



## **Education status and factors affecting effective education among indigenous Tharu community in Nepal**

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### **Abstract**

This paper examines the education status of the indigenous community of Tharu community and factors affecting effective education among them. A total 61 samples were collected using simple random sampling technique of the study area of Padampur village in Chitwan district, Nepal. Majority of the respondents (38%) were under age of 35 to 40 years and 93% respondents were male. Majority of family were nuclear type (78.7%). Agriculture as the most important occupation among Tharu households for their life subsistence and dealing with society. Two-third of households had NRs. 30000 to 50000 annual earning and same expenditure. Majority of the households have been expensed in other things than that of children education. Out of total samples, only 14% expensed on children education, 19% on farming, 24% on food/entertainment, 13% on health, 8% on transport and 21% expensed on welcoming their guest. The literacy rate of the respondents' family members was 58.5% under the age of 14 to 45 year old. The total school drop-out during academic time among Tharu students was very high (36.5%) in the study area. Majority of Tharu' children were dropped from school due to early marriage (21.4%), poor economic condition (19%), parent negative attitude (15%), copy to other (8.6%), feeling of aloneness and humiliation (8.1%), language difficulty (6.3%) and burden of household work (5.9%). The status of education among Tharu family was very low as compared to higher caste family in the society. Parent negative attitude, school holistic quality, behavior of teachers, less access in decision making, failure in examination, parent education, copy to others/friends were the major social factors for low educational status in the Tharu community whereas the early marriage, sex discrimination among son and daughter, mobility to other places were the major cultural factors. The major hindering economic factors in Tharu education were small farm size for producing crops, non-productive occupation such as subsistence farming and household chores, low income and high expenses in feast, festival and welcoming the guest, large family size with minimum food sufficiency and unemployment. Most of the cases of drop out from the school were seen as the result of early marriage of girls and boys. To reduce the early marriage, it would be better to conduct the awareness on early pregnancy and its negative

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impact for maintaining the overall socio-economic status of the family. It also recommended that there should be the orientation about the parent awareness, suitable age of marriage to their children and impact of population growth on family. Income generating program such as goat farming, vegetable farming, banana cultivation, fish farming, buffalo/rearing and bamboo crafting would be suitable to boost up the economic condition of the Tharu in sustainable way for motivating them to deploy their children to the school.

**Keywords:** Education, Tharu community, School drop-out, Nepal

## 1. Introduction

Education encompasses teaching and learning specific skills, and also something less tangible but more profound: the imparting of knowledge, positive judgment and well-developed wisdom. It has as one of its fundamental aspects the imparting of culture from generation to generation. Education means to draw out, facilitating realization of self-potential and latent talents of an individual. In fact, education is the mirror through which we can see the world. It has a key role in national development. Literacy is the ability of reading and writing whereas education is the systematic instruction to gain knowledge. However, literacy and education are similar and both are complementary of each other. Education is the backbone of a national development, which plays vital role for progress. Education helps to shape the individual role for society. Educated people utilize scientific technology on the local resources but partial education does not play effective role for the development of society and individual. So, education and literacy is little bit different in the broader sense but similar in narrow sense.

In the context of Nepal, educational status was very low and fragile during the abolition of *Rana* regime, the progress of education by establishing public schools had been formally initiated. In that time, efforts were made to establish a national education system. Formal schooling in modern times was still constrained by the economy and culture. Children were generally needed to work in the field and at home, and educating females was viewed as unnecessary. In 1975, primary education was made free, and the Government of Nepal became responsible for providing school facilities, teachers, and educational materials. Primary schooling was compulsory; it began at age six and lasted for five years.

In spite of being made many activities and plans after 1950, no remarkable progress has been obtained in the development of education sector. Even today, elite mass are in front line of the education. Most of the boarding and highlighted public schools are occupied by them expensing enough money. Nowadays, education as business is accelerating day by day in every

districts of the nation due to privatization effect. In this situation, the opportunity of involving marginal and poor children is declining to join these schools. It is all due to their low socio-economic status and false governmental policy and strategy to include them in the developmental mainstreaming.

Among these communities, Tharus are those living in the Terai region of the Nepal. They are also called indigenous nationality of Terai. They are distributed from Kanchanpur to Jhapa districts along Indian boarder dividing in different cast and race. *Mahato, Chaudhari, Rana, Darai*, is the main races of the Tharus. It is estimated that the total linguistic population of Tharus across the nation is 1,331,546. It is 5.87% of total population (DDP/N, 2004). It was also coated that some of the earliest settlements of Tharus were deep in the forest isolated from other ethnic groups.

Initially in the historic time, these oldest communities Tharus were the master of Terai and very rich and prosperous. Most of the landlord and Jamindars were the Tharus and they had sustained the economy of the whole Terai and inner Terai (Chaudhari, 2003). But in change of the development due to cultural exchange and elite mass domination, these community were displaced and excluded to grab many opportunity. They were behaved as an entity of traditional thinkers. Now, most of the people think that Tharus are an innocent, shy and relatively timid people due to their illiteracy and little exposure in the national politics. They are socially, politically and educationally excluded to entry in the mainstreaming of the nation.

Access in education is an important dimension to assess the development of a society. Education helps the human resources development which is interpreted as a process of increasing the knowledge, skill and capabilities of all people in the countries. Such improvements of human resources help to meet the desired goal in different sectors of development. However, socio-economical and cultural aspects of the society can be considered as some of the challenges to get desired goal in the development of education.

Tharus are more illiterate exploited and poorest segments of the Nepalese population. They are most backward community as educationally, socially and economically. The cause of the backwardness might have been due to various factors. They are mainly depending in agriculture and livestock. They have limited access to government services. They are exploited by so called upper castes. They have rare access to employment, education and health and so on.

Tharus consisting 5.6 percent of the nations' total population are relatively one of the disadvantaged communities. Though, with the recent changes in the composition of population, they are living in culturally composite areas and traditionally in the forest clearings places. Even now they tend to live particularly in close approximation of forests. Preferring to live in isolation from other communities, they are settled in the entire length of the plains of the Terai from east to west.

According to 2001 population census, literacy rate of Nepal is 54.1 percent. Among those the literacy rate of Tharu community is very low. Many people do not send their children to school. There is higher proportion of school going children in the primary level than secondary and higher levels. The drop out rate of student is very high, only few students complete their education. Similarly, unequal behavior between boys and girls still exists in Tharu community. Maximum number of daughters are confined into the household territory and engaged in domestic work. So, enrollments rate of girls in the school is lower than the boys, very few girls get opportunity to complete their education. Although Tharus are the native people of Terai, they are backward in the field of education. In this context, the thing that should not be over looked is with out ensuring the active and equal participation from all caste, ethnic group and gender in the development process of the country seems difficult. Thus, it is the important to investigate the problems of (1) what are the affecting factors of education of this community? what prevents parents not sending their children to school? and (3) the reasons for drop out in the school in different levels.

In this context, this paper examines the education status of Tharu community having age group ranging from 14 to 45 years and the factors of low educational status among them.

## **2. Review of literatures**

### **2.1 Theoretical review**

According to NDP (2004), Nepal is a small country which is an encompassment of colourful ethnic groups and communities rich in cultural heritage. Although it is a small and poor country, it is noted for its glorious history and diverse ethnic communities as Australian, Mongolian and Aryan Socks, which dwell in the different parts of the nation and until now, have

preserved some fascinating cultural traits of the prehistoric or mythological times. Despite various races, castes and creeds on religious harmony exists among the people of Nepal, it constitutes a solid national unity base.

