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# Educational Status of Santhal Community

*A Study of a School Dropout in Santhal Children of Eastern Nepal*

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*In*

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**EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF SANTHAL COMMUNITY**

**(A study of a school dropout in Santhal Children of Eastern Nepal)**

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## Abstract

The government of Nepal has taken initiatives to increase the enrollment of the students and keep them in school by making tuition fee free up to secondary level, offering various scholarship schemes for girls, marginalized and indigenous children; however, the dropout rate of children in Nepal is still high and, in the case of Santhal children, it is even higher. In this context, the current study seeks to critically explore the reasons for the high dropout rate among Santhal students.

This study is the result of a qualitative field research conducted in Gauradaha and Korobari Village Development Committees in Nepal in May and June 2014. This study includes the voices of teachers, parents, dropouts and educationists, which are supplemented by the researcher's observation notes, government and school data. Drawing on the theories of dropout and social capital, this study aims at finding out how the lack of social capital in school, family and community affects the educational attainment of Santhal children. This information can be used to develop programs designed to increase social capital in schools, families, and communities, which can contribute to a decrease in the dropout behavior. The findings show that students who are unable to develop social capital in the forms of school social capital, family social capital, or community social capital, or a combination of these three forms, have a more difficult time completing school. Using qualitative methods along with the numerical data in the form of tables, the stories of students, teachers, parents and educationist have shown that the lack of or the lower social capital which is persistent in the Santhal community has contributed to the dropout behavior of Santhal children.

Key words: Santhal, education, school dropout, social capital, *Adibasi/Janajati*

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## Glossary of non-English words

<i>Adivasi/Janajati</i>	Indigenous People in Nepal
<i>Bhasa pathsala</i>	Language school
<i>Brahmin</i>	member of the highest priestly hindu caste
<i>Chhetri</i>	member of high caste people after Brahmin
<i>Gudit</i>	secretary to village headman
<i>Jag Majhi</i>	deputy village headman
<i>Kudam Naike</i>	assistant to village priest
<i>Majhi</i>	village Headman
<i>Mundo</i>	derogatory term used by santhal to refer to Brahmin/Chhetri
<i>Naike</i>	head village priest
<i>Pahadiya</i>	people from hill particularly, Brahmin/Chhetri
<i>Panchyat</i>	political system in Nepal, 1960-1090
<i>Paranik</i>	assistant to village headman
<i>Rana</i>	rulers of Nepal, 1846-1950
<i>Satar</i>	another term for Santhal
<i>Terai</i>	Southern plain region in Nepal

## Abbreviation

BPEP	Basic and Primary Education Program
CAS	Continuous Assesment System
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
CSSP	Community School support program
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EFA	Education for All
FGD	Focused Group Discussion
GoN	Government of Nepal
MoE	Ministry of Education
NEFIN	Nepal Foundation of Development of Indigenous Nationalities
NFE	Non Formal Education
NPC	National Planning Commission
NPCS	National Planning Commission Secretariat
NPHC	National Planning Commission Secretariat
PEP	Primary Education Project
PPC	Pre-Primary Classes
SEDP	Secondary Education Development Project
SSRP	School Sector Reform Program
TEP	Teacher Eucation Project
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Orgnization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children`s Emergency Fund
VDC	Village Development Committee

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Nepal government has identified 59 indigenous nationalities through the enactment of the National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities Act, 2002. According to Indigenous Nationalities Act, 2002, *Adivasi/Janajati* is the community which “has its own mother tongue and traditional culture and yet does not fall under the conventional Hindu hierarchical caste structure”. So, according to the definition, *Adivasi/Janajati* has distinctive collective identity: own language, religion, tradition, culture and civilization, traditional homeland or geographical area, written or oral history, and a "we feeling". Still they have had no decisive role in politics and government in modern Nepal (NEFIN, 2004). NEFIN(2004) has further classified the 59 *Adivasi/Janajatis* into five groups comprising endangered, highly marginalized, marginalized, disadvantage and advanced group.

Among the 59 indigenous communities, Santhal are categorized as a highly marginalized indigenous people living in south-east region of Nepal.<sup>1</sup> They are one of the first people to settle in Jhapa and Morang district by clearing the *charkose Jhadi*<sup>2</sup>(Sharma, 1998). According to the National Population and Housing Census (NPCS) of 2011, the total population of Santhal in Nepal is 51,735. The urban population of Santhal is 1736, whereas the rural population is 49999 (NPCS, 2012). The larger portion of Santhal population is found in Jhapa and Morang districts of Nepal, where we find 92.64 percent of the Santhal population (ibid.). Since large portion of Santhal people are in rural area of Jhapa and Morang district, their main occupation is agriculture. They cultivate land but could not become owners of the land. They cultivate the land of Landlords in lease or contract and share the half of the production with landlords. The land reform program of 1967 did not bring advantages for them (Gautam, 2011). Land-reform legislation abolished all communal land and converted it into private or national land, resulting in the loss of land of poor indigenous people.<sup>3</sup>The situation of Santhal is becoming worse because of political suppression and economic exploitation from *brahmin/chhetri*, the so called high caste people of Nepal. The people from the hill (*brahmin/chhetri*) tricked and took the land of Santhal and forced them to live destitute life

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<sup>1</sup> Retrieved from [www.nefin.org.np](http://www.nefin.org.np) (Accessed in February 4, 2015)

<sup>2</sup>Charkosejhadi- name of the dense forest in the eastern plain region of Nepal Retrieved from <http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/printedition/news/2014-06-02/forest-for-the-trees.html> (Accessed in march 23, 2016)

<sup>3</sup> Retrieved from ([http://www.usaidlandtenure.net/sites/default/files/country-profiles/full-reports/USAID\\_Land\\_Tenure\\_Nepal\\_Profile.pdf](http://www.usaidlandtenure.net/sites/default/files/country-profiles/full-reports/USAID_Land_Tenure_Nepal_Profile.pdf)) (Accessed in March 23, 2016)

(Sharma, 2009). Their social, political, cultural and economic presence is limited to the state apparatus.

Along the line of social, political and economic exploitation, they are also left far behind in educational achievement. The literacy rate<sup>4</sup> of Nepal in 2011 is 65.9%. Literacy status among different caste/ethnic groups shows a huge variation ranging from 20.31% in Dom to 87.27% in Kayastha. Among 130 castes/ethnic groups (including 59 indigenous communities), 83 castes/ethnic groups have a literacy rate below the national average of 65.9%. The Literacy rate of Santhal is 48.30 % which is lower by 17.6% compared to the national average (NPCS, 2014).

In order to address the disparity in educational attainment between indigenous and non-indigenous communities, the government of Nepal has taken initiatives to uplift the educational status of indigenous communities. The interim Constitution of Nepal (2007)<sup>5</sup> has provisioned in Article 13(3) to provide positive discrimination<sup>6</sup> to the people of marginalized groups such as women, *Dalits*, indigenous people, disabled, peasants and laborers. It has also introduced measures to improve social justice and safeguard the rights of these communities. Article 17 further states that every community shall have the right to get the basic education on its own mother tongue and every citizen will have right to get free education up to the secondary level from the state. The Ministry of Education has also made provisions for ensuring the equity and inclusion in education and literacy program for the excluded and marginalized communities (MoE, 2009a). The Education Act (Seventh Amendment, 2001) and Regulations (2002) have emphasized the representation of women, *Dalit* and underprivileged indigenous communities in the school and education management committee. These acts seek to offer scholarships for girls and students from *Dalit* and underprivileged indigenous communities (World Bank, 2014).

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<sup>4</sup>**Literacy rate**

There has been a slight improvement in the definition of literacy used in various censuses over the years. Literacy was defined as the ability to read and write in any language in the censuses of 1952/54, 1961 and 1971. A modification was first made in the 1981 census, where literacy was defined as the ability to read and write in any language with understanding. Similarly, a further modification was made in the 1991 census where literacy was defined as the ability to read and write in any language with understanding and the ability to do simple arithmetic calculations. The same definition was used in the censuses of 2001 and 2011.

<sup>5</sup>[http://www.constitutionnet.org/files/interim\\_constitution\\_of\\_nepal\\_2007\\_as\\_amended\\_by\\_first\\_second\\_and\\_third\\_amendments.pdf](http://www.constitutionnet.org/files/interim_constitution_of_nepal_2007_as_amended_by_first_second_and_third_amendments.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> According to oxford dictionary, positive discrimination is the practice or policy of favoring individuals belonging to groups which suffer discrimination.

The Ministry of Education also formed a thematic group to ensure the right of indigenous peoples and linguistic minorities to basic and primary education through mother tongue. The group recommended four strategies to meet the goal. They are: 1. Use of mother tongue as the subject and the medium of instruction; 2. Bilingual education; 3. Teachers' recruitment, training and deployment; 4. Special programs for endangered languages and cultures (Bhattachan, & Webster, 2005).

Despite the constitutional provision and government initiatives, the children enrolment and attendance has remained irregular, and many children still drop out before completing secondary education. Furthermore, the enrolment rates are uneven across the country; especially, the indigenous, disadvantage and marginalized communities are far behind the national average.

#### 1.1. Statement of problem

Education has been formally recognized as a human right since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. The right to education has been further strengthened in numerous other global human right treaties, including the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) convention against Discrimination in Education (1960), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1981) (UNICEF, 2007). These treaties have buttressed the free compulsory primary education of all children, an obligation to develop secondary education for all children and equal access to higher education. Moreover, they aim to provide not only education to all, but quality education along with eliminating discrimination at all levels of the educational system.

Nepal has signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the Dakar Framework of Action (2000) and was committed to Education for all by 2015 (Wagle, 2012). With this background, the government of Nepal has taken initiatives to increase the enrollment of the children and keep them in school by eliminating tuition fee fees up to secondary level, offering various scholarship schemes for girls, marginalized and indigenous communities. Despite the government's efforts for increasing the enrollment and keeping the children in school, the rate of dropout among indigenous communities is still high in Nepal and in particular Santhal community. According to MoE (2011), the Santhal children enrolment is 21.7% at primary level, 14.6% at lower secondary, 10.5% at secondary and 6.8%

at higher secondary level. This data reveals that majority of Santhal children who are supposed to be at school are out-of-school.

In this context, I am undertaking this study to explore the reasons for the high dropout rate among Santhal students and find the answer to the following research questions.

#### 1.2. Research Questions:

1. How does the social capital impact the education attainment and drop-out rate?
2. What other factors than social capital keep students away from school in Santhal community?

#### 1.3. Significance of the Study

There are many research studies done on dropout of children from school in developed countries but there are few studies on such topics in developing countries (Wagle, 2012). In the case of Nepal, few researches have been done on the issues of Santhal. This study will help to locate the position of the Santhal educational status within the national educational level. I believe that the study on dropout of Santhal children from schools in Nepal helps to analyze and compare the dropout tendency of one of the highly marginalized indigenous groups with the national dropout trend. This study will further delve into the causes of the dropout not only from the perspective of government records but also from the perspectives of local teachers, head teachers, parents and dropouts. Apart from that, the thesis lays out the suggestions from teachers and head teachers and community leaders on what type of improvement could be made in currently running programs in order to address the problem of dropout and keep children in school. I believe that the respondents' experiences and suggestions on the issue will help the stakeholders to formulate new policies and programs and properly implement them. The study will be helpful, as it reveals what is actually happening and what measures should be taken in the areas of children and their schooling, especially in the Santhal community of Nepal.

#### 1.4. Structure of the thesis

The thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter 2 gives the background information on Santhal and their socio-economic and cultural practices; educational history of Nepal; and the educational status of indigenous, disadvantage and marginalized communities. Chapter 3

focuses on the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study. Chapter 4 outlines the methodological procedures for the study and reflection on the use of the methods. Chapter 5 presents the data and analysis. And finally, the thesis concludes with discussion of the key findings.

## Chapter 2: Background Information

This chapter presents the background information of the thesis. The first part provides the historical background of Santhal and their social, political and cultural practices, then it lays out the historical development of education system of Nepal and finally it goes on to discuss the educational status of indigenous and marginalized communities of Nepal.

### 2.1. Historical background of Santhal in Nepal and their social, economic and cultural practices

The term Santhal is a derivation of 'Saontar,' a place name in India, where they are known as Santhal (Gautam, 2011). But, in Nepal, they are also called '*Satar*,' which is often taken as a pejorative term reflecting hegemonic attitude and disrespect to the people, as well as a form of domination by *Pahadiya* (Hill people) of Nepal (Gautam, 2011.). Santhals are the oldest inhabitants of the eastern *Terai* (Plain) region. Santhals are also found in the *Adivasi* (indigenous) community in India and Bangladesh.

There are many assumptions regarding the history of origin of Santhal people in Nepal. It has been argued that Santhals have immigrated to the eastern plain region of Nepal from Dumka district, a sub-division of Bihar state of India (Sharma, 2000). It has also been proposed that they have migrated to Nepal from Indian states like West Bengal, Jharkhand and Orissa. Daulat Bikram Bista suggests that the name '*Satar*' is derived from their earlier ancestral place 'Sount,' which lies in Midnapur, India (Gautam, 2011). According to the information acquired from some elderly Santhali people from Jhapa, their migration to Nepal from India and Bangladesh was due to their low economic condition causing them to settle in the dense forest areas of Jhapa and Morang districts (Field report, 2014). Along with farming, they go for fishing and hunting. Hunting is not merely a hobby for the Santhals, but it is a part of their culture and tradition. Even today, Santhali youth goes out for hunting with bow and arrow as a symbol of maturity. This process is necessary to establish them as responsible member of community (Prasai, 1998).

Santhals have a patriarchal family system; in the absence of a male member, the lead role is transferred to female member. Basically, they have joint families, but due to intensifying poverty among them nowadays, they are living in a nuclear family. The Santhal villages are social and political entities with great cohesion and continuity. The village council controls the entire social system of Santhals. The village council consists of *Majhi* (village Headman), *Jag Majhi* (deputy village headman), *Paranik* (assistant to village headman), *Gudit* (secretary

to village headman), *Jag Paranik*(deputy *Paranik*), *Naike*(head village priest), and *KudamNaike*(assistant to village priest). All the villagers, one from each family, are members of the village council. The village council is the institution that settles all the disputes of the village and finds solution to the problem in the community (Gautam, 2011). In comparison to the non-indigenous *Brahmin/chhetri* communities, the santhal people seem have more intense and dense network among the people in the community. Since they have their own village council where each family are members of village council, the communication between the families is more intense and dense. The likelihood of family and community social capital seems to be higher if considered the village council and the social cohesion in the communities.

