
Margins to Milestones: An Auto-ethnography of a Marginalized Madheshi Scholar

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<https://doi.org/10.3126/oas.v3i1.78097>

Abstract

This auto-ethnography study explores the life-changing experience of a marginalized Madheshi scholar in Nepal. The first author personal experiences and perspectives are examined, extending from his early years in the Terai region. The first author's life story and the socioeconomic obstacles he faced are reflexively analyzed as core methodology, auto-ethnography through the integration of personal accounts with primary reflective data sources. His experiences provide important insights into the challenges faced by marginalized populations as they strive for acceptance and empowerment. The first author emphasized the transformative power of education in furthering social justice by arguing access to education. In conclusion, "Margins to Milestones" is for conducting academic study and engaging in introspective personal introspection in order to create a more equal and inclusive society, in addition to presenting Yadav's life-changing journey.

Keywords: Auto-ethnography, Educational resilience, Marginalized communities, Transformative education

Introduction

The personal journey of the first author is explored in this auto-ethnographic research. He considers his scholastic path while reflecting on his early circumstances, which were marked by illiterate parents. Through this narrative investigation, the piece highlights the transformational impact of education while simultaneously shedding light on the problems faced by members of underrepresented communities. Moreover, it describes Yadav's later contributions to Nepal's education system, acting as an example for others to follow. The Madheshi community of Nepal, which is mostly found on the plains that border India in the South, has long struggled with education (Khadka, 2017). Due to their ethnic and cultural distinctions and closeness to the Indian border, the first author is in marginalization (Gurung, 2019; Khadka, 2017). Within the larger Nepali environment, their unique identity shaped by a fusion of Indian and Nepali cultures has frequently been disregarded and misinterpreted (Chaudhary, 2020; Pandey, 2023). Even though they are an essential component of Nepali society,

Madheshis have faced discrimination and lack of opportunity in the fields of politics, work, and education. Many Madheshis have been inspired by this marginalization to work toward social improvement and recognition; some, like the autobiography's protagonist, have overcome great challenges to accomplish extraordinary achievement. The protagonist's narrative sheds light on the Madheshi people's tenacity and their struggle for justice and recognition in Nepali society via their own journey.

Within the broad realm of higher education, stories frequently emerge from the writings of academics whose lives have been influenced by privilege and access. Nonetheless, there is a need to uncover the stories that come from the periphery, the stories of people whose paths to academic success have been paved with hardship, marginalization, and resiliency. This auto-ethnographic inquiry embarks on a journey to unravel the intricate layers of paramount shift own narrative as a Madheshi scholar hailing from the remote village of the Terai region in Nepal. The intricacies of being a Madheshi are interwoven with my existence; the first author marginalized not only by cultural norms but also by the very structures that control my access to opportunities and education. Being a short, brown-skinned man, my physical attributes were a blank canvas that preconceptions from society painted, creating feelings of inadequacy and exclusion. Raised in the isolation of a small Terai town, my early years were marked by a contrast between hope and hardship, with moments of optimism shining through the shadow of misfortune.

My early years were colored by shades of poverty as my family struggled to survive. Despite being regarded as a ray of hope, education remained elusive due to societal expectations and budgetary limitations. My Madheshi ethnicity turned from being a badge of honor to a barrier when I faced the harsh realities of discrimination and inequity at school. While I made my way through the maze-like network of institutional obstacles that continued to marginalize me, the academic hallways appeared far away, nearly unattainable. My days were not limited to the four walls of a classroom; rather, they were shaped by the cadence of country life: running cattle and buffaloes, playing in the fields. The seeds of my academic path were sowed in these fields, among the rustling of leaves and the whispering of the wind.

