspiration**

  Aspiration refers to individuals' hopes and ambitions for the future. It recognizes that individuals have a range of aspirations and that these aspirations are essential to their well-being. Education plays a crucial role in aligning students' aspirations with their potential and opportunities. In addition to aligning aspirations with education, it is crucial to provide students with a robust infrastructure of resources and facilities. Access to libraries, computer labs, and other essential amenities not only supports their current education but also serves as a wellspring of inspiration for their future aspirations. Furthermore, it is also essential to analyze the impact

of education and awareness on early marriage, as it can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of educational interventions such as EFA and shed light on the factors influencing this societal issue.

Research Methodology

This study utilizes both quantitative and qualitative research approaches to investigate the educational landscape of the Rautahat district. Rautahat district in Nepal faces significant challenges regarding literacy and education. With an overall literacy rate of merely 42%, it becomes evident that immediate attention and concerted efforts are required to implement educational reforms and initiatives to tackle this pressing issue. The combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches strives to enhance the overall rigor and validity of the study, keeping the capability approach as the central thematic area of the research study. It enables a more comprehensive analysis, shedding light on both the quantitative indicators and the qualitative nuances of the educational challenges faced by the district. This integrative methodology could potentially contribute to formulating informed recommendations and strategies for educational reforms and initiatives in Rautahat, ultimately aiming to improve literacy rates and enhance overall educational outcomes in the district.

3.1 Duration of the study

This research began in March and continued until September 2023 and consisted of two field visits to the Rautahat district of Madhesh Province. The field study was conducted at Yamunamai and Durgabhagwati Rural Municipalities in the months of May and June, each lasting up to two weeks. During the initial field study, conducted over a two-week period, a comprehensive sample of 200 students, comprising 102 females and 98 males, representing grades 3 to 8, were chosen as respondents for the focus group discussion (FGD) study. Likewise, in the subsequent field visit, spanning the same duration, a total of 600 data points were meticulously collected from the respective rural municipalities.

3.2 Study Area Description

This study focuses on the gender dynamic and its potential impact on education in the rural setting of Nepal. The study was conducted in the Rautahat District of Nepal, which lies in the Madhesh Province. Rautahat district, located in the southern region of Nepal, faces significant socio-economic challenges, particularly in the field of education and literacy. There are a total of 16 municipalities and 2 rural municipalities, with Gaur being the headquarters.

Figure 3.1 Administrative map of Rautahat District
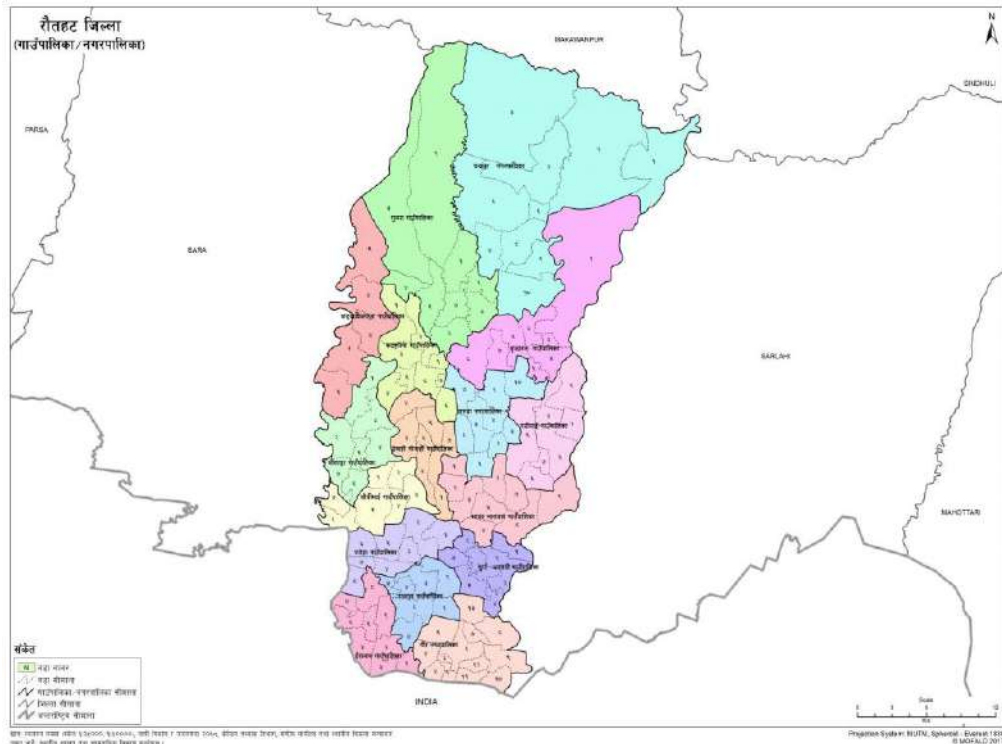
The district has a population of 813,573, with 408,403 males and 405,170 females, according to the 2021 census. It is noteworthy that Rautahat has the highest percentage of Muslims among all districts in Nepal. With a total of 370 schools, the district's educational infrastructure holds promise for addressing general literacy issues. However, the district's literacy rate stands at a worrisome 42%, with only half of the men and a third of the women being literate. The study focuses on two rural municipalities, Durgabhagwati and Yamunamai Municipalities.

3.3   Respondent demographics

The respondents were selected through stratified random sampling, which is a statistical sampling technique used to ensure that a representative sample is obtained from a population. Stratified random sampling (SS) is an approach that makes it easier to compare and contrast different recognized subgroups in a population (OXFAM, 2019). In this research study, the population is divided into distinct subgroups based on certain characteristics, such as age groups, gender, grade, and ethnicity. For the sample survey, a total of 600 students were taken as respondents from 12 schools situated in two rural municipalities within the Rautahat district, specifically: Yamunamai Rural Municipality (consisting of 5 schools) and Durgabhagwati Rural Municipality (comprising 7 schools). The students' demographics are as follows:

Table 3.1 Age of the respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
6-8	89	15%
9-11	270	45%
12-14	212	35%
15-17	29	5%
Total	**600**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 3.2 Gender of the respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	300	50%
Female	300	50%
Total	**600**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 3.3 Grade of the respondents

Grade	Frequency	Percentage
3	119	20%
4	119	20%
5	119	20%
6	81	14%
7	81	14%
8	81	14%
Total	**600**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 3.4 Ethnicity of the respondents

Ethnicity	Frequency	Percentage
Brahmin	38	6%
Chhetri	8	1%
Dalit	123	21%
Kanu	9	2%
Mahato	46	8%
Muslim	65	11%
Yadav	93	16%
Others	218	36%
Total	**600**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2023

3.4   Data collection tools

The research conducted in this study employs a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods to explore the educational situation in the Rautahat district. A set of questionnaires, designed in accordance with the capability approach,

was prepared for both focus group discussions (FGDs) and surveys. A total of 17 FGDs took place across 8 different schools located in Durgabhagwati and Yamunamai rural municipalities. Similarly, for the survey report, a sample of 600 students was selected, ensuring a proportional representation of males and females. Instead of focusing on just enrollment rates and education attainment rates, the questions were targeted to gain students' perspectives on their current situation in education based on their gendered experiences. The study commenced after obtaining ethical clearance from the relevant authorities. Data collection involved conducting individual interviews and FGDs at selected public schools. The interviews and FGDs were conducted in a comfortable and neutral setting within the schools. All participants were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses.

3.5   Focus Group Discussion

The purpose of a focus group is to explore participants' perspectives, experiences, beliefs, and attitudes related to the research topic in a group setting. A focus group discussion is a qualitative research method that involves bringing together a small group of individuals. *Krueger (1994) defined focus groups as discussions planned in order to gather data on a specific topic from participants in a friendly, non-threatening environment, strengthening the atmosphere of the discussion as a catalyst for data collection.* It allowed an interactive and dynamic exchange of ideas, opinions, and insights with the students that helped us construct the conceptual framework for this study.

FGD was conducted during the first field visit to the Rautahat district in the month of May. A total of 16 FGDs were conducted in 8 different schools from the two rural municipalities, specifically Yamunamai Rural Municipality and Durgabhagwati Rural Municipality. The respondents were deliberately selected to achieve an equal proportion of male-to-female representation, encompassing students from Grade 3 to Grade 8. Furthermore, the sample included individuals from diverse ethnic groups, ensuring a broad representation of the student population. Overall, the focus group discussion played a crucial role in this study by offering an interactive platform to explore diverse perspectives, deepen the understanding of the research topic, and generate insights that enriched the findings and discussion.

3.6   Sample Survey

To ensure participant ratio control, a selective group of students was necessary, prompting the utilization of a sample survey. *"A sample survey is a method for collecting data from or about the members of a population so that inferences about the entire population can be obtained from a subset, or sample, of the population members"* *(Antonio M. Chiesi, 2015).* The sample survey was conducted during the second field visit to Rautahat, specifically in the month of June.

In this study, a sample of 600 students was carefully selected to ensure a proportional representation of both males and females. Data collection took place across 12 schools situated in two rural municipalities within the Rautahat district, specifically: Yamunmai Rural Municipality (consisting of 5 schools) and Durgabhagwati Rural Municipality (comprising 7 schools). To enhance the richness of the findings and facilitate comprehensive discussions on the issue, the student sample included

individuals from diverse age groups, sexes, grades, and ethnicities. This deliberate inclusion of variation allowed for a broader range of perspectives and responses, contributing to a more nuanced understanding.

3.7   Observation

During the two field visits, a range of observations were conducted to gain insights into the cultural context and the significant influence of norms and values on the lives of students. These observations provided valuable information on how cultural factors shape the experiences and perspectives of the student population. Similarly, observations were also carried out during the FGDs and the sample survey to delve deeper into the core issues prevalent in the community. This comprehensive approach allowed for a holistic understanding of the research topic by integrating direct observations with the voices and experiences of the participants.

3.8   Data analysis

The data collection process involved administering questionnaires to the participants, and the responses were constructed and collected with the help of Kobo Toolbox and later entered in Microsoft Excel. Subsequently, the data underwent statistical analysis using statistical software such as STATA and SPSS to calculate averages and derive meaningful insights. In addition to the quantitative analysis, the narrative responses provided by the participants were also considered in the analysis in the form of FGD findings.

Results and Discussions

This chapter undertakes a thorough examination of the research findings, which have been organized into four main themes: time autonomy, personal autonomy, aspiration, and their intersection with age, gender, grade, and ethnicity. By cross-examining these themes within the context of the conceptual framework, this research aims to provide a more robust understanding of the research outcomes and their implications. The goal of this detailed explanation is to provide a comprehensive understanding of each theme, offer deeper insights, and facilitate a thorough comprehension of the research outcomes.

4.1   Time autonomy

The primary objective is to determine whether students, specifically considering gender dynamics, have control over how they allocate their time for both studies and household chores and to explore the potential impact on their academic performance

4.1.1 Adequate time for study

The first aspect of time autonomy examined in this research is the availability of adequate study time for students after their school hours. This indicator focuses on assessing whether students have sufficient time to dedicate to their studies once their school hours have ended on the basis of age, gender, grade, and ethnicity.

Table 4.1 Adequate time for study by age group

Age-group	Yes	No
6-8	100%	0%
9-11	99%	1%
12-14	100%	0%
15-17	100%	0%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The above data presented indicates the percentage of students within different age groups who have reported having adequate time to study, as well as those who have reported not having enough time. In the age group of 6-8, all the students, 100%,

responded that they have sufficient time to study, while none of them reported a lack of time for studying. In the age group of 9-11, 99% of student reported having sufficient study time, while 1% indicated a lack of time, suggesting a small proportion facing constraints. Likewise, in age groups 12-14 and 15-17, 100% of the student reported having adequate time to study, with an insignificant percentage expressing a lack of time.

Here, the entire sample within this age group feels that they have sufficient time available for their academic commitments. The data reveals a consistent trend across the different age groups, with the majority of students reporting having sufficient time to study. However, there is a very small percentage of students within some age groups who perceive a lack of time for studying.

Table 4.2 Adequate time for study by gender

Gender	Yes	No
Male	100%	0%
Female	99%	1%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The data presented in the above table indicates the percentage of students, categorized by gender, who reported having adequate time to study and those who reported not having enough time. Among the male students, 100% reported having sufficient time to study, with none indicating a lack of time. This suggests that the entire sample of male students feels they have enough time available to dedicate to their studies. On the other hand, among female students, 99% reported having sufficient time to study, indicating a high percentage of female students who feel they have enough time for their academic pursuits. However, only 1% of female students reported not having adequate time for studying, suggesting a small proportion of female students may be facing time constraints or other factors that limit their study time.

The data indicates that the majority of both male and female students feel they have enough time to study. However, there is only a minimal difference in the percentage of female students who reported a lack of time compared to male students. This suggests that the issue of time constraints may be more influenced by individual circumstances (internal factors) than by gender as a broad determinant.

Table 4.3 Adequate time for study by grade

Grade	Yes	No
3	100%	0%
4	99%	1%
5	99%	1%
6	100%	0%
7	100%	0%
8	99%	1%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The presented data categorizes students by grade level and illustrates the percentage of students who reported having adequate time to study. In grades 3, 6, and 7, 100% of the students reported having sufficient time to study, with none indicating a lack of time. This suggests that the entire sample of grades 3, 6, and 7, students feel they have enough time available to dedicate to their studies. In grades 4 and 5, the data shows that 99% of students reported having sufficient time to study, indicating a high percentage of students in these grades who feel they have enough time for their academic pursuits. However, 1% of students in grades 4 and 5 reported a lack of time for studying, suggesting a small proportion of students may be facing time constraints or other factors that limit their study time. These findings highlight the importance of considering individual differences and potential constraints.

Table 4.4 Adequate time for study by ethnicity

Ethnicity	Yes	No
Brahmin	100%	0%
Chhetri	100%	0%
Dalit	99%	1%
Kanu	100%	0%
Mahato	100%	0%
Muslim	100%	0%
Yadav	100%	0%
Others	99%	1%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The data presented categorizes students by ethnicity and indicates the percentage of students who reported having sufficient time to study and those who reported having insufficient time. Among the students belonging to Brahmin, Chhetri, Kanu, Mahato, Muslim, and Yadav ethnicities, 100% of the students reported having adequate time to study, with none reporting a lack of time. This indicates that the entire sample of students from these ethnicities perceives that they have sufficient time to allocate to their studies. Likewise, among the students belonging to the Dalit and other ethnicities, 99% reported having sufficient time to study, indicating a high percentage of students who feel they have enough time for their academic pursuits. However, only 1% of the students from Dalits and other ethnicities reported a lack of time for studying, suggesting a small proportion may be facing time constraints.