The family and the community social capital are not only limited to the dense network among the people in the community; the economic and cultural capital also plays an important role in enhancing the family and community social capital and vice versa (the details of social capital is presented in next chapter). As mentioned in the introduction chapter, the Santhal people are one of the highly marginalized indigenous people of Nepal. Their socio-economic status is comparatively lower than other notable indigenous communities not to mention *Brahmin/Chhetri*, the high caste people of Nepal. Poverty, dependency on landlords` land for agriculture, illiteracy among the elderly population has forced Santhal people to lag behind the other communities in Nepal.

## 2.2. Education history of Nepal

Though there was school education during *Rana Regime*<sup>7</sup>, the basis for a modern educational system in Nepal was laid out in the early 1950's. During the period in which Nepal was under Rana rule (1847-1950), there were some English Schools and *BhasaPathsalas*(Language Schools) opened for only privileged and high caste people. School education was opened to the general public only after 1950 (Groot, 2007; 13). After the establishment of democracy in 1950, Nepal adopted a planned approach for development in various areas including the education sector (MoE, 2009a). The Ministry of Education was established in 1952 for the development of education in the country, mainly school education. Although some special schools existed before 1950, the present structure of education system is directly linked to the post-1950 developments (MoE, 2009a). In 1954, the Nepal National Education Planning commission was formed within the framework of national unity, democracy and development to review the educational status of the country at that time and to suggest strategies and

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<sup>7</sup> Rana dynasty ruled Nepal from 1846 to 1951.



policies for the overall development of the education in the country (Panday, R.R., Chhetri, K.B., & Wood, H.B., 1956). It was realized that time that the country's educational status was far too low with country's literacy rate estimated at about 2% only (MoES, 2007; 5). The commission recommended the strong role of the government to make primary education available for all children. The commission further suggested the need to make the education accessible for girls, rural people and people with disability. As a result, schools for girls and special schools for people with disabilities started to be established.

In 1962, the political system of Nepal changed. The democratic system was sabotaged by the then king Mahendra, who introduced the party-less *Panchayat* system<sup>8</sup> from 1962 to 1990. The change in the political spectrum had great influence on Nepal's education system. As a result the National Education Planning Commission adopted nationalism and the prevailing political ideology for its education system. The National Education System plan for 1971–76 adopted the nationalized education and shaped the education in accordance with the values of the *Panchayat* System (MoE, 2010).

During the Panchayat period, the state attempted to build a 'modern' and 'unified' nation. Although the government of Nepal abolished caste-based discrimination in 1963, it could not incorporate the voice of the marginalized, indigenous and ethnic minorities of Nepal. The diversity of languages and culture were taken as barriers to development that had to be merged into a common 'modern' Nepali culture in the name of modern and unified nation. Cultural 'unity' was projected as essential to nation-building and the maintenance of independence (Bennet, 2005).

The People's Movement in 1990 brought an end to the absolute monarchy and established a constitutional monarchy. The multi-party democracy began in Nepal. This political change opened avenues for development and change. In 1990s, many projects were initiated to improve the access and quality of school education (MoE, 2010). Some of the major projects were the Primary Education Project (PEP), Basic and Primary Education Program (BPEP) and Secondary Education Development Project (SEDP). During that period, the government formed two high level commissions – the National Education Commission in 1992, and the High Level National Education Commission in 1999 to make policies and recommendations to improve the education in Nepal. After 2000, the government started to shift its centralized policies to decentralization and community involvement programs to improve school performances. The Education For All (EFA), Community School Support Program (CSSP),

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<sup>8</sup> Autocratic Political system in Nepal in effect from 1960 to 1990

Secondary Education Support Program(SESP), Teacher Education Project(TEP),and Food for Education(FFE) programs were implemented in accordance with the spirit of decentralization and community support(ibid).

“The campaign of Education For All started by the World Conference held in Jomtien in 1990 put immense impetus on the development of education in the country” (MoE, 2007; 5). However, it was realized in the World Education Forum on Education forAll (EFA), held in Dakar, Senegal in 2000 that the countries like Nepal are far from achieving the EFA goals. Again, Nepal showed its commitment to achieve the EFA goals by 2015. This international commitment brought both inspiration and support for the development of basic and primary education in Nepal (MoE, 2007).

Central to the government’s initiatives to improve the education system are increase of enrolment and meeting the EFA goals, decentralization in educational planning and implementation, transfer of school management to communities, empowering school management committees, providing free school education, incentives and scholarship schemes, expanding ECD(early childhood development), PPC(pre-primary classes) programs, meeting the learning needs of all children including indigenous people, reducing adult illiteracy through NFE( Non-Formal Education) programs, eliminating gender disparity through recruitment of female teachers, etc. (Groot, 2007:13).The Millennium Development Goal progress report 2005 for Nepal has shown that Nepal had done modest progress in increasing the enrollment rate in primary education from 64 in 1990 to 81 in 2000 and increasing the literacy rate from 49.6% in 1990 to 70% in 2000 (GoN, NPC & UNDP, 2005: 21).

From 2009, the Ministry of Education (MoE) launched the School Sector Reform Program (SSRP) funded by the World Bank. The main objective of this program was to increase access to and improve quality of school education, particularly basic education (grades 1–8), especially for children from marginalized groups. The SSRP was a continuation of the on-going programs, such as Education for All (EFA), Secondary Education Support Program (SESP), Community School Support Program (CSSP) and Teacher Education Project (TEP).The SSRP comprised the restructuring of school education, improvement in the quality of education, and institutionalization of performance and accountability. By putting forward these reform initiatives, the Plan placed emphasis on the access of the out-of-school population and had guaranteed the provision for all children to learn by raising efficiency and enhancing effectiveness in the delivery of services in the education sector (MoE, 2009a).

Observing the educational history of Nepal, the government is seen to focus on the education of indigenous and marginalized communities after 1990. However, the government's initiatives to uplift the educational status of *Dalit*, *Adivasi/Janati* are seen to be limited in papers and laws. As mentioned in the introduction chapter, the interim constitution of Nepal, 2007 has provisioned special right to women, *dalits*, indigenous people, disabled, peasants and laborers to uplift their educational status but they are only limited in the laws. The constitutional provisions are not fully implemented. The article 7 provision of basic education on its mother tongue has not been implemented yet. During the field work, it was found that students were taught in English medium in institutional schools and Nepali medium in community schools. In addition, It was found during the fieldwork that the government's scholarship scheme to keep children in school was not effectively implemented to target groups. Scholarships were found to be distributed to academically strong students. The students from marginalized communities and are susceptible to dropout were found to be overlooked during the distribution of the scholarship.

### 2.3. School Education in Nepal

The school education in Nepal comprises primary, lower secondary, secondary and higher secondary education continuing for 12 years. Here, the primary education means the education from grade 1 to 5, lower secondary education comprises grades 6 to 8, grade 9 and 10 make up the secondary education, which concludes with the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) Examination and grades 11 and 12 make up higher secondary education. In addition, early childhood development centers and pre-primary classes are being introduced with community support, but they are not yet part of the formal education system. Early Childhood Development (ECD/Pre-primary Classes (PPCs) are offered in most of the schools for the preparation of the children from grade 1. The aims of ECD and PPC classes are to improve the internal efficiency of primary and basic education. The prescribed age for ECD/PPCs is 3–4 years, 5–9 for primary, 10–12 for lower secondary, 13–14 years for secondary and 15–16 for higher secondary education program. Since 2009, the Government of Nepal (GoN) introduced the School Sector Reform Plan, 2009–2015 to restructure school education into two levels: basic education (grades 1–8) and secondary education (grades 9–12). In Nepal, both the old and the new system of school education exist (MoE, 2009a).

Broadly, schools are categorized in two types: community schools and institutional schools. Community schools are run by the government or the community, whereas institutional schools, often referred to as “private” schools, are supported by parents and trustees. In

Nepal, the majority of students study in community schools. Parents with low socio-economic backgrounds are found to have been sending their children to the community schools because of their low cost. Out of the total enrolment at secondary Level (grades: 9–12), 84.8% are in community schools and 15.2% are in institutional schools (MoE, 2011).

### *2.3.1. The Gross Enrolment Rate and Net Enrolment Rate*

“GER is an indicator related to the total enrolment at a specific level of education, regardless of age, and is expressed as a percentage of the eligible official school age population corresponding to the same level of education in a given school year. This indicator is widely used to show the general level of participation in a given level of education” (MoE, DoE, 2012: 32). “NER is an indicator related to the total enrolment of the official age group for a given level of education expressed as a percentage of the corresponding population. NER gives a more precise measurement of the extent of participation in a particular level of education of children belonging to the official school age. Practically, a high NER denotes a high degree of participation by the official school age population. The highest theoretical value is 100%.” (32).

The GER in 2011 at primary, lower secondary and secondary level is 135.9%, 100% and 70.1% and the NER in 2011 at primary, lower secondary and secondary level is 95.1%, 70%, 52.1%. (See Appendix for table 1, 2&3. showing GER & NER)

When the NER is compared with the GER, the difference between the two ratios highlights the incidence of under-age and over-age enrolment. From the data, it can be seen that 40% in primary, 30% in lower secondary and 18% in secondary level are either under-age or over-age enrolment. Considering the educational history of Nepal, there is slim chance of under-age enrolment in school so the difference between GER and NER is more likely to represent over-age enrolment. Secondly, the net enrolment rate in lower secondary level is lower than primary level by 25.1%, and the net enrolment rate of secondary level is 17.9% lower than lower secondary level. This data shows that 25.1% of the students repeated their class in primary level and 17.9% of the students repeated their class in lower secondary level. This higher grade repetition is one of the important factors in higher dropout rate in Nepal. This will be further elaborated in the data analysis chapter.

### *2.3.2. School attendance and Educational attainment:*

Overall, 69% of 6–25 years old population attended school in 2011. Urban areas had a higher attendance rate compared to rural areas: 74% and 68% respectively (NPCS, 2014a).

MoE (2009b) indicates that only 64 out of 100 children who enrolled in grade 1 were promoted to grade 2. The rest either repeated grade 1 (26.5% in 2009) or dropped out (9.9%). In 2009, the overall promotion rate in primary education was 79.1%, with a 14.4% repetition rate and a 6.5% dropout rate. Based on the grade progression rate, the estimated survival rate at grade 5 is very low (45%) – many students who enroll in grade 1 do not stay until grade 5 for various reasons (the reasons will be explained in data analysis chapter), although some of them would eventually reach grade 5 later on after repetitions. The problem is more serious for grades 8 and 10, which have survival rates of only 38%.

According to NPCS (2014), among the population of age 6 and above in 2011, 26% had a primary level education followed by 22% with a lower secondary level education and 12% with SLC and higher secondary education. Only 3% achieved an educational level equivalent to graduate or post-graduate in 2011. During the last 20 years (1991–2011), even though the population with an educational level of SLC or higher secondary education has increased four-fold from 3% in 1991 to 12% in 2011, the educational attainment still seems stark (MoE, DoE (2012). From the data mentioned above, it can be seen that around 74% in primary, 78% in lower secondary and 88% in secondary level never attend school, repeat the grade or dropout of the school. This is a national average (MoE, DoE, 2012).

During the field work and data collected from the primary or secondary sources, I was only able to find the numerical data of grade repetition and dropout of overall student population of Nepal. I was not able to get the information on the grade repetition and dropout rate specific to Santhal, *Adivasi/Janajati*. However, I will be using the data related to the selected schools and later use it as a broader framework in comparing and contrasting the dropout rate of Santhal with the National average.

### 2.3.3. *Out-of-School Children*

Out-of-school children can be both those who never attended schools and those who are dropouts. Data on out-of-school children do not give the actual information on dropout since out-of-school children data encapsulates both those who never attended and those who dropped out. But I believe that the data on out-of-school children can imply the tentative information on dropout also.

The table 4 shows the trend for out-of-school children from 2004 to 2011. The data shows that the percentage of out-of-school children has been decreasing from 2004 to 2011. In 2004, the percent of out-of-school children in primary school was 15.8% and in 2011, it has dropped

down to 5.4%. Similarly, in lower secondary school, it has dropped from 56.1% to 30.5%. We can see the remarkable reduction of the out-of-school rate over the years. But if we observe the difference of the out-of-school rate between primary and lower secondary level, it is more than 5-fold. Similarly, if we project the difference of out-of-school rate between primary and secondary, primary and higher secondary, the gap will be even higher. This data reveals the fact that still large portion of the children are out-of-school and the out-of-school ratio is higher in upper grades, (See Appendix for table 4, showing out of school trend)

#### 2.4. Share of *Dalit* & *Janajati* enrolment

The population census of Nepal 2011 and other government data on population are classified under the broader framework of *Dalit*, *Adivasi/Janajati* and others (*Brahmin & Chhetri*, the so called high caste people). Although this research is primarily on Santhal, the data on the educational status of specific communities are not available in Ministry of Education and its apparatus. Even in the school, the data on specific communities are kept under the broader framework of *Dalit*, *Janajati* and others. Since, Santhal are the *Adivasi/Janajati* of Nepal and the data are incorporated with the other 58 *Adivasi/Janajati* of Nepal, the data of the *Janajati* is mentioned in this research to reflect the data of Santhal.

Studying Santhal educational status taking the reference of *Janajati* data may still be elusive because the government of Nepal has categorized Santhal as one of the highly marginalized *Janajati*. The socio-economic aspect of the Santhal is far behind other *Janajatis*. So, the data on education of the *Janajati* may portray a better picture of Santhal than their real situation. Though Santhal are *Janajati* according to the Nepalese constitution and do not come under the Hindu hierarchy system, unlike other notable *Janajati*, Santhal are untouchables like *Dalit* in Nepal. Their social, political and economic status seems close to the *Dalit* of Nepal because both Santhal and *Dalit* are highly marginalized people and both are treated as untouchables. In order to understand the Santhal, they should be understood from both *Dalit* and *Janajati* point of view. So, to some extent, the data on *Dalit* and *Janajati* may help to position the educational status of Santhal in Nepal.

