

**CHALLENGES FACED BY CHILDREN OF MUSAHAR COMMUNITY IN
EDUCATION DUE TO SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF FAMILY IN PARSA DISTRICT**



A Thesis

**Submitted to the MPhil PhD Programme in Sociology,
Central Department of Sociology,
Faculty of Humanities and Social Science, Tribhuvan University,
in the Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of
Master of Philosophy
in
Sociology**

Submitted by:

Rajan Kumar Khadka

Exam Roll No.: 515

TU Regd. No.: 9-2-243-38-2001

March 2025

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation, entitled **“Challenges Faced by Children of Musahar Community in Education due to Social Exclusion of Family in Parsa District, Nepal”**, is my original research work, submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy (MPhil) in Sociology. This dissertation has not been submitted to any academic institution for any other degree or qualification.

This research was conducted under the supervision of Dr. Bindu Pokhrel from the Central Department of Sociology, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal.

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Date: 9-04-2025

Tribhuvan University
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Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
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LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

This is to certify that **Mr. Rajan Kumar Khadka** has conducted his research under my supervision and guidance for his dissertation titled “**Challenges Faced by Children of Musahar Community in Education due to Social Exclusion of Family in Parsa District, Nepal**”. This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Philosophy (MPhil) in Sociology.

To the best of my knowledge, this study is original and provides valuable insights into the subject matter. Therefore, I strongly recommend it for evaluation and approval by the Dissertation Committee.

.....

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APPROVAL LETTER

This dissertation entitled “**Challenges Faced by Children of Musahar Community in Education due to Social Exclusion of Family in Parsa District, Nepal**” prepared and submitted by Rajan Kumar Khadka has been examined and accepted by the Expert Committee of Central Department of Sociology as partial fulfillment of requirement for Master in Philosophy in Sociology.

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Rajan Kumar Khadka

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study explores the challenges faced by children of Musahar community in education due to social exclusion of family in Parsagadhi Municipality-1, Badaruwa, Parsa District, Nepal. The Musahar, one of the most marginalized Dalit groups, face systemic socio-economic barriers, including extreme poverty, landlessness, child labor, and caste-based discrimination, which significantly hinder their children's access to education. Despite various government policies promoting inclusive education, Musahar children continue to experience high dropout rates due to financial hardships, lack of parental literacy, and societal biases. Using a qualitative research approach, the study employs Semi Structure interviews, Key Informant Interview and focus group discussions to examine the relationship between social exclusion and educational disparities. The findings indicate that economic deprivation forces many Musahar children into labor, limiting their participation in schooling. Gender disparities further exacerbate educational exclusion, with girls facing early marriage and domestic responsibilities. The study highlights that exclusion is not merely a financial issue but an institutional challenge rooted in systemic inequalities. Addressing these barriers requires targeted interventions such as need-based scholarships, parental literacy programs, improved school infrastructure, and stricter enforcement of inclusive education policies. The research provides insights for policymakers, educators, and social organizations working toward reducing educational inequalities. By fostering community participation and implementing inclusive strategies, Nepal can bridge the educational gap and enhance social mobility among marginalized communities.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CBS	:	Central Bureau of Statistic (Nepal)
NLSS	:	Nepal Living Standards Survey
SDGs	:	Sustainable Development Goals
MDGs	:	Millennium Development Goals
EFA	:	Education for All
PTA	:	Parent Teacher Association
FGD	:	Focus Group Discussion
KII	:	Key Informant Interviews
EC	:	European Commission
NGO	:	Non-Governmental Organization
NER	:	Net Enrollment Rate
NHRC	:	National Human Rights Commission
SES	:	Socioeconomic Status
FAO	:	Food and Agriculture Organization
NNDSWO	:	Nepal National Dalit Social Welfare Organization
UNDP	:	United Nations Development Programme
GDP	:	Gross Domestic Product
UNESCO	:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
OECD	:	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UNICEF	:	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
B.S.	:	Bikram Sambat

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Social exclusion can be understood as a process where certain individuals or groups are consistently blocked from accessing the rights, services, and resources that others in society typically enjoy such as education, employment, healthcare, housing, and political participation. This form of exclusion extends beyond mere economic hardship, as it also limits one's ability to engage fully in social, cultural, and political life. Factors contributing to exclusion may include caste, ethnicity, gender, disability, or socio-economic background (Silver, 2007).

Importantly, social exclusion goes beyond financial poverty and is viewed as a complex, multidimensional issue. It includes experiences of isolation, systemic discrimination, and the undermining of personal value and social standing. This concept stresses the way certain groups are disconnected from societal institutions, networks, and recognition. Researchers emphasize that exclusion is maintained through institutional norms and societal structures that hinder full inclusion in civic and public life (Levitas et al., 2007).

The reasons behind social exclusion differ across settings but often arise from long-standing inequalities and systemic discrimination. Marginalized populations such as lower caste communities or ethnic minorities often remain excluded due to social hierarchies and limited political voice. These forms of exclusion are perpetuated through both formal policies and everyday practices that maintain unequal power dynamics (Bhalla & Lapeyre, 2004).

Nepal, with a nominal GDP of approximately USD 40.39 billion and a per capita income of USD 1,372 (World Bank, 2023), continues to face significant economic challenges. According to the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) Report 2023, approximately 17.4% of Nepal's population lives in multidimensional poverty, with rural poverty rates remaining substantially higher than urban areas (NPC, 2023). Among Nepalese children, a considerable proportion faces extreme poverty, with two in every five children experiencing severe deprivation of basic needs such as food, sanitation, and access to clean drinking water.

Nepal is a country characterized by vast socio-cultural diversity, which has given rise to issues of inclusion and exclusion. With over 61 ethnic groups and multiple languages spoken across the nation, Nepal presents a rich cultural tapestry. However, despite this diversity, the country continues to struggle with persistent poverty, largely influenced by spatial heterogeneity and structural inequalities (Bennett et al., 2008). Regional imbalances in development and disparities between different social groups contribute significantly to these issues.

One of the most significant factors exacerbating structural inequality in Nepal is the caste system. Despite constitutional provisions against discrimination, caste-based disparities remain deeply ingrained in Hindu-dominated Nepalese society (Gellner, 2007). Lower-caste groups, particularly the Dalits, face continued marginalization in access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. Although legal frameworks, such as the Local-Self Governance Act and the 10th Five-Year Plan, have aimed at enhancing Dalit participation in governance, these efforts often remain superficial and lack substantial impact (Kabeer, 2006).

The national literacy rate stands at 76.3%, as per the 2021 Nepal census, but disparities persist across different socio-economic groups, particularly among marginalized Dalit communities (CBS, 2021). Children from disadvantaged, Dalit, and illiterate families are disproportionately affected by poverty, with economic hardships being three times more severe in rural regions compared to urban centers. Limited access to education, malnutrition, and inadequate healthcare further contribute to poor health outcomes and elevated child mortality rates in these communities (MoEST, 2023).

The exclusion of families from economic, social, and institutional opportunities significantly affects children's access to education. Families facing extreme poverty are often unable to provide the financial resources necessary for school enrollment, uniforms, books, and other essential learning materials. Additionally, children from excluded families are more likely to be engaged in child labor, household responsibilities, or early marriage, further limiting their chances of attending school regularly (UNDP, 2012).

Parental illiteracy further exacerbates this educational disparity. Parents with no formal education may not recognize the long-term benefits of schooling or may be unable to provide academic support to their children. Studies have shown that children of educated parents tend to perform better academically due to greater encouragement, a conducive learning environment at home, and improved social capital (Osunloye, 2008; Hochschild, 2003). On the contrary, children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds often face additional barriers, such as discrimination in schools, lack of motivation, and limited exposure to educational aspirations.

Despite Nepal being a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which mandates free and compulsory primary education (UNCRC, 1989), many children, particularly from marginalized communities like the Musahar, continue to struggle with school retention. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Education for All (EFA) initiative have emphasized the need for inclusive education, particularly for children in difficult circumstances, ethnic minorities, and girls (MoES, 2009). However, challenges such as high dropout rates, poor infrastructure, and teacher shortages persist in rural Nepal, disproportionately affecting children from excluded families (CERID, 1991).

Sociological research consistently demonstrates a strong correlation between a family's socio-economic status (SES) and children's academic performance (Sirin, 2005). Children from high-SES families typically receive greater financial support, access to better schools, and a more stimulating home environment conducive to learning (Graetz, 1995; Eamon, 2005). Conversely, children from lower-SES backgrounds often lack access to these resources, leading to lower academic performance and higher dropout rates.

A study conducted in Nepal's Terai region highlights that parents from wealthier backgrounds and those with some level of education are more likely to send their children to school, whereas economically disadvantaged families struggle to do so (Lockhud & Janison, 1990). Additionally, factors such as early marriage, engagement in labor, and poor health due to malnutrition further contribute to school dropouts among marginalized groups, particularly among Dalit children (CERID, 1991).

The Musahar community is among the most disadvantaged Dalit groups in Nepal and continues to face significant educational and socio-economic hardships. Although literacy rates have improved over the years, they remain critically low. Data from the 2021 National Population and Housing Census indicates that only about 18% of Musahar adults are literate, with an even lower percentage among women. This limited access to education reinforces the cycle of poverty and marginalization across generations (CBS, 2021).

Pandey (2062 B.S.) presents a detailed ethnographic account of the Musahar community, highlighting aspects such as their traditional occupations, demographic features, surnames, and socio-cultural practices. He notes that the Musahars have historically regarded education as a privilege reserved for the upper classes, which has contributed to their marginal involvement in formal schooling. Describing their socio-economic condition, Pandey observes that Musahars typically work as agricultural laborers on others' land or as domestic workers. They often live in poorly constructed huts and remain among the most educationally disadvantaged groups in Nepal (Pandey, 2062 B.S.).

According to the 2021 Nepal Census, the Dalit community constitutes approximately 13.6% of Nepal's total population, among which Musahar is one of the most marginalized and socio-economically disadvantaged groups (CBS, 2021).

Historically, Dalits have been referred to by different terms, including 'untouchables,' 'scheduled castes,' and 'Harijan.' The term 'Dalit,' derived from the Marathi language, means 'broken' and symbolizes oppression. It gained traction in activist movements in India during the 1970s and is increasingly recognized in Nepal, especially since the 1990 democratic movement (Mendelsohn & Vicziany, 1998).

Dalits fall outside the traditional varna classification and consist of various sub-castes that maintain hierarchical relationships among themselves. The etymology of 'Dalit' highlights its evolving meaning, with historical figures such as Jotiba Phule and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar using it to describe the oppressed and marginalized groups in caste-based societies (Koirala, 1996). In Nepal, the term has evolved to encompass individuals facing economic hardship, social discrimination, and political exclusion.

Musahars primarily reside in the Terai region, particularly in districts such as Saptari, Siraha, Dhanusha, Mahottari, and Sunsari. The 2021 Nepal Census reported that Musahars make up approximately 2.2% of the Dalit population in Nepal, with severe economic and social vulnerabilities (CBS, 2021). Their primary occupation remains agricultural labor, particularly working as landless laborers for wealthier landlords. Many are also engaged in daily wage labor, brick kilns, and seasonal migration for employment.

The literacy rate among Musahars is alarmingly low. According to the 2021 Census, the overall literacy rate of Nepal is 76.3%; however, the literacy rate among Musahars is significantly lower at approximately 17.2% (CBS, 2021). The gender disparity is also prominent, with only around 8% of Musahar women being literate, further exacerbating their socio-economic exclusion.

Economic indicators reveal that Dalits, particularly Terai Dalits, experience the highest rates of poverty. According to the 2021 Nepal Census, the poverty incidence among Musahars is estimated at around 50.3%, making them one of the poorest communities in Nepal (CBS, 2021). Landlessness remains a critical issue, with less than 5% of Musahars owning land, forcing them into exploitative labor conditions.

The Musahar community in Nepal continues to face systemic barriers to social and economic advancement. Addressing their marginalization requires targeted policies, including access to quality education, land ownership reforms, and social inclusion initiatives.

Children from Musahar households encounter multiple barriers to education. Factors such as extreme poverty, child labor, early marriage, and a lack of literacy support from parents contribute to high dropout rates, particularly among girls. Research by Human Rights Watch (2023) reveals that a significant number of Musahar children continue to be trapped in exploitative labor sectors like brick kilns and agriculture, further restricting their chances of receiving formal education.

Addressing educational exclusion requires a multi-dimensional approach. Policies should focus on:

Economic Support: Providing scholarships, school feeding programs, and financial aid for disadvantaged families can help alleviate the burden of educational expenses.

Community Engagement: Encouraging parental involvement in children's education through literacy programs, school visits, and awareness campaigns can improve educational outcomes (GES/PTA/SMC Handbook, 2001).

Infrastructure Development: Enhancing school facilities, particularly in rural areas, can create a more inclusive learning environment.

Policy Implementation: Strengthening the enforcement of free and compulsory primary education policies can help ensure that all children, regardless of socio-economic status, have access to schooling.

By addressing these issues, Nepal can make significant progress in reducing the educational gap between marginalized and non-marginalized communities, thereby promoting social inclusion and economic mobility.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The Musahar community is among the most disadvantaged Dalit groups in Nepal and continues to face significant educational and socio-economic hardships. Although literacy rates have improved over the years, they remain critically low. Data from the 2021 National Population and Housing Census indicates that only about 18% of Musahar adults are literate, with an even lower percentage among women. This limited access to education reinforces the cycle of poverty and marginalization across generations (CBS, 2021).

Children from Musahar households encounter multiple barriers to education. Factors such as extreme poverty, child labor, early marriage, and a lack of literacy support from parents contribute to high dropout rates, particularly among girls. Research by Human Rights Watch (2023) reveals that a significant number of Musahar children continue to be trapped in exploitative labor sectors like brick kilns and agriculture, further restricting their chances of receiving formal education.

Major Challenges Leading to Exclusion:

Economic Hardships: Many Musahar families are landless and rely on low-paying, daily wage labor. The financial burden makes it difficult to cover educational expenses, resulting in high school dropout rates (Bishwakarma, 2022).

Caste-Based Discrimination: Social biases and discrimination against Musahar students in schools discourage them from continuing their education, ultimately limiting their academic progress (INSEC, 2023).

Gender Inequality: Young Musahar girls are more vulnerable to early marriage, heavy domestic responsibilities, and overall societal neglect, making it difficult for them to complete even basic schooling (UNESCO, 2022).

Insufficient Government Assistance: Despite existing affirmative action policies, the implementation of programs specifically designed to uplift the Musahar community remains weak. As a result, there are limited opportunities for education and employment (Gurung, 2021).

According to Das and Hatlebakk (2009), there is a strong link between social and economic exclusion in Nepal, with traditional caste hierarchies continuing to shape economic disparities. These inequalities significantly influence socioeconomic status and poverty, directly affecting the quality of life and children's educational opportunities within families.

Research has consistently shown that students' cognitive skills vary significantly based on their home environment and parental cognitive traits. Several studies highlight the crucial role of socioeconomic status and home conditions in shaping children's academic achievements (Crane, 1996; Hochschild, 2003). The family environment serves as the primary socialization factor, influencing a child's interest in education and future aspirations.

It is widely recognized that in developing countries, social exclusion and low socioeconomic status places families under constant stress. Children growing up in financially disadvantaged households face a higher risk of academic struggles, social challenges, and poor health, all of which can negatively impact cognitive development and educational success.

1.3 Research Questions

This study seeks to explore the challenges faced by children of Musahar community in education due to social exclusion of family in Parsagadhi Municipality-1, Badaruwa, Parsa District. The research aims to assess the relationship between social exclusion and educational challenges faced by children, focusing on the socio-economic and structural barriers that contribute to their limited access to education.

To achieve these objectives, the study will address the following research questions:

1. What are the experiences of social exclusion among families in the Musahar community, and how does this exclusion shape the educational circumstances of their children?
2. What are the key challenges faced by children in accessing and continuing their education due to the social exclusion of their families in the Musahar community?

1.4 Research Objectives

General Objective

The General objective of this study is to examine the challenges faced by children in their education due to social exclusion of family in the Musahar community, with a focus on Parsagadi Municipality-1, Badaruwa, Parsa District, Nepal.

Specific Objectives:

1. To analyze the extent and nature of family-based social exclusion in the Musahar community and its effects on children's educational opportunities.
2. To identify the key challenges that children face in accessing and continuing their education as a result of their families' social exclusion

1.5 Significance of the Study

A socially inclusive society ensures that every individual has the opportunity to thrive and experience a fulfilling life. Inclusion plays a crucial role in fostering the holistic development of communities, improving individual physical and mental well-being,

enhancing workplace productivity, and increasing employment opportunities. Social participation allows individuals to maintain dignity, security, and access to a better quality of life. Therefore, addressing social isolation and ensuring that individuals feel valued and connected to society is essential for their overall well-being.

Social connections and supportive relationships significantly influence health and emotional resilience, serving as key factors in recovery from trauma. Moreover, economic participation is closely linked to social inclusion, as access to employment, education, and vocational training is critical in preventing severe poverty. Without these opportunities, individuals and families remain trapped in cycles of deprivation, limiting their chances for upward social mobility. Conversely, social inclusion benefits not only individuals but also the broader community and economy by fostering greater stability and development.

Achieving social inclusion is a significant step toward promoting inclusive education, which ensures equal learning opportunities for all students, especially those who face exclusion or marginalization due to social, economic, or cultural factors. Inclusive education emphasizes full participation, accessibility, and academic success for all learners, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities.

The social exclusion of families can have a profound impact on children's educational opportunities and academic success. Families experiencing economic hardship, discrimination, or social marginalization often struggle to provide adequate resources for their children's education. Limited access to quality schools, educational materials, and extracurricular activities can hinder children's academic progress. Additionally, socially excluded families may face barriers in accessing healthcare, nutritious food, and stable housing, all of which are crucial for children's cognitive and emotional development.

Research suggests that children from marginalized backgrounds are more likely to experience lower educational attainment, higher dropout rates, and limited career prospects (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; UNESCO, 2020). Parental education levels, employment status, and social networks also play a significant role in shaping

children's academic experiences. For example, children from families who experience social isolation may lack role models, academic support, and encouragement to pursue higher education (Bourdieu, 1986).

In addition, educational exclusion is often intergenerational, meaning that children from excluded families may face persistent disadvantages that carry over into adulthood. To address this issue, policy interventions must focus on improving access to quality education, financial support for low-income families, and community programs that promote social inclusion (Sen, 1999).

The Musahar community is considered one of the most marginalized and disadvantaged groups within the caste hierarchy in the Terai region of Nepal. They face severe socio-economic exclusion, being landless and economically deprived, socially marginalized due to low literacy rates and limited societal status, and underrepresented in political and institutional decision-making processes. These factors contribute to their gradual detachment from the mainstream development of the nation.

The primary objective of this study is to assess and analyze the social exclusion of families within the Musahar community and its impact on children's education. By exploring the connection between social exclusion at the family level and children's educational opportunities, this research aims to identify strategies that educational institutions and other relevant stakeholders can adopt to address the challenges faced by Musahar children in Parsasadhi Municipality-1, Badaruwa, located in Parsa District, Nepal.

The findings of this study will provide valuable insights for both governmental and non-governmental organizations at national and local levels in understanding how family-based exclusion affects children's education, particularly among Dalit children in rural Nepal. Moreover, this research will contribute to bridging the knowledge gap regarding the influence of social exclusion on educational access and performance in marginalized communities.

Several Significant Contributions of this Study Include:

- Addressing gaps in knowledge concerning the impact of social exclusion and family characteristics on children's education.
- Providing critical information for child development programs and policy

initiatives aimed at improving education in socially excluded communities.

- Offering insights that can guide further studies on the Musahar community and other marginalized groups in Nepal.

1.6 Organization of the Study

The thesis is organized into six separated chapters. The first chapter constituted the introduction including the in-depth description of the background to the study, statement of the problem, research questions, objectives of research, I have explained significance of study in present context and then limitation of the study.

The second chapter constituted a literature review of related literature on the theoretical framework of the study and some special gaps in the literature reviewed. Relevant researches, national and international studies, research papers and articles have been reviewed in order to enrich this research with ample ideas. It also constituted brief sketch on key terms like Social exclusion, poverty, children Education, education performance, Child Rights, and Dalit and Musahar community are included in it.

Chapter Three is about methodology for the study. It explains each of the procedures undertaken to conduct the research. This comprised the Field work site, sampling procedure, research design and instrument, data collection procedure and its analysis method. Chapter Four presents the Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the respondents. It explores demographic, social, economic, and educational aspects, offering insights into the lived experiences of participants. Chapter Five includes the Key challenges faced by children in their education due to the social exclusion of family. And finally, the sixth chapter discussed summary and conclusion of my thesis. And lastly, included references and Appendix.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review plays a crucial role in any research study by providing insights into the existing body of knowledge on a given topic. The primary objective of a literature review is to develop an in-depth understanding of the subject matter and its various dimensions.

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Understanding of Social Exclusion

The concept of social exclusion encompasses a broad spectrum of issues related not only to poverty and deprivation but also to various social, cultural, and political disadvantages.

It is generally described as a continuous and multidimensional process in which individuals or groups experience a breakdown of the 'social bond' a term that refers to the relationships, institutions, and shared identities that foster social cohesion, integration, and solidarity. According to Silver (2007), the breakdown of this bond can manifest in various ways, including marginalization, discrimination, segregation, abandonment, and dependence on external assistance.

Social exclusion restricts individuals from fully participating in the customary activities of society, preventing access to essential resources such as information, recognition, social networks, and opportunities for self-improvement. This, in turn, diminishes self-esteem and limits personal development (Silver, 2007).

The term social exclusion is believed to have originated in Europe, particularly in France in the early 1970s, where it was initially used to describe the marginalization of certain social groups such as people with disabilities, the elderly, abused children, and single parents who were not covered by employment-based social security programs. Over time, the term evolved to address broader societal issues, particularly in response to economic crises and the weakening of social bonds including family structures, community networks, and labor organizations. Additionally, it began to

encompass the exclusion of immigrants, especially Muslims, from social and economic integration (Silver, 1994). The French perspective linked social exclusion to the failure of the state to uphold social solidarity, prompting policies aimed at reintegrating marginalized individuals into society (Silver, 1995; de Haan, 1999).

