

Empowering Youths for Social Changes: Educational Initiatives in Gandaki Rural Municipality, Ward No. 6

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to discern the role of education on youth empowerment to promote health and sanitation, gender equality and awareness to address social issues for social changes in Gandaki Rural Municipality ward number 6. The survey study identified various challenges related to education for youth empowerment. The descriptive research design was used. The focused group discussions using semi-structured questionnaires were administered to the seven youths of *Chepang/Praja* community aged 15-19 years old residing in the ward number 6. The sample was selected using purposive sampling technique. The education the youth of *Chepang/Praja* community empowered through education demonstrated the ability to promotes health and sanitation, gender equality and create awareness to address social issues within their society. Major challenges identified includes reluctance to change by the senior citizens, lack of priority to the training that didn't provide allowances, the voices of youth are unheard, remote geographical location, lack the access to transportation, lacks appropriate resources and migration. The study suggested that the education brings positive social changes through empowering the youth in the promotion of health and sanitation, gender equality and creation of awareness to address the social changes.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental human right that equips an individual with the ability to adapt to evolving circumstances and be aware of their right and responsibilities (Pradhan, 2015). Education is the nation's backbone that helps empower individuals toward positive change. The first Constitution promulgated by the representatives elected by the people, the Constitution of Nepal 2015, enshrined education as a fundamental right and stated that every citizen, including

citizens with disabilities and indigent citizens, has a right to access education (The Constitution of Nepal, 2015). Education is a factor that guides individuals and groups to work for the betterment of society and bring about positive changes in society.

Social change is defined as the changes that occur in the social action or culture within a society, community or context (Servaes, 2011). Social changes are the alternation of ongoing social processes, patterns, interactions, and organizations. Social changes refer to the transformation

of aspects of the society. Social change is the positive transformation of the action or culture of society. For the positive transformation of the society, education plays a pivotal role. Education increases the capability and capacity of an individual and empowers them to achieve positive social transformation.

Access to education and skills for life is essential to empower the youth and improve the quality of life, leading to positive rural transformation (Sharma, 2014). Education to the young people drives the youth to be empowered, which increases their capability of bringing changes to themselves and society. Empowerment refers to the ability of people, families, organizations, and communities to have more control over their lives within social, economic, and political contexts in order to improve their quality of life (Jennings et al., 2006). Hence, the education provided to young people empowers them and leads to social change. Youth empowerment equips the youth with the necessary tools along with the skills and knowledge required to involve themselves in bringing positive social changes (Jamatia, 2023). Youth empowerment includes the procedures through which individuals gain the knowledge and skills for positive change in their lives and communities (Trivedi & Patel, 2023). The youth population plays a vital role in the positive transformation of society, and education helps guide them in this. Youth empowerment is widely recognized as crucial in driving positive social change. This study focuses on understanding the role of education in empowering the youth to pave the path to social changes in Ward Number 6 of Gandaki Rural Municipality.

Gandaki Rural Municipality lies in the Gorkha District. It is surrounded by Dhading district in the east and south, Chitwan district in the west and Sahid Laxman Rural Municipality in the North (Gandaki Gaupalika, n.d.). The report of the National Population and Housing Census shows that the total population of the Gandaki Rural Municipality is 21394 among which 51.9% belongs to the female population and

48.1% belongs to the male population. Similarly, 76.55% of the total population aged 5 to 25 years of age are currently studying at school. Among the total population, 16.9% of the total population of Gandaki Rural Municipality are *Chepang/Praja* (NPHC, 2021). According to the National Population and Housing Census, the population of the ward is 3573, of which 1748 are male and 1825 are female population (NPHC, 2021).

This study will explore the role of education in empowering youth who belong to the *Chepang/Praja* of Gandaki Rural Municipality, ward number 6, towards positive social changes. This study examines the role of education in empowering the youth of the *Chepang/Praja* community to promote health and sanitation, gender equality, and awareness of social issues. The study also tries to identify the challenges related to youth empowerment of the *Chepang/Praja* community in terms of promoting health and sanitation, gender equality, and awareness of social issues in Gandaki Rural Municipality, ward number 6.