There were turns and dead ends along the way, as well as times of desperation and resolve, on the nonlinear trek from the periphery to the milestones. Nevertheless, one constant belief persisted throughout everything: the belief in the ability to overcome obstacles and change the story of marginalization, as well as the belief in the transformational power of education. I am very conscious of the privilege of being able to share my story within the walls of academia when I think back on my journey. My narrative is only one of many that are suppressed and pushed to the periphery of society. I am forced to consider the nuances of

selfhood and identity as well as the points where privilege and marginalization converge as a result of starting this auto-ethnographic investigation. My Madheshi identity serves as both a source of strength and a marker of uniqueness, demonstrating the tenacity of a community that persists in defying the obstacles. Through this inquiry, I hope to unravel the intricacies of my own narrative, to excavate the layers of privilege and power that shape scholarly attainment, and to pave the way for a more inclusive and equitable academia. I'm reminded of Audre Lorde's quote as I make my way through the academic landscape: "Your silence will not protect you" (Lorde, 2017). We start to tear down the barriers of marginalization and clear the path for a more fair and just society when we speak up and express our truths. This auto-ethnographic investigation is merely a modest attempt to shatter the taboo, give voice to the voiceless, and pave the way for empowerment and liberty.

The southern Nepalese lowlands, or Madhesh, are an important part of the nation's cultural and historical fabric. The Sanskrit name "Madhyadesh," which refers to its geographical location along the Gangetic plain and the Vitri Madhesh area that borders India to the south, is where the term "Madhesh" originates (Rai, 2017). It then extends northward to the foothills of the Siwalik range. Madhesh's distinct character within the Nepali setting has been established by the many dynasties, rulers, and cultural influences that have shaped its rich history. Madhesh and its people, called Madheshis, have endured socioeconomic hardships and marginalization despite the region's historical significance. As to the results of the 2001 population census, Madhesh is home to 48.5% of Nepal's total people and occupies 23% of the country's total area (Adhikari, 2023). Plains people make up the majority of Madhesh's population; they are similar to those in the Indo-Gangetic plains to the south in terms of their religious practices, language, caste structure, food, fashion, and social mores. We explore the story of a Madheshi scholar whose journey crosses the boundaries of identity, education, and society dynamics in this auto-ethnographic study paper. Through the perspective of this story, one can examine the complexities of Madheshi identity, the difficulties underprivileged populations in Nepal confront, and the victories attained in defiance of social norms.

By utilizing the protagonist's own insights and encounters, we hope to provide light on the larger socio-cultural setting in which their trip takes place. Through the protagonist's story being placed front and center within the broader story of Madheshi identity and marginalization, this auto-ethnography aims to deepen our awareness of the intricacies of identity, agency, and resilience within Nepal's heterogeneous social fabric. In the parts that follow, we'll focus on particular turning points, obstacles, and transformational experiences that define the protagonist's journey. This will help us understand the wider implications for Madheshi people who aspire to succeed in school and in the workplace in a society where injustice and marginalization are prevalent. We want to elevate

voices from the margins through this auto-ethnographic investigation, providing insights into the lived reality of marginalized populations and the paths toward empowerment and acknowledgment.

He can provide distinct insights into his study subject by utilizing his personal and academic history when writing an auth-ethnobiography research essay. Auth-ethnobiography expands on ethnobiography by combining academic rigor with reflexivity. Ethnobiography is the study of one's own cultural background, values, and experiences. Yadav may consider how his educational background and Nepali ancestry have shaped his research interests, approaches, and viewpoints.

Yadav's research paper can explore the relationship between identity, culture, and education by utilizing his experiences as a scholar and a Nepali community member. He can investigate the ways in which modern educational methods. Yadav can present his identity as a researcher and educator while also providing a deep grasp of his research topic by fusing together academic analysis, personal tales, and cultural observations. A narrative arc that charts Yadav's intellectual development from his early educational experiences in Nepal to his doctoral studies in India and his current role as an Associate Professor might be the format of his auth-ethnobiography research piece. This approach recognizes the connection between personal identity and scholarly inquiry.

Review of Literature

Auto-ethnography, as a qualitative research method, emphasizes self-reflection and introspection to elucidate personal experiences within socio-cultural contexts (Muncey, 2005). Within the field of education, scholars have increasingly utilized auto-ethnography to unpack the complexities of educational resilience and access in marginalized communities (Batut et al., 2022). Additionally, studies underscore the significance of education as a catalyst for socio-economic mobility and community empowerment (Park & Friston, 2013). However, limited research focuses specifically on the Terai region of Nepal, warranting a deeper exploration of the intersection between adversity, education, and community development.