The share of *Dalit* enrolment is 21.7% at primary level, 14.6% at lower secondary, 10.5% at secondary and 6.8% at higher secondary level. Similarly, the share of *Janajati* enrolment is 37.6% at primary level, 40.8% at lower secondary, 40.4% at secondary and 31.5% at higher secondary level. The share of others (*Brahmin & Chhetri*) in primary level is 40.7%, lower secondary level is 44.6%, secondary level is 49.1%, and higher secondary level is 61.7%

(MoE, 2011). According to the data, the concentration of the *Dalit* enrolment is high in primary level and as the level goes up the share of the enrolment is dropping down in alarming rate. The share of the enrolment in secondary level is half of the primary level. From the data, it is not clear how many percent are contributed by grade repetition and dropout separately in the decline of the enrolment. The reasons for the dropping of the enrolment are either by grade repetition, or dropout, or both. The enrolment of *Janajati* remains consistent in relation to *Dalit* enrolment. The enrolment seems almost the same in primary, lower secondary level and secondary level, and it drops by almost 9% in higher secondary level. This data show that the grade repetition rate and dropout rate of *Janajati* is almost nominal in relation to *Dalit*. The share of the others (*Brahmin & Chhetri*) is rising in each level from primary to higher secondary, which means that the concentration of the *Brahmin/Chhetri* population is higher in higher levels. To sum up, the grade repetition and the drop out of the *Dalit* children is higher than *Janajati* and the grade repetition and the dropout of *Janajati* is higher than *Brahmin/Chhetri* children.

## 2.5. Summary

The aim of this chapter was to give the background information of my thesis. Since my thesis is on Santhal education, in the first part, I mentioned the historical development of Santhal in Nepal. Next, I presented the modern education system of Nepal which began after 1950s to observe the provisions to uplift the educational status of Santhal, *Dalit*, and *Adivasi/Janajati*.

In the next chapter, I present the theoretical and conceptual framework of my study and discuss the theory on dropout and social capital.

## Chapter 3: Theoretical Conceptualization

This chapter presents the theories on dropout and social capital to provide a basis for understanding the educational status of Santhal students and their dropout tendency. This chapter, first, addresses the concept of dropout. Then, it proceeds to observe the basic tenets of dropout in different countries and explains the different models of finding dropout. There are different factors like poverty, social exclusion, lack of economic & cultural capital, etc. contributing to the dropout of the students; however, parents' and teachers' educational expectation for their child and student play important role in keeping students in school. In this context, I focus on social capital as a theoretical tool to observe the dropout of Santhal students in rural Nepal. For this, I use the concept of Bourdieu and Coleman to see how the social capital affects the dropout tendency of the students.

### 3.1. Concept of dropout:

A dropout is defined as a pupil who leaves school, for any reason except death, before graduation or completion of a program of studies and without transferring to another school. In other words, a child admitted to a school leaves school before completing the prescribed course or class is referred as a dropout ((Lamb, Markussen, Teese, Sandberg, & Polesel, 2011). The definition of dropout varies from country to country. For example, in USA a dropout is defined as someone who does not complete a high school diploma or the equivalent. In Australia, a dropout is defined as someone who leaves school before year 12 (the final year of secondary school) or begins year 12 but leaves without obtaining an upper secondary qualification (Lamb et al., 2011). In Canada, a dropout is someone who has not successfully completed high school and is not enrolled in education or in a work study program (Lamb et al., 2011). Someone who left upper secondary education before the final year or who remained to the end, but failed to fulfill the graduation requirements is dropout in Norway (Lamb et al., 2011). In case of Nepal, someone who has not completed +2 level educations (11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade) and has left school is known as dropout (Wagle, 2012).

Though there are similar views about dropout, they do not share a similar way of measuring it in different countries, so it is quite complex to find similar parameters in measuring dropout. However, the different measures used in finding dropout rates in different countries across the globe can be classified in three different ways: the event dropout rate, the status dropout rate and the cohort dropout rate (Lamb et al., 2011). The event dropout rate measures the percentage of a specified or given group (such as students of a particular age enrolled in high



school) who drop out of school in a particular time period, such as a single year. The status dropout rate measures the percentage in a population or sub-population (such as 16 to 24 years old) who are not enrolled in a high school program and do not hold a high school diploma. The cohort rate refers to the rate of dropping out within an age or grade cohort over a specified period of time, such as the percentage of students in grade 8 who had not attained a high school diploma by the age of 20 (Lamb et al., 2011). Each measure can produce different estimates and lead to different conclusions about the dimensions of dropout and completion. It is also possible that the one who dropped out would later complete the study by either returning to school or finishing their study in another setting.

Sara Bettin Pearson and her colleagues have identified five theories on dropout. They are: academic mediation theory, general deviance theory, deviant affiliation theory, family socialization theory and structural strain theory (Rumberger, 2011). According to academic mediation theory, all predictors of dropout, including deviant behavior, low social bonding and family background are mediated by poor academic achievement (Rumberger, 2011). Apart from this first theory, in all other theories predictors have direct impact on dropout. The second theory, general deviance theory, highlights that the juvenile delinquency, drug and alcohol use, smoking and teenage pregnancies exert a direct influence on dropout. The third theory, deviant affiliation theory, buttresses on bonding with antisocial or delinquent friends leading to direct influence on dropping out. The fourth theory, family socialization theory, explains the poor family socialization, as related to parental expectations, family stress, and parental control as the influencing factor for dropout. And finally, the structural strain theory emphasizes on demographic factors such as race, ethnicity, and family socio-economic status as the main factor for dropout.

School dropout is a complex phenomenon resulting in the reduction and loss of social, economic and cultural aspect of the individual, family, community and nation. Countries with higher dropout rate suffer from lack of competitive manpower for economic activities along with the degradation of the social, cultural and environmental aspects. It increases the risk of unemployment and low-paid jobs, and also correlates with higher levels of delinquencies (Andrei, Teodorescu, & Oancea, 2011).

Considering the dropout theories mentioned above, dropout encompasses factors such as socioeconomic status, parents' level of education, siblings' level of education, parents' value of education, parents' occupational status, students' motivation, social contacts, mental and physical health and material possession. Zarif(2012) finds mixed responses from the

interviewees on the issue of dropout in developing country like Pakistan. The teachers considered that parents find it useless to send children to school if they fail in exams and according to most of the teachers; students quit school because they are not interested in acquiring education. For the parents, the students drop out of the school because they have to work full time to earn a living or help their families in their work. Second, there are no basic facilities like proper infrastructure, clean drinking water, proper toilets, electricity and viable environment of teaching and learning. Third, the parents find schooling very time consuming. As the children grow older they have to attend to social and economic issues, family and tribal issues. Fourth, the caste system prevalent in the society creates disparity in the school which has led to many security and social issues.

### 3.2. Social Capital Theory

Bourdieu and Coleman are the founding theorists of social capital. For Bourdieu, Social capital is “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word”<sup>9</sup> (Bourdieu, 1986). Accordingly, social capital is a relationship immanent capital that provides useful support when it is needed. Stable relationships create honor and reputation among its members and are, thus, most effective for building and maintaining trust (ibid.). The members in a group provide safety and status credit for each other. The relationships among the group members are sustained by material and/or symbolic exchanges. These exchanges reinforce the existing relationships and can be used to socially guarantee or institutionalize them. In this case, the exchanges serve as institution acts (Bourdieu, 1983, as cited in Hauberer, 2011).

“The volume of social capital possessed by a given agent (...) depends on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilize and on the volume of the capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he is connected” (Bourdieu, 1986). The volume of social capital of a given person is assessed not only by the amount of relationships he/she builds, but also by the capital resources of the partners.

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<sup>9</sup><https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/fr/bourdieu-forms-capital.htm>

### 3.3. Coleman's Concept of Social Capital

Coleman's concept of social capital lies in the context of the rational choice theory. Social interdependencies arise among actors because they are interested in events and resources controlled by other actors to maximize their utility by rationally choosing the best solution for them. If permanent social relations like authority relations or trust relations are established, acts of exchange and transfer of control result.

According to him, social capital is a resource existing in kinship relations and in appropriable social organizations. It supports, for example, the cognitive and social development of a child and is most useful for the constitution of human capital (Hauberer, 2011). "Social capital comprises a variety of different entities having two characteristics in common: They all consist of some aspect of social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within the structure" (Coleman, 1990:302). This means social capital is always an element in the social structure favoring actions of actors that are members in this structure. A special feature of social capital is that "unlike other forms of capital, social capital inheres in the structure of relations between persons and among persons" (Coleman 1990: 302). Social capital is for none of the embedded actors a private good; it has the character of a public good (Hauberer, 2011).

Observing the literature on education and dropout, it seems that the authors attributed their findings to overarching social and economic aspects; however, there are other factors in play. Coleman (1988) has found that by increasing the social capital, the students' dropout tendency can be decreased. According to Coleman (1988), social capital is an aggregate of trust and obligations developed within networks of various people. It is a resource available to individuals much like monetary capital. The obligations form a type of social credit. The basic components of the social capital are the numerous relationships and interactions among various people who are associated with one another (Drewry, 2007). The most basic components of social capital within Coleman's definition are the relationships available to individuals in all aspects of life: home, work, school, church, community and others. In the context of education, these relationships and interactions may be in the form of parent-child interactions, teacher-parent interactions, teacher-student interactions, student-student interaction. These interactions can further be expanded to parents interacting with children's friends and their families and so on.

From the interactions, people develop relationships and through the relationships they develop a sense of whom they should trust. They will come to know one another and develop mutual trust. Whether an individual acts upon the information depends on the level of trustworthiness placed on the source. This mutual trust will create common norms and values. These common norms and values provide a rationale for the promotion and the inhibition of certain actions in the form of reward and punishments. And these interactions and the trust at the end create obligations among all actors: teachers, parents, students and other people in the community. These obligations form a type of non-monetary credit that can be called social capital (Drewery, 2007).

To maintain social capital, it is necessary to fulfill incurred obligations. There are different factors that influence social capital as a whole: closure, stability and ideology. Social structures realize different levels of closure. A social structure is closed, if relations exist between all embedded actors. That means that actors with dense networks have a higher amount of social capital at their disposal than actors with sparse networks. Every kind of social capital depends on the stability of the social structure or the relations. Disruptions in social organization or social relations destroy the social capital (Hauberer, 2011)

Coleman (1988) concluded that students living with single parents are more likely to drop out of school than students living with two parents. Second, as the number of siblings increases, the amount of contact a student has with a parent decreases and the likelihood of his/her dropout increases with the addition of each sibling. Third, parents who expect that their children would go to college are more likely to complete school than those who have parents with no expectations of college attendance of his/her children. And fourth, the percentage of students completing school will decrease by about 12.5% when student has only one parent and multiple siblings and by about 22.5% if student has single parent, multiple siblings, and parents with no expectations of college attendance of his/her children. Coleman also concluded that children who change the schools are more likely to dropout. If a child moves to new school, he will have new teachers, new friends, and new community where he has to develop new network and relations in new setting, which obviously will take time resulting in the reduction or loss of social capital. Likelihood of dropout is higher with the higher mobility of the children in new schools. He also concluded that children studying in religious schools have fewer dropouts than nonreligious schools because religious schools provide strong support for students to stay in school.

Be that as it may, the social capital that is embedded in relationship networks does not always work to the academic benefit of those who tap into it. “Even as some adolescents maintain friendships that foster achievement-related behaviors and subsequent academic success, others situate themselves within friendship networks in which antiestablishment behavior prevails” ((Ream & Rumberger, 2008)). So, while accomplishment and satisfaction with learning may drive some students to seek like-minded academically oriented friends, for at least some other students, the search of less socially acceptable rewards appears to follow, as a matter of course, they may take recourse in anti-school social networks. In short, the behavioral and social aspects of schooling are dynamically interlinked within the overall process of school completion or dropout (Ream & Rumberger, 2008.).

From the discussion above, higher the social capital a student gets from family, school and community, there is higher possibility that s/he will graduate from the school. In the case of Santhal students, along with cultural and structural challenges, one main reason of higher dropout rate is lack of School, family and community social capital.

#### 3.4. Summary

This chapter aimed at presenting the theories on dropout and social capital to provide a basis for understanding the educational status of Santhal community and the tendency of high dropout of Santhal children. It presented the concept of dropout theory and how dropout is measured using event dropout, status dropout and the cohort dropout rate. Then, it sought to explain the social capital theory of Bourdieu and Coleman and explored the relationship between social capital and dropout. The next chapter will present the methodological framework for the study and field experience.

## Chapter 4: Methodology

In this chapter, I present the methodology of the thesis and fieldwork experience. It starts with the study area and informants; and describes how and why I have chosen the particular study area and people for my research. I share the field experience, describe and discuss the data collection and the research process. I explain the choice of the methodology and discuss why I used it for the research. Furthermore, I explain the advantages and challenges I faced during the process of the data collection. And finally, I present my own role as a researcher and how far I have considered ethical issues during my research.

### 4.1. Study Area

As mentioned above, Santhal people are mainly found in Jhapa and Morang district of Nepal, so I had to choose either Jhapa or Morang for my fieldwork. I rather preferred Jhapa because it was my home district and I was a bit closer to the Santhal communities in Jhapa.

Jhapa District is located in Mechi Zone of the Eastern Development Region of Nepal. This district is famous for different cash crops, tea, horticulture and livestock. The district has the facilities of roads, electricity, drinking water, school, colleges, etc. It ranks 15<sup>th</sup> in Human Development Index (HDI) among 75 districts in Nepal. The literacy rate of the district is 75.3% which is 9.4% above national average. According to the HDI, literacy rate and the infrastructure of the district, it is one of the developed districts in Nepal (NPCS, 2014b).

This research primarily focuses on the Santhal of the Gauradaha and Korobari VDC (Village Development Committee) of Jhapa district and tries to look upon the wider picture of the Santhal children dropout in the bigger context of Jhapa and Morang. Although the dropout trends in Gauradaha and its surrounding VDCs necessarily may not entirely represent the overall trends of Santhal, similar socio- economic, cultural and rural backdrop help to look upon the Santhals educational status through the particular case of Gauradaha and Korobari.

Among the 7 constituencies in Jhapa, the chosen VDCs are from the constituency number 6. These are the neighboring VDCs. Through the field observation during my field work, I found that Gauradaha had better facilities for education, health and other infrastructural development, such as roads, electricity, internet, drinking water, schools, etc. than Korobari VDC. Along with the difference in economic development, they have different demographic compositions; the concentration of others (*Brahmin & Chhetri*) castes is high in Gauradaha, whereas the concentration of *Dalit* and *Janjati* is high in Korobari VDC. The concentration of

Santhal population is almost 6 times higher in Korobari than in Gauradaha. Demographically, the total population of Gauradaha VDC is 14,771, where the population of Dalit and Janajati is 46.21% of the total population, and the Santhal population is 4.60% of the total population. The total population of Korobari VDC is 6026, where the total population of Dalit and Janajati is 87.65%, and the population of Santhal is 24.02% of the total population (NPCS, 2014b).

