EXPLORING EXPERIENCE OF RURAL SECONDARY LEVEL STUDENTS ON HOUSEHOLD CHORES AND SCHOOLING

Mahanand Timalsina

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AN ABSTRACT

of the dissertation of *Mahanand Timalsina* for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Education (Development Studies) presented on *4 January 2026* entitled *Exploring Experience of Rural Secondary Level Students on Household Chores and Schooling.*

APPROVED BY

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Asst. Prof. Suresh Gautam, PhD

Dissertation Supervisor

This study explored how secondary level students experience their participation in household chores and schooling and has examined how students' household responsibilities shaped their daily schooling experiences. This study has addressed the following questions: a) How do voluntary/involuntary household chores that students engage in shape their schooling experience? b) In what ways do they balance (cope) their household duties and schooling? c) How do they learn, and prepare for future aspirations from the household chores and schooling? The study employed Qualitative Interpretive Inquiry as part of a methodological approach that sought to understand the experiences, meanings, and social contexts of children who engage in domestic chores alongside schooling, with an emphasis on subjective meaning-making through deep engagement with children from their point of view. This was achieved by integrating qualitative methods and selecting 11 participants who were purposefully chosen.

Secondary level students' household chore responsibilities are varied and follow a demanding weekly cycle. Although students consider the light to moderate household chores normal and useful and continuation of intergenerational cultural and social norms, socialization of the children irrespective of gender and preparing for future roles as mother and wives for girls, excessive and intensive engagement in household work affects their schooling and study. On the one hand, engagement in household chores help learning skills like cooking, washing, taking care of siblings,

and farm-based work equips them with skills for potential careers in hospitality or agriculture and management, while long hours of household chores, lifting heavy weights, and repetitive motions have a negative impact on a child's immature body, causing physical exhaustion and stress, which in turn affects the ability to learn and concentrate on education. While spending prolonged hours on household chores as well as staying late at night for study, seasonal agricultural responsibilities due to dearth of agricultural labor force trigger by youth and male outmigration prevent school attendance for days or weeks, limiting study opportunities, causing reduced preparation for exams, creating significant gaps in their education. Seasonal agricultural responsibilities prevent school attendance for days or weeks, creating significant gaps in their education.

To balance or cope up with the household chore responsibilities together with schooling, students and families use a variety of balancing techniques to minimize the tension between household chores and schooling. To minimize the impact of workload in schooling, students adapt, create suitable routines, divide up certain times for household chores and study negotiating with parents especially during academic periods. Similarly, students also negotiate with parents for household chore timetable based on the academic calendar, designate household tasks based on age and capability, and extend their support relieving duties to their children. Children also seek help from friends for getting class notes and explanations and negotiate with teachers to provide extra classes and flexibility with deadlines.

Coping with dual responsibilities acts as a catalytic force for personal growth of students. Navigating the complexities of responsibility, children develop transferable skills, like time management, negotiation, and informed decision-making. Balancing household chores and schooling contributes to character building. This balancing act of dual responsibility nurture hard work, cultivates essential life skills, fosters a mindset of self-reliance and determination in future. Students engage in household chores, schooling, learning, and preparing for their future aspirations. Household chores, such as farming, cooking, or caring for siblings, can shape career interests in various professions in the future. Professionals or seniors in society who have emerged from similar struggles and persevered are motivating factors for students to continue their education despite the difficulties. Experiences of handling complex responsibilities prepare children with adaptive abilities vital to steer hard

times and pursue their long-term aspirations. The challenges and hardships inherent in these duties help children build resilience and emotional strength.

In conclusion, this study highlights the students' experiences with household chores and schooling as evolving issues, based on the perceptions and practices of secondary level students and the coping mechanism of dual responsibilities. Household chores are common phenomenon for students. Children are involved in moderate to intensive household chores together with schooling. Although the moderate chores are useful, the prolonged hours of work affect study and schooling. To cope with the burden of dual responsibilities of household chores and schooling, students adapt to the situation and develop problem-solving traits like patience, discipline, work ethics, emotional strength, hardworking mindset, motivation and determination to do well and resilience. This not only helps them to continue their schooling at present but is also useful for future professions. This study is useful for preserving the positive aspects and mitigating the negative dimensions associated with children's household chores. Intervention programs can preserve the benefits of a household while mitigating the harm it causes to children by encouraging a community that age-appropriately assigns balanced household chores, which are a helpful source of cultural socialization, the development of practical skills, and character building.

…… 4 January 2026

Mahanand Timalsina

Degree Candidate

शोध सार

विकास अध्ययनमा दर्शनशास्त्रको स्नातकोत्तर डिग्रीको लागि महानन्द तिमिल्सिनाको शोध प्रबन्धको शीर्षक "ग्रामीण माध्यमिक तहका विद्यार्थीहरूको घरायसी काम र विद्यालय अनुभवको अन्वेषण" २० पौष २०८२ मा प्रस्तुत गरिएको थियो।

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उप. प्रा. सुरेश गौतम, पीएचडी

शोध निर्देशक

यो अध्ययनले माध्यमिक तहका विद्यार्थीहरूले घरायसी काम र विद्यालयमा आफ्नो सहभागिताबारे कस्तो अनुभव गर्छन् र विद्यार्थीहरूको घरायसी जिम्मेवारीले उनीहरूको दैनिक विद्यालय अनुभवलाई कसरी प्रभाव पार्छ भन्ने विषयको अध्ययन गरेको छ। यस अध्ययनले निम्न तीन प्रश्नहरूलाई सम्बोधन गरेको छ: १) विद्यार्थीहरूले गर्ने घरायसी कामहरूले उनीहरूको विद्यालय अनुभवलाई कसरी प्रभाव पार्छन्? २) उनीहरूले घरायसी कर्तव्य र विद्यालयलाई सन्तुलन (सामना) कसरी गर्छन्? र ३) घरायसी काम र विद्यालयबाट उनीहरूले कसरी सिक्छन् र भविष्यका आकाङ्क्षाका लागि तयारी गर्छन्?

यो अध्ययनले घरायसी कामसँगै विद्यालयमा संलग्न बालबालिकाहरूको अनुभव, अर्थ र सामाजिक सन्दर्भ बुझ्ने प्रयास गरेको छ। यो गुणात्मक अध्ययन व्याख्यात्मक अनुसन्धान विधि प्रयोगमार्फत उद्देश्यपूर्ण रूपमा छनोट गरिएका ११ सहभागीहरूको अनुभवको आधारमा गरिएको शोध हो। माध्यमिक तहका विद्यार्थीहरूले विविध प्रकारका घरायसी कामको जिम्मेवारी बहन गर्ने र कठोर साप्ताहिक चक्र पालना गरिरहेको पाइयो । विद्यार्थीहरूले साधारणदेखि मध्यम घरायसी कामलाई सामान्य र उपयोगी ठान्ने, साथै यसलाई लैङ्गिक तथा अन्तरपीढीय सांस्कृतिक र सामाजिक मान्यताहरूको निरन्तरताका रूपमा बुझ्ने गरेको देखियो। उनीहरूले यसलाई समाजीकरणको एक अङ्गका रूपमा लिने र खासगरी बालिकाहरूका लागि भविष्यमा आमा वा पत्नीका रूपमा खेल्ने भूमिकाको तयारीका रूपमा बुझ्ने गरेको पाइयो। तर अत्यधिक र तीव्र घरायसी कामले उनीहरूको विद्यालय र अध्ययनलाई प्रभावित गर्ने गरेको विद्यार्थीहरूको बुझाइ देखियो।

एकातिर घरायसी कामले खाना पकाउने, धुने, भाइबहिनीको हेरचाह र कृषि–आधारित काम जस्ता सीप सिकाउँने जसले आतिथ्य, कृषि वा व्यवस्थापनजस्ता सम्भावित करियरका लागि उपयोगी सीप प्रदान गर्ने बुझाइ रहेको पाइयो । तर अर्कोतिर, लामो समयसम्म घरायसी काम गर्नु र भारी बोक्ने गतिविधिले अपरिपक्व शरीरमा शारीरिक थकान र तनाव सिर्जना गर्छ, जसले सिकाइ र एकाग्रता क्षमतामा असर गर्ने

बुझाइ रहेको पाइयो। लामो समय घरायसी काम, राति अबेरसम्म पढाइ, गाउँबाट युवा तथा पुरुषहरूको बहिर्गमनका कारण कृषि मजदुर अभावले सिर्जना गरेको मौसमी कृषि जिम्मेवारीका कारण दिन वा हप्तौँ विद्यालय नजाने अवस्था उत्पन्न हुने, अध्ययनका अवसर सीमित हुने, परीक्षा तयारी घट्ने र शिक्षामा ठूलो अन्तर सिर्जना हुने गरेको देखियो। कृषि तथा खेती लगाउने जिम्मेवारीका कारण दिन वा हप्तौँ विद्यालय नजाने र शिक्षामा ठूलो अन्तर सिर्जना हुने बिद्दयार्थीहरुको बुझाइ रहेको पाइयो । घरायसी काम र विद्यालयबीचको जिम्मेवारी सन्तुलन गर्न तथा तनाव न्यूनीकरण गर्न विद्यार्थीहरूले अनुकूलन गर्ने, उपयुक्त दिनचर्या (रुटिन) तयार गर्ने, घरायसी काम र अध्ययनका लागि अभिभावकसँग समन्वय गरी समय विभाजन गर्ने गरेको अनुभव र बुझाइ रहेको पाइयो। त्यस्तै, विद्यार्थीहरूले शैक्षिक क्यालेन्डरका आधारमा, उमेर र क्षमताअनुसार घरायसी कार्य बहन गर्ने तथा अभिभावकहरूलाई कार्यभार घटाउन आग्रह र समन्वय गर्ने गरेको बझाइ व्यक्त गरे। घरयासी कामका कारण विद्यालय छुटाएका बालबालिकाहरूले कक्षा कार्यका लागि साथीहरूबाट सिकाइ माग्ने, सहयोग लिने र शिक्षकहरूसँग अतिरिक्त कक्षा तथा गृहकार्यको समयसीमामा लचकताका लागि समन्वय गर्ने गरेको अनुभव साझा गरे । दोहोरो जिम्मेवारीको सामना गर्नु विद्यार्थीहरूको व्यक्तिगत विकासका लागि उत्प्रेरक बन्ने देखियो। जिम्मेवारीको जटिलता व्यवस्थापन गर्ने क्रममा बालबालिकाहरूले समय व्यवस्थापन, धैर्यता, आत्मिनर्भरता, द्रुत कार्य सम्पादन र निर्णय लिने क्षमता जस्ता गुण तथा सीपहरू विकास हुने बुझाइ रहेको पाइयो ।