Southerland (1911) defines community in this way "a community is a local area over which people are using the same language conforming to the some mores, feeling more or less the same sentiments and acting upon the same attitudes." Where we analyze the Sutherland definition it is found that the community remains under specific geographical location and its way of expressing attitude i.e. language is same. Community means the group of people living in a locality with their own unique identity including the social solidarity and integration. MDG (2002) has stated that all girls and boys of the member's countries should complete as compulsorily the full course of primary schooling by 2015 AD. Moreover, it also addresses that the primary education as a universal education to all sectors of the people irrespective of gender, castes and races.

According to 10<sup>th</sup> five year plan (2002), the country was set the target of achieving a 100% literacy rate for the 6+ age population by the end of this Plan (by 2007). As per plan, the Ministry of Education had also taken steps to implement the compulsory primary education policy. Even now, the government is also considering necessary steps to make basic and primary education more meaningful by extending this level of education up to Grade 8 instead of the current level of Grade 5.

According to EFA assessment (2002) for the educational improvement of disadvantage group including Tharu, the government recognizes the need to improve the physical atmosphere of learning in schools in order to raise the quality of primary education. It will continue the policy of improving physical facilities as a strategy to improve access and the learning environment. To address the problem of poor enrollment, retention and completion rates of primary children among the disadvantaged communities (including socially-deprived children, linguistic minorities, out-of-school children, children with disabilities, and children from small and remote communities who have limited access to educational opportunities), the government will undertake construction of new physical facilities in such communities. Moreover, it also address that the government is committed to ensuring schooling opportunities for all children whose educational needs are not fulfilled by formal primary schools. To this end, alternative schooling arrangements are made by adopting: (a) school outreach programmes, (b) flexible

schooling programmes, and (c) out-of-school programmes (OSP) as the means of reaching hard-to-reach groups.

Similarly, according to three year IP of Nepal (2007/08), it has focused the definite strategy, policy and program especially for Adibashi and Dalit community to their educational development. Through literacy, post literacy, income generation and informal education by providing mobile facilitators and involving NGOs, local bodies, school and private sector, the holistic development of Dalit and Janajati have been assured providing scholarship, incentive on the basis of their enrollment and regularity in the school.

According to Bogardus (1965) "community is a social group with some degree of "we feeling" and living in a given area." According to Ogburn and Nikoff (1913), Community is the collection of groups that inhabits a locality. Yaar (1987) shows the ethnic inequality in educational attainment between European, America, Asian and African people. He states their poorer academic performance and higher dropped out rates because they lay in the development of effective learning. Their deficiencies are attributed mainly to the socio-economic background of families and their traditional cultural heritage. Similarly, institution discrimination is also cited as a cause of inequality because schools are social institution committed to universalistic standards of performance.

CERID (1990) describes the educational situation of backward society in Nepal on article of educationally disadvantaged population groups. The report pointed out the major problem of the poor economic condition is due to the illiteracy. Socio-cultural factors which have influenced the poor economy of the communities such as early marriage, negative attitude toward girl education and social relation (i.e. language problem and teacher's behaviors on students). The study has found out the higher dropout rate in the higher level of classes. In the context of girl's education, this trend is more rapid than in the boys.

Lock head and Janison (1999) elaborate in a study prepared for World Bank on primary and lower secondary school participation in the Terai region of Nepal indicates that parents from higher socio-economic backgrounds and with some education tend to send their children to school more often than those with low socio-economic status. The study indicates that children's school participation was determined by the household wealth, the schooling attained by household heads and the caste of the household. Many poor parents are unable to send their

children to school where as educated and wealthy parents perceive education as a means of security, better jobs in the government.

Basnet (1978) in his article "An inquiry in to the cause of primary school dropouts in Rural Nepal has mentioned that various factors have influenced the participation of children in education. These factors are: gender, economic status of family, family education, school facilities, topography, modern family size, teacher characteristics and language. These factors that determine whether children will get chance to study or remain in home without education. Apart from giving an account on various factors concerning educational participation in Nepal, the researcher has also discussed about relatives importance of those factors. This study has emphasized on gender which is the most important factors influencing the participation of people in education.

There are many controversies about the origin of Tharus. Scholars have been able to come a definite and clear conclusion regarding the origin of Tharus. Some scholars have to derive their origin through etymologies and some tried to trace their origin through a legend. The first western scholar, Prancis Bachanon (1969) gives some information on the Nepalese Tharus. While describing Eastern Nepalese Terai, he says that the Tharu caste resembling in its manners the Gangai of Morang composes the great part of the population on the plain.

A study conducted by CERID (1988) on educational status of Tharus in four districts of Nepal i.e. Sunsari, Chitwan, Dang and Kailali. These districts have large population of Tharu. This study has concluded the educational situation and Tharus parents' attitude toward education. The major findings of this study are: in educationally a disadvantage community, large numbers of children go to school living in mixed community than from exclusive Tharu community but small percentage of them complete their education. The dropout rate from the school percentage of them completes their education. The dropout rate from the school is high in the secondary level and participation of girls is very low from Tharu community. Increasing the levels decreasing the number of students is mentioned as the characteristics of school enrollment students in Tharu community. The study states that landholding and food sufficiency of the family have identified as strong relationship with the enrollment of the Tharus' children. The economic, socio-cultural and school related factors are presented as the major determining factors on education of Tharu community.

Bhatta (1977) in his book entitled "Natural history of Nepal" has written about the Tharu tribes indicating their relation with Janin, Jaal and Jungle as well as their habit and indebtedness. He stated that a Tharu is truly son of the forest and so this day he retains freedom of mind and movement, a rather uncommon feature among the tribes of Nepal. The Tharu love fishing but it is the women who goon the big catch when they get respite from the field. A Tharu is always happy with a jug of his brews coming from many different sources rice, maize, banana, etc. Addition to drink makes him an easy prey to the caprices of the landlord and no wonders therefore he is always in debt.

Janardon (1997), in his study "enrollment of girls at primary level in Dhankuta and Nuwakot" has found that the girls' enrolment in primary level in spite of equal age level population was lower than that of boys in both districts. The main causes were found to be the poverty, negative parent attitude, girls' involvement in farming and household works and lack of educational awareness in parents. He also found girls a decreasing trend of enrollment from primary to the secondary level in both districts. Though high rate of enrollment were found in primary level in comparison to other levels, the proportion of girls' enrollment even at this level was only 38 percent as against 62 percent of the boys.

Basnet (1978), in his study "Access to education of the Tharu children in Haridwar Village Panchayat of Dang District" has stated the low participation of school enrollment students from Tharu community. He found increasing the level decreasing rate of attendant at the school. The concentration of Tharu students in the primary level is extremely higher and lower in all other levels. He has shown strong relationship between absence in the class and increasing the age of children. Parents ignorance, lack of awareness, poor economic condition, and traditional concept (Daughter need not to study) is represented major problems of lower participation and dropout from the school. Apart from these, distance from the school is also mentioned as the cause of non-participation of children in the school. He found no girls were in the lower secondary and secondary level.

Eng. and Henderijntie (1981) in their study "A study of social and educational status of Tharu women and girls of eastern and central region" have concluded the poor situation of Tharu women. They found the male dominated Tharu community. The poverty is handled by male while females are concentrated only in the domestic works. Discrimination between son and daughter was found in the study area. The ratio of Tharu' girls students to Tharus boy students



was quite high at primary level but gradually tapers at the higher grades. The dropout rate of Tharu girls' students was higher than of the boys. Early marriage, language problem, use of their children in the field works, ignorance of parents are presented as the cause of dropout. Apart from these, poor economic conditions are found to be the main principal causes of determining drop out.

Subedi (1992) on his study "Bounded labour in Nepal" has mentioned the root of major cause of bounded labour (Kamiya) in Tharu community is illiteracy. In the absence of literacy, they are not aware of the surroundings. So they are cheated by others. Poverty is the major cause of non-participation and dropout from the school. In this context, most of the Kamiya children are made traditional bounded labour.