#### 4.2. Selection of informants and accessing the informants

The study was conducted in the capital city of Nepal and the rural area of Jhapa district. For the study, I chose the general to specific method. I first decided to collect the general data on the education system in the country and to understand how it is administrated and manage, planned, implemented and monitored. The aim was to reach the people who are familiar with the issues in the country's system of education. In Nepal; MoE is the apex body of all educational organizations responsible for overall development of education in the country.<sup>10</sup> The ministry is responsible for formulating educational policies and plans and managing and implementing them across the country through the institutions under its authority. Contacting the Ministry of Education was the first step in my selection of informants. I contacted them via telephone and they agreed to be interviewed. I had interviews with the personnel there and also collected some secondary data. After that, I contacted the Department of Education (DoE), which is the organization working under MoE that coordinates and monitors the plan and policies of the school education in Nepal.<sup>11</sup> I contacted them through telephone and they agreed to be interviewed.

For the better understanding of history, culture, and the overall understanding about the Santhal, I contacted the representatives of the Nepal Federation for Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN)<sup>12</sup> and collected the data. Then, I went to the Tribhuvan University Central Library in order to collect the dissertations and other relevant materials related to Santhal and their education.

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<sup>10</sup><http://www.moe.gov.np/> retrieved 10.3.15

<sup>11</sup><http://www.doe.gov.np/>

<sup>12</sup>NEFIN is an autonomous and politically non-partisan common organization at the national level, which consists of 54 out of 59 indigenous member organizations widely distributed through Terai, Hills and Himalayas of Nepal. The main objective of this organization is to assist in capacity building for Indigenous Nationalities by coordinating with their organizations.

After collecting data in Kathmandu, I went to Jhapa. I contacted the District Education Office (DEO) in Jhapa. DEO works under MoE and coordinates, monitors and implements the policies of MoE in the district<sup>13</sup>. After an interview with one of the office-bearers in DEO, I planned to choose two community schools and one institutional school from 2 different VDCs: Gauradha and Korobari. I chose Gauradha and Korobari for two reasons: first, I had worked as a teacher at one of the institutional schools at Gauradha and I thought that I could have easy access to the teachers and head teachers there; second, the Santhal people make a significant proportion of the population there, so I thought that it would be easier for me to get informants.

### 4.3. Field Experience

I conducted my field work from 25<sup>th</sup> of May to June 15<sup>th</sup>. I spent a week in Kathmandu and two weeks in Jhapa. During my field visit, I have found most of my respondents quite open and were happy to talk to me. It was not that much difficult to get information from the informants, but the challenge was to get the informants. None of the respondents refused to answer my questions. In Kathmandu, my respondents were educationists and policy makers so I got opportunity not only to get the answers of my questions but also valuable suggestions regarding my research. They also suggested to me internet sites, bookshops, libraries, where I could get information regarding the education of Nepal. A week-long stay in Kathmandu gave me insight about the education system in Nepal.

During my twenty-day fieldwork in Jhapa, I visited the schools, interviewed the teachers and head teachers for primary data and collected school profiles and schools' flash reports for my secondary data. The conversations with the teachers helped me learn about the initiatives undertaken by the schools to make teaching and learning more effective. In Janata secondary school, I was able to organize a group discussion among teachers including the head teacher. I found the teachers and head teacher open in sharing their thought and idea about the school, education system, and children education. I had planned to do at least 2 group discussions thinking that I could have comfortable access to the target groups. But unfortunately, I was not able to organize the group discussion as I had planned and ended up with one focus group discussion.

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<sup>13</sup><http://deojhapa.gov.np/home>



During my field work in Santhal villages I had a Santhal guide, who had a close relation with the people, so it became easier for me to collect information from them. But the problem was that monsoon season had already started and most of the people were in the field to plant rice during daytime and came home being tired in the evening. In the evening, they had to do their household chores and had to prepare the things for the field next day. So it was quite difficult to meet them and get information. I could not spend more time with the people because of their hectic schedule during monsoon.

I collected primary data from the interviews with educationists, Santhal village heads, parents, school head teachers and dropped-out students, whereas secondary data were collected from reports from ministry of education, Central Bureau of Statistics, school profiles, schools flash reports, INGO reports, and books related to education in Nepal. It was difficult to collect secondary data in such a short time in Nepal because books related to Santhal were very few and rare. I visited different libraries in the capital city but was only able collect a few. Very little information about Santhal was found on the internet and the websites of concerned offices. Few researches were done on Santhal so far and it was difficult to get the copy of them in such a short time.

#### 4.4. Data Source and Method of Data Collection

##### 4.4.1. Interviews

In research, interview is a purposeful face-to-face conversation between individuals which seeks to understand the experiences, feelings, opinions of an individuals and particular phenomena. It is a widely employed, exploratory in nature and flexible method of research so that interviewees are allowed to response freely (Hancock, 1998). Interviews are a means of collecting data through conversation between researcher and the participants (Crang& Cook, 2007). As my research is on educational status of Santhal community and the causes of high dropout in Santhal children, Interviews give the opportunity to step into deeper and related issues of the topic. It provides an opportunity to explore the real voice of the informants. While conducting interviews, I tried to create the ambience so that the informants could express their opinion. I did the interviews following a certain pattern: Nepali greetings at the beginning followed by introduction of me and explanation of the motif of my interview.

In field work, I used semi-structured interviews. I had an interview guide. I had prepared a questionnaire with 31 questions at my disposal. I had different list of questionnaires for different informants, representatives of the institutions, teachers, parents and dropouts.

Interviewees were free to answer the questions openly. The questions were about dropout, education system, language in the class room, infrastructure of the school, parents awareness about education, trained teachers, early marriage and its relation to dropout, household chores and dropout, poverty and dropout, teachers and students relation, parents and students relation and dropout, governmental investment in education and dropout, school environment, Santhal children and their access in education, etc. Questions did not follow the exact way that was outlined in the interview guide, however, all the questions were asked.

Semi-structured interviews employ a series of open-ended questions, which provide the opportunities to discuss the topics in more detail and the freedom to give original responses (Hancock, 1998). I used this type of interview because I thought I could get the answer to all my questions in more detail and in a conversational way. I had planned to use unstructured interview also before the field visit, and I tried it with one of my informants, but the interview went into digression and off the topic. I then rather switched to semi-structured interviews than unstructured interviews in my subsequent interviews.

#### 4.4.2. Focus Group Discussion

In order to research on the highly marginalized Santhal community, focus group technique of interview plays a vital role to uncover the actual scenario of the community. Because focus group is a form of interview with several people, usually at least four interviewees. It emphasizes on fairly defined topics and allows for participants' perspectives on the research (Berg, 2000). According to (Berg, 2001:111) "the focus group may be defined as an interview style designed for small groups. Using this approach, researchers strive to learn through discussion about conscious, semiconscious and unconscious psychological and socio-cultural characteristics and processes among various groups".

According to Bryman, (2001), focus group discussion is a descriptive way of getting information from the participants. In this approach, moderator or facilitator becomes more flexible and allows free and fair discussion among the participants. The "advantage of allowing a fairly free rein to the discussion is that the researcher stands a better chance of getting access to what individuals see as important or interesting( *ibid.*). The goal of this study is also to document the knowledge from the community; FGDs provide an opportunity to gain perspectives and reflection of the people involved. To gain perspective and reflection of teachers, head teachers, and Santhal people, it would require interaction with them.

Focus groups are generally based on unstructured interviews, conferring exploration of wide varieties of views in relation to a particular issue in which participants are able to bring significant issues related to the topic, and other participants can ask each other, support and challenge each other's views and can ask for further clarification (Hancock, 1998). Such spontaneous discussion in free environment can help the researcher to obtain a more realistic account of what people think, why and how they think in that particular scenario. The group interaction among participants has good potential for greater insights into the community.

The participants were teachers of Janata Secondary School. There were 8 participants who agreed to take part in the FGD, including the head teacher. The FGD lasted for an hour. I followed Lederman's (1990) steps for how to make an interview guide for the focus group discussion. They are as follows: an introduction which provides the purpose, ground rules and parameters, an ice-breaker or warm-up set of questions, a series of questions designed to elicit all of the necessary information on the issues to be addressed, and a summary or closing section (Lederman, 1990: 122).

The discussion was mainly based on the classroom teaching, school infrastructure, parent-teacher relation, teacher student relation, curriculum design, the factors for the students drop out, and so on. The discussion went smoothly as I was conscious to fill up with prompts and evidences so as to ensure the discussion does not break. Since my respondents were teachers, it became easier for me to go into the subject matter and make the debate or discussion more productive. The focus group discussion gave me insight into the school education system of Nepal and the discrepancy between the documentation on the school education in Nepal and its implementation in the rural areas. Moreover, I got the opportunity to reflect my own role as a moderator.

#### 4.4.3. Participant observation

Observation technique of data collection is one of the prevalent methods to study socially as well as economically sensitive social groups (Mulhall, 2003). A researcher in observation is privileged to capture data in a more natural social setting (Bryman, 2001). The essence of observation is using "our eyes as well as our ears" so that a researcher can collect information about how people make interaction, use social spaces, their household and community role and responsibilities, decision making process and access to resources and other various day-to-day activities or particular social construction in a specific social setting (Mulhall,

2003,307-308). Observation is important to study overall condition of a community, as it informs about the physical environment (Mulhall, 2003).

During my fieldwork, I used the non-participant observations method because I had short time and I did not get more time to be with my informants' community due to the monsoon season. The physical and cultural environments of the respondents' house structure, settlement pattern, school infrastructure were observed to obtain information about their socio-economic conditions.

#### 4.5. Successes and challenges in the use of the methods

##### 4.5.1. Reaching the informants

Being a local resident and conducting field work in my home country was comparatively easier for me to reach the informants. Familiarity with the culture, language and habits of people were an advantage for me.

During my field visit, I had found respondents who were quite open in sharing their feelings and idea. It was not that much difficult to get information from the informants. It was easy to access people in the cities thanks to internet and telephone. In the rural area, I had a Santhal guide, who was in touch with the Santhal people, which made it relatively easier to access the people. The monsoon season had already started and people were busy in farming, which made it difficult to reach the respondents because most of them were in the field during day time and I had to wait for them until evening. In the evening, they were quite busy in their household chores and had to prepare the things for the field next day. So I could not spend more time with the people because of their hectic schedule during the monsoon. Monsoon season was the great challenge for me for two reasons; it made it difficult to meet the people, and it made the roads slippery and muddy.

The exams were running in the schools and after the exam the schools were going to be closed for a month due to the monsoon season so I had to collect the data as fast as possible. Teachers were relatively busy in conducting exams, checking copies and doing final arrangements before the school closes, which made it difficult to arrange meeting for interviews and focus group discussions. I planned for two focus group discussions but ended up with one because of the hectic schedule of the teachers and parents.

Expectation of gifts and development projects by the Santhal informants was another challenge which I faced during the course of the field work. Though I introduced myself as

only a student, my study in the foreign University always put them a sense of doubt that I had a link with powerful institutions like INGOs and governmental organizations which can contribute to their communities with development projects.

#### 4.5.2. My role

An insider researcher shares identity, language and experience with the participants (Dwyer&Bukle, 2009). As mentioned earlier, my informants were educationists, teachers, Santhal village heads, parents and dropouts. I had worked as a teacher in one of the institutional schools of Gauradha. Given my educational background and my teaching experience in Nepal, I could be identified much closer with the teachers in that region. I share the similar linguistic as well as cultural background with many of the teachers I interviewed. In this respect my role is partly of an insider. However, my insider identity can be challenged as most of my teacher informants were from community school and my experience in institutional school may not fully be identified with them.

Regarding Santhal community, I was quite familiar with the locality and socio-cultural practices of Santhal people. It was not difficult for me to develop rapport with the people because I knew in advance to present myself in front of them according to their cultural norms and values. My role was that of an outsider also because I do not belong to the Santhal community. For them, I belong to the *mun*do(hill people) community. During my field work as an insider and outsider, I did not feel too much of a stranger nor too close to the people. I found myself in-between.

#### 4.5.3. Language Issues

As mentioned by Irvine, F., Roberts, G. & Bradbury-Jones, C. (2008), it is important to interview participants in their language in order to maximize the quality of data. During the interviews and the focus group discussions, the use of language was Nepali. Nepali is the lingua franca in Nepal. Since all the respondents could speak Nepali and I am also good at Nepali language, I did not find any problem in the use of language. Even in the Santhal community, my respondents were bilingual, who could speak both Nepali and Santhali. The Nepali speaking community and the Santhali speaking community were so mixed up that I found that the Santhali people were speaking Nepali language in their daily use. I found them using their own language only if they were saying something private, which they wanted others not to understand.

For the purpose of the data presentation, I have translated the interviews and discussion notes into English. One cannot deny the fact that accurate translation is crucial for credibility of findings (Tryndyuk, 2013). I showed my translation to a professional translator who made a few corrections to ensure that my translation was not distorting the meaning.

#### 4.6. Ethics

In social research, ethics is a set of moral and professional behaviors which respects the research subjects, promotes the aim of research, values the collaborative work, makes the research team accountable before the public, collects and uses genuine data for analysis and public the outcomes.<sup>14</sup> In fact, ethics in research comprises a set of behavioral patterns to direct the researchers to express and reinforce important social and cultural values of a society that deals with the dynamics of decision making concerning what is right and wrong. Ethics is not limited to a set of rules only, it is set of right behaviors that are closely related to who you are, what your deep values are and understanding of the culture you are researching.

To get started with my field work, I asked for the consent from the local officials of my study area. I used the letter from Sami Center to introduce myself and reassure the authorities that the purpose of my fieldwork was for my study solely. Before the interviews, I informed the informants about the methods and goal of the study, what they would gain or lose after they participate and told them that they were free to refuse to be my informants. I assured them that participation is voluntary, and they could leave the conversation any time they wish. I also assured my informants that none of the informants would be harmed in any way and the confidentiality will be maintained. I told them that the records of the interviews will be destroyed after the completion of my thesis.

Ethics is an embedded, continuous concern acknowledging how the researcher's presence in the field of research is a unique, essential point of knowledge making. Ensuring that all information would be treated confidentially was of utmost importance for developing trust between the researchers and informants. In the daily communication between the researcher and informants, no comments or information gained from one informant was passed on to other informants in the field (Igholt et al., 2015).

