

Bridging Cultural Capital and Academic Achievement: The Study of Rana Tharu Community

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Abstract

This study aims to examine how Rana Tharu students use their cultural resources to navigate academic challenges, incorporating Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital. The primary objective of this study is to explore the cultural capital and academic pursuits of the Rana Tharu community, given the limited empirical evidence available to conclusively determine the factors contributing to their educational marginalization in relation to their cultural capital. Furthermore, it identifies the real challenges faced by Rana Tharu pupils due to inadequacies in educational institution, so that corrective measures can be implemented to raise their academic achievement. Following ethnographic critical lens as a research design, it aims to investigate whether or not current social policies and practices are meeting the interests of a certain group. The study is especially concerned with examining how the current educational system falls short of meeting the requirements of minority groups, such as the Rana Tharus to integrate them into the mainstream of education. The findings of the study reported that Rana Tharu students have their own cultural and ethnic identities, and different cultural capitals. However, our mainstream schools are not found to be much friendly to minorities. Although it is claimed that mainstream schools are for all ethnicities, they mostly favor the culture of the dominant ethnic group.

Keywords: cultural capital, ethnicity, achievement, ethnography, ethnic minorities

Introduction

It is unquestionably true that education plays a significant role in changing social inequality into equality (Apple, 2013). So, it is obvious that schools, being the authorized institutions to impart education, can play an important role for the socio-economic upliftment of an individual as well as a community (Freire, 2005; Gillborn, 1990). The academic environment of the school is an indicator that reflects whether the

society is developed or undeveloped. It is found that academic achievement and occupational attainment largely depend on people's family background (Krauskopff, 1995). Pupils from sound educational family status are supposed to perform better in schools. Likewise, they are assumed to achieve success in an environment where they are psychologically inspired and valued (Gay, 2013). Similarly, the teacher-student relationship, which is reciprocal to uniformity in ethnicity, also plays a vital role in educational attainment. Learners' historically and socially formed identities influence the subject position they take in the language classroom, as well as the relationships they form with language teachers (Norton, 2000). Furthermore, the increasing performance of students guarantees that the school is adopting the instruction that respects and responds to their cultural situation (Wearmouth, 2017). The students, who are psychologically and socially not ready for school or schooling activities, are not supposed to perform better in school. That is why schools must form and apply student-friendly policies, so that students can make school environment as their own.

Grounded in Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, this study seeks to understand how Rana Tharu students mobilize their cultural resources to navigate the complexities of academic achievement. In the absence of ample empirical research evidence in the context of their cultural capital, no clear conclusion is found behind their backwardness in education. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to examine the cultural capital of the Rana Tharu and their efforts to achieve academic success. This study intends to discover the difficulties that Rana Tharu students encounter due to the gaps in academic institutions like schools so that remedial actions may be taken to improve their academic standing. Likewise, it is planned to research how they approach education in the context of their respective cultures.

As this study aims to study the cultural capital of the Rana Tharu community, the research questions are designed to stipulate the aims or objectives of the study in the answerable form (Andrews, 2005). The main objectives of the study are:

1. To identify the key cultural capitals of the Rana Tharu community.
2. To analyze the relationship between cultural capital and academic achievement in the Rana Tharu community.

The study has been structured to answer the question: *How do the cultural capitals of Rana Tharu community affect their academic achievement?*

Rana Tharu People in Nepal

Tharu is one of the major ethnic groups living in the low-land region of Nepal, which is also known as Terai or Madhesh (*National Population and Housing Census 2011*, 2012). On the basis of its population, it is placed as the fourth largest ethnic group covering 6.56% of the total population of Nepal. The Terai region, which is flat and warm but very fertile land of Nepal, was overlooked in the eyes of the state till the establishment of democracy in 1950 A.D. Most of the region was covered with jungle and was highly affected by Malaria. It was sparsely populated by Tharus and others who are supposed to have inherited immunity to Malaria (Lam, 2012). Like other Tharu ethnicities, Rana Tharus are also believed to have had immunity against Malaria. The region only attracted the attention of the past rulers for revenue-generating, but it was totally neglected in terms of the languages the people spoke there (Gellner, 2007). After the success of the Malaria eradication program in the Terai region during the 1950s, the area was not only limited to the Tharus but also all the people, particularly the Pahadis (people from the hillside) migrated there in considerable numbers (Lam, 2012). The hill dwellers, who owned land in Terai, had already visited the area only during the cold season and had settled there permanently. Most of these descendants were high-class people, who were privileged with linguistic, cultural and educational capital and started to dominate the Tharu community, which is a major cause behind shaping a Tharu ethnic identity in Modern Nepal (Guneratne, 2004).