1.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

Education and skills for life are essential in mitigating the poverty through empowering individual to take advantage of the opportunities available to improve their lives either economically or other ways. Learning centers at community offers diverse educational program to combat poverty and enhance the quality of life of rural people (Sharma, 2014).

All children whether or not they belong to the marginalized community should have an access to quality education which will help to equip them with the required ability that helps to adopt themselves in the changing situation and ensure them to be aware of rights and responsibilities (Pradhan, 2015). The study of Melo (2019) concluded that the emancipatory education helps to empower youth to challenge the existing norms and practices of the community and direct the community towards positive restructuring.

Prasad and Gupta (2020) stated that the education has power to help societies

and the world to change for the better. The quality education is recognized as an important tool that has truly advanced into a road map that takes in the direction of the social transformation and protect the society from the threats of security issues (Chinedu et al., 2023). The study Roy et al. (2023) concluded that the education is a key for bringing about the positive social changes that improves the lives of women, promotes social cohesion and economic transformation, aware people about their rights and responsibilities which are key aspects for bringing about social changes.

According to the Sharma (2014), learning centers at community should be supported with adequate resources, strong legal foundation and policy, active public engagement and dedicated management teams that enables to function the learning centers properly to promotes education at community.

The various literatures have highlighted the importance of education for promoting social transformation and ending the inequality in the society. The access of quality education is also supportive to the government through which the government shapes the norms of the society to achieve the development it needs (Chinedu et al., 2023).

The role of education helps to empower the youth that helps to end the social inequality. The study of Jamatia (2023) concluded that the youth have been leading several initiatives and programs aimed to tackle social inequality and empower marginalized communities. Their initiatives have been effective in raising awareness and empowering youth for their involvement in combating social inequality. The potentiality that the youth have can combat social inequality and empower others youths.

The several literatures have also concluded about the importance of education on youth for the wellbeing of the society. The study of Trivedi and Patel (2023) found that among the various dimension of empowering youth, education is one that play a pivotal role to empower youth and establish a strong foundation for

tomorrow. The education is important to the young people as it inform young people about the current problem and encourage them for the socio-economic wellbeing of a society (Ikromjon, 2022). The younger generation in the education sector can lead to the development of the village as it develops youth as a leader, companions, facilitators to aware the society and lead to the path of the development (Wulandari & Montessori, 2023).

The education is important to promotes gender equality in the society. Khan et al. (2013) mentioned that the various forms of violence against women exist in the society and found that the education has positive impact in eliminating such violence. The result of the study demonstrated that the increase in the level of education is reduces the violence against women and guarantee the women's basic human rights. The study of Kapur (2019) concluded that the eudcation empowers the women through which wellbeing of the society is promoted.

Education encourages women to demolish the old customs and empower them with an ability to raise voice against injustice and inequality and to stand against gender bias by improving their decision-making capabilities (Prasad & Gupta, 2020). Education conveys the light of knowledge to all the people in society through its various strategy that takes them to achieve the gender equality through eliminating gender discrimination and support to reach the peak of social progress (Roy et al., 2023).

Education promotes the health and wellbeing of the individual and the society. The various literatures have included the importance of education to make their society clean and wellbeing. According to Firestone et al. (2020), the education has become a medium through which young people learn the ways to address social health issues for the wellbeing of the society. Education to individual allows to create awareness that promotes good health and wellbeing and encourage for the cleanliness inside and outside households in an appropriate manner for good health and

wellbeing. Thus, the lack of education and awareness have directly impact health of an individual (Kapur, 2019). A quality education is the foundation for the good health and wellbeing which maintain healthy environment by warning people for their anti-social activities and encourage them work to form excellence society having a healthy environment (Roy et al., 2023).

The education is important as it empower youth to address various issues that leads to the positive transformation of the society. Empowering youth is an important which develop capacity and capability of young people for creating positive social changes (Firestone et al., 2020). The study of Trivedi and Patel (2023) concluded that investment in education and other factors like skill, engagement and wellbeing, the society can harness the potentiality of youth that leads to the positive societal transformation.

Therefore, these literatures concluded the importance of education and youth empowerment that makes the society adopt the positive changes through awareness of health and sanitation, gender equality and raising awareness to address social issues.