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<sup>14</sup><http://www.niehs.nih.gov/research/resources/bioethics/whatis/>

#### 4.7. Summary

This chapter presented the methodological issues of the study. The field work was conducted in Gauradaha and Korobari VDCs of Jhapa district. In order to study the causes of the dropout, I used qualitative semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion as the primary source of data collection. It presented the reflections from the field in terms of challenges and opportunities; more specifically how the researcher`s background has affected gaining the field data. And, finally, I concluded with the ethical issues considered during the data collection process.

## Chapter 5: Data Presentation and Analysis

This chapter discusses and analyses the data of my field research covering the facts and findings on dropout of Santhal children in Gauradaha and Korobari VDC. It firstly presents the educational status of the Santhal, *Dalit* and *Adivasi/Janajati* children from the selected schools. The aim here is to find out the current educational status of Santhal children in those schools. Secondly, it presents how the lack of social capital and the factors other than social capital keep the students away from school in the Santhal community.

### 5.1. Educational status of Santhal, *Dalit*, *Adivasi/Janajati* and others in selected schools

As mentioned in methodology chapter, this study presents the demographic composition and the educational status of the two community schools, Janata Secondary School & Adarsha Secondary School, and one institutional school, namely, Mount Everest English School.

The students are presented under the broader frame encompassing the categories *Dalit*, *Janajati* and others. In school records, the data of Santhal children are incorporated under the broader category of *Janajati* with other *Janajati* children so the data of *Janajati* is presented here as a data of Santhal. Only the grade-wise population of the Santhal was found from the schools' record so it is presented accordingly in separate table. The data on the dropout rate of the students was not found in the school record so it will be analyzed through the students' enrollment, appearance in exam and the pass rate of the students. In addition, the share of the Santhal, *Dalit* and *Janajati* population in schools will be compared with the share of population of respective groups in the VDC. The objective of the comparison is to show the relation between the demographic compositions of the students in the school to the respective demographic compositions of the community in the VDCs. This comparison will reveal if Santhal, *Dalit* and *Janajati* children enroll in schools on a par with others (*Brahmin* & *Chhetri*) children.

#### 1.1. Janata Secondary School, Gauradaha

Demographically, the total population of Gauradaha VDC is 14,771, where the population of Dalit and Janajati is 46.21% of the total population of the VDC and the Santhal population is 4.60% of the total population (NPCS, 2014b). The population of *Dalit* and *Janajati* children in Janata Secondary School is 52.41% and the population of Santhal children is 8.94% (ibid.). Comparing the data, the share of Santhal, *Dalit* and *Janajati* population in the school is higher



than their respective population in the VDC. In the case of the Santhal, their share of the population in the school is almost double compared to their share of population in the VDC. This data shows the higher enrolment and participation of the Santhal in the education sector.

Grade		Number of students enrolled	Number of students appeared in exam	Number of students passed
1-5	<i>Dalit</i>	45	45	38
	<i>Janajati</i>	46	46	37
	Others	45	40	39
6-8	<i>Dalit</i>	31	25	12
	<i>Janajati</i>	50	45	35
	Others	81	71	52
9-10	<i>Dalit</i>	30	27	11
	<i>Janajati</i>	91	84	60
	Others	140	121	82

Source: School Flash report 2013

The table shows enrolment of the *Dalit*, *Janajati* and others in different levels grade 1–5, 6–8 and 9–10. It can be seen that the trend of enrolment of different groups is different. The enrolment of *Dalit* declines sharply in the higher grades, whereas the enrolment of *Janajati* and others has is higher with more than 2 folds.

The pass percent of *Dalit*, *Janajati* and others in grade 1–5 seems almost similar. The pass percent of the students is seen to drop in the entire group as the grades go upward. The population of the others (*Brahmin & Chhetri*) seems to rise from grade 6 to 10 in comparison to the population of *Dalit* and *Janajati* children. The pass percent of the *Dalit* seems to get lower than that of the other two groups as the grade goes upward.

The number of *Dalit* students passed is seen to have fallen by 3 folds from primary to lower secondary level. The number of others in secondary level is 3 folds higher than the primary level.

This indicates that the survival rate of *Dalit* children in the school is sharply lower in the higher level in comparison to *Janajati* and others.

### Grade-wise Santhal students in Janata Secondary School

Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Female	-	4	3	2	-	3	1	-	4	3
Male	-	4	10	4	1	3	-	2	4	2

In the table above the concentration of Santhal is uneven. The enrolment of Santhal children is null in grade one. It is highest in grade 3, falls sharply in grade 7, and is seen to rise sharply in grade 9. Observing the Santhal population in the VDC, the enrolment of the Santhal children in school seems to be far lower than their share of population in the region. It can be said that large portion of Santhal children are out of school. However, it is not clear from the data what portion of the children never attended school and what portion of the children dropped out of school.

#### 5.1.2. Mount Everest English School, Gauradha

In Mount Everest English School, Gauradaha, the data of Santhal children are put under the broader category of *Janajati* because the separate data of Santhal was not available in the school record. From the table below and the data from the VDC, it is visible that the share of the *Dalit* and *Janajati* population in the school is 18.69% lower than the share of *Dalit* and *Janajati* population in the VDC. This means that the number of *Dalit* and *Janajati* is lower in the school compared to their population in the region. There is a huge gap in the enrolment of the *Dalit*, *Janajati* and others. In all the levels, the number of others is sharply higher than *Dalit* and *Janajati*. The population of *Dalits* is only 20 in primary level where as the population of others are 179, which is almost incomparable.

The number of *Dalit* enrolment is sharply dropping from primary to lower secondary and secondary level. In secondary level, the number of enrolled *Dalit* is only 2 whereas the number of enrolled others is 103. This data shows that the *Dalit* children population is fairly low in this school and their enrolment is significantly dropping down in higher grades.

The grade repetition rate is almost null. All the enrolled students appeared in the exam and all of them passed except 1 student from *Dalit* in grade 1–5.

Name of school: Mount Everest English School, Gauradaha

Grade		Number of students enrolled	Number of students appeared in exam	Number of students passed
1-5	Dalit	20	20	19
	Janajati	72	72	71
	Others	179	179	179
6-8	Dalit	6	6	6
	Janajati	43	43	43
	Others	171	171	171
9-10	Dalit	2	2	2
	Janajati	29	29	29
	Others	103	103	103

Source: School Flash report 2013

#### 5.1.3. Adharsha Secondary School, Korobari

The total population of Korobari VDC is 6026, where the total population of *Dalit* and *Janajati* is 87.65% and the population of Santhal is 24.02% of total population. According to the flash report 2013, the share of Santhal children in Adharsha Secondary School is 22.76%, and the share of *Dalit* and *Janajati* children is 81.71%. Comparing the data, the population of the Santhal children in the school is lower by 1.26% than the share of the Santhal population in the VDC. The share of the *Dalit* and *Janajati* children is lower by 5.94% than the share of the *Dalit* and *Janajati* population in the VDC.

According to Flash Report 2013, the share of *Dalit* and *Janajati* children is higher than the share of others (Brahmin/Chhetri) children in Adarsha Secondary School, Korobari. The percentage of Santhal children is 22.76%, and the percentage of the *Dalit* and *Janajati* children is 81.71%. Large portion of Santhal, *Dalit* and *Janajati* children are enrolled in this school. The enrolment of *Dalit* compared to *Janajati* and others sharply drop from primary to lower secondary and secondary level.

The pass percent of all the groups seems to be dropping down as the grades go up. The pass percent of all the groups seems similar until grade 5, but the pass percent of *Dalit* and *Janajati* is lower than the pass percent of others from grade 6 to 10.

Table no. 3 Name of school: Adarsha secondary school, korobari

Grade		Number of students enrolled	Number of students appeared in exam	Number of students passed
1-5	<i>Dalit</i>	146	134	109
	<i>Janajati</i>	138	123	112
	Others	61	51	36
6-8	<i>Dalit</i>	65	56	16
	<i>Janajati</i>	132	125	56
	Others	44	39	34
9-10	<i>Dalit</i>	21	20	14
	<i>Janajati</i>	101	94	64
	Others	30	29	25

Source: School Flash report 2013

#### Grade-wise Santhal Population

Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Female	17	9	5	1	13	11	9	5	3	2
Male	5	8	17	6	13	9	10	16	5	4

In the table above the concentration of Santhal is uneven. The enrolment of Santhal children is 22 in grade one and it drops down to 7 in grade 4 and it rises up to 26 in grade 5 and is only 6 in Grade 10. The distribution of the enrolment seems to be fluctuating.

Observing these three schools, the concentration of *Dalits* and *Janajati* children is found to be higher in Janata and Adharsha Secondary school, while their population is lower in Mount Everest English School. Since Adharsha and Janata schools are community schools and Mount Everest is an institutional school, the concentration of Santhal, *Dalit* and *Janajati* is found higher in community schools than institutional school. The rate of enrolment of all the schools (both community and institutional) at the primary level is higher than the enrolment in lower secondary or secondary level. The rate of enrolment is lower in higher classes. The lower enrolment in the higher classes in the schools is due to the higher retention and dropout. Since, the actual data of the dropout was not found during the field research, but the sharp reduction of the enrolment in the higher grades strongly suggests the higher repetition and dropout in higher grades.

The grade repetition rate in institutional school is found to be almost null, but the grade repetition rate is alarming in community schools. The enrolment rate of *Dalit* children is extremely low compared to *Janajati* and others (*Brahmin & Chhetri*) children in higher grades. *Janajati* children are found in significant numbers in all three schools, but the *Dalit* children are found remarkably only in community schools. Their enrolment in the institutional school is nominal comparing with *Janajati* and others. The share of others is significantly higher in higher levels. The data reveals that the grade repetition and dropout is alarmingly higher among the *Dalit* compared to *Janajati* and others children.

Observing the previous researches, I have presumed that the cause of low educational attainment and high dropout in Santhal children is to be found in the lack of good rapport between school administration, teachers, students and parents. Furthermore, family background (such as socioeconomic status, family structure and parental education), demographic factors (such as gender, race, ethnicity, and location), individual attributes (such as disability, health, self-esteem) and experiences in school (such as academic achievement, attitudes towards school, grade repetition) are important factors for dropout.

According to Jain (2015) a major impeding factors contributing to dropout and lower attainment of secondary schools are caste-based discriminations, poverty, illiteracy in *Dalit* parents, lack of inspiration from teachers, discrimination by peers and society. The GoN, NLSS (2010-11) issued report showing that 25 percent of children dropout due to poor academic progress, 22 percent to help parents in their household chores, and early marriage is responsible for 17 percent dropout. Parents not willing to send children to school and higher cost of schooling shared 7 percent each (ibid.). Another reason for the dropout and higher retention rates of the children in class which is basically found in poor infrastructure and lack of quality education.

In this section, on the basis of the collected data, I analyzed the reasons for the dropout of the Santhal children. Social capital and other factors are considered while analyzing the data.

## 5.2. The role of schools in dropout of children

### 5.2.1. School social capital

School social capital comprises the structure and resources available to the students through the school. Factors like demographics of the student body, school size, budget and funding distribution, expectations and discipline, norms, relationship between teachers and students, and parental involvement with the school forms the school social capital. Students gain access to social capital from relationships developed with teachers. Even when students enter high

school with a history of academic difficulties, direct guidance and support from teachers can make an important difference in their willingness to persist through graduation (Drewery, 2007).

Muntu Soren, age 23, left school when he was in grade 6 because he did not find his teachers and his classmates friendly in school. He said, “I left school because of the school and my classmates”. His school was 1 hour walking distance from home. He had friends from his own community. Some of his friends started quitting school from grade 3. As he was upgrading the class, he was with his fewer friends and when he reached grade 6, he was the only one left to go to school from his community. All his friends had already left the school. He went to school for the first 2 months in grade 6 and finally decided not to go because he had no friends from his community to go with him and he was not able to make close friends in the school with other children outside of his community. He further said:

“I was the only Santhal student in grade 6, all my classmates were *Brahmin*, *Chhetri* and *Janajati*. They did not consider me as their fellow friend. Some of my classmates made fun upon the color of my skin and teased me upon my caste. All the teachers were from *Brahmin*, *Chhetri* and *Janajati* communities. We did not have teachers from our community. I did not have teachers who would encourage me in my study”.

Here the question comes, what would happen if Muntu was able to make friendship with children from other communities in the school? What would happen if teachers had close understanding of his problem before he dropped out? Would he have continued school, if he had teachers encourage him in his study and his classmates were friendly towards him?

Theorists of social capital have confirmed that the educational environment in school, the relation of teachers with students and the teachers–parents relation can contribute to keeping children in school. Croninger and Lee (as cited in Drewery, 2007) studied whether social capital provided by school increase the likelihood that students complete high school. They measured social capital in two ways: student opinions and beliefs about the efforts of their high school teachers to help them in school and self-reported incidences of teachers guiding students about school or personal matters. The findings show that the presence of social capital increases the likelihood that children stay in school. Here, in the case of Muntu, if he had got the encouragement and support from parents and teachers, he would have continued the study. The case is not similar to all the santhal dropout students. The story of Tulia Hasda is different.

During the interview Tuila Hasda, age 20 said that his teachers were good. None of his teachers mishandled him. Sometimes, he was late in school, he could not do his homework on time in such time his teachers encourage him to study. He recalls his school time and says: “My teachers were really kind to me, they knew my situation, and they knew the condition of my family”. In Tuila’s case, the teachers seemed to have established relationship with the students. If this was the case, then why did Tuila dropped out of the school? One of the teachers of Adharsha Secondary school said:

“Santhals are poor and their children have to help the family. They don’t have time to do their homework on time and sometimes, they are late because they have to cook food by themselves and feed their younger siblings and come to school. But the problem is that teachers are careless here. They don’t care if the students come to school or quit the school. They get their salary whether the students pass or fail, or the students come to school or not.”

He further said: “I have never seen any of the teachers calling the parents if the children are irregular in the class or have not done their homework. The teachers are making excuses on the poor living condition of Santhal and the illiterate Santhal parents.”

In the case of Tuila, the teachers are irresponsible towards students. They appear to be good in the eyes of the students but are not doing efforts to facilitate in the study of students. School social capital can be in the form of the teachers’ effort to create bonds with students, teachers’ efforts to contact parents, and teachers working with other teachers to develop information channels. In the case of the community schools which I observed during the fieldwork, there is no provision of student counselor, no administrative body to listen to students. Under such conditions, they were not able to maintain the good relation with students and parents.