घरायसी काम र विद्यालयको सन्तुलनले चरित्र निर्माणमा योगदान पुऱ्याउँछ। यस दोहोरो जिम्मेवारीको सन्तुलनले कडा परिश्रमलाई प्रोत्साहन गर्ने, आवश्यक जीवनोपयोगी सीपहरूको विकास, आत्मनिर्भरता र दृढताको मानसिकता विकास गर्ने विद्यार्थीहरूमा बुझाइ रहेको देखिएको छ। विद्यार्थीहरू घरायसी काम, विद्यालय र सिकाइमार्फत भविष्यका आकाङ्क्षा विकास गर्न तयार गर्ने, खेती–किसानी, खाना पकाउने वा भाइबहिनीको हेरचाहजस्ता घरायसी कामले भविष्यमा विभिन्न पेसा प्राप्तिमा सघाउने वा रुचि अभिवृद्धि गर्न सक्ने बुझाइ रहेको पाइयो। यस्तै संघर्षबाट अघि बढेका समाजका व्यावसायिक वा वरिष्ठ व्यक्तिहरूको प्रेरणाले विद्यार्थीहरूलाई कठिनाइका बाबजुद शिक्षालाई निरन्तरता दिन प्रेरणादायी भूमिका खेल्ने बुझाइ रहेको पाइयो। जटिल जिम्मेवारी सामना गर्ने अनुभवले कठिन समय व्यवस्थापन गर्ने र दीर्घकालीन आकाङ्क्षा पछ्याउने अनुकूलन क्षमता विकास गर्ने बुझाइ रहेको पाइयो। यी जिम्मेवारीहरूमा निहित चुनौती र मिहिनेतले बालबालिकाहरूमा उत्थानशीलता र भावनात्मक शक्ति निर्माण हुने बुझाइ रहेको पाइयो।

निष्कर्षमा, यो अध्ययनले माध्यमिक तहका विद्यार्थीहरूको घरायसी काम र विद्यालय अनुभवलाई उनीहरूको धारणा र अभ्यासमा आधारित विकसित मुद्दाका रूपमा उजागर गरेको छ, जसमा दोहोरो जिम्मेवारीको सामना गर्ने प्रणाली रहेको बुझाइ रहेको पाइयो। घरायसी काम विद्यार्थीहरूका लागि सामान्य घटना हो। बालबालिकाहरू मध्यमदेखि तीव्र घरायसी कामसँगै विद्यालयमा संलग्न हुन्छन्। मध्यम काम उपयोगी भए पनि लामो समयको कामले अध्ययन र विद्यालयलाई प्रभावित गर्छ। घरायसी काम र विद्यालयको द्वैध जिम्मेवारीको बोझ सामना गर्न विद्यार्थीहरूले अवस्था अनुकूलन गर्ने र धैर्यता, अनुशासन, काम नैतिकता, भावनात्मक शक्ति, कडा परिश्रमको मानसिकता, प्रेरणा, दृढता र लचकता जस्ता समस्या

समाधान सम्बन्धी गुणहरू विकास गर्ने बुझाइ देखिएको छ । यसले हाल विद्यालय निरन्तरतामा सहयोग पुऱ्याउने र भविष्यका पेसाका लागि उपयोगी हुने देखिन्छ। यो अध्ययन बालबालिकाका घरायसी कामसँग जोडिएका सकारात्मक पक्षहरू संरक्षण गर्न र नकारात्मक आयामहरू न्यूनीकरण गर्न उपयोगी हुनेछ। हस्तक्षेपकारी कार्यक्रमहरूले उमेरअनुसार सन्तुलित घरायसी काम सुम्पिने अभ्यासलाई समुदायमा प्रोत्साहन गर्न सक्छन्, जसले सांस्कृतिक समाजीकरण, व्यावहारिक सीप विकास र चरित्र निर्माणका लागि उपयोगी स्रोतको रूपमा काम गर्न सक्छ ।

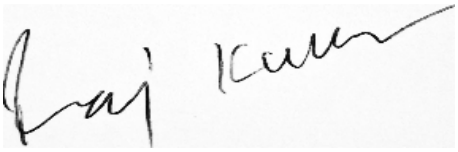
..... २० पौष २०८२

महानन्द तिमिल्सिना

उपाधि उम्मेदवार

This dissertation entitled *Exploring Experience of Rural Secondary Level Students on Household Chores and Schooling* presented by *Mahanand Timalsina* on *4 January 2026.*

APPROVED BY



…… 4 January 2026

Rajkumar Dhungana, PhD

External Examiner

……. 4 January 2026

Asst. Prof. Suresh Gautam, PhD

Dissertation Supervisor,

Head of Department, Development Education

…… 4 January 2026

Prof. Bal Chandra Luitel, PhD

Dean/ Chair of Research Committee

I understand that my dissertation will become a part of the permanent collection of Kathmandu University Library. My signature below authorizes the release of my dissertation to any reader upon request for scholarly purposes.

…… 4 January 2026

Mahanand Timalsina

Degree Candidate

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work, and it has not been submitted for candidature for any other degree at any other university.

…….. 4 January 2026

Degree Candidate

Mahanand Timalsina

DEDICATION

Dedicated to the students who are carrying out dual responsibility of Household Chores and Schooling and Special thanks to my beloved parents, Wife and Children for support and cooperation.

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Mahanand Timalsina
Degree Candidate

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Situating Myself in the Study

I was born and grew up in a remote and rural village of Lalitpur District, Pyutar, where I completed my schooling up to secondary level (class 10). This is a typical rural village of Nepal, with the majority of people still engaged in livestock and agriculture. This rural village, situated in the southern belt of the Kathmandu Valley, is approximately 50 kilometers from the Lalitpur section of the Ring Road. It is the village directly rooted in the production of vegetables, food grains, milk, evaporated milk solids (khuwa or mawa), and other agricultural activities, which are the sole means of people's livelihood. Being a member of a family rooted in agriculture, supporting my parents with day-to-day household chores was a routine I followed during my school days. Additionally, my family was not financially stable. The participation of my siblings and me in household chores indirectly supported the livelihood of our five-member family, as it allowed my parents to work on family farms and beyond.

My major household chores would be milking cows and buffaloes, chopping wood and vegetables, cooking morning meals, cutting and collecting grass and fodder, feeding livestock, and fetching drinking water, among other activities, in the morning, and collecting firewood, grazing goats and cattle in the afternoon after school, and during weekdays. I would do more chores on weekends or holidays. These types of chores included seasonal farm work, including *parma* as one of the household chores responsibilities. *Parma*, a traditional labor exchange system common in many rural and agricultural communities, is a form of non-monetary cooperation, as it addresses both a labor shortage and a need for a large, temporary labor pool for time-sensitive, intensive tasks such as planting, harvesting, or weeding. Apart from *Parma,* my responsibilities used to rest on grazing buffaloes, cows, oxen, and goats, fetching grass, fodder, and firewood from faraway jungle.

My childhood experiences with household chores were arduous, especially when I had to perform farm-based work, in addition to tasks like fetching water, firewood, and grass from the nearby jungle, particularly during holidays. However, except for light household chores, my engagement in these types of household

chores/work was involuntary. These types of work were not done daily; rather, they were typically done on weekends or during the agricultural season. Although my child's mind could neither analyze the pros and cons of such tasks nor categorize them as child labor at that time, these household chores, however, used to prevent my time to carry out home assignments, study, and exam preparation.

My Childhood Experience as Insight for the Study

I continued my schooling while engaging in household chores and completed my school-level study. It was obvious that students desire autonomy in terms of choosing their level of involvement in household chores rather than being forced by their parents. I would also wish to have no or minimal participation in household chores. Instead, I was obliged to participate in the above-mentioned tasks. The dual responsibilities of household chores and schooling often left me exhausted most of the time, especially during peak agriculture seasons. Moreover, I felt that constant engagement in these burdensome household chores was an obstacle to excelling in my academic performance. I believed that had I not been obligated to perform household and farm work, my academic performance would have been substantially better. I also felt then that the demands of household chores left me with insufficient time to complete school assignments or prepare adequately for final exams, which I used to take as a hindrance to securing good marks in the subjects.