1.2 RESEARCH GAP

Education is a factor that guides individuals and groups to work for the betterment of society and bring about positive changes in society. Education increases the capability and capacity of an individual and makes them empowered towards positive social transformation. Therefore, access to quality education is significant for empowering the youth to guide society towards positive transformation.

Limited literature studies the role of youth empowerment through education for social changes. The literature has studied the role of the education programs offered by the community for social transformation. The literature on gender equality has focused much on the importance of educating women rather than the role of education for both gender in minimizing

gender inequality. Similarly, the literature on health and well-being focused much on the role of education in maintaining a clean environment despite the fact that the role of education has changed the youth's involvement in cleanliness. The literature has focused more on socio-economic prospects in eradicating poverty rather than the role of education through cleanliness, equality and eradicating social issues. Therefore, this article focuses on studying the role of education in empowering youth who belong to the *Chepang/Praja* community of Gandaki Rural Municipality ward number 6, Hiklung and Thumka towards positive social changes. This study tries to study the role of education in empowering the youth of the *Chepang/Praja* community to promote health and sanitation, gender equality and awareness of social issues. The study also tries to identify the challenges related to youth empowerment of the *Chepang/Praja* community in terms of promoting health and sanitation, gender equality, and awareness of social issues in Hiklung and Thumka.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The study aims at understanding how education empower the youth of *Chepang/Praja* community of Gandaki Rural Municipality ward number 6 for paving the path towards the positive social changes:

1. To discern the role of education on youth to promote health and sanitation, gender equality and awareness to address social issues for social changes in Gandaki Rural Municipality ward number 6.
2. To identify the challenges related to education for youth empowerment for promoting health and sanitation, gender equality and awareness to address social issues for social changes in Gandaki Rural Municipality ward number 6.

2. MATERIALS AND METHOD

The study used a qualitative research design. The focused group discussion was done to collect the

information required for the study. Focus group interview is a technique involved in details interviewing the group who share certain social characteristics and are chosen with a purpose to provide insights on a specific topic and are comfort in sharing their perspectives (Rabiee, 2004).

The data were collected using primary source by using semi structured interview with the youth. The non-random sampling method were used to choose the sampling for the study. The purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample. According to the National Population and Housing Census 2021, 1839 population between age 5 to 25 years are attending school in ward number 6. The total population of the *Chepang/Praja* community people in the municipality is 16.9%. The seven youths of aged 15-19 years old of Gandaki Rural Municipality ward number 6 who are currently attending formal education were chosen for the study. The small size of population of *Chepang/Praja* youth attending school, the lack of transportation in the ward and time constraints limited the sample size to seven.

3. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

3.1 ROLE OF EDUCATION IN PROMOTING HEALTH AND SANITATION

The participants agreed that the education have aware them to promote health and sanitation. They have been learning about health and sanitation through school and different programs organized by different organizations at their village and have been using it in their day-to-day life. These learning empowered them for promoting health and sanitation. They have been involved in cleaning the house and surroundings once a day to make the environment clean in their spare times. They have installed dustbins from the money they have collected through playing *Deusi* and *Bhailo* in Tihar. The dustbins have installed in different places of their villages specially to those places where the chances of throwing non-biodegradable waste is high. The respondents answered that they use the learning about health and

sanitation in their daily life and also engage their parents, elders and youngers together in the work of cleanliness so that to make the environment remains clean. The female participants have been provided with sanitary pads by their school for menstrual hygiene. They wash their clothes daily to prevent infection during mensuration. They throw the used pads in the dustbin or in the garbage area. They found to be aware of the menstrual hygiene as they said that it is important for their health. The increased awareness in the community have improved the health and sanitation and people have become more conscious about keeping their surrounding clean.

3.2 ROLE OF EDUCATION IN PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY

The interviewers stated that the promoting gender equality is important and education empowers them to promote gender equality in the society. They have been learning about gender equality from their school or different training programs organized by Non-Government Organizations at their village. They agreed that the learning about the gender equality empower them to promote gender equality. The male friends have been helping their female friends to raise voices. The male friends encourage their female friends to take part in various activities at their school. The respondents They have recently shown the drama to aware the people of the community about the importance gender equality. They are aware of the abuse and harassment and aware their friends especially the female friends to be safe from the harassment that they might be suffered through the use of internet. They work together to end gender-based violence by raising voice for their friends, encouraging their friends to raise voice and providing knowledge about abuse and harassment to their friends that they have learnt from different training programs. Parents in their village are also sending the girls child to the school. The husband and wife support each other for generating income and doing household chores. The

gender equality aspect has improved in the community.