The data analysis reveals that across various ethnicities, the majority of students report having sufficient time to study, indicating a positive perception of time availability for academic pursuits. And only a small portion of the students reported having some constraints on time management for study.

4.2   Household chores

The second indicator of time autonomy in this research is the examination of how students allocate their time for household responsibilities. By exploring the students' chores allocation at home, this research contributes to understanding how external

responsibilities impact students' control over their time and whether it impacts their learning experiences.

Table 4.5 Division of household chores by age-group

Age-group	Agricultural work	Caregiving	Cleaning	Cooking	None	Others
6-8	9%	2%	12%	6%	20%	19%
9-11	42%	50%	47%	38%	48%	41%
12-14	40%	43%	36%	49%	31%	36%
15-17	10%	5%	5%	8%	2%	5%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The data presented illustrates the distribution of household chores among different age groups using a multiple-choice response format. Each percentage represents the proportion of students within an age group who reported engaging in various types of chores at home. In the age group of 6-8, the data reveals that 9% of student reported participating in agricultural work, 2% in caregiving tasks, and 12% in cleaning, 6% in cooking, 20% reported not having any assigned chores, and 19% reported engaging in other types of chores.

Likewise, in the age group 9-11, a significant proportion of students in this age group reported participating in agricultural work 42%, caregiving tasks 50%, cleaning 47%, and cooking 38%. The data reveals that children in this age group demonstrate a higher level of involvement in household chores across all categories compared to other age groups which could be the result of families assigning appropriate tasks and emphasizing the importance of children participating in household chores during this stage.

Similarly, in the age group of 12-14, 40% of students reported engaging in agricultural work, 43% in caregiving tasks, 36% in cleaning, 49% in cooking, 31% reported not having any assigned chores, and 36% reported engaging in other types of chores. Lastly, in the age group of 15-17, 10% of students reported participating in agricultural work, 5% in caregiving tasks, 5% in cleaning, 8% in cooking, and 2% reported not having any assigned chores, and 5% reported engaging in other types of chores.

Students of age groups 6-8 years old tend to have lower involvement in household chores compared to older age groups. As children progress through the age groups, especially till age 12-14, their engagement in agricultural work, caregiving tasks, cleaning, and cooking increases seems to have increased. Additionally, a significant portion of students in each age group reported not having any assigned chores or engaging in other types of chores. There is a sudden decline in reported chore involvement in the age group 15-17, which could be the result of various factors, including increased academic workload, evolving social dynamics, and a shifting focus towards personal responsibilities and independence.

Table 4.6 Household chores division by gender

Gender	Agricultural work	Caregiving	Cleaning	Cooking	None	Others
Male	64%	26%	33%	22%	62%	66%
Female	36%	74%	68%	79%	38%	34%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The presented data highlights the percentage of males and females who reported engaging in different types of chores, representing the division of household chores by gender. Among male student respondents, the data reveals that 64% reported participating in agricultural work, 26% in caregiving tasks, 33% in cleaning, and 22% in cooking. Furthermore, 62% of males reported not having any assigned chores, and 66% reported engaging in other types of chores such as drawing water and assisting their parents. On the other hand, among female student respondents, the data shows that 36% reported engaging in agricultural work, 74% in caregiving tasks, 68% in cleaning, and 79% in cooking.

Additionally, 38% of females reported not having any assigned chores, while 34% reported engaging in other types of chores drawing water, etc.

These findings from Table 6 suggest that there are some notable gender differences in the division of household chores. Male students tend to have higher involvement in agricultural work, while females have higher participation in caregiving tasks, cleaning, and cooking. The percentages indicate that females predominantly perform caregiving, cleaning, and cooking chores, while males are more commonly involved in agricultural work.

These gender disparities in chore allocation may be influenced by traditional gender roles and societal expectations that assign certain tasks based on gender norms. Cultural and familial factors, as well as individual preferences, can also contribute to the observed patterns.

Table 4.7 Household chores division by grade

Grade	Agricultural work	Caregiving	Cleaning	Cooking	None	Others
3	21%	12%	20%	9%	23%	22%
4	19%	19%	18%	17%	20%	21%
5	18%	23%	20%	17%	22%	21%
6	14%	13%	14%	17%	13%	12%
7	14%	15%	13%	19%	13%	14%
8	15%	18%	16%	21%	9%	10%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The above data demonstrates how the division of household chores varies across different grade levels, illustrating the percentage of students in each grade who reported participating in various chore categories. We can observe this data in the following ways:

- **Agricultural work:** The percentage of students engaging in agricultural work varies across grade levels, with grade 3 having the highest percentage (21%), and grades 6 and 7 having the lowest (14%).

- **Caregiving:** Grade 5 has the highest percentage (23%) of students involved in caregiving tasks, while grade 6 has the lowest (13%).

- **Cleaning:** Grade 3 has the highest percentage (20%) of students engaged in cleaning, while grades 6 and 7 have the lowest (14%).

- **Cooking:** Grade 6 has the highest percentage (17%) of students participating in cooking, while Grade 3 has the lowest (9%).

- **None:** The percentage of students who reported not having any assigned chores varies across grades, with grade 3 having the highest percentage (23%) and grade 8 having the lowest (9%). The reason could be that students in grade 8 are more concerned about their education and academics and thus spend less time doing household chores.

- **Others:** The percentage of students engaging in other types of chores shows very little variation across different grade levels.

- The variation in the percentage of students engaging in different types of chores across grade levels can be influenced by various factors; for instance, grade 5 students might focus more on caregiving skills, leading to a higher percentage of students involved in caregiving tasks. It is also important to understand various family structures and dynamics.

4.2.1   Chores comparison among siblings

The indicator for time autonomy in this context involves comparing the division of chores among siblings. By examining how household tasks are allocated among siblings, we can gain insights into the dynamics of time autonomy within the family. This analysis allows us to understand how siblings experience their autonomy in managing their time and responsibilities within the household.

Table 4.8 Chores comparison among siblings by age group

Age group	Yes	No	Equally
6-8	10%	85%	5%
9-11	26%	68%	6%
12-14	26%	66%	8%
15-17	41%	52%	7%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The above table presents the responses from different age groups regarding whether they believe they do more household chores than their siblings. In the age group of 6-8, 85% of the students felt they did fewer chores than their siblings. This suggests that according to their perception, the division of household chores among siblings in this age group is such that they feel they have a lesser chore load compared to their older siblings. This suggests that according to their perception, they shoulder a greater chore load than their siblings.

On the other hand, a higher percentage (68%) perceived that they did less work than their siblings, indicating that they feel their siblings have a greater share of household chores. In the age group of 12-14, a similar pattern emerges, with 26% of children reporting doing more chores than their siblings. Lastly, among the age group of 15-17, 41% of the respondent felt like they do more chores compared to their siblings. This indicates that as children reach adolescence, a significant portion may perceive an increased chore burden in comparison to their siblings.

Overall, from the data highlights the importance of considering individual perceptions and experiences within the context of sibling relationships when examining the division

of household chores. It suggests that as children grow older, they become more aware of and may notice differences in how household chores are divided among siblings.

Table 4.9 Chores comparison among siblings by gender

Gender	Yes	No	Equally
Male	23%	71%	7%
Female	26%	67%	6%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Among the male students, 23% responded that they do more chores compared to their siblings, while 71% responded that they did not do more chores compared to their siblings, and 7% responded that they did equal household chores. Likewise, in the response of female students, 26% believed that they do more chores than their siblings, while 67% perceived that they did not do more chores than their siblings, whereas only 6% said that they do equal household chores.

These findings suggest that gender may play a role in how individuals perceive the distribution of household chores within the sibling dynamic. Although there isn't much difference in the response by both male and female students, we also need to note that these perceptions may not necessarily reflect the actual household chores and could be influenced by individual experiences, cultural norms, and even family dynamics.

Table 4.10 Chores comparison among siblings by grade

Grade	Yes	No	Equally
3	15%	80%	5%
4	19%	77%	5%
5	33%	63%	4%
6	27%	64%	9%
7	25%	65%	10%
8	31%	61%	9%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Based on the above data, it appears that a higher percentage of students in each grade believe that they do more household chores than their siblings compared to those who believe they do not. In grade 3, 15% of students think they do more household chores, while 80% believe they do not, and only 5% think they share the chores equally. In grade 4, the percentage of students who think they do more household chores increases slightly to 19%, while the percentage who believe they do not is 77%, and the percentage who think they share the chores equally remains at 5%.

Likewise, in grade 5, a higher percentage of students, 33%, believe they do more household chores compared to the previous grades. Meanwhile, 63% think they do not, and 4% think they share the chores equally. Grade 6 shows a decrease in the percentage of students who think they do more household chores, dropping to 27%,

while there is only a slight difference in the students who do not think that they do more household chores respectively.

In grade 7, the percentage of students who think they do more household chores is 25%, while the percentage who believe they don't do more chores than their sibling remains at 65%, and the percentage who think they share the chores equally increases to 10%. Lastly, in grade 8, the percentage of students who think they do more household chores increases again to 31%. The percentage who believes they do not decrease to 61%, and the percentage who think they share the chores equally remains at 9%.

From this analysis, it is clear that there is no consistent trend across all grades regarding the distribution of household chores. However, in most grades, there is a slightly higher percentage of students who believe they do more household chores than those who believe they do not. It is also worth noting that the percentage of students who think they share the chores equally remains relatively low in all grades.

Table 4.11 Chores comparison among siblings by ethnicity

Ethnicity	Yes	No	Equally
Brahmin	21%	71%	8%
Chhetri	38%	63%	0
Dalit	17%	79%	4%
Kanu	11%	89%	0
Mahato	30%	67%	2%
Muslim	45%	45%	11%
Yadav	17%	79%	4%
Others	25%	66%	9%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The above data presents responses from students from different ethnic backgrounds regarding the chores comparison among siblings. Among all the respondents, 45% of Muslim students believed they do more household chores, whereas about 89% of students from the Kanu ethnicity responded that they do not do more chores than their siblings. Similarly, 11% of students of Muslim ethnicity believed that they did equal household chores. On the other hand, Chhetri and Kanu had an insignificant number of respondents saying that they do equal household chores.

The fact that a higher percentage of Muslim students believe they do more household chores compared to other ethnicities could potentially be influenced by cultural or religious practices that emphasize gender roles and responsibilities within the household. The data shows an insignificant number of Chhetri and Kanu respondents claiming that they do equal household chores. This could suggest that within these ethnic groups, there may be a more traditional or conventional division of household chores, where one gender may be assigned more responsibilities compared to the other

4.3   Personal Autonomy

Personal autonomy refers to an individual's ability to make independent decisions and act in accordance with their interest and their priority. The study highlights the crucial notion of individuals having the freedom to shape their own lives and actively participate in decision-making processes that have an impact on their well-being. It also explores various social norms and values that could potentially influence one's decision-making capacity.

4.3.1   Personal values in decision making

Personal values in decision-making involve taking into account one's own beliefs and what they deem significant when making choices. However, for students, the opportunity to make their own decisions is often limited. In many cases, the majority of a student's life decisions are primarily dictated by their parents and guardians. Therefore, it is crucial to assess the extent to which young students have the autonomy to make their own life decisions.

Table 4.12 Right to make your decision by age group

Age group	Yes	No
6-8	12%	88%
9-11	26%	74%
12-14	50%	51%
15-17	52%	48%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The above-provided data shows the percentages of respondents from the student within different age groups who believe they have the right to make their own decisions and those who do not. Only 12% of respondents from the age group 6-8, the students responded that they have the right to make their own decisions, while the majority, 88%, do not feel they have this right. In the age group 9-11, the percentage of respondents who believe they have the right to make their own decisions increases to 26%. However, the majority, 74%, still feel that they do not have this right. Likewise, for students from 12-14, the percentage of those who believe they have the right to make their own decisions rises significantly to 50%. Almost an equal proportion, 50%, still feel that they do not have this right. And finally, within the oldest age group, 15-17 analyzed, 52% of respondents believe they have the right to make their own decisions.

However, a significant portion, 48%, still feel that they do not have this right. Overall, the data suggest a gradual increase in the percentage of respondents who believe they have the right to make their own decisions as they get older. While younger children (6-8 years old) generally have a lower sense of autonomy, there is a gradual shift towards a greater belief in personal decision-making rights as they enter adolescence.

Upon further analysis, it is evident that young children between the ages of 6-8 and 9-11 perceive a significant reliance on parental or adult guidance in decision-making processes. Interestingly, the majority of students in the study reported that their mothers took charge of making most decisions for them, attributing it to their fathers being occupied with work commitments. Likewise, as students' progress into older age

groups, there is a gradual increase in the percentage of respondents who believe they have the right to make their own decisions. This indicates a growing sense of autonomy and independence as children enter adolescence.

Table 4.13 Right to make your decision by gender

Gender	Yes	No
Male	37%	63%
Female	31%	69%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The above figure presents the percentage of students who believe in the right to make their own decisions, categorized by gender. According to the data, 37% of males agree with this right, while 63% do not. On the other hand, 31% of females agree with the right to make their own decisions, while 69% do not have the right to make their own decisions. There is a slight difference between the male and female students' right to make their own decisions. The reasons behind these variations could be complex and multifaceted. These reasons could vary from different cultural, societal, and even individual factors present in their respective community and their family dynamics. One of the main contributing factors could be the influence of traditional norms and practices that historically assigned specific roles and responsibilities to females, potentially limiting their autonomy and decision-making capabilities. However, it is evident through observations that many young female adolescents are actively asserting their ability to make independent choices, such as attending school and nurturing their own future aspirations.

Table 4.14 Right to make your decision by grade

Grade	Yes	No
3	22%	78%
4	22%	78%
5	31%	69%
6	37%	63%
7	51%	49%
8	53%	47%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The provided data above reveals the responses of students from various grade levels regarding their belief in having the right to make their own decisions. The majority of students in grades 3 and 4, constituting 78%, do not believe they possess this right. In grade 5, 69% of students claimed to not have the right to make their own decisions, while in grade 6, this percentage increased to 63%. Moving on to grade 7, 49% of students responded did not agree regarding their right to make decisions. Lastly, in grade 8, 47% of students claimed they do not have the right to make their own decisions.

