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Gender gap in allocating household resources to childhood education in Nepal

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Abstract

This study aims to explore how differently boys and girls receive an allocation of intra-household resources and care in Nepali society, discuss how existing gender discourses affect boys and girls separately, and explore the impact of gender discrimination on boys' and girls' rights to schooling. This study's research method was a review of the previously published and unpublished literature. The results indicate that girls were partially treated during the allocation of intra-households resources and their rights to quality education. The results further suggest that four quite distinct discourses (socio-culture factors, child marriage, religion, and poverty) were crucial indicators of gender discrimination on children's rights to quality education, which have dominated approaches to childhood study over many decades. The implication of this research would be beneficial to educators, teachers, scholars, and regional and local governments to formulate gender related educational policies in Nepal.

Keywords: Intra-household resources and allocation, discourses, explore, discrimination, gender.

Introduction

"Gender discrimination is one of the major drawbacks in Nepalese culture."

Gender inequality in educational attainment remains a salient feature of contemporary Nepalese society. This inequality exists not at the high school level but also in the higher-level education in Nepal. Nepal is an underdeveloped country between India and China and presents dismal female literacy rates. Within the SAARC region, Nepal has the lowest female literacy rate. The literacy level of people above six years was 65.5%. Divided by gender, men have a literacy rate of 78.59%, and women only 59.72% (Dhakal 2018). Nepal has already committed to an international slogan of free quality school education for all children, but the current practice of childhood education is still problematic in Nepal. It is obvious that the poor performance of public schools increases the emergence of private schools rapidly as an alternative to quality education (Adhikari 2016. Caddell 2007).

Gender discrimination and son preference have been brought into being an issue in the context of the South Asian countries, such as Nepal. Son preference is generally viewed as a socially determining bias. Parents prioritize a child with culturally accepted characteristics, status, and economic potentiality in a patriarchal society (Basnet 2013). Son preference often influences their behaviour and may result in gender biases that negatively affect girls' and women's educational rights, welfare, health, and survival (Khanal, 2018; Silas Mollel & Chong 2017). In this sense, girls seem to be disadvantaged in the patriarchal society, resulting in gender discrimination by their own parents. Apart from the negative impact of gender discrimination on the girls' welfare, health, and survival, they are equally deprived of their right to quality education as well. A number of discourses have been established which have deeply rooted in the rural Nepalese society to address children according to their gender (Lee 2020). As a consequence, a dual school education has taken place in Nepal. Unaffordable costs for the poor and inaccessibility for children in remote areas are the burning issue of equal access to quality educational in the Nepalese education sector. The school system produces two social classes of children, which is the antithesis of the ultimate goal of education (Gautam, 2012).

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Koolwal (2007, p.881) states son preference is an enduring phenomenon in many low-income countries, particularly in Asia, North Africa, and the Middle East. Male preference to allocate household resources is still debatable issue in Nepalese society. The government of Nepal has already announced the implementation of equal opportunity for both males and females. However, the Nepalese communities still believe that men are the pillars of every family to manage economic activities (Adhikari, 2016). Traditional Nepalese concepts of gender roles prioritize male education while relegating women to household work. (Department of Education 2004). Men are breadwinners; women are homemakers (Ho & Lam 2014).

The net enrolment rate for boys stands at 86 %. For girls, 74.6 % clearly shows gender disparity among boys and girls in education as well as in other sectors of Nepalese society. Moreover, there are two types of education (Pre-primary level, Primary level, Lower Secondary, Secondary level, Undergraduate and Graduate level) in Nepal. People spend 200 to 500 EURO on educating sons in private schools, that directly impacting their annual savings. If the quality of education in government schools improves, it is believed that the rate of gender discrimination may be minimized (Koirala, 2022). Son preference has come to be known and told through a number of dominant narratives that rely on particular epistemological assumptions. While this issue has different inflections across the various sites of this research in the South Asian movement, this paper will outline the contours of cartography of study and inquiry, which privileges specific ways of 'knowing' son preference while often appearing evident to others (Berenbaum, & Liben 2009). The production of this body of knowledge, for the most part, has centered on what can be described as evidence-based academic scholarship, which has ultimately produced an empiricist knowledge base about son preference (Purewal 2016). The outcome of this issue is that constructions and understandings of son preference rely mainly on empirically-driven tools and methods meant to demonstrate, highlight and trace the declining terms of gender equity against females have dominated the broad field (Purewal 2016).