The principal of Adharsha Secondary school says:

“The students are irregular in the class. Some of the students have genuine reason to stay at home but some of them leave home for school but they don’t arrive at school. They go somewhere and play. In such case parents think that children are at school and we think that children are sick or have some problem and stay at home.”

He further says:

“We have no proper means to communicate with parents. We don’t have phone

facilities, let alone internet. If the children are absent, we cannot immediately inform the parents that their children are absent. Our only way to communicate with parents immediately is through letters, which we send through other students who are neighbors of the absentees. Later, we have found that most of the parents did not get letters we sent from here.”

From the opinions above, it can be said that the problem lie both in cultural and structural aspects, which is reducing the social capital between parents, teachers and students. Some teachers are found genuinely concerned on the education of the students but have no adequate mechanism to communicate with the students and parents effectively. And it has also been found that some teachers and students have not utilized the available resources to make teaching and learning effective and keeping the children in school because irregularity and poor academic performance in schools finally leads students to drop out.

#### 5.2.2. Lack of child-friendly education

Conducting research on *Dalit* (the untouchable) children of Nepal, Bartlett, Pradhananga, Sapkota & Thapa (2014) points out that *Dalits* who are enrolled in much higher numbers at child-friendly schools are less likely to dropout. Provisions like pure drinking water, basic sanitation, lunch program at school, playground, and recreational instruments are essential to motivate the children to go to school. But, what I could see during my field visit was that these basic facilitates were inadequate. The school buildings were of low quality, the classes were not well ventilated, and the furniture in the classroom was insufficient. The science teacher of Janata Secondary school said:

“There are not enough books in the library room. The library building seems to be only for showpiece. It is almost in no use, same is the case with science lab, and we don’t have science equipment required for science experiments. We are teaching the students theoretically where the practical science experiment is the requirement of the curriculum.”

Agreeing on the lack of basic facilities in the school, the representative of DEO said: “We have limited funds. We prioritize the needy schools first. So, we have not been able to make the basic facilities intact but we are trying our best, in near future we will be able to solve such problems.”



Along with lack of basic facilities in the schools, there was a problem of lack of availability of books and reference materials. The government of Nepal has been distributing the books for free but they are not available on time. The social studies teacher of Adharsha School said: “Every year, we are getting the books 2-3 months after the academic session starts. Because of the late availability of books, we are facing problem of completing the course on time. We have no bookshops in the region and the students have to go to nearby cities to collect reference books.

Furthermore, the community schools in Jhapa lack trained teachers in the rural areas. Teachers are teaching in traditional rote learning methods. The resource person<sup>15</sup> of Gauradha admits that all the teachers in the region are not trained for student-centered teaching and learning. “We have lack of trainers in rural areas. We have limited number of trainers. We have the problem of funding to hire new trainer.”

### 5.2.3. Teacher-student ratio, lack of and carelessness of teachers

The Education Act of Nepal (7th amendment) has stipulated a normal class size for the Mountains, Hills and for *Terai* and Valley districts as 35, 45, and 50 respectively (CERID, 2002). By including this ratio in the Education Act, the government has indeed shown its concern for regulating class size in schools. Ironically, the student-teacher ratio (or the minimum class size) is more influenced by the availability of students in these regions rather than optimizing their student’s learning achievement (ibid). Such high teacher-students ratio determined by the government act is affecting the teachers’ and students’ performance which is demotivating the students to go to school. Chandra khadka, teacher of Janata Secondary school says: “We have more than 50 students in most of the classes. How can a teacher look into individual cases of such a large number of students in 40-minute class?” He further said:

“In such a short time, we have to teach new lesson, revise it, check students’ homework and give feedback. It is almost impossible to provide individual care to the students. We should have the counselor body or the administrative body to listen to students, check them whether they are regular or not, or help to solve their problem to keep them in school. I think it is almost impossible in community schools, since we are lacking the teachers to teach, we have limited fund and the government is not increasing the quota of teachers in our school.”

Gumit Lal Kisku, the Santhal village head said:

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<sup>15</sup> A person who monitors the schools in Nepal

“There are not enough teachers in the school. One teacher is teaching more than 50 students in a class. Most of the teachers are careless and irregular. They don’t teach the children carefully. They send their children in institutional schools. If their children are also in community schools, maybe they would teach carefully. If the community schools also have the educational environment like that of institutional schools, our children could have studied well.”

In an interview with the representative of MoE, he agreed that in the rural areas the teacher-students ratio is high. Teachers are not adequately staffed. This problem is in community schools. In institutional schools, this is a rare case. He further said:

“If the teachers are not adequately staffed, the community schools also can recruit temporary teachers by collecting funds in the community or using the school funds. In the rural areas, where the parents are illiterate and where the SMC is not active, there is a problem. We have a resource person, who monitors the schools. If he does not receive complaints about the school and the teachers, there is chance that he may overlook the issues. So the active role of parents and SMC is also required.”

The representative of DEO also had a similar opinion and he said:

“Along with the inadequately staffed school, the teachers are irregular in schools in rural areas. We also lack proper monitoring in rural areas, and the parents are also not aware whether the teachers are regular or not, and whether teachers are teaching properly or not.”

The head teacher of Janata Secondary school had different opinion, he said:

“The teachers are under the supervision of the head teacher and SMC in school, and the teachers have to complete the teaching hours. So, the teachers cannot be irregular as they wish. If the teacher does not complete the teaching hours, he will be penalized. In some schools in rural areas, if the head teacher is not competent enough to monitor the teachers, the teachers can be irregular but such case is very rare and almost unlikely.”

AmritRajbansi, the math teacher of Adarsha School said: “Only the teachers should not be blamed for the poor academic performance of the students”. He further says:

“I think there is no importance of something which is free. We have a free education here in community schools so none of the parents care about what is happening here in the school. If they had invested money in education, they could have come quite

frequently to talk about their children's education. You can see in the private schools the parents pay a lot of money. And, they go frequently in schools and talk to teachers about the study progress of their children. We organize parents-teachers meeting every 3 months but very few parents come to the meeting.”

Opinions of teachers, head teacher, representative of MoE & DEO, and Santhal Village head vary from each other. There seems to be like a blame game between each other. But there is a one thing in common: the lack of social capital between the stakeholders. Because of the lack of social capital, they are not able to produce stable relation among them which lead to lack of mutual respect, honor, and trust. Because of the lack of social capital, there is a lack of norms and incurred obligation among the stakeholders. This can be seen in their opinion of blaming others and not taking responsibility of owns actions and deeds and whose repercussion is on the drop out of the students. As Ream and Rumberger (2008) points out that teacher can play a very important role in keeping children in school. The students' performance in school is better with the higher expectation of the teachers in both behavioral and academic achievement of students. The students are ready to meet the higher expectation of the teachers only if there is a good relationship between teachers and students. The lack of teachers and their carelessness can only deteriorate the bond between the teachers and the students, which leads to the poor academic achievement of the students and finally exposes them to the risk of dropping out of the school.

#### 5.2.4. Evaluation System

Laxman Rajbansi of Adarsha secondary school points out the role of evaluation system in drop out of children from school. The proper evaluation of the students helps to keep the children intact. The problem in the students can be noticed before it is too late to be addressed. He said:

“We don't have an effective evaluation system. We have continuous assessment system up to grade 7. In theory this assessment system is good but it is not working well in practice. The teachers are not evaluating the students upon their performances in the class. They are giving the students higher grades than they deserve. This system is not working well here. Students think that they can pass easily and teachers also give good grades without evaluating the actual performance of the students. This problem is

actually in feeder schools<sup>16</sup>. And you can see in the school data also that large number of students fails in grade 9, 10 and SLC exam.”

He further said:

“The SLC exam is conducted by the SLC board. In this exam students are not evaluated by continuous assessment system. The students have to take the paper based exam and the questions are set by SLC board. The exam is conducted in SLC centers so the students of those feeders’ schools mostly fail in this exam. After the students fail twice or thrice they are likely to drop out of the school.”

The government of Nepal has launched the continuous assessment system (CAS) to evaluate the students` performance as a part of School Sector Reform Program (SSRP). The motif of CAS is to ensure continuous learning and to enhance quality in education. The CAS was launched to assist children individually for learning. The aim of CAS was to reduce drop out by frequently assessing the performance of students and help develop the teacher-student interactions. Students receive feedback on time from teachers based on their performance that allows them to focus on topics they have not yet mastered. Teachers can know which students need what sorts of assistance and which students are ready to move on to more complex work.

CAS has been a practice in developed countries and has been proved to be effective in teaching and learning. But this system has not been found effective in the study area. Teachers in feeder schools are found misusing it. They are evaluating students not based on the performance of the students but giving good grades simply to upgrade the students. They are using CAS in their benefit. By giving good grades than students deserve, they can avoid complain from parents and head teacher. Even they can be popular among the students, and students do not have to bother on study because they will finally receive good grade. It has been found that CAS till the date has been reducing the quality of the education in studied schools. It has been making both teachers and students more lazy and careless. The students who are likely to fail or their tendency to drop out because of the grade retention has been reduced up to lower secondary level but when comes the board exam in grade 8 and 10, the effects of such haphazard grade promotion has been found more serious. The low survival rate of the students in grade 8 and 10 in Nepal is the result of this. The motif of CAS to reduce the drop out has been found exacerbating the dropout tendencies in grade 8 and 10 more seriously than before.

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<sup>16</sup>Schools from which most of the children go to particular secondary school. These schools are particularly primary and lower secondary schools in Nepal.

### 5.2.5. Mobility

Mobility of children from feeder schools to secondary school is pointed out as another reason for dropout. In the rural areas there are only primary schools, and students have to change the school and walk more than an hour to reach secondary schools. In the new school, they face difficulties in creating close relationship with peers and teachers in new atmosphere.

A teacher of Janata Secondary school said:

“Students from feeder schools find it difficult to adjust in the new atmosphere. It was easy and comfortable to read in school near the village with the peers from the community. But after the students pass primary level, they have to change the school and come to secondary school which is far away from their village. Students have to make new friends. They have to mix with the students from different places and communities. The teachers are new to them and they are new to the teachers. It will take time for both teachers and students to know each other. It obviously will hamper the teaching and learning. We have seen here in this school that children from feeder schools have higher repetition and dropout rate than the students who pass primary level from here and continue secondary level.”

Fuchhu Hasda, age 23, left the school in grade 6. He studied at primary level in the village school. After primary, he had to change the school and walk for an hour to reach the nearby secondary school. Few of his friends decided to continue secondary level because the school was far and everything was new for them, including teachers and friends in the class. Recalling his new school experience, he said:

“The new school was far away from village. I had only few friends who went to the new school. Everything was new for me: teachers, students and school. Teachers were not as friendly as those I had in primary school. Some of my friends started to quit the school. I was not able to make friends since students came there from different places. I felt alone. I started feeling like I also should not go to school. I left school after 8 months”.

The question comes, what would happen if Fuchhu was able to make friends in the school? What would happen if he was able to continue his secondary school education in nearby village?

The representative of DEO also agreed that the mobility of the children from the feeder school to secondary school has resulted in the dropout of children. The children find it

difficult to adjust in the new setting. Both teachers and classmates are new to them, which reduces the social capital between them resulting in dropout. He further said:

“The dropout rate of *Dalit*, *Adivasi/Janajati* children from the feeder school is higher than *Brahmin/Chhetri* children. The demography of primary and secondary schools is different. The population of *Dalit* and *Janajati* children is low in secondary school in comparison to their respective population in feeder schools. The children may find it difficult to make friendship with students from another community, which may have resulted in the higher dropout of *Dalit* and *Janajati* children from feeder schools in higher classes.”

The principal of Janata Secondary school has a different opinion. He said:

“The government has a policy not to fail the students up to grade 5. If the school has high failing rate, the school will be penalized. On the one hand, the teachers in the feeder schools do not want to take risk by failing the students and on the other hand they don’t have to teach the students in secondary level and make them pass in SLC exam which is the final exam of school. Because of this, the teachers in feeder schools don’t find it obligatory to teach better and pass all the students. They simply give good grades to the students and save their face. This has become burden to us because those students from the feeder schools come to our school for secondary education. There is high chance that those children will find it difficult to study here. And if they fail for 1 or 2 times, they are more likely to drop out.”

The above-mentioned views reveal, firstly, that mobility of the students from feeder school to secondary school leads to a loss of social capital between the teachers and students. And secondly, it is making the teachers in feeder school less responsible, which obviously affects teaching and learning. According to Ream (2003:239), “mobility disrupts social root systems, challenging the development and maintenance of social capital by inhibiting students’ efforts to make new friends, adjust socially to a new school situation, and develop reciprocal relations with school personnel.”

#### 5.2.6. Lack of quality in community school

The quality of schooling is important in the decision making of parents in regards to bearing the expenses that come with educating their children. The quality education in school has

been found to be increasing the school attendance and reducing involvement of children in work. When schools offer good quality education, parents are encouraged to send their children to school instead of sending them to work (Rosati & Rossi 2007:10). In an interview, a local educationist in Gauradaha said:

“The reason for dropout in Nepal is the poor quality of schooling. The school education of Nepal only produces high school graduates with the ability to read newspapers, but without the aptitude to think independently or pursue meaningful careers. The younger siblings in the family can see their elder sibling with certificate in their hands but without jobs or without meaningful use of those certificates. Since large numbers of the high school graduates go to India, Dubai and Qatar for labor work; this has repelled the desire for the younger sibling to complete the high schools.”

It obviously seems that if the elder siblings who have high school certificates do some meaningful and respectable work or are in line to pursue meaningful jobs, then the younger siblings could have been enticed to continue their studies. There are complaints from the parents that the teachers don't pay attention to their children. A father of a 10-year old Santhal student says:

“There are no strict rules and no discipline in school. Teachers don't teach the children effectively, they only take the attendance, write things on the black board and tell the children to mug up. They spend their time talking with other teachers and letting the children play. So, why should I send my son to school? If he stays at home at least he can help me.”

Another problem found in the school was the financial greed of the teachers in community schools. Tula Hasda says:

“Most of the children fail in English, math and science subjects. There are not extra classes in school for these difficult subjects. So, we have to send our children to tuition classes in order to pass. I don't understand one thing: the same teacher teaches in school and in the tuition classes. Our children understand the lessons in tuition but not in school. I think there is a problem with the motivation of the teachers. They do not teach effectively in the school in order to attract children to tuition classes so that they can earn extra money. Here, in Janata Secondary School, a math teacher can earn more money from private tuition than the salary he gets from school. It is useless to send the children to community school if you cannot put your children in tuition classes. As far

as institutional school is concerned, we don't have money to send our children there; they are very expensive.”

