

CHILD DISCRIMINATION AT SCHOOL: LIVED EXPERIENCE OF STUDENTS AT COMMUNITY SCHOOL, NEPAL

DAWA SHERPA

Assistant Professor at Central Department of Education, T.U., Kirtipur, Nepal.
Email: dawa.sherpa@tucded.edu.np, ORCID: 0000-0003-3247-0667

KHAGENDRA BARAILY

Email: khagendraji@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0003-0235-1296

DHANA KRISHAN MAHAT

Assistant Professor at Research Directorate Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal.
Email: dkmahat111@gmail.com, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9229-4039>

Abstract

This study embraces how teachers discriminate against children in community school classrooms. Mainly the study has explored the lived experience of children regarding the discriminatory behavior of teachers while teaching in class. The four students from the secondary level representing diversified characteristics were purposively selected for the participants, and they were interviewed through semi-structured interview guidelines questions in a natural setting. The interview responses were transcribed verbatim and analyzed by extracting themes within a theoretical framework based on post-structuralism and discourse analysis. Students labeling, emphasis on intelligent students, demographic prejudice, and participation restrictions for disabilities were explored as discriminatory behavior. Such discrepancies manifested by teachers create classroom conflict among students and teachers. The study has contributed by exploring how to address the differences in the classroom. Moreover, the study finding provides insights for the head teachers and school management committee to manage a healthy and justiciable environment in the classroom. Furthermore, it helps to design equitable policy at the school for the policy maker.

Keywords: Student-Teacher Relationship, Demographic Discrimination, Student In-Labeling, Disability Discrimination

INTRODUCTION

The researcher had taught for more than ten years in the community school and observed various discrepancies among school families. One day, a researcher was taking his class. All the children were paying attention in his class and were busy practicing and coping with the instruction. In the meantime, he found loud crying. Most of the children's attention went to that side, disrupting the whole class. One girl was falling from a desk and lying down. The girls' bodies were thrilling, sweating from their faces. Her hand and legs were straight, solid. The children were afraid and stayed far from the girls. He was the newly appointed teacher, thought that what was the reason behind that he had one friend who used to teach science in that school. I showed him the situation of my students who suspected the symptoms of hysteria. Other teachers also came there and stood far from her. By cultural restriction, he could not touch her. Another teacher expressed thought about seizure disorder and became far away. The administrative staff was talking about making a telephone call to her parents.

By observing that scenario, he had looked to see its reason. Sickness and other biological problems are not under the control of human beings. It suddenly comes and goes. Sometimes, physical maturity can create such types of withdrawal symptoms. But this may go and disappears soon. The school staff was treated like commodities, which would be unusable after some time. The aging senior teachers were showing discriminatory behavior with prejudice. In that behavior of the person for girl student, He fell into socks for a long time. He wanted to criticize the social structure and ask me, when does such prejudice overcome justifiable society? In the study conducted by Cojocariu and Boghian (2019), the research findings delineate that the phenomena of child discrimination affect students' participation and engagement in their classroom learning environment. The various dimensions of discrimination that occur in school demand the respect of dignity and create a welcoming environment for the child. The agents responsible for promoting discrimination seeks to determine the existence of identity with diversities. This study contributes to identifying the favorable intervention and agents involved in implementing interventions designed for controlling and mitigating child discrimination. Eliminating child discrimination in school may reduce dropouts and promote overall educational performance.

Child Rights Practice in Nepal

It is well known that there is a proliferation of bills of rights in national constitutions worldwide. The rights of children have not been addressed in this development. This is my response. It investigates the transformative power of international law and how human rights instruments, particularly the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, have shaped the treatment of children in national constitutions (Tobin, 2005) Nepal government has ratified a series of international child rights conventions and accepted to endorse international provisions with a commitment to incorporate the rules of the convention in legislation and administration. The principle of the domestic legislative instrument made by the government of Nepal in terms of children's rights has become a safeguard for the interest of children in 1992().in the paragraph 79 of the government report, the children's Act protects the child from cruel treatment by parents, guardians, and teacher. Likewise, section 7 of the children's Act prohibits torture, mitigating discrimination against children. According to chapter 9 of Muluki Ain, if hurt, injuries hurt imposed on the family member, teacher, or guardians with simple force, it won't be responsible for the Act. Moreover, if the child dies of beating or doing something else for the benefit of the deceased by his teacher or guardians, he will be punished with 50 rupees. In article 152 of the government report, there is a provision that the beating of children by employers and teachers is a serious problem. There are several causal factors attributable to the problem. The legal relationship between child servants and employers is undefined in Nepali Law. If the employer is considered the child's guardian in its care, then beating to death for the benefit of the dead is penalized in the same manner described above.