By 1989, the European Commission had formally recognized social exclusion as a critical issue, adopting measures to counteract it and promote social integration. The concept soon became dominant in European development and social policy discourse, sometimes even replacing poverty as a primary focus (Silver, 1995). Encouraged by international organizations, the term spread to other parts of the world, including Asia, Latin America, and Africa, where it was often used interchangeably with concepts like poverty and relative deprivation. Some scholars (Sen, 2000; de Haan, 1999) argued that social exclusion offered a more comprehensive analytical framework than poverty, while others, such as Saith (2001), contended that applying the concept to developing countries often resulted in mere rebranding of existing poverty studies.

While most definitions emphasize exclusion from full participation in society, some highlight other aspects, such as the role of citizenship and social rights. The framework of social exclusion allows for a contextualized analysis that can inform policies tailored to specific local circumstances (de Haan, 1999).

Social exclusion refers to a condition where individuals are unable to engage in economic, social, political, and cultural activities at a level deemed socially acceptable. Rather than focusing solely on the state of exclusion, the concept emphasizes the underlying processes that contribute to it. Key contributing factors include (Levitas et al., 2007):

- Insufficient material resources necessary for daily living.
- Inadequate income to afford basic needs or a lack of state support for their provision.
- Limited access to formal employment opportunities.
- Barriers to affordable and suitable housing.
- Restricted access to education and healthcare services.
- Experiences of discrimination.
- Limited opportunities for social engagement and network-building.
- Lack of influence or voice in policymaking that affects these fundamental conditions

Social exclusion has emerged as a significant topic in current social policy discussions. Although the term's precise definition remains a subject of debate (Evans, Paugham, & Prelis, 1995; Atkinson, 1998a; Klasen, 1998), some of the most insightful explanations highlight that social exclusion involves the inability to fully engage in economic, social, and cultural aspects of life. Additionally, it can lead to alienation and detachment from mainstream society (Duffy, 1995).

Unlike poverty and unemployment, which primarily examine individuals or households, social exclusion focuses on the relationship between individuals and society and how that connection evolves over time. In many ways, discussions on social exclusion parallel conversations about the barriers faced by individuals with disabilities. Just as physical or mental impairments can create significant obstacles to participation in society requiring state intervention to mitigate these challenges the same logic applies to socially excluded groups. Social exclusion stems from societal barriers that restrict participation, and like those with disabilities, affected individuals should receive state support to overcome these challenges (Klasen, 1998).

Social exclusion is fundamentally relational and is reflected in recurring patterns where certain individuals or groups are systematically denied access to goods, services, and opportunities (Gore & Figueiredo, 1997). Exclusion can take multiple forms, including intentional discrimination, structural barriers, or unconscious bias (Beall & Piron, 2005). It is also deeply tied to power dynamics, as those in positions of authority can reinforce exclusion through policies, discrimination, or social norms (Lukes, 2005). De Haan (1998) argues that social exclusion is inherently contested, as it involves deliberate acts of exclusion by dominant groups.

While the definition of social exclusion varies, scholars agree that it extends beyond poverty and unemployment to include broader societal participation. Some definitions highlight that exclusion represents an "inability to participate effectively in economic, social, and cultural life," which can lead to alienation from mainstream society (Duffy, 1995). This perspective underscores the interaction between individuals and society rather than merely economic deprivation.

In many ways, social exclusion shares similarities with discussions surrounding disability. Just as physical or mental impairments can create barriers to social

engagement, systemic constraints prevent marginalized groups from integrating into society. Consequently, addressing social exclusion requires proactive policy measures to remove these obstacles and promote inclusion (Klasen, 1998).

2.1.2 Poverty of Family and Child Education

Poverty remains a significant barrier to children's education and overall development in Nepal. According to the Nepal Living Standards Survey (NLSS) 2019/20, 17.4% of the population lives below the national poverty line, showing a decline from 25.2% in 2011 (CBS, 2020). However, disparities persist, as rural poverty rates are considerably higher than urban areas, impacting children's access to education and other essential services.

Children from low-income families often face difficulties in educational attainment due to limited access to quality schooling, inadequate learning resources, and economic constraints that force them into labor. The Net Enrollment Rate (NER) for primary education in Nepal was 94.6% in 2021, but this rate declines significantly in secondary education due to financial barriers and household responsibilities (CBS, 2021). Additionally, the dropout rate remains high, particularly among children from poor households and marginalized communities.

Research has shown that economic hardships negatively affect cognitive development and learning outcomes. Children from impoverished backgrounds are more likely to experience malnutrition, leading to developmental delays that hinder academic performance. Studies indicate that maternal poverty can result in low birth weight, which is linked to long-term health complications, further affecting a child's ability to succeed in school (Bradley et al., 2001).

Parental involvement plays a crucial role in shaping a child's educational success. However, parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds often struggle to engage in school activities due to inflexible work schedules and financial pressures (Hill & Taylor, 2004). This lack of involvement affects children's motivation and school performance, increasing the likelihood of grade repetition and dropout. In contrast, children from wealthier families benefit from greater access to educational materials, extracurricular activities, and supportive learning environments at home.

Gender disparities also persist in educational attainment, with girls from impoverished households being more vulnerable to school discontinuation. Factors such as early marriage, household responsibilities, and cultural norms contribute to lower secondary school completion rates among girls in Nepal (CBS, 2021). Despite government initiatives like scholarship programs and free education policies, economic hardship remains a primary obstacle to educational equity.

2.1.3 Social Exclusion of Family and Educational Performance of Children

Social exclusion remains a significant challenge in Nepal, particularly affecting low-income families and children's education. Socioeconomic status (SES) is a critical factor in determining a child's educational success, encompassing aspects such as parental education, employment, and income levels. Children from economically disadvantaged families often face systemic barriers, including limited access to quality education, fewer learning resources, and social stigmatization, which ultimately influence their academic performance (Central Bureau of Statistics [CBS], 2020).

Nepal's 2019/20 Living Standards Survey revealed that 17.4% of Nepal's population lives below the national poverty line, with rural areas experiencing significantly higher poverty rates than urban centers (CBS, 2020). This economic disparity directly impacts educational outcomes. According to the Nepal Census 2021, the literacy rate among individuals aged 5 and above is 76.3%, reflecting progress in education, yet gaps remain across different social and economic groups (CBS, 2021).

Children from low-income households face multiple disadvantages, including:

- Lower literacy and numeracy skills due to inadequate early childhood education.
- Higher school dropout rates, particularly in rural areas, where financial constraints force children into labor.
- Limited access to higher education, with lower enrollment rates in secondary and tertiary institutions.
- Increased behavioural challenges, including disengagement from school activities due to economic stress at home.
- Restricted participation in science and technology fields, limiting future career opportunities.

The interplay between social and economic exclusion is evident in Nepal's educational system. Studies suggest that parental education plays a more significant role in a child's academic success than household income alone (Williams et al., 1993). Families where parents have received formal education tend to foster an environment that supports learning, whereas children from uneducated households often struggle with school readiness and cognitive development.

Additionally, children from marginalized ethnic groups and lower caste backgrounds face discrimination in education, further perpetuating the cycle of poverty and exclusion. According to the 2021 Census, Dalit and indigenous communities have lower school completion rates compared to other social groups, highlighting the ongoing disparities in educational attainment (CBS, 2021).

Parental engagement is crucial in shaping children's academic success. However, many low-income parents work multiple jobs or face job insecurity, limiting their ability to support their children's education. Research shows that parents from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to participate in school activities, positively influencing their children's performance and motivation (Hill & Taylor, 2004). In contrast, children from economically disadvantaged families often receive less academic support, contributing to lower achievement levels and reduced aspirations for higher education.

2.1.4 Children and Children Rights

Child rights refer to the specific legal and social protections designed to safeguard children from infancy to adolescence. According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), child rights ensure children's survival, development, protection, and participation in society (UNCRC, 1992). The responsibility of upholding these rights is shared by parents, guardians, and the state.

There is a lack of uniformity in defining the age of a child across different legal frameworks. The UNCRC defines a child as any individual under 18 years of age, while Nepal's Child Rights Act (1992) sets the age limit at 16 years. However, as a signatory to the UNCRC, Nepal is gradually aligning its policies with the international standard (NHRC, 2008).

According to the 2021 National Census of Nepal, children make up a substantial portion of the country's total population. The census categorizes children into different age groups as follows:

- 0–4 years: 8.5% of the total population
- 5–9 years: 9.3% of the total population
- 10–14 years: 9.6% of the total population
- Below 18 years (total): 40.1% of the total population

These figures indicate that nearly two-fifths of Nepal's population consists of individuals under the age of 18, highlighting the importance of child-focused policies, education, healthcare, and welfare programs (NSO, 2022).

Categories of Child Rights under the UNCRC:

- **Survival Rights:** Ensuring basic necessities such as nutrition, shelter, healthcare, and a safe living environment.
- **Development Rights:** Access to education, play, cultural activities, and personal freedoms, fostering intellectual and social growth.
- **Protection Rights:** Safeguarding children from violence, abuse, exploitation, child labor, and mistreatment in the justice system.
- **Participation Rights:** Encouraging children to express their views, participate in decision-making, and engage in social and cultural activities in preparation for adulthood.

The UNCRC emphasizes that childhood is a phase marked by dependency, where children require protection, guidance, and support to develop fully. Regardless of gender, socioeconomic status, or background, children deserve equal opportunities to education, play, and a safe environment to grow into responsible adults (UNCRC, 1989).

2.2 Social Exclusion and Inclusion in the Context of Nepal

Nepal, a predominantly Hindu society, experiences various forms of social exclusion political, economic, and socio-cultural. Four major groups facing exclusion in Nepal are the Dalits, Madheshi/Terai people, Indigenous communities, and Women. Historically, the Hindu caste system classified people into four hierarchical groups:

Brahmins (scholars and priests) at the top, followed by Chhetris (warriors), Vaishyas (merchants and traders), and Sudras (laborers and peasants) (Dumont, 1998). The 1854 Muluki Ain (Civil Code) further institutionalized caste hierarchies and integrated indigenous non-Hindu groups (Adivasi Janajatis) into the system at a middle rank (Hofer, 2004). Although caste-based discrimination was legally abolished in 1963, its effects persist in various forms.

One of the most significant factors exacerbating structural inequality in Nepal is the caste system. Despite constitutional provisions against discrimination, caste-based disparities remain deeply ingrained in Hindu-dominated Nepalese society (Gellner, 2007). Lower-caste groups, particularly the Dalits, face continued marginalization in access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. Although legal frameworks, such as the Local-Self Governance Act and the 10th Five-Year Plan, have aimed at enhancing Dalit participation in governance, these efforts often remain superficial and lack substantial impact (Kabeer, 2006).

Women in Nepal also experience systemic social exclusion, often linked to discrimination, violence, and socio-economic disparities. Their marginalization extends beyond hierarchical structures and is deeply rooted in societal norms that restrict their participation in political, economic, and social spheres (Tuladhar, 2069 B.S.).

The Dalit community experiences exclusion not only from public services but also from legal protections and economic resources. While some affirmative policies exist, their implementation has been limited. Activists and organizations advocating for Dalit rights continue to highlight critical issues such as untouchability, discrimination, social prejudices, and lack of political representation (World Bank, 2006).

Similarly, the Madhesi community in Nepal has long faced socio-political marginalization. Despite their historical presence in the country, Madhesis are often perceived as outsiders and struggle with exclusion from political participation, administration, governance, and decision-making processes (Jha, 2014). One of the most pressing issues they face is related to citizenship rights, which significantly impacts their socio-economic status and access to opportunities.

The Madhesi community, residing in the Terai region, has long faced social, political, and economic exclusion. Despite their deep-rooted presence in Nepal, they are often regarded as outsiders, leading to challenges in gaining citizenship, political representation, and recognition of their language and identity. This marginalization has contributed to a growing sense of alienation among Madhesis and has negatively impacted Nepal's economic development. Gaige (1976), in his book *Regionalism and National Unity in Nepal*, highlighted the economic significance of the Terai region, noting its exclusion from mainstream socio-economic, political, and administrative frameworks. Government policies and programs have historically favored the Pahadi (hill) communities, leaving a large Madhesi population marginalized (Ghimire, 2013).

Modern infrastructure and essential services remain largely inaccessible to Madhesi communities. Nearly 40 percent of the Madhesi population comprises Dalits and indigenous Janajati groups, who are already disadvantaged in terms of social and economic indicators (Guneratne, 2002). Additionally, the Muslim population residing in rural Nepal faces extreme poverty and low literacy rates. Limited efforts have been made to address these challenges, and urgent action is needed to integrate marginalized groups into Nepal's political and economic framework (Kumar, 2012).

Addressing social exclusion requires an inclusive approach that ensures equal access to resources, governance, and policy-making opportunities. Providing citizenship rights to landless Madhesi people and maximizing their representation in political and administrative bodies are crucial steps towards achieving social justice and economic development in Nepal.

2.3 Social Exclusion and Children

Social exclusion occurs when specific groups within society face systemic disadvantages due to social, economic, cultural, or political factors. In Nepal, this exclusion significantly impacts children's ability to receive quality education, particularly affecting marginalized groups such as Dalits, ethnic minorities, girls, children with disabilities, and those living in remote areas.

To determine whether a child is experiencing social exclusion, one must examine the circumstances that limit their participation in and recognition by society. Sen's capabilities approach offers a useful framework for defining social exclusion as the

inability to engage in social life and gain acknowledgment from others. A more comprehensive definition would also emphasize the conditions under which participation and recognition occur, ensuring that they are based on equality and equal opportunity. This perspective aligns with the principles of citizenship and human dignity, which are fundamental for fostering inclusive social interactions.

The lack of participation and societal recognition is not just a theoretical concern; empirical data show that it is a widely recognized issue. According to Eurobarometer survey findings, Golding (1995) reported that 65% of European Union (EU) citizens consider “feeling recognized by society” as an essential aspect of life. Other indicators of social engagement also rank high, underscoring the significance of inclusion as a key capability that should be accessible to all. Berghman (1995) further refines this concept by identifying four dimensions of integration:

- Civic integration – participation in legal and democratic systems, including children's legal rights and protections, especially for marginalized groups.
- Economic integration – access to employment and financial stability.
- Social integration – inclusion in public welfare systems and safety nets.
- Family and community integration – building social networks and fostering “social capital”.

Children’s social exclusion is closely linked to family and household economic conditions. Extensive research on intergenerational poverty highlights that economic and social disadvantages are often passed down from parents to children (Wilson, 1987; Hills, 1998; Machin, 1998; Mincy, 1994). Scholars such as Atkinson (1998a, b) and Walker (1997) argue that recent economic changes such as shifts in the labor market for low-skilled workers, privatization of essential services, and evolving retail and housing markets have reinforced the connection between poverty and social exclusion. These factors have created additional barriers, increasing both the challenges and costs for impoverished individuals to meet their basic needs and integrate into society.

2.4 Global Commitments to Education

Over the past two decades, global efforts to ensure that all children have access to and complete primary education have been consistently reaffirmed. The Education for All (EFA) initiative was formally introduced in 1990 in Jomtien, Thailand, with support

from the international community. This commitment was further reinforced at the Dakar Conference in Senegal and incorporated into the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) established in 2000.

Under the MDGs, governments pledged to provide free, quality, and compulsory primary education for all children by 2015. Goal 2 of the MDGs, focused on achieving universal primary education, included Target 3: "Ensure that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling" (United Nations, 2008, p. 12). This target emphasized not only school enrollment but also the importance of completion. Social exclusion was explicitly addressed in MDG Goal 3, which aimed to promote gender equality and empower women. Specifically, Target 4 sought to "eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and at all levels of education no later than 2015" (United Nations, 2008, p. 16).

Similarly, one of the key objectives of the EFA Dakar Framework was to ensure that by 2015, all children, particularly those from marginalized communities such as girls, children facing difficult circumstances, and ethnic minorities had access to and completed free, high-quality primary education (UNESCO, 2008, p. 56). The EFA goals align with the MDGs but provide a more comprehensive framework, emphasizing the inclusion of socially disadvantaged groups.

2.5 Education and Its Importance

Education is a fundamental right that benefits individuals of all ages, including children, youth, and adults. It is designed to fulfill essential learning needs, which include both foundational learning tools such as literacy, verbal communication, numeracy, and problem-solving and fundamental content, such as knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes. These elements are crucial for individuals to survive, reach their full potential, live and work with dignity, actively contribute to societal development, enhance their quality of life, make informed decisions, and continue learning throughout their lives. The specific scope of these learning needs and the means of fulfilling them may differ across nations and cultures and are subject to change over time (UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, & World Bank, 1990).

As reported by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2012), education significantly impacts economic productivity, leading to higher wages and improved employment prospects. Research consistently demonstrates that individuals with higher educational attainment are more likely to secure employment and earn higher incomes.

Lucas (1998) asserts that a nation's standard of living is closely linked to how effectively it cultivates, manages, and utilizes its knowledge and skills while ensuring access to quality education. He further argues that education enhances the overall intellectual abilities and efficiency of a nation's workforce, enabling countries to remain competitive in an increasingly dynamic and technologically advanced world.

Education is a lifelong process that fosters intellectual growth and promotes positive changes in individuals' lives. It is a crucial tool for eradicating poverty and facilitating economic development. By establishing a strong foundation for both social and economic well-being, education is indispensable for achieving sustainable progress. According to Omoniyi (2013), education enhances labor productivity and economic value, which in turn contributes to poverty reduction.

Furthermore, research by Helliwell and Putnam (1999) highlights the strong relationship between education and social capital, including trust and civic engagement. Similarly, Psacharopoulos and Woodhall (1993) found that education directly influences national income growth by improving workforce skills and productivity.

Education is widely recognized as a pivotal factor in poverty alleviation and economic advancement. According to Jaiyeoba (2009), education functions as both a private and public good, offering substantial individual and societal benefits. Abdulahi (2008) further emphasizes that investing in education yields significant long-term rewards and externalities, making it an essential prerequisite for improving the living standards in developing nations.

2.6 Sociology of Education

The sociology of education examines the relationship between education and society, focusing on how social institutions, cultural norms, and individual experiences shape educational systems and outcomes. It analyzes how social structures, such as class,

gender, and ethnicity, influence access to education and academic achievement (Ballantine & Hammack, 2012).

Ottaway (1962) describes the sociology of education as a branch of social science that applies scientific methods to study educational institutions, aims, curricula, administration, and policies in relation to economic, political, religious, and social forces. It highlights the role of social life and relationships in shaping individual personality development and educational experiences. Rather than focusing on pedagogical practices, the sociology of education critically examines the societal patterns and structures that affect educational outcomes.

Brookover and Gottlieb (1964) argue that education consists of various social interactions, and sociology provides a framework for analyzing these human interactions. The educational process occurs both formally, within institutions, and informally, in everyday social environments. Studying these interactions helps in developing generalizations about human relationships within educational settings.

Furthermore, the sociology of education explores the function of public education systems in modern industrial societies, particularly in higher, adult, and continuing education. Scholars like Durkheim (1922) asserts that education reinforces societal cohesion by instilling shared norms and values, while Bourdieu (1973) suggests that education perpetuates social stratification through cultural capital. Conflict theorists, such as Bowles and Gintis (1976), argue that education serves to maintain economic and social inequalities by reproducing class divisions.

By understanding these sociological perspectives, policymakers and educators can work towards reducing educational disparities and creating more equitable learning

2.7 Musahar as a Dalit Caste in Nepal

Dalits in Nepal experience significant social inequality in various aspects of daily life, including social interactions, religious practices, and access to food and water. Despite Nepal's ethnic, linguistic, religious, cultural, and geographical diversity, social stratification remains a key challenge. The caste system, intertwined with economic class, has structured Nepalese society into hierarchical divisions (Bista, 1991). Official narratives often portray caste diversity as a harmonious coexistence of four

varnas and thirty-six jaats; however, caste remains a major determinant of social stratification (FAO, 2004).

According to the 2001 Census, Nepal is home to 102 distinct cultural groups and 92 languages, yet many of these cultural identities continue to face marginalization. The Dalit community is one of the most deprived groups in Nepal, with Musahar being among the most vulnerable and marginalized Dalit castes in the Terai region. Historically, Dalits have been referred to by different terms, including ‘untouchables,’ ‘scheduled castes,’ and ‘Harijan.’ The term ‘Dalit,’ derived from the Marathi language, means ‘broken’ and symbolizes oppression. It gained traction in activist movements in India during the 1970s and is increasingly recognized in Nepal, especially since the 1990 democratic movement (Mendelsohn & Vicziany, 1998, p. 4).

Dalits fall outside the traditional varna classification and consist of various sub-castes that maintain hierarchical relationships among themselves. The etymology of ‘Dalit’ highlights its evolving meaning, with historical figures such as Jotiba Phule and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar using it to describe the oppressed and marginalized groups in caste-based societies (Koirala, 1996). In Nepal, the term has evolved to encompass individuals facing economic hardship, social discrimination, and political exclusion.

The major Dalit caste in Nepal vary by region. Hill Dalit groups include Kami, Damai, Sarki, Badi, and Gaine, while Terai Dalit groups comprise Dom, Halkhor, Dusadh, Chamar, Tatma, Khatwe, Musahar, and Bantar, among others. The National Dalit Commission has classified 22 major Dalit castes, five of which are from the hills and 17 from the Terai (National Dalit Commission, 2063 B.S.).

Musahars are believed to have migrated from the Chhotanagpur plateau in Bihar and have resided in Nepal for multiple generations. Their cultural practices bear similarities to the Munda tribe of Chhotanagpur. However, some Musahars argue that they are an indigenous group that has lived in Nepal for centuries (NNDSWO, 2006). A legend from the Ramayana connects Musahars to the low-caste devotee Sabari, who gained prominence for her devotion to Lord Ram (Moktan, 1997).