Pyakuryal (1982), describing the general socio-economic condition of Tharus that they are one of the major ethnic groups in the Terai region and one of the more under developed groups in Nepal. Their history is a story of extreme deprivation, enormous hardship and blatant class exploitation. Because of physical and social isolation from development activities in the region and cultural contacts with other people, their superstitions backwardness of timidity were reinforced. As people they are generally illiterate and unschooled, they lack awareness about their rights and privileges. The gap between Tharu and other caste is very wide.

## **2.2 Review of empirical studies**

Based on the finding of the previous studies, various differences were identified as the key variables of Tharu people. As the study attempt to draw a socio-economic profile of Tharu people it is hoped that it may represent the living conditions or the way of life among Tharu people of Padampur village of Chitwan district. The variables for the study include age, sex, education, marital status, family size, occupational status, income and ownership, ceremonies, indigenous skill. It will be conceptualized that these selected variables will help to identity the way of educational status of Tharu people.

Bista (1967) writes that the Tharus are probably among the oldest group to inhabit the Terai. They usually like very close to the heavily forested regions. A great number of the villages of Tharuwan are found in small clearing in the middle of the forest itself. Most of the large compact Tharu settlements are found in tropical malarial areas, interested with wild animals such as elephants, rhinoceros, bears, tigers and poisonous snakes.

Tharu who lived in Chitwan are started to call Chitaune Tharu. They have patriarchal system which is different from the western Tharu. According to old person they are interested to call descendents of Rajput Chhetri.

According to Chaudhari (2003), the educational status of Tharu community is deplorable. Based on population of Tharus, education is very meager. The number of educated people is very less but employment problem is at risk in this community. Women are least prioritized for education and government jobs. He also quoted that after the entry of English education system, the educational level of these communities was getting lower and pitiable. In that time, they did not adopt the English education because of cultural rigidity. Now there is a great problem in Tharu young and grown up who are even educated because they face great difficulty in getting jobs. Due to unemployment problem, Tharus young and even educated boys are forced to go other parts of the world to seek the jobs to rear family

A study conducted by Khanal (2000) shows that there is about 46 percent Tharus dropouts found in Chitwan district in primary education particularly in class one and two, though the study was conducted in public school across Ratnanagar municipality only. The dropout rate of Tharu was found the highest among the other ethnic groups in the study area.

Rajoure (1977) in his study entitled, "Anthropological study of the Tharus of Dang. Deukhari" has presented the ethnography of indigenous tribe "The Tharu" in detail. Rajoure views that due to geographical cross-cultural and cross linguistic factors, several regional variations of the Tharu culture have been developed in different parts of the country within the narrow belt of Tharu inhabitations. He has loosely put these cultural variations into the major two groups-less influenced by other cultures and more influenced by other cultures. The Tharus of Nawalpur and Chitwan valley, Dang-Deokhuri, Surkeht valley and Bardiya belongs to first group while the Tharu of east Jhapa, east Koshi reigon, center (Bara and Parsa districts) and far west-Siraha (excluding the Dangaura immigrants Tharus) belongs to later group. According to Rajoure, there was no interaction in significant degree between Tharu and non-Tharu in the time before the eradication of malaria as few absentee non-Tharus landlords who had controlled over most of the land in Dang valley, used to come down only for few months in winter of year while the Tharus were working here as their tenant farmers for the whole year. But there occurred great interaction than before between the Tharus and the non-Tharus the immigrants from the hill after the implementation of malaria eradication and land reform programs. However, as he noted,

these two programs, which proved very helpful and beneficial to hill-people it was less fruitful and unfortunate to the Tharus. They were the people of different nature and attitudes. Tharus prefer disciplined manner are peaceful and obey the rules of society while the hill people in the other hand are a freedom living people with a materiality a spirit dislike to remain under the control or domination of others. So the first impact that took place in Tharu villages, after the immigration of hill people according to Rajaure's finding was the decay and neglect of the village level rules, customs and disciplines which has been imposed up till then by the committee of the Mahato and the Tharu households chiefs.

Pyakurayal (1982) had carried out his field work in the eastern Chitwan. The main concern of his study was to explore how variability in settlement pattern affects the process of integration and economic modernization of farm people. The research was focused on four Tharu villages that represent different locations and compositional situations in the Chitwan district. One between the two major findings of his study, which differs from what generally thought is that village location (centrality) is a more important conditional factor reinforcing the manifestation of ethnicity than is the ethnic composition of the village (homogeneity/diversity). It means that households in centrally-located village (irrespective of their homogeneity/diversity) are too more isolated areas as the finding of his study.

Rakesh (1994) in his book "cultural heritage of Nepal Terai, has mentioned different aspects of socio-religious life of the Tharus of Nepal Terai. He writes a peculiarity to point out is that despite the fact that Gautam Buddha was born in Nepal Terai at Lumbini, the Terains Tharus are not followers of Buddhism. They are mostly Hindu.

Janawali (1899) concluded that the Tharus are very rich in cultural aspects whereas their socio-economic status is still in a pathetic condition. Kamaiya Pratha is its evidence. It is also obvious that fertility is high in tribal community like the Tharu and it is a very complex phenomenon governed by most demographic and socio-economic factors. The community is backward even in the areas of material and child wealth and unconscious about the evil consequences of rapid population growth.

BASE (2001) found that educational attainment of Tharu females in level-wise show high disparity whereas educated families is found more in primary level than other level. More literate females are found families with medium income service background and business. Due to poor economic condition, the females of Kamaiya and labour families have been found deprived from

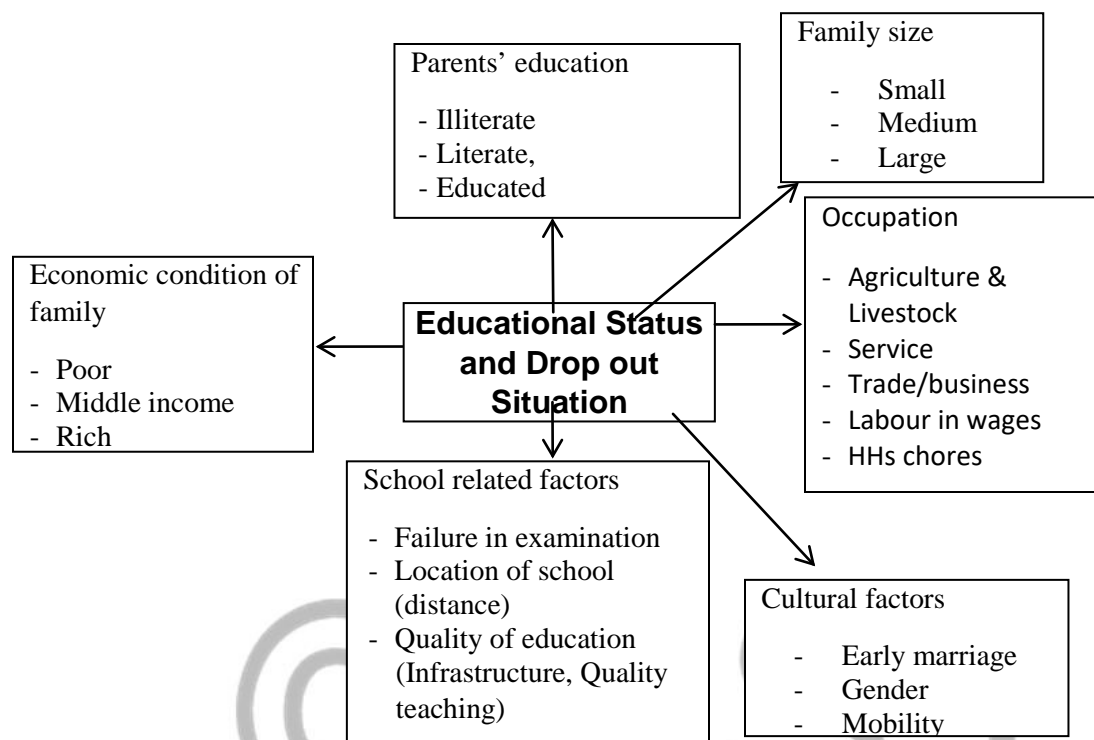
formal education. More concentration of literate females are in the age group of less than 15 years but more number of informal literate females are in the age group of more than 26 years.