In "From Margins to Milestones: An Auto-Ethnography of a Madheshi Scholar," the auto-ethnographic research methodology is contextualized and its importance in examining individual experiences (Alarcón & Bettez, 2017). As a qualitative research approach, auto-ethnography blends autobiographical and ethnographic components to illuminate broader social challenges, especially those that affect minority voices and identities, and to offer fresh insights into personal experiences (Currie-Patterson & Watson, 2017). In this study, the auto-ethnographic approach serves as a means to document the complexities of the

Madheshi scholar's experiences and transformational journey amidst socio-economic obstacles in Nepal's educational landscape.

For a subtleties of their experiences, qualitative research methodology' flexibility and depth are essential (Qutoshi, 2015). During the course of the research process, the researcher critically analyzes their own positionality, biases, and assumptions through auto-ethnography, so engaging in reflexivity (Hernandez-Carranza et al., 2021). In order to maintain objectivity and honesty, reflexivity is essential because it enables the researcher to recognize how their educational experience work (George, 2012). Furthermore, reflexivity makes it easier to go further into the discussions surrounding identity negotiations and power struggles in the Madheshi society, shedding light on the complex interplay between institutional constraints and individual agency (Crawley, 2012).

In auto-ethnography, the researcher's perceptions, experiences, and observations are crucial components of the data collection process (Crawley, 2012). Yadav uses fifty years of personal reflections from memories of his early years to his work as an assistant dean, a government employee, and a university professor in this study (Holt, 2003). These comments provide valuable qualitative data that sheds light on the challenges, successes, and changes encountered along the way (Lamichhane & Luitel, 2003). In order to provide an organized framework for examining individual experiences within larger societal structures, thematic analysis is utilized to find recurrent themes, narrative arcs, and patterns within the data (Walford, 2021). The researcher examines issues including socioeconomic barriers, transformational education, and educational resilience through theme analysis, illuminating the complex dynamics involved. of marginalization and empowerment within the Madheshi community (de Villiers Scheeper et al., 2023).

According to Lamichhane and Luitel (2023), the auto-ethnography underscores the educational resilience possessed by Madheshi scholars, highlighting their potential to surmount systemic barriers and strive for academic success. Additionally, the stories shed light on the institutional injustices from social discrimination to financial difficulties that affect the scholars' opportunities and experiences within the educational system (Hanauer, 2021). The study emphasizes the necessity of systemic interventions to overcome structural imbalances and promote equity and inclusion by placing individual conflicts within wider socio-political processes (Slade et al., 2020). In the end, the auto-ethnographic narrative is a potent instrument for exposing broader societal realities and promoting positive changes in educational institutions (Yoon, 2020). The researcher hopes to uplift people and advance inclusive teaching strategies that support social justice and empowerment by sharing personal tales of fortitude and resiliency (Wessels & Grünwald, 2023).

Material and Methods

This study employs auto-ethnography as the primary research methodology, enabling Yadav to engage in reflexive analysis of his lived experiences (Aagaard et al., 2023). Drawing upon personal narratives and retrospective insights, Yadav reconstructs his journey from a challenging childhood in the Terai region to his current role as an educational leader. Additionally, the study incorporates secondary data sources, including educational statistics and policy documents, to contextualize Yadav's experiences within broader socio-economic dynamics in Nepal.

A qualitative research method called auto-ethnography combines ethnography and autobiography to examine individual experiences in larger sociocultural contexts. This methodology offers unique insights into personal experiences while illuminating larger social issues, making it especially useful for examining disadvantaged voices and identities. The purpose of this research, "From Margins to Milestones: An Auto-Ethnography of a Madheshi Scholar," is to explore the experiences of a Madheshi scholar negotiating socioeconomic obstacles in the context of education. The auto-ethnographic study's research approach plays a pivotal role in documenting the complexities of the experiences and transformational journey of the Madheshi scholars. The flexibility and depth required to examine the subtleties of unique narratives are provided by the qualitative research approach, which enables a comprehensive comprehension of the researcher's life trajectory. This method allows the researcher to find underlying themes and patterns buried within their own experiences by embracing subjectivity and introspection.