An Overview of Child Discrimination in Nepal

Children are the stakeholder of rights, as stated by the convention on children's rights, and discrimination by race, color, sex, language, religion, political, social origin, or physical disability should be banned (Lord et al., 2010). Every child has to be recognized as having the

fundamental right to education (Moen et al., 2011). The first stage of human rights is education, and the nation needs to guarantee the rights that are universal and free. The different forms of discrimination consist of violation of these rights and inequality (Thoms & Ron, 2007). Multiple forms of discrimination, such as bullying students, emphasizing intelligent students, and labeling the students that persist in school, must be recognized as an expression of injustice. These discriminations are considered the driving force of educational exclusion. To mitigate the above discrepancies, children's education needs to be preferred based on their needs and interest in the least restrictive environments. The different types of discrimination based on sex, caste, color, and ethnicity, language, and socioeconomic status still exist in society (Brewer et al., 2002).

Discriminatory behavior of teachers toward students in the classroom impacts the child's teaching-learning activity. In their opinion, the biased attitude based on many characteristics influences the entire educational environment.

Nowadays, discriminatory behavior is unfortunate and common in Nepalese rural schools (Baral et al., 2007). Such discrimination has increased social inequality, resulting in conflict throughout society. Such inconsistencies limit children's growth away from formal schooling development. To address this circumstance, intercultural education appears to be a way to tackle cultural diversity and act as if to avoid discrimination from various dimensions (Gay, 2010). Intercultural engagement may be useful for mitigating such disparities in the educational environment. Nondiscrimination education, tolerance education, and peace education all emphasize instilling human rights ideals to achieve freedom and respect. The classroom fosters a child-accepting atmosphere by encouraging tolerance, freedom, equality, solidarity, collaboration, respect for difference, and empathy (Baidhaw, 2007).

Discrimination can be classified as direct or indirect (Doyle, 2007). Where there is no similar case, direct discrimination occurs. Avoiding latecomers in exam halls is an example of direct discrimination. This is strongly tied to equality as consistency, and one individual is viewed less favorably than another. In this sense, both persons are treated equally. The giving of equitable treatment to remedy societal injustice is not adequate for justice. This form of equal treatment may result in uneven outcomes regardless of their background. This results in a shift from consistency to drugs.

Indirect discrimination is unclear since it aims to go beyond equal treatment to equal results and opportunities. To remove such forms of discrimination, the approach must focus on individuals who face chronic bias rather than providing formal therapy in comparable instances (Hajian et al., 2011).

These are disrupting the pace of social development of the nation. Such types of discrepancies have evolved the social conflict in the community. Since school is a miniature of society, society's feature is reflected in the classroom. The different form of discrimination, either direct or indirect, is becoming an impediment to child's right. In such context, this study intended to explore how to remove discrimination to create social harmony in the classroom. This study is a milestone for exploring the root cause of students' discrimination in the classroom.

CRITICAL RACE THEORY (CRT) AS A THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

The concept of critical race theory is one of intellect. The fundamental idea is that race is a social construction and that racism is not merely the result of human bias or prejudice but is also ingrained in legal systems and regulations (Gillborn, 2005; Hylton, 2008). Race is produced by culture, not by nature. The biogenetic hypothesis of race was refuted by genetic discoveries made in the late 20th century. This is the notion that the human species is divided into several groups based on physical and behavioral traits that are inherited from parent to child. The concept of race is a social construct, according to social scientists, historians, and other specialists (Fullwiley, 2007).

According to certain CRT theorists, race is a constructed relationship or correlation between a set of physical characteristics, such as skin color, certain facial features, and hair texture, and an imagined set of psychological and behavioral tendencies, viewed as either positive or negative, good or bad (Ahn Allen et al., 2006).