In this way, many previous scholars have contributed by carrying out their studies on the Tharu indigenous of Nepal. The studies are mainly focused on the habitat, occupation, festivals, economic exploitation and ethnicity, which are mostly anthropological in nature. On the basis of location it is found that the studies were centered mostly on Dang, Chitawa, Siraha and Surkhet districts.

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### 3. Materials and Methods

#### 3.1 Conceptual Framework



**Figure 1.** Conceptual framework of the research

Source: Own illustrations based on theories and past empirical research

**Following variables were defined as a conceptual definition:**

*Drop out:* The students who leave the school before completion of grades or level. It may be primary, secondary or higher secondary.

*Early marriage:* Marriage of girls before legally permitted standard age.

*Economic condition:* The circumstances or situation in which people live, work or do something by utilizing their available resources.

*Education:* A process of teaching and learning especially in schools or colleges, to improve knowledge and develop skill.

*Educational Status:* The position of education in the particular time period by the specific community.

*Gender:* Socially given role and identification of male and female in a particular society.

*Household chores:* Daily and regular works doing in the house.

*Indigenous nationality:* The people stayed in the particular area since long time or their ancestors.

*Key informants:* Socially reputed and honorable persons involved in the interview and discussion during questionnaire fill up.

*Literacy rate:* The rate of ability to read and write by the community.

*Mainstream development:* The development accepted by most of the people in the country or society.

*Mobility:* The ability to move around easily without hindrance to every place and social class for own interest.

*Occupation:* A job or profession for income generation and livelihood of a person.

*Parents' education:* Father and mother knowledge and skill of Tharu children.

*Parents' attitude:* The feeling, thinking, perception and reaction of parent on their daughter and son education. It may be negative or positive.

*Tharu community:* A socially classified ethnic groups living in the Terai region of the Nepal which are believed to be deprived, exclusive and poor.

### **3.2 Rationale of the selection of the study area**

Padampur village of Chitwan district had been selected as a research area for this study. It was noticed that there had not been enough study carried out on these ethnic group particularly on education which was one of the largest VDC of Tharu population. Another reason to choose the area was new settlement of Tharu community due to flood victim previously and easily accessible also. The area is located on the north from Mahendra national highway at a distance of about 10 km from Ratnanagar and about 6 Km from district headquarter, Bharatpur on east direction. In this area, Tharus are economically, socially and educationally marginalized and poor. Moreover, it is believed that they are the aborigine of Chitwan district. Their life style is different than that of other community. They are excluded from the mainstream of the development also.

### **3.3 Nature and sources of data**

To fulfill the aforementioned objectives, this study was based on primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected from the field visit with the help of various techniques of data collection e.g. household survey, key informants' interview, focus group discussion and observation. Similarly, secondary data was collected from previous studies, published

newspapers, articles and newspapers published by GON, DDC, CBS, VDC, municipality and other unpublished documents etc. The data was both qualitative and quantitative in nature.

### **3.4 Universe and sampling**

Two wards were purposively selected for research based on Tharu domination. Out of total Tharu population of two wards (406), only 15% (61) were taken as sample for study purpose applying simple random sampling technique. Due to highly dominated wards of Tharu and resource constraint, whole study was concentrated in the ward 6 and 9 of the VDC<sup>2</sup>.

### **3.5 Research design**

This study was based on both exploratory as well as descriptive research designs. Exploratory research was done to collect information about educational condition in the study area. This study was focused on to investigate the educational status of Tharu community. Besides, this study was made on attempt to describe the things related socio-economic, educational and other individual's studies. Descriptive research method was used to collect the qualitative information from the survey.

#### **Interview**

Questionnaires were both open and close ended. Structured questionnaire had been used to collect the primary data by visiting door to door of the respondents. Questionnaires for the sample households were filled up with the help of the concerned household head. In case the absence of household head, another senior member of the household had been asked for such help as respondents.

#### **Key informants interview**

Some of the educated and experienced persons of the field area were used as key informants. School teachers, representatives of the VDC, Tharu community leaders, school headmaster and teachers had been taken for interview. It had been taken from 13 cross check for the reliability of data collected through the questionnaires method.

#### **Focus group discussion**

School teachers, village/political leaders, social workers were used for focus group discussion to triangulate the data to assure the reliability and validity of the study. Check list was applied during the discussion for data collection.

<sup>2</sup> VDC is village development committee, the low administrative unit of Government of Nepal and it became Municipal' ward in Federal system.

## Observation

Especially, qualitative information like the activities, behaviors, status and participation of Tharus' in the areas and issues related with education were observed during field work. So, direct observation was carried out for minimizing the sampling error and more reliability of the information.

### 3.6 Data processing and analysis

The collected data had been processed and analyzed to make them more clear and scientific. Simple statistical tools were adopted during data analysis. Maps, graphs and diagrams were used as tools and techniques for data analysis of the study to illustrate the research work more clearly. Data coding, decoding and tabulation were the basic system of data analysis.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

Socio-demographic condition reflects the situation and condition of the society. It also deals with the quantitative aspects of the population of the community. It might relate social and economic characteristics with other social factors. So, this chapter has dealt on various variables related to social and demographic characteristics.

#### Age and sex

Different age group of the respondents is presented in Table 1. Total 20 (32.79%) respondents were under the age group of above 40 years among 61. Similarly, 23 (37.7%) respondents felt under the age 35 to 40 years, 11 (18.03%) respondents felt under 30 to 35 years, 3 (4.92%) felt under 25 to 30 years, 4 (6.56%) respondents felt under 20 to 25 years and none of the respondents in the age of 14 to 20 years. This indicates that most of the respondents during the survey were household head and they had governed their family and social role staying in the community. Moreover, majority of them under the age of 35 to 40 years were more active in term of social and economic point of view to run the family and society more smoothly.

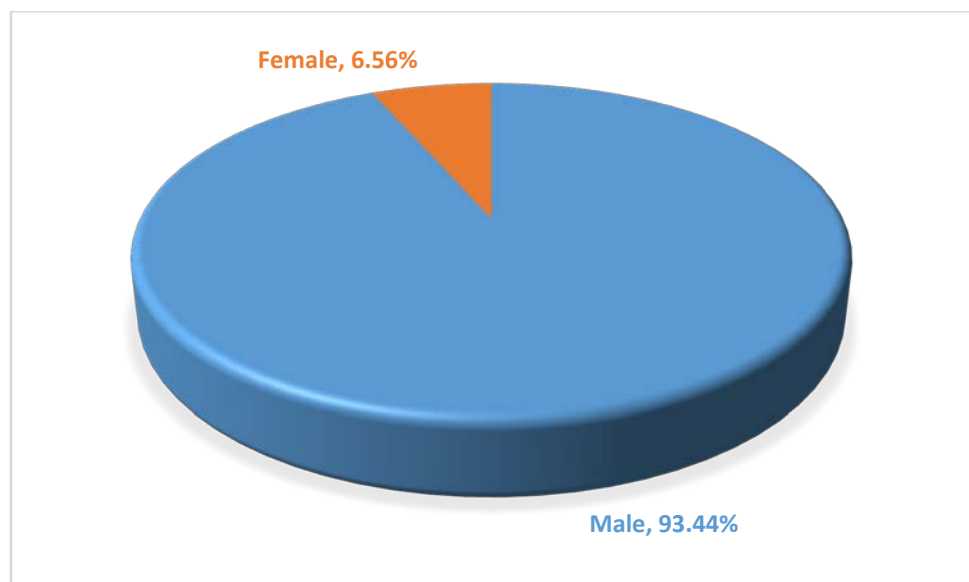
Table 1: Different age groups identified during the study

Age groups	No of respondents	Percent
14 to 20 year	0	0.00
20 to 25 year	4	6.56



25 to 30 year	3	4.92
30 to 35 year	11	18.03
35 to 40 year	23	37.70
Above 40 year	20	32.79
Total	61	100

In the study area about 93% were male and 7% were female respondents (Figure 2). This shows that in decision making level there was male dominancy and in households level there was female dominancy. It is probably because of the innate social role provided by the society to the male and female in households and community level.