Although in the records of government, only Tharu has been recorded as the major ethnic groups, there are different clans of Tharu community, namely, *Kochila*, *Chitwaniya*, *Kathoria*, *Lamposwa*, *Rana Tharu* and so on (Krauskopff, 1995). Most of these clans claim that they are separate ethnicities because they possess their own unique language, costume and culture that do not match with other ethnicities. Most of the groups of people living across the border in the Terai region of Nepal, although they were culturally and linguistically distinct from each other, were known collectively as Tharus (Guneratne, 2004). Out of these clans of Tharus, Rana Tharu is one of the major ethnicities, which claims its distinguished identity referring to its unique language, costumes and cultural traditions (Rana, 2011). Furthermore, (Krauskopff, 1995) says:

Nevertheless, there are still many different Tharu subgroups, more or less numerous, more or less known, some sharing a very similar culture under

different ethnic levels (e.g. Deshaurya Tharu and Dangaura Tharu in Western Terai), some having totally different customs through living in close proximity (Rana & Dangaura Tharu in Kailali & Kanchanpur districts, p.186).

Although formally listed as Tharu ethnicity, Rana Tharu resisted the Tharu label and strongly claimed that they were the descendants of Rajputs which had similar caste status as high caste Hindu *Pahadis* (Gurung, 1992).

Among Tharus, Rana Tharu is a highly marginalized community living particularly in the Terai region of western Nepal, especially in two districts namely Kailali and Kanchanpur (Gurung, 1992; Krauskopff, 1995; Lam, 2012; Rana, 2011). They are also found in some adjacent Indian territories of the Khiri districts of Uttar Pradesh and Khatima district of Nainital (Srivastava, 1965). However, there is no authorized demography of Rana Tharu People, the total population of Rana Tharu people is estimated to be 4,86,000 including India and Nepal, out of them 3,36,000, live in Nepal (Regmi et al., 2012).

Despite having a unique social, linguistic and cultural identity, Rana Tharus were unidentified and neglected by the government and its agencies for centuries. It has to wait till 2020 to be indexed as a different ethnic group. The government of Nepal decided to enlist Rana Tharu as a different ethnicity of Nepal on Feb.3, 2020 (Chaudhary). Due to a lack of authenticity in the eyes of the government, Rana Tharus have been compelled to live an isolated life from the mainstream of development for years (Rana, 2011). However, they have been struggling to search for their identity for a long time - they have been deprived of it. Lack of a solid identity in the eyes of authorities can be one of the reasons that they have been lagging behind the various facets of development (Lam, 2012).

Cultural Capital at a Glance

The children employ their acquired capital into their educational system; as a result the families who are privileged with cultural capital reproduce their own socio-economic status (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). In fact, the theory explains the intergenerational reproduction of socio-economic position due to the transmission of cultural capital. Bourdieu argued that individuals and families possess different types of capital- economic, human, social and cultural that they endow to another generation; so that, it could be invested to generate more capital or converted

from one type of capital into another (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). By giving institutional recognition on each given agent's cultural capital, academic qualification also allows for the establishment of conversion rates between cultural capital and economic capital by ensuring the monetary value of a specific academic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). According to Bourdieu, the more privileged in society can transform and legitimize the dominant culture (Azaola, 2012).

As in other sectors, cultural capital also strongly impacts children's educational attainment because it is deeply rooted in children's knowledge, language and mannerisms (Dumais, 2002). So, pupils with poor academic culture in the family have less chances of massive achievement in education and vice versa. Accordingly, the ones who do not have a strong academic background, enjoy fewer opportunities for occupational attainment. Having a sound ethnic status, Rana Tharu students possess their own cultural capital that differs from the dominant ethnicity in the region. So, it is obvious that they bear many disagreements with the existing mainstream education systems that support the cultural capital of dominant ethnic groups.