Critical racial theory (CRT) is an academic and social movement that adopts a loosely structured legal analytical approach. It is founded on the notion that race is not a natural, biologically-based characteristic of physically varied subgroups of humans, but rather a socially produced (culturally invented) category that is used to oppress and exploit people of color.

The Critical Race Theory (CRT) movement in legal studies has its roots in the social missions and fights for justice, emancipation, and economic empowerment in the 1960s (Hylton, 2008). As a result, it has had academic and social activist goals ever since it was first established. In addition, the movement is a response to the dismantling of civil rights victories and a change in how the political and social debate is conducted. Critical race theorists argue that racism is intrinsic to the legal system and legal institutions in the United States. These institutions are responsible for producing and maintaining social, economic, and political inequities between whites and non-whites (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015).

CRT in Education

The movement of the CRT was stretched from the legal institution, however (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015) stated embody the critical origins of CRT are used in the law as well as other sectors to demonstrate that the job of CRT requires more than simply pointing to race. To do so, we must confront and express the material, social, and ideological forces of white supremacy. Dixson and Rousseau Anderson (2017) have highlighted the argue CRT, is a competition-based achievement system that leads to racial disparities in education. CRT in education also investigates how education policy and practices promote normative whiteness and racial inequality. CRT questions the widely held belief that people of color are inferior and white people are superior. CRT in education rejects historicism and analyzes the links between present educational inequity and historical racial oppression. CRT in education understands how race is mediated by and interacts with other identity markers (i.e., gender, class, sexuality, linguistic background, and citizenship status). CRT advocates for racial fairness in education. CRT goes beyond detecting inconsistencies. Critical race theory provides a framework for

understanding how allegedly race-neutral educational systems such as knowledge, truth, merit, objectivity, and "good education" are strategies for constructing and policing the racial limits of white supremacy and racism (Lynn & Adams, 2010). Thus in this study, the researcher has observed how discrimination is practiced in the classroom and how does it overcome to ensure justice for the learners.

Purpose of the Study

To explore the perception of students on discriminatory behavior in school and critical relationships with the teaching-learning activity.

METHODOLOGY

In this research, the researcher collected participants' experiences, and the experiences were analyzed critically. The researcher used a hermeneutic phenomenology research design for this study. This design explores the lived experiences and the shared meanings of compatible experiences (Manen, 1997). This design helps to analyze the discriminatory behavior of teachers in the classroom. Students' experiences and stories are derived from their natural settings (Shamir & Eilam, 2005). The participants for this study were five students from the community school from grade eight from five different schools. Two girls of the age 14 and three boys aged 15 were purposively selected from the middle-class family from the rural areas located in province one Dhankuta district from class eight. The class monitor was contracted as he had a direct contract with the principal researcher and his classmate. The class monitor acted as a facilitator to disseminate the study's information and invite potential. The participants were informed about the details of the study before the data collection. The participants in this study were volunteers, and they had the option to withdraw at any moment, with no repercussions. Before taking part in this study, all individuals signed an informed consent form.

Pseudonyms for research confidentiality have replaced the actual names of the participants. The interviews were conducted in their natural environment, wherever they belonged. The researcher described the purpose of the study and obtained consent to participate in the interviews at the first meeting. The interviews have then performed the interviews focused on interview guidelines, followed by research questions. The researcher used the recorder to capture the interviews. The interviews were transcribed and coded for the basic theme (Esfehni & Walters, 2018).

Similarly, the transcribed data were made available to the participants for memo checking. The code was used for the basic theme, and the organized theme was based on the basic theme. The organized themes were used for the global subject, and the global themes were discussed and analyzed using the participants' code and quotations. In the discussion, the themes were created using grounded data that was compared and contrasted with data from other sources and literature.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The interview transcription and the literature review guide as mainly thematic analysis revealed four main themes: Students in-labeling, focusing on intelligent students, disability discrimination in the class, and demographic discrimination as discussed.