The notion of untouchability was not emphasized in the early Vedic period. Swami Vivekananda criticized untouchability as a ‘mental disease’ that needed to be

eradicated. Landlessness remains a significant issue among Dalits, particularly in South and Southeast Asia, where agriculture is the dominant economic sector. Studies indicate that limited access to land is a primary factor contributing to poverty and economic disparity in Nepal (Acharya, 1997).

Nepal's multicultural and multilingual landscape has led scholars to describe it as an 'ethnic turntable' in Asia (Gautam & Thapa, 1994). The country's diverse racial, religious, and social systems are shaped by geography and history (Dahal & Chhetri, 2051). The Musahar community, characterized by high levels of illiteracy and economic hardship, primarily works as landless laborers, often on the lands of wealthier landlords (Shrestha & Singh, 1984; Upadhyaya, 2041).

Musahar settlements typically consist of simple, low-height huts made from bamboo, straw, mud, and thatch. Indian scholar Rabindranath Mukherjee categorized Musahars into two groups: nomadic hunters and those who have transitioned to a more settled lifestyle. Traditionally, they follow their tribal faith while also incorporating elements of Hindu religious practices.

Economic indicators reveal that Dalits, particularly Terai Dalits, experience the highest rates of poverty. According to the Nepal Living Standard Survey (2003/04), the poverty incidence among Terai Dalits was 49.2%, compared to 44.9% for Hill Dalits. Landlessness among Madhesi Dalits is alarmingly high, with only a small percentage owning land (Sharma, as cited in Pokharel, 1997).

Several ethnographic studies highlight the economic and social challenges faced by the Musahar community. For example, a study by NNDSWO (2006) found that Musahars have the lowest adult literacy rate (6.9%) among all groups in Nepal. Additionally, a study by Manish Pokharel (1998) in Nawalparasi District revealed significant gender disparities in education, with a cultural preference for educating boys over girls.

Madhusudhan Pandeya's book 'Nepalka Dalitharu' (2062 B.S.) provides an overview of Musahar ethnography, including their occupation, population, surnames, traditions, and culture. The book notes that Musahars traditionally view education as a pursuit of the elite, which has contributed to their low participation in formal schooling. Musahars are agricultural laborer working in others land and also working as house servant living in small huts and very backward in education (Upadhyaya, 2041).

According to the 2021 Nepal Census, the Dalit community constitutes approximately 13.6% of Nepal's total population, among which Musahar is one of the most marginalized and socio-economically disadvantaged groups (CBS, 2021).

Historically, Dalits have been referred to by different terms, including 'untouchables,' 'scheduled castes,' and 'Harijan.' The term 'Dalit,' derived from the Marathi language, means 'broken' and symbolizes oppression. It gained traction in activist movements in India during the 1970s and is increasingly recognized in Nepal, especially since the 1990 democratic movement (Mendelsohn & Vicziany, 1998).

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Musahars primarily reside in the Terai region, particularly in districts such as Saptari, Siraha, Dhanusha, Mahottari, and Sunsari. The 2021 Nepal Census reported that Musahars make up approximately 2.2% of the Dalit population in Nepal, with severe economic and social vulnerabilities (CBS, 2021). Their primary occupation remains agricultural labor, particularly working as landless laborers for wealthier landlords. Many are also engaged in daily wage labor, brick kilns, and seasonal migration for employment.

The literacy rate among Musahars is alarmingly low. According to the 2021 Census, the overall literacy rate of Nepal is 76.3%; however, the literacy rate among Musahars is significantly lower at approximately 17.2% (CBS, 2021). The gender disparity is also prominent, with only around 8% of Musahar women being literate, further exacerbating their socio-economic exclusion.

Economic indicators reveal that Dalits, particularly Terai Dalits, experience the highest rates of poverty. According to the 2021 Nepal Census, the poverty incidence among Musahars is estimated at around 50.3%, making them one of the poorest communities in Nepal (CBS, 2021). Landlessness remains a critical issue, with less than 5% of Musahars owning land, forcing them into exploitative labor conditions.

The Musahar community in Nepal continues to face systemic barriers to social and economic advancement. Addressing their marginalization requires targeted policies, including access to quality education, land ownership reforms, and social inclusion initiatives. Government programs and non-governmental efforts should focus on breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty among Musahars to ensure equitable development.

2.7.1 Educational Situation of Dalit Children in Nepal

Madhusudhan (2007) highlights that parental encouragement and government incentives, such as scholarships, have positively influenced Dalit children's school enrollment. However, despite these efforts, a significant number of Dalit children of school-going age remain out of school (Madhusudhan, 2007). Various government and non-government initiatives, including scholarships and reservation policies, have played a crucial role in increasing Dalit student enrollment. Yet, numerous challenges persist, particularly for Terai Dalits. Barriers such as limited access to educational resources, household labor responsibilities, economic hardship, and parental illiteracy continue to hinder their educational progress.

"The Muluki Ain" of Nepal historically classified lower-caste individuals as "untouchables," a group now recognized as Dalits. This term is used both legally and academically to identify marginalized caste groups who have historically faced social exclusion and limited access to national opportunities due to systemic discrimination by the so-called upper castes.

In 1991, the literacy rate among Dalits in Nepal was recorded at 17%, which saw an increase to 33.8% by the 2001 census. Despite this improvement, Dalit literacy rates remained significantly lower than the national average of 53.7%. Comparatively, higher caste groups had much better literacy rates, such as Brahmins (74.9%), Kshatriyas (60.1%), and Newars (71.2%). Within the Dalit community, those from the Terai region faced even greater educational disparities, with a literacy rate of only 21.1% (Sherpa, 2006, as cited in Bhattachan et al., 2009).

Dalits in Nepal continue to face significant barriers in education due to historical discrimination, socio-economic challenges, and systemic inequalities. Over the years, there has been some progress in literacy and enrollment rates, but disparities remain compared to the national average and higher caste groups.

According to the Nepal Living Standards Survey (NLSS) and data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), the literacy rate of Dalits has shown gradual improvement:

- 2011 Census: The overall literacy rate of Dalits was 45.5%, while the national average was 65.9% (CBS, 2012).
- 2017 (NLSS Report): Literacy among Dalits reached 53.4% but still lagged behind the national rate of 72.2% (NLSS, 2017).
- 2021 Census (Preliminary Data): The literacy rate among Dalits increased to 57.5%, whereas the national literacy rate was 76.3% (CBS, 2022).
- 2023 (Ministry of Education Report): Some reports suggest Dalit literacy rates have now reached around 60%, but disparities persist between urban and rural areas.

According to some flash report (2017–2024) , Government education programs, such as the Scholarship Program for Dalit Students, Mid-Day Meal Program, and Free Education Policies, have contributed to improved enrollment rates. However, dropout rates among Dalit students remain higher than among other caste groups.

The rates of enrollment of the dalit in primary, lower secondary and secondary level has shown some minor improvement:

Table 2.1

The Rates of Enrollment of the Dalit in Primary, Lower Secondary and Secondary Level

Level	2017 Enrollment Rate (%)	2020 Enrollment Rate (%)	2023 Enrollment Rate (%)
Primary Level	89.3%	91.5%	93.8%
Lower Secondary	72.6%	76.1%	80.2%
Secondary Level	47.2%	52.8%	58.5%

Source: 2017 (NLSS Report), 2021 Census (Preliminary Data) and 2023 (Ministry of Education Report).

In 2017, the primary school enrollment rate for Dalit children was 89.3%, which increased to 93.8% by 2023. It seems that Enrollment drops sharply as students move to higher grades. In 2017, the transition from primary (89.3%) to lower secondary (72.6%) showed a 16.7% drop. By 2023, despite improvements, only 80.2% of Dalit children enrolled in lower secondary education, compared to 93.8% at the primary level, highlighting transition barriers. The most concerning trend is seen at the secondary level, where enrollment remains significantly low. In 2017, only 47.2% of Dalit students continued their education at the secondary level, which increased to 58.5% in 2023 a remarkable 11.3% growth, but still significantly lower than other levels. The gap between primary and secondary enrollment remains wide (35.3% difference in 2023), indicating that many Dalit students drop out before completing secondary education.

2.7.2 Educational Situation of Musahar Children in Nepal

The Musahar community, one of the most marginalized Dalit groups in Nepal, faces significant barriers in accessing education. Despite efforts to improve educational opportunities for disadvantaged groups, children from the Musahar community continue to experience low literacy levels, high dropout rates, and limited access to quality education (Gurung, 2021).

Data from the 2021 Nepal Census highlights the low literacy rate among Musahar children, which is among the lowest of all Dalit sub-groups. Only 17.3% of Musahar children aged five and above are literate (CBS, 2021). School enrollment remains critically low, particularly among girls, due to socio-economic hardships, child labor responsibilities, and deep-rooted gender disparities (Kisan, 2020).

Multiple interrelated factors hinder the educational progress of Musahar children:

- **Economic Hardship:** Many Musahar households lack stable incomes and depend on daily wage labor, making education a lower priority (UNDP, 2022).
- **Child Labor and Household Responsibilities:** Financial insecurity often forces Musahar children to engage in agricultural work or domestic labor instead of attending school (Paudel, 2021).
- **Social Discrimination:** Caste-based biases within schools and communities discourage Musahar children from actively participating in education, contributing to alienation and higher dropout rates (Gurung, 2021).
- **Inadequate Educational Resources:** Many Musahar settlements lack sufficient schools, qualified teachers, and essential learning materials, further limiting educational opportunities (Kisan, 2020).

The dropout rate among Musahar children is exceptionally high. Studies indicate that more than 70% of Musahar students leave school before completing primary education, and only a small fraction less than 2% reach the secondary level (CBS, 2021; Paudel, 2021). Those who remain in school often struggle academically due to a lack of support at home and within the community.

In an effort to increase school participation among Dalit children, the Nepalese government has introduced programs such as free primary education, scholarships, and school meal initiatives. However, their effectiveness among the Musahar community has been limited due to lack of awareness, weak implementation, and social barriers (UNDP, 2022). Addressing these challenges requires more targeted approaches that consider the specific needs of Musahar children.

The educational conditions of Musahar children in Nepal remain a major concern, with persistent low literacy rates, high dropout rates, and systemic obstacles limiting their academic progress. Addressing these issues requires stronger policy implementation, economic support for families, awareness campaigns, and improved school facilities to create an inclusive educational environment for Musahar children.

2.8 Economic Condition of Nepal

Nepal, a landlocked country situated between India and China, remains one of the least developed nations in South Asia. According to the National Census of 2021, Nepal's population reached approximately 29.2 million (Central Bureau of Statistics [CBS], 2021). The country's economic progress has been marked by gradual improvements in various sectors, yet challenges persist in achieving equitable growth and poverty reduction.

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in Nepal was estimated at \$1,372 (current USD) in 2021 (World Bank, 2022). Over the years, the economy has diversified, transitioning from a primarily agrarian society to an economy driven by services, remittances, and industrial activities. The Nepal Living Standards Survey (NLSS) 2019/20 indicates that poverty levels have further declined, with the national poverty rate standing at 17.4% compared to 25.2% in 2011 (CBS, 2020). However, poverty remains significantly higher in rural areas than in urban regions, exacerbating regional inequalities.

Economic growth has been modest yet steady, with an average annual GDP growth rate of 4.9% from 2015 to 2019, before experiencing a downturn due to the COVID-19 pandemic (World Bank, 2022). The service sector has become the dominant contributor to GDP, followed by agriculture and industry. Employment in non-agricultural sectors has increased, offering a pathway out of poverty for many Nepalese. However, disparities persist, as households reliant on agricultural labor continue to face the highest poverty rates.

Remittances play a crucial role in Nepal's economy, contributing nearly 24% of GDP in 2021, making Nepal one of the most remittance-dependent countries in the world (World Bank, 2022). The reliance on foreign employment has significantly shaped household incomes and consumption patterns. Nonetheless, structural challenges, including low industrial productivity, inadequate infrastructure, and political instability, continue to hinder sustainable economic development.

2.9 Reviews of the Previous Study

This section aims to examine relevant scholarly works related to the research focus. South Asia is one of the most economically challenged regions globally, with over 570 million individuals living below the poverty line. This accounts for approximately 44% of the world's impoverished population, surviving on less than \$1.25 per day (Siddiqui, 2006). Additionally, the issue of illiteracy is highly prevalent in developing countries, with nearly 98% of the global illiterate population residing in these regions. South Asia alone is home to nearly half of this illiterate population, with an adult illiteracy rate exceeding 40% (UNDP, 2013).

A significant number of children across the world remain deprived of their fundamental right to primary education, while approximately 960 million adults lack basic literacy skills. Of these, two-thirds are women and girls. Without access to education, individuals are unable to obtain essential information that directly affects their daily lives (Subedi, 1997).

The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), held in Cairo, Egypt, from September 5 to 13, 1994, set forth significant educational goals to be achieved by 2015. These targets included ensuring universal education for all and eliminating the gender gap in education by 2005 (ICPD, 1994).

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were established during the Millennium Summit in September 2000, forming a global initiative aimed at poverty reduction and improving living standards. As part of this initiative, the second goal specifically emphasized achieving universal primary education (MDGs, 2000). In alignment with this international agenda, Nepal set its own educational targets, which included achieving a 100% net enrollment rate in primary education, increasing the percentage of students who complete grade five, and improving the gender parity ratio in primary, lower secondary, and secondary education (Nepal MDGs, 2000).

Similarly, the Dakar Framework for Action, established during the 'Education for All' summit held in Senegal from April 20 to 24, 2000, was also ratified by Nepal. This framework underscored the commitment to ensuring equitable access to quality education for all individuals.

The caste-based discrimination in Nepal has a long history, with Dalits being historically deprived of access to education and other social services (Gellner, 2007). Until the introduction of democratic reforms in the 1950s, Dalits, including the Musahar, were legally and socially excluded from formal education (Bhattachan et al., 2009). Even after the abolition of the caste-based legal system, social exclusion persisted due to deeply ingrained discriminatory practices and economic deprivation (Cameron, 2005).

Research on the direct linkage between children's education in marginalized and deprived communities and socioeconomic conditions in Nepal is limited. However, numerous empirical studies have demonstrated the relationship between education and socioeconomic status or poverty.

Hill and Taylor (2004) examined mechanisms through which parental involvement influences academic performance and achievement. Their research highlights that parental school involvement positively impacts school-related outcomes by equipping parents to support their children in academic activities. This involvement also familiarizes parents with school expectations, thereby reinforcing appropriate behavior at both school and home (McNeal, 1999, as cited in Hill & Taylor, 2004). Parents from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to engage in their children's education, whereas those from low-income backgrounds face challenges such as inflexible work schedules and the stresses of residing in disadvantaged neighborhoods, limiting their involvement (Hill & Taylor, 2004).

Acharya (2011) conducted research on the status of children from poor backgrounds in urban areas, particularly child laborers engaged in various occupations such as rag picking, street vending, and domestic labor. Acharya's study reveals that Nepalese children are among the most deprived, suffering from systemic socioeconomic, cultural, and political exploitation. Their basic needs, including food, shelter, clothing, education, and security, are frequently unmet. The study further highlights the extreme oppression and exploitation faced by children working in urban restaurants and as bonded laborers in landlords' homes.

Pradhan (2009) asserts that child labor is both a political and social issue, deeply intertwined with the socioeconomic and cultural realities of Nepal. While laws and policies have been introduced to address child labor, they remain largely ineffective

without broader societal mobilization. Pradhan emphasizes that raising awareness and engaging stakeholders such as parents, teachers, students, and policymakers is essential to combating child labor.

Cognitive abilities, which significantly affect academic performance, are influenced by socioeconomic status. Several studies have found a strong correlation between socioeconomic status and indicators of children's cognitive ability, such as IQ, achievement tests, grade retention rates, and literacy (Baydar, Brooks-Gunn, & Furstenberg, 1993; Brooks-Gunn, Guo, & Furstenberg, 1993; Liaw & Brooks-Gunn, 1994; Smith, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1997). Moreover, good parenting—strongly associated with higher socioeconomic status—has been shown to enhance academic achievement (DeGarmo, Forgatch, & Martinez, 1999). Conversely, poverty-induced stress impairs parenting skills, leading to disengagement and negatively impacting children's school performance (Hsueh & Yoshikawa, 2007).

In the Nepalese context, numerous studies have focused on child labor and street children. Doyle (2000) and Subedi (2002) reported that street children in Nepal are often sexually exploited. Basnet (2010) examined the reasons why children become street children and the risks they face. Doyle (2002) highlighted the issue of sexual abuse among street children in Kathmandu, while Baker (1996) documented the severe challenges faced by street children, including frequent illness, dog bites, hunger, and early mortality.

Danzigner and Stern (1990) argued that children born into persistently poor families are at greater risk of adverse birth outcomes and academic failure. Similarly, Harper, Marcus, and Moore (2003) emphasized that childhood is a critical stage for cognitive development, with poverty significantly affecting children's aspirations, perceptions, and life chances.

In Cameroon, Faux and Ntembe (2013) investigated the impact of educational attainment on poverty. In Nepal, Yadav (2005) studied the Musahar community, highlighting their extreme marginalization and social exclusion. Graetz (1995) found that parents' socioeconomic status significantly influences students' academic performance, a conclusion echoed by Considine and Zappala (2002), who observed that children from economically advantaged families receive greater psychological and emotional support, fostering academic success.

Gautam and Thapa Magar (1994) studied untouchable castes in Nepal, including the Musahar, emphasizing caste-based discrimination and its effects on education. Similarly, Sharma, Chhetri, and Rana (1994) documented caste-based discrimination in education, revealing heart-wrenching disparities among different social groups.

Yaar (1979) examined ethnic inequality in educational attainment between different ethnic groups, attributing disparities to socioeconomic background and institutional discrimination. A study by New Era (1993) investigated the correlation between menarche and female school dropout rates in Dang and Rolpa districts, identifying early marriage, household responsibilities, and parental expectations as contributing factors.

CERID (1991) reported high dropout rates among children from illiterate, low-income families engaged in agriculture and labor-intensive occupations. This study established a strong relationship between dropout rates and economic conditions. Similarly, Eng and Henderijntje (2000) found that poverty, early marriage, language barriers, and parents' ignorance significantly contributed to high dropout rates among Tharu girls in eastern and central Nepal.

A World Bank study by Lockhud and Janison (1990) concluded that parents from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to send their children to school than those from lower-income groups. The CERID (1990) report on educationally disadvantaged populations in Nepal highlighted early marriage, negative attitudes toward girls' education, and language barriers as critical factors contributing to educational disparities.

Maharjan (1986) compared the attitudes of high-caste and low-caste parents toward education, revealing that children from high-caste families had higher enrollment rates. Economic and social factors played a significant role in limiting school attendance among low-caste and minority groups.

Research conducted by CERID (1982) demonstrated that parents perceived education as a means of securing future prosperity. However, socioeconomic status and literacy levels significantly influenced parental attitudes toward education.

A UNESCO Nepal study (SARATHI Nepal, 2001) on dropout and grade repetition among girls in the Eastern Development Region found that parental attitudes and education levels significantly affected children's schooling. The study revealed higher repetition and dropout rates among girls than boys, particularly in primary education.

These studies collectively emphasize the intersection of poverty, social exclusion, and education within marginalized communities, particularly the Musahar. The research highlights that socioeconomic disadvantages, cultural biases, and systemic discrimination contribute to educational disparities, reinforcing the cycle of poverty among marginalized groups.

2.10 Theoretical Perspective

This section presents the theoretical foundation that guides this research on the social exclusion of families and its impact on children's education within the Musahar community in Nepal. The study is anchored in two key theoretical perspectives: Human Capital Theory, as articulated by Becker (1962) and Schultz (1961), and the Capabilities Approach, as introduced by Sen (2000). These theories provide a comprehensive framework for analyzing the interplay between education, socioeconomic status, and structural inequalities affecting marginalized groups.

2.10.1 Human Capital Theory

Human Capital Theory posits that investment in education enhances individual and societal productivity, contributing to overall economic growth. This theory, advanced by Becker (1993) and Schultz (1963), emphasizes that education serves both as a means of personal development and as a tool for economic advancement. Education enhances cognitive skills, productivity, and employability, thereby fostering upward socioeconomic mobility.

In economic terms, education functions as both a consumption good and a capital good. As a consumption good, it provides intrinsic value to individuals, while as a capital good, it leads to higher earnings, increased productivity, and broader economic benefits (Rosen, 1989). The theory suggests that families with greater financial

resources can make substantial investments in their children's education, leading to better educational attainment and long-term socioeconomic benefits. Conversely, low-income families often struggle to allocate adequate resources for education, perpetuating intergenerational cycles of poverty.

Empirical studies demonstrate that financial constraints significantly affect access to education, particularly among disadvantaged communities. Wu (2010) identifies resource limitations as a primary barrier to educational investment in developing countries, where many families prioritize immediate economic survival over long-term educational gains. This is particularly evident in Nepal, where marginalized communities, such as the Musahar, face systemic barriers to education due to extreme poverty. Children from these communities often engage in labor-intensive activities to supplement household income, resulting in irregular school attendance and high dropout rates.

Within the Musahar community, the lack of investment in education perpetuates social exclusion and limits economic mobility. Due to their historically marginalized status, many Musahar families have limited access to educational resources, reinforcing generational cycles of poverty. The Human Capital Theory underscores the importance of targeted interventions, such as scholarships, vocational training, and community-based educational programs, to break these cycles and promote inclusive development.

2.10.2 Capabilities Approach

The Capabilities Approach, developed by Amartya Sen (1999, 2000), provides an alternative perspective on human development, emphasizing the expansion of individual freedoms and opportunities rather than solely focusing on economic returns. Unlike Human Capital Theory, which highlights the economic benefits of education, the Capabilities Approach considers education as a fundamental tool for enhancing well-being and enabling individuals to lead meaningful lives.