**Figure 2:** Sex of the surveyed respondents

**Family type and family relation**

Table 2 presents the family type and family relationship composition. Majority of family were nuclear type (78.7%) whereas 26.7% were son and 25.2% were daughter in relation whereas 37% were father and mothers. This little bit high number of son population in the sample households indicates the importance of son in Tharu community.

**Table 2:** Family type and family relationship composition

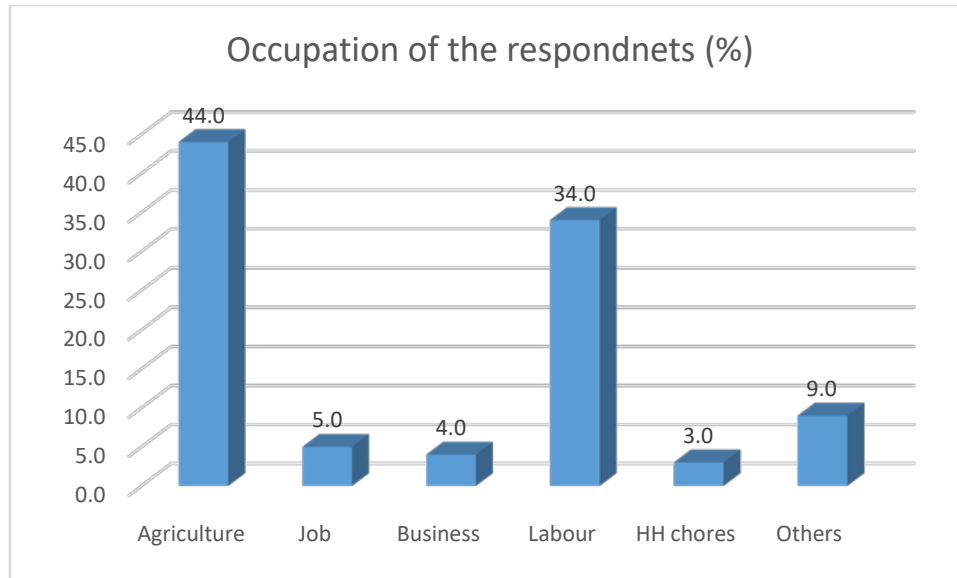
Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Family type		

Joint	13	21.3
Nuclear	48	78.7
Family relation		
Son	88	26.7
Daughter	83	25.2
Father	61	18.5
Mother	61	18.5
Other	37	11.2

## 4.2 Economic situation of the respondents

### Occupation

Occupation is one of the important components for sources of income. It was analyzed to examine the drop out condition in relation with the main occupation of the guardian of Tharu students. Dropout rate is not equal in all family of diverse occupations. Moreover, occupation of people influences their lives, custom and standard of living in the society. The social and economic status of the people is largely determined by the occupational composition. According to study, the main occupation adopted by the people were agriculture, job doing, business conduction, daily wage labour, households chores and other related to minor (fishing, boating, crafting). Among various occupations, agriculture was the most important for life subsistence and dealing with society. In both wards of total 119 responses, 52 (43.3%) on agriculture, 41 (34.5%) on labor work, 6 (5%) on job, 5 (4.2%) on business, 4 (3%) on households chores and 11(9.2%) responses on other minor work had been responded from total 61 respondents. These figures have shown that the agriculture and daily wage labour as main income generating enterprise for meeting whole need and requirement of the respondents' family. In addition to this, households' chore done by women as non-productive work has been happened in few cases during questionnaire fill up and discussion with respondents. The occupation of the respondents is presented in Figure 3.



**Figure 3:** Occupation of the respondents

### Annual income and expenditure

The income sources of respondents were farming, labour, services, business and households chores. It indicates the living standard of the respondents. Annual income of family is diversified that has been determined the degree of exposure to different productive work/occupation of the people. In sample, there were two households (3.2%) earning NRs.<sup>3</sup> 15000 to 30000, thirty seven households (60.6%) earning NRs. 30000 to 50000, eight households (13.11%) earning NRs. 50000 to 70000, nine households (14.75%) earning NRs. 70000 to 100000 and five households (8.34%) earning worth more than NRs. 100000 annually from different sources of income.

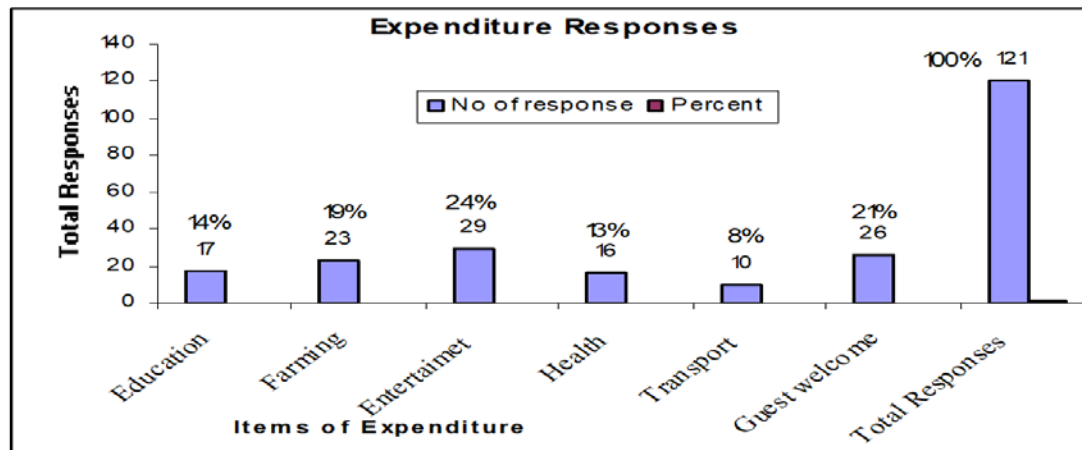
The annual expenditure of the family was somewhat different in comparison with annual income. As far as the expenditure is concerned, one household (1.64%) expenses NRs. 15000 to 30000, forty households (65.57%) expenses NRs. 30000 to 50000, eight households (13.11%) expenses NRs. 50000 to 70000, seven households (11.48) expenses NRs. 70000 to 100000 and five households (8.2%) expenses NRs more than NRs. 100000. Table 4 presents the annual household income and expenditure in the study area.