3.3 ROLE OF EDUCATION IN CREATING AWARENESS TO ADDRESS SOCIAL ISSUES

There have been different social issues in the community. The education is important to empower the youth to aware their parents and people of their communities about different social issues. The respondents have been learning about how important it is to aware the people about social issues from their schools and different other programs organized by local government and NGOs. The education has empowered the youth to raise awareness regarding the importance of addressing social issues. They aware their parents and siblings about the importance of addressing social issues. They have recently shown the drama at their village to aware the people of the community about the social issues like gender inequality. The youth aware their male family members to not involve in gender based or other violence. The youths in the village unite to address the social issues like disputes among the neighbor, making unnecessary noises by drinking alcohol, domestic violence and so on. They youths also aware the people of their community about the importance of education, importance of empowering their girl's child, encourage the people to send their girls child for school and attending different training programs and eliminating child marriage in the community.

3.4 CHALLENGES OF EDUCATION IN PROMOTING HEALTH AND SANITATION, GENDER EQUALITY AND AWARENESS TO ADDRESSES SOCIAL ISSUES

The study found that the education plays an important role in empowering the youth of *Chepang/Praja* community of Gandaki Rural Municipality ward number 6. There are some challenges related to education for youth empowerment for promoting health and sanitation, gender equality and awareness to address social issues for social changes as discussed by the respondents. Among the various challenges reported by the respondents the

reluctance to change by the senior citizens of the community is one among them. The elder family members in are unwilling to adopt new changes that helps to promotes health and sanitation, gender equality and awareness to address social issues. The senior citizens are not found to be interested to drop their traditional behavior which has impacted on health and sanitation, gender equality and addressing social issues. The family members don't prioritize the training that is provided without any allowances is another challenge. The training programs without any allowances organized by government or non-government organizations with an aim to empower were not given much importance by their family member. Similarly, it is difficult to convince some of their parents for their approval to the trainings organized in the village. The voices are unheard by the seniors. The youths also responded that in some situations their voices have not been heard by their seniors. In some of the situations, they are not allowed to give their opinions for making the decision is another challenge. Similarly, due to its remote geographical location the knowledge provided to them is limited. They don't have many opportunities to learn things that could help them to be more empowered. They are not so convenient to take extra trainings by visiting other places because they lack the access to transportation. Allocation of appropriate resources is one of the challenges for empowering youth. Lack of inadequate human and financial resources to promote health and sanitation, gender equality and addressing social issues is one among them. The respondents have also reported the migration as a challenge to it. They are able to convince the people in their village to minimize various social issues but the issues like child marriage, gender-based violence and discrimination are initiated by those who have temporarily left the village for various purposes and have returned after a while.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study concluded that the education plays a pivotal role in empowering the youth for social changes. The findings show that the role of education on youth to promote health and sanitation, gender equality and awareness to address social issues for social changes is positive. The youth empowered through education are able to promote health and sanitation, gender equality and awareness to address social issues in the society. The *Chepang/Praja* community youth are able to bring the social changes being empowered through education. The informal or formal education and knowledge provided to them in school or through various programs organized by government and non-government organizations at their village have empowered the youth of *Chepang/Praja* community for paving the path to the social changes.

The recommendations include:

- i. Fostering collaboration by local governments with central and provincial government, non-government organizations and private sector organizations for empowering youth through education.
- ii. Enhancing the capacity of the teachers by facilitating various advanced training programs.
- iii. The youth clubs in the village should be supported with adequate resources and can be mobilized to prevent anti-social activities in the community and promotes health and sanitation, gender equality and create awareness to address social issues.
- iv. The opinion and concerns raised by the youth should be heard. The youth should be involved in every decision-making process.

The study suggested that the education brings positive social changes through empowering the youth in the promotion of health and sanitation, gender

equality and creation of awareness to address the social changes.

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