Sen's framework conceptualizes poverty not merely as a lack of financial resources but as a deprivation of fundamental capabilities—the ability to achieve valued life

outcomes. Education is crucial in this regard, as it enhances individual autonomy, critical thinking, and participation in social, economic, and political spheres (Robeyns, 2003). This perspective shifts the focus from economic investment in education to a broader understanding of education as a means of empowerment and social transformation.

Structural barriers, such as discrimination, inadequate public services, and deeply embedded social hierarchies, limit the educational opportunities available to marginalized communities. Sen (1999) argues that development should focus on eliminating these constraints to enable individuals to achieve their full potential. In the context of Nepal, the Capabilities Approach highlights the need for policies that address not only financial hardships but also cultural and systemic impediments to education, particularly for historically excluded groups like the Musahar.

Applying this approach to the Musahar community underscores the importance of holistic educational policies that go beyond financial aid. Efforts must focus on addressing entrenched social discrimination, improving school infrastructure, and promoting inclusive curricula that recognize the unique challenges faced by marginalized groups. Programs that integrate community participation, awareness campaigns, and government support can help create an educational environment that fosters empowerment and long-term social mobility.

By broadening the focus from economic gains to human well-being, the Capabilities Approach provides a more comprehensive framework for understanding education's role in fostering social justice and reducing exclusion among disadvantaged populations. This perspective aligns with the need for transformative policies that promote equity and inclusion in Nepal's educational system.

2.11 Research Gap

While numerous studies have been conducted separately on social exclusion and children's education, only a limited number of research efforts have specifically explored the challenges of faced by children due to the social exclusion of families and its impact on children's education in marginalized communities of Nepal.

While social exclusion and its impact on education have been widely studied in various marginalized communities, there is limited research specifically addressing

the Musahar community in Nepal, particularly in Parsagadi Municipality-1, Badaruwa, Parsa District. Existing literature primarily focuses on broad Dalit experiences, often overlooking the unique socio-economic and cultural barriers faced by Musahar families.

Most studies on educational inequality in Nepal focus on caste-based discrimination at the institutional level, rather than the intra-community or family-level social exclusion. The role of family-based social exclusion in shaping children's educational experiences within the Musahar community remains underexplored. Current literature does not provide sufficient empirical evidence on how exclusion within the family structure impacts children's education.

The latest Nepal Living Standard Survey (NLSS) and the 2021 Nepal Census provide valuable socio-economic indicators, but they do not comprehensively analyze how systemic and structural barriers specifically affect the Musahar community's access to education. There is a gap in understanding how state policies, economic deprivation, and social stigmatization collectively influence the educational participation of Musahar children.

There is a dearth of studies analyzing the intergenerational impact of social exclusion on education within the Musahar community. Existing research does not adequately explore how historical deprivation and parental educational background contribute to the ongoing cycle of exclusion and educational marginalization.

While studies have examined poverty and caste-based discrimination in Nepal, there is a lack of intersectional analysis that integrates caste, gender, and economic status to understand how these factors interact to limit educational opportunities for Musahar children. The combined effects of caste-based exclusion, economic hardships, and lack of social mobility remain underexamined.

Although the Government of Nepal has introduced inclusive education policies, there is insufficient research assessing their effectiveness in addressing the specific educational barriers faced by Musahar children. There is a need for policy-oriented research that evaluates the impact of affirmative action programs and social interventions in improving educational access and retention rates among Musahar children.

Quantitative surveys provide statistical insights into literacy rates and enrollment levels, but they fail to capture the lived experiences of social exclusion among Musahar families. There is a research gap in qualitative studies that document personal narratives, community perspectives, and everyday struggles that hinder children's educational progress.

Most available studies on marginalized communities in Nepal are cross-sectional and fail to examine long-term trends. There is a need for longitudinal research to track how social exclusion affects educational outcomes over time and to assess the effectiveness of interventions aimed at breaking the cycle of educational deprivation.

While national surveys provide general statistics on school enrollment and dropout rates, data specifically disaggregated for the Musahar community is scarce. There is an urgent need for focused research that provides detailed educational indicators related to this marginalized group.

Addressing these research gaps, this study will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how family-based social exclusion affects the educational trajectories of children in the Musahar community. Future studies should integrate empirical data, qualitative insights, and policy evaluations to develop inclusive educational strategies that cater to the specific needs of Musahar children.

2.12 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is essential for understanding the different aspects of social exclusion that influence families and children's access to education. This section presents key concepts, definitions, and theoretical perspectives that support this study. By examining the various elements that contribute to educational exclusion, the framework establishes a structured approach to analyzing the issue. Furthermore, relevant operational definitions are introduced to create a clear analytical structure.

Social exclusion is a complex issue involving economic, social, political, and cultural dimensions. In the context of education, it refers to obstacles that prevent specific groups, particularly families and children, from accessing and fully participating in

educational opportunities. Such obstacles may stem from socio-economic disadvantages, systemic discrimination, structural inequalities, and policy constraints (Silver, 2015).

Educational Exclusion: This occurs when children face challenges in enrolling, continuing, or completing their education due to financial difficulties, resource shortages, or institutional biases (UNESCO, 2021).

Family Exclusion: This refers to the marginalization of families due to economic struggles, social prejudices, or cultural obstacles that limit their ability to engage in their children's education (Bourdieu, 1986).

Systemic Barriers: These include institutional and structural challenges such as ineffective policies, inadequate funding, and lack of inclusive educational practices (OECD, 2018).

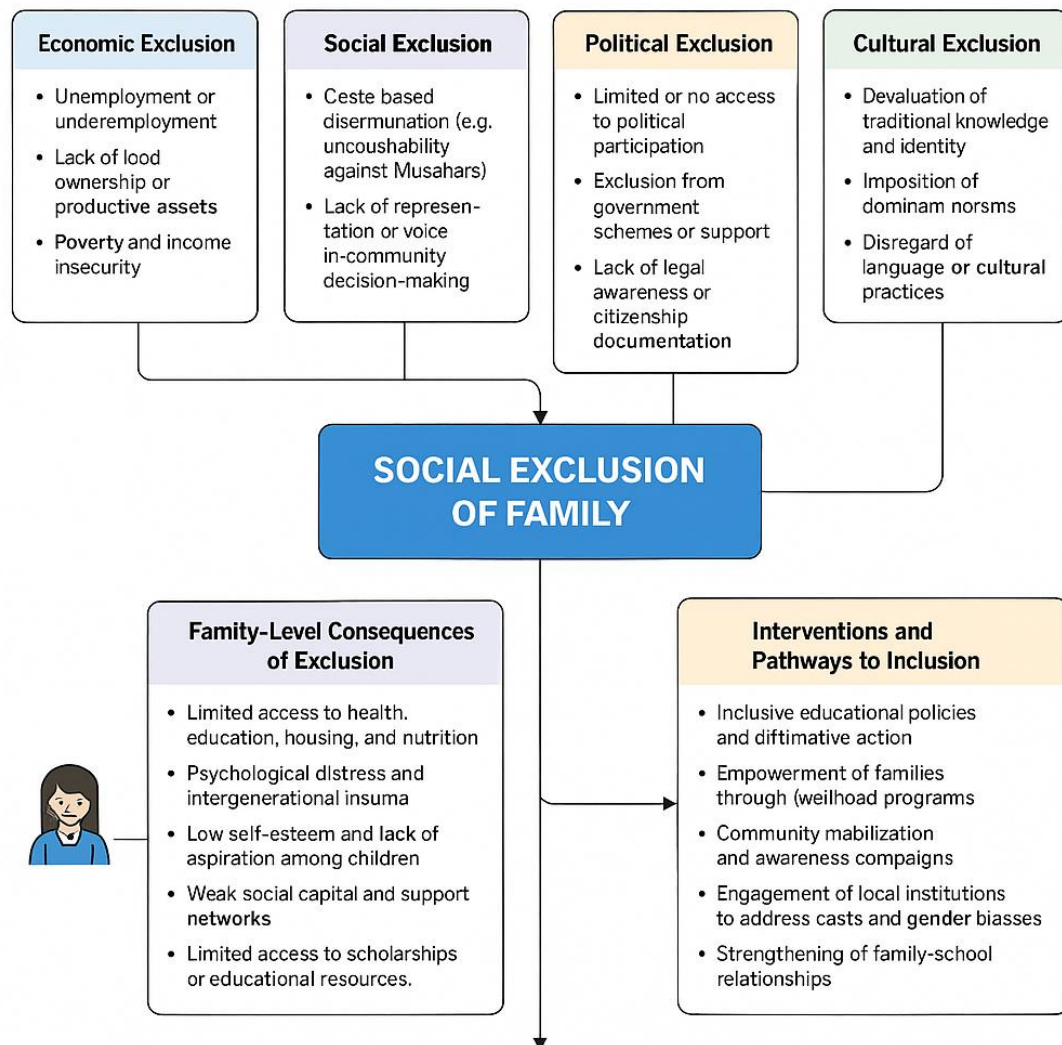
Intersectionality of Exclusion: The interaction of multiple exclusionary factors, such as poverty, disability, gender discrimination, and minority status, further intensifies educational disadvantages (Crenshaw, 1991).

The figure below illustrates that social exclusion is multi-dimensional, affecting families especially marginalized communities like the Musahar through structural barriers that intersect and reinforce each other. These dimensions lead to long-term disadvantage and limit the life chances of both parents and children, particularly in education.

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Figure 2.1

Conceptual Framework: Social Exclusion of Family and Its Relation to Education:



These are the root causes that push families to the margins:

- **Economic Exclusion:** Poverty, unemployment, lack of land or assets mean families cannot meet basic needs or invest in children's education.
- **Social Exclusion:** Caste-based discrimination, especially untouchability, denies dignity and participation. Families are voiceless in community decisions and suffer social stigma.
- **Political Exclusion:** Families are excluded from political processes, lack awareness of rights, and often don't benefit from government schemes.

- Cultural Exclusion: The community's language, identity, and traditions are not valued. Dominant norms are imposed, making their cultural practices invisible or inferior.

Family-Level Consequences:

These forms of exclusion lead to material and emotional deprivation:

- Families lack access to education, healthcare, housing, and food.
- Mental health is impacted distress, trauma, low confidence.
- Children grow up with limited aspirations due to inherited exclusion.
- Weak support networks make it hard to seek help or resources.

This conceptual framework offers a structured method for analyzing the social exclusion of families and children in education. By incorporating diverse definitions and analytical perspectives, it establishes a foundation for investigating the causes, impacts, and potential solutions for educational exclusion (Silver, 1994; Sen, 2000).

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology refers to the systematic approach used to address the research problems. This section outlines the methods employed in this study to achieve the research objectives.

To investigate the Challenges Faced by Children of Musahar Community in Education due to Social Exclusion of Family, Parsagadhi Municipality-1, Badaruwa in Parsa District, Nepal, a qualitative inquiry approach was primarily utilized. This approach is described as a broad scholarly activity that goes beyond focusing solely on data analysis (Wolcott, 1994). The selection of research methods was influenced by the specific context of the study, including factors such as the participants' age, gender, socioeconomic background, and the issues being examined. In certain instances, a mixed-method approach incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods was employed to gather data.

A variety of data collection methods were applied, including semi-structured interviews, participant observations, focus group discussions, and field notes. This multi-method approach follows an interpretive and naturalistic paradigm, allowing for an in-depth understanding of the routine and significant experiences of individuals (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, 1998). Clarke (2005) emphasizes that employing multiple methods provides opportunities for different forms of engagement and allows participants, especially children, to express their views in various ways. In addition to primary data, secondary data was gathered from a range of government, academic, and non-governmental research sources and reports.

3.1 Brief Overview of the Study Area

3.1.1 Parsa District Nepal

My study area is situated in Parsagadhi Municipality Ward number-1, Badaruwa village in Parsa district. Parsa District, located in Province No. 2 of Nepal, is one of the 77 districts of the country and falls within the Narayani Zone of the former administrative structure. It shares its southern border with the Indian state of Bihar, while Bara district lies to the east, and Chitwan and Makwanpur districts are to the

west and north, respectively. Covering a total area of 1,353 square kilometers, the district features an altitude range from 122 meters to 925 meters above sea level. A significant portion of the district's land falls within the Parsa Wildlife Reserve and its buffer zone, as well as the Chitwan National Park. Administratively, Parsa District is divided into four electoral constituencies, one Metropolitan City (Birgunj), three municipalities, and ten rural municipalities. The district is part of Nepal's central development region and holds strategic importance due to its location along the Indo-Nepal border, contributing significantly to trade and commerce.

According to the latest census of 2021, the total population of Parsa District has grown to approximately 649,397, showing an increase from the 601,017 recorded in 2011. The district continues to experience a population growth rate higher than the national average, driven by migration and natural increase. The sex ratio remains relatively balanced, with a slight predominance of males over females. The literacy rate in Parsa District has improved to around 62.5%, though it still lags behind the national average. Similarly, life expectancy has risen slightly, reaching approximately 71.5 years, reflecting overall health improvements in the region. The poverty rate has decreased to about 33.8%, but it remains higher than the national average, highlighting ongoing economic challenges. Agriculture, forestry, and fish farming continue to be the primary sources of livelihood for the majority of the population, with over 52% of households engaged in these sectors. Industrial and commercial activities, particularly in Birgunj, play a crucial role in economic sustenance, as the city serves as a major trade hub between Nepal and India. However, only 32% of the district's land is under cultivation, while forests cover 56% of the area, and approximately 9,000 hectares remain barren or occupied by urban settlements. The per capita income in Parsa District has seen an upward trend, reaching approximately \$1,350, reflecting gradual economic development.

The district is home to a diverse ethnic population, with middle-caste groups forming the majority. Bhojpuri remains the most widely spoken language, followed by Nepali and Hindi, which serve as common means of communication. Among marginalized communities, the Musahar population, recorded at around 11,000 in the latest census, remains one of the most disadvantaged groups, requiring targeted socio-economic interventions. Overall, while Parsa District has witnessed progress in literacy, health, and economic development, challenges such as poverty, limited agricultural land, and urban expansion continue to shape its socio-economic landscape.

3.1.2 Parsagadhi Municipality

Parsagadhi Municipality is located in Parsa District, within Province-2 (Madhesh Province), in the Narayani Zone of Nepal. The municipality lies approximately 35 kilometers from the district headquarters, Birgunj. It was established in 2073 B.S. (2016 A.D.) through the amalgamation of five former Village Development Committees (VDCs): Baghbanna, Biruwaguthi, Harpur, Panchrukhi, and Bageshwari Titrauna. Currently, Parsagadhi Municipality consists of nine administrative wards, covering a total area of 99.69 square kilometers (NSO, 2021).

According to the latest National Population and Housing Census 2021, the total population of Parsagadhi Municipality is 52,244 individuals. The literacy rate in the municipality is recorded at 64.5 %, which is significantly lower than the national literacy rate of 76.2%. Within this, male literacy stands at 73.1 %, whereas female literacy is notably lower at 55.8%, highlighting a significant gender disparity in educational attainment. The lower literacy rate, particularly among women, suggests limited access to education and socio-economic challenges compared to national figures.

Parsagadhi Municipality in Parsa District, Nepal, is characterized by rich ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity. The five largest caste/ethnic groups in the municipality are Tharu (12,947), Yadav (9,963), Muslim (9,628), Chamar/Harijan/Ram (5,731), and Musahar (3,281), reflecting a blend of indigenous and historically marginalized communities. Linguistically, the municipality is dominated by five major mother tongues, with Bhojpuri being the most widely spoken (57,042 speakers), followed by Maithili (6,497), Nepali (4,056), Tharu (3,315), and Urdu (2,886). These languages represent the region's multicultural fabric and interethnic communication. In terms of religious composition, Hinduism is the predominant faith, followed by 75.36% of the population, while Islam constitutes 22.47%, Buddhism 1.12%, and other religions, including Christianity and Kirat, collectively make up 1.05%. This demographic structure highlights the municipality's diverse socio-cultural landscape (NSO, 2021).

The Musahar community, historically marginalized and socio-economically disadvantaged, comprises a notable segment of Parsagadhi's population. According to

the Nepal Census of 2021, the total Musahar population in the municipality was recorded at 3281. The Musahar people have traditionally faced significant barriers to education, employment, and overall socio-economic advancement, which has resulted in their exclusion from various development opportunities (CBS Nepal, 2021; Living Standard Survey, 2023). Addressing these disparities remains a critical challenge for local governance and development initiatives.

The socio-economic profile of Parsagadhi Municipality suggests the need for targeted interventions in education, livelihood development, and inclusive policies to uplift marginalized groups. Enhancing access to education, particularly for women and disadvantaged communities, could significantly improve the municipality's human development indicators and contribute to overall regional progress.

Table 3.1

Consumption of Fuel for Cooking by Households in Parsagadhi Municipality at Parsa District

S.N.	Type of Fuel	Number of Household	Remarks
1.	Fire Wood	6064	
2.	Animal Dug	54	
3.	LP Gas	42	
4.	kerosene	78	
5.	Bio gas	127	
6.	Electricity	-	
7.	Other	2	
8.	Not mentioned	45	
Total Household		6412	

Source: National Census Report 2068.

Above table shows that majority of households (6064) use the Firewood, second majority of household (127 households) use Bio-gas, 78 households use kerosene and 54 households use animal Dug, whereas only 42 households use LP Gas But there no any household for using electricity for cooking food in the study area, Parsagadhi Municipality at Parsa District.

Table 3.2

Source of Drinking Dater Using by the Household in Parsagadhi Municipality at Parsa District.

	Tap Pipe Water	Tuwel or Hand Pump	Covered Well	Uncovered\ Open Well	Natural Source of Water	River	Other	Not Mentioned	Total Household
Number of household	523	5377	10	4	35	2	419	42	6412

Source: National Census Report 2068.

Above table shows that the people in the study area, Parsagadhi Municipality are using different types of water source for drinking. The majority of household (5377) are using Tuebel or hand pump and 523 households are using Tap or pipe water as a main source of drinking water. However, there are 4 households how use uncovered or open well, 35 households use natural source of water for drinking and there is still 2 households who are directly use water from river.

3.2 Rationale for the Selection of the Study Area

The study area was selected using a purposive sampling technique based on information provided by the Parsagadhi Municipality Office. This region of the Terai is of particular interest due to its socio-economic conditions, historical marginalization, and vulnerability to natural disasters, particularly flooding. The Musahar community residing in Parsagadhi Municipality-1, specifically in Badaruwa village, represents one of the most socially excluded and economically deprived ethnic groups in Nepal. They have remained geographically and socially isolated, residing near river basins under challenging conditions.

The selection of this study area is justified for the following reasons:

- The Musahar community in this area faces extreme social and economic marginalization. They are among the poorest communities in Nepal and have historically been excluded from mainstream development opportunities (Gurung, 2020). Educational attainment within the Musahar community is significantly lower than the national average. According to the National

Census of Nepal (2021), the literacy rate among the Musahar community is only 17.2%, making them one of the most educationally disadvantaged groups. Further, data from the Nepal Living Standards Survey (NLSS) 2022 highlight that school dropout rates are alarmingly high, particularly among girls, due to poverty and lack of access to education (CBS, 2022).

- Many Musahar children are unable to attend school regularly, as they are often engaged in household responsibilities such as caring for younger siblings. Field observations also indicate that early child marriage is a prevalent practice within the community, which has a direct impact on school dropout rates, especially among girls. Cultural norms, religious traditions, and economic hardships lead to parents marrying off their daughters at an early age, further restricting their access to education (Adhikari, 2019).
- To date, no in-depth study focusing on the intersection of social exclusion and children's education has been conducted in this particular community. The lack of research in this specific area highlights the need for an in-depth investigation into the educational barriers faced by Musahar children.

This study employs a case study research design, which involves a comprehensive exploration of a specific social unit (Yin, 2018). In this research, the unit of analysis comprises children and their families from the Musahar community. This approach allows for a detailed understanding of the socio-economic and cultural factors influencing educational participation and exclusion within the community.

3.3 Sampling Procedure and Research Participants

This study was conducted in the Musahar community of Badaruwa village, located in Parsagadhi Municipality, Ward No.1. The community consists of 25 households, from which 15 households were selected for data collection using the purposive sampling method. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that allows researchers to intentionally select participants who meet specific criteria relevant to the study (Etikan et al., 2016).

For this study, households with children aged 10 to 18 years were chosen to ensure the collection of relevant data. A total of 30 respondents were selected as the sample population, comprising 15 parents and 15 school-age children (one children and one parent equally selected from each sampled household) from the identified households. The inclusion of both parents and children was essential to gaining comprehensive insights into the research topic. The purposive sampling technique facilitated the selection of participants who could provide meaningful contributions to the study, aligning with the research objectives (Palinkas et al., 2015).

3.4 Research Design

In this study, I employed a case study research design to explore the challenges faced by children of Musahar community in education due to social exclusion of family in Parsagadhi Municipality-1, Badaruwa in Parsa District, Nepal. A descriptive research design has been adopted, as it facilitates a comprehensive understanding of social realities by systematically describing the characteristics of a specific group or phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Given the nature of the study, a qualitative research approach has been prioritized. Qualitative methods are particularly useful in examining individual behaviors, socialization processes, cultural aspirations, and belief systems to uncover the deeper meanings of social phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the lived experiences of individuals and communities, providing reliable evidence to address the research questions. However, the study also incorporated quantitative data to support qualitative findings, ensuring a more holistic analysis.

Application of Research Methods in a Case Study Approach:

- Semi-Structured Interviews (with 30 respondents including 15 children and 15 parent from 15 sampled households): These interviews help capture personal insights from individuals such as community members, parents, and children. They provide an in-depth understanding of their experiences with social exclusion and its influence on education.
- Focus Group Discussions (conducted with two different groups): FGDs facilitate discussions among groups, allowing participants to share their

collective experiences. This method helps uncover social dynamics, common challenges, and diverse perspectives within the community.

- **Key Informant Interviews** (Two Key Informant Interview were conducted): Engaging with key informants, such as teachers and local community leaders, offers expert perspectives. These interviews provide a broader contextual understanding of social exclusion and its impact on educational opportunities.