Ethnic Minorities and Their Socio-Economic Conditions

The socio-economic condition of the ethnicity is determined by various factors such as income, education, employment, feelings of security and social support. Socio-economic condition is reciprocal to class relationships in the society (Guneratne, 2004). Class relations are the integral power structures in society to the exploiters and exploited (Murray & Öchsner, 2017). Every society has class relationships among various ethnicities, in which the ethnicities having better socio-economic conditions exercise more power, and are privileged with more opportunities whereas the ethnicities having poor socio-economic conditions have weaker access to resources. The study by (Tumbahang, 2009) is critical of the role of the state in creating a gap between dominant and dominated groups in education and other domains. He believes that the current inequalities in multilingualism result from the state's planned linguistic suppression. State's prolonged mission, vision and policy determine which group of people is going to be dominant or dominated in the long run.

As schools are the settings to reproduce inequalities (Bourdieu, 1986), it is necessary to explore and seek influential ways that identities or identity characteristics such as ethnicity, race, social class and gender are mediated; so that the reproduction of

education inequalities could be avoided (Rolon-Dow, 2004). The schools need to minimize the cultural capital gaps between schools and children. Students are unable to achieve the expected outputs until their identities are suppressed within their school site because students' primary motivation is self-identity. A school's quality is reflected by its efforts to fit students into its social setting; by the way, students' family background or the cultural capital they are equipped with strongly correlates with their behavior or performance in school (Akerlof & Kranton, 2002).

Research Methods

The research design of this study is ethnography using a critical lens because it intends to question whether the interest of a particular group is being or not being addressed by existing social policies and practices (Taylor & Medina, 2011). Any research that aims and focuses on emancipation and empowerment falls under the critical research paradigm (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The research is particularly focused on exploring the existing deficiencies in the educational system, which are unable to meet the needs of minority communities like Rana Tharus, so that they could be included in the mainstream of the education process. The research method was qualitative, particularly ethnography, where attitudes of teachers, students and parents about cultural capital in the natural setting were discovered.

The study intends to explore the cultural capitals of the Rana Tharu community and their effects on academic achievement. The research design as the conceptual structure (Cohen et al., 2017) of this study is planned with various methods and procedures for collecting the relevant data and the techniques, so that the collected data could be analyzed concentrating on the objectives of the research (Kothari, 2004). For the purpose of data collection, two schools, Jana Kalyan S. School (pseudonym) and Sharada S. School (pseudonym) were visited purposefully. Likewise, the participants selected were teachers, parents and students - two from each. The research participants were selected purposefully based on convenience. Through the use of various data collection methods, i.e., observation, personal communication, interview and document analysis, it is possible to collect information about the cultural capitals of Rana Tharu students and their effects on academic achievement. By determining the students', parents', and teachers' interpretations, the researcher could identify the gaps which need

to be minimized, so that Rana Tharu students could achieve expected educational attainments.

Results and Discussion

Students from diverse social backgrounds have unequal academic achievement, which refers to inequalities in the amount of cultural capital they possess (Stopforth & Gayle, 2022). Cultural capitals have direct relations with the academic achievements of students. Though all ethnicities have their own culture, it is necessary to study the cultural capitals of a particular community, comparing their academic achievements. The varying amount of cultural capital includes language aptitude, attitude towards education and interpersonal skills (Xu & Hampden-Thompson, 2012). Enriched in cultural entities, Rana Tharus have their identical culture, language, costume, living and literary conditions.

Linguistic Capital of Rana Tharu

The language spoken by the Rana Tharu people is named the Rana language, which sounds a bit similar to the Hindi language. However, it sounds quite different from other native Tharu languages spoken by other communities. The Rana language is said to have been written in *Unam* script (an ancient script used by indigenous people which is not in existence at present) in the past, but now it is written in *Devnagari* script (a script used in the north Indian subcontinent to write Sanskrit, Hindi, Nepali, etc.) (Rana, 2011; Regmi et al., 2012). The Rana language has not been recognized as a separate language by the government of Nepal till 2019; it has been listed as language spoken in Nepal when Language Commission of Nepal has officially identified it as an identical language (Gautam, 2019). As Nepali is the official language in Nepal, although not perfectly, they try to speak Nepali for official purposes. Possessing all the characteristics of a complete language, the Rana Tharu language requires much more study and research for its development.

Costume and Jewellery of Rana Tharu

Rana Tharus wear a very colorful and unique type of dress along with heavy silver jewellery. Rana Tharu females wear hand knitted dresses which are made up of multi-colored scraps of left-over fabric (Yatri, 2011). Their dresses are embroidered with silver coins and pieces of mirrors too. Rana Tharu women wear *Angiyan* (a blouse-like dress) in the upper part of the body and *Ghangariya* (a skirt-like dress) in the lower

part (Rana, 2012). Likewise, they cover their heads with *Uniya*. *Uniya* is a piece of cotton, cloth black in color, with a colorful border. In comparison to females, Rana Tharu males wear simple dresses like a white shirt and white dhoti. In the past, they used to wear *Kharaun* (wooden slippers), but nowadays they wear common slippers.