The data suggests that there is a gradual increase in the percentage of individuals who believe they have the right to make their own decisions as they progress through the grade levels. Grades 7 and 8 have the highest percentages of individuals who believe in their decision-making rights, with 51% and 53%, respectively. This pattern could be attributed to several factors, including the age and maturity of students, the influence of friend circles, and many as such.

Table 4.15 Right to make your decision by ethnicity

Ethnicity	Yes	No
Brahmin	34%	66%
Chhetri	25%	75%
Dalit	36%	64%
Kanu	11%	89%
Mahato	26%	74%
Muslim	37%	63%
Yadav	38%	62%
Others	33%	67%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The table provides data on students' responses regarding their belief in having the right to make their own decisions based on their ethnicity. According to the data, students belonging to the Yadav ethnicity had the highest percentage of students who believed that they had the right to make their own decision. On the other hand, only 11% of students from Kanu ethnicity believed to have the right to make their own decisions. The data suggests that there are differences in the perception of decision-making rights among different ethnic groups. Factors such as cultural norms, traditions, social structures, and historical contexts within each ethnic community may contribute to these variations. The provided could suggest that certain ethnic groups such as Brahmin (34%), Yadav (38%), Muslims (37%), and Dalit (36%) with higher percentages of students believing in their right to make decisions may have cultural or social contexts that value individual agency and freedom. On the other hand, ethnic groups with lower percentages of student who did believe to have the freedom to make their own decision such as Kanu (11%), Chhetri (25%), and Mahato (26%) may have cultural traditions or social norms that prioritize collective decision-making. Another possible reason for the lower numbers could be the underrepresentation of various ethnicities in the data collection process, as the respondents were randomly sampled.

4.3.2 Importance of personal autonomy

This indicator assesses the significance students attribute to their personal autonomy and the freedom to make their own choices. It explores their perception of the value and importance of having control over their own lives.

Figure 4.1 Column chart on the importance of personal autonomy by age group
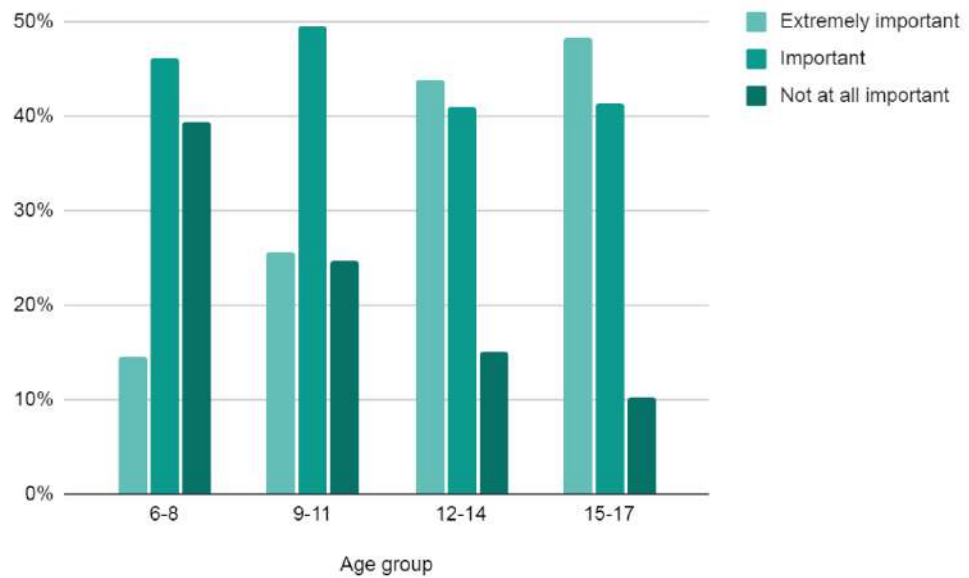
The above figure represents the data on how students from various age groups perceive personal autonomy to be important. 15% of the students believe personal autonomy is extremely important, and 46% believe it is just as important. where 39% of the students felt that having personal autonomy was not as important.

In the age group 9–11, there is a notable shift in student perception towards personal autonomy, with a higher percentage recognizing its significance. Specifically, 26% of students in this age group consider personal autonomy to be extremely important, and 50% believe it to be important. However, it is important to note that 25% of students still do not view personal autonomy as important. While a growing number of children in this age group acknowledge the importance of personal autonomy, a significant portion may still be developing their understanding or hold differing perspectives on its relevance.

In the 12–14 age group, there is a notable increase in the percentage of individuals who recognize the extreme importance of personal autonomy. 44% of the students believe personal autonomy to be extremely important, followed by 42% who believe it is not as important. And only 15% of the students in this age group considered personal autonomy to be important. A significant portion considers it important, indicating a growing understanding and value placed on autonomy and decision-making. In the age group 15–17, a significant shift is observed in the perception of personal autonomy. Among students in this age group, 48% believe personal autonomy to be extremely important, while an additional 41% recognize it as important. Only a small minority of 10% of students in this age group do not consider personal autonomy to be important. A significant portion continues to consider it important, indicating a strong belief in the value of autonomy and decision-making as they grow older.

Overall, the data suggests that the perceived importance of personal autonomy tends to increase as students grow older. Younger age groups may still be developing their understanding of personal autonomy, while older age groups show greater recognition

of its importance. This can be attributed to increased maturity, life experiences, and a growing sense of individual agency as individuals transition into growing old.

Figure 4.2 Column chart on the importance of personal autonomy by gender
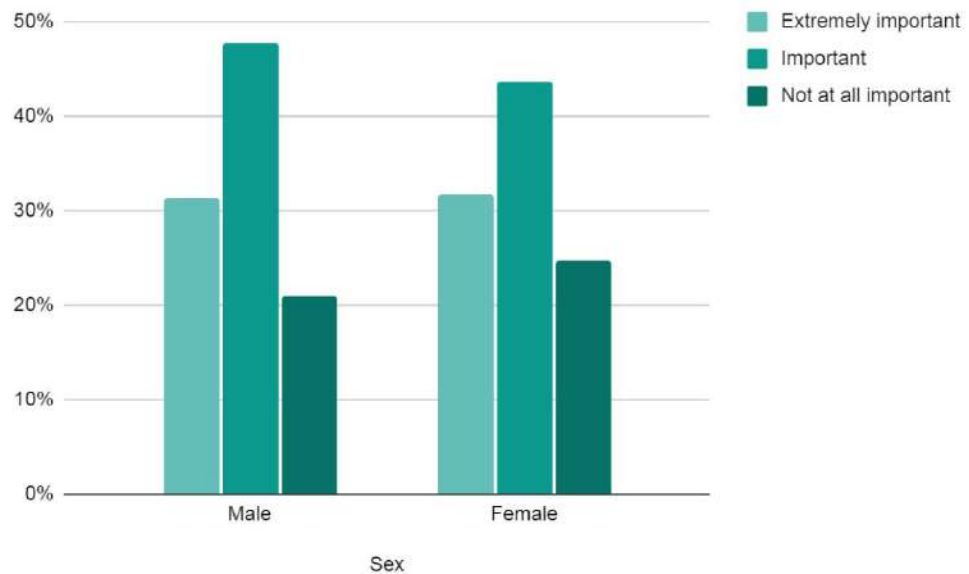
Source: Field Survey, 2023

The above data illustrates the perceived importance of personal autonomy among different genders. The data suggest that both males and females generally recognize the importance of personal autonomy, with a slightly higher percentage of females perceiving it as extremely important. However, the differences between the genders are relatively small. 31% of male students responded it was very important to have personal autonomy and 48% perceived it to be important. Whereas only 21% claimed that it is not important.

Likewise, in the case of data from female students, 32% recognized personal autonomy to be extremely important followed by 44% who believed it to be important. And 25% claimed it was not important at all. The table shows that both males and females recognize the value of having control over their own choices and the ability to act in accordance with their own interests and priorities.

While the percentage of students recognizing the importance of personal autonomy may seem relatively low, this can be attributed to various factors, including cultural norms, family structures, and societal values. Family dynamics and upbringing can also play a role, as some households may prioritize obedience over individual decision-making.

Figure 4.3 Column chart on the importance of personal autonomy by grade
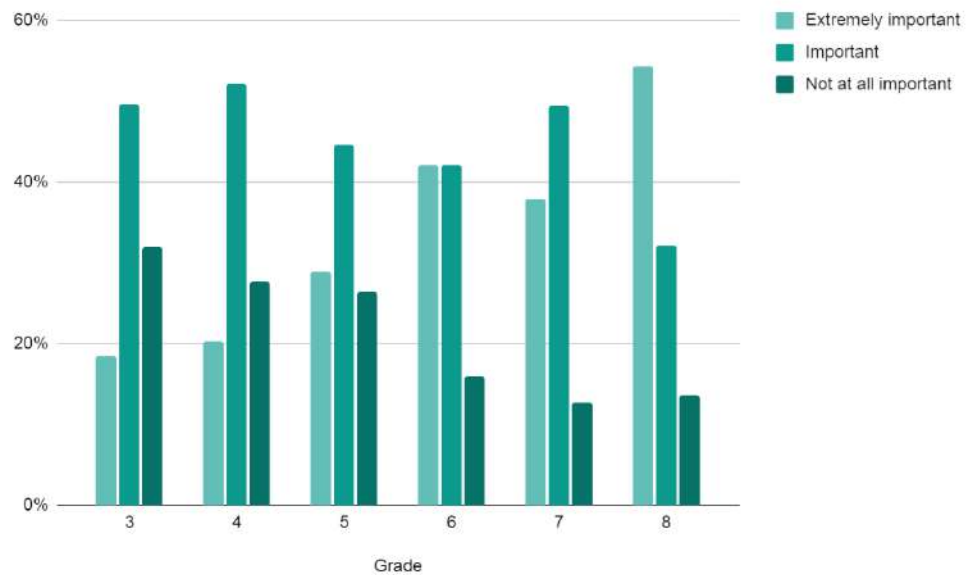
The above data highlights the perceived importance of personal autonomy among different grade levels. In grade 3, only 19% of the students recognized personal autonomy to be extremely important and 50% recognized it to be just important. Whereas 32% of the students do not consider personal autonomy to be important. The data is followed by grade 4, where 20% and 52% recognized the importance of personal autonomy. And 28% responded to not at all important. A lower percentage of students who perceive personal autonomy as extremely important can be seen in grades 3 and 4. Likewise, as students advance to Grade 5, Grade 6, and Grade 7, there is a notable increase in the percentage of students who recognize personal autonomy as extremely important.

The percentage is also seen less in students who do not think personal autonomy is important at all. Lastly in grade 8, there is a drastic change in the students' perception regarding the importance of having personal autonomy. 54% of the students from grade 8 perceive personal autonomy to be extremely important, followed by 32% of students who consider it to be important. Whereas only 14% do not consider personal autonomy to be important at all. The data indicate that as students grow older and progress academically, they could more or less develop a greater understanding of personal autonomy in their lives.
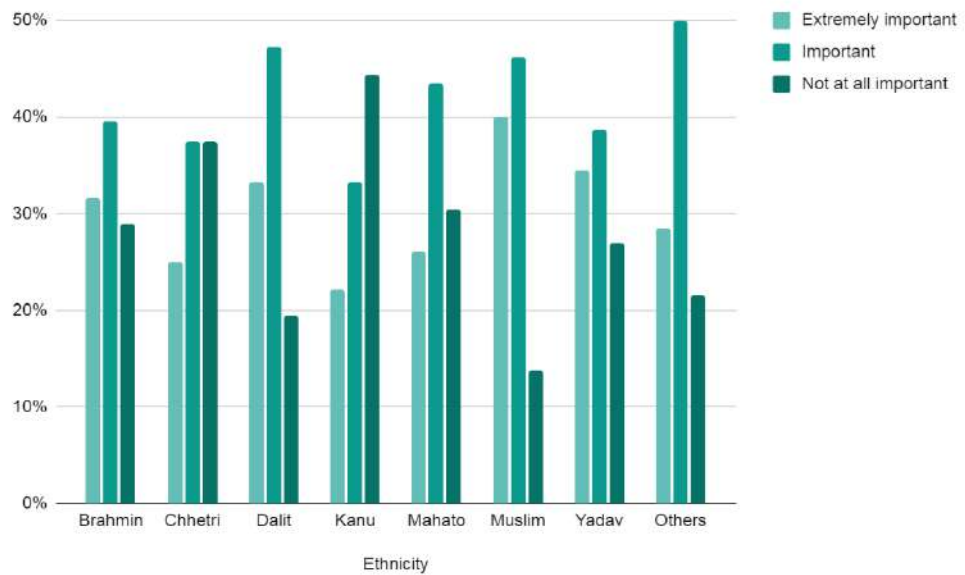
Source: Field Survey, 2023

The above data illustrates the perceived importance of the personal autonomy of students among different ethnicities. In the given data, the highest ratio for considering personal autonomy as extremely important is seen among the Muslim ethnicity (40%), followed closely by the Dalit (33%), Yadav (34%), and Brahmin (32%) ethnicities. This indicates a relatively higher emphasis on personal autonomy among these groups. Likewise, the highest ratio for considering personal autonomy as important is observed among the ethnicity of the other (50%), followed by the Muslim (46%), Dalit (47%), and Mahato (44%) ethnicities.

Lastly, the highest ratio for not considering personal autonomy as important is seen among the Kanu ethnicity (44%), followed by the Chhetri (38%), Mahato (30%), and Yadav (27%) ethnicities. These ratios indicate a higher percentage of individuals within these groups who do not perceive personal autonomy as important. Each ethnicity has its own distribution of responses. The responses could reflect the influence of specific norms, values, and traditions within each ethnic community.

4.3.3   Impact of social norms on Decision-making

This section explores the influence of various social norms on decision-making processes. Social norms are guidelines and expectations of society that guide behavior within a specific society or community. They shape individuals' beliefs, values, and attitudes, influencing the choices they make in various aspects of life. It highlights the complex interplay between individual autonomy and societal influences.

Table 4.16 Impact of social norms on Decision-making by age group

Age group	Yes	No
6-8	57%	43%
9-11	56%	44%
12-14	53%	47%
15-17	59%	41%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The above table provides data on the impact of various social norms in decision-making among students from various age groups. The data shows that 57% of students from the age group 6-8 believe that social norms have an impact on their decision-making. Whereas 43% believe that social norms have no impact on their decision-making. This could suggest that most young individuals recognize several influences of social norms in their personal autonomy. Upon further questioning, a significant number of young students indicated that their decision-making freedom is primarily guided by their parents rather than society. Followed by the age group 9-11, 56% of the students believe that social norms have an impact on their decision making and the rest 44% do not believe so.