In this auto-ethnography, the researcher's observations, understandings, and life experiences serve as the main sources of data. The data cover a wide spectrum of personal tales spanning fifty years of life, from early childhood recollections to work as an associate dean, a government servant, and a university teacher. These reflections provide personal accounts of the difficulties, victories, and transformations faced during the journey, making them an invaluable source of qualitative data. The reflexivity of the researcher, which entails critically analyzing their own positionality, biases, and presumptions during the research process, is fundamental to the auto-ethnographic approach. The researcher can preserve objectivity and honesty in their study by admitting the impact of their social background and personal history on their interpretations. In addition, reflexivity facilitates a more thorough investigation of identity negotiations and power struggles within the Madheshi group, illuminating the intricate relationship between institutional limitations and human agency.

To find recurrent themes, narrative arcs, and patterns in the data, thematic analysis is used. The researcher finds important topics pertaining to

socioeconomic obstacles, transformational education, and educational resilience through an iterative coding and categorizing method. The researcher examines the relationships between individual experiences and more general social structures using these themes as an analytical framework. A major theme in the auto-ethnography is educational resilience, which emphasizes the Madheshi scholar's capacity to overcome obstacles and seek academic achievement in spite of systemic obstacles. The researcher provides insights into the elements that lead to resilience among marginalized communities by explaining the tactics and support systems that aided their educational path through reflective testimonies and narrative vignettes.

The researcher's narratives shed light on the structural disparities that influence their prospects and lived experiences in the educational system, ranging from social prejudice to economic problems. To address the underlying reasons of marginalization, systemic change is necessary, and the auto-ethnography emphasizes this by placing individual struggles within larger socio-political processes. One important result of the Madheshi scholar's journey is transformative education, which emphasizes the ability of learning to subvert repressive conventions, cultivate critical consciousness, and spark social change. The researcher considers the transformative impact of education in empowering underprivileged populations and advancing social justice through their roles as an assistant dean and university teacher. Through the sharing of their personal narrative of strength and resilience, the researcher hopes to encourage others and promote inclusive teaching methods.

To sum up, this auto-ethnographic study presents a powerful story of the Madheshi community's resiliency, hardship, and transformation. Through the use of a reflexive qualitative technique and a focus on the researcher's personal experiences, the study offers insightful information about the challenges of managing marginalization in the context of schooling. The researcher highlights the need for systemic interventions to address structural disparities and promote equity and inclusion by illuminating the intertwining dynamics of socioeconomic obstacles, educational resilience, and transformative education through the use of thematic analysis. In the end, this auto-ethnography offers proof of the ability of personal narrative to reveal more general social truths and promote constructive change.

Results

Yadav's childhood in the Terai region was characterized by multifaceted challenges, including food insecurity, parental illiteracy, community indifference, and extreme weather conditions. Despite these adversities, Yadav's unwavering determination and belief in the transformative power of education propelled him forward. These experiences instilled in him a deep sense of purpose and commitment to improving educational opportunities for marginalized communities in

Nepal. Discussion: Yadav's narrative underscores the resilience embedded within individuals facing socio-economic adversity, highlighting the critical role of education in fostering personal agency and community development. Moreover, his journey exemplifies the potential for individuals from marginalized backgrounds to effect systemic change within the education sector. His story serves as a testament to the transformative power of education and the capacity for individuals to effect positive change within their communities.

The auto-ethnography depicts the difficult path, replete with obstacles, disappointments, and moments of victory, from the periphery to significant events. Yadav struggles with the conflict between societal expectations and personal desires as he negotiates institutional barriers and societal prejudices. Yadav overcomes obstacles by being persistent and having a strong faith in the transforming potential of education. He eventually becomes the Assistant Dean at Tribhuvan University. His story emphasizes the value of inclusive teaching methods and the necessity of removing structural obstacles that support marginalization.