<sup>3</sup> 110 NRs. (Nepalese Rupee) = 1 US Dollar

**Table 4:** Annual household income of the respondents

Annual HH income and expenditure	Frequency	Percent
Income range		
NRs. 15000-30000	2	3.20
NRs. 30000-50000	37	60.60
NRs. 50000-70000	8	13.11
NRs. 70000-100000	9	14.75
NRs. >100000	5	8.34
Total	61	100
Expenditure range		
NRs. 15000-30000	1	1.64
NRs. 30000-50000	40	65.57
NRs. 50000-70000	8	13.11
NRs. 70000-100000	7	11.48
NRs. >100000	5	8.20
Total	61	100

They expense their money in education, farming, food and entertainment, health, transportation and welcoming guest. If we analyze their item of expenditure, majority of the households have been expensed in other things than that of children education. Out of total 121 responses from 61 households, 17 (14%) on education, 23 (19%) on farming, 29 (24%) on food/entertainment, 16 (13%) on health, 10 (8%) on transport and 26 (21%) responses on welcoming guest have been distributed annually according to respondents interview. It shows that most of the earning of Tharu community spends in unnecessary item of entertainment and guest welcome. Only small amount is separated for children education due to their innate cultural norm and unawareness to fulfill the present need of children education. According to key informant, in local and national festival, Tharu are gathered among family and attended in heavy feast by doing alcoholic beverage and gambling party in most of 24 hours (D. Ban, personal Communication, 2008). The expense more and more in that types of occasion and spend all the money that they had earned from different income sources (Figure 4).

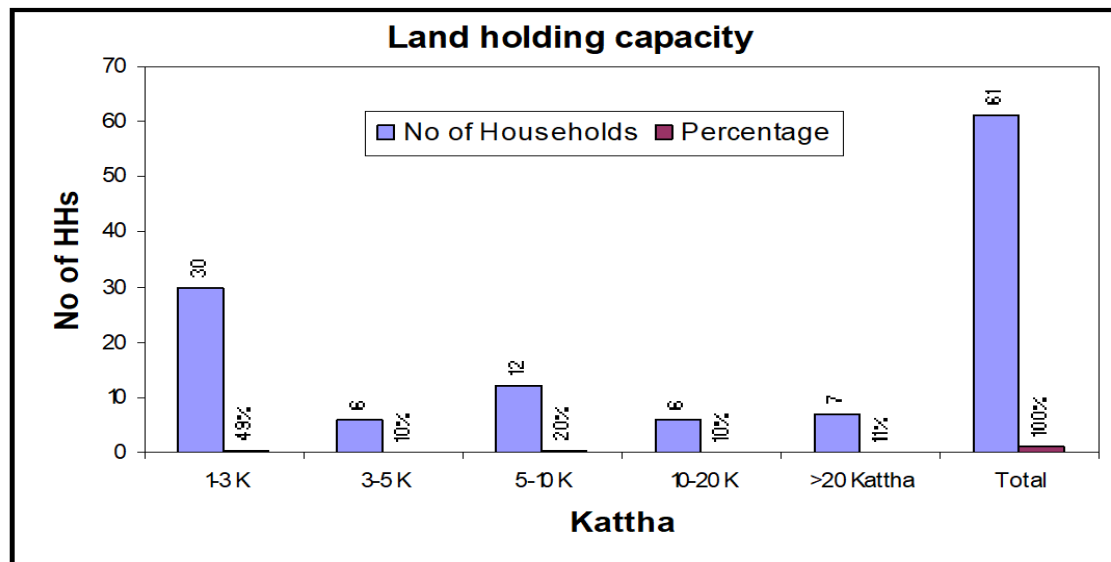


**Figure 4:** Annual items of expenditure done by respondents

### 4.3 Land holding and food sufficiency condition

Food sufficiency of household is highly depended on land holding capacity of each individual in the society. Lower the land, lower will be the food sufficient to meet the annual hand to mouth problem of the family. Moreover, land holding size is one of the most important factors for the total arable area that would be shown strong economic condition of the people. Due to lack of employment opportunity and traditionally back up society, most of the farmers in Padampur village occupationally engage in agriculture occupying limited area of land. So, there is great relationship between land and Tharu people since their settlement. They would like to believe only in land and farming for livelihood and existence. Out of total 61 sample households, 30 households (49%) occupied 1 to 3 kattha<sup>4</sup>, 6 households (10%) occupied 3 to 5 kattha, 12 households (20%) occupied 5 to 10 kattha, 6 households (10%) occupied 10 to 20 kattha and remaining 7 households (11%) occupied more than 20 kattha of land according to households interview. In the Figure 5, small farmers were in more numbers than that of big farmers. It has shown that most of the farmers will not reach food even for family consumption annually. To meet the food, they would have done another work for other business to fulfill the basic family needs and requirement. They should work for daily wage labour and other productive and money oriented work for sustainability. Farmers land holding capacity is presented in Figure 5.

<sup>4</sup> 30 kattha = 1 hectare



**Figure 5:** Land distribution pattern of sample households

#### 4.4 Educational characteristics of respondents

Education as one of the basic human needs has a greater role for the development of society, without which, we can not even imagine the improvement in social, economic and political situation of the nation. So, for the development of these attributes, people must be conscious, literate and educated. Thus literacy and education are viewed as the vital indicators of socio-economic enhancement of individual in the society.

##### Schools' education of respondents

Table 6 presents the school education of respondents and their family. Before asking the question to the respondents, it had been classified the educational groups into 6 categories and asked the questions accordingly. The groups were i) never going to school ii) reading 1 to 3 class iii) reading 3 to 7 class iv) reading 7 to 10 class v) reading IA level and vi) reading BA and more. Based on the responses given by the respective respondents, 143 (43%) family members of them were illiterate out of total 329 from 61 households. They included in the category of never going to school. Similarly, 9 (3%) were reading under 1 to 3 class, 85 (26%) were reading under 3 to 7 class, 72 (22%) were reading under 7 to 10 class, 16 (5%) were completed IA level and only 4 (1%) completed BA level. This status of education among Tharu family is low, if we compare this with higher caste family in that society. During the time of study, it had been depicted that most of the household heads were illiterate. According to a key informants, they were not able to learn even from adult literacy class conducted by GON and NGO/INGO. He also reiterated that

they have less accessibility of informal education because of their timidity, simplicity of living and unawareness. (G. P. Khanal, Local Trader, Personal Interview, 2008).

**Table 6:** School education of respondents and their family

Educational category	Frequency	Percent
Never going school	143	43
1-3 Grade	9	3
3-7 Grade	85	26
7-10 Grade	72	22
IA level	16	5
BA+ Level	4	1
Total	329	100

**Educational status of the respondents in the age of 14 to 45 year**

The age ranging from 14 to 45 years is considered as the economically very productive and active period to do something. In this age, most of the people in the community engage in different types of occupation i.e. farming, service, social work, daily wage labour and so on. Below and above of this ranging is said as non-productive and passive period. In the society, children and aged grouped above 45 years old are included in this category. So, this study focuses that group in the society to fine out the educational status who are involved in production and income generation activities (Table 7).

**Table 7:** School education respondents and their family in the age of 14 to 45

Educational category	No of members	Percent
Never going school	98	42
1-3 Grade	8	3
3-7 Grade	55	23
7-10 Grade	55	23
IA level	16	7
BA+ Level	4	2
Total	236	100

### **Total drop out and causes of drop out from school education**

The main challenges for school going children in deprived and marginalized community is drop out condition. It is due to their economic problem and innate socio-cultural attitude. In most of the cases in this community, children are escaped from the school and participated in other work even there is educational facility and physical condition in the school. They are not interested to read and write in the school and home because of poverty, unawareness of their parents, language difficulty and so many psychological hindrances. So, more of the drop out in the school more will be the illiteracy rate in the community and society. And ultimately it creates the uneven development of discrimination, inequity and injustice.