However, it is not the intention of this author to criticize empirical work. Empirical, primary research in various forms has produced some of the richest accounts and slices of social and cultural processes that offer insights into the gendered social world in which son preferential processes and practices exist (Debotri Dhar, 2015). It represents empirical data in the framing of arguments and explanations for why and how son preference exists. In other words, it means empiricism suggests that it is possible to understand son preference which this author is interested in, i.e., how the object of study of 'son preference or sex selection' has been created and reified in childhood education in South Asian context (Adhikari 2016; Patel 2014).

The concept of intrahousehold resources allocation decisions has a long-established place in the literature. Two classes of models typically used in the intrahousehold resources allocation literature that allow for parental preference differences are the family bargaining model and the collective model (Dhakal 2018). Bargaining models assume that household allocation outcomes reflect a bargaining process in which household members seek to allocate the resources they control to the goods that they

individually prefer. The resulting equilibria are sensitive to the threat point definition, and equilibrium concept assumed that the collective model leaves unspecified the underlying issue of household resources allocation (Emerson & Souza 2007).

There is extensive literature on parental preferences over a child's gender. The preference for male children has been widely documented in South and East Asia, where gender bias is severe, especially before birth and at young ages (Bondar et al. 2020). In many Asian countries, females' social status has been lower than men, and females have been treated differently in various ways since childhood (Adhikari 2016). Females in these countries have been discriminated against from birth, resulting in a high male-to-female sex ratio at birth. Moreover, childhood discrimination has caused gender gaps in both human capital and labour market performances. However, in response to rapid economic growth and the change in social perception that emphasizes gender equality, females' socioeconomic status has improved in some of these Asian countries as well as in western countries. In particular, Nepal—henceforth, Nepal—became the only country that reverted to the natural sex ratio at birth in Asia (Dhakal, 2018; Lee, 2020).

This paper primarily aims to find the literature on parental preference for allocating household resources to sons' education. The specific objective is to examine and understand parental opinions and perceptions of sending their sons to institutionalized schools and girls in public schools in Chitwan district based on previous studies. Furthermore, it evaluates the cultural reasons why parents prefer to send their sons to standardized (private schools) schools and girls to public schools (Basnet 2013).

Sari Knopp Biklen et al. (1993) observed that the climate of sexual relations in schools undermines girls' confidence and makes them feel a deep sense of inferiority. She further added that sexual harassment, demonstrated through 'unwelcome physical conduct of a sexual nature, is experienced by girls regularly, which has hampered girls' educational performance in school education (Dang & Rogers 2015). Garvis and Sivaness Phillipson (2020) suggest that the sexual insults are part of the experience that pushes girls to marry, the jobs they take up, and their perceptions of themselves as objects of another's desire. It is not enough to provide equal access to the curriculum, and schools must not allow giving the situation and backdrop for harassment to occur to girls (Dhakal 2018; Khanal 2018; Basnet 2013).

Nevertheless, the rebalancing of the sex ratio at birth does not imply that gender discrimination or son preference has completely disappeared. Nepal also has a gender wage gap among SAARC countries (Garvis & Sivaness Phillipson 2020). Also, the evidence from a recent study shows that fewer parental inputs of gender equality are made to girls than to boys (Choi & Hwan, 2015). In Asian countries with strong son preference, the value of having a son is higher than that of a daughter, which led to the sex-based fertility stopping rules (Pradhan et al. 2019). Both male and female children are equally important for the overall development of a country. In this context, every child has the right to quality education, but there is a gap between male and female children for the opportunity for quality education. Parents still prefer to send their sons to institutionalized schools and daughters to government schools (Khanal

2018). Parents do have a preference in allocating intra-household resources to educate their children. They are happy to allocate more intra-household resources to their sons than their daughters because they culturally believe that sons are their future caretakers in their old age (Khanal 2018; Dhakal 2018). This study has reviewed the previous journal articles related to gender discrimination in childhood education in the Asian context, including Nepal and India. The implication of this study will be beneficial to regional policymakers, school educators, higher-level students, teachers, parents, and other social activists who are fighting for the children's right to quality education.