Rana Tharu women used to wear very heavy silver-made jewellery, nowadays they are gradually leaving them (Rana, 2012). However, some of the old women still do the same. Their jewelry is mostly made of silver except the nose ring which is made of gold. However, the modern generation is not fond of wearing such heavy ornaments regularly. Rather, they prefer to wear them during the cultural programs. The young generation is found to be fond of wearing light and portable types of ornaments; on the other hand the old-fashioned heavy ornaments became very expensive and hard to afford too. Rana Tharu women are very fond of putting tattoos on their fore-arms. Generally, they get drawn images of flowers, animals, etc., along with their names in their tattoos.

Literacy Situation of Rana Tharu

Rana Tharu has very poor presence in the educational world, in comparison to males, females have more miserable conditions (Regmi et al., 2012). (Rana, 2011) writes that according to a report published by Lakhbari -2062 only 18% of Rana Tharu people learn to read and write. Rana Tharu has a high drop-out ratio in schools. According to the study conducted by (Rana, 2011), 55% of Rana Tharu students dropped their studies at primary level and 76% students drop their study at lower secondary level. Education was not a priority for the Rana Tharu people in the past, but nowadays they send their children to schools.

Rana Tharu's Dwellings

Rana Tharu's houses are made up of straw, wood and mud. Generally, their houses are two-storied; the ground floor is used for residential purposes whereas the upper floor is used for store purposes. The houses have open access to all the rooms; the rooms are separated by curtains. Likewise, they make *Kuthiya* (mud made big drums) to put their grains in, and they keep their clothes in a big wooden box. Their houses are plastered with mud, and the front walls decorated with images of different pets made of mud. Rana Tharus like to keep their houses neat and clean. However, modernization has gradually touched Rana Tharus too; their cultural houses are being replaced by bricks

and cement made buildings.

Generally, Rana Tharu people do not have separate kitchens. Their kitchen is found to be very neat and clean. They use utensils made up of bronze and brass. They prefer rice and rice products with vegetables, but they do not eat rice with pulses and curry. They rarely eat wheat bread and wheat products. However, they have started eating wheat breads imitating other cultures. Cornflower is a very popular breakfast in Rana Tharu kitchen. Similarly, they make various sweet dishes during the festivals. (Beshar Rana Tharu, Personal Communication, February 15, 2020)

Rana Tharu Males and Females

Rana Tharu males are generally engaged in agricultural work. They are busy in ploughing, sowing and reaping. Likewise, they are engaged in feeding and taking care of cattle i.e. oxen and male buffaloes, which are kept for ploughing purposes. They cut grass and feed them. Similarly, they are engaged in weaving fishing nets and beds with multi-colored ropes.

Rana Tharu females are busy with household affairs. They cook food and take care of house. They keep their kitchen neat and clean. In their leisure time, they weave the fishing net, go fishing and knit their cultural dresses too. They would like to prepare their clothes themselves; they make clay oven, clay pots, and beautifully woven baskets with wool and straws. Similarly, some women go for grazing sheep and goats. (Beshar Rana Tharu, Personal Communication, February 20, 2020)

Rites and Rituals of Rana Tharu

Rana Tharus are very rich in terms of rites and rituals. They claim that they are Hindu (Lam, 2012), and most of their festivals are Hindu in cultural aspects. They celebrate various festivals like *Aashadhi Puja*, *Tijiya Guriya*, *Atthami*, *Dina Iitbar*, *diwari*, *Hori*, *Charaai*, *Baishakhi Charaai*, *Bhajahar* (Rana, 2012; Yatri, 2011), etc. They perform cultural dances and sing songs during festivals like Holi, Charaai etc. Most of these festivals are celebrated in groups.

After a long observation of Rana Tharu culture and discussion with many participants, the researcher found that most of the rites and rituals they celebrate are similar to Hindus. After six days of the birth of a child, they organize *Chhathi* (sixth-day ceremony). On the day, they perform some cultural rituals and keep the child's name. Fish is a compulsory dish to perform a six-day ceremony; however, mutton is

strongly prohibited.