I tried to avoid these household chores numerous times. Occasionally, I would simply tell my parents that I didn't want to work on a specific day because of the substantial school assignments I had. I even pretended to be sick at times. But it was not a permanent solution. When I expressed my frustration about the burdensome nature of household work to my parents, they would try to convince me by explaining that my involvement in these tasks was a way to contribute to family life, as well as a means of covering my own school expenses. They would also say that these tasks help equip me with essential life skills that could be valuable for my future.

Nonetheless, my limited understanding did not fully convince me to appreciate my parents' explanation. The realization only came to me a bit later, as the skills I developed through my participation in household chores during my childhood could prove beneficial. When I grew up, I found that these household chores were not entirely bad, but empowering, despite being temporarily burdensome. Reflecting on my childhood now, I realize that my involvement in household chores, including farm-based family work, provided valuable learning opportunities, although it was

sometimes challenging to balance with education and my childhood at the time. It helped me acquire various skills, traits, and habits, as well as develop motivation and hard work. However, balancing education with household responsibilities remained extremely challenging. Notwithstanding these hindrances, I accomplished my schooling with higher-than-average marks, clearly reflecting my aspiration and self-determination. These skills, traits, and habits enabled me to sustain my post-school life when I moved to Kathmandu to pursue higher education.

In the rural context of Nepal, child work is a common practice. Although light household chores involvement of children is beneficial to schooling, the extensive and intensive engagement in the household chores influence their schooling as well as their future life. Therefore, they opt for several strategies or balancing measures between these two responsibilities in everyday life. This study focuses on how children's extensive and intensive involuntary/voluntary household chores and children's balancing measures of challenging dual responsibilities, which can hinder children's educational attainment, makes children resilient for schooling and lifelong learning. Because it teaches essential planning, task delegation, and problem-solving skills. Household chores provide different but equally valuable knowledge, complementing schooling. My argument is that engagement in household chores of children builds a foundation for lifelong hard work. It instills a strong work ethic and independence, preparing them to handle real-life challenges, develop self-reliance, and even shape future career paths. My experience is important in countering the problem of household chores for children, which is often regarded as a hindrance to students' learning achievement. Therefore, their experience of handling this dual role in day-to-day life is worth investigating.

This issue has personally influenced me, and I have a personal interest in the subject because, as a child, I contributed significantly to my family's livelihood through direct engagement in household chores. Because it is necessary to appraise the feelings and understanding about their involvement in household/farm work from their own perspective. As I recollect now, the time I joined the university was marred by Maoist insurgency in Nepal. As villages were under the grip of Maoist rebels, my village was no exception. By the time I completed my Intermediate Level (IA), I found it too risky for youth like me to return to the village to live with my family during the brief break in the academic session before the start of the bachelor's level admission process. At that time, Maoist rebels were forcibly abducting the village

youths to hire and train them as insurgents. Many of my schoolmates were taken by them for so. My family alerted me in time, and I stayed in Kathmandu to avoid that. Then I searched for jobs to earn a livelihood in Kathmandu. Luckily, I found a very challenging marketing job. To accept and continue this challenging job, my household and farm-based work greatly helped. Without those early experiences, I would not have pursued this path, and some fundamental traits, such as self-reliance, independence, and resilience, added significant value to my struggle. This realization, combined with my increased awareness following the completion of my university education, has prompted me to explore these issues further.

Household Chores or Works

This study basically deals with household chores or works of children and in my research context, understanding the meaning of it is crucial. It is often defined as activities performed at the household level and excluded from child labor (Edmunds & Pavcnik, 2005). Child work is a highly debated topic and people often do have misconceptions about child work, and the termed child work is associated with it. Household work of children is activities such as helping parents, caring for siblings, and working for a few hours before or after school or during holidays and they are light work and not to be harmful to them (Mudzongo & Whitsel, 2013). It is a part of the growing-up process for children and a means of acquiring basic survival and practical skills (Mudzongo &Whitsel, 2013) which counters the concept of child labor is economic activities of children, including engagement in all the production activities for the market as well as personal consumption and harmful to their well-being and undermines development, education, and leisure of children (Bhukuth, 2008, p. 387).

Nonetheless, there are several intriguing questions. What are the pros and cons of children's household chore involvement? Are all household works means of acquiring basic life skills for children? Does their household work interfere with their schooling? How do school children balance their dual responsibilities of household chores and schooling? How do they see their current dual responsibility in connection with their future aspirations?

Students' involvement in their household chores has been a common phenomenon in Nepal, particularly in rural areas, and as part of the normal process of socialization (International Labour Organization [ILO] & Central Bureau of Statistics [CBS], 2012). The parents expect that their children are to contribute to the household

chores such as cooking, cleaning, washing, collecting grass, fodder and firewood, fetching water, herding goats and cow planting and harvesting crops etc. (Kelly & Agarwal, 2004). Despite the participation in household chores taken as an important means of learning basic life skills in our society for children, these kinds of work can also be detrimental to negative consequences such as reducing time of study, mental and physical exhaustion even preventing going to school or dropping out (Kyei-Gyamfi, 2025).

Research Gap

Children are routinely engaged in household and agricultural work, often at the expense of their education and well-being when it is excessive time and intensive work. Despite Nepal's progress in education policies, a significant number of children are engaged in household and agricultural work. However, there remains a critical gap in understanding how children adapt or balance their prolonged hour of household chores responsibilities and schooling responsibilities, how these experiences shape individual life and how do they relate it in terms of their future aspiration.

There have been massive number of research studies carried out in the field of Child labor both international and National context. The research field of children's participation in paid work, including domestic help and wage labor outside the home, is significantly rich in Nepal. Likewise, there has been many research works regarding the field of children household work and education in Nepali context. Some of them I reviewed are Rothchild (2006), Dhital et al. (2022), Shrestha and Gurung (2025), Thapa-Parajuli et al. (2025), Schafer et al. (2025) and Ghimire, (2007). Shrestha and Gurung (2025) claim that in their study: "Parental Pressure, Family Support and Household Workload Among High School Students in Rural Parts of Nepal: An Observational Study" that high household workload and low family support may lead to academic stress in students which can hamper academic performances of the students. Likewise, Thapa-Parajuli et al. (2025) claim in their study: "Parental Informal Occupation Does Not Significantly Deter Children's School Performance: A Case Study of Peri-Urban Kathmandu, Nepal" conclude that various factors, like household wealth, past performance, and caregiver support, played bigger roles, indicating a nuanced relationship where informal work isn't a definitive barrier to education of children. On top of that Rai et al. (2023) claimed in their study: "Effect of parental seasonal labor migration on children's care and educational performance in rural Nepal" that Children from migrant households have school absences and poorer

educational performance as they are required to help with household work and lack guided learning at home. Children lose interest in studying, and those who miss upper-class admission because of seasonal migration drop out of school and join the migration. I have taken them with considerable help in qualifying my study.

Although some of them deal with the issues of children's work in relation to their schooling, most of these studies have only focused on household chores and schooling from the perspective of parents, teachers, or policymakers. Literatures on household chores and their implications on their schooling has been quite limited in the Nepali context. Similarly, the available studies on children's household chores and children's balancing strategies have follow the deductive reasoning with the aim of testing the established theories in Nepali. These studies have not adequately explored this topic from the children's point of view and their subjective experiences, feelings, and challenges they face balancing dual responsibilities of household chores and schooling.

Therefore, this study has explored the subjective experience of secondary school children/student's household chores responsibilities and its relation on schooling especially in the context of their excessive and intensive engagement in household chores and how do they balance these dual responsibilities and see their household responsibilities in connection with their future aspirations to establish a general pattern through Interpretive Inquiry. With consideration, this study has been carried out to contribute knowledge in the field of child work and their balancing strategies of dual responsibilities.

In this study, I have used different operational terms in this thesis with specific meanings. They are as follows:

Basic Concepts and Terminologies Used in this Study

Child Household Chores

As the term "Children's Household Chores' itself says, the meaning of domestic work is a range of work carried out within the household. It is useful as part of the children's growth process and help to acquire basic survival and practical skills (Mudzongo &Whitsel, 2013) than children's participation in the economic activity for the market and potentially harmful and negatively associated with growth and schooling (Bhukuth, 2008, p. 387). Depending on the age, gender, ethnic background, and migration status of the workers concerned, as well as the cultural and economic context in which they work, the situation can vary.

Invisible/Hidden form of Child Work

This is the terminology that appears in literature, as children ‘s engagement at the household level and on the family, farm is not even recognized as work. Children’s household chores are linked to social and cultural patterns of society and are normalized socially and culturally in many countries. It is also considered a positive light type of work and part of preparing for adulthood and marriage, especially for girls. It is considered hidden because it remains absent from statistics and goes beyond monitoring or regulation and is invisible to the public.

Children’s Unpaid Work

Children’s domestic work, household chores, is widely termed as unpaid work. It is generally referred to as the activity or service that children provide within their own family or other family members, such as for friends or neighbors. Unpaid housework encompasses tasks such as cooking, cleaning, laundry, and work performed in the courtyard or on family farms.

Involuntary Household Chores

Household chores are considered a normal part of family life if they are undertaken in a rational manner. Involuntary child work refers to work those children engage in without their free will or choice, due to legal coercion, economic necessity, or powerful social norms and expectations. Likewise, children are either forced by their parents, or their situation to work in their family or communities for the economic benefit/livelihood of their own family.

Voluntary Household Chores

Children’s voluntary households refer to unpaid household tasks, encompassing a range of activities such as cooking, cleaning, and vegetable chopping, which are essential to sustaining daily life. Regarding voluntary work, children willingly work alongside adults to support families and communities, without compromising their health or educational activities. Adults do not force them to do work rather; they motivate and engage in such labor as part of their learning opportunities.