Likewise, in the older age group 12-14, 53% of the students believe that social norms have an impact on their decision making and 47% do not believe that social norms have an impact on their decision-making Lastly, in the oldest age group 15-17, 59% of the students believe that social norms have an impact on their decision-making, and the remaining 41% do not believe so. In these age groups, there is a slight decrease in the percentage of individuals who perceive the impact of social norms as compared to the previous age groups. It could indicate a growth in awareness of personal autonomy and freedom in making their own decision.

Table 4.17 Impact of social norms on Decision-making by Gender

Gender	Yes	No
Male	52%	48%
Female	59%	41%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The above table presents data on the impact of various social norms on decision-making among students of different genders. As per the table, 52% of male students believe that social norms impact their decision-making, and 48% of males do not. Likewise, in the case of female students, 59% believe that social norms impact their decision-making, and 41% do not believe that social norms impact decision-making. The data shows that a slightly higher percentage of females than males perceive the impact of social norms on their decision-making. This indicates that female students may be more impacted by the influence of societal expectations and norms on their choices in comparison to male students.

The data also shows that both male and female students acknowledge the impact of social norms to some extent, and the majority of them recognize their influence in their lives. Hence, this study observes variations in decision-making between male and female students. In such instances, females may be more inclined to consider societal expectations and norms in their choices, while male students may perceive their decision-making to be less influenced by social norms.

Table 4.18 Impact of social norms on Decision-making by Grade

Grade	Yes	No
3	54%	46%
4	59%	41%
5	55%	46%
6	58%	42%
7	56%	44%
8	57%	43%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The above data presents the percentage of the impact of social norms on decision-making among students from different grade levels. 54% of grade 3 students believe that social norms impact their decision-making, and the rest (46% do not). For grade 4, 59% of the students believe that social norms have an impact on their decision-making, and 41% do not believe so. Likewise, in grade 5, 55% of the students believe that social norms have an impact on their decision-making, while 46% do not. The data for Grade 6 shows that 58% of students in Grade 6 believe that social norms have an impact on their decision-making, while 42% do not. This suggests a strong majority of students at this grade level recognize the influence of societal expectations and norms on their choices. Moving on to grade 7, 56% of students believe that social norms have an impact, whereas 44% don't. Lastly, in grade 8, 57% of the students believe that social norms have an impact on their decision-making, and 43% of the students do not believe so.

From the data above, we can assume that the higher percentages who believe social norms have an impact on decision-making could indicate that they have recognized and perceived the influence of societal expectations on norms on their choices. Likewise, the percentages for students who do not believe social norms influence their decision-making could indicate that a considerable portion of students in each grade level may not fully recognize or perceive the influence of social norms on their decision-making. This could be due to varying levels of awareness, individual differences, or personal perspectives and cannot be considered a single explanation.

Table 4.19 Impact of social norms on Decision-making by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Yes	No
Brahmin	60%	40%
Chhetri	100%	0
Dalit	50%	50%
Kanu	56%	44%
Mahato	59%	41%
Muslim	46%	54%
Yadav	54%	46%
Others	58%	42%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The table above represents the data on the impact of social norms on decision-making among students of various ethnicities. In the given data, the highest to lowest percentage who believe that social norms have an impact on decision-making can be seen among the Chhetri (100%), Brahmin (60%), Mahato (59%), others (58%), Kanu (56%), Yadav (54%) and lastly Dalit (50%) ethnicities. The Chhetri ethnicity stands out with 100% of individuals indicating that social norms have an impact on decision-making. This suggests a strong cultural emphasis on adhering to societal expectations and norms within this ethnicity.

Whereas, the Dalit ethnicity has the lowest percentage among those who believe that social norms have an impact on decision-making, with 50%. This indicates a relatively lower recognition of societal influences on decision-making within this group. We can assume that the Dalit community may have a strong sense of cultural identity that differs from mainstream societal norms. This could influence their perspectives on the impact of social norms, with a tendency to prioritize their own cultural values and beliefs over conforming to broader social expectations.

4.3.4   Friends' support

Friends' support serves as an important indicator of personal autonomy, encompassing various aspects such as emotional validation, encouragement, empowerment, and fostering independence. When friends provide emotional validation, they affirm an individual's feelings and choices, validating their autonomy. By considering friends' support as an indicator, we can assess the quality of social relationships and their impact on their personal autonomy.

Table 4.20 Perceived Friends' Support by age group

Age group	Yes	No
6-8	100%	0%
9-11	99%	1%
12-14	98%	2%
15-17	97%	3%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The above table presents data on students from different age groups and their responses regarding the availability of friend support. In the age group 6-8, 100% of the students reported having friends' support. This suggests that all individuals in this age group feel supported by their friends. From the given table, we can see that as the age group increases, the percentage of people who report having friends' support decreases slightly while the percentage of those who do not have friends' support increases. Though the differences in percentages are relatively small, the trend suggests that as individuals get older, there might be a slight decrease in the perceived level of friends' support which could be the result of changes is social dynamics among friends and personal circumstances. However, it's important to note that even in the oldest age group, a significant majority still report having friends' support, indicating that friendships remain important and valuable throughout different stages of life.

Table 4.21 Perceived Friends' Support by Gender

Gender	Yes	No
Male	99%	1%
Female	98%	2%

The data presented in above the table shows the perceived friends' support among individuals based on their gender. Overall, the data suggest that both males and females generally have a high level of perceived friend support. There is a slightly higher percentage of males who feel supported by their friends compared to females. 99% of the male students and 98% of the female students responded to perceiving friends' support. However, these differences are relatively small, and the data indicates that the majority of both genders have positive perceptions of their friendships and the support they receive from their friends.

Table 4.22 Perceived Friends' Support by Grade

Grade	Yes	No
3	99%	1%
4	99%	1%
5	98%	2%
6	99%	1%
7	98%	3%
8	98%	3%

The above data presents the percentage of students who responded to the perceived friends' support among individuals based on various grade levels. The percentages of students reporting friends' support are consistently high ranging from 98% to 99% across most grades. And only a small portion of the students responded to not having a good friend's support. In the seventh and eighth grades, approximately 3% of students reported no friends' support, suggesting that some students in higher grades may experience more diverse social groups, potentially leading to feelings of limited support from their friends.

Table 4.23 Perceived Friends' Support by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Yes	No
Brahmin	100%	0
Chhetri	88%	13%
Dalit	98%	2%
Kanu	100%	0
Mahato	89%	11%
Muslim	100%	0
Yadav	100%	0
Others	100%	1%

The above table presents the percentage of students from different ethnicities who responded to the perceived friends' support. 100% of students from ethnicities such as Brahmin, Kanu, Muslim, Yadav, and others responded that they felt supported by their friends. However, among Chhetri students, 88% reported having friends' support, while 13% responded negatively. Similarly, among Mahato students, 89% reported having friends' support, while 11% responded negatively. This indicates that a significant majority of Chhetri and Mahato students feel supported by their friends, but there is a notable percentage who do not perceive the same level of support. Such variations in perceptions could be influenced by various factors, including social dynamics, cultural differences, and individual experiences within each ethnic group. In summary, the data highlights that while a substantial majority of students across different ethnicities feel supported by their friends, there are some variations in perceived friends' support within certain ethnic groups.

4.4   Leisure activities

Leisure activities can take many forms and can vary widely based on individual interests. This chapter deals with how students spend their leisure time, the activities they indulge in, and the amount of time allocated to various leisure activities.

4.4.1   Adequate allocation of time for leisure activities.

This section examines the extent to which individuals allocate sufficient time for leisure activities in their daily lives. It aims to understand whether people have enough opportunities to engage in recreational pursuits, hobbies, and interests.

Table 4.24 Adequate leisure time at home by age group

Age group	One to two hours	Two to Three hours	Three to four hours	Four hours and more	None
6-8	34%	38%	17%	10%	1%
9-11	14%	48%	24%	14%	0%
12-14	35%	36%	18%	10%	1%
15-17	39%	36%	17%	9%	0%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The table above indicated the amount of time allocated for various leisure activities by various age groups. The students from the age group 6-8, 38% of the students reported spending two to three hours on leisure activities and only 1% of the students reported not having no leisure time at all. The data suggests that most children in this age range have some time set aside for leisure and recreational pursuits. In the age group 9-11, the highest percentage of children in this age group which is 48% spend two to three hours on leisure activities and none of the students felt that they did not have any leisure time. A similar pattern can be found in the age group 12-14 where 36% reported spending two to three hours on leisure activities with an insignificant number having no time for leisure activities. Lastly, among the students from the age group 15-17, 39% of students reported having only one to two hours of free time. The percentage of individuals spending more than three hours on leisure decreases slightly as the age

group advances, indicating a potential increase in other commitments such as schoolwork or extracurricular activities.

Table 4.25 Adequate leisure time at home by Gender

Gender	One to two hours	Two to Three hours	Four hours and more	Three to four hours	None
Male	30%	37%	11%	21%	0%
Female	40%	37%	8%	14%	1%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

From the data on time allocation for leisure activities by gender, we can observe that both male and female students share a common trend, with 37% of students of both genders allocating two to three hours to leisure activities. This consistent percentage suggests that a significant proportion of students, dedicate a substantial part of their day to engaging in leisure pursuits. However, 40% of female students reported spending just one hour on leisure activities. This could suggest that more female students spend a moderate amount of time on recreational pursuits. Likewise, male students tend to allocate more time to leisure activities that extend beyond three hours. These differences in time allocation for leisure activities by gender may be influenced by a variety of factors, including cultural norms, and societal expectations.

Table 4.26 Adequate leisure time at home by Grade

Grade	One to two hours	Two to Three hours	Three to four hours	Four hours and more	None
3	36%	35%	20%	9%	0%
4	35%	42%	18%	5%	1%
5	34%	37%	17%	12%	0%
6	46%	30%	16%	7%	1%
7	33%	41%	15%	11%	0%
8	28%	38%	19%	14%	1%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The data presented above illustrates the time allocation for leisure activities among students from different grades. Notably, Grades 3, 4, 5, and 7 exhibit similar patterns, with a comparable number of students allocating one to two hours for leisure pursuits. This may indicate that students in these grades have relatively stable leisure habits or face similar constraints in their daily schedules. In contrast, Grade 6 stands out with 46% of students dedicating one to two hours, indicating a larger proportion of students in this grade engaging in such activities. Likewise, Grade 8 has the highest percentage (14%) of students spending four hours or more on leisure activities. This suggests that older students may have more leisure time or prioritize longer time for leisure activities. On the other hand, Grades 4, 5, and 7 show consistency in their time allocation across various categories.

Table 4.27 Adequate leisure time at home by ethnicity

Ethnicity	One to two hours	Two to Three hours	Three to four hours	Four hours and more	None
Brahmin	40%	32%	11%	18%	0%
Chhetri	88%	0%	13%	0%	0%
Dalit	29%	40%	21%	10%	0%
Kanu	44%	33%	22%	0%	0%
Mahato	41%	26%	15%	17%	0%
Muslim	34%	42%	14%	9%	2%
Yadav	32%	34%	23%	10%	1%
Others	36%	40%	16%	7%	1%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The above data on time allocation for leisure activities by ethnicity provides insights into the leisure time allocation by students of different ethnic groups. Chhetri ethnicity stands out with 88% of students allocating one to two hours for leisure activities, suggesting that a significant proportion of Chhetri students dedicate this amount of time to recreational pursuits. On the other hand, the Dalit, Muslim, and Yadav ethnicities have relatively lower percentages in the one to two hours category, with 29%, 34%, and 32%, respectively. This may indicate that a smaller proportion of students from these ethnicities allocate this amount of time for leisure activities compared to other groups. In the two to three hours category, the Muslim, Dalit, and others, have an average of 40% of students' allocated time for leisure activities. Likewise, in the category of three to four hours, Dalit Kanu with 22% and followed by Dalit ethnicity students have the highest percentage. And lastly, Brahmin ethnicity with the highest 18% and Mahato with 17% seem to spend more than four hours in leisure time activities. And there were some students from Muslim, Yadav, and other ethnicities that reported not having any leisure time. Those students who did not have any free time claimed to spend their time helping out their parents rather than doing other activities.

4.4.2 Leisure time activities

This section explores the types of activities students participate in when they have leisure time. It aims to gain insights into their interests, hobbies, and preferences, providing a comprehensive understanding of how students choose to spend their leisure time outside of academic commitments.

Table 4.28 Leisure time activities by age group

Age group	Study	Play	Sleep	Others
6-8	14%	15%	15%	13%
9-11	44%	47%	49%	37%
12-14	37%	33%	32%	42%
15-17	6%	5%	5%	8%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The provided data on leisure time activities by age group provides insights into how students in different age brackets choose to spend their free time. In the 6-8 age group, the most common activities are playing and sleeping, with 15% of students engaging in each of these activities. Study and other activities, such as hobbies or socializing with friends, follow closely at 14% and 13%, respectively. This suggests that younger students often prioritize play and rest, while also showing some interest in studying and exploring other interests.

As students grow older to age group 9-7, the percentage of those engaging in study and play increases significantly to 44% and 47%, respectively. Sleeping remains a common activity, with 49% of students allocating time for rest. Additionally, 37% of students participate in other activities, indicating a more diverse range of interests and hobbies in this age group. Likewise, from the age group 12-14, 37% of students spent on studying, and 33% of students spent on playing, followed by 32% spent on sleeping. This suggests that academic commitments and recreational pursuits remain essential aspects of their leisure time. Furthermore, 42% of students engage in other activities, indicating a similar pattern to the students from ages 12-14.

Lastly, in the oldest age group i.e., 15-17, study, play, and sleep activities show a significant decrease, with only 6%, 5%, and 5% of students participating in them, respectively. This trend could suggest that as students transition into adolescence, they experience a decrease in leisure time. Many older students mentioned their busy schedules, including regular tuition classes and other daytime commitments, which limit the time available for leisure activities.

Table 4.29 Leisure time activities by Gender

Gender	Study	Play	Sleep	Others
Male	50%	52%	49%	52%
Female	50%	48%	52%	48%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The above data on leisure time activities at home by gender shows a relatively equal distribution in study, play, sleep, and other activities between male and female students. Both male and female students spend an equal amount of time on studying, with 50% for each gender. This indicates a balanced commitment to academic pursuits among boys and girls. Similarly, 52% of male and 48% of female students engage in playing and other activities. Likewise, the data reveals no significant gender-based difference in sleep patterns, with 49% of male and 52% of female students allocating time for rest at home. Overall, the data indicate that gender does not necessarily play a significant role in determining how students choose to spend their leisure time at home. Both male and female students allocate comparable amounts of time to study, play, sleep, and other activities, suggesting a relatively balanced approach to leisure pursuits.