Another most important event of Rana Tharu's life is marriage, which is mostly arranged. Parents decide whom their children marry. There was a tradition named *Magani* among Rana Tharus, in which parents got their children engaged in early childhood. When they are matured, they have to marry to the same partner who they were engaged with. However, the *Magani* tradition is not very popular among youths nowadays; they would like to choose their partner themselves. During the marriage ceremony, two separate beautifully decorated carriages named *Dola* are made for the bride and groom which are carried by people (Yatri, 2011).

Livelihood of Rana Tharu

The primary source of livelihood for Rana Tharu is agriculture. They are rarely found to be engaged in jobs and other service sectors. They spend most of their time farming. Due to their belief in agriculture as a very important occupation for living, they train their children for agricultural work from childhood. Rice is the staple crop, they grow. They grow corn too. In the past, they scarcely used to grow wheat, but nowadays, they do. They earn their livelihood by selling the agricultural products they grow. Similarly, the Rana Tharu women collect money by selling sheep and goats. They were not good at business; however, they are learning nowadays. (Ram Din Rana Tharu, personal communication, January 9, 2020)

Social System of Rana Tharu

Rana Tharus are found to be gentle and honest people who believe in simple living. They believe others easily. They have a good social network. They would like to gather together to celebrate festivals or resolve social issues and problems. There are *Padhana*, *Bhalamansa* and *Chaakar* to resolve different issues of society (Rana, 2012). They exchange their greetings by saying 'Ram Ram'. Rana Tharus are rich in sociocultural aspects, too. Similarly, they have some special socio-cultural systems to operate the society. Rana Tharus choose their leaders in a democratic way to conduct various activities in the village, such as Pradhan / Padhana (Chieftain of the community), Bhalmansa (to maintain law and order), Bharra (for the treatment of people), Chaakar (to convey messages), etc. (Rana, 2012).

Perception Towards Education

The field visit reflects that the participants (teachers) were not found very satisfied with the academic performance of Rana Tharu students. They claimed that they are inferior at doing home assignments and self-study. Sharing his experience of teaching Rana Tharu students for more than ten years Lekh Raj, the teacher participant, said, “I do not mean to say that they are mentally weak; they are physically well built, mentally sound but do not pay much attention in study.”

When I visited the office room of Jana Kalyan S. school, there was a list of class first students kept on the table of the headmaster. In my observation, I could not find any names of Rana Tharu students; by the way some Dangaura Tharu students were listed there. As Lekh Raj said, ‘Belonging to a farmer’s family is not only the major issue there; the pivotal issue is how they perceive the value of education,’ Lekh Raj further said. In his observation, Rana Tharu prefers to engage in household affairs rather than doing home assignments. As they belong to farming families, it is certain that they have a lot of work to do to support their parents as well as other family members. He further claimed that, ‘The main issue is in their family structure. They are not much convinced that education will change their lifestyle.’ If the family structure is not supportive and parents are not aware of the value of education, it is quite difficult to achieve success in school.

Bourdieu (1986, as cited in Cox, 2016) thinks that cultural capital received from home plays a vital role in the academic performance of students; those who lack the necessary skills and knowledge will experience academic disadvantages. From the opinion of the teacher, it is clear that Rana Tharu students lack those required skills and knowledge that are a must in their school, so they are unable to achieve the academic advantages they are supposed to have.

Teachers further viewed that Rana Tharu students are average or below average in terms of disciplinary conditions at school, too. They are poor in terms of following rules and regulations at school. Similarly, they are not regular students at school. “When their parents are informed about their absence, they are also not very responsive.” Dirgh Raj, another teacher participant from Sharada S. School, stated quite hopelessly. Teachers are not found to be very satisfied with their behavioral conduct at school.

Teachers are supposed to impose on them to follow the codes of conduct of the school to maintain uniformity in the school premises.

It is found that most of the parents are still avoiding sending their children to school. Those who send their children to school also do not take their children's educational performance much seriously. The teacher participant from Sharada S. School, Dirgh Raj said:

When we tried to convince them about the importance of education, they expressed “Padhai Me Bahut Paisa Kharcha Hot Hai” (Too much money is spent on education and we cannot manage it.). In fact, it is not true that they cannot afford their children's education; it is due to a lack of willpower.