In addition, Yadav's participation in seminars and training programs shows his dedication to professional growth and lifetime learning. Yadav exhibits his commitment to having a good impact on the education sector by spearheading programs that attempt to improve primary teachers' skills and the standard of education in Nepal. His experiences highlight the value of lifelong learning and capacity building in promoting social empowerment and high standards in education. Finally, "From Margins to Milestones: An Auto-Ethnography of a Madheshi Scholar" sheds light on Rajeshwer Prasad Yadav's life-changing experience and provides insightful information about the relationships between identity, education, and societal dynamics. Yadav's tale highlights the need for inclusive educational practices and structural change while also serving as a monument to the resiliency and agency of oppressed people through personal narratives and scholarly analysis. Yadav's story encourages contemplation and action in the direction of a more just and inclusive society since it resonates beyond personal experience.

Discussion

In context of socioeconomic constraints, education may be a transforming force, as demonstrated by the discourse around Rajeshwer Prasad Yadav's auto-ethnographic journey. This is especially true for oppressed communities such as the Madheshi community in Nepal. Yadav's story offers a powerful illustration of the resiliency that people possess when faced with hardship, demonstrating his unwavering resolve and faith in the ability of education to overcome obstacles (Aagaard, 2021). His early life in the Terai region provides a compelling portrait of tenacity in the face of adversity, highlighting the significance of education as a driving force behind both individual and societal progress (Chang, 2016).

Yadav's journey serves as an example of how education has the power to change people's lives and bring about systemic change in the education sector (Roth, 2005). Yadav used his experiences to advocate for inclusive policies, teach prospective educators, and lead community engagement activities as he rose to the position of Assistant Dean at Tribhuvan University (Ellis, 2004). His narrative highlights the critical role that education plays in promoting individual autonomy and communal development,

making it a ray of hope for underprivileged people aiming for socioeconomic growth (Chang, 2013).

Additionally, given Nepal's heterogeneous societal terrain, Yadav's auto-ethnographic narrative illuminates the larger socio-cultural backdrop of marginalization and Madheshi identity (Hamilton et al., 2008). Yadav offers insightful information about the struggles of marginalized communities and their quest for acceptance and empowerment through sharing his personal narrative (Choi, 2016). His experiences go beyond personal accounts to provide a window into the social dynamics and systemic inequities that influence social inclusion and educational attainment (Hayano, 1979).

Yadav's professional and academic experience broadens his viewpoint as a researcher and teacher and gives him a sophisticated grasp of the ways in which education, society dynamics, and identity are intertwined (Garcia-Carrion et al., 2015). Yadav provides thorough insights into the difficulties Madheshi scholars encounter in gaining entrance to academia and overcoming institutional barriers through a combination of personal tales and academic analysis (Hayes, 2012). His participation in conferences and training courses demonstrates his dedication to professional growth and lifetime learning, underscoring the significance of ongoing capacity building in advancing social empowerment and high standards in education (Benner & Yand, 2015; Boni & Velasco, 2020).

The study captures Yadav's life-changing experience and provides priceless insights into the interplay of societal dynamics, education, and identity. In addition to honoring the resiliency and agency of underprivileged people, his story acts as a rallying cry for inclusive educational practices and structural change (Allahwala et al., 2012). Yadav's story resonates beyond individual experience to incite genuine change through scholarly research and personal reflection, encouraging action toward a more just and inclusive society (Alm & Guttormsen, 2021; Shevlin & Rose, 2023; Valverde, 2004).

This auto-ethnographic exploration offers a poignant reflection on the intersections of adversity, education, and community development in the Terai region of Nepal. Through his personal narrative, Rajeshwer Prasad Yadav illustrates the transformative potential of education in transcending socio-economic barriers and empowering marginalized communities. Moreover, his contributions to the education sector exemplify the agency of individuals to effect meaningful change within their societal contexts. Ultimately, Yadav's story serves as an inspirational call to action for others to emulate, fostering a collective commitment to educational equity and social justice in Nepal.

Authors' Contribution

The first author prepared the manuscript. The second and the corresponding author corrected the manuscript and the third author edited finally. All authors agreed to publish the paper.

Declaration of Interest

We declare that all the authors have not any conflict of interest.

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