Student's Labeling

Treating students with dominant words refers to labeling. A discriminatory word that segregates students from normalization situations. In this sense, teachers behave against students by using bad words to express their identities, discriminating them from others (DeVoss, 1979). The students with their labeling perform responsibility from different perspectives. The teacher's behaviors in the classroom are shaped by stereotyping thought to accumulate varieties of students for the whole achievement. In this relation, participant S1 said,

If I walked in later in the class, the teacher became angry and shouted by expiring frightening words like Gande. The teacher makes me frightened and would be the whole day's mood. Running to the class, if I asked something, he gave me slabs, saying he did not know the simple matter. The teacher treats me not to come late from today and onwards have to come to from 10 km far from the school. I have no vehicles, and there is no road also. So it takes more time to arrive at school. I could not prepare early in the morning because of agricultural work on the farm. Frequently I need to accept dominant words from my teacher.

In this assertion, the teacher is deemed superior by traditional thought. His intention is guided by the stigmatized concept and always drives his motives to dominate children. In the time of asking confusion, he discourages and misinterprets curiosity. This shows that teacher is just like a so-called teacher, and the recommendation of political power recruits him. He does not possess the characteristics of an ideal teacher. If he is modeling as teaching, he should have the minimum quality of a good teacher. Such a teacher cannot be a facilitator for children's future careers. The legend is that if a ship's captain makes a mistake, one ship will sink, but if teachers do not teach properly, the whole nation will be dismissed. To the greatest extent, the teacher's responsibility is in the world (Esmaeili et al., 2015). To be an excellent teacher, he needs to have the characteristics of an ideal teacher who guides all learners along the lines of his future career. In the same context as the above participant, S2 said,

I am studying in class 8, and I cannot understand mathematics. I did not become attentive to reading complicated subjects at the lower level. At that time, we, weaker students, collectively sat on the same bench and did not pay attention while reading mathematics. The teacher used to give classwork in mathematics that we copied from peers and submitted to the teacher. In the case of home assignments, we did the same at school. We secured lower marks on the class test, and the teacher became angry with us. The teacher always shouted and said oh, feeble-minded.

In this assertion, the classroom is always existed diversified based on performance. The average and weaker students occupy the whole classroom. The intelligent students are curious and keen to study but the poor students try to escape classroom engagement. It is shown that the poor students imitate the notebook of intellect and submit to the teacher. Such activity is just like a cheating habit and opposes the conceptualization. In addition to this, the teacher needs to extend equal respect for all learners and create a sound learning environment in the respective classroom (Hess, 2002). In the same context as above, participant S3 asserted as

I belong to the Magar community, and in this community, most girls get married at an early age. They do not feel afraid of a legislative provision. The boys and girls from the school escape and transform into a couple at the age of 15/16 years. Some couples get married after giving birth. In this practice, the teacher teased us, " Did you get married? We girls are labeled as a runner to marry. Sometimes they tease us by saying having age for marrying. He further says do you need a husband?

In this quotation, early marriage culture is accepted in some communities in our country. However, it is legally restricted. To some extent, students below 16 years are getting married by escaping school. This is an illegal practice, but it is gradually reduced from the procedure. By taking this event, the teacher sometimes dominates boys and girls by saying the pseudo name. This is not the appropriate practice for a teacher because he is a conscious person in society. If such illegal practice happens in the community, he needs to discourage making a legal state. In the above relation participant, S4 said as

I belong to a low-income family, and my parents have a black color job. My parents cannot afford to purchase expensive clothing. Sometimes my clothes are not straight and shining. At that time, he calls me, saying, dirty fellow. He does not advise me to change and wash properly; instead, he says change or an idiot. Sometimes madam denies staying together. The teacher asked me to sit behind our counterparts at the back and kept asking myself, who am I?

The statement stated that the students from poor families seemed to be wearing low-cost clothes. In the teacher's perception, wrinkled clothes are unsuitable for the school premise. The students from poor families cannot maintain their uniforms with wealthy families. In this context, schools need to allow similar clothes regardless of the quality.

Disability discrimination in the class

The battle of the class is to discriminate by their nature. Generally, children with disability are not discriminated against in school but are budding due to disability prejudice in various forms. In this context, participant S1 said as

In my class, students of various characteristics represent as classmates. Due to their nature, seating arrangements are entirely different, whether provisioned or not. In the mainstream classroom, the students with disability are not provided supportive furniture in class, and the teacher does not give focus during the time

of teaching. Such types of students are labeled by an imbecile and feeble-minded named psycho. I have seen children with no legs sitting on the floor. The administration is not willing to address such type of issue. So, the existing accommodation of children with disability is disheartening.