Literature Review

From the beginning of the 20th century to recent years, the gender gap has narrowed in various aspects of human capital and economic outcomes, such as labour force participation, working hours, work experience, and education. Women's relative earnings have also increased compared to those of men. However, as described in the previous section, there is still a significant difference in allocating household resources between male and female education, particularly in Nepal. The gender education gaps are divided into those derived from human capital differences and the residual. Several prior studies on the gender education gap interpreted the residual portion as a result of discrimination (Brown & Guichun Zong 2017; Berenbaum & Liben 2009). The study by Emerson and Souza (2007) showed an imbalance in the gender ratio of boys and girls globally.

The literature indicates a gender gap in education globally as well. One of the biggest problems in Nepal's education system is female education; that issue has been neglected since the 1950s to till now. In fact, there is extreme inequality in the literacy rate between males and females. In Nepal, 71% of males can read and write. In contrast, only 44 percent of females can read, which is a staggering inequality in females' education and direct links to areas of poverty in Nepal (Cannon 2014).

2.1 Gender disparity in household resource allocation and its contributing factors

Girls face considerably less participation in education, poor health and nutrition outcomes, more housework burden, and less time for entertainment and play than boys in many poor and developing countries (Adhikari 2016). One of the explanations for such differences in child outcomes is gender discrimination in the intra-household allocation of resources prevailed overwhelmingly. In many South Asian countries, Parent's first preference goes to boys over girls, both in monetary terms and in the time allocated to each child. Empirical evidence suggests that gender bias is considerable in some developing countries. Khanal (2018) found another fact that women spend more time with their children in the household after she has given birth to a baby boy.

On the other hand, after the birth of a baby girl, they should be busy with household and other work more rather than spending time with the children. There is considerable evidence of excess female mortality and morbidity in South Asia, especially among children (Haywood & An, 2013). They are attributed to discrimination against female children in the intra-household allocation of food and health care (Cerrato & Cifre 2018). In addition, girls are

also discriminated against in the distribution of intra-household resources in education. They tend to have lower completed schooling than boys. Cannon (2014) suggested that the intra-household allocation of resources among children is not guided by inequality aversion or needs alone but is consistent with the parental preference of boys over girls, with the higher returns to investment in boys' education. In specific contexts, female members are allocated fewer resources (Cerrato & Cifre 2018). One of the main reasons for not investing more resources in girls' education is the lower return expectation from girls than boys in countries where women and young girls have considerably fewer opportunities than men in the labour market (Basnet 2013).

Similarly, the girls will not be able to fulfil the expectation of their parents as they are no longer the properties of their natal parents after marriage and devote their time and resources to the husband's family (Ukhova 2015). In a resource-constrained household, fewer girls than boys may be able to attend school. Girls also may have more housework responsibilities than boys affecting their school attendance and performance with poor educational outcomes (Kleven, Landais & Sgaard 2018). The common explanation of the gender gap in education is the outcome of labour market discrimination against women and young girls in developing countries (Ho & Lam 2014). In contexts characterized by both limited resources and discrimination against girls, they do not have equal access to nutrition and paid health services. Chaudhuri and Roy (2009) found that parents may have a gender bias regarding health issues in India. They highlighted that mother have to wait for a longer time for a baby girl to take to the hospital for the treatment than they do with their baby boy, leading to differences in health outcomes. In particular contexts, girls and young women are more likely to be underweight than boys and young men (Choi & Hwang 2015).

2.2 Previous studies on the childhood gender discrimination in education

Girls are even more disadvantaged based on the rationale of cost-benefit analysis. For example, if parents feel that their daughters will be unable to take advantage of education in the labour market, they will be more likely to depend on their sons for support in old age (Holmarsdottir 2013). *Men are breadwinners; women are homemakers.*" (Ho & Lam, 2014 p.498).

In other words, parents believe that sons are the long-term contributors to the household economy since they stay with their parents as crucial support in their old age. Conversely, daughters have to be married to someone else and leave their parents' homes (Khanal 2018).

2.3 Evidence of the previous studies on the gender gap

Son preference is an enduring phenomenon in many low-income countries, particularly in Asia, North Africa, and the Middle East (Adhikari, 2016).