Excessive/Extensive and Intensive vs Moderate/Light Household Chores

The term ‘excessive household chores’ refers to the longer duration or frequency of chores involvement which cause stress, fatigue, or interfere with other important aspects of life like education, leisure, or rest. The “Intensive” household chores refer to vigorous activities which demand a much higher level of physical

exertion, require more effort to make and make it difficult to handle. While light/moderate household chores refer to light kinds of works require some effort. Studies have suggested that light and moderate household chores nurture a sense of responsibility and improve executive function (Bowes et al., 2016) and better self-regulation and inhibitory control (White et al., 2019) while the extensive and intensive household chores interfere with health such as causing higher stress levels, physical exhaustion and academic outcomes to their and schooling performance of children (UNICEF, 2016).

The issue of child household chores and experiences of children has been studied in the past, primarily from a quantitative perspective. This study focuses on examining both voluntary and involuntary household work, including family farming. With consideration, this study has focused on concept of both Voluntary and Involuntary Domestic Work.

Statement of Problem

Participation in household chores by children in developing countries (Camilletti et al., 2025) is prevalent and it is more common in rural areas compared to urban children from a very young age (Kelly & Agarwal, 2004). They participate in a wide range of household chores such as fetching water, collecting grass, fodder, firewood, cooking, cleaning, caring for siblings, and assisting in agricultural tasks like planting, harvesting, and herding livestock and these daily household chores, are seen as an integral part of family livelihood and survival in resource-constrained environments (Kelly & Agarwal, 2004). Existing literature on child work often criticizes children's involvement in household chores as an exploitative practice or terms it as a cultural practice that builds children's character (Bray, 2003; Kyei-Gyamfi, 2025). Several studies have shown an opposite relationship between prolonged hour of engagement in household chores and academic outcomes, including school attendance, performance, and dropout rates (Amali, 2018). Rather, these responsibilities are part of the everyday life of rural students, which shapes their daily schooling experiences, resulting in fatigue, reduced study hours, and even school absenteeism (Bray, 2003; Kyei-Gyamfi, 2025).Therefore, although children's engagement in household chores is important for the functioning of the household, it contradicts the time available for study as well as co-curricular activities that nurture all-around development of children if it is participation for longer period and intensive works. Due to cultural norms, girls are unjustifiably influenced by domestic duties,

which further contribute to the educational disparities (Kyei-Gyamfi & Kyei-Arthur, 2024; Kyei-Gyamfi, 2025; Zhang et al., 2007). However, not all household chores are a burden, as it depends on the types of tasks assigned to children (Kyei-Gyamfi, 2025). Hossain et al. (2023) conducted a study involvement of children in household chores in Bangladesh by examining the prevalence, duration, and controlling determinants and they came up with a finding that their involvement in household chores has both positive and negative aspects. On one hand, it contributes to their physical activity and fosters a sense of responsibility towards their families and society while on the other hand it has an adverse effect on their school attendance.

Ambetsa's (2016) carried out a study in early childhood emphasizes the interplay between the home and the school in enhancing quality holistic experiences in children in the early years. This descriptive study was to find out whether school children in urban households are being involved in housework and how this relates to their academic performance. Findings showed that most children in urban areas did not participate in housework, few who did had positive views, but opportunities were limited. School work and house help were a major competing force to children's participation in housework. This study recommended that parents, teachers and policy makers should be enlightened on the role of housework in developing academic competence in children.

Azeem & Noor (2025) conducted as study: Influence of household chores on grades of undergraduates. In this study, it was found that most of the undergraduates perform household chores regularly, which reduces their study hours. Students who perform household chores are likelier to get poor academic grades. Students with less contribution to household chores showed better academic outcomes. It is recommended that household chores should be equally divided between family members.

Rai et al. (2023) conducted a study on effect of parental seasonal labor migration on children's care and educational performance in rural Nepal. This study focuses on the effect of parental migration on the care and educational performance of left-behind children of migrant families. It was found that there were school absences and poorer educational performance due to their household work and lack of guided learning at home. Consequently, children lose interest in studying, face risk of dropping out of school. Children are also found to have engaged in seasonal work during school breaks so that they can pay costs of schooling.

In rural agricultural economies, household work isn't just a chore, it is also an indirect tool to combine economic necessity for survival. Due to the pressure of seasonal farming, poverty, and the absence of parents at home forces children into intensive household responsibility (Rai et al., 2023). While moderate chores are a normal part of life, extreme workloads create relentless tension between the duty to the family and the duty to school (Shrestha & Gurung, 2025). This is caused by reducing study time, slowing down academic progress and creating physical and mental exhaustion. As part of coping mechanism, children develop a balancing strategy to navigate the dual responsibilities. By solving these day-to-day problems at a young age, children develop soft skills that school cannot teach (Liborio & Ungar, 2010).

In addition to the immediate effect on academic performance, the day-to-day demands of household chores shape a child's educational aspirations, motivation to pursue further education, resilient and hardworking. Nonetheless, many children develop strategies to balance work and education. However, this balancing act (coping effort) does not come without paying a heavy price of exhaustive and long hours of chores (Kyei-Gyamfi, 2025). Understanding the connection between household chores, schooling, and children's future aspirations is crucial for introducing effective interventions and policies.

This study has addressed three problems concerning rural children's simultaneous engagement in household chores and schooling. As rural Nepali children are generally assigned involuntary household and farm-based chores, their persistent engagement in these demanding chores and the way they adversely shape their academic life has been found less adequately explored. This is a visible gap in understanding how children experience the excessive and intensive work influences in schooling, such as time for study, completion of homework, classroom attention, and overall academic performance, among others. Children who need to balance their household responsibilities with the demands of schooling often face practical and emotional dilemmas. Likewise, it is equally unclear whether the dual responsibilities of household work and schooling complement them in acquiring life skills, knowledge, and motivation to effectively learn and prepare for their future aspirations.

The existing body of research in this issue are limited in Nepali context and has not adequately captured the subjective perceptions and experiences of schooling

and household work regarding their dual role as students and domestic workers. For this, in-depth, qualitative exploration is needed to understand how children experience and perceive their engagement in involuntary domestic work, as well as how they negotiate their time and efforts to manage these conflicting responsibilities.

Purpose of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the daily household chores of children and their educational experiences.

Research Questions

I begin my study with the main research questions: how do school-going children perceive their participation in household/family farm-based work? Apart from this, in this study, I give emphasis to the following specific questions:

- How do students' engagement in voluntary/involuntary household chores shape their schooling experience?
- In what ways do students balance or cope with their household duties and schooling?
- How do students engage in household chores to learn and prepare for future aspirations?

Rationale of the Study

Students' involvement in household chores among children has been a common phenomenon in Nepal, particularly in rural areas, and is part of the normal process of socialization (ILO & CBS, 2012). The parents expect their children to contribute to household chores, such as cooking, cleaning, washing, collecting grass, fodder, and firewood, fetching water, herding goats and cows, planting and harvesting crops, etc. (Kelly & Agarwal, 2004). Despite the participation in household chores being taken as an important means of learning basic life skills in our society for children, these kinds of work can also have negative consequences, such as reducing time for study, mental and physical exhaustion, and even preventing going to school or dropping out (Kyei-Gyamfi, 2025). However, a critical gap remains in understanding how these experiences shape individual lives, both positively and negatively.

Existing studies have focused more on either the exploitative nature of child work or its economic necessity, neglecting the subjective experiences of those who navigate these dual pressures. This study aims to bridge this gap through a reflective

and analytically rigorous examination of how school students' involvement in household chores affects their educational performance in school.

Largely, educational research focuses on classroom settings or socioeconomic status as the fundamental drivers of educational achievement. The issue of how children navigate the psychological and physical tension of dual responsibilities, and its effects has been underexplored in the Nepali context. However, this study has filled the gap in understanding how work, a cultural and economic reality in rural settings, influences children's schooling, future aspirations, and career choices. Generally, involuntary household chores are viewed strictly as a barrier to education. This study is needed to examine whether these chores are entirely limiting or if they serve as a space where children develop resilience and future aspirations. The issue of children's participation in household work is a pressing issue, particularly in the context of a rural agricultural economy. Being a researcher who grew up in the rural area of Nepal, I chose this issue as part of my M.Phil.'s research. This study is also situated on my own journey of being part of involuntary labor during schooling.

Delimitation

The issue of balancing household chores and schooling among secondary level students is a complex phenomenon. As the largest number of working children falls between the ages of five and 17, the study, however, focuses on working children aged 12-17 years. Since this study is limited to examining children's perception of their engagement in household work and family farming, it will not include the children's work outside of their own family. Likewise, this study will also be limited to those children who combine household work with attending school.

Organization of Chapters

I have organized this study into eight chapters. The first chapter of this provides the Introduction, research issue, and overview of the study, while the second chapter deals with the Review of Literature. In this chapter, I present a brief review of the research problem: children's household chores and their relationship with schooling. The chapter to which this refers describes the methodological approaches used in the study I conducted, including an explanation of how I approached the study. Tools and methods used, field settings, and the number of respondents interacted with collecting data, among others. Chapters four, five, and six dealt with the stories and experiences during the fieldwork. In chapter seven, I presented the findings and analyzed them in the context of my fieldwork experiences, drawing on

broader contexts, relevant theories, and literature. Conclusions, implications, and reflections have been outlined in chapter eight.