Concerning the above assertions, the classroom management has not done disable friendly. Concerning furniture and another physical arrangement, the mainstream classroom is lacking, and the school administration lacks proper management. Without maintaining a disability-friendly environment at school, the slogan of inclusive education is unable to ensure in practice (Botts & Owusu, 2013). In this prospect, schools must be attentive to managing the academic and physical course sent by allocating sufficient resources. In the same context, another participant, S2, said,

I have faced many challenges in the class due to the administration's lack of solid operational support. Sometimes I have faced hardship from peers and teachers within the class. In the case of seat arrangement, girls need to sit on the front bench. Always every subject teacher imposes to have a seat in that way. The intention is that we sit at the back and will be out of track from the line of learning hope to see a non-discriminatory ethos for everyone with equality.

In this assertion, the students with physical disabilities are accepted by the class and peers. The classroom environment is disabled-friendly, so when they come late due to the long distance from home, the front seats are already occupied, and they must sit at the back. In such cases, more students in the class cannot engage in the teaching-learning activity. So the seating arrangement needs to be done according to the feature of the students (Norazman et al., 2019). If the school does not manage equal education, opportunities cannot be ensured for the students.

Focusing on intelligent student

The intends of teachers to welcome brilliant students in the teaching-learning activities refers to focusing on the students. Such activities are exhibited by the prospective teachers, enabling the creation of a discriminatory environment in school. A large number of students feel suffocation in the classroom. In this context, participant S1 said

In our class, we all are of different needs, interests, and intentions. Some of us carefully see the instruction and keep silent while running the class. Some of us are not attentive in class because we do not understand the subject matter as the teacher instructs. The thing is that the teacher always focuses on intelligent students and interacts with them. Mutual interaction takes place between them. Sometimes anybody could ask something the teacher would tease him and oh! You do not know this also. In the mass of students, teachers treat them differently with an imperialistic attitude.

The subject teacher explicates child discrimination in the above assertion. Those students who seemed to be comparatively weak are the focus of the subject teacher. Classroom instruction is influenced by the interaction between teachers and students of high achievers. The exclusionary

behavior of teachers dominates the weaker students. Every student needs to be considered equally to ensure the child's rights (Hakovirta & Hiilamo, 2012). The teacher must be able to manage diversity to achieve a predetermined goal. The teacher's intention of excluding children from the opportunity of learning is highly faulted. Such a type of teacher cannot become an ideal teacher and good facilitator across student development. In the same context as above, the participant said

I am reading class ten, lying in the average category. The teacher who teaches us is like a lecturer at the university. They teach quickly by lecture method. Sometimes I ask a question about his subject when he says no time for me and makes me ask mates. My friends are like me. They are not reading well, so how can they answer? They discard the comments in the administration because the high achiever students have not kept anything about the teacher. If the respective teacher notices the complaint, he will shout at us.

In the above assertion, the teacher seems to be teaching without the skill of child psychology. When any person stands as a teacher in the classroom, firstly, he needs to know about the diversity of students. He should think all the students in the class should be equally valued and emphasize the need for low achievers. Every child's interests need to be somewhat addressed to become an ideal teacher. If the teacher instructs without the knowledge of diversity in the classroom, he will be only the teacher, not the facilitator. A teacher has the responsibility of making students' life in prosperous life. If the teacher cannot guide the students according to their needs, he will drop his life in waste life (Esmaili et al., 2015). In this context, he won't be a model teacher. In the same context as the above participant said as

The teacher and some other intelligent student activity run the overall class. The teacher frequently asks some students and ignores us. Most intelligent students sit at the front and interact with the teacher. Teacher instruction is concentrated on them and ends the class without responding to them. The teacher decides to complete the course according to the student's interests. Generally, the teacher denies the system's revision until the intelligent student is requested. Now a day, the teacher focuses on some girls who are slightly knower than us.