3.5 Indicators Used to Measure the Variables

To comprehensively analyze the social exclusion of families and its impact on children's education in the Musahar community of Parsagadhi Municipality, this study employed various indicators across multiple dimensions. These indicators are interrelated and help capture the multifaceted nature of exclusion and its consequences. The following key categories were used to measure the variables in this research:

1. Educational Indicators:

Educational indicators assess the level of children's access to and participation in education. These include:

- **Years of schooling:** The total number of years a child has spent in formal education.
- **School enrollment rates:** The proportion of children enrolled in school at different levels.
- **Literacy levels:** The ability of children to read and write at an age-appropriate level.
- **School attendance:** Frequency and consistency of children's presence in school.
- **Study habits:** Hours dedicated to reading, completing classwork, and homework.
- **Dropout rates:** The percentage of children leaving school before completion.
- **Availability of learning materials:** Access to books, writing materials, and other educational resources (UNESCO, 2019).

2. Social Indicators:

Social indicators capture aspects related to the family's and child's integration into society. These include:

- Community participation: Involvement in social, cultural, and community-based activities.
- Peer group relationships: Interactions between children from different socio-economic backgrounds.
- Discrimination and social stigma: Experiences of exclusion based on caste, ethnicity, or socio-economic status.
- Child labor prevalence: The extent to which children are engaged in labor instead of education (Bourdieu, 1986).

3. Economic Indicators:

Economic indicators measure the financial condition of households, which plays a crucial role in access to education. These include:

- Household income: Monthly or annual income levels.
- Occupational status: Type and stability of employment within the family.
- Ownership of assets: Land, livestock, and other valuable resources.
- Housing conditions: Type of housing, availability of electricity, and cooking fuel.
- Household expenditures: Spending patterns on food, non-food items, and education.
- Skill development opportunities: Access to vocational training and skill enhancement programs (Sen, 1999).

4. Health Indicators:

Health indicators assess the well-being of children and family members, as poor health conditions can negatively impact education. These include:

- Nutritional status: Dietary intake and food security.
- Prevalence of diseases: Common illnesses affecting children and family members.

- Access to clean drinking water: Availability and quality of water sources.
- Sanitation facilities: Presence and condition of toilets and hygiene practices (WHO, 2020).

5. Other Socio-Cultural Indicators:

Additional indicators were considered to assess the broader social environment influencing children's education, including:

- Age distribution: The demographic profile of children and parents.
- Home environment: Availability of a supportive learning space at home.
- Incidence of family violence: The extent of domestic violence and its impact on children.
- Parental involvement: Level of parental support in children's education.
- Gender disparities: Differences in educational opportunities based on gender (Narayan et al., 2000).

By incorporating these indicators, this study ensured a holistic analysis of the factors contributing to social exclusion and its effect on children's education. The integration of educational, social, economic, health, and cultural dimensions provided a comprehensive framework for understanding the challenges faced by the Musahar community.

3.6 Nature and Sources of Data

This study utilized both primary and secondary data sources to examine the Challenges Faced by Children of Musahar Community in Education due to Social Exclusion of Family in Parsagadhi Municipality-1, Parsa District, Nepal. A mixed-method approach has been adopted to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the research problem by integrating qualitative and quantitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

3.6.1 Primary Sources of Data

Primary data were collected directly from the field using multiple qualitative data collection techniques, including semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and Key Informant Interview. An interview schedule was designed to capture key socio-economic, educational, and other relevant variables. These methods enabled the researcher to gain in-depth insights into the lived experiences of families and their children's educational challenges (Patton, 2015). The combination of various qualitative tools ensures data triangulation, enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

3.6.2 Secondary Sources of Data

In addition to primary data, secondary sources were utilized to provide contextual background and support the analysis. These sources included official records from the municipality office, books, academic journals, research articles, past thesis, and policy documents. Secondary data helped in understanding broader socio-economic and policy-related aspects of social exclusion and educational disparities within the Musahar community (Bryman, 2016).

By combining field-based primary data with document-based secondary data, this research ensures a robust and well-contextualized analysis of the issue. The use of multiple data sources enhances the reliability and depth of the study, facilitating a comprehensive exploration of the relationship between family exclusion and children's education in the Musahar community.

3.7 Data Collection Tools and Techniques

In this study, data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. The Primary data were collected through field surveys, employing various qualitative data collection techniques such as semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interview. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in informal settings to establish rapport between the researcher and participants, facilitating open and honest discussions. These methods were chosen to gain rich,

context-specific insights into the experiences of families in the Musahar community regarding social exclusion and its implications for children's education (Yin, 2018).

The primary data were collected from the fieldwork. The secondary data were collected through published and unpublished materials such as research articles, related books, CBS, related profiles, NGOs reports, and municipality office.

3.7.1 Semi-Structured Interview

A semi-structured interview is a widely used qualitative data collection method that allows for a flexible yet guided conversation between the researcher and the participants. This method is particularly useful for exploring complex social issues such as social exclusion and its impact on children's education, as it enables the researcher to gather in-depth and context-specific insights from the participants (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

In the context of this study on the social exclusion of families and its relation to children's education in the Musahar community, semi-structured interviews served as an effective tool for understanding the lived experiences of families, their perceptions of exclusion, and the challenges they face in accessing education. This method is chosen due to the following reasons:

- **Flexibility:** Unlike structured interviews, semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to modify questions based on the participants' responses, enabling a more dynamic and natural conversation (Patton, 2015).
- **Depth of Information:** This approach facilitates the collection of rich, detailed, and nuanced data, which helps in understanding the complexities of social exclusion and educational barriers (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).
- **Participant-Centered Approach:** Semi-structured interviews encourage active participation from respondents, making them feel comfortable in expressing their experiences, emotions, and opinions (Bryman, 2016).
- **Clarification and Probing:** The researcher can seek clarification, probe for additional details, and explore emerging themes, making the data collection process more comprehensive and insightful (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

For this research, semi-structured interviews were conducted with:

- 15 Parents of school-age children to understand their perceptions of education, financial constraints, cultural barriers, and experiences of social exclusion.
- 15 Children (ages 10–18) to explore their experiences with schooling, social inclusion, and the challenges they face in accessing education.

The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions covering themes such as educational access, socio-economic conditions, health condition, cultural beliefs, discrimination, and aspirations for the future. While a predefined set of questions provided structure, the researcher had the flexibility to adapt and explore emerging topics based on the participant's responses (Galletta, 2013).

Semi-structured interviews involved direct interaction with participants during the interview in the field work. It played a crucial role in this study by capturing the lived experiences of the Musahar community in relation to social exclusion and education. The method's flexibility, depth, and participant-centered approach made it a valuable tool for gathering meaningful qualitative data. When combined with other data collection techniques, semi-structured interviews contributed to a comprehensive and holistic understanding of the research problem.

3.7.2 Key Informant Interview (KII)

Key Informant Interviews (KII) are a qualitative data collection method used to gather in-depth information from individuals with specialized knowledge or experience on a particular subject (Patton, 2015). In this research, KIIs were conducted to cross-check the data obtained from semi-structured interviews and to gain further insights into the social exclusion of Musahar families and its impact on children's education.

The key informants were selected based on their familiarity with the Musahar community and their active involvement in local educational and social programs. For this study, KIIs were conducted with (Appendix III: KII Checklist):

- A local teacher, who has direct experience working with Musahar children and understands the challenges they face in accessing education.

- A youth leader, who has been actively engaged in community-based initiatives aimed at improving the conditions of the Musahar community, including education-related programs.

These informants provided valuable perspectives on the community's attitudes towards social exclusion and its direct impact on children's educational opportunities. It served as an essential data collection tool in this research by providing expert insights into the social exclusion of Musahar families and its effect on children's education.

3.7.3 Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is a qualitative data collection method used to explore participants' attitudes, perceptions, and experiences on a specific topic (Krueger & Casey, 2015). In this research, FGDs were conducted to understand the social exclusion of Musahar families and its impact on their children's education.

There were two FGDs session conducted in my research. The FGDs involved senior leaders (Mukhiyas), children, parents, women, and youth of the Musahar community in the study area. The main objective of these discussions was to examine how social exclusion affects the education of children in Musahar families. The total of 9 participants took part in each session. Before conducting the FGDs, the researcher developed a structured checklist to ensure a focused and systematic discussion. The collected data was edited in the field to enhance clarity and coherence.

To maintain reliability and validity, the following measures were considered:

- The FGDs were conducted by the researcher with the assistance of local facilitators, ensuring cultural sensitivity and effective communication.
- A local teacher acted as a note-taker, documenting critical discussions and insights.
- The discussion groups were organized with both homogenous and heterogeneous compositions in terms of age, gender, and education level, allowing for diverse perspectives.
- The number of participants in each discussion session was kept below 15 to

facilitate meaningful interaction (Morgan, 1996).

- A structured checklist was prepared to align discussions with research objectives and problem statements.
- The facilitator's primary role was to encourage equal participation and ensure that all voices were heard during the discussion. (Appendix II: FGDs Checklist)

3.8 Analysis of Data

Data analysis is a systematic process of breaking down, organizing, and interpreting collected data to identify patterns, relationships, and key findings (Jorgensen, 1989). This research follows a mixed-method approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative analysis to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the social exclusion of families and its impact on children's education in the Musahar community.

To ensure an effective and structured analysis, I applied the following steps:

- Editing: Reviewed the collected data for completeness, accuracy, and consistency before analysis.
- Coding: Categorized responses into meaningful groups based on key themes such as demographic characteristics, socio-economic dimensions, causes, and effects of social exclusion, and its relation to children's education.
- Tabulation: Organized coded data into tables and charts to facilitate comparison and interpretation.

Qualitative data, which includes responses from interviews, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews, was analyzed using thematic analysis. This method involved:

- Data Familiarization: Reading and re-reading the collected data to identify emerging themes.
- Coding: Assigning labels to key themes related to social exclusion and education.
- Thematic Categorization: Grouping similar codes into broader themes such as community perceptions, barriers to education, and socio-cultural influences.
- Interpretation: Analyzing patterns and narratives to derive meaningful conclusions about the lived experiences of the Musahar community.

Likewise, some Quantitative data obtained from questionnaires was analyzed using simple statistical tools, ensuring clarity and reliability in the findings. The following techniques were applied:

- Percentage Analysis: Used to represent demographic distributions, educational status, and socio-economic indicators.
- Tabulation: Data was arranged in tables to identify trends and relationships.
- Graphical Representation: Only few Figures and charts were used to visually illustrate key findings for better comprehension.

The data analysis process in this research was designed to extract meaningful insights into the social exclusion of Musahar families and its impact on children's education. By employing both qualitative and quantitative approaches, the study ensured a robust and holistic interpretation of the research findings.

3.9 Methodological Reflection

Methodological reflection involves a critical assessment of the research process, focusing on the strengths, limitations, and challenges of the chosen methods. This section evaluates the qualitative research approach, case study design, and data collection techniques used to examine social exclusion and its impact on children's education within the Musahar community of Parsagadhi Municipality, Nepal.

a. Reflection on the Research Design:

This research utilized a case study design to provide an in-depth understanding of the experiences of the Musahar community. This approach allowed for a comprehensive exploration of social exclusion and its influence on education within a specific socio-cultural setting. While the method generated rich, contextual insights, its main limitation was the limited generalizability of findings beyond the study area. Nevertheless, given the focused nature of the research problem, this design was suitable for capturing the intricate dynamics of social exclusion in a marginalized group.

b. Reflection on the Qualitative Inquiry Approach:

The study adopted a qualitative approach, which facilitated a deep exploration of both individual and collective experiences. Through an interpretive and naturalistic framework, the research captured the perspectives of affected families regarding social exclusion. However, the subjectivity of data interpretation posed a challenge, as qualitative research is influenced by the researcher's interactions and biases. To mitigate this, triangulation (including semi-structured interviews, FGDs, and KIIs) was employed to strengthen data validity by incorporating multiple viewpoints.

c. Reflection on Sampling Techniques:

A purposive sampling method was employed to select participants who could offer meaningful insights. While this approach ensured relevance and depth, it also restricted the randomness of participant selection, potentially affecting the study's representativeness. However, since the research focused on a specific community, purposive sampling was deemed appropriate for gathering context-specific data.

d. Reflection on Data Collection Methods:

This method facilitated flexible, in-depth discussions with parents, children, and community members. It provided respondents the freedom to express their experiences while allowing the researcher to probe deeper. However, some participants were reluctant to discuss sensitive issues regarding social exclusion. To overcome this, trust-building techniques, such as informal conversations and repeated interactions, were employed.

FGDs captured collective narratives on social exclusion, revealing shared experiences and community perspectives. This method was effective in identifying common challenges faced by Musahar families. However, dominant participants sometimes influenced the discussion, making it difficult for quieter individuals to contribute. To counteract this, the researcher encouraged equal participation and worked with local facilitators to ensure inclusivity.

KIIs gathered expert opinions from teachers and community leaders, offering broader insights into structural barriers affecting education. However, some key informants

were cautious in their responses, possibly due to social or political constraints. Cross-verifying data with multiple informants helped address this limitation.

e. Reflection on Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns and meanings in the qualitative data. Although this method yielded rich interpretive insights, data organization and coding were labor-intensive. To ensure analytical rigor, the identified themes were cross-checked and reviewed multiple times for consistency and coherence.

The methodological reflection highlights the strengths, challenges, and limitations encountered during the research process. Despite challenges such as subjectivity, sampling constraints, and ethical considerations, the integration of multiple qualitative methods enabled a comprehensive investigation of social exclusion and education in the Musahar community. By incorporating diverse data collection strategies, ethical safeguards, and rigorous analysis techniques, this study offers a well-rounded and credible understanding of the research problem.

- **Reflection on Data Reliability and Validity**

To enhance data credibility, several strategies were used:

1. Triangulation ensured consistency across different data sources.
2. Member checking involved verifying findings with participants to ensure accuracy.
3. Thick descriptions provided detailed contextual accounts, improving reliability.

Despite these measures, potential researcher bias remained a limitation due to the inherently interpretive nature of qualitative research.

- **Ethical Considerations and Challenges**

Ethical considerations were carefully managed to protect participant confidentiality and secure informed consent. However, the research faced several challenges:

1. Power dynamics within the community may have shaped participant responses.

2. Emotional distress was a concern; as social exclusion is a sensitive issue.
3. Language barriers were addressed by employing local translators where necessary.

3.10 Limitation of the Study

This study examines the Challenges Faced by Children of Musahar Community in Education due to Social Exclusion of Family, Parsagadhi Municipality-1, Badaruwa in Parsa District, Nepal. The research is subject to the following limitations:

- The study is geographically confined to the Musahar community residing in Parsagadhi Municipality, Ward No. 1, Badaruwa, Parsa District, Nepal.
- A total of 15 households with children aged 10 to 18 were selected for the study using purposive sampling methodology. The sample consists of 30 respondents, including 15 parents and 15 their respective school-aged children from the same households (one children and one parent from each sampled households) .
- The focus of this research is specifically on the social exclusion of families and its correlation with children's education within the selected Musahar community. The findings are therefore not intended to be generalized to other ethnic communities within the district or at the national level.
- Primary data collection methods employed in this study include semi-structured interviews, Key Informant Interview, and focus group discussions, all of which align with the qualitative research approach. Given the small sample size and localized scope of the study, the findings may have limited applicability beyond the specific community under investigation.
- This research has been conducted as a partial requirement for the Master of Philosophy (MPhil) degree in Sociology at Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur, Kathmandu, Nepal.

CHAPTER FOUR

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS

4.1 Introduction

Parsagadhi Municipality, located in Parsa District, Nepal, is a region marked by significant ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity. The population is composed of various indigenous and historically marginalized communities, with Tharu, Yadav, Muslim, Chamar/Harijan/Ram, and Musahar being the most prominent ethnic groups. Linguistically, Bhojpuri is the predominant language, followed by Maithili, Nepali, Tharu, and Urdu, reflecting the municipality's multicultural identity. Hinduism is the major religion, practiced by the majority, while Islam, Buddhism, and other faiths also have a presence.

Among the marginalized communities, the Musahar population remains socio-economically disadvantaged, facing persistent challenges in education, employment, and development. Limited access to resources and opportunities has contributed to their continued marginalization. Addressing these disparities through targeted policies and developmental initiatives is crucial for fostering inclusive growth. Enhancing educational access, particularly for disadvantaged groups and women like Musahar, is essential to improving the overall human development indicators and promoting sustainable progress in the municipality.

Basically, the data for this study was gathered through semi-structured interviews with children and their parents from Musahar households in Parsagadhi Municipality-1, Badaruwa, Parsa district, Nepal. The total 30 participants where 15 children and 15 parents from 15 Musahar households were purposively selected to share their experiences related to discrimination, social exclusion, and its impact on children's education. Additionally, relevant information was obtained through focus group discussions and key informant interviews, which played a significant role in the data analysis process. The interview transcripts were carefully examined in relation to the research questions to present the study's findings.

In this study, the term "parents" refers not only to a child's biological mother and father but also to grandparents who serve as primary caregivers. Since some children

are raised by their grandparents, they are recognized as guardians in this context. Accordingly, interviews were conducted with either the father or mother when the child lived with their parents. However, for children under the care of their grandparents, the interviews were held with the grandfather or grandmother, acknowledging their role as the child's primary guardian.

This chapter presents the data gathered from fieldwork, including an overview of respondents' demographic characteristics and descriptive statistics. Additionally, it highlights key findings derived from the study.

4.2 Socio-Economic and Demographic Data of Respondents from Sampled Households

The following section presents socio-economic and demographic data from the study's sample population. It includes an analysis and discussion of various factors such as age and gender distribution, occupation, employment status, social, economic and educational factors, resource and land distribution as well as the respondents' average monthly income.

4.2.1 Descriptive Statistics

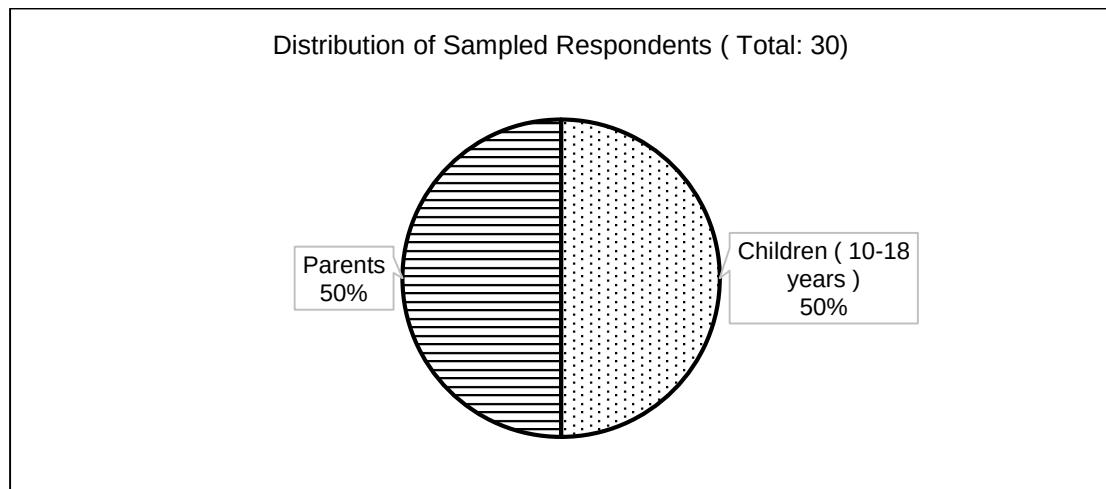
This section aims to present a clear and concise overview of the data collected from the sampled households, focusing on various factors such as age, gender distribution, occupation, employment status, and educational attainment. By employing descriptive statistics, the study seeks to summarize and interpret the key features of the data, allowing for a better understanding of the socio-demographic landscape of the Musahar community in Parsagadhi Municipality. This analysis not only highlights the distribution of respondents across different categories but also sets the stage for further exploration of the relationships between these characteristics and the challenges faced by the community, particularly in relation to children's education and socio-economic status.

4.2.2 Distribution of the Respondents by the Sample Numbers of Children and Parents Respondent

There are a total of 30 sampled respondents, consisting of 15 children (aged 10 to 18) and 15 parents from 15 sampled households.

Figure 4.1

Shows the Distribution of the Respondents by its Percentage from Children and their Parents in the Study Area



Source: Field Survey (2023).

Above charts shows that there were altogether 30 sampled respondents and out of 30 respondents, 50 percentage of respondents are children (age of 10 to 18) and another 50 percentage of respondents are their parents.

4.2.3 Gender Distribution of the Respondents.

Table 4.1 below shows the percentage of Gender distribution of the Respondents.

Table 4.1

Distribution of Respondent by their Gender

S.N.	Types of Respondent	Numbers of Respondents	Gender of Respondents			
			Male	%	Female	%
1.	Children	15	10	66.66	5	33.33
2.	Parents	15	9	60	6	40
Total Respondents		30	19		11	

Source: Field Survey (2023).

Above table shows that among 15 child participants, 66.67% are male and 33.33% are female, while among 15 parent respondents, 60% are male and 40% are female, resulting in an overall total of 19 males and 11 female respondents. This data indicates a higher proportion of male respondents in both groups.

4.2.4 Age Distribution of the Respondents

The respondents' age distribution is categorized into two groups, children and parents, based on their gender. This classification helps analyze perspectives across different age and gender groups. Table 4.2 below presents the details of the respondents' population by age and sex.

Table 4.2

Selection of Respondents' Population by Age and Sex

Respondents	Numbers	Age	Gender of Respondents		Total	
			Male	Female	Number	Percentage (%)
Children	15	10 -12	4	2	6	20
		13-15	4	1	5	16.66
		16-18	2	2	4	13.33
Parents	15	25-30	3	3	6	20
\guardian		30-35	3	1	4	13.33
		35-40	1	2	3	10
		40 -45	1	-	1	3.33
		45 above	1	-	1	3.33
Total			19	11	30	100 %

Source: Field Survey (2023).