In this chapter, I begin with my childhood experiences in a household. My childhood was marked by struggles, as I had to balance household work with my schooling. I have briefly highlighted how my past experiences in household work as a school-going child provide a major insight into choosing this as my topic for study. Based on my past background and statement of the problem, I developed questions for the study.

Essence of Chapter

My exposure to household chores during my childhood in the rural village has provided me with a unique insight into the problems of everyday life of schooling going children who actively engage in household chores at home. Although moderate level of household chores is beneficial to children, the prolonged hour of engagement is stress full and affects their schooling.

However, students/children design strategies and coping mechanisms to counter these problems. Therefore, issue of household chores and balancing practice in rural villages is very important issue to be explored. However, this knowledge system has remained underexplored. In this context, the issue of child work and their relation to schooling, influence excessive work and balancing mechanism is new knowledge that is imperative.

CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter examines literature reviews on various aspects of schooling-going children's participation in household chores and family-based farm activities. This chapter provides an overview of the relevant literature on children's experiences, their participation in household chores, and their schooling. While doing so, I reviewed the conceptual, empirical, and policy perspectives, as well as the theoretical perspectives. Firstly, I have discussed the concept of childhood, followed by the distinction between child labor and child work. Afterwards, I have included policy perspectives on child labor. Following this, I have presented some empirical reviews on child work. Then, I have discussed the child labor situation in Nepal from the perspective of theoretical frameworks at the household level, and finally, I have also developed the conceptual framework of my study based on the given literature reviews.

Socially/Culturally Constructed Concept of Childhood

As I reviewed the literature related to child work or child chores, I came to know that there are various perspectives associated with the concept of child/childhood. Prout and James (1997) and Wells (2009), argue childhood as a socially and culturally constructed concept, arguing that it is dependent on the society and culture of a specific time or place. Fulfilling certain social and cultural obligations is essential for conceptualizing children (Nanjunda, 2014). Childhood cannot be separated from social variables such as class, gender, or ethnicity (Ilias & Akter, 2017; Prout & James, 1997). The concept of childhood is often termed as a journey towards adulthood (Ilias & Akter, 2017). Nanjunda (2014) stated that children are individuals whose overall development is ongoing. Mukharjee and Das (2008) referred to it as a phase of human life dedicated to obtaining learning and training (p. 305). Characteristics like location, cultural attitudes, and time variables distinguish an adult from a young child (Hoque, 2021). Age is an important basis for distinguishing a child from an adult, though there are varying interpretations on the exact ending of childhood (Gurung, 2001; Ilias & Akter, 2017). From a normative perspective, childhood is defined not only in terms of chronological age but also in social factors.

Modern societies view children as developing individuals whose incomplete cognitive, moral, and affective capacities to behave competently in their own interests justify adults' paternalistic behavior in protecting, nurturing, and educating them through socialization (Hoque, 2021). From legal perspective, *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989*) defines a child as a person under 18 years of age. In contrast, the *Minimum Age Convention (1973*) defines a child as a person under the age of 15 years or, in special circumstances, 14 years. The *Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 2000* defines a child as a person up to 16 years of age, while the Children Act 2018 defined the age of children as less than 18 years of age. If we examine this from a historical perspective, we can see that children were often viewed as miniature adults and frequently worked alongside adults from a young age in medieval Europe. During the Industrial Revolution, children were found to be working in factories, which led to reforms that limited child labor and made schooling mandatory (Ilias & Akter, 2017).

If we view childhood from a modern perspective, it is termed a period of life in which children are given the freedom to play, learn, and receive protection from laws to ensure they receive adequate care. In Western countries, children focus on education and play, while in developing countries, children often bear household responsibilities due to economic needs in most developing countries. In much literature, social and cultural norms are also determining factors for what children act and behave. It is because parents and communities teach them values, beliefs, and behaviors. However, their socialization depends on learning language, cultures, skills, feelings, and other aspects. Social factors, such as family income, gender, ethnic background, and religion, also impact childhood (Ilias & Akter, 2017). Parents' economic status is also considered one of the key factors in determining children's work culture. Studies have found that, compared to wealthier families, children from poorer families have fewer opportunities (Miller et al., 2021; Yıldırım et al., 2015).

Study of Children's Household Chores Practice

Of the child workforce worldwide, approximately 22% in Asia, 32% in Africa, and 17% in Latin America are engaged in work (Meena, 2013). Additionally, 1% of children in the US, Canada, Europe, and other regions are also involved in work while children often engage in household activities at a very young age in Nepal (CBS, 2011). Children's participation in household work has become a major concern for Nepal. As I reviewed from the National Labor Force Survey (NLFS) 1998/99, 42%

(1.9 million) of children aged 6-14 years were engaged in work, which is the highest rate in the South Asia region (UCW, 2003). There were about 7.77 million children in Nepal (around 41% of rural children) aged 5-17 years who were engaged in work (CBS, 2011). Likewise, according to the Nepal Labor Force Survey 2017/18, there were the approximately 7 million children aged between 5 and 17 years, approximately 2.1 million were involved in at least one activity related to producing goods for own final use (CBS, 2019). In this, 24.8 percent of children were found to have involved in production of subsistence foodstuffs, whereas fewer than one percent were involved in manufacturing household goods, in construction or major repairs to their own dwelling. Likewise, the report also acknowledges that gender disparities manifested themselves at an early age in that similar patterns are observed among adults and among children. Involvement in these activities was greater among girls than among boys (CBS, 2019). Children are being engaged in household chores because they are taken as important economic resources in Nepal (Khadka, 2005; Gurung, 2001). In surveys conducted in India, Nepal, South Africa, and Vietnam, UNICEF found that 2% of boys and 5% of girls are responsible for household work (Edmunds & Pavcnik, 2005). Children are found to have been engaged in agriculture throughout the world, and it is commonly found in rural areas (Udry, 2003, p. 4).

A study conducted in Nepal reveals that 92% of working children in Nepal are engaged in household agricultural work (Edmunds, 2003, p. 14). It is because the family's livelihood depends on the children working here. Children generally carry out various tasks in households, including taking care of siblings, herding cattle/goats, collecting grass/fodders and firewood from the forest, ferrying household goods to market for selling, working in family farms, planting and harvesting crops, among others, either on a full-time basis or combined with school. While doing this, boys generally perform manual types of work, and girls indulge in household chores.

In the Nepali context, various studies have been done regarding children's household work. Baker and Hinton (2001) conducted research: *Approaches to Children's Work and Rights in Nepal* to compare the impact of current approaches to child work on the livelihoods of working children. It found these two factors were strongly associated. Ghimire (2007) conducted research: *Comparative Study Household Chores among Khas, Janjati/Aadhibasi and Dalit in Morang*, and the findings of study revealed the involvement period and types of household chores by the social, economic and demographic characteristics. Likewise, the study: *Gendered*

homes and classrooms: Schooling in rural Nepal done by Rothchild (2006) by examining the complexities of gender in a rural village of Nepal by interviewing community members, parents, teachers, and students and through observations in school and home settings. It revealed that the educational experiences of girls and boys as they were affected and influenced by attitudes about gender.

Dhital et al. (2022) conducted a study examining the effect of household water accessibility on children's educational attainment in villages situated in the remote hilly and mountainous areas of Nepal. Educational attainment was measured based on school attendance, grade repetition, and completion of primary and lower-secondary schooling. The results showed that a one-hour increase in the time spent on a water-fetching trip will decrease the probability of girls completing primary school by about 17 percent.

In his context, an observational study on parental pressure, family support and household workload among high school students in Nepal, Shrestha and Gurung (2025) assessed the level of parental pressure, family support and household workload in high school students in rural part of Nepal. It found that high household workload and low family support may lead to academic stress in students which can hamper academic performances of the students. Moreover, Thapa-Parajuli et al. (2025) conducted a study how parents' informal work relates to their children's academic performance. The study revealed that household wealth, past performance, school type, and the level of supporter education in the family played significant roles in shaping parental perceptions of the child's school performance. At the same time, the nature of the parent's job did not significantly determine the child's school performance. Likewise, a study "Family strategy: Labor migration, multigenerational households, and children's schooling in Nepal" conducted by Schafer et al. (2025) found that the temporary migration to international destinations has many implications for the family members left behind.

Likewise, research conducted at international level has revealed that children work primarily on family farms in rural areas (Bhalotra, 2003, p. 6; Menon et al., 2005, p. 3; UCW, 2003). While reviewing the research studies, I found that in the literature, 44% of rural children and 19% of urban children were engaged in household activities, respectively, in terms of household chores (UCW, 2003). Hossain et al. (2023) conducted a study involvement of children in household chores in Bangladesh by examining the prevalence, duration, and controlling determinants

and it came up with a finding that their involvement in household chores, a form of hidden child work, has both positive and negative aspects.

The review of the child labor literature reveals that various factors influence children to work. Child work at home in society is associated with various socio-economic factors of the family. Some studies have claimed that economic vulnerability drives children to work (Bhalotra, 2003, p. 3; ILO, 2013). They also claimed that household liabilities such as poverty, risk, and shocks are directly correlated with child labor (ILO, 2013, p. XIV). One of the common causes of child labor is poverty, and it has been found that poor families often engage their children to work to support their livelihoods (Rana & Das, 2014; Udry, 2003, p. 8). Some studies have revealed that children of the rich typically do not work because their families can afford the costs of education and its associated expenses, such as school uniforms, stationery, and other necessities (Huisman & Smits, 2009). Due to limited access to credit, poor families often prioritize their children's work over their education (ILO, 2013). Many studies have highlighted demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, and birth order, as determining factors for children's participation in household work (Webbink et al., 2012). In doing so, older children engage more in household chores than younger ones (Bhalotra, 2003, p. 14; Mudzongo & Whitsel, 2013). Gender identity and household work play dominant roles in society. Women do have vital roles in the family and are often preferred for their domestic tasks.