Comparing and contrasting the community and institutional schools, he further says:

“There is a huge difference between community and institutional schools here. The institutional schools are expensive. The pass percent of the students is almost 100%.The teachers are qualified and they are attentive to the students. If the student becomes academically poor then, teachers have to be responsible. They have two choices: either to teach well or quit the school. But the case is not so in community schools. The teachers are permanent. They will get the salary whether they teach effectively or not. They rather prefer not to teach well in order to attract children to their tuition center so that they can earn extra money privately.”

In the study it was found that the interaction between the parents and the teachers was more frequent in institutional schools. The attendance rate of the students was regular. Students were encouraged more effectively to participate in curricular and extracurricular activities. If the students were not performing well, the schools had the provision for parent-teacher meeting, special meeting for the academically weak students, etc. This increased interaction provides information that is crucial to achieve high enrollment, regular attendance, improved retention rates and low dropout in school. However, there are contrary views as well, students in private schools complete their education more often not because of the type of school they attend but because they are more often from higher socio-economic backgrounds. Government schools have by far the highest concentration of students from low socio-economic backgrounds.

So, the question comes whether the graduation rate of students in private schools is higher than the government school, is it that the private schools have better quality or they attract students who are more likely to complete?

Whatever the debate is, but according to Schuchart (2013), in managing pupils, for example, private schools often have more formal systems of student care, more extensive extra-curricular activities, and more clearly articulated and controlled policies on discipline and order. These features of organization can help attract students to school and promote stronger engagement and academic motivation.

In conclusion, it has been found that the quality of relationships between parents, teachers and students plays a vital role in keeping the students in schools whether it is private or public



schools. The quality of relationships with parents and teachers was of crucial importance for the educational plans of students. It has been found that teachers play an important role in the process of planning educational decisions of students, not only in terms of knowledge-based support, but also in terms of social and emotional supports (Schuchart, 2013). The findings presented here show that schools with higher social capital between teachers and students has less dropout compared to schools with lower social capital between teachers and students. Schools with higher levels of teacher expectations has smaller dropout rate, and, in contrast, schools with lower level of teacher expectations have higher retention, which leads to higher dropout rate. In addition, lack of child-friendly education, higher teacher-student ratio, lack of and carelessness of teachers and lack of quality in community schools are other contributing factors for the higher dropout of Santhal children in Nepal.

### 5.3. The role of family

#### 5.3.1. Family social capital

The income and the education of the parents influence the educational status of children. Income, which is related to financial capital, and education, which is related to human capital, plays an important role in the choice about how much time and resources to invest in the education of the children. Parents with sound income and higher education provide more resources to support their children's education by putting them in better schools, providing them the resources necessary for their children education and helping them in their studies (Lamb, Walstab, Teese, Vickers, & Rumberger, 2004).

According to the human capital theory, parents make choices about how much time and other resources to invest in their children based on their objectives, resources, and constraints which, in turn, affect their children's taste for education (preferences) and cognitive skills (Haveman & Wolfe, 1994, as cited in Lamb et al., 2004).

Despite giving the credit to financial and human capital, the sociologist James Coleman argues that human capital (parental education) and financial capital (parental income) are insufficient to explain the correlation between family background and children school success. According to him, the human and financial capital can be used best for the betterment of children education, if there is social capital in the family, school and community. He argues that social capital, which is manifested in the relationships parents have with their children, other families, and the schools, influences school achievement independently of the effects of human and financial capital (Coleman, 1988). His argument

was further supported by McNeal, (1999) and Teachman et al., (1996), who claim that strong relationships between students and parents reduce the odds of dropping out of school.

Family social capital involves the relationships between parents and children that impacts educational attainment. The aspects of social capital include parental aspirations for the child, family mobility, family structure, and rules and norms established in the household. For Smith, Beaulieu, & Israel (1992) factors such as the number of siblings in the family, parents' occupation, single-parent or two-parent family, and parents' expectation from the child's education are all important in keeping the children in school.

In an interview Sunil Mardi, age 19, said he left school when he failed SLC exam for 3 times.

“My father works as a daily wage laborer. He works when work is available. My mother works in home and in a farm. We are 4 siblings. I had to go to work on the farm with my mother early in the morning. I used to come back at home at around 9 am. However, I manage to reach school at 10 am. I used to be very tired and was not able to concentrate in class. I did not have time to study and do my homework. My parents are uneducated; they never encourage and supported me to study. I reached up to SLC by my own effort. If I had support from my family, I could have passed high school.”

During the interviews, most of the parents of dropout respondents work pattern show the low income of family. Most of the parents were found to be unskilled and were seasonally employed. They had little income which was not sufficient to cover the family needs. So, children were called in to add to the household income, either as a wage laborer, or helping other household members in farm, or at home doing household chores.

Manandhar and Sthapit's (2011) report highlights that parents' education is important to keep children at schools rather than other factors. They further argue that unless parents are educated, it is impossible to keep every child at school to complete a full cycle of basic education.

In an interview the 25-years old Sony Hemram said that she left school when she was studying in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Her family's economic status was poor. Both of her parents were illiterate. Her father used to drink alcohol a lot. Her father thought there was no need to educate children. She said: “If I had support from my parents, I could have continued my study. I used to be 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> in class. Educated people around my community also tried to convince my father for my study, but he did not listen to them. I have never seen such a fool

like my father.” In the case of Sony, if her parents were educated and had expectation that Sony graduate from school, she could have completed her high school.

The resource person of Gauradaha had similar views. He said:

“Illiteracy of parents has huge impact on children education. In Gauradaha, the dropout rate of *Brahmin & Chhetri* children is less than the dropout of Santhal and other indigenous children. It is not only because *Brahmin & Chhetri* are rich and indigenous people are poor in the region. Even the dropout rate of poor *Brahmin & Chhetri* children is less than that of the rich indigenous children. I think the main reason is the level of education of parents. If the parents are educated, their expectation of their children education is high. They will encourage and help children in their study. If the parents are illiterate, they have a low expectation of their children education. They don't see the point in educating their children.”

It is obvious that parents are the first teachers of their children. They are the source of motivation. It is parents who instill in their children the understanding of the importance of education. If the parents are illiterate, their priority on education will be lower, and they will see less importance in education.

The dropout rate of the indigenous children is seen to be higher than that of non-indigenous children in the study of McInerney (1991) and Craven et al. (2003). McInerney (1991) found that indigenous students and parents find the education theoretically valuable for future employment but did not seem to believe that good jobs were attainable for them after they complete their studies. Craven et al. (as cited in Lamb et al., 2004) conducted a national survey of indigenous and non-indigenous students. Both indigenous and non-indigenous students were asked whether employer attitudes towards them might act as a barrier to achieving their aspirations. Approximately 40% of the non-indigenous students were worried about employer attitudes, while approximately 30% said that such attitudes did not trouble them at all. In contrast, among indigenous students, only one in ten said that employer attitudes did not trouble them at all, and over 60% said that employer attitudes would act as a barrier to their aspirations. Both findings suggest that the future prospect of finding job and quality of life after the completion of the school education seems dismal in indigenous students' perspective which insinuates that indigenous students' educational aspirations are much lower than those of non-indigenous students.

Israel and Beaulieu (2004) found that high level of family social capital can compensate the low level of economic and cultural capital and vice versa, but high level of both can assure the completion of high school. Salma Hasda, age 24, said:

“I am a Santhal girl. I am from poor family and my parents are also illiterate. But, I have passed MA and am teaching in school now. I have been listening from everybody saying poverty is the reason for the dropout in Santhal community. But I don’t think so. I don’t mean to say that I did not have difficulties during my study because of poverty. Of course, I had. I still recall those days when I had nothing to eat at home and I had to go to school being hungry. But if you are determined and if you get support, care and encouragement from your family, you can study. In my community, I can see most of the children don’t study; they waste their time by playing and doing household chores. I don’t think that parents here don’t want their children to study. Of course, they want. I see some problem in children also; they don’t study when they have time. Instead they prefer to help parents so that parents don’t scold them for reading books. You see, in our community most of the people are illiterate, almost all the parents. The elder siblings in the house are dropouts. You know, children learn from elder people in the community. They follow the elders in the family. In your family, if there is a trend of dropout, then of course you are likely to drop out. In *Brahmin/Chhetri* community, the parents are educated, the elder siblings in the family go to school, and the younger siblings follow the elders. Even in the poor *Brahmin/Chhetri* family, you can see low dropout. There is an educational environment in home. Parents encourage and support children in the study even if they are poor which is almost unlikely in Santhal community till date.”

Meaningful conversation with the children, parents support and the expectation that their children graduate from school plays an important role in keeping children in school. In the case of Salma, though her parents were illiterate and poor, she got constant support; care and high expectation of parents that she graduate has played an important role. Salma’s case is exemplary to high light that increased social capital in the family can compensate the cultural and structural barriers in education.

### 5.3.2. Poverty

As mentioned above, along with family social capital, factors like financial and human capital also influence the students’ tendency to drop out of high school. According to Teachman et al.

(1997), parental income and education level are also associated with a greater tendency to complete or drop out of school.

Yadav (2007) finds social and economic factors the main reasons for dropout in the southern part of Nepal. Girls and children of the poor and disadvantage families have more dropout tendency than well to do family. The economic hardships of the families have made it difficult for them to meet expenditures associated with the schooling of children. This affects the quality of learning on the one hand and motivation of children on the other, which leads to poor performance and irregular attendance at school and, eventually, to dropout from school. During the observation in the fieldwork, I found that most of the Santhal, *Adivasi/Janajati* students did not look economically well off in their physical look. Some of them came to school without wearing school dress. Almost all the children put on slippers not shoes. They did not have bags; they were holding their books and copies in their hands. In an interview with Santhal village head, he said:

“Agriculture is our main occupation. We work as agricultural laborers, work in construction sites, brick factories and involve in other low paid job. The money we earn is sometimes not even enough to manage the hand to mouth problem. In such situation how are we able to buy the educational materials for our children?”

There must be a correlation between the economic aspects of the family with the dropout of the children. Hunt (2008:7) suggests that children from the better off households are more likely to remain in school, while the children of the poorer families are more likely not to attend school or dropout once they are enrolled. The children from the poorer families cannot buy the educational materials they need, they cannot buy lunch during the school hour, they even have to help their parents in their household chores as a result they cannot manage to revise the lesson, do their homework and engage themselves in learning.

Poor households tend to have lower demand for schooling than richer households: whatever the benefits of schooling, the costs for them are more difficult to meet than is the case for richer households (Colclough, Rose, & Tembon, 2000:25). During the field work, Muntu Tudu, age 19, said that he left school when he was in grade 7. He did not have time to do his homework and revise his lesson because he had to work in landlord house in the morning and in the evening, during day time he would go to school. But he could not continue his study because his parents' earnings were not enough to run the family, and finally he had to work as a wage worker. Wagle (2012:49) states “poverty, particularly physical poverty which includes

children's families' inability to buy regular educational material and meet the cost of schooling like fees, shoes, uniform, transport result in children's dropout".

Sumitra Mardi, age 30, said:

"I am a mother of 4 children. We are altogether 7 members in the family including my mother in law. We are farmers. We don't have land but we have taken the land in lease from the landlord. We have to go to the field early in the morning and come home in the evening. All our children go to school but they also have to help us in the household work and sometimes in the field. We also want to see our children studying in college but we are illiterate and cannot help them in their studies. We try our best not to engage our children in work, but what to do; we (husband and wife) cannot manage to do all the work in the field and at home."

Teachers and head teachers also stated that poverty is one of the main reasons for the dropout of the children. During the interview, the Head Teacher of Adarsha Secondary school said:

"Children from poor families come to our school; the children from richer families go to institutional schools. Most of our students are mal-nourished. Most of the parents of our school are poor farmers, wage labors, factory workers, etc. Parents don't have enough income to feed their kids, buy educational material and provide pocket money for lunch in school. How can children concentrate in study, when they are hungry and do not have necessary educational materials? In addition, when parents go for work, the elder siblings in the house have to do all the household chores including looking after the younger siblings. Given this situation, the students are irregular in class. They fail in the exam and finally dropout."

Parents with sufficient financial resources can provide their children with materials they need in order to perform well at school; books and other learning materials (Coleman, 1988). Lamb (1994) states that dropout rate of children of parents with professional job and higher income is lower than the dropout of children of parents with manual job and lower income level. Parents with higher education are more likely to have greater knowledge of the school system and to view higher education as the preferred option for their children (Lamb et al., 2004). Families with higher human and economic capital tend to have higher cultural capital. It has been found that children from the families with higher cultural capital have higher survival rate in school. They are able to adjust better to the dominant culture in schools than children

of parents with less cultural capital. The social and cultural capital is different depending on the socio-economic background, which eventually affects the expectation of parents of their children's education. Individuals with otherwise equal initial abilities but living in different social contexts can end up choosing entirely different educational careers (Lamb et al., 2005).

### 5.3.3 Retention

Retention is a process to identify students who lack the academic qualifications to move to the next grade level (Alexander, Macdonald, & Paton, 2005). Factors like race, socioeconomic status, and family structure play a role in deciding which students are retained. It is found that retained students have lower achievement levels and/or more disciplinary problems than students who are promoted continuously throughout school (Alexander, Macdonald, & Paton, 2005). Students who are retained are more likely to drop out of school (Rumberger, 2011)

Jimerson (2002:442) stated that the experience of being retained influences numerous factors taken to be associated with dropping out of high school, e.g., student's self-esteem, socio-emotional adjustment, peer relations, and school engagement.

As retained students are older than their peers, they are more susceptible to dropout because of societal pressures that pull them out of school (Stearns, Moller, Blau, & Potochnick, 2007). They are likely to take the family responsibility than to go to school.

Retention ruptures the social bonds with peers, teachers and parents. It affects the student's ability to develop relation with teachers. Teachers are also affected by the retention status of the students. Teachers and parents also think that the retained children will not be successful in education like the continuously promoted students.

Unsuccessful school outcomes, such as grade retention, lead to a reduction in students' self-esteem. Retained students feel more alienated from the school and are less likely to participate in both the formal curriculum and the extra curriculum. Students who are engage with school through participation in extracurricular activities are less likely to drop out of school than are students who do not participate in extracurricular activities (Fredricks, & Eccles, 2006).

Parents can increase their children's levels of social capital by interacting positively with their children; by implementing closure in their children's networks; or by interacting closely with schools, other institutions, and other adults in their children's lives (Carbonaro 1998; Teachman et al. 1997). In pursuing these strategies, parents add to the social capital of their

children and help to prevent disengagement from schooling and truancy. But the retained status of the student affects the already fragile bonds between student and parents, and parents and school.