Son's preference is one of the major social and cultural beliefs in Nepalese society, so girls are sent to public schools, and sons are sent to private schools (Adhikari 2016). The previous literature of Adhikari (2016) indicates that there is still gender disparity in girls' education in Asia, including Nepal. Various determining factors such as socioeconomic, political, cultural norms, and beliefs of the society have more significant influences on the

accessibility of the children's educational attainment. Based on gender preferences, the unequal distribution of household resources among children is a significant problem in many parts of the developing world, especially in South Asia and North Africa (Cannon 2014; Jungwirth & Bauschke-Urban 2019). Such inequality is prevalent in

their schooling as well (Basnet 2013). The decision about child education depends on the available resources and parental attitudes towards educating their children. Therefore, parental attitude brings out the inequality in the right to children's education (Kleven, Landais & Sgaard 2018)

Table 1. Summary of the empirical investigations.

Names of authors	Countries	Study's outcomes	Data and methods applied	Key findings
Asadullah & Chaudhary (2009)	India	Main achievements were grade completion, current enrolment, child work, and educational expenditure for two age groups, 6-10 & 11-17	Household Expenditure Survey was used for 1995, 2000, and 2005. Household Fixed Effect	Results show a reverse of the gender gap favouring girls in schooling and child labour, particularly in secondary schooling, during the introduction of the female secondary income program in 1994. Further, boys were more likely to enrol by 11.5% for initial enrolment, 13.6% for the later enrolment, and the grade attainment was a substantial gap of 20.5%.
Dreze & Kingdon (2001)	India	The initial enrollment outcomes for children aged 5-12, the next enrollment for children aged 5-18, and grade attainment for 13 to 18.	The household survey data from Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Himachal Pradesh, the Public Report on Basic Education, PROBE survey 199 were used. The analysis model was Logit for school enrolment and ordered logit model for grade attainment.	The results indicate that boys were more likely to be involved in outside activities, such as schooling with high female literacy, and engaged in work where the male labour participation was higher. The results further indicated that girls were found less likely to go to school in the presence of young and older male siblings, while the presence of older female siblings improved the chances of schooling.
Kambhaampati and Rajan (2008)	India	Participation in school, work, and household chores and none for the girls aged 10-15 years.	It uses the 50 th round of the household socioeconomic survey by India's National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO). A multivariate probit model is used.	A Significant gender gap in school enrolment and the study suggest that parental preference returns to education and the opportunity cost of domestic work substantially influences sons more than daughters.
Pal (2004)	India	Participation in school and job market for children aged 5-15 years in rural West Bengal was the outcomes study	The data of WIDER villages in West Bengal in India was used where a bivariate probit model was used.	The results showed that the non-enrolment of girls demonstrated gender bias in school, but once the children were enrolled, not much difference was observed in the decision to spend. The researcher concluded that the Hurdle model was seen as the more appropriate approach to detecting gender bias at the disaggregated level than the Engel curve
Kingdon (2005)	India	Household decisions to enrol children in school and how much to spend on enrollment conditions were the study outcomes. Children aged 5-19 were studied	The Household survey data from the National Council of Applied Economic Research NCAER was collected from 16 central states in India in 1994. A hurdle model with probit estimation for the decision to enrol and OLS for expenditure conditional on enrolment was used. The Engel curve approach was estimated for comparison.	The results show that the non-enrolment of girls demonstrated gender bias in school, but once the children were enrolled, not much difference was observed in the decision to spend. The hurdle model was the more appropriate method for detecting gender bias at the disaggregated level than the Engel curve.
Mohanty (2006)	India	The focus was on household schooling decisions to study the effect of sibling competition.	The purpose-based data collected in 1999 from rural Andhra Pradesh in India was used. A simple probit method was used.	The results indicated that the gender of a child significantly impacted the decision to enrol a child in school but not once they are enrolled.
Ota & Moffatt (2007)	India	Household The focus was on schooling decisions to study the effect of sibling competition.	Purpose-based data was collected in 1999 from rural Andhra Pradesh in India. Was used. A simple probit method is used.	The results found a significant effect of birth order, gender, and age of children on the probability of attending the school, where girls were less likely to participate in school than boys, and the gap widened with age. Girls were double disadvantaged as they had to compete with their brothers and sisters while boys competed only with their brothers.