Table 4.30 Leisure time activities by Grade

Grade	Study	Play	Sleep	Others
3	18%	21%	23%	20%
4	21%	20%	19%	12%
5	22%	21%	21%	19%
6	14%	14%	12%	11%
7	13%	12%	14%	14%
8	13%	12%	12%	25%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The above-illustrated data on leisure time activities at home by grade indicates variations in how students from different grade levels choose to spend their free time. Grades 3 to 5 demonstrate a relatively higher percentage ranging from 18% to 22% of students allocating time for study during their leisure hours at home. This suggests younger students in these grades spend most of their free time studying. In grades 5-6, there is a notable decrease in the percentage of students spending time studying at home. This decline may indicate either a reduced allocation of time for study or a shift in priorities as they grow older, leading them to prioritize other activities over academic commitments.

Likewise, students from grades 6 to 8 show similar percentages ranging from 14% to 12% of students engaging in playing, sleeping, and other activities. This could suggest that they have a little amount of time allocated to study or as they grow older. The data shows a relatively consistent ratio across all grades for students dictating time to sleep during leisure hours at home. Grade 8 stands out with the highest percentage with 25% of students engaging in various other activities during leisure time at home. This suggests that older students explore a wider range of interests and hobbies beyond academic and play-related activities.

Table 4.31 Leisure time activities by Ethnicity

Grade	Study	Play	Sleep	Others
Brahmin	7%	6%	5%	6%
Chhetri	1%	2%	0%	0%
Dalit	22%	20%	25%	20%
Kanu	2%	2%	1%	1%
Mahato	6%	6%	8%	7%
Muslim	10%	10%	8%	12%
Yadav	36%	37%	37%	34%
Others	16%	17%	16%	20%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The above-presented data on leisure time activities at home by ethnicity reveals interesting patterns in how students from different ethnic groups spend their free time. Students from Yadav ethnicity stand as the highest with 36% of students dedicating

time to studying at home, indicating a strong emphasis on academic pursuits within this group. On the other hand, students from the Chhetri community with only 1%, and Kanu community with 2% show the lowest percentages in this category, which could either suggest that they have a relatively lower priority for studying during leisure time or there could be a lack of sufficient representation from these particular groups in the overall data. Likewise in terms of playing, students from Yadav and Dalit ethnicities have the highest percentages 37% and 20%, respectively of students engaging in play activities at home.

As the table indicates, Yadav and Dalit ethnicities again show the highest percentages 37% and 25%, respectively in dedicating time to sleep at home. This suggests that students from these ethnicities prioritize adequate rest during their leisure time. And lastly, the students from Muslim and other ethnicities have higher percentages i.e. 12% and 20%, respectively of students engaging in various other activities at home during leisure hours. This indicates a diverse range of activities within these groups. Most of the students from Muslim communities explained that they spent most of their leisure time attending prayers at Masjids. Overall, the data highlights that different ethnic groups exhibit distinct patterns in leisure time activities. Cultural norms, family values, and individual preferences likely contribute to these variations.

4.5   Aspiration

The theme of aspiration explores the extent to which students can align their education with their future plans and goals. Exploring students' aspirations provides valuable insights into their future plans, career interests, and personal development. Aspirations can influence academic performance, decision-making processes, and time allocation for various activities.

4.5.1   Alignment of School Learning with Future Goals

This indicator measures the extent to which students perceive their school learning as aligned with their future aspirations and career goals. This indicator helps assess whether the educational curriculum and experiences provided by the school adequately support students. Additionally, it offers insights into the effectiveness of the school's approach in fostering students' aspirations and enhancing their overall academic and career development.

Table 4.32 Alignment of School Learning with future goals by age group

Age group	Often	Sometimes	Never
6-8	38%	47%	15%
9-11	47%	44%	9%
12-14	57%	36%	7%
15-17	59%	24%	17%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The above data offers valuable insights into how students perceive the alignment of their school learning with their future goals across different age groups. As students

grow older, there is a noticeable increase in the percentage of students who feel that their school learnings match their future goals. In the age group of 6-8, 38% of students often feel this alignment, which increases to 59% in the 15-17 age group. This suggests that as students' progress through their academic journey and gain more clarity about their future aspirations. There is a small portion of students in all age groups who felt that their school learning does not often match their future goals. As students progress to the 9-11 age group, the percentage of those who perceive their school learnings as often aligned with their future goals increases to 47%. This could suggest that as students grow older, they might gain a clearer understanding of their ambitions and how their education can support them.

As the student progress to further age, the percentage of students who reported that their school learning never aligns with their future goals has decreased. However, in the age group 15-17, the fact that 17% of students feel that the alignment between their school learning and future goals never happens may indicate their increased awareness of what they need to achieve their aspirations. This suggests that these students recognize the importance of seeking additional opportunities beyond their school curriculum to bridge the gap between their educational experiences and their envisioned future paths.

Table 4.33 Alignment of School Learning with future goals by gender

Gender	Often	Sometimes	Never
Male	49%	40%	11%
Female	50%	41%	9%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The table above presents the data on the alignment of school learning with future goals based on gender. Around 49% of male students and 50% of female students feel that their school learnings often match their future goals. Additionally, about 40% of male students and 41% of female students report that this alignment happens sometimes. This suggests that, on average, male and female students share similar perceptions regarding the relevance of their education to their future aspirations. Likewise, the data indicates that a slightly higher percentage of female students (9%) compared to male students (11%) feel that the alignment between their school learning and future goals never happens. This could suggest that female students, to some extent, are satisfied with the education that they are receiving in comparison to male students. However, both genders exhibit a relatively low percentage in the "never" category, implying that most students perceive some level of alignment, with only a minority feeling that the connection is entirely absent.

Table 4.34 Alignment of School Learning with future goals by grade

Grade	Often	Sometimes	Never
3	43%	45%	12%
4	41%	50%	8%
5	46%	44%	11%
6	54%	38%	7%
7	61%	27%	13%
8	63%	31%	6%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The above table presents the data on the alignment of school learning with future goals across different grades, we can observe that as the students' progress to higher grades, there is a notable increase in the percentage of students as they progress into higher grades who feel that their school learnings often match their future goals. In grade 3, 43% of students report that this alignment happens often, while in grade 8, the percentage rises to 63%. This suggests that as students grow older, they are more likely to perceive a stronger connection between their education and their envisioned future paths.

We can also see some positive changes among the student who do not feel like their education aligns with future goals as they progress to higher grades. In grade 3, 12% of students feel this way, while in grade 8, the percentage decreases to only 6%. This suggests that with age and increased exposure to education and career possibilities, more students recognize the importance of education and align with their future. Overall, the data reveals a positive trend in the alignment of school learning with future goals as students' progress to higher grades. However, there is still scope to further strengthen this alignment, particularly for students who feel that their education sometimes or never matches their future aspirations.

Table 4.35 Alignment of School Learning with future goals by ethnicity

Ethnicity	Often	Sometimes	Never
Brahmin	40%	53%	8%
Chhetri	38%	50%	13%
Dalit	46%	47%	7%
Kanu	89%	11%	0%
Mahato	57%	35%	9%
Muslim	49%	34%	17%
Yadav	62%	31%	7%
Others	46%	43%	11%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The above table provides data on the alignment of school learning with future aspirations by ethnicity. The data indicates significant variations in the percentages of students from different ethnicities who feel that their school learnings often match

their future goals. Students from Kanu ethnicity stood out with the highest percentage (89%) of students who perceive strong alignment, followed by Yadav (62%) and Mahato (57%). On the other hand, Chhetri (38%) and Muslim (49%) ethnicities exhibit relatively lower percentages in the "often" category. These differences could suggest that there might be varying degrees of relevance perceived by students from different ethnic backgrounds in their educational experiences regarding their future aspirations. Likewise, 17% of students from Muslim and 13% from Chhetri ethnicities exhibited the lowest percentage that their education in school never or doesn't necessarily align with their future goals. It could suggest the presence of negative stereotypes that could create a mindset that certain career paths may be less accessible or suitable for individuals from particular ethnic backgrounds.

4.5.2 Resources

The section on "Resources" explores the availability, and satisfaction of various educational resources in school. This specifically includes availability and satisfaction towards libraries, and Computer labs that can enhance the learning experience.

4.5.2.1 Library availability and satisfaction

Figure 4.5 Column chart on the availability of library by age group
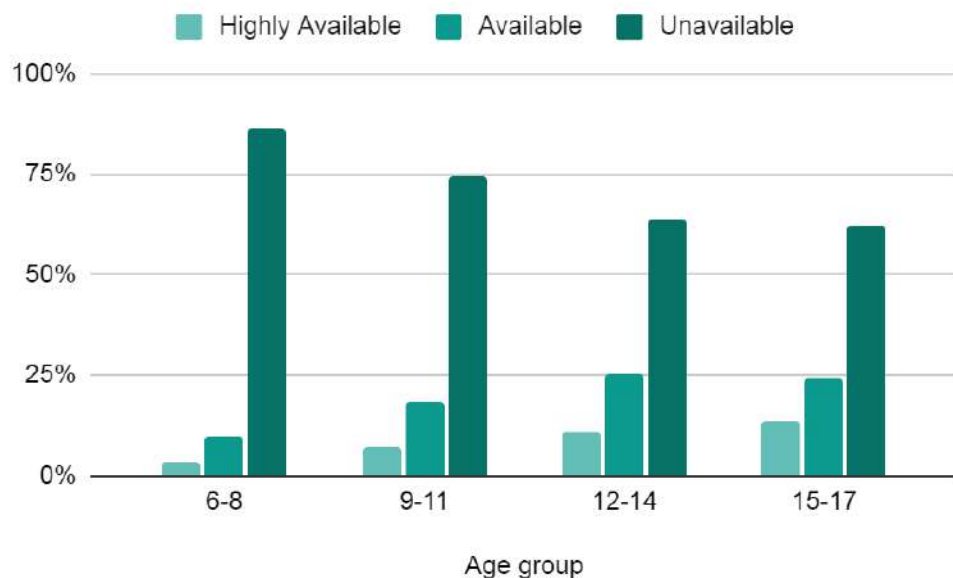
Source: Field Survey, 2023

The above chart presents the data on the on library availability by age group indicating the proportion of students within each age group who perceive the availability of libraries as "Highly Available," "Available," or "Unavailable". Across all age groups, the majority of students perceive library availability as "Unavailable". In the age group 6-8, only 3% of students feel that libraries are "Highly Available," while 10% perceive them as "Available." The majority, 87% of students, believe that libraries are "Unavailable" for them. In the age group 9-11, the percentage of students who perceive library availability as "Highly Available" increases to 7%, and 19% feel that libraries are "Available."

However, a significant 74% of students still consider libraries as "Unavailable." A similar pattern can be seen in the age 12-14, where 11% of students perceiving libraries as "Highly Available," 26% as "Available," and 64% as "Unavailable." In the age group 15-17, the highest percentage of students (14%) believe that libraries are "Highly Available," and 24% see them as "Available."

Here, a considerable 62% still feel that libraries are "Unavailable" for them. Overall, the data suggest that library availability is a challenge across all age groups, with a majority of students in each group perceiving limited access to libraries. Upon further observation, we came to know that most of the schools were not equipped with libraries at all which led to a low percentage of students responding to the unavailability of libraries in school. Additionally, some students mentioned that they faced restrictions and were not permitted to access the library.

Figure 4.6 Column chart on the satisfaction with the library by age group
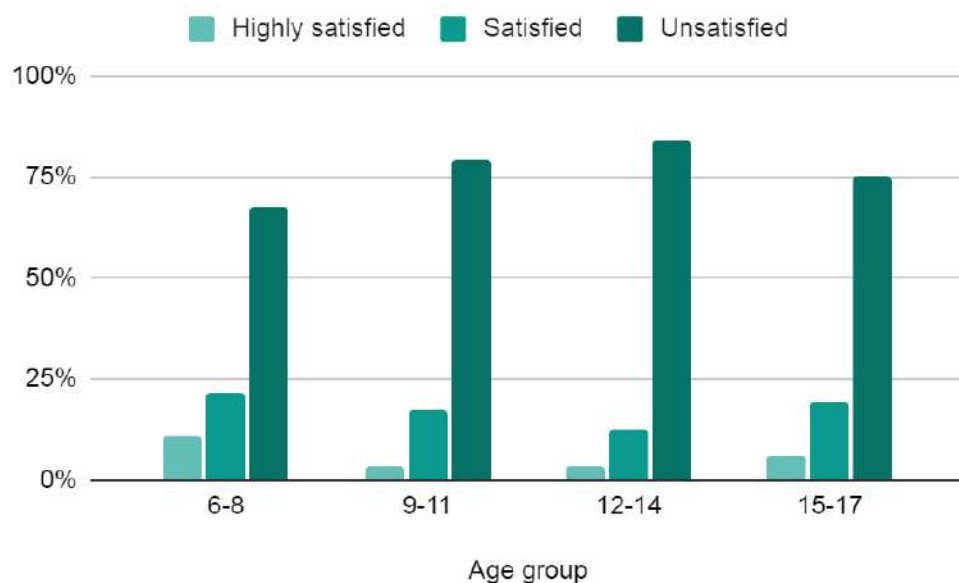
Source: Field Survey, 2023

The above column chart presents the data on library satisfaction by age group and provides insights into how students in different age groups perceive and feel about the libraries they have access to. In the age group 6-8, only 11% of students report being "Highly satisfied" with the libraries, while 22% are "Satisfied." The majority, 68% of students, express being "Unsatisfied" with the libraries available to them. Similarly, in the age group 9-11, the percentage of students who are "Highly satisfied" drops to 3%, and 17% are "Satisfied." A significant 79% of students report feeling "Unsatisfied" with the libraries. In the age group 12-14, there is a consistent pattern, with 3% of students "Highly satisfied," 12% "Satisfied," and 84% "Unsatisfied" with the libraries.

For the age group 15-17, 6% of students are "Highly satisfied," 19% are "Satisfied," and 75% express being "Unsatisfied" with the libraries they have access to. Upon further observation, it was noted that a significant number of young students under the age of 12 were not aware of the availability of library facilities in their schools. As a result, they were unable to provide their perception or satisfaction regarding the libraries. In contrast, the responses from the older age group students revealed that many of them

expressed dissatisfaction due to either the lack of availability of books or the absence of libraries altogether.