A growing body of research on the influence of educational structures on children's achievement, attainment, and aspirations has shown that educational structures, such as retention, affect black, Latino, and white children in different ways (Blau, as cited in Stearns et al. 2007). Blau argues that aspects of the formal educational system, such as retention, do not have as negative an impact on the future aspirations and attainment of black students as they do on white students because black communities are able to provide support for children who are not identified as "high achievers" in school. Whereas, retention is often synonymous with individual failure in white culture, it may symbolize institutional discrimination in other cultures (ibid.). Thus, the experience of retention may differ by race. These racial differences in processes that are associated with high school dropout may be attributable to the frustration/self-esteem, participation identification, and social capital models of dropping out because each of these theories highlights large racial differences in resources.

In the case of Indigenous and Non-indigenous communities of Nepal, there is a perception similar to Blau's finding. The retention and drop out was found to be an individual failure in *Brahmin/Chhetri* communities whereas retention and drop out in Santhal and other marginalized communities has been perceived as an institutional discrimination. In an interview with one of the *Adivasi/Janajati* leaders of Gauradaha, he said:

“We are institutionally being marginalized. We are forced to be the second class citizen of the nation. We are deprived of opportunities. If an indigenous and a non indigenous individual of same qualification go for job interview, the non-indigenous will get the opportunity because the another non-indigenous is in the position to recruit. If you see, in civil service, army, Nepal police, Parliament, Court, and Supreme Court; ... You will only see *Brahmin/Chhetri*. Let's talk about Education. Why the educational status of santhal, *Adivasi/Janajati* is low? First, I want to ask you. How many Santhal, *Adhibsi/Janajati* teachers did you see during your field visit in schools? You may not have seen more than 5-10% let not mention Santhal because you may not have seen any of the Santhal teachers in the schools you visited. So the problem is that Santhal, *Dalit*, *Adivasi/Janajati* are lagging behind in education not by their individual failure but by institutional discrimination by the state. The state does not want to empower us. Planned social, economic, political, caste, regional discrimination by the state led by



*brahmin/chhetri* is the main reason that we are lagging behind in all sectors including education.”

Whether it is individual failure or institutional discrimination, the lack of social capital is the root cause of retention and drop out. In conclusion, students whose parents monitor and regulate their activities, provide emotional support, encourage independent decision-making, and are generally more involved in their schooling are less likely to repeat grade or leave school early. Common indicators of parental involvement include contacts between parents and school, parental involvement in school activities, parent-child communication about school, parental supervision involving homework, and parents' educational aspirations for their child (McNeal, 1999).

#### 5.4. Community Social Capital

Community social capital comprises the demographics of the community and the social networks that existed. Community social capital develops from residents' action to improve the local economy, provide human and social services, and express local cohesion and solidarity. According to Putnam (as cited in Israel, Beaulieu, & Hartless, 2001) communities with high social capital have extensive civic engagement and patterns of mutual support. The high social capital in the community provides foundation for new community efforts to address educational or other needs (Israel et al., 2001).

The socio-economic capacity of rural areas has lagged behind that of suburbs or urban areas. As a result, lower skilled and low-pay jobs have been concentrated in rural areas, whereas highly paid and highly skilled jobs are found in urban areas (ibid.). People in urban areas have high aspiration for formal education and investment in human capital than people in rural area. Structural attributes: socio economic capacity, isolation, instability and inequality in a society affect the development of community social capital by enhancing or inhibiting opportunities for relationship that contribute to structural integration of society.<sup>17</sup> The structural integration of society provides the basis for mobilizing specialized resources through local governments or informal community networks. But the activities of local governments or informal communities vary greatly across communities.

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<sup>17</sup><http://www.aaaeonline.org/Resources/Documents/Southern%20Region/Israel%20Beaulieu%20Paper,%20Southern%202002.pdf>

Inequality in a society creates social cleavages that affect the quality of interactions (ibid.). In the case of Nepal, there is inequality between *Brahmin/Chhetri* and the *Dalit/Janajati*. The *Brahmins/Chhetris* have the highest per capita income, followed by the *Adivasi/Janajati* and the *Dalit*. Though Jhapa is a comparatively developed district in Nepal, the situation of all the communities is not same. Santhal and *Dalits* are far behind compared to *Brahmin & Chhetri*. GoN, NLSS (2010-11) shows a clear association between caste and ethnicity, and levels of income. The per capita income of *Brahman/Chhetri* is two times higher than that of the *Dalit*. Similarly, the poverty incidence or poverty for *Brahmin/Chhetri* has a low incidence of 10.3 percent compared to 38.2 percent for *Dalits* (NPC, & UNDP, 2014).

The socio-economic variation between *Brahmin/Chhetri* and *Dalit/Janajati* has created a gap of interaction. The poor and marginalized communities are forced to be alienated or isolated in the society as a result they decline to take part in collective action in society. Fragmented and incomplete networks of relationships inhibit their integration into society. This provides the limited social capital, insufficient for promoting local education issues. It is necessary to involve the people of marginalized and excluded group to actively participate in order to increase the community's attachment to the school (CERID, 2005a&b).

It has been argued that community involvement is essential for a school to provide quality of education and make it accessible to the whole community. According to representatives of MoE, "the bottom-up approach is essential to involve all members of a community to get the education possible for their children. The current policy of the government is that every school should form a community managed school management committee (SMC), which is responsible to run the school."

The concept of community managed School management Committee (SMC) is to devolve more authority from the centre to the local level and restructure school governance with the concept of decentralization. The process of devolution of educational management from centre to local level began as a top-down move, and is carried out under broader administrative reform endeavors in education. Transferring the management from centre to community level can contribute to increase the stock of social capital in community required for school improvement. CERID (2009) highlights the increased stock of Social Capital in the community level by transferring the management to local level. According to CERID (2009),

"Community Manage School (CMS) authorities visited several organizations, met with various people such as government officials, political leaders, local and external donors,

NGOs and INGOs, and attended meetings outside the school. They shared their experiences and problems in running the educational institutes and asked for the needed support. These activities helped form connections and trust expanded the relations of schools with several organizations and institutes. These kinds of social capital were finally turned into physical and financial capital. Several community manage schools developed physical facilities, library, drinking water facilities, received computers and learning materials by establishing mutual trust and social connection.”(66)

Community and parental involvement generates trust to solve managerial conflict, and acts as a key monitoring device against possible irregularities in providing education. The outcome of such networking generates a public good that cannot otherwise be cost-effectively provided by mere state intervention (Mozumber & Halim, 2006). According to the *bidhyalayaSudharYojana* (School Reform Plan) of the visited schools, SMCs were formed in the schools but there were no members from *Santhal* and *Dalit* communities. There was found a weak link between Santhal parents and teachers at the schools. Santhal parents don't know what happens in the schools, who the teachers are and which teacher teaches their children. The SMCs are found to be made under the presidency of the head teacher or parents from elite *Brahmin/Chhetri* Community. In the sampled schools, the decision making in reality is in the hands of the head teachers or some powerful *Brahmin/Chhetri* village elites. The involvement and participation of Santhals, *Dalit* and other marginalized communities is almost null in effect. The Santhal village head says: “None of the Santhals are in the school management committee. Only the *Brahmin*, *Chhetri* and the rich *Janajati* are in the school management committee in the region”. Many parents claimed to have never heard of SMC or PTA (parent-teacher association). It was found that the majority of *Dalit*, Santhal and deprived community are deprived of the opportunity to participate in school activities. A teacher of Janata Secondary School said: “Poverty holds back participation of Santhal parents in school activities.” He further said: “Poor Santhal parents who are struggling for their hands to mouth problem can give little time and efforts for things which don't have direct and immediate relevance for their livelihoods.”

In this study, while recognizing current poverty level and the disparity between the so called high caste and low caste people, it can be argued that social cohesion between school and community and among community members themselves has been found interrupted. Social cohesion is a key factor in the overall development of schools and keeps the children in school. Social, cultural, economic disparity between indigenous and non-indigenous communities and the lack of participatory management in community manages schools has

created a social cleavage which has its repercussion on high dropout in Santhal, *dalit* and *Adivasi/Janajati*.

#### 5.4. Summary

This chapter aimed at presenting and analyzing the data. Beginning with the numerical data presentation of educational status of the Santhal, *Dalit* and *Adivasi/Janajati* children from the sampled schools, most of the data input came from interviews, Focus Group Discussions and Observations; the idea of Social Capital theory has been used to substantiate the data. The study has contributed to highlight the reasons for the drop out of Santhal children. It has presented how the lack of social capital and the factors like lack of child friendly education, high teacher student ratio, lack of and carelessness of teachers, mobility, poverty and social inequalities has led to high dropout tendency in Santhal children.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

The present study sought to critically explore the reasons for the high dropout rate among Santhal students. This study is the result of a qualitative field research conducted in Gauradaha and Korobari VDCs in Nepal in May and June 2014. This study includes the voices of teachers, parents, dropouts and educationists, supplemented by the researcher's observation notes, government and school data. Drawing on the theories of dropout and social capital, this study explored how the lack of social capital between parents-students, parents-teachers and teachers-students contributes to the dropout of Santhal students. This information can be used to develop programs designed to increase social capital in schools, families, and communities, which can contribute to a decrease in dropout behavior. In addition, this study also explored the reasons of dropout other than social capital.

The purpose of this study was to record and analyze students, teachers, parents and educationist experiences with regards to dropping out of high school within a social capital framework. The study has shown the correlation between social capital and the student's tendency to dropout. The findings show that students who are unable to develop social capital in the form of school social capital, family social capital, community social capital, or a combination of these three forms, have a more difficult time completing school. Using qualitative methods along with the numerical data in the form of tables, the stories of students, teachers, parents and educationist have shown that the lack of or the lower social capital which is persistent in the Santhal community has contributed to the dropout behaviors of Santhal children.

When deciding to dropout, students go through a long process. The decision to leave school is a culmination of many years of interaction between students, their parents, teachers, schools and the communities they live in. Lamb et al., (2004) finds that dropping out results from a downward spiral of failure, frustration, and declining self-esteem. Poor attendance affects the academic achievement of students. Over time, absenteeism threatens peer relationships so that absentees tend to become social outsiders who feel that they do not 'belong' at school. In this study, it was found that most of the Santhal students had to handle family work along with the study, which forced them to be late and irregular at school. They were found not to be able to participate in curricular and extra-curricular activities like other students. It was found that their disengagement from school lost their identification and bonds with school and they became more inclined to leave.

The overarching theme found in this study was that Santhal children did not get the social capital they needed in order to complete school. In many cases, the students had the desire to graduate from school but with the lack of economic, cultural and social capital, they were not able to continue their studies. Most of the students in this study did not have access to a high level of social capital in the form of student–teacher or student–parents or teacher–parents interactions at the high school, most were not able to establish a relation the way they were supposed to in order to complete their studies.

In some cases, social capital at home, school and community was found to be high. But with the lack of or lower economic and cultural capital at home, school and community, students were not able to continue their studies. To sum up, lack of social capital at school, home and community, lack of child friendly education, high teacher-student ratio, carelessness of teachers, ineffective evaluation system, mobility of students from feeder schools to secondary schools, lack of quality in community schools, parents’ attitudes towards education, little encouragement from the family, lack of parental awareness towards children’s education, social inequalities between indigenous and non- indigenous communities, poverty, engagement of children in household chores and grade retention in school due to poor quality of classroom instruction, ineffective school management were found to be the contributing factors for dropout of children in Santhal community.

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Appendix

Table 1: GER and NER trends by gender at primary and lower secondary levels, 2004-011

School year	GER						NER					
	Primary level			Lower sec. level			Primary level			Lower sec. level		
	Girls	Boys	Total	Girls	Boys	Total	Girls	Boys	Total	Girls	Boys	Total
2004	124.2	137	130.7	73.9	86.4	80.3	78	90.1	84.2	40.2	47.6	43.9
2005	141.8	148.8	145.4	68.2	84	76	83.4	90.1	86.8	43.1	49.8	46.5
2006	138.4	139.2	138.8	65.4	77.9	71.5	85.5	89.3	87.4	47.8	57.1	52.3
2007	139.6	137.6	138.5	75.9	81.6	78.8	87.4	90.7	89.1	49.6	56.1	52.9
2008	145.6	140.2	142.8	79	81.1	80.1	90.4	93.2	91.9	56.6	58	57.3
2009	146.1	137.1	141.4	89.3	88.2	88.7	92.6	94.7	93.7	61.9	64.3	63.2
2010	144.8	134.5	139.5	97	92.1	94.5	93.6	95.3	94.5	68.5	70	69.3
2011	141.2	131	135.9	104.1	96	100	94.5	95.6	95.1	69.5	70.5	70

Source: Flash I Report 2004-011, MoE, DeO, (2012)(p.32,33)

Table 2: Trends of GER at secondary level by gender

Students	GER							
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Girls	45.2	45.5	53.1	52.4	57.3	64.5	66.5	71.9
Boys	55.4	53	60.2	59.3	61.6	66.8	66.1	68.4
Total	50.4	49.3	56.7	55.9	59.5	65.7	66.3	70.1

*Flash I Report 2004-011, MoE, DeO, 2012(p.59)*

Table 3: Trends of NER at secondary level by gender

Students	NER							
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Girls	28.8	29.2	32.4	32.8	35	40.1	45.9	51.4
Boys	35.2	35.5	37	37.7	37.8	41.4	47	52.7
Total	32	32.4	34.7	35.3	36.4	40.8	46.5	52.1

*Flash I Report 2004-011, MoE, DeO, 2012(p.60)*

Table 4: Percentage of out-of-school children at primary and lower secondary levels

School year	Percentage of Out of school children at primary and lower secondary levels					
	Primary level			Lower secondary level		
	Girls	Boys	Total	Girls	Boys	Total
2004	22	9.9	15.8	59.8	52.4	56.1
2005	16.6	9.9	13.2	56.9	50.2	53.5
2006	14.5	10.7	12.6	52.2	42.9	47.7
2007	12.6	9.3	10.9	50.4	43.9	47.1
2008	9.6	6.8	8.1	43.4	42	42.7
2009	7.4	5.3	6.3	38.1	35.7	36.8
2010	6.4	4.7	5.5	31.5	30	30.7
2011	5.2	5.7	5.4	32.5	33.8	30.5

*Flash I Report 2004-011, MoE, DeO, 2012(p.38)*