Sax et al. (2016)	India	The focus was on household decisions to incur positive expenditure on schooling and educational spending conditional on the decision to spend.	Data from India Human development survey, 2005 was used. Engel curve approach, as well as hurdle model, was estimated.	The results show a significant gender gap at national and state-level analysis, and the gap widens as children age and reaches an intensive margin at the age of 15-19. The hurdle model was confirmed as an appropriate approach to detecting gender bias at the disaggregated level to the Engel curve approach.
Asfaw A. Klasen, S & Lamanna F. (2008)	India	The focus was on hospitalization decisions and the financing options of the household.	52 nd Indian national sample Survey data was used where Probit selection model was used for decision of hospitalization and probit model for the financing option.	The results show substantial gender bias in access to hospital treatment. In contrast, gender does not significantly impact the probability of households using their current income for financing. Still, it affects the use of existing savings significantly, selling assets, or borrowing money to finance the inpatient health expenses of their children.
Stash & Hannum (2001)	Nepal	The focus was on access to schooling and completion of primary education for children aged 10-15.	The NFS data was used in 1991. A logit model for primary school enrolment and the completion was fixed.	The results indicate that there was a significant gender gap in school enrolment as well as in the completion of primary school.
Pokhrel & Sauerborn (2004)	Nepal	The focus was on the household decision on child care, perception of illness, choice of health care service, and health care expenditure.	The Nepal Living Standard Survey (1996) data was used. The quantitative dimension of the qualitative pathway model of health-seeking behaviour was used. The analysis was Descriptive.	The results found that the gender of the child played a significant role in the perception of illness but not in the subsequent care-seeking decision, for example, choice of health care service and spending on health.
Pokhrel (2008)	Nepal	The focus was on illness reporting, choosing external care, and choosing a specific health care provider expenditure on treating a sick child.	Nepal Living Standard Survey of 1996 was used. The quantitative dimension of the qualitative pathway model of health-seeking behaviour was used. The analysis was based on Descriptive analysis.	The results show that the gender of the child plays a significant role in the perception of illness but not in the subsequent care-seeking decision such as choice of health care service and spending on health.
Baluch & Shahid(2009)	Pakistan	The focus was on Primary school enrolment of children aged 5-9 years.	The data from Pakistan Social and Living Standard Measurement Survey (2004-2005) was used. The probit model was used for the study.	The results show a significant gender gap of 11%, and the per capita income of a household was one of the crucial determinants. It also found that rural or urban residence of families widens the gender gap.
Dunga (2015)	Pakistan	The focus was on primary school enrolment and the determination of schooling for the children aged 5-15 years	Pakistan Integrated Household Survey, 2001-2002 was used in the study. A hurdle model was used to estimate a probit model to incur positive educational expenditure.	The results showed a significant pro-male bias in the decision on educational expenditure. Household fixed effect estimations confirmed that the pro-male preference is within household issues.
Aslam & Kingdon (2008)	Pakistan	Focused on the household decision on educational expenditure conditional on enrolment, Children aged 5-19 were studied.	Household decision on educational expenditure conditional on enrolment of children aged 5-19 data was studied.	The results show that evidence from all estimations showed significant pro-male bias in the decision of educational expenditure. Household fixed effect estimations confirmed that the pro-male bias was within household issues.
Himaz & Aturupane (2021)	Srilanka	She was focused on enrolling and school expenditure for children aged 5-19.	Data on household income and expenditure Surveys for 1990-91, 1995-96, 2000-2001. It was used. Engel curve approach and double hurdle model for unpacking the effect of enrolment as well as expenditure decision	The results showed a clear pro-male bias in allocating education expenditure within rural Sri Lanka households. They confirmed that the double hurdle model picked up the gender bias better than the Engel curve approach.
Song & Appleton (2006)	China	The focus was on school enrolment, household spending on education, and returns from education.	The data of the rural household survey, 1995 was used. A logit model was estimated for school enrolment of age groups 7-10 & 15-18. Two-stage least squares were evaluated for the household spending on education.	The results indicated that income significantly impacted the enrolment of girls aged 15-18 and insignificant of younger age group 7-10. The results further showed that girls were less likely to be enrolled at an older age. School expenditure was significantly less for girls aged 16-18 but not for the younger age group.
Gao & Yao (2006)	China	Focused was on treatment decisions and curative expenditure	Data from the Ghana Living Standards Surveys, 1989, was used. Logit model was	The results showed that girls were discriminated against in health care. Curative expenditure for girls was sensitive to parent's