Figure 4.7 Column chart on the availability of library by gender

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The above figure indicates the availability of libraries based on gender. Both male and female students reported relatively low percentages for libraries being "Highly Available," with 9% for male students and 7% for female students. The percentages for "Available" libraries are the same for both genders, with 20%. However, the majority of students, regardless of gender, responded that libraries were "Unavailable," with 71% for male students and 73% for female students. This suggests that a significant proportion of students from both genders perceive a lack of library facilities, indicating potential challenges in accessing library resources and services for their educational needs.

Figure 4.8 Column chart on the satisfaction with the library by gender
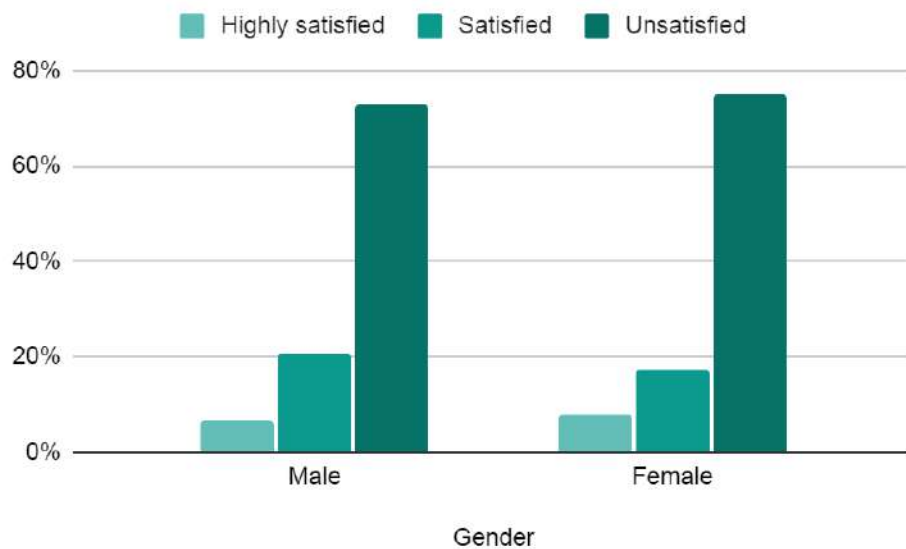
Source: Field Survey, 2023

The above figure provides insights into library satisfaction by gender, serving as a follow-up to the data on library availability, it can be observed that both male and female students expressed relatively low levels of satisfaction with their respective libraries. The percentage of students who reported being "Highly Satisfied" is low for both genders, with 7% for male students and 8% for female students. Similarly, the percentage of students who reported being "Satisfied" is also relatively low, with 21% for males and 17% for females. The majority of students from both genders, 73% of male students and 75% of female students indicated being "Unsatisfied" with their libraries. This data suggests that the majority of them seem dissatisfied with their current library experiences. This could indicate that there need for several improvements in the library services and resources provided to students.

Figure 4.9 Column chart on the availability of library by grade
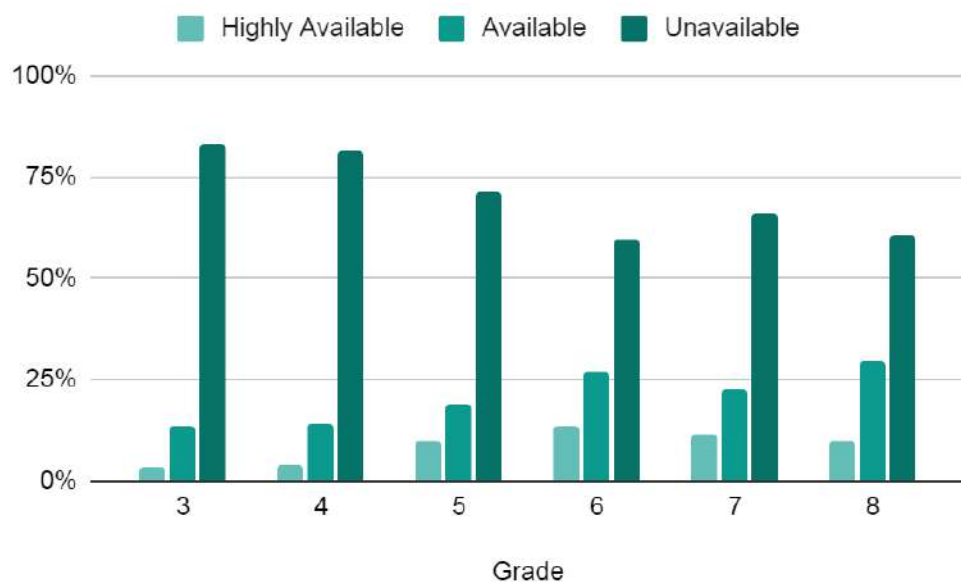
The data on library availability by grade indicates the perceived availability of libraries among students in different grades. As students progress to higher grades, there is a noticeable increase in the perception of library availability. For example, in grades 3 and 4, only a small percentage (3% and 4%, respectively) of students reported libraries as "Highly Available." However, as students reach grades 5 and 6, the percentage of those who consider libraries to be "Highly Available" rises to 10% and 14%, respectively. Furthermore, as students advance to grades 7 and 8, the percentages continue to increase to 11% and 10%, respectively. Similarly, the percentage of students who consider libraries to be "Available" also shows a gradual increase from lower grades which is 13% in grade 3, and to higher grades which is 30% in grade 8. Conversely, the percentage of students who perceive libraries as "Unavailable" decreases as they progress through grades, indicating an improvement in library availability perceptions. Older students, having spent more time in the school environment, are likely to be more aware of the library and its importance.

Figure 4.10 Column chart on the satisfaction with the library by grade
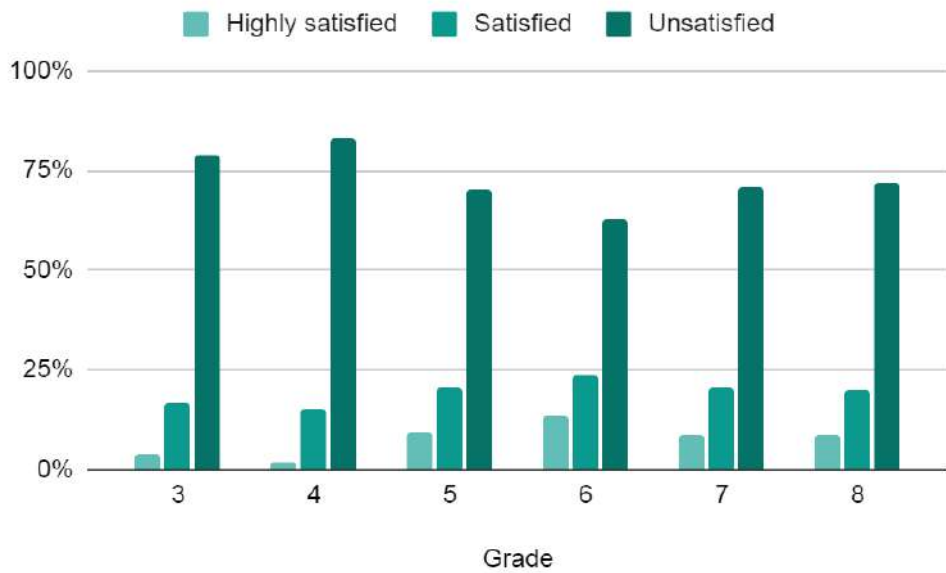
The above data on library satisfaction by grade provides insights into how students of different grade levels perceive their experience with the school library. In grades 3 and 4, only a very small percentage of 4% and 2% of the students reported being "Highly Satisfied" with the library. The majority of students in these grades express dissatisfaction, with 79% and 83% indicating they are "Unsatisfied." These results suggest that younger students might not find the library resourceful or not understood the importance of the library.

In grades 5 and 6, there is a noticeable improvement in library satisfaction. The percentage of students who are "Satisfied" with the library increases to 21% and 24%, respectively. The percentage of students expressing their dissatisfaction decreases to 70% and 63%. This indicates that the library experience might be improving for students as they progress to these grades. Likewise, in grades 7 and 8, the percentage of students who report being "Highly Satisfied" remains stable at 9%. The percentage of students who are "Satisfied" remains consistent at 20%. However, there is a slight increase in the percentage of students expressing their dissatisfaction to 71% in grade 7 and 72% in grade 8. This suggests that while efforts to improve library satisfaction have been effective to some extent, there is still room for further improvement in these higher grade levels.

Overall, the data indicates that there is a trend of lower library satisfaction among younger students in grades 3 and 4 and a gradual improvement in satisfaction as students' progress to higher grades from 5 to 8. It also highlights the importance of continuous efforts to enhance library resources, services, and the overall library experience to ensure that students across all grade levels have a positive library experience. Most of the students also complained that there were no updated books for them to read and most of the time they were not even allowed to visit the library.

Figure 4.11 Column chart on the availability of library by ethnicity

The above figure on library availability by ethnicity presents the perception of library accessibility among students belonging to different ethnicities. Students from the Brahmin and Chhetri ethnicities have a relatively higher perception of library availability. 16% of Brahmin students and 13% of Chhetri students consider libraries to be "Highly Available", while 21% of Brahmin students and 25% of Chhetri students consider libraries to be "Available." However, a significant proportion of 63% of Brahmin and 63% of Chhetri students from both groups perceive libraries as "Unavailable". Likewise, Students from the Dalit and Kanu ethnicities have lower perceptions of library availability. Only 6% of Dalit students and no Kanu students feel that libraries are "Highly Available". Additionally, 12% of Dalit students and 11% of Kanu students believe libraries are "Available", while a vast majority, 82% of Dalit and 89% of Kanu students, see libraries as "Unavailable".

Whereas, students from the Mahato, Muslim, Yadav, and Other ethnicities show mixed perceptions. Mahato students have a relatively higher perception of library availability compared to Dalit and Kanu, with 7% perceiving libraries as "Highly Available" and 26% as "Available". Muslim students have even higher perceptions, with 12% seeing libraries as "Highly Available" and 35% as "Available". For Yadav and Others, library availability perceptions are lower, with only 8% and 8%, respectively, perceiving libraries as "Highly Available" and 15% and 20%, respectively, as "Available". Libraries in some schools may be more accessible and better equipped due to differences in socioeconomic status. It may not necessarily have to do with students ethnicity but rather the socio-economic status of the schools.
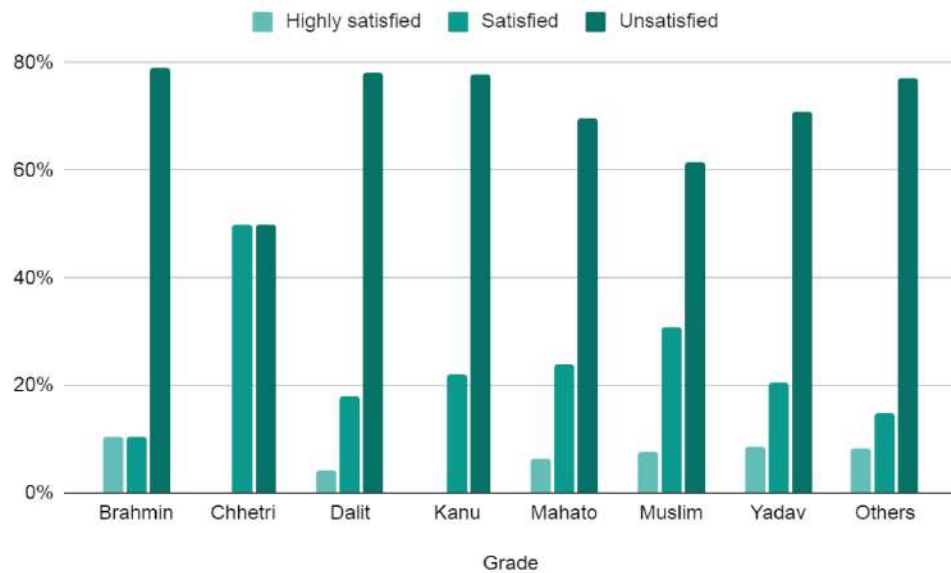
The data on library satisfaction by ethnicity presents the level of satisfaction students from different ethnicities have with their school libraries. Among Brahmin students, only 11% expressed being "Highly Satisfied", while 11% were "Satisfied," and 79% reported being "Unsatisfied" with their library facilities. Chhetri students showed a contrasting pattern with 50% of them being "Satisfied" and 50% being "Unsatisfied". Interestingly, none of the Chhetri students reported being "Highly Satisfied". Dalit students had 4% who were "Highly Satisfied," 18% "Satisfied," and a substantial 78% were "Unsatisfied" with the library resources.

Similarly, Kanu students had no one who reported being "Highly Satisfied," while 22% were "Satisfied," and the majority (78%) were "Unsatisfied". Mahato students showed 7% being "Highly Satisfied," 24% "Satisfied," and 70% "Unsatisfied". Muslim students had 8% "Highly Satisfied," 31% "Satisfied," and 62% "Unsatisfied". And lastly, the students from Yadav and Other ethnicities shared similar patterns with 9% and 8% "Highly Satisfied", 20% and 15% "Satisfied," and 71% and 77% "Unsatisfied", respectively. The reasons behind these variations in satisfaction could be attributed to factors like library infrastructure, resource availability, book collection diversity, accessibility, and overall quality of services.