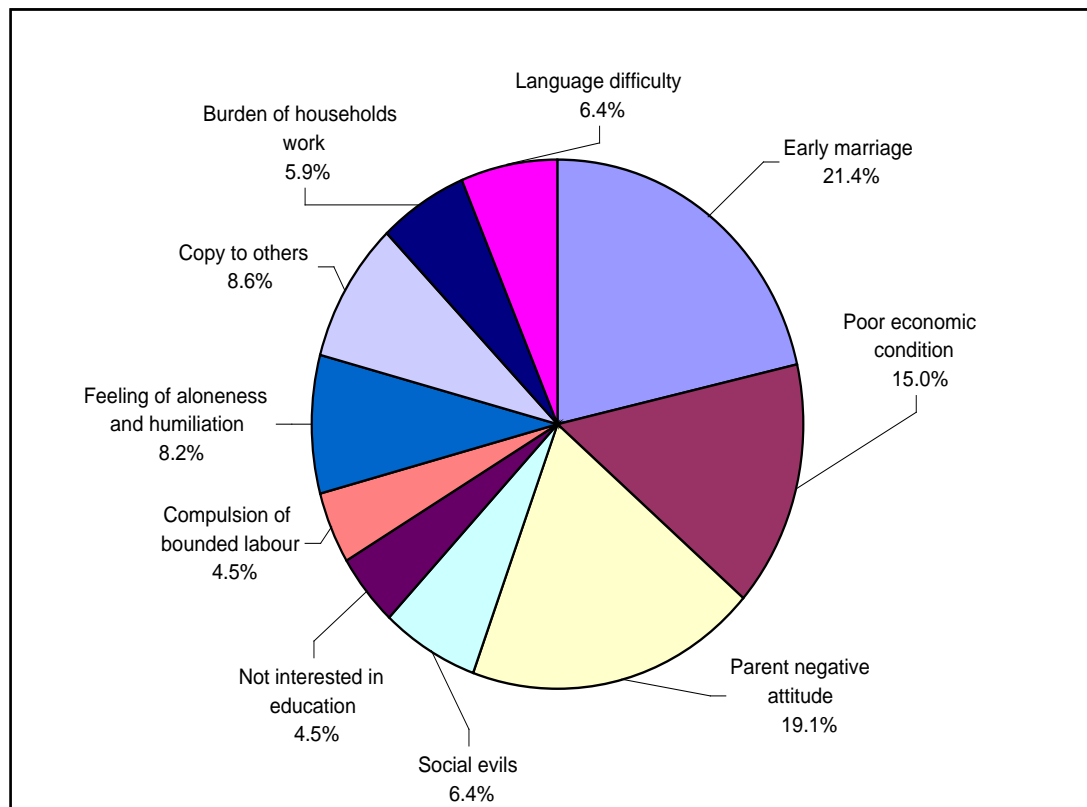
According to respondents, there were 120 children and family members comprising 53 from ward 6 and 67 from ward 9 dropped out from the school among 329 members during their academic time which was very high of 36.47% of the total. This ratio is quite high in comparison to national figure. In national figure, the average dropped out rate from the school (primary to secondary Level) irrespective of ethnicity is 9.28% (DOE-2007/08) which is very lower than that of our sample communities of Tharu. After leaving the school, they used to search the agricultural job, labour work and others in land lord and hotel. They also go to Kathmandu, India and golf countries for seeing better job and opportunity to rear the family and to fulfill the dream of their parents. In this way, education is the minor and no value element in this Tharu society. They think that job, better opportunity, courtesy to guest and entertainment are the things good for them to sustain the life. This has been creating the extravagant and uneducated condition among them due to their negative competition in food and festivals.

As far as the causes of dropped out is concerned, the major causes were early marriage of the children, poor economic condition, parent negative attitude, social evils, non-interested in education, compulsion of bounded labour, feeling of aloneness and humiliation, copy to others, burden of households work and language difficulty. Due to poor economic condition of the family, nearly 5% of Tharu children after reaching 8 year they compelled to work in restaurant and hotel in Narayangardh and even Kathmandu. They do not get any chance of education through out their life. Whole life is confined in the restaurant and hotel. They feel that their god is only the hotel and restaurant owners. In addition to this, language difficulty in the school was another circumstance for dropped out. Since the mother tongue is Tharu, 4% of the children had



the problem of language during the learning time at school. It created the drop out situation to some extent.

As per the total responses given by the 61 respondents, 21.36% responses on early marriage, 19% on poor economic condition, 15% on parent negative attitude, 8.6% on copy to others, 8.1% on feeling of aloneness and humiliation, 6.3% on language difficulty and 5.9% on burden of household work had been identified for the reason of schools' dropped out. Among the various causes, the major two prone were early marriage of children before/during the school period and parent negative attitude on education. In Tharu culture, when daughter reach in 12/13 years of old, their parent are more concerned on marriage and they search for suitable candidate. Moreover, daughter in this community are so socialized that they should select a best mate so that they can live in the family easily and romantically. Thus, parents don't give the priority for getting education to their children. The causes of dropped out from the school is presented in Figure 7.



**Figure 6:** Causes of dropped out of Tharu students

### **Literacy rate of respondents**

The rate of ability to read and write by the community in a particular time is referred to as literacy rate. Literacy rate has indicated the level of professionalism and awareness level to the community. Higher the literacy rate, higher will be the educational capability to perceive the circumstances and know the human development index.

The respondents of Tharu people at sample wards were some what different in literacy rate measurement. Out of total 329 Tharu members from 61 households, only 143 members had not the knowledge of writing and reading anything. This shows the total illiteracy rate of Tharu. So, by analyzing the above fact, it can be said that the overall total literacy rate of the respondents' families was 56.53% irrespective to gender which is very low than the district literacy rate of Chitwan. Based on the district figure as per coated by CBS 2001, the district literacy rate of Chitwan is 70.8% which is comparatively high than national rate (53.7%). It is because of the political and parent awareness on the people. But in case of Tharu, it is not matched to the district figure due to their cultural rigidity and laggardness concept on education. Furthermore, the literacy rate of respondents' family members was 58.47% among total 236 under the age of 14 to 45 years old. It is also lower than the district rate.

### **Parent perception on children education**

Perception of guardians to their children about the education plays a vital role for creating drop out and future of the children. It also creates the conducive environment of good socialization to acquire knowledge and idea in a joyful condition. Negative thinking on education always hampers the degree of knowledge enhancement and mental development of their children.

During the time of questionnaire discussion to the respondents, one question related to children education was parent's coordination and contribution on children education at home. According to the respondents, 18 (29.5%) responses were in guardian help in their children education and 36 (59%) responses were in not help in their children education. And remaining 7 (11.47) responses had no any comments on the above matter of helping to the children. By analyzing this scenario, the over all cooperation of the parents in children education was negative and comparatively hopeless. Most of the respondents did not want to help effectively to their children during the educating time in the house. They only felt that education to their children through school and house will be useless to them and even for children also in the long term. It

was also because of the innate cultural behavior and negative socialization of the parents during their adulthood.

Similarly, during the course of asking, another question was also the most talented persons among children respective of gender. In this context, 32 responses were in sons, 15 responses were in daughters and 10 responses on both among total 57 responses. This also showed the gender imbalance within the family for easily education accessibility. In this case , daughter were more vulnerable and susceptible for getting the light of education then that of boys Moreover, the reason of intelligent and talent in education among sons and girls were also discussed during households visit. According to them, 7 responses were due to boarding school education, 13 responses due to intensive tuition in home, 31 due to good educational environment in home and school, 21 responses due to brainy nature of their children and 13 responses on anonymity or no reply. It indicates that the good educational environment to their children in school and home has governed the positive impact on children mental and educational development.

#### **4.5 Factors affecting the low educational status of Tharu**

The main objective of modern education is to make social upliftment through the exposition of the latent talents and potentialities in individuals and to prepare citizen to be able to perform in a scientific way by owning human values and beliefs. Further, it is accepted as a means to enhance the economic competence, protect positive tradition and culture and prepare qualified human resources who are capable to cope with the development of the innovative knowledge, skill and technology. However, during the course of time, many factors may govern the quality of the people on the aspect of acquiring the education. On this above regard, following factors had been identified as major hindering entities for the betterment of Tharu education.