			estimated to study the probability of a child dropping out, attending, and never attending school.	education, family income & wealth as well as village sanitary conditions but not for boys
Tuwor & Sossou (2008)	Ghana	The focus was on school attendance of children aged 6-20.	The data from the Ghana Living Standards Surveys, 1989, was used. Logit model was estimated to study the probability of a child dropping out, attending, and never attending school.	The results showed that female children were 1.5 times more likely to drop out of school, more than twice more likely not to attend school, and half likely to participate in school than males. A mother's education was a significant determinant of a child's school attendance, indicating that having an educated mother increases the probability of school attendance.
Irving & kingdom (2008)	South Africa	The focus was on the decision to report sickness, seek treatment on the condition of enrolment, and incur favourable medical expenses conditional on having sought treatment.	The data was collected by the Ghana Living Standards Surveys, 1989. The Logit model was estimated to study the probability of dropping out, attending, and never attending school.	The results show that women favoured treatment decisions, particularly positive medical expenditure. Pro-female bias was also seen in consultation decisions, with powerful results at 16-40 years old.
Tansel (2002)	Turkey	The focus was on completing primary school-aged 14-19, middle school-aged 16-19, and high school-aged 19-20.	The data of household income and expenditure survey, 1999 was used. An ordered probit model was used.	The results showed that girls' education was more sensitive to changes in income and parental education than boys' at all schooling levels, indicating girls were more deprived than boys. Urbanization is a significant determinant of middle and high school attainment by children.
Adhikari (2013)	Nepal	The focus is on how patriarchal socio-cultural practices influence the girls' participation and drop out of the secondary education system	A qualitative approach and collected data were from both primary and secondary sources.	The study's main findings indicate that the reasons for girls' school dropout are a complex phenomenon resulting from the interplay of structural, cultural, religious, social, and economic factors. The most important constraint was gender inequality, where gender is perceived in religion and the economy.
Adhikari	Nepal	The focus is on how parents allocate their intra-household resources to educate their children in Chitwan district, Nepal	A qualitative approach along with a semi-structured interview was used to collect data.	This research concluded that deep-rooted traditional spiritual thoughts were the key factors influencing childhood education is still a debatable issue in Nepalese societies because parents still discriminate against their children while sending them to school. Finally, people still believe that males are physically, mentally, and politically strong, so parents send their sons to high-quality schools and girls to low-quality schools.

The results indicate a significant effect of birth order, gender, and age of children on the probability of attending the school, where girls were less likely to (join) in school than boys, and the gap widened with age. Girls were double disadvantaged as they had to compete with their brothers and sisters while boys competed only with their brothers (Bengtsson, 2015). The results further show that the reasons for girls' school dropout are a complex phenomenon resulting from the interplay of structural, cultural, religious, social, and economic factors. The most important constraint was gender inequality, where gender is perceived in religion and the economy (Cerrato & Cifre 2018).

Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendation

3.1 Discussion and conclusion

Due to problems such as child labour, early marriage, poverty, ignorance, injustice, racism, and the deprivation of fundamental rights to quality education are the main issues faced by female children (Bengtsson, 2015). Therefore, this author called upon governments to end the gender gap and violence; ensure free, compulsory education for every

child; and support the expansion of education opportunities for girls in the developing world. This author insists on accepting 'all communities and rejects prejudice based on caste, creed, sect, gender, colour, and religion. He further insists on ensuring freedom and equality for female children so they can flourish' because 'we cannot all succeed when half of us is held back (Zawilski 2010). This author further believes that we all have to pick up our books and our pens; they are the most powerful weapons to minimize the gender disparity. This author insists on the philosophy that one child, teacher, book, and pen can change the world, so education is the only solution to all types of disparities. It is an urgent issue to understand women's education as an instrument of global development shares equal space with an understanding of education as a fundamental human right for all men, women, and children (Haywood & An, 2013).