Rana Tharu's parents think that education is very expensive and they cannot afford it. But Dirgha thinks that it is not a case of money, but the main issue is will power. He further said that “It has a direct impact on their children's study. They also become careless and make different excuses to escape from the educational activities.” From the remarks, it is clearly understood that the Rana Tharu community has still not approved the waves of modern society. They are still unaware of the importance of education; as a result, children's education is still not the primary priority of Rana Tharu's parents. It is found that parents' indifference towards education harms children's studies. It indicates that it is necessary to change the attitude of Rana Tharu society towards education; for this purpose, it is essential to educate them about the importance of education first. Sangita, one of the student participants studying at Sharada S. School said:

I know education is really important for my better future. Although I like to study hard, my family is not supportive. I am from a farmer's family and you know how busy farmers are. My parents work hard in the field to earn a living for us. My parents, along with my two elder brothers, work in the field, and my sisters-in-laws have to take care of animals especially sheep and goats. So, it becomes my responsibility to support them by working in the kitchen and feeding the children and sometimes, I have to go to the field in the rice planting season. I must be grateful to my parents, at least they are sending me to school, and I am able to pass SEE.

Another student respondent Dhruva, a student of Jana Kalyan S. School, had also similar problems. He responded,

I am the eldest son of my family. My parents got me married when I was studying at Eighth standard because nobody could support my mother in household affairs. As I have grown up now, I have to take the responsibility of my farmland as well as the cattle. I have to cut grass and feed the cattle. Similarly, I have to assist my father in ploughing the land and doing various other farm work. But I cannot explain all my problems to my teachers. They expect me to attend my classes regularly and do homework. Who will feed and water to my cattle if I am busy with my studies?

The above remarks indicate that one major issue caused by their cultural capital is the early marriage system. The kids get married in in their teenage, which has a negative impact on their studies. After getting married, it is certain that family responsibilities are added to them, and they cannot allocate much more time for their study. Ultimately, it makes them drop out of school. The above responses of the participants make clear that the older generation is still unaware of the importance of education in their children's lives; however, the younger generation is much more conscious.

It is expected that identifying the historical and socio-economic position or cultural capital endowments (Bourdieu, 1986, 1993) of a particular community can help to understand the cultural capital gaps. Unless the cultural capital gaps are identified, it is difficult to bridge those gaps with achievements. The long history of top-down, monolingual policies and the implicit or covert language policies in Nepal has not only affected the academic achievement of indigenous communities like Rana Tharus but also influenced socioeconomic, political, and educational positions in the society (Phyak, 2013). Ethnic minorities like Rana Tharus are compelled to adopt the mainstream cultures in public institutions like schools. As the children from the majority have already been endowed with various cultural capital from their families, the minorities have to struggle hard to achieve the basic standards. Their linguistic, cultural backgrounds are not very friendly with mainstream culture. As a result, the ethnic minorities are left far behind in the competition. They feel isolated and humiliated when they are forced to take up a culture that they are not familiar with. As

they feel the loss of their identity in public institutions, many of them prefer to drop out. As long as the mainstream culture-based instruction methods are solely accepted and employed, the ethnic children are not likely to enjoy the classroom; they cannot achieve classroom learning as much as non-ethnic children do ((Dhungana, 2020). Recognizing the cultural capitals and bridging them to academic institutions are essential steps for academic achievement of not only minorities but all students.

Conclusion and Implications

Multilingual, multiethnic, multireligious classrooms are unbeatable truths in Nepal's context. Our classrooms are the mosaics of various cultures representing the cultural diversity of society. In this regard, we cannot ignore the multiple cultural capitals of the students who come from different family backgrounds. Having different cultural and ethnic identities, Rana Tharu students also possess different cultural capitals than others. However, our mainstream schools are not found to be minority friendly. They do not address the cultural and ethnic interests of the minorities. Although it is claimed that mainstream schools are founded for all ethnicities in general, they mostly favor the culture of the dominant ethnicity.

The parents of Rana Tharu claimed that their children were raised in a cultural environment different from that of most students in the schools, which, they argued, gave them an advantage in terms of cultural capital compared to the majority of their peers. It is obvious that they are endowed with their identical habitus regarding their language, costume and other cultural entities (Andersen & Hansen, 2012; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Jæger, 2011). Bourdieu's key concept about cultural reproduction is that inequalities in cultural capital lead to unequal scholastic achievement of students from different social class backgrounds (Stopforth & Gayle, 2022). The participants viewed that historically they were grown up in different socio-economic backgrounds, so it is natural that their expectations from mainstream schools are different than others.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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