##### **Social factors**

Socially governing causes that affect the educational environment in the particular circumstances has significantly played a vital role in every community. It is possibly associated with socialization process of an individual and other socio-dynamic paradigm. Parent negative attitude, school holistic quality, behavior of teachers, less access in decision making, failure in examination, parent education, copy to others/friends were the major causes of low educational status in the Tharu community. Based on key informants interview and focused group discussion

among teachers, local political leaders and old aged people, following were some points to be considered in mind for Tharu education (Table 8). As per Table 8, 26.6% responses on parents negative attitude and illiteracy, 20% on school quality, 17.7% on copy to others/friends, 11.1% on behavior of teachers on students, 8.8% on failure in examination, 8.8% on language difficulty and 6.9% on less access in decision making had been identified as social factors affecting in Tharu education.

**Table 8:** Social factors affecting the Tharu education

Factors	Responses	Percent
Parents negative attitude and illiteracy	12	26.66
School quality	9	20
Copy to others and friends	8	17.7
Behavior of teacher on students	5	11.11
Failure in examination	4	8.8
Language difficulty	4	8.8
Less access in decision making	3	6.9
Total	45	100

### Cultural factors

Culture is one of the important indicators for civilization and development of society. Basically, it has represented the society as innovative and laggard on the adoption or rejection of the new thing. Early marriage, sex discrimination among son and daughter, mobility to other places were the major factors affecting the education of Tharu community. As per above Table 9, 46.42% of responses falls in early marriage of children(both son and daughter), 28.5% responses falls in gender discrimination in education and 25.08% responses falls on mobility of male and female to other place out of home for exposure. These responses are out of total responses 28 from total 13 key informants and 3 focused group discussion. It has depicted that exposure to other places, vision to male and female education and early marriage due to cultural taboo were the main cultural factors hindering the good environment for educating the Tharu children.

**Table 9:** Cultural factors affecting in Tharu education

Factors	Responses	Percent
Early marriage	13	46.42
Gender	8	28.50
Mobility out of home	7	25.08
Total	28	100

### Economic factors

This is also a major considerable factor for deciding the educational status of the community. It includes various wealth and finance related elements that directly influence the wellbeing level of the family and society. Family size, occupation, family status, wealth and income-expenditure level are some attributes associated with this factor. According to Table 10, the major hindering economic factors in Tharu education were small farm size for producing crops; non-productive occupation such as subsistence farming and household chores; low income and high expenses in feast, festival and welcoming the guest; large family size with minimum food sufficiency and unemployment based on the interview with key informants and focused group discussion. As per discussion, 41.17% of responses on low income and high expenditure, 23.52% on non-productive occupation, 17.64% on large family size with minimum food sufficiency, 11.76% on unemployment of family members and 5.88% on small farm size holding had been identified as the major economic factors affecting the Tharu education.

**Table 10:** Economic factors affecting in Tharu education

Factors	Responses	Percent
Low income and high expenditure	7	41.17
Non- productive occupation	4	23.52
Large family size with minimum food sufficiency	3	17.64
Unemployment	2	11.76
Small farm size	1	5.88
Total	17	100

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

### Conclusion

Tharus are more illiterate, exploited and poorest segments of the Nepalese population as compared to other castes. They are most backward community to grab the life opportunities. The cause of the backwardness might have been due to various hindering factors. They are mainly depending in agriculture and livestock for livelihood and existence. They have limited access to government and private services. They are considered exploited by so called upper castes. They have rare access to employment, education and health. Economic, cultural and social were the main factors affecting the Tharu education in Padampur. It was also depicted that work load in farming, fishing, early marriage and unawareness also the supporting role to marginalize them from the mainstream of education.

The community level education of Padampur village was very fragile. Higher education obtained by the Tharu family is minimum. In one hand, only 1% of Tharu children had got campus level of bachelor education. Most of them were illiterate and excluded from the light of education. In another hand, poor economic condition, early marriage, parent negative attitude and feeling of alone ness and humiliation due to failure in examination were the major causes of drop out from the school in the early level of school. This created the compulsion of farming, family rearing, break down for getting higher study and so many other circumstances that directly related to hamper the education. Due to absence of any informal literacy classes and slow down the educational system in formal institutions; most of the Tharu families were getting low level of literacy rate. According to the study, only 56.53% in general and 58.47% in particular case of age ranging from 14 to 45 years of old population had total literacy rate. It is relatively lower than the district rate. The district literacy rate of Chitwan is 70.8%. So, the literacy rate of productive segment in this society was low that will be resulting for negative impact in holistic development in Tharu community. The causes of preventing parents to their children to school and overall drop out were early marriage, parent negative attitude, poor economic status of the family, feeling of humiliation due to failure in examination, households work, language difficulty, compulsion of bounded labour, social evil (extravagant, gambling, etc) and copy to others for not going to school. This has also indicated the low living standard and mobility to others in Tharu society.

However, the Tharu of study area have been become little bit conscious as they begun to understand the value of education and school. Now-a-days, it is going change due to their political awareness and enforcement package of education by supporting agencies. But, what so ever mentioned above, some measures should be designed and implemented to encourage the participation of the Tharu children for educational development.

### **Recommendation**

It has been found that lower literacy status among the Tharu community is the result of economic, social and cultural reasons. Early marriage, involvement of their children in agricultural work, social prejudices among gender, lack of awareness and ignorance of parents and poverty are few major causes behind low literacy rate and stunted educational level. The following recommendations have been put forward on the basis of this study:

- In view of low interest of the Tharu communities in education, the need to adopt measures to motivate them towards education is very important. An awareness campaign in Tharu village should be launched through audio-visual media such as television, video, success story telling and film showing.
- In view of the low participation of Tharu children in secondary and higher education, package program of scholarship, hostel facility, home tuition and seat reservation should be provided to encourage them towards reading and writing.
- In this recent days, unemployment problem inviting and hatching negative attitude and frustration on education among youth, children and even parent also. So, to mitigate this situation, it would be better to create the skill oriented jobs at local, regional and national level and motivate Tharu community towards that direction.
- Most of the cases of drop out from the school were seen as the result of early marriage of girls and boys. To reduce the early marriage, it would be better to conduct the awareness on early pregnancy and its negative impact for maintaining the overall socio-economic status of the family. It also recommended that there should be the orientation about the parent awareness, suitable age of marriage to their children and impact of population growth on family.
- Income generating program such as goat farming, vegetable farming, banana cultivation, fish farming, buffalo/rearing, bamboo crafting, etc would be suitable to boost up the economic condition of the Tharu in sustainable way for motivating them to deploy their children to the school.
- It should be reinforced to the government of Nepal that education for Tharu from primary to secondary level will not be optional with out any pre-condition and circumstances in coordination with local level politician and developmental organization. By doing this, every parents of Tharu community will be sensitized to admit their children in the school compulsorily.
- Along with formal education, non-formal educational system such as adult education, early child hood development center, Parenting Education (PE) program and Participatory Learning and Reflection (PLR) would be the better educational practices to the Tharu community at grass root level to change the innate attitude of parent on their children and strengthen the learning attitude of Tharu.

- Provision of quality education such as experienced and qualified teacher recruitment, good teaching materials availability, maintaining students-teacher ratio and extra-curricular activities to manage the overall situation in the school to address the educational vulnerability of Tharu students.
- It would be better to provide Tharu teachers to reduce the language difficulty during the time of teaching period especially for those students who can not easily understand the formal language in the school.
- Skill and vocational educational system should be managed in formal and non-formal educational institution to generate the employment opportunity in the village.
- As a strategy for effectively encouraging the parent's provision to reward those parents who send all of their children to school also be made.
- Measures to develop local leadership to motivate parents and children towards education need to be done.

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