4.5.2.2 Computer lab availability and satisfaction

Figure 4.13 Column chart on the availability of computer labs by age group
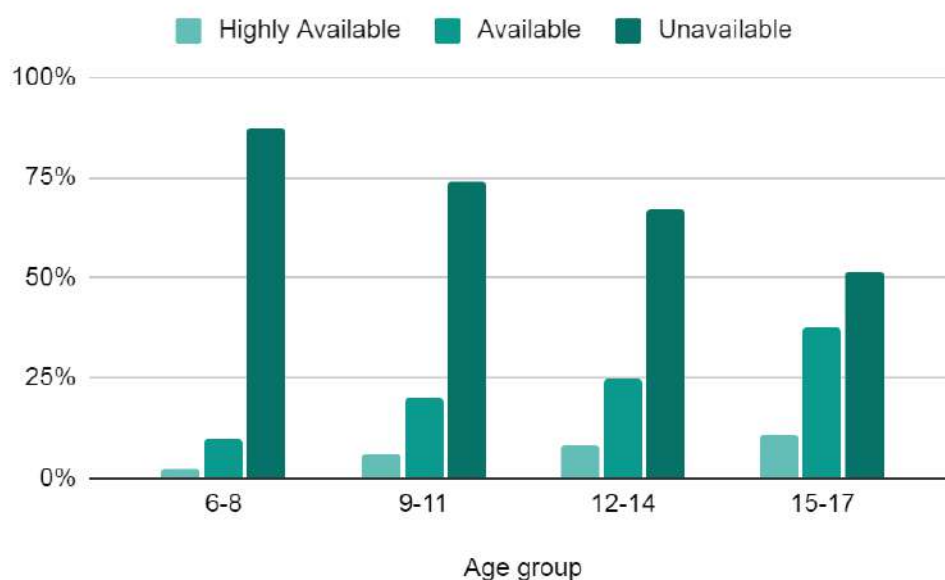
The data on computer lab availability by age group reflects the perceived accessibility of computer labs among students in different age groups. Among students aged 6-8, only 2% reported computer labs as "Highly Available", 10% considered them "Available", and 88% perceived them as "Unavailable". For students aged 9-11, 6% felt computer labs were "Highly Available," 20% viewed them as "Available," and 74% perceived them as "Unavailable". Likewise, in the 12-14 age group, 8% considered computer labs "Highly Available", 25% as "Available", and 67% as "Unavailable". Lastly, among students aged 15-17, 11% responded to computer labs as "Highly Available", 38% as "Available", and 51% as "Unavailable".

The data suggests that as students' progress to older age groups, there is a gradual increase in the perceived availability of computer labs. Older students are more likely to have access to computer lab facilities compared to younger students. This may be due to the educational curriculum evolving and incorporating more technology-based learning methods for older students that starts from grade 7, so usually students from older age group responded to the availability of computer labs. However, it is important to note that even among the older age groups, a significant percentage of students still perceive computer labs as "Unavailable". This is due to factors such as limited access or no access to computer labs, insufficient computer software, or even hardware components.
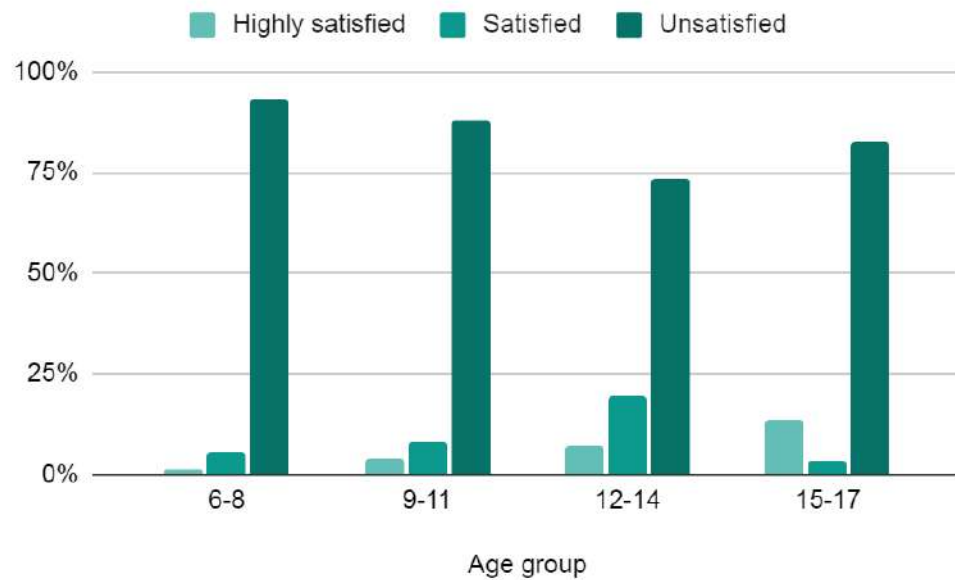
The data on computer lab satisfaction by age group indicates the level of satisfaction among students regarding their experience with computer labs in different age groups. Most of the responses are based on the availability or unavailability of computer labs. Among students aged 6-8, only 1% expressed being "Highly Satisfied" with the computer labs, while 6% were "Satisfied", The majority (93%) of students in this age group reported feeling "Unsatisfied" with their computer lab experience. For students aged 9-11, 4% indicated being "Highly Satisfied," 8% reported feeling "Satisfied", and 88% expressed being "Unsatisfied" with the computer labs. In the 12-14 age group, 7% of students were "Highly Satisfied", 19% were "Satisfied," and 74% were "Unsatisfied" with their computer lab experience.

Lastly, among the students aged 15-17, 14% were "Highly Satisfied", 3% were "Satisfied", and the majority (83%) were "Unsatisfied" with the computer labs. The data suggests that there is generally a low level of satisfaction with computer labs among students across all age groups. Even among the older age group of 15-17, the majority still expressed being "Unsatisfied" where the percentage of computer labs being available to them was relatively higher. The reasons for the low satisfaction levels could vary and may include issues such as insufficient availability of computer resources, slow or outdated computers, limited or no access to computer labs, lack of trained teachers, etc.

Figure 4.15 Column chart on the availability of computer labs by gender
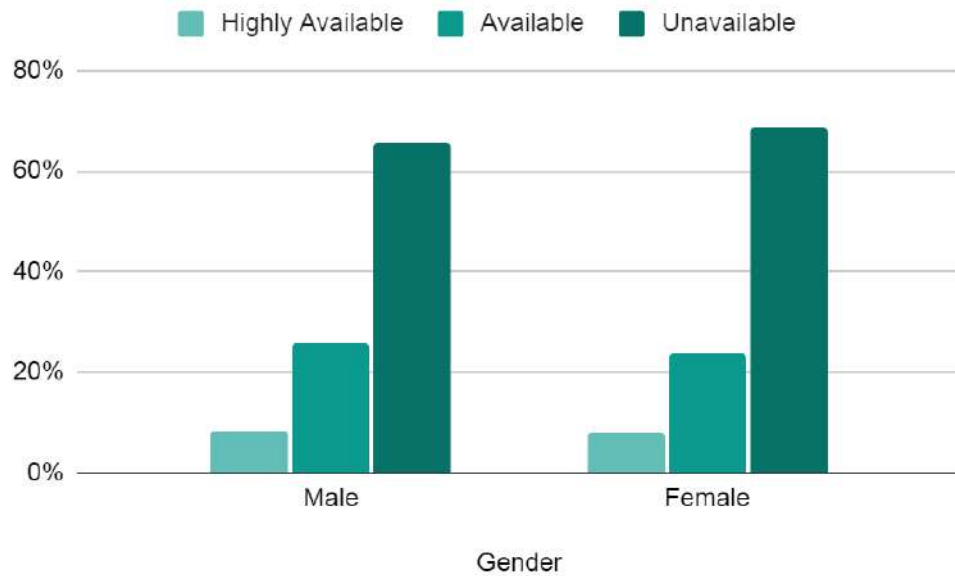
The data on computer lab availability by gender illustrates the perceived availability of computer labs among male and female students. Both male and female students show a similar perception of computer lab availability, with 8% of both genders considering computer labs as "Highly Available". Among male students, 26% perceive computer labs as "Available", while 66% feel that they are "Unavailable". For female students, 24% perceive computer labs as "Available," and 69% see them as "Unavailable". The data suggests that the majority of students, both male and female, perceive computer labs to be "Unavailable," indicating that there may be limitations or challenges in accessing computer facilities in educational institutions. Upon further questioning, most of the male students were concerned regarding the unavailability of computer labs in comparison to female students. This could mean that male students are more interested in learning how to use computers. However, there were other instances where female students showed equal concern for the unavailability of computer labs.

Figure 4.16 Column chart on the satisfaction with the computer labs by gender
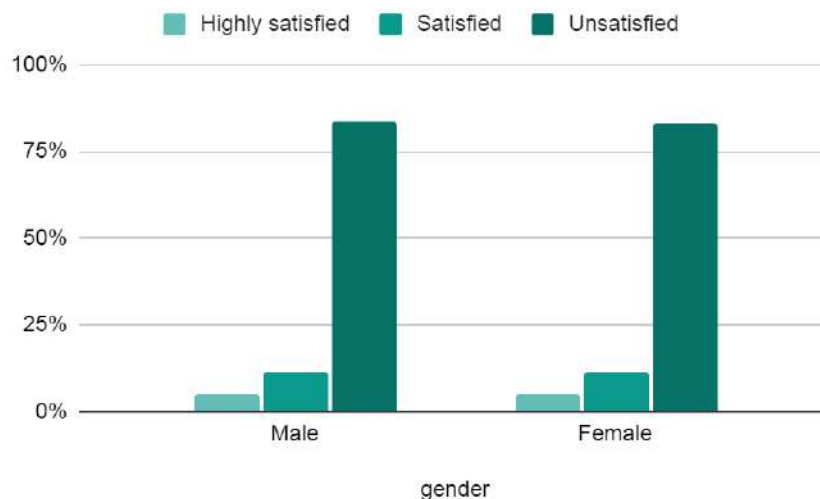
The figure above provides data on computer lab satisfaction by gender and shows the level of satisfaction among male and female students regarding the computer lab facilities available to them. Both male and female students exhibit similar levels of satisfaction, with 5% of both genders being "highly satisfied." Among male students, 11% report feeling "satisfied" with the computer lab facilities, while the majority, 84%, express "unsatisfied" sentiments. For female students, 12% report feeling "satisfied" with the computer labs, while 83% are unsatisfied." The data suggests that a significant portion of both male and female students are "unsatisfied" with the computer lab facilities. The reasons for this perceived dissatisfaction could be varied, including issues related to the quality and quantity of computers available, limited access time, a lack of trained professionals, etc.

Figure 4.17 Column chart on the availability of computer labs by grade
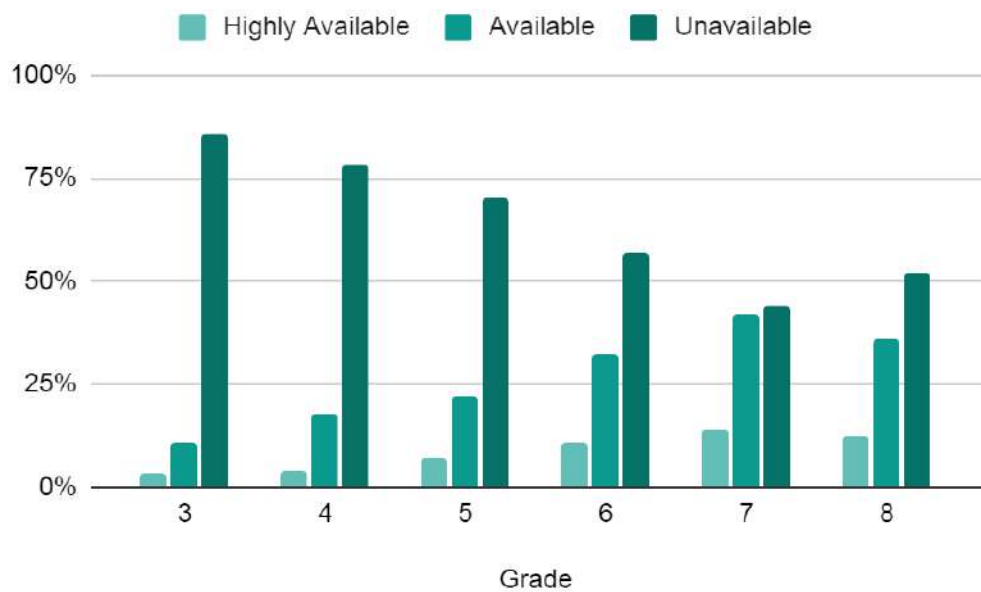
Among students in different grades, the data indicate their perception of computer lab availability. Notably, responses from grade 7 are significant, as computer classes are introduced only after this grade. In grade 7, 14% of students perceive the computer lab as "highly available, while 42% consider it available." However, 44% of students still feel it is unavailable." Similarly, in grade 8, 12% of students believe the computer lab is "highly available, and 36% consider it available." Despite these improvements, 52% of students perceive it as unavailable." One possible reason for grades 7 and 8 responding to high availability as well as unavailability could be that the number of computer labs or the available computers might be insufficient to meet the demand of all students in these grades.

Figure 4.18 Column chart on the satisfaction with the computer labs by grade
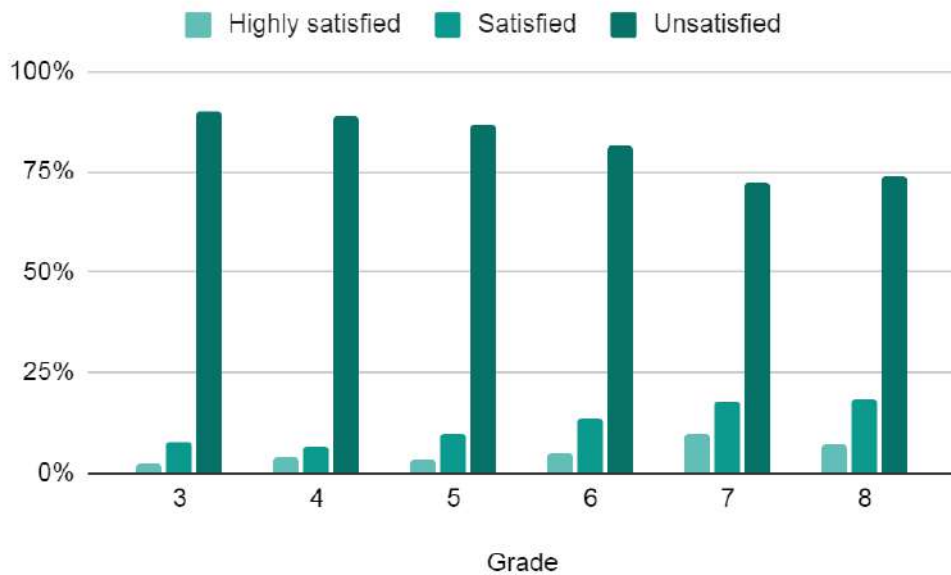
From the above figure regarding students' dissatisfaction on the computer labs we will look into the data from grade 7 where computer lesions are to be taught. In grades 7 and 8, the data shows the level of computer lab satisfaction among students. In grade 7, 10% of students report being "Highly Satisfied" with the computer lab, while 18% express being "Satisfied." However, a significant majority of 72% of students feel "Unsatisfied" with the computer lab experience. Similarly, in grade 8, 7% of students indicate being "Highly Satisfied," and 19% report being "Satisfied." Again, a majority of 74% of students express "Unsatisfied" feelings towards the computer lab. These findings suggest that the majority of students in both grades 7 and 8 have reservations or concerns about their computer lab experience. Another reason given by the student is that most of the schools did not have adequate teachers as well as computers. Having said that, most of the schools do not even provide their students with textbooks regarding computer discerning their dissatisfaction regarding computers overall.
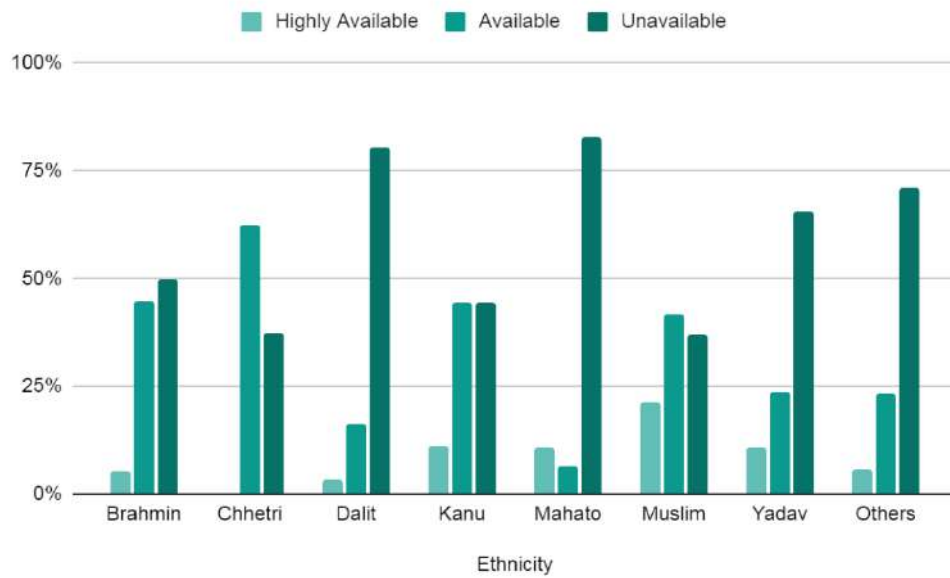
Source: Field Survey, 2023