In the above context, teachers' focus is concentrated on intelligent students, and overall instructional activity is influenced by the overwhelm of the teacher. The classroom involves all the students with verities of needs. In the eye of the teacher, they all are the same, but instructional practice happens to discriminatory attitude (Hajian et al., 2011). In such behavior, all the students with diverse needs are not getting an education in a fair environment. It is said that if all the students do not benefit equally, the teacher's instruction will fail, and the goal of the teaching-learning activity will be dismissed.

Demographic discrimination

Discrimination based on socio-cultural factors such as caste, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and geographical location is found in school. These discrimination factors are

directly or indirectly connected with the obstruction of a learning environment. In this context, a participant said

I got admission with support from one uncle, the owner of the house where I reside, and I have been working in this house for the last five years. Sometimes school organizes parent meetings, and nobody will be at my school from my side. The uncle who supported admission is a businessman and is often swamped. No teachers respond to me about the educational support in class due to the absence of parents.

From this assertion, it is clear that the students whose parents reside nearby the school and frequently visit the school are responded to by the teacher and school family. Some parents live far from the school, and some children work as a housemate in this school. In such cases, the guardians are irresponsible about their reading because they think the children are only child laborers and must perform their duty efficiently. The teachers underestimate the child without frequent parents visits and continuously ask about the child's progress (Morgan et al., 2009). Such a type of concept is more stigmatized and unproductive for student affairs. So schools need to ensure children's right to be educated as provisioned in the constitution by using an inclusive approach in the least restrictive environment. In the same issue, another participant said as

My parents are a farmer, and they always work on the farm. They both illustrate and hesitate to visit in school. Due to my family's poor economic condition, they cannot manage time to visit school. Most of my friends take tuition for math and English, but I could not take education due to money. Our teacher teases me, why not you take tuition? The teacher prefers those who take tuition in the classroom instruction. For those who are not taking tuition, teachers discard them.

This assertion shows that the students reading within the same class and same school are falling into the concept of economic inequality. The teacher's behavior is discriminatory towards the student world; however, they are in the same class. The teacher's service is wholly oriented to business motives instead of welfare. All students need equally respect from the ideal teacher (Alhija, 2017), but it does not happen with the teacher's behavior in the classroom. In the same context as above, participant S3 said,

In my experience, the teacher treats me differently from the students. For children of politicians and wealthy parents, he takes care and responds frequently. Here are the children of the head teacher and mayor of a municipality in my class, and every teacher gives them emphasis t on reading. Those not belonging to the family mentioned above are carelessly behaved by the teacher and school families.

In this assertion, the teacher is working in favor of power. The present teachers are not coming under professional ethics and worship the power holder. Teacher likes to love the children of a head teacher with the expectation of an advantage in school. Likewise, he takes care of the

mayor's children, anticipating a transfer to a good school. Both functions are unrealistic and unhealthy for professional ethics. Generally, weak teachers worship such type of power holder to protect the job in a suitable place. The poor teacher wants to sustain their profession by taking sympathy from the organization leader. The educational Act has promulgated that teacher need to have far from politics. In practice, the teachers are becoming politically conscious and can influence the local person by accompanying the associated party. Teachers are familiar with every community with their students' help.

CONCLUSION

The presence of undervalue to weak students either in learning or other aspect is common everywhere. Teachers' and office personnel's discriminatory behavior were found in their conscious and subconscious mind. Intelligent students were treated with high priorities in the eyes of teachers rather than weak students. It is in opposition to equitability and self-determination. Similarly, weak and backward community students were labeled with rough words that discourage their learning. Such discriminatory behavior hinders ensuring justice for the students. Such discriminatory behavior must be omitted in the classroom to empower weak students. Students who are from nearby schools get emphasis and priority in learning and extra-curricular activities than outsiders or students from a distant place from school. So weak students were getting back and they can't maintain their academic excellence. Thus equitable environment in the classroom needs to be practiced by teachers. Since school is a miniature of society, it mirrors the community's social features. School also leads to the community reducing social inequality and creating social harmony. If discriminatory behavior is loaded in the classroom. Such school education won't contribute to individual development full of potential and cannot facilitate student development through education. Such practices discourage inclusion in school education.

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