Many studies have highlighted this fact, as gender roles are also a determinant of children's participation in household chores (Edmonds, 2003; Webbink et al., 2010). Apart from that, household attributes such as family size and composition, as well as parents' education, can affect children's participation in work. Children are likely to work more in larger families because such families need more resources for their livelihood (Bhalotra, 2003; Webbink et al., 2012). Many studies have also highlighted that the level of physical development of the areas where children live, such as the presence of schools, roads, marketplaces, and availability of electricity in the locality, are determining factors for children to work. Studies have also found that more children in rural areas participate in household work than those in urban areas (Webbink et al., 2012). In some societies, children are often required to engage in involuntary work at a very young age, and this is considered normal. It is because parents believe that this helps children learn skills that are beneficial for them in the future, and studies have found that children's engagement with work and the socio-

cultural status of society are correlated (Abebe, 2009). Children are voiceless people who abide by what their parents ask them to do. Their poor capability to act or lack of agency also puts them in charge of household chores. Since their ability to make their own choices is limited, parents make decisions for their child and exercise authority over them (Nanjunda, 2009). However, some studies claim that children engage in work even if they are not forced to do so (Rana & Das, 2014). They participate in involuntary household work because it is considered a traditional practice for children, and it serves as a platform for acquiring life skills that prepare them for adulthood.

Household Chore: Barrier vs Useful

Children's participation in household chores is a multifaceted and highly contentious topic, and there has been a wide debate over its developmental benefits and potential burdens (Kyei-Gyamfi, 2025). Some argue that chores are an essential component of child development, nurturing responsibility, competence, and family contribution, while others view chores as a likely burden, in case they are excessive and overloaded (Bray, 2003; Kyei-Gyamfi, 2025). It is a complex question, as it depends upon factors such as the nature of the tasks, age of the child, cultural context, and socioeconomic conditions (Ilias & Akter, 2017).

While going through the literature, the dichotomy household chores of children are clearly visible. On the one hand, it supports children’s well-being; on the other hand, it hinders children's socialization and education (Kyei-Gyamfi, 2025). While contributing to the household chores by children, it makes an impact on the family's livelihood, nurturing the capability. Furthermore, performing household chores and learning to manage tasks and routines also enhances planning, organization, and problem-solving skills in children (Tepper et al., 2022). These skills are vital for academic accomplishment and independence later in life.

A longitudinal study conducted by White et al. (2019) found that improved math scores among children who engaged in household chores suggested that household tasks enhance cognitive and behavioral skills. It indicates that appropriately assigned household chores are not a burden but rather work as a developmental asset (Loderup et al., 2021). Contrary to this, a study by Marsh et al. (2020) highlights that household chores can exacerbate negative outcomes, making one feel burdened. This study found consistent correlations between household chaos and adverse outcomes across cognitive, socio-emotional, and health domains.

In developing countries, children often engage in household chores due to economic necessity, which results in reduced schooling opportunities and imposes a physical or emotional burden (Lin & Adsera, 2012). In stark contrast, children's household chores are taken as character-building in developed Western countries. A study conducted by Blair (1992) found that, in terms of socializing and learning life skills, children contribute approximately 7 hours of housework per week. Therefore, not all household chores may be a burden for children, but age-appropriate tasks can contribute to self-competence, accelerate educational performance, and develop life skills (Tepper et al., 2022), although excessive chores may pose challenges.

From sociological perspectives, children's household chores play a vital role in socialization and the diffusion of cultural values (Wang et al., 2022). Likewise, household chores also play a role in shaping children's understanding of their gender roles, work responsibilities, and social expectations within their family and community (Kyei-Gyamfi, 2025). In many cultures, children's engagement in household chores is rooted in their growth and development and is seen as a step towards adult roles. Studies indicate that regularly performing household chores is associated with improved academic performance, increased self-esteem, and enhanced resilience (Loderup et al., 2021).

Balancing Children's Household Chores and Schooling

Participation in household chores is an integral part of life for children in many developing countries (Camilletti et al., 2025; Lin & Adserà, 2013). Although the nature of the chores differs, children, especially in low-income families, predominate in rural parts of the country due to a labor-intensive, agro-based economy. Due to the significant engagement of children in household chores, it is challenging for them to continue their schooling. Children try to balance it so that both can coexist. However, it is not easy due to the socio-economic perspective of children, especially from vulnerable families (Mishra et al., 2023). While children opt for numerous strategies and adjustments to adjust to their differing double duties. One of the strategies to counter the competing demands is time management skills. To do that, children develop self-regulation plans, self-competence, and self-efficacy to achieve academic, social, and career success and allocate specific periods for chores and schoolwork (White et al., 2019). This includes creating schedules and managing tasks in line with academic deadlines, as well as accomplishing household duties.

According to Bandura (1997), self-regulation is encouraged through task completion, such as chores, enabling children to balance responsibilities by maintaining discipline in both academic and household domains. Children also adopt measures like mindfulness or dividing tasks into small, manageable parts to cope with the stress of household and schoolwork, so that they can maintain academic focus (Compas et al., 2001). Another balancing measure is negotiating household chore responsibilities with parents or siblings by creating a schedule that accommodates lighter or flexible duties during exam periods, fair distribution of household chores as per age and capacity, such as more household chores for older siblings while less work for younger ones (Grusec et al., 1996).

Children also develop strategies, such as multitasking, to balance household chores with schooling and prioritize schoolwork by negotiating reduced chore loads or seeking family support to focus on their studies. To keep up with school demands, children also seek help from seniors in the community to compensate for the time spent on household chores. Another measure children use to seek academic support from peers to stay on track with schoolwork. Ray (2000) implies that by offering academic assistance, colleagues help children balance household chores and education. Children who miss frequent school due to household responsibilities often seek help from peers for homework and class notes from teachers to compensate for the missed classes.

Education and Future Aspirations and Students' Household Chores

Aspiration is correlated with various dimensions, such as education and tasks or jobs that one is engaged in. Every person sets a goal in their life to lay the path for their future aims. Setting goals is important because it motivates them to move forward (Bashir & Peerzada, 2023). Aspiration is a motivating factor that encourages people to strive harder and achieve more. Therefore, aspirations refer to a person's desire to achieve a specific objective, such as a job or level of education (Poudel, 2018). As I reviewed the aspiration literature, it states that aspiration is composed of three dimensions: human capital investment, education, and labor market success (Agasisti & Maragkou, 2023, p. 471), and is shaped by a combination of individual, family, social, and cultural factors. It starts to shape children’s early life, but experience and environment force modifications (Poudel, 2018).

In relation to students’ responsibilities in their household, psychological, social, cultural, economic, and environmental dimensions affect their educational

aspirations. Social cognitive theory suggests that engaging in household chores enhances children's sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). It emphasizes that household chores build confidence and support in goal setting. Bandura (1997) argues that the skills learned from household chores and motivation for future success are subsidiary. On one hand, basic household chores shape behavioral skills critical for schooling and future aspirations, giving a sense of belonging and accomplishment (White et al., 2019). On the other hand, excessive and burdensome engagement in household chores is detrimental to children's education and negatively impacts their future aspirations. It is because a continuing engagement in mandatory household chores minimizes the time available for studying, homework, and leisure, negatively influencing school performance (Webbink et al., 2012). Likewise, students who frequently carry out household chores develop a stronger sense of duty, which positively influences their aspirations for careers. Weiss and Schwarz (1996) suggest that steady participation in choreography fosters self-discipline, which is correlated with higher academic and professional aspirations. In contrast, gendered chore assignments strengthen traditional roles and limit the future aspirations of girls. Children contributing excessive chore burdens can reduce time for education or extracurricular activities, compromise academic and professional aspirations, especially for girls in developing countries. Household chores can encourage students to aspire to financially independent roles, while household chores that develop practical skills enhance children's aspirations for complex roles (Goodnow, 1988). Some literature also argues that disciplined behaviors from household chores relate to academic success, fostering higher aspirations. However, it has been argued that the developmental influence of household chores varies by age, influencing aspirations differently across stages (Larson & Verma,1999).

Theoretical Framework of the Study

Theories and concepts are crucial in research work; they serve as a lens for inquiry (Creswell, 2009), helping researchers position themselves within research studies and make sense of the world being studied. The perspectives and concepts presented here provide further explanations for the topic I studied.

The Interplay of Micro, Meso, Exo, and Macrosystem

Russian American psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner pioneered the Ecological Model of Human Development in the 1970s. It is also known as the ecological systems theory. This ecological model explains how human development is

influenced by the various environments in which we live. It is a framework that views child development as a complex process influenced by five nested environmental systems, ranging from microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, macrosystems, and chronosystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1994), which influence an individual's development through the person’s interaction with the surrounding environment. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model of Human Development comprises four levels: microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, and macrosystems.