Above Table presents the distribution of respondents based on age and gender. The data reveals that 20% of the respondents belonged to the 10–12 age group, while another 20% fell within the 25–30 age range. Additionally, 16.66% were between 13–15 years, and 13.33% were within both the 16–18 and 30–35 age groups. Furthermore, 10% of respondents were aged between 35–40 years, while 3.33% belonged to the 40–45 age category, and another 3.33% were above 45 years of age.

Overall, the majority of respondents (70%) were within the 10–30 age range, indicating that a significant portion of the sample comprised children and younger adults. This age distribution is crucial in understanding the perspectives of younger generations and their guardians within the study area.

4.2.5 Distribution of Number of Children of Selected Households

The distribution of the number of children in selected households provides insight into family size and structure. Analyzing this data helps understand household demographics and their potential impact on various socio-economic factors. The following table presents the details of the number of children in the surveyed households. In this research 15 households were selected purposively from out of 25 households.

Table 4.3

Distribution of Number of Children Having in Selected Households

S.N.	No. of Households	Total Number of Children with Each Household
1	2	two
2	7	three
3	6	Four
Total	15 Households	

Source: Field Survey (2023).

The distribution of the number of children per household, as presented in the study, provides significant insights into the demographic patterns of the selected Musahar community. Out of the 15 purposively sampled households, the majority (7 households) have three children, indicating a prevalent family size within the community. Additionally, 6 households have four children, representing the highest recorded number of children per family in this dataset. In contrast, only 2 households have two children, which constitutes the smallest family size among the sampled households. These findings suggest that a substantial proportion of families have three or more children, reflecting a high birth rate in the study area. This trend may be attributed to various socio-economic and cultural factors, including traditional family structures, limited access to family planning resources, and societal norms favoring larger families.

4.2.6 Monthly Household Income Distribution of Respondents

The distribution of monthly household income among respondents offers insight into their financial status and overall economic well-being. A family's income significantly

influences its ability to cover daily expenses and support children's education. While higher income levels often provide better access to educational resources, lower income levels can create financial difficulties in meeting both educational and basic needs. The table below illustrates the monthly income distribution of the sampled households.

Table 4.4

Distribution of Monthly Income of Sampled Households

S.N.	Monthly Household Income (Rs)	No. of Household	Percentage (%)
1.	4000	3	20
2.	4000 -6000	5	33.33
3.	6000 -8000	3	20
4.	8000 -10000	2	13.33
5.	10000 -12000	1	6.66
6.	12000 -14000	1	6.66
Total		15 households	100%

Source: Field Survey (2023).

Above table and figure shows that monthly household income distribution among respondents reveals significant financial hardship within the musahar community. Among the 15 surveyed households, income levels varied, with 20% earning approximately Rs. 4000 per month, indicating extreme economic vulnerability. The largest proportion, 33.33%, reported an income between Rs. 4000–6000, followed by 20% earning Rs. 6000–8000 per month. A smaller percentage of households had slightly higher incomes, with 13.33% earning Rs. 8000–10,000, while only 6.66% reported incomes of Rs. 10,000–12,000 and Rs. 12,000–14,000, the latter being the highest recorded income. The data suggests that the majority of households earn below-average incomes, insufficient to meet essential needs such as quality education and healthcare. Fieldwork findings further indicate that household income barely covers regular expenses, making it difficult to manage financial strains, especially

during medical emergencies and festival seasons. Many families expressed their inability to afford additional expenditures for their children's education, highlighting the economic struggles faced by the Musahar community in the study area. These financial constraints limit access to basic necessities, reinforcing cycles of poverty and restricting opportunities for socioeconomic advancement.

4.2.7 Distribution of Children in the Musahar community by their Household Income and Access to School Education

The table below illustrates the relationship between household income and school access among children in the Musahar community. Examining this data provides insight into how economic conditions and other socio-cultural factors influence school enrollment, attendance patterns, academic progression, and dropout rates.

Table 4.5

Distribution of children by their Household Income and Access to School Education

Household Income in Thousand	Being Affected in Accessing School Education					Total Regular Access to the School and Upgrading Class at Right Time
	Late Enrolled	Irregular to School	Repeating the Same Class	Dropped out	Total (Being Affected in Accessing School Education)	
4000	1	1	1	-	3	-
4000 -6000	-	-	-	-	-	1 (6.66%)
6000 -8000	1	-	-	1	2	2 (13.33%)
8000 - 10000	-	1	-	-	1	1 (6.66%)
10000 - 12000	-	1	-	1	2	2 (13.33%)
12000 - 14000	-	-	1	-	1	-
	2 (13.33%)	3 (20%)	2 (13.33%)	2 (13.33%)	9 (60%)	6 (40%)
Total Chldren						15

Source: Field Survey (2023).

The data presented in the table above reveals that, out of the 15 children interviewed, 9 (60%) experience significant barriers to accessing education. These barriers manifest in various forms, including late enrollment (2 children, 13.33%), irregular school attendance (3 children, 20%), repetition of grades (2 children, 13.33%), and school dropout (2 children, 13.33%). The children facing these challenges come from families with monthly household incomes ranging from 4,000 to 14,000 rupees. This distribution suggests that school access issues are not confined to a particular economic group but are prevalent across different income levels within the community.

In contrast, 6 children (40%) have consistent access to education and progress through their studies at the appropriate pace. These children come from families with monthly incomes in the ranges of 4,000-6,000 rupees, 8,000-10,000 rupees, and 10,000-12,000 rupees, with each income group contributing one child who successfully advances in their education without disruption.

An examination of income-based variations highlights that children from lower-income households (those earning between 4,000 and 8,000 rupees per month) are more likely to face educational challenges. However, the data also indicates that children from higher-income families, such as those earning between 12,000 and 14,000 rupees, still encounter difficulties. Instances of grade repetition and irregular school attendance, and even school dropout, were noted within this income group, specifically among children from families earning between 10,000 and 12,000 rupees. This finding suggests that while financial constraints play a significant role, they are not the sole determinant of school access. Other factors, such as socio-cultural influences and structural barriers, may also contribute to these issues.

The findings of this analysis suggest that a majority of children (60%) within the Musahar community face barriers to accessing education, with only 40% of children progressing through school without interruptions. Although lower-income households are more likely to experience difficulties, the data indicates that factors beyond financial limitations such as social exclusion, lack of awareness, and inadequate educational infrastructure also play critical roles in limiting school access. These findings underscore the need for targeted policy interventions that address not only financial challenges but also the broader socio-cultural and structural factors that impede education access and retention among Musahar children.

4.2.8 Household Occupation of Children's Family

The household occupation of children's families provides insight into their primary sources of income and economic stability. A family's occupation directly influences its financial capacity to cover daily expenses and invest in children's education. The following table presents the occupational distribution of the sampled households.

Table 4.6

Household Occupation of Children's Family

S.N.	Occupation	Number of Household	Percentage
1.	Construction Worker	10	66.66
2.	Agriculture Labor	3	20
3.	Fire wood collection	1	6.66
4.	Auto rickshaw driver	1	6.66
Total		15 Household	100%

Source: Field Survey (2023).

The above table indicates that the occupational distribution of the children's families in the study area is diverse, spanning multiple sectors. The majority of households (66.66%) are engaged in the construction sector as laborers, making it the most common occupation among the respondents' families. The second most prevalent occupation, accounting for 20% of households, is agricultural labor. These families primarily work as tenant farmers, either renting land or cultivating under a system locally known as "Adhiya" and "Batiya" in the Tarai region. However, they do not own land for cultivation.

Additionally, 6.66% of households rely on auto-rickshaw driving as their primary occupation, while another 6.66% sustain their livelihoods through firewood collection from the forest. These findings highlight the dependence of the children's families on informal and labor-intensive sectors for their economic survival.

4.2.9 Level of Education of Respondents

The educational background of respondents plays a key role in shaping their awareness and overall family environment. In most cases, a higher level of education

leads to a more informed and supportive parenting approach, creating a nurturing atmosphere for children. Educated parents are often better prepared to offer guidance, resources, and support for their children's education, ultimately improving their learning experiences and well-being. Table below shows the educational level of the Respondents in the study area.

Table 4.7

Level of Education of Respondents in the Study Area.

Types of Respondents	Frequency	Level of Education	Remarks
Children	4	Class 3	
	2	Class 4	
	3	Class 5	
	3	Class 6	
	1	Class 7	
	1	Class 5	Dropped out
	1	Class 7	Dropped out
Total	15 children		
Parents	8	Illiterate	
	3	Literate	
	3	3 to 5 class	
	1	6 class	
Total	15 parents		
Grand Total	30 respondent		

Source: Field Survey (2023).

The above Table illustrates the educational level of respondents in the study area, including both children and their parents. Among the 15 child respondents, the majority are enrolled in lower primary education. Specifically, four children are studying in Class 3, two in Class 4, three in Class 5, three in Class 6, and one in Class 7. However, there is a concerning trend of school dropouts, with one child dropping out from Class 5 and another from Class 7. This suggests challenges in sustaining education beyond the primary level.

Regarding the parents' educational background, the data reveals a significant level of illiteracy. Out of the 15 parent respondents, eight are completely illiterate. Three

parents are categorized as literate but have not received formal schooling, while another three have attained education between Class 3 and Class 5. Only one parent has completed education up to Class 6.

The findings highlight a low level of educational attainment among both children and parents in the study area. While some children are enrolled in school, the presence of dropouts indicates potential barriers such as financial constraints, lack of awareness, or the necessity to contribute to household income. The high illiteracy rate among parents further suggests a generational cycle of limited educational opportunities. Addressing these issues requires targeted interventions, such as awareness programs, financial support for education, and community-based initiatives to improve literacy among both children and adults in the study area.

4.2.10 Pattern of Land Holding among the Children's Household

Table 4.8 below presents the distribution of landholding among children's families, highlighting the percentage of land ownership within the surveyed households.

Table 4.8

Land Holding Pattern of 15 Sampled Households of Children

S.N.	Land Holding in Dhur and Kattha	No. of Household (Children Belong)	Percentage	Registered or Non-Registered Land
1.	5 dhur -10 Dhur	8	53.33	non registered land
2.	1 Kattha	4	26.66	non registered land
3.	2-3 Kattha	3	20	non registered land
Total		15 Households	100%	

Source: Field Survey (2023).

From the above table, the landholding pattern of the 15 sampled households reveals a high degree of landlessness and economic vulnerability. The data shows that 53.33% of households possess only 5 to 10 Dhur of land, which is significantly less than 1 Kattha, and this land is primarily occupied by their residential structures, leaving no space for agricultural or economic activities. Furthermore, 26.66% of households hold up to 1 Kattha of land, while the remaining 20% of households possess 2 to 3 Kattha.

A crucial finding from this dataset is that none of the sampled households have registered land, meaning they lack legal documentation and ownership rights. The absence of legal land registration significantly impacts their socio-economic security, restricting access to government services, financial credit, and development programs. This lack of land ownership, coupled with limited landholding, exacerbates their marginalization.

Based on these findings, the Musahar community in the study area faces severe socio-economic exclusion. As a historically marginalized group, they are among the most disadvantaged, with limited access to resources and opportunities for development. The lack of land ownership further entrenches their poverty, preventing them from benefiting from land-based economic activities or securing their livelihoods. This data underscores the urgent need for policy interventions to address land tenure security, economic upliftment, and social inclusion for such vulnerable communities.

4.2.11 Housing Condition of Children's Households

The housing conditions of the respondents were observed and recorded during a semi-structured interview conducted in the study area. Housing conditions serve as one of the most critical indicators of the overall living standards of people, particularly in the context of Nepal. The quality and type of housing reflect the socio-economic status and well-being of the community.

Table 4.9

Distribution of Housing Conditions of the Children's Families

Types of Housing	Number of Children Households	%
Thatched \Mud and bamboo	15	100%
Total	15	100%

Source: Field Survey (2023).

The housing condition data of the 15 sampled children's households reveals that 100% of the respondents reside in thatched houses constructed from mud, wood, and bamboo. This uniform housing pattern highlights the economic vulnerability and marginalized status of the community, as these types of houses are typically associated with low-income and socially excluded groups.

The reliance on temporary and fragile construction materials indicates that the households face severe economic hardship, with limited access to durable housing infrastructure. Such housing conditions make them highly vulnerable to natural disasters, extreme weather conditions, and health hazards. Furthermore, the absence of permanent housing structures reflects the lack of financial resources and government support, reinforcing their social isolation and exclusion from mainstream development initiatives.

Overall, the data suggests that the community remains one of the most disadvantaged groups, struggling with poverty, inadequate living conditions, and limited access to basic services. This situation calls for urgent policy interventions aimed at improving their housing conditions, ensuring land tenure security, and promoting inclusive development programs to uplift their socio-economic status.

4.2.12 Distribution of Types of Family

Table 4.10 below presents the distribution of children's households based on family type. Among the 15 sampled households in the study area, three distinct family structures were identified: nuclear family, joint family, and extended family in the study area. This classification provides insights into the household composition and social structure within the community.

- **Nuclear Family:** A nuclear family is made up of parents and their children, forming a small and independent household unit. This type of family typically excludes extended relatives and focuses on immediate family members only (Giddens et al., 2017).
- **Joint Family:** A joint family is a form of household where several generations, including grandparents, parents, and their children, live together. It often includes siblings of the same generation and their families, sharing common resources and responsibilities (Shah, 1998).
- **Extended Family:** An extended family includes the nuclear family along with additional relatives such as grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins. These family members may or may not live under the same roof but maintain strong familial ties and support systems (Haviland et al., 2016).

Table 4.10*Distribution of the Households on the Basis of Family Type*

Type of Family	Number of Household	Percentage	Numbers of Family Members
Nuclear Family	6	40	4-6
Joint Family	7	46.66	7-8
Extended Family	2	13.33	9
Total	15 households	100%	

Source: Field Survey (2023).

The distribution of family types among the 15 sampled households indicates that the majority (46.66%) belong to joint families, followed by 40% in nuclear families and 13.33% in extended families. This data suggests that the Musahar community in the study area predominantly prefers joint and nuclear family structures, reflecting their cultural and socio-economic lifestyle. The prevalence of joint families may indicate a reliance on shared resources and collective living, which is common in economically marginalized communities.

Additionally, the data highlights the family size distribution within these households. The largest proportion (46.66%) of households consists of 7 to 8 family members, followed by 40% with 4 to 6 members, and 13.33% with 9 members. This suggests that larger family sizes are a common trend among the Musahar community, which could be attributed to traditional family structures, economic dependencies, and cultural norms.

The overall findings indicate that the community relies on extended kinship networks for economic and social support, reinforcing the need for targeted interventions in housing, education, and livelihood opportunities to enhance their living conditions and economic security.

4.3 Causes of Low Socio-Economic Status of Respondents

The perspectives of all 30 respondents (15 children and 15 parents) regarding the primary reasons for their socio-economic disadvantage and social exclusion have been documented based on data collected from the field. The analysis of these responses is presented below.

Table 4.11*Distribution of Causes for Low Socio-economic Status of the Respondent's Families*

S.N	Cases	Frequency (Children and Parents)	%
1.	Lack of awareness	12	40
2.	Lack of education	11	36.66
3.	Own Culture	2	6.66
4.	Lack of opportunity and participation	5	16.66
Total		30 Respondents	100%

Source: Field Survey (2023).

The data presented in the above table indicate that the primary factor contributing to the low socio-economic status and social exclusion of respondents' families is a lack of awareness, as reported by 40% of participants. Additionally, 36.66% of respondents identified a lack of education as the main cause of their socio-economic disadvantage. Furthermore, 16.66% attributed their condition to limited opportunities and participation in social and economic activities. Lastly, 6.66% of respondents cited their own cultural practices as a key factor influencing their existing state of social exclusion in the study area.

4.4 Educational Status of Respondents and Parental Involvement in Children's Education

Significant efforts have been made to assess children's educational performance, access to schooling, and parental involvement in their education. Furthermore, different situations of the school age children with regard to the education have been identified.

4.4.1 Current Educational Situation of Children and their Access to School

Children's educational experiences can be influenced by several factors, including school dropout, late enrolment, class repetition, and irregular attendance.

Here in this research, Children who discontinue their education before reaching the age of fifteen and completing grade 10 are considered to have dropped out of school.

Another challenge is late enrolment, where children begin their formal education after the age of six, leading to delays in their academic progress.

Additionally, some students struggle with academic performance and are required to repeat the same grade multiple times. This repetition often results in frustration and discouragement, increasing the likelihood of dropping out.

Similarly, irregular school attendance, characterized by frequent absences or inconsistent participation in classes, negatively affects students' learning and overall academic performance.

All these factors play a crucial role in shaping the educational situation and outcomes of children, particularly in marginalized communities such as the Musahar community.

Table 4.12

Distribution of Children Respondents by their Current Educational Situation and Access to School

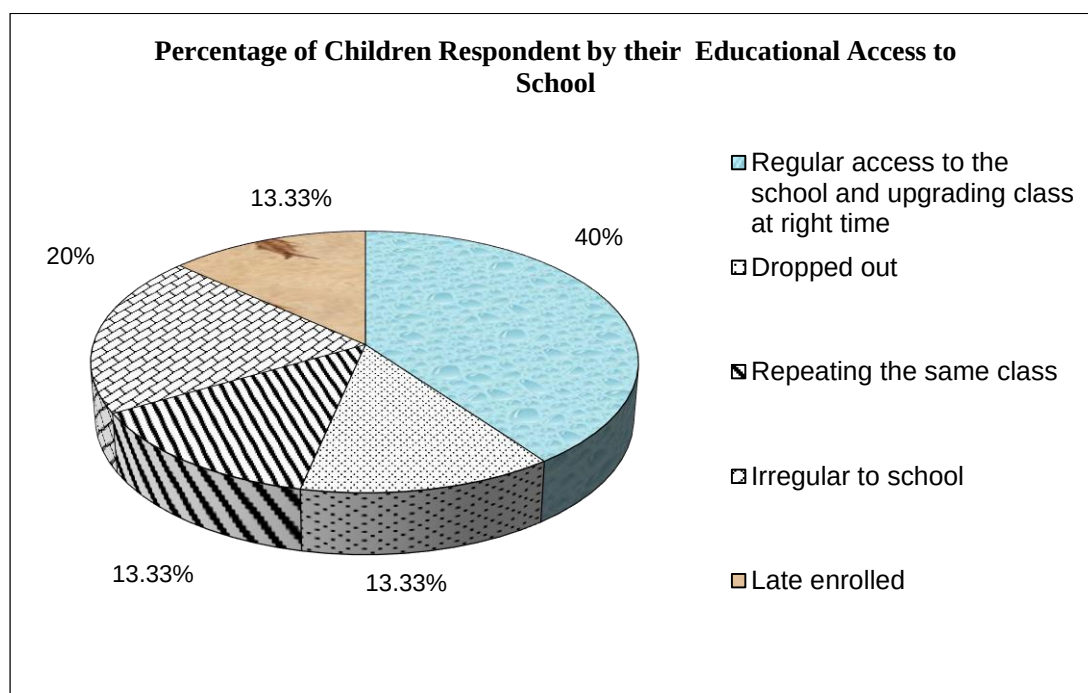
Situation of Educational Access to School	Frequency	Dropped out and Repeating Class	Percentage	Reason of Dropped out	Remarks
Regular access to the school and upgrading class at right time	6	-	40%		
Dropped out	1	5 class	13.33%	Frequently failed and older than other age in the class Due to the responsibility to support family	
	1	7 class			
Repeating the same class	1	5 class	13.33%		repeating the class 2 nd time
	1	7 class			
Irregular to school	3		20%		7-10 days absents per months
Late enrolled	2	-	13.33%		
Total	15 children		100%		

Source: Field Survey (2023).

Figure 4.2 below shows the percentage of children respondent by their educational Access to School.

Figure 4.2

Percentage of Children Respondent by their Educational Access to School



Source: Field Survey (2023).

The data presented in the above table and pie charts indicate that among the 15 sampled school-age children, 40% (6) had regular access to education and progressed through their classes without interruption. However, the remaining 60% (9) experienced various disruptions that hindered their normal access to education. Among these affected children, 13.33% (2) had completely dropped out of school before the age of 15 one from grade 5 and the other from grade 7 due to repeated academic failures, being older than their classmates, or family responsibilities. Another 13.33% (2) were enrolled in school late, after the age of six, while an equal percentage (13.33%) were found repeating the same grade, specifically grades 5 and 7. Additionally, 20% (3) of the respondents exhibited irregular attendance, missing school for 7 to 10 days each month. Overall, the findings indicate that a significant portion of school-age children (60%) have faced challenges in accessing education, ultimately impacting their academic progress and performance.

4.4.2 Education Status of Parents and Children

Parental education plays a crucial role in shaping various aspects of their children's daily lives and future careers. A parent's level of education significantly influences how they guide, nurture, and support their children. Generally, educated parents are more likely to provide strong encouragement, informed guidance, and constructive feedback, which positively impact their children's education, compared to those with limited education.

Since the family serves as a child's first learning environment, parents naturally take on the role of their first educators. From this standpoint, examining how differences in parental education affect children's access to schooling and overall educational experience is essential. To explore this, key educational indicators such as school dropout rates, grade repetition, late enrolment, and irregular attendance were analysed in relation to the educational background of parents in the study area.

Table 4.13 below shows the educational Status of parents and its relation with educational situation of children.

Table 4.13*Educational Status of Parents and Children*

S.N.	No. of Children Respondents	Level of Education of Parents	Parents		%	Situation of Children for Educational Access to School with the Level of Parents Education				
			Father	Mother		Regular Access to the School and Upgrading Class	Dropped Out	Repeating the Same Class	Irregular to School	Late Enrolled
1.	8	Illiterate	√	√	53.33	1	2	2	2	2
2.	3	Literate	√	√	20	2			1	
3.	3	3 to 5 class	√	√	20	2				
4.	1	6 class	√	×	6.66	1				
Total	15 Children →				100%	6 children	2 children	2 children	3 children	2 children

Source: Field Survey (2023).

The table shows the relationship between parents' education levels and their children's educational access. There were 15 children in the survey, with parents of varying educational backgrounds.