Further, Gillborn (2015) highlighted that critical race theory does not treat gender as an isolated category; instead, the author stays attentive to how gender intersects with class, race, ethnicity, religion, and nationality to create shifting and complex power structures. Most importantly,

the author strongly indicts totalitarianism by making a poignant connection between education, compassion, and socio-political transformation. Obviously, without meaningful education, it is impossible to cultivate empathy for the challenges faced by female children around the world and foster a commitment to democracy, diversity, dialogue, and peaceful resolution of gender disparity in education. Education, then, is the practice of freedom, making us simultaneously human and humanitarian (Jungwirth & Bauschke-Urban, 2019).

Traditional and some contemporary literature on the relationship between female children and education have tended to be instrumentalist in intent, viewing girls' education as a means to larger ends. Thus girls' education has been seen to contribute to the welfare of the mother-child dyad and the family (through reduced maternal mortality, improved child health, and better socialization patterns); to the economic and social development of the family, community, and country through the greater investment of income in the family and community, as well as through human resource development and increased productivity of the labour force for the country and to a reduction in global inequality (through an improvement in the quality of half the world's population (Berenbaum & Liben 2014).

Childhood education in Nepal is still in its background phase. While advancements have been made to provide free education through government schools, this education is widely considered insufficient compared to the education provided in private schools. In comparison to private schools, government schools are less funded and provide a poorer quality of education. Despite this, a large number of girls are enrolled in government schools, while their brothers receive the quality opportunity, or at least better, education in private schools. This disparity can be traced back to a history of gender-based marginalization in Nepalese society (Education Ministry of Nepal 2016-2022).

This study found that sons were sent to private schools in the hope of getting support from the male when their parents got older and physically weak. The results also found that parents were happy to send their sons to private schools for quality education and their daughter to public schools. They believe that sons can manage all household economic activities and are authorized to do all spiritual activities, for example, the activities after the death of their parents (Cerrato & Cifre 2018; Chouari, 2016; Tansel 2002; Sari Knopp Biklen, Pollard & For 1993).

According to Nepalese traditional culture, girls are banned from doing spiritual work as the male population. More significantly, parents send their daughters to the government schools because they still think that girls go to their new homes after their marriage and cannot care for their parents when they get older. This research concluded that deep-rooted traditional spiritual thoughts are the key factors influencing childhood education is still debatable in Nepalese societies because parents still discriminate against their children while sending them to school. Finally, people still believe that males are physically, mentally, and politically strong, so parents send their sons to high-quality schools and girls to low-quality schools (Adhikari 2016).

3.2 Recommendations

It has been explicitly known that there are significant data gaps within the studies on children and discrimination in

Nepal. Some major national surveys have not collected in-depth information on child discrimination based on age, gender, and siblings' composition. There are many weaknesses in improving the ability to monitor the progress of discrimination reduction and the plan of formulating policies and programmes in favour of children. Based on the key findings of this study, I suggest the following recommendations for the stakeholders who work on child education. Future research by the Ministry of Education in the Government of Nepal is expected to maintain the gender disparity in education through the following activities:

- Developing gender-friendly curriculum materials and school environment is expected.
- Fostering gender-sensitive policy and management is expected.
- Improving physical facilities of public schools to strengthen the quality of education.
- Introducing alternative schooling programmes to all girls and other children who cannot attend full-time, formal schools.
- Providing authority to local schools for rescheduling school hours to fit local lifestyles Establishing a system of reward and punishment to reinforce teachers' academic performance encourages a better work ethic in the profession, both private and public schools.
- Providing incentives (scholarships, free textbooks, uniforms, and nutrition) for girls and disadvantaged children.
- Establishing schools at short walking distances for children.
- Improving the quality of teacher training with an increasing supply of female teachers.
- Giving due focus on educational planning, implementation, monitoring, and follow-up.
- Strengthening community mobilization, advocacy, and communication for promoting gender education.
- Removing socio-cultural barriers to girls' enrolment and retention.

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Table 1. Mothers' aspirations for university education (percentage).

Countries	Sons	Daughters	Son-daughters ration
Japan	73.0	27.2	2.6
United Sates	68.9	65.8	1.1
Sweden	31.1	30.8	1.0
Germany	19.6	14.3	1.4
England	48.1	44.1	1.1
Korea	88.3	81.2	1.1
Philippines	87.3	84.5	1.0
Nepal	75.6	53.3	1.41

Adapted from Lyonette, Atfield, Behle & Gambin (2015) and Ministry of Education Nepal (2020)