In the Ecological Model, the microsystems refer to immediate environments like family, school, friends, siblings, and neighborhood, while the mesosystem refers to connections between microsystems, such as interaction between kids, teachers, and parents, interaction between friends and siblings, interaction between neighborhood and family, and interaction between daycare and family. Likewise, the exo-system refers to social settings that don't involve the individual directly, like extended family members, mass media, social services, local government, parents' workplace, and family friends, while the macrosystem is cultural context like values, laws and legal systems, attitudes, customs, political systems and policies, nationality, and ideologies. The chronosystems refer to the dimensions of time and historical events, including environmental changes, parents’ employment status, societal economic shifts, and alterations in family structure (Yang & Oh, 2024). This theory helps us understand the upbringing of children, which is shaped by the interaction of various environmental systems ranging from immediate surroundings to broader societal structures. Children develop their skills through interaction with their surrounding social environments, which occurs through engagement in various activities (Kyei-Gyamfi, 2025).

Ecological Model of Resilience

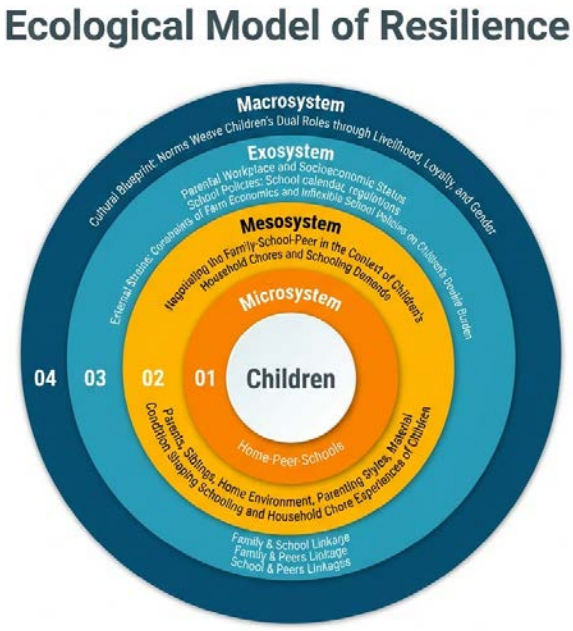
Moderate level of involvement of children/ students in daily household chores is considered as part of culture and socialization process and it is not barrier but complementary to schooling as it teaches them basic and essential livelihood skills (White et al, 2019). However, their intensive and extensive engagement in household chores including farm-based work is detrimental to schooling and physical and mental problems (Kyei-Gyamfi, 2025). To cope with this problem, students nurture certain qualities like patience, adaptability, endurance, motivation of doing well, self-reliance and independence. This represents as comprehensive concept of resilience which describes not just the ability to endure hardship, but the capacity to adapt and thrive under pressure. Resilience theory refers to the capacity to adapt positively to

adversity, trauma and stress, and is called a process of adaptation relating to the interaction between individual traits like self-efficacy and optimism and broader environmental systems such as support networks and resources (Masten, 2014). Resilience is the mental and emotional strengths that allow a person to keep going when they are exhausted or in problems. Resilience focuses on how individuals navigate challenges and bounce back from obstacles. This perspective underlines problem-solving skills which allow individuals to find meaning in hardship and experience post-traumatic growth (Masten, 2014) A resilient child/student maintains or controls their own lives and stay level-headed despite a heavy workload. It implies an internal strength where they rely on their own grit to succeed.

This study has been used theoretical lens Ecological Model of Resilience, focusing on the four levels of systems, as adapted from the Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Model of Child Development highlighting Micro, Meso, Exso and Macro System as major components. In this study, family and school are the major microsystems where children encounter them in their day-to-day life and develop their social, cognitive, and emotional skills through interactions and experiences (Rus et al., 2010; Yang & Oh, 2024; p. 250). Children who work daily, often for 5-6 hours, on basic household chores before and after school, or in long hours of work, or intensive tasks like lifting heavy loads of grass, fodder, firewood, or harvested grains, and other family responsibilities, shape their experiences. Meso-systems are interactions between microsystems (including connections between the home and school environments) and play a vital role in understanding the balance itself for children (Yang & Oh, 2024).

Figure 1

Ecological Model of Resilience



(Bronfenbrenner's, 1979)

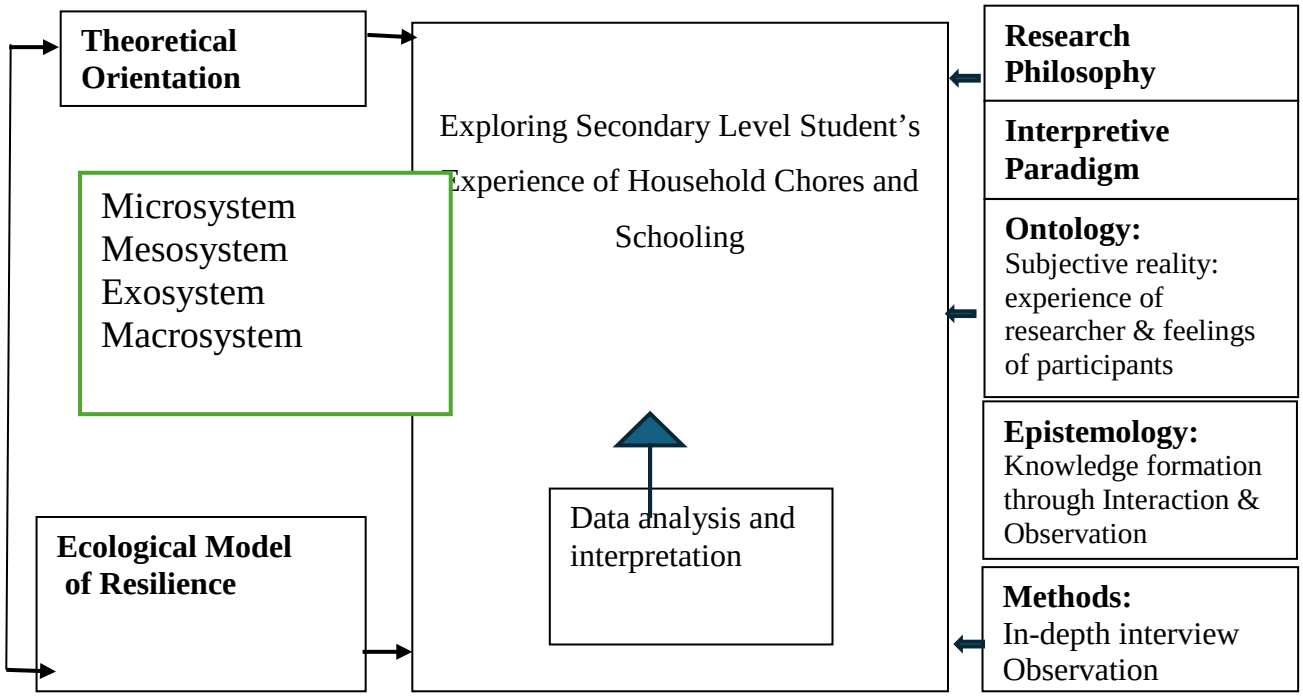
Exo-system refers to indirect influences on children from the broader systems and institutions surrounding parental employment conditions, such as long hours and low wages necessitating children's work (Yang & Oh, 2024). If a child's parents are constantly stressed due to work (an exosystemic factor), it influences the support they provide at home, affecting the child's ability to focus on school and impacting their aspirations. The macrosystem refers to broad cultural & societal influences that encompass the overarching cultural values, laws, and economic systems (Yang & Oh, 2024). Engaging children in household chores as part of intergenerational practice and socializing process and cultural attitudes towards gender roles, societal values regarding education versus early employment, and national economic policies shape children's experiences. On one hand, childhood is a period for learning in cultures where academic achievement is highly valued, thus prioritizing schooling, which aspires to higher professional careers. On the other hand, children’s aspiration is compromised in societies where early contribution to family income is common (Psacharopoulos, 1997). To counter this problem, children develop agencies, counter balancing measures, motivation, and adaptability making them resilient.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

I extensively reviewed the literature on children's involuntary household work/labor, qualitative research methodologies, and the Ecological Model of Human-Child Development. Based on my literature review, I have presented my conceptual framework in diagrammatic form below.

Figure 2

Conceptual Framework of the Study



This study is structured in a conceptual framework constructed to comprehensively explore the experiences of rural children's participation in involuntary household chores and their schooling in Nepal. At its foundation lies the Ecological Model of Resilience, adopted from Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model of Human/Child Development. It posits that a working child's growth is shaped by a series of coupled environmental systems, including micro, meso, exo, and macro systems. This theoretical orientation constructs the inquiry into children's immediate environments like home and school (Microsystem), interconnections between home and school (Mesosystem), external settings like parental workplaces that indirectly affect the child (Exosystem), and the overarching cultural values, societal norms, and economic conditions in rural Nepal (Macrosystem).

Through the theoretical lens of this ecological resilience model, the struggle to balance survival and education cultivates a specific character to students. Through the

hardship of rural life, students develop independence and adaptability, hard work mindset, staying calm despite overwhelming responsibilities and optimism and resilience, and an ability to see a future beyond the existing difficulties. This study utilized an Interpretive Inquiry Research Design where ontology is the experiences and feelings of the teenage children, which are the central focus of reality, while the epistemology is concerned with knowledge that is formed through interaction and observation of the participants' own meanings.

In terms of methodology, a rich and nuanced understanding of the children's daily lives is achieved through in-depth interviews and observation. It concludes with data analysis and interpretation, where themes are identified and explored to understand how children’s day-to-day experiences of involuntary household chores and schooling shape their ability to balance chores and schooling, as well as their future aspirations.