53.33% (8 children) have illiterate parents, where both father and mother lack formal education. For these children, educational outcomes are quite varied: 1 has regular access to school, 2 have dropped out, 2 are repeating the same class, 2 attend irregularly, and 2 enrolled late.

20% (3 children) have literate parents, with both father and mother having basic literacy. Among these children, 2 have regular access to school, while 1 attends irregularly.

Another 20% (3 children) have parents with 3-5 years of education. All of these children have regular access to school, suggesting that even modest parental education positively impacts children's school attendance.

6.66% (1 child) has a father with 6 years of education while the mother is not educated. This child has regular access to school.

Overall, the data reveals a potential correlation between parents' educational levels and their children's educational outcomes. Children with more educated parents tend to have better school access and fewer educational challenges. In total, only 6 children (40%) have regular access to school, while 9 children (60%) face educational barriers in the form of dropping out (2), repeating classes (2), irregular attendance (3), or late enrolment (2).

Fieldwork findings indicate that school dropouts were primarily due to older age compared to peers and the necessity of contributing to household income. Similarly, frequent school absences were often linked to children having to assist with family responsibilities. This analysis suggests that parental education level may be an important factor in determining children's educational stability and success.

4.4.3 Parent's Involvement in Children's Education

Parental involvement in a child's education typically includes attending PTA meetings, making periodic visits to the school to inquire about academic progress, supervising their studies at home, fulfilling their educational needs, and fostering a supportive learning environment.

This study identified a significant lack of parental engagement in children's education within the study area. Table No. 4.14 below shows the distribution of parent on the basis of their involvement in children education.

Table 4.14

Parents Involvement in their Children's Education

S.N.	Number of Parent Respondents	Attend in PTA Meeting at School	Visit Children's School for Feedback	Support or Supervise Children's Studies at Home	Providing Educational Materials	Goal to See Children in Future
1.	3	Sometimes	Sometimes	Only in free time	Sometimes	Teacher
2.	7	Never	Sometimes	Only in Free time	Sometimes	Send abroad for employment
3.	4	Never	Never	Only in free time	Sometimes	Driver \police
4.	1	Sometimes	Never	Only in free time	Sometimes	Doctor but do not think possible
Total	15 parents					

Source: Field Survey (2023).

The data from the above table reveals that parental engagement in school-related activities is generally low. Out of 15 parents surveyed, only a few occasionally attend PTA meetings, while the majority never participate. Similarly, visiting children's schools for feedback is infrequent, with some parents making occasional visits and others never engaging in such activities. This limited involvement may affect children's academic development and their connection to the school environment.

Regarding support for children's education at home, all parents provide some level of supervision, but only during their free time. This suggests that education is not a primary focus in their daily routines, possibly due to work or other commitments. Additionally, the provision of educational materials is inconsistent, with parents reporting that they do so only sometimes. This irregular support could impact children's learning outcomes and access to necessary resources.

Parents also have diverse aspirations for their children's futures. Some wish for their children to become teachers, drivers, or police officers, while others hope they will seek employment opportunities abroad. Notably, one parent expressed a desire for their child to become a doctor but doubted its feasibility, highlighting concerns about financial and educational limitations. These aspirations reflect both ambition and the socioeconomic challenges faced by families in supporting higher education.

Low Parental Engagement: The limited participation in school activities may hinder children's academic motivation and performance, as parental involvement is a key factor in educational success.

Limited Time for Supervision: Parents support their children's studies only in their free time, indicating that economic or occupational responsibilities take priority over educational engagement.

4.5 Suggestions of Respondents to Improve the Social Exclusion of their Families in Musahar Community

Table 4.15 presents the respondents' suggestions for addressing social exclusion and improving the socio-economic conditions of their families in the Musahar community. These recommendations reflect their perspectives on overcoming barriers to social inclusion and fostering better opportunities for development

Table 4.15*Suggestions of Respondents to Improve the Social Exclusion of Musahar Community.*

S.N.	Suggestions	No. of Respondents (Children and Parent)	%	Remarks
1.	Social and cultural awareness	2	6.66	
2.	Provide the full scholarship (including school uniform, tiffin, stationary, and fees etc) for quality of education for musahar children both in private and public school	7	23.33	
3.	Need to provide some registered land for housing and agriculture	11	36.66	
4.	Priority in job opportunity to the parents	8	26.66	
5.	Vocational skill training program	2	6.66	
Total	Total	30 respondent	100%	

Source: Field Survey (2023).

The data presented in the above table reflects the diverse suggestions from 30 respondents, including both children and parents, aimed at enhancing the socio-economic conditions of the Musahar community. A significant majority of participants (36.66%) underscored the necessity for registered land for housing and agriculture, implying this as a fundamental step towards improving their living conditions. Following this, 26.66% expressed a need for priority in job opportunities for parents, highlighting employment as a crucial factor for socio-economic upliftment. Additionally, 23.33% of respondents advocated for comprehensive scholarships covering all educational expenses not only in public school but also in the private school for their children, which indicates a collective desire for quality education as a pathway out of exclusion. Lastly, 6.66% suggested a focus on social and cultural awareness, as well as vocational skill training programs for the parents and family members, emphasizing the importance of holistic development. It is evident that the

suggestions reflect a multifaceted approach to overcoming barriers to social inclusion, focusing on education, employment, land ownership, and awareness initiatives.

In conclusion, the analysis of the suggestions from the Musahar community underscores a pressing need for targeted interventions in land rights, employment opportunities, and educational support, which collectively could foster better socio-economic conditions and enhance social inclusion for its members.

4.6 Suggestion of Respondents to Improve the Children Education in Musahar Community

Table 4.16 below presents various suggestions from respondents to enhance children's education in the Musahar community, based on the options provided in the researcher's questions.

Table 4.16

Suggestions of Respondents to Improve the Children Education in Musahar Community.

S.N.	Suggestions	No. of Respondents (Parent)	No. of Respondents (Children)	Total Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
1.	Sponsor for school education with Family support program	3	2	5	16.66
2.	Full scholarship program including lunch, stationary, uniform and school fees in private school .	5	7	12	40
3.	Family and community awareness and counselling program and provide free education for private boarding school	3	3	6	20
4.	Government has to provide special counselling program in the community and manage the proper income source to the parents	4	3	7	23.33
Total	Total Respondents	15 parents	15 children	30 Respondent	100%

Source: Field Survey (2023).

The above table presents various suggestions from respondents to improve children's education in the Musahar community. Among the four given suggestions, the full scholarship program, which includes lunch, stationery, uniforms, and school fees in private schools, received the highest support, with 12 respondents (40%) favoring it. This indicates a strong preference for direct financial and material assistance in education.

The second most preferred suggestion, endorsed by 7 respondents (23.33%), was the government providing special counselling programs in the community and managing a proper income source for parents. This highlights the community's need for broader socio-economic support alongside education.

The family and community awareness and counselling program, which also includes free education for private boarding schools, was supported by 6 respondents (20%), showing a moderate level of importance placed on awareness and psychological support for both students and parents.

The least favoured option was sponsorship for school education with a family support program, selected by 5 respondents (16.66%). While financial sponsorship is acknowledged as beneficial, it appears to be seen as less impactful compared to full scholarships and systemic interventions.

In summary, the respondents prioritize direct financial aid (scholarships) over other forms of assistance, followed by community counselling and economic support. Awareness programs and educational sponsorship, while valued, receive comparatively lower preference, suggesting that the community views financial barriers as the most significant challenge in children's education.

4.7 Health and Sanitation Situation of Respondents

Health and sanitation are critical factors in determining the overall well-being of any community. This section analyses the health and sanitation conditions of respondents, with a specific focus on household treatment patterns in the Musahar community, based on data collected from fieldwork. Examining these aspects provides insight into prevailing healthcare practices, hygiene standards, and the challenges the community faces in accessing adequate medical and sanitation facilities.

4.7.1 Household Treatment Pattern of Respondents in the Musahar Community

The household treatment patterns of respondents in the Musahar community reflect their healthcare-seeking behaviour and access to medical services. This section explores the methods used for treating illnesses within households. Understanding these patterns provides valuable insights into the community's health practices and challenges.

Table 4.17

Treatment Pattern of Respondents in the Musahar Community.

Treatment Pattern	No. of Households	Percentage %
Local Health Post	5	33.33
Private Medical or Clinic	1	6.66
Priority in Dhami Jhakri	3	20
Both local Health Post and Dhami Jhankri	6	40
Total Households	15	100%

Source: Field Survey (2023).

The data in the above Table shows how households in the Musahar community seek medical treatment, reflecting social exclusion, economic challenges, and cultural beliefs. Among the 15 sampled households, 40% rely on both local health posts and traditional healers (dhami jhankri), indicating that while they seek modern healthcare, they also trust traditional healing methods. Additionally, 33.33% of households depend solely on local health posts, likely because they are more affordable and accessible in the study area.

Only one household (6.66%) chooses private medical or clinic services, which are more expensive than local health posts. This suggests that financial limitations prevent most households from seeking private healthcare. Meanwhile, 20% of households prioritize traditional healers, showing a strong cultural connection to these practices. This preference could stem from a lack of awareness, trust issues with modern healthcare, or financial struggles. The data suggests that many in the Musahar community have limited access to proper medical services, reflecting their marginalization in mainstream healthcare.

The way, families in the Musahar community seek medical care affects children's education. Many rely on traditional healers or affordable local health posts, which may not always provide effective treatment. As a result, children suffer from prolonged illnesses, leading to frequent absences, poor academic performance, and higher dropout rates. Additionally, financial difficulties in accessing better healthcare reflect the broader economic struggles of these families, limiting their ability to support children's education. This pattern of inadequate healthcare access further deepens social exclusion and creates barriers to educational opportunities for Musahar children.

7.7.2 Health Problems Frequently Affecting in the Musahar Community

Health problems in the Musahar community are a significant concern, affecting the overall well-being and quality of life of its members. This section of analysis examines the common health issues frequently experienced by the respondents in the study area in 2023.

Table 4.18

Health Problems Faced by the Respondents.

Health Problems	No. of Parents	Percentage (%)	No. of Children	Percentage (%)
Viral Fever	3	20	8	53.33
Jaundice	2	13.33	1	6.66
Common Cold and Cough	5	33.33	2	13.33
Diarrhea	4	26.66	3	20
Skin Wound and Allergy	1	6.66	1	6.66
Total	15	100%	15	100%

Source: Field Survey (2023).

The data presented in the above table highlights the significant health challenges faced by parents and children in the Musahar community. Among the respondents, viral fever emerges as the most prevalent health issue among children, affecting 53.33% of the reported cases. This high incidence suggests poor living

conditions, lack of sanitation, and limited access to healthcare, which contribute to frequent infections. Common cold and cough is another major concern, affecting 33.33% of parents and 13.33% of children. This could be due to inadequate housing, exposure to harsh weather, and malnutrition, all of which weaken immune systems.

Additionally, diarrhoea, which impacts 26.66% of parents and 20% of children, signifies possible contamination of drinking water and poor hygiene practices. The presence of jaundice in both parents (13.33%) and children (6.66%) points to deeper health risks, potentially linked to unsafe drinking water and malnourishment. The occurrence of skin wounds and allergies among both parents and children, though at a lower percentage (6.66% each), still indicates vulnerability due to unhygienic living conditions and lack of proper healthcare.

The data reflects the precarious health situation in the Musahar community, where both parents and children are highly susceptible to preventable diseases. The high burden of illnesses, particularly viral fever, diarrhea, and common cold, underscores the inadequate access to healthcare and poor sanitation in this marginalized community.

7.7.3 Practice of hand washing by Respondents in the Musahar Community

The practice of hand washing plays a crucial role in maintaining personal hygiene and preventing the spread of infectious diseases.

Table 4.19

Practice of Hand Washing by Respondents

Practice of Hand Washing	No. of Children Respondents	%	No. of Parent Respondents	%
The practice of handwashing with soap before preparing meals and after using the toilet.	7	46.66	9	60
No Practice	8	53.33	6	40
Total Respondents	15 Children	100%	15 Parents	100%

Source: Field Survey (2023).

The table illustrates the handwashing practices among 15 child respondents and their 15 parents in the Musahar community. The data reveals that only 46.66% of children (7 out of 15) practice handwashing with soap before preparing meals and after using the toilet. Similarly, 60% of parents (9 out of 15) follow this hygiene practice. However, 53.33% of children (8 out of 15) and 40% of parents (6 out of 15) do not engage in regular handwashing with soap, indicating a significant gap in hygiene awareness and practice within the community.

The findings suggest that a considerable portion of both children and parents lack proper hand hygiene habits, which may contribute to increased health risks such as infections, diarrhea, and skin diseases. This inadequate practice could be linked to factors such as low awareness, limited access to clean water and hygiene products, and prevailing socio-economic conditions. The Musahar community, historically marginalized and socio-economically disadvantaged, often faces challenges in accessing essential health and sanitation resources. This lack of proper hygiene has a direct impact on children's education in the study area, as some children experience irregular school attendance and are unable to complete their homework due to illness

CHAPTER FIVE

CHALLENGES FACED BY CHILDREN IN THEIR EDUCATION DUE TO THE SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF FAMILY

The education of children in the study area is greatly influenced by the social and economic conditions of their families. It is observed that Musahar as a marginalized community, social exclusion plays a significant role in limiting children's educational opportunities. Economic hardship remains a primary barrier, as most Musahar families face extreme poverty due to landlessness and a lack of stable employment. Many children are forced into labour at a young age to contribute to their family's income, leading to irregular school attendance and a high dropout rate. Additionally, the community environment presents further challenges, as children are often surrounded by peers who have already left school, engaging in unproductive or harmful activities. This exposure discourages school-going children and negatively impacts their discipline and academic performance.

Parental attitudes and behaviours also have a profound effect on children's education. Alcoholism, domestic conflicts, and a general lack of awareness about the importance of schooling prevent parents from actively engaging in their children's academic progress. Many parents failed to communicate with teachers or monitor their children's performance, creating a disconnect between students, educators, and families. Cultural factors further compound these challenges, with deeply ingrained gender discrimination and early marriage limiting girls' access to education. Boys are often prioritized for schooling, while daughters are expected to marry early and take on household responsibilities, making it difficult for them to continue their education.

Despite these obstacles, there are signs of positive change, with some parents beginning to recognize the value of education and supporting their children's learning. However, without significant social, economic, and cultural interventions, children in the Musahar community will continue to face barriers to education. Addressing these challenges requires targeted policies, community engagement, and increased awareness to ensure that all children, regardless of their background, have access to quality education.

5.1 The Effect of Economic Hardship on the Children's Education

In Nepal, agriculture is the primary source of livelihood for many families, with land ownership playing a crucial role in sustaining their economic well-being. However, for the Musahar community in the research area, landlessness is a significant issue. Most families either have no land or possess only small, unregistered plots near riverbanks, leaving them in a state of extreme financial instability.

A parent described their family's financial challenges, explaining, *"Our household depends solely on my husband's income, and whenever I get the opportunity, I also earn by working as a daily wage laborer during agricultural seasons. I help neighbours with tasks such as planting and harvesting crops. Unfortunately, we don't own any farmland."* (Parent: Rampati Devi Majhi). Her husband's earnings as a seasonal laborer in a nearby market are the family's primary source of income.

Another parent expressed similar hardships, saying, *"Since I don't own any farmland, I have to work on others' land to sustain my family. It's difficult to explain the depth of our poverty. How can I afford my daughter's education when we have neither land nor a proper home or regular income? Unlike others in the village who live in proper brick houses, our home is just a temporary small cottage that leaks when it rains and is flood-affected. We don't even have our own water pump for drinking water."*

Many parents pointed out that economic difficulties force their children into labor instead of school. One parent noted, *"Some children in the Musahar community must work to secure food for themselves. Some find work outside the village, while others spend time along the riverbank or in nearby forests rather than attending school."*

The necessity for children to earn at an early age, rather than focusing on education, was highlighted by another parent: *"In our community, we don't own land or have any business culture. By the time children reach grades 6 or 7, they start working to contribute to the family income. They gather firewood from the forest to sell in local markets or take up labor work at construction sites and riverbanks. Once they start earning, they no longer see the need for education."*

Another community member (parent and local leader) reinforced this reality: *"Children who have completed grade six or seven often begin working in river areas or construction sites, as their parents expect them to contribute financially. Some parents even tell their children, 'Let's go load sand onto a tractor if we all work together, we can make 700 to 900 Rupees in a day.'"*

For many families, a child's education takes a backseat to immediate financial needs. As one parent admitted, *"Sometimes, we prefer that our children work rather than go to school. If they skip school to help with labor, we don't mind. The children don't mind either because, at their age, they are happy to avoid school."*

Financial constraints make it difficult for parents to invest in their children's education, as Rampati Devi Majhi (parent) also emphasized. Because of extreme poverty, many children must work long hours, making it challenging to focus on schoolwork or complete assignments at home.

A 17-year-old children Respondent who dropped out of school shared how economic struggles directly affected his education: *"Irregular attendance and school dropouts are mostly due to financial difficulties. When I was in grade 9, my father asked me to help him with labor work in another village. He had already spoken and requested to my teacher to approve my absence, so I had no choice but to go. Sometimes, when parents leave for full-time labor work for several days, the eldest child has to stay home and care for younger siblings, leading to further school absences."* And gradually, this culture motivates and pushes them to drop out of school education.

This situation indicates that some parents, overwhelmed by their immediate financial struggles, may not fully recognize the long-term impact of neglecting their children's education. As a result, many Musahar children lack a supportive learning environment at home, which leads to irregular school attendance and poor academic performance.

5.2 Community Environment and Its Impact on the Children's Education

The experiences shared by "parents Respondent" indicate that the local environment has a significant negative influence on the education and behavior of children in the Musahar community. One of the main concerns is the presence of unschooled children who spend their time playing and working near the river, which can distract those who are attending school.

“A single mother respondent” from the musahar community expressed her concerns about the surroundings, stating *that many older children who have dropped out of school wander around the area, listening to music, smoking, and consuming alcohol. In such an environment, school-going children are at risk of picking up undesirable habits, which can negatively impact their discipline and academic performance. She also pointed out that children from single-parent or alcoholic households often skip school, choosing instead to spend time with non-schooled peers.*

Additionally, children from the Musahar community face social exclusion, as families from other mixed neighbourhoods often discourage their children from interacting or playing with them. This lack of exposure to a diverse peer group further limits their social development and educational motivation.

The community environment plays a crucial role in shaping the educational engagement and behaviour of Musahar children. The presence of unschooled peers and negative influences within their surroundings often distracts them from their studies and encourages undisciplined behaviour. Furthermore, social isolation from children of other communities deprives them of positive peer interactions, limiting their opportunities for academic and personal growth. Addressing these challenges requires community-level interventions, awareness programs, and implementing support systems can help establish a more favourable learning environment for children in the Musahar community.

5.3 Parental Attitudes and Behaviour and Its Impact on Children's Education

Findings from the field research in the study area indicate that children in Musahar families not only struggle with financial hardships but also face emotional distress due to their parents' actions. Parental conflicts, often fuelled by alcohol consumption, directly impact children's well-being and education.

One parent respondent, a mother, described the difficulties she faces at home. She explained that *her husband drinks excessively every day, becomes aggressive, and disturbs the household for long hours at night. Despite repeated efforts to persuade him to stop drinking, he refuses to change, creating a constant state of tension and conflict within the home.*

Similarly, another children respondent shared that his father consumes alcohol heavily every night, encourages his mother to do the same, and irresponsibly spends his earnings. As a result, frequent arguments erupt between the parents, often involving offensive language, even in the presence of their children. This hostile environment causes significant emotional distress for the children.

Lack of Awareness and Its Impact on Children

A local teacher, serving as a key informant, highlighted the lack of proper parental guidance in the community, largely due to limited awareness. He observed that many parents prioritize spending money on alcohol, cigarettes, and gambling rather than on their children's education. While some children receive school scholarships, irregular attendance remains a concern, as many parents view education as a mere formality rather than a serious priority. Further he observed that Dalit children, in general, have limited interaction and communication with their teachers. Furthermore, parents rarely visit schools to monitor their children's academic progress, highlighting a significant gap in the relationship between students, teachers, and parents.

Despite these obstacles, certain children in the community have demonstrated academic excellence, ranking among the top students in their classes. Additionally, some younger parents are showing a growing awareness of the importance of education and are making efforts to support their children's learning. However, the broader community remains largely indifferent to issues such as domestic violence, alcoholism, and children's rights, with little to no intervention from neighbours.

The findings indicate that children from the Musahar community often face educational challenges due to inadequate resources and lack of family awareness towards their children education. Additionally, Dalit children, including those from the Musahar community, tend to have limited interaction and communication with their teachers. A key factor contributing to this issue is the lack of parental involvement in their children's education. Many parents do not visit schools to monitor their children's academic progress, leading to a weak connection between students, teachers, and parents. This lack of engagement further hampers the educational development of Musahar children, making it difficult for them to receive the necessary support and guidance

Community Challenges and the Need for Change

Another key informant, a local teacher and community leader, provided further insights into the challenges faced by Musahar children. He noted *that many children follow in their parents' footsteps, engaging in behaviours such as early alcohol consumption, smoking, and underage marriage. Poor hygiene and lack of cleanliness at home further contribute to the community's marginalized status. He stressed that instead of blaming external factors, community members must take responsibility for improving their own circumstances.*

Positive Shifts in Attitudes

Encouragingly, some parents within the Musahar community are beginning to realize the value of education. Another parent respondent, a mother, expressed her determination to support her children's education despite financial struggles. She recounted how a head teacher had advised her about the long-term benefits of education, particularly for her daughters. She was committed to ensuring her children continued their studies, even if it meant working tirelessly to support them.

A positive trend has emerged, with a growing number of children attending school compared to previous years. This shift highlights a divide within the community while some parents remain indifferent to education due to a lack of awareness, others actively strive to secure better opportunities for their children. Those who recognize the importance of education see it as a path to transformation, while those who neglect it continue to misuse their earnings and resources.