The data on computer lab availability by ethnicity provides insight into the perceived accessibility of computer labs among students belonging to different ethnicities. Among students of Brahmin ethnicity, only 5% perceive the computer lab as "Highly Available", while a larger proportion of 45% considers it "Available". However, a significant portion of 50% of Brahmin students perceives the computer lab as "Unavailable". In contrast, students from the Chhetri ethnicity report a different pattern, with no students perceiving the computer lab as "Highly Available." However, the majority (63%) of Chhetri students feel that the computer lab is "Available", and 38% consider it "Unavailable". Similarly, among students from the Dalit and Mahato ethnicities, only a small percentage (3% and 11%, respectively) perceive the computer lab as "Highly Available". Additionally, 16% of Dalit students and 7% of Mahato students believe it is "Available", while a significant proportion of 81% of Dalit and 83% of Mahato students perceive it as "Unavailable.".

Among Kanu students, 11% perceive the computer lab as "Highly Available," and 44% believe it is "Available." However, 44% of Kanu students also feel it is "Unavailable". For Muslim students, the highest percentage (22%) perceive the computer lab as "Highly Available," and 42% consider it "Available." A smaller proportion (37%) of Muslim students perceive it as "Unavailable". Finally, among Yadav and other ethnicities, 11%, and 6%, respectively, perceive the computer lab as "Highly Available". Additionally, 24% of Yadav students and 23% of other ethnic students believe it is "Available," while a significant portion of 66% of Yadav students and 71% of other students perceive it as "Unavailable".

The varying perceptions of computer lab availability among different ethnicities could be influenced by several factors, such as the allocation of resources in schools, and the overall prioritization of computer lab facilities within educational institutions. It may also be reflective of students' individual experiences with the computer lab and their satisfaction levels that do not necessarily incline with discrimination within the ethnic groups. One major issue with this analysis is the lack of proper representation from every ethnic group, which could have influenced the data's accuracy and reliability.

Figure 4.20 Column chart on the satisfaction with the computer labs by ethnicity

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The data on computer lab satisfaction by ethnicity reveals the level of satisfaction among students belonging to different ethnicities with the computer lab facilities. Brahmin students show the lowest levels of satisfaction, with 0% being "highly satisfied" and only 18% being satisfied. The majority of 82% expressed being unsatisfied. Chhetri students also display low satisfaction levels, with 0% being "highly satisfied", and only 13% being satisfied." The majority, 88%, are unsatisfied." Among Dalit students, 3% are "highly satisfied, 10% are "satisfied," and 87% are unsatisfied. Kanu students demonstrate mixed results, with 11% being "highly satisfied," 0% being "satisfied," and the majority, 89%, being unsatisfied. Mahato students have 4% being "highly satisfied, 2% being satisfied, and the majority, 94%, being unsatisfied." Among Muslim students, 14% are "highly satisfied, 19% are "satisfied," and 68% are unsatisfied. Yadav students indicate 7% being "highly satisfied, 15% being satisfied, and 79% being unsatisfied." Lastly, for Others' ethnicity, 4% are "highly satisfied," 10% are "satisfied," and the majority, 86%, are unsatisfied. Regardless of the ethnic background of the students, overall, the data suggest that there is a significant level of dissatisfaction among students of various ethnicities with the computer lab facilities.

4.5.3   Opportunities for future aspirations

Table 4.36 Opportunities for future aspirations by age group

Age group	No	Yes
6-8	29%	71%
9-11	31%	69%
12-14	29%	71%
15-17	35%	66%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The above data on opportunities for future aspirations by age group reveals the percentage of students who believe they have opportunities to pursue their future aspirations and career goals. In the age group 6-8, 71% of students responded "Yes", indicating that they perceive opportunities available for their future aspirations, while 29% responded "No", indicating a lack of opportunities. For the age group 9-11, 69% of students responded "Yes," indicating opportunities for their future goals, and 31% responded "No", indicating a lack of opportunities. In the age group 12-14, 71% of students responded "Yes", indicating they believe there are opportunities for their future aspirations, and 29% responded "No", indicating otherwise. Lastly, in the age group 15-17, 66% of students responded "Yes", suggesting they perceive opportunities for their future aspirations, and 35% responded "No", indicating a significant proportion of students feel a lack of opportunities. This data suggests that while a majority of students feel optimistic about their opportunities, there is still a considerable number of students who may not feel adequately supported or informed about available opportunities.

Table 4.37 Opportunities for future aspirations by gender

Gender	Yes	No
Male	70%	30%
Female	69%	31%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The table presents data on opportunities for future aspirations by gender. It shows the percentage of male and female students who responded either "Yes" or "No" to the question of whether they believe they have opportunities to pursue their future aspirations and career goals. The data present 70% of male students responded "Yes", indicating that they perceive opportunities available for their future aspirations, while 30% responded "No", suggesting a minority of male students feel a lack of opportunities. Similarly, 69% of female students responded "Yes", indicating opportunities for their future goals, and 31% responded "No", suggesting that a relatively smaller percentage of female students feel they lack opportunities.

Overall, the data shows that the majority of both male and female students feel positive about their opportunities to pursue their future aspirations. There is a slight difference between the genders, but it is not significant, as both groups have relatively similar percentages of students who believe in the availability of opportunities for their future aspirations.

Table 4.38 Opportunities for future aspirations by grade

Grade	Yes	No
3	71%	29%
4	68%	32%
5	67%	33%
6	70%	30%
7	70%	30%
8	74%	26%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The data on opportunities for future aspirations by grade reveals the percentage of students in different grade levels who believe in the availability of opportunities to pursue their future goals. From the data, we can observe that a significant majority of students in each grade level expressed optimism about their future opportunities. In grade 3, 71% of students believe in the availability of opportunities, while 29% responded "No". Similarly, in grade 4, 68% of students see opportunities for their future aspirations, and 32% responded "No". Grade 5 shows a similar pattern with 67% of students believing in available opportunities and 33% responding "No". As we move to the higher grades, the percentages remain quite stable.

In grade 6, 70% of students expressed a positive outlook on opportunities, while 30% said "No". Grade 7 also reported 70% of students believing in available opportunities and 30% saying "No". Finally, in grade 8, the percentage of students who believe in opportunities for future aspirations slightly increased to 74%, while 26% responded "No". Overall, the data indicates that a consistent majority of students across all grades have a positive perception of the availability of opportunities to achieve their future aspirations. This positive outlook may foster a sense of hope and motivation among students as they progress through their education and plan for their future endeavors.

Table 4.39 Opportunities for future aspirations by ethnicity

Ethnicity	Yes	No
Brahmin	18%	82%
Chhetri	38%	63%
Dalit	33%	67%
Kanu	11%	89%
Mahato	24%	76%
Muslim	34%	66%
Yadav	71%	29%
Others	68%	32%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The above table presents data on opportunities for future aspirations by ethnicity and provides insights into how students from different ethnic backgrounds perceive the availability of opportunities to pursue their future goals. From the data, we can observe significant variations in how students from different ethnicities perceive their future opportunities. Only 18% of Brahmin students believe in available opportunities for their future aspirations, while 82% responded "No". This suggests that a significant majority of Brahmin students have a pessimistic view regarding the opportunities available to them. For Chhetri students, 38% expressed optimism and see opportunities for their future aspirations, while 63% responded "No". The data indicate that a relatively larger proportion of Chhetri students have a positive outlook on their future opportunities compared to Brahmin students.

Among Dalit students, 33% perceive available opportunities for their future aspirations, while 67% responded "No". This shows that a considerable majority of Dalit students also have a pessimistic view of their future prospects. Only 11% of Kanu students believe in available opportunities, while a substantial majority of 89% responded "No".

This suggests that a large number of Kanu students have a negative perception of the opportunities for their future aspirations. For Mahato students, 24% expressed optimism and see opportunities for their future aspirations, while 76% responded "No". Among Muslim students, 34% perceive available opportunities for their future aspirations, while 66% responded "No". This suggests that a substantial proportion of Muslim students have a negative view of their future prospects. The data for Yadav students shows a positive outlook, with 71% believing in available opportunities and only 29% responding "No". This indicates that a significant majority of Yadav students have an optimistic view regarding the opportunities available to them. Lastly, for students belonging to the "Others" category, 68% expressed optimism and see opportunities for their future aspirations, while 32% responded "No." This suggests that a relatively larger proportion of students in this category have a positive outlook on their future prospects compared to some of the other ethnicities.

Overall, the data indicates significant variations in how students from different ethnic backgrounds perceive the availability of opportunities for their future aspirations. Factors such as cultural background, socio-economic status, and access to resources and support systems may contribute to these variations.

Conclusion

This research stands as a significant stride in addressing various impacts of gender dynamics within the public education system of Rautahat district. In conclusion, gender dynamics play a significant role in shaping the educational experiences of students. Understanding and addressing these dynamics are essential steps toward creating a more equitable and inclusive educational environment. While the study in the public schools of Rautahat District revealed a relatively equitable picture of gender dynamics, it is crucial to recognize that gender equity is just one aspect of improving education. The comprehensive study on education in public schools in Rautahat District sheds light on various aspects such as gender, age, grade, and ethnicity that influence students' educational experiences, including social norms, decision-making, leisure activities, and the alignment of school learning with future goals. The data shows that gender dynamics play a significant role in shaping these experiences. Female students tend to be more aware of and influenced by social norms in their decision-making processes. However, it has not yet imposed any sort of restrictions on their educational attainment or overall experiences.

Beyond the scope of gender dynamics, a complex interplay of both internal and external factors emerges. However, it is pertinent to note that these factors exert an equal influence on the learning outcomes of female students. Female students hailing from affluent families appear to enjoy a higher degree of autonomy when it comes to making choices about their academic pursuits. Their financial advantage affords them the opportunity to opt for private tuition, which in turn equips them to excel both within the classroom and during examinations. In this context, the financial stability of these students' families grants them the privilege of additional educational support, enabling them to access private tutoring resources. Consequently, these female students are better positioned to perform well academically due to the enhanced educational opportunities facilitated by their families' financial means. This situation imposes a detrimental effect on female students who lack the financial means to afford tuition, consequently leading to underperformance in school compared to their more privileged counterparts.

The role of age emerged as a significant factor, often outweighing the influence of gender dynamics. As students transitioned into older age groups, a discernible pattern of maturity became evident across the dataset. This maturation was manifested through greater self-awareness, refined decision-making, and a more profound grasp of the socio-educational landscape. While gender dynamics undoubtedly had an impact, the progression of age seemed to exert a more pronounced influence on the participants' perspectives and behaviors within the educational context.

Both male and female students allocate a substantial amount of time to leisure activities, indicating the importance they place on personal autonomy and recreational pursuits. Interestingly, there are no significant gender differences in perceiving the alignment of school learning with future aspirations, indicating a relatively equitable perception in this aspect. However, concerns arise about library and computer lab availability for both genders, suggesting the need for improvement in educational resources. Overall, understanding and addressing gender dynamics are crucial steps toward creating an inclusive and equitable educational environment that fosters students' growth and opportunities for the future.

In terms of various household chores, the data suggests that as children advance through age groups, their involvement in household chores tends to increase as they grow older. The findings underline the impact of societal expectations, family dynamics, and changing priorities on chore participation within different age cohorts. Viewed from a gender perspective, these chore disparities likely stem from ingrained traditional roles and societal norms. Cultural and family factors further entrench these patterns, emphasizing the need to acknowledge and rectify such gender imbalances. Addressing these discrepancies is vital for promoting fair chore distribution and challenging established norms in society. However, its impact on education remains relatively limited.

When it came to personal autonomy, the data highlighted a notable difference in the perception of the right to make decisions between male and female students. This variance is rooted in multifaceted cultural and societal factors, particularly historical norms. Nevertheless, the observation of young female adolescents asserting their decision-making autonomy signifies a positive shift towards greater empowerment and challenges established gender roles.

Throughout this study, various dimensions of gender dynamics, age, grade, and ethnicity have been dissected with four different indicators: time autonomy, personal autonomy, leisure activities, and aspiration, shedding light on their intricate interplay within the education landscape. The findings have highlighted individual dynamics while also recognizing positive trends, such as the growing assertion of young female adolescents in asserting their autonomy and their priority towards education. By recognizing the significance of gender dynamics, striving for more balanced chore distribution, acknowledging the rights of young individuals to make their own decisions, and creating opportunities for personal autonomy, it could potentially contribute to a future where every student's potential is fully realized and nurtured.

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