5.4 Cultural Contexts and Its Impact on Children's Education

Fieldwork findings indicate that gender-based discrimination is deeply ingrained in the Musahar community, where a strong preference for male children affects educational opportunities. For instance, *a mother (parent respondent) shared that 'despite having three daughters, her husband still hopes for a son'.*

A 16-year-old girl (children respondent) who was married at the age of 15 and had to drop out of school in the seventh grade, she described how sons receive more parental care and financial support for school expenses, including daily allowances for food.

In contrast, daughters are often provided very limited opportunity comparing with son. And she further told that some parents preferred to send their son to a private boarding school and the daughter to a public school. Additionally, many families prioritize marrying off their daughters early rather than investing in their education, as they believe there are no long-term benefits in educating girls. However, some families are gradually recognizing the importance of girls' education and have started to give it more priority.

Beyond the preference for sons, the traditional practice of early marriage presents another significant obstacle to education. A mother respondent recounted that *community members often perceive older, unmarried girls as undesirable for marriage, fuelling the pressure to arrange marriages at a young age.* Moreover, societal norms discourage interactions between boys and girls, as such interactions are often met with gossip and negative judgments. This further compels families to arrange early marriages to maintain their social standing.

In most cases, continuing education after marriage is nearly impossible for girls in the Musahar community. Once married, young brides move into their husbands' homes, where household responsibilities take precedence over education. The primary motivation for early marriage is the belief that delaying it will reduce a girl's chances of finding a suitable match.

Despite these longstanding traditions, some young parents are beginning to acknowledge the value of education for their daughters. A few respondents shared that they now wait until their daughters complete tenth grade before arranging their marriages, understanding that post-marriage education is impractical. However, still there is lack of awareness of postponing marriage until college graduation and is still not practiced in the musahar community in the study area.

The deeply rooted cultural norms in the Musahar community, particularly son preference and early marriage, have significantly hindered children's education, especially for girls. While some progress has been observed in attitudes towards female education, early marriage remains a substantial barrier. Without substantial cultural shifts and policy interventions, girls in this community will continue to face

educational disadvantages. To create lasting change, there is a need for increased awareness, community engagement, and policy support to ensure that education becomes a priority for all children, regardless of gender.

5.5 Caste-Based Discrimination among Musahar Children and Its Impact on Education

Although the practice of untouchability was legally abolished in Nepal in 1963, caste-based discrimination remains deeply entrenched in many aspects of daily life, particularly for marginalized communities: Musahar. According to the collected data Information through interview and FGD from the study area in this research, despite some progress in social integration, Musahar children continue to experience exclusion in both social and educational settings, which significantly hinders their academic development and self-esteem.

Various data information collected in the field work in the study area indicate that while there is no explicit caste-based discrimination from teachers or school administrators, an evident communication gap exists between Musahar students and their teachers. This gap can lead to feelings of neglect and discourage students from actively participating in classroom discussions, ultimately affecting their learning outcomes. Moreover, due to their socio-economic status and historical marginalization, Musahar children often struggle to integrate into peer groups, as they are frequently isolated by students from higher castes.

Likewise, in public spaces such as local markets and local festivals, traditional caste-based norms appear to be gradually weakening, allowing for some level of social integration. However, subtle forms of discrimination still existed within schools, particularly in shared activities like sitting arrangements and water-sharing among students. These indirect forms of exclusion can create a sense of alienation among Musahar children in the study area, further reinforcing their marginalization in educational settings.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Summary

The primary aim of this research is to examine key aspects of social exclusion and its impact on children's education within the Musahar community. This study explores how family-based social exclusion influences educational access and development among Musahar children.

In Nepal, many children from marginalized and disadvantaged groups face deprivation, lacking essential human needs such as food, clothing, shelter, basic child rights, and other fundamental requirements for education and development. This research utilized qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions (FGDs), as primary data sources. Fieldwork was conducted in the Musahar community of Parsagadhi Municipality-1, Badaruwa, Parsa District, Nepal. The total of 15 households with school-aged children were purposefully selected as samples. From these households, 15 children aged 10–18 years and their parents 30 respondents in total were interviewed using semi-structured interview techniques.

The study presents the experiences and perspectives of Musahar children and their parents regarding social exclusion and education, aiming to understand how family exclusion influences children's educational opportunities and development.

Findings suggest that family-based social exclusion significantly impacts children's education and overall growth. Various factors contribute to this exclusion, including parental income, educational background, employment status, lack of opportunities, limited social participation, land ownership issues, restricted access to resources, caste-based discrimination, and deeply rooted traditional practices. Social exclusion leads to poverty, affecting families in multiple ways socially, economically, culturally, educationally, and health-wise ultimately fostering inequality, distress, and continued marginalization.

Key findings reveal that 60% of children face educational barriers, with financial constraints, socio-cultural influences, and structural barriers identified as significant factors. The analysis of household occupations indicates a high illiteracy rate among parents, perpetuating a cycle of limited educational opportunities. Landholding patterns show economic vulnerability, with most households lacking registered land. The study identifies a lack of awareness (40%) and education (36.66%) as primary causes of low socio-economic status. Parental involvement in education is notably low, impacting children's educational outcomes. Suggestions for improvement include scholarship programs and community awareness initiatives. Health treatment patterns reflect reliance on local health posts and traditional healers, indicating economic challenges and cultural beliefs. The prevalence of illnesses underscores inadequate healthcare access and poor sanitation, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to enhance socio-economic conditions and educational support.

The main findings of this study are as follows:

- 1. Demographic Characteristics:** The study involved 30 respondents, equally divided between children (15) and parents (15) from 15 sampled households (one children and one parent from each sampled households) in Musahar community, highlighting the importance of understanding both perspectives in educational access.
- 2. Gender Distribution:** The gender distribution revealed a higher proportion of male respondents, with 66.67% of child participants being male and 60% of parent respondents being male. This indicates a potential gender bias in educational access and societal roles.
- 3. Age Distribution:** A significant portion of respondents (70%) fell within the 10-30 age range, emphasizing the focus on younger generations and their educational experiences.
- 4. Household Income:** The majority of households reported low monthly incomes, with 53.33% earning between Rs. 4,000 and Rs. 6,000. This financial strain directly impacts their ability to support children's education, leading to barriers such as late enrolment and school dropouts.
- 5. Educational Attainment:** A concerning trend was observed in educational attainment, with a high illiteracy rate among parents (53.33% illiterate). This lack of education among parents correlates with the educational challenges faced by their children,

including high dropout rates and irregular attendance.

6. Occupational Patterns: The predominant occupations among households were low-paying and labour-intensive, with 66.66% engaged in construction work. This economic vulnerability limits families' capacity to invest in education and other essential services.

7. Barriers to Education: The analysis indicated that 60% of children faced significant barriers to education, including late enrolment (13.33%), irregular attendance (20%), and dropout rates (13.33%). These challenges are exacerbated by socio-cultural factors and financial constraints.

8. Parental Involvement: Low levels of parental involvement in education were noted, which negatively impacts children's educational outcomes. Educated parents tend to provide better support, indicating a need for community awareness programs.

The findings of this study underscore the critical socio-economic challenges faced by the Musahar community, particularly in relation to education. The data reveals a cycle of poverty and limited educational opportunities, driven by low household incomes, high illiteracy rates among parents, and inadequate parental involvement in children's education.

Influence of Parental Occupation and Income on Education

While parental income and occupation moderately affect access to education and academic performance, no major differences were observed among the sampled children in the Musahar community.

Parental Involvement and Student Success

Active parental participation in their children's academic activities and school engagements strongly correlates with better educational outcomes.

6.2 Conclusion

The conclusions of this study are based on the research findings. Since the Musahar community is one of the most marginalized and economically disadvantaged groups in the study area, several socio-cultural and economic factors have negatively influenced children's education. Household responsibilities, engagement in income-

generating activities to support the family, and deep-rooted cultural practices such as child marriage have significantly hindered children's access to education and academic performance.

Additionally, parental education plays a crucial role in shaping children's schooling and academic achievements. The study indicates that children from families with low parental education and minimal parental involvement in academics tend to face difficulties in accessing school and maintaining strong academic performance. Conversely, children whose parents have a higher level of education generally show better educational outcomes.

Parental engagement in a child's learning both at home and in school has a strong correlation with their academic success. This includes attending PTA meetings, visiting schools to track their child's progress, supervising studies at home, fulfilling educational needs, and creating a supportive learning environment. However, the study found that many parents in the Musahar community lacked active participation in their children's education, which contributed to poor school attendance and lower academic performance.

Objective 1. Nature of Family-Based Social Exclusion and its Effects:

This study highlights that family-based social exclusion in the Musahar community severely impacts children's educational opportunities. Socioeconomic constraints, such as landlessness, unstable employment, and low income, force children to prioritize work over schooling, leading to irregular attendance and high dropout rates. The lack of parental education and awareness further exacerbates this issue, as many parents are unable to provide adequate academic support. Gender biases and cultural practices, like early marriage, disproportionately affect girls' education. Additionally, poor housing, limited land ownership, inadequate infrastructure, poor health and sanitation and low participation in social and economic activities reinforce the cycle of exclusion and marginalization. To address these issues, targeted interventions such as economic assistance, educational awareness campaigns, and inclusive policies are crucial to breaking down the barriers preventing Musahar children from accessing quality education.

Objective 2. Challenges that Children Face in Accessing and Continuing their Education:

The findings of this study reveal that social exclusion significantly hinders the educational opportunities of children in the Musahar community. Economic instability, primarily driven by landlessness and inconsistent employment, compels many children to engage in labor at a young age, leading to frequent school absences and high dropout rates. The local environment further contributes to these challenges, as children are often influenced by peers who have already discontinued their education, thereby discouraging school attendance and academic persistence. Furthermore, parental factors such as alcohol dependency, household conflicts, and limited awareness regarding the significance of education hinder active parental involvement, weakening children's academic support systems. Cultural practices, particularly gender-based discrimination and early marriage, further restrict educational opportunities, especially for girls. While some positive shifts in attitudes toward education are emerging, sustained efforts through targeted policies, community involvement, and economic support are necessary to address these deep-rooted challenges and ensure equitable access to education for all Musahar children.

6.3 Theoretical Reflection

This research explores the relationship between social exclusion and education and challenges faced by children in the Musahar community by applying two theoretical frameworks: Human Capital Theory and the Capabilities Approach. These theories provide valuable insights into how economic constraints and structural inequalities shape educational opportunities for marginalized families.

The findings of this study align closely with Human Capital Theory, which posits that investment in education enhances individual productivity and economic mobility. The Musahar community faces significant financial hardships that limit their ability to invest in their children's education, perpetuating cycles of poverty. Consistent with the arguments of Becker (1962) and Schultz (1961), this study confirms that the lack of financial resources forces families to prioritize immediate economic survival over long-term educational benefits. Many children from this community engage in labor-intensive activities, resulting in irregular school attendance and high dropout rates.

Furthermore, the study reinforces the idea presented by Wu (2010) that financial constraints act as a major barrier to accessing education. In the Musahar community, education is often seen as a secondary concern due to economic pressures and the necessity for children to contribute to household income. This situation highlights the limitations of Human Capital Theory in addressing non-economic factors that contribute to educational exclusion. While financial aid programs and scholarships can mitigate economic constraints, they do not necessarily address social discrimination, lack of motivation, and inadequate school infrastructure.

In contrast, the Capabilities Approach, as developed by Amartya Sen (1999), provides a broader perspective that extends beyond economic investment in education. This approach emphasizes the importance of expanding individual freedoms and opportunities, acknowledging that poverty is not merely a lack of financial resources but also the deprivation of essential capabilities. The findings of this research support Sen's argument that structural barriers, such as caste-based discrimination and inadequate public services, significantly hinder the educational attainment of Musahar children.

This study reveals that, beyond financial hardship, social stigma and discrimination limit educational access for Musahar children. Schools often fail to provide an inclusive environment, reinforcing social exclusion. The Capabilities Approach underscores the importance of addressing these social inequalities through policies that promote inclusive curricula, community awareness campaigns, and improved school infrastructure. Unlike Human Capital Theory, which primarily focuses on economic returns, this approach highlights the transformative power of education in enhancing social justice and empowerment.

By integrating these theoretical perspectives, this research provides a more comprehensive understanding of the educational challenges faced by the Musahar community. While Human Capital Theory explains the economic limitations that hinder educational access, the Capabilities Approach highlights the broader social and structural barriers that perpetuate exclusion. Together, these frameworks reinforce the need for targeted interventions that address both financial and systemic challenges. Policies should not only focus on financial assistance but also aim to create an equitable educational environment that fosters inclusion, empowerment, and long-term social transformation.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Semi-Structure Interview Guide

Date:

A) Interview Guide for Children Respondents:

1. Personal Background

- Name:
- Address:
- Caste/Ethnicity:
- Sex:
- Age:
- Reading class:
- Name of Father: (Dead / Alive / Deserted / Do not know)
- Name of Mother: (Dead / Alive / Deserted / Do not know)

2. Educational Indicators

- How many years have you been in school?
- Are you currently enrolled in school? (Yes/No)
- Do you attend school regularly? (Yes/No) If no, why?
- Do you have enough reading and writing materials (copy, pencil, books, etc.)?
- Do you complete your homework every day? (Yes/No) If no, why?
- Who helps you with your homework at home?
- Are you happy with your school environment? (Yes/No) Why?
- What kind of behavior do your parents, teachers, and friends show toward you?
- Do you get any types of punishment or mistreatment at home or in school? If yes, what kind and by whom?

3. Social Indicators

- How often do you play or spend time with your friends?

- Have you ever felt discriminated against by classmates or teachers? (Yes/No) If yes, in what way?
- Do you participate in community events or programs? (Yes/No)
- Do you or any of your friends work to support the family? (Yes/No) If yes, what kind of work?

4. Economic Indicators

- How often do you get new school supplies and clothes?
- Do you have to work to help your family? (Yes/No) If yes, what kind of work?
- Do your parents pay for your education? (Yes/No) If yes, how much?

5. Health Indicators

- How many times do you eat in a day?
- Do you get enough food to eat? (Yes/No)
- Do you get tiffin during school time? (Yes/No) If yes, from where? (House/School)
- Is there a sanitary facility in your school? (Yes/No)
- What do you do when you feel sick? (Go to the hospital / health post / Jhakri / other)
- What are the common diseases you or your friends suffer from?

6. Parental Involvement in Education

- How often do your parents attend PTA meetings? (Never / Sometimes / Always)
- How often do your parents visit your school for inquiries? (Never / Sometimes / Always)
- How often do your parents help you with your homework? (Never / Sometimes / Always)
- How often do your parents supervise you while studying at home? (Never / Sometimes / Always)
- How often do your parents provide your educational needs? (Never / Sometimes / Always)

Semi-Structure Interview Guide with Parents

Date:

B) Interview Guide for Parent Respondents

1. Family Background

- Name:
- Relation to children:
- Number of children:
- Occupation:
- Education Level: (Literate / Illiterate)
- If literate, did you study at home or school?

2. Economic Indicators

- Nature of work (Farm work / Rearing cattle / Cooking / Dishwashing / Cloth washing / Cleaning / Other)
- Working hours per day:
- Land ownership status: (Yes/No) If yes, how much?
- Monthly income:
- Source of income:
- Monthly expenditure:
- Do you drink alcohol? (Yes/No) If yes, how much per day?

3. Health and Living Conditions

- What are the common diseases you or your children suffer from?
- How do you treat your children when they fall sick? (Hospital / Health post / Jhakri / Other)
- Do you have access to clean drinking water? (Yes/No)
- Do you have proper sanitation facilities at home? (Yes/No)

4. Children's Educational Details

- Do you have to pay for your child's school education? (Yes/No) If yes, how much per month?

- Has your child ever dropped out of school? (Yes/No) If yes, why?
- Total cost of investment in children's education per month:
- Children's reading hours per day:
- Academic performance of children (Good / Average / Bad)
- Exam results (Pass / Fail)
- School attendance per month:
- Does your child engage in any income-generating activity? (Yes/No) If yes, what does he/she do?
- How do you support your child's education?
- Does your child participate in extracurricular activities? (Yes/No)

5. Parental Involvement in Education

- How often do you attend PTA meetings? (Never / Sometimes / Always)
- How often do you visit your child's school for inquiries? (Never / Sometimes / Always)
- How often do you help your child with homework? (Never / Sometimes / Always)
- How often do you supervise your child to study at home? (Never / Sometimes / Always)
- How often do you provide for your child's educational needs? (Never / Sometimes / Always)

6. Future Aspirations

- What is your goal for your child's future? (Doctor / Teacher / Driver / Farmer / Engineer / Other)

Appendix-II: Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Checklist

Research Topic:

Challenges Faced by Children of Musahar Community in Education due to Social Exclusion of Family

Items	Descriptions
Activities	Focus Group Discussion (FGD)
FGD Themes	- Understanding Social Exclusion - Impact of Social Exclusion on Education - Barriers to Accessing and Continuing Education - Community and Institutional Support - Recommendations and Solutions
Locations	Parsagadhi municipality –1, Parsa District ,Nepal
Target Groups	Parents, caregivers, community leaders, and other relevant stakeholders in the Musahar community
Target Group Criteria	- Parents or caregivers of school-going children - Community leaders or activists - Educators or school representatives
Introduction	- Welcome participants and introduce the purpose of the discussion. - Explain the objectives of the study. - Ensure informed consent for participation and recording. - Assure confidentiality and voluntary participation.
Warm-Up (5 Minutes) • Introduction of Participants: Ask each participant to introduce themselves, their role in the community, and their experience with children's education. • Icebreaker Question: What do you think is the biggest challenge for children in the Musahar community regarding education?	
Discussion Themes and Key Questions	
Themes	Key Questions
Understanding Social	- How do Musahar families experience social exclusion

Exclusion	in daily life? - What are the common forms of discrimination faced by the Musahar community? - How does exclusion affect access to basic services like healthcare, employment, and government support? - Does social exclusion impact children's confidence and participation in community activities?
Impact of Social Exclusion on Education	-What difficulties do Musahar children face in getting admission to schools? - Do school authorities, teachers, or peers discriminate against Musahar children? - Are there cases of bullying or exclusion in schools? How does this affect their motivation? - How does the family's financial and social status affect children's ability to stay in school?
Barriers to Accessing and Continuing Education	- What are the main reasons why Musahar children drop out of school? - Are there specific subjects or activities where Musahar children struggle more? Why? - Do schools provide adequate support when children face challenges? - Are girls more disadvantaged than boys in accessing education? - Are there government or NGO programs supporting Musahar children's education? How effective are they?
Community and Institutional Support	- What kind of support do schools and local authorities provide to Musahar families? - Are there community-led initiatives to help Musahar children overcome educational challenges? - What role does the Musahar community itself play in ensuring children's education? - What improvements should be made at the school or government level to ensure better educational access?

Recommendations and Solutions	- What solutions do you suggest to improve access to education for Musahar children? - What message would you give to policymakers and organizations working with the Musahar community? - How can social inclusion be promoted in schools and the broader community?
Closing Questions: • Is there anything else you would like to share about social exclusion and education in your community? • Do you have any final recommendations for improving the situation? • Do you consent to having your comments included in our reports, with your name mentioned if necessary? (Please provide verbal confirmation. Any refusal will be acknowledged and respected.) Thank you all for your time and valuable insights. Your participation has been extremely helpful in understanding the challenges faced by the Musahar community. Before we conclude, does anyone have any final thoughts or questions? (Moderator: Address any questions or comments from participants.) End of Discussion	

Appendix-III: Key Informant Interview (KII) Checklist

Research Topic: Challenges Faced by Children of Musahar Community in Education due to Social Exclusion of Family.

Research Location: Parsagadhi Municipality-2, Parsa District

Target Informants: Local School teachers and Community Leaders

Date:.....	
Name of the respondent.....Address :.....	
Organization/Institution:.....Position.....Contact no.....	
Items	Details
Interview Type	Key Informant Interview (KII)
Key Themes	Social Exclusion, Educational Challenges, Institutional Support, and Solutions
Target Informants	Local Teachers and community leaders
Interview Introduction	- Introduction of the interviewer and purpose of the research. - Ensure confidentiality and voluntary participation. - Obtain verbal consent to proceed with the interview.
Interview Questions	
Themes	Key Questions
Understanding Social Exclusion	- How does social exclusion manifest in the daily lives of Musahar families? - What are the key factors contributing to their exclusion from mainstream society? - How does exclusion affect access to public services like education, healthcare, and employment?

Impact on Children's Education	- How do Musahar children perform academically compared to other students? - Do they complete homework and classroom assignments regularly? - How does family-based social exclusion impact school enrollment and attendance among Musahar children? - Do teachers and school authorities treat Musahar children differently compared to other students? - Are there instances of discrimination, bullying, or isolation of Musahar children in schools?
Barriers to Accessing Education	- How many Musahar children are enrolled in your school? - What is the attendance pattern of Musahar students? - Have you noticed frequent dropouts among Musahar children? What are the common reasons? - What are the main reasons for school dropouts among Musahar children? - How does economic hardship within families influence children's education? - Are there cultural or gender-related barriers affecting children's education, particularly for girls?
Institutional Support and Government Initiatives	- What programs or policies exist to support the education of Musahar children? - How effective are government scholarships, mid-day meal programs, or other incentives in keeping Musahar children in school? - What are the major gaps in government or NGO support for Musahar education?
Community and Local Initiatives	- Are there any community-led efforts to improve education for Musahar children? - What role do local leaders and parents play in en-

	couraging school participation? - How can the Musahar community be better integrated into broader social and educational structures?
Recommendations and Solutions	- What steps should the government take to reduce social exclusion and improve educational access? - What changes are needed in schools to create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for Musahar children?
Closing Questions • Is there anything else you would like to share about the social exclusion and education of Musahar children? • What message would you like to convey to policymakers or organizations working to improve education in the Musahar community? Interview Conclusion • Thank the informant for their time and insights. • Reiterate the importance of their input in shaping research recommendations. • Ensure that their identity and responses will remain confidential.	

Appendix-III: Photos from Field Work