The study examines how the child's schooling and aspirations are negotiated at the interface of home and school, as well as the two primary microsystems: home and involuntary household chores, and formal learning. Going beyond the children alone, the ecological resilience model provides the lens to examine how forces from all system levels enable or impede this balancing act.

The first question concerned the direct impact of excessive household chores on homework time, exam preparations and schooling attendance, called the Microsystem, and the way conflict or lack of communication between home and school managers affects this effect, the Mesosystem. It also touches societal norms that dictate what level of chore engagement is considered acceptable, even if detrimental to schooling, the Macrosystem. The second question focuses on the child's active role within their Microsystems. It seeks to understand their strategies, negotiations, and agency. The Mesosystem is concerned with the way schedules, expectations, and support between teachers and parents enable effective balancing. Regarding the third question, children learn skills and values in the Microsystem of home. It also examines how the School Microsystem and the Home-School Mesosystem influence resilience and aspiration formation. Likewise, it considers how Exosystemic dimensions and Macrosystemic dimensions ultimately shape what futures children see as possible and how their current dual workload prepares them for those futures.

Essence of Chapter

The issue of children's participation in household chores and their schooling experiences and how do children balance their dual responsibilities is one of the prevalent phenomena in Nepal. However, the issue is not explored extensively in Nepali context. In developing countries like Nepal, children often engage in household chores due to various reasons, including economic and livelihood necessity, household composition and cultural practices. To balance these responsibilities with their schooling, children employ different strategies. However, it did not explore enough. Hence, it is worth studying. For this, I reviewed various literature relating to concept of childhood, household chores and children’s balancing practice with schooling, and ecological model of child development as theoretical lens of study.

CHAPTER III
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I have discussed the research paradigms regarding my study. I have presented ontological and epistemological assumptions of my inquiry. This chapter also sheds light on my research design. I have discussed the methods and procedures I use while collecting data during fieldwork for the study. I have also discussed research methodologies, quality standards, and ethical considerations related to my inquiry.

Interpretivism as My Research Paradigm

In this study, I employed an interpretive paradigm to investigate and understand the meaning of children's engagement and experience in household chores and schooling. I employ interpretivism because it is challenging to find a single truth when conducting research on my topic, as the subject can be influenced by multiple factors, unlike the natural sciences (Cohen et al., 2000). I explored children's engagement in household chores and their experiences in school. In so doing, my main task in the study was to discover the subjective experiences and perspectives of the children and the subjective meanings that they are experiencing in their day-to-day life (Farzanfar, 2005 as cited in Tuli, 2010). I also used this to interpret their actions, experiences, and feelings and generate the meaning from their subjective reference as well as my observations. The aim was to understand their perception of micro social phenomena from the children's perspective.

My Philosophical Consideration

Researchers begin their studies with certain assumptions about how to learn during inquiry, and these assumptions are collectively referred to as research paradigms, philosophy, or worldviews (Creswell, 2022). In research, philosophical consideration helps to understand what constitutes valid research and which research method is most appropriate. The paradigm is composed of ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology that compose the paradigm and are the central features for any research (Creswell, 2003; Tuli, 2010, p. 99).

Ontological Assumption of Study

The purpose of my research was to explore the experiences of children's household chores and schooling. As an interpretivist researcher, ontologically, the

truth or reality is locally constructed, perceived, and experienced by children through their day-to-day experiences in the societies and cultures in which they live (Wahyuni, 2012). Instead of a single, objective reality, multiple realities exist because children interpret experiences in different ways (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Under the interpretivist paradigm, my ontological assumption is that multiple realities exist, which are socially constructed by children. It concerns the nature of the children in rural social contexts and my understanding of their household chores and schooling experiences.

Thus, the aim of this study is to explore the voice, feelings, and experiences of children engaged in household chores and schooling. So, I conducted the study with the aim of discovering these multiple realities of children. As a researcher, my role is to gather information with children and interpret it.

Epistemological Assumption of Study

In the context of exploring and interpreting children's experiences with household chores and schooling, the truth for me lies in the knowledge generated from observation and expressed by the children. My epistemological assumptions concern how knowledge of children 's experiences and views regarding their engagement in household chores and schooling is created, acquired, and communicated (Scotland, 2012). It is an understanding developed through dialogue, reflection, and shared interpretations between me and my participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Under this paradigm, as a researcher, I create knowledge through a personal, interactive mode of data collection where I am not independent from the issues being researched. I believe that interaction and observation with children produce knowledge that incorporates their subjective experiences and consciousness within their household and schooling environments. As an interpretivist researcher, my epistemological position is that knowledge is locally co-created through the interaction and observation of children (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). My source of data is the experiences and feelings of children and how they perceive their daily life patterns, such as how they feel about their daily phenomena of household work and schooling, and how they perceive them.

Axiological Assumption of Study

In this study, my experience with household chores, as well as my rural and cultural background, and the experiences of children, shaped the formulation of questions and the interpretation of the findings. It is because, axiologically, the

interpretivist paradigm believes that research is value-laden, rejecting the notion that research can be value-free and that researchers cannot conduct research without imposing values. In the study, respondents actively shared their experience during the research process and were involved in the meaning-making process. Being a child during my childhood who contributed to household chores along with schooling, my experiences and values of both research participants and researchers influence the collection of data and its analysis (Wahyuni, 2012). In this study, I discuss the values that shape the narrative and include my interpretation alongside the participants' interpretations (Creswell, 2009). However, I have not misinterpreted or misrepresented the socio-cultural contexts, which may defame or hurt them.

My Research Design

Interpretive Inquiry as Methodology

In this study, I employed qualitative research techniques and adopted Interpretive Inquiry as the methodology. Research Methodology is considered a model, strategy, or plan of action for conducting research within the context of a particular paradigm (Wahyuni, 2012). The selection of research methodology determines the paradigm (Tuli, 2010, p. 99). Interpretive Inquiry follows the philosophical tradition of interpretivism, which draws on foundations in phenomenology and hermeneutics, seeking to explore the core of lived experiences through in-depth interactions and descriptions from participants, as well as the interpretation of human action and texts, unlike the positivist paradigm (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). My methodological approach of the study is to seek an understanding of the experiences, meanings, and social contexts of children who engage in domestic chores alongside schooling, with an emphasis on subjective meaning-making through deep engagement with children from their point of view. Interpretive Inquiry focuses on interpreting the meanings, purposes, and interpretations that people attribute to their own activities and relationships with others (Given, 2008). Field observation and in-depth interviewing with children represent the core method of my study. As a researcher, I have explored children’s everyday experiences, including their participation in household activities and schooling, in natural settings. I explored knowledge inquiring into how they go about their day-to-day lives, and the meaning they attribute to their experiences. My role as a researcher conducting research using interpretive inquiry is to uncover the meaning as perceived or intended by the respondents (Muganga, 2016).

Before Going to the Field

Prior to conducting fieldwork, a review of the literature was conducted in the context of children's household chores, their educational aspirations, and the balancing of household chores and education, as well as the methods to be employed. In doing so, I chose Interpretive Inquiry as the research methodology and determined the data-gathering tools to be in-depth interviews and observation. I chose these methods to gather the perspectives of my informants on the topic under study.

Before conducting fieldwork, I also determined the number of participants to include in the study. The gender and age range of participants were considered. Before leaving for fieldwork, I also obtained permission from my department at Kathmandu University.

Selection of the Study Area

Based on my previous knowledge of it, I chose Bagmati Rural Municipality as my study site. I chose three wards (no. 4, 6, & 7) of the Rural Municipality as the study site. I chose this site for my research because it suits my study due to its geographical location, demographic profile, and socio-economic characteristics. The area features predominantly rural characteristics, despite being within a 60-90 kilometer range from the edge of the Kathmandu Valley. Almost all people, except teachers and local government employees, are devoted to the agricultural profession, where children often have to balance the dual responsibilities of household chores and attending school. Similarly, this area is also suitable for my study due to its proximity to the Kathmandu Valley, which makes fieldwork, data collection, and follow-up visits. Additionally, I selected the study area based on my prior knowledge of the region. This part of the area also belongs to my ancestral home, where I spent my childhood and completed my secondary level of education. I still know most of the people living there, and I even have some extended family members in the community. I had lived and attended school in the community during my childhood, so some schoolmates and old friends in the area may still know me. I know the profession of people living there is agriculture, particularly livestock keeping, apart from paddy, wheat, maize, and vegetable farming, and so their children work alongside them. All the children attend school, although some drop out at the secondary level. I have extended family members in the area, as well as childhood friends and schoolmates who are still living there, and I maintain a personal relationship with the most senior members of the community, which can be described

as fluid. Therefore, I anticipated that all these connections may influence me in varied ways. I anticipate that all these relationships may influence me in diverse ways. My personal relationship with the community members can be immensely useful. Therefore, I considered the community an appropriate study site for gathering children's perspectives on their participation in household work and schooling. The discussion with working children is considered a source of data. The informal discussions, observations, and in-depth interviews were the primary sources of data.

Selection of the Participants

For the fieldwork, I selected a total of 11 participants for the study. Regarding the gender and age range of the informants, I conducted in-depth interviews with 7 girls and 4 boys, whose age ranged from 12 to 17. The main reason for choosing this age group is that they remain very active in the family work, compared to the younger age group. Regarding the selection of a total of 11 respondents, I considered it sufficient to explore the phenomenon of children's experience with household chores and schooling due to theoretical saturation. As I conducted an in-depth interview, I found that continuing to pursue it would result in redundancy (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 188). I chose a higher number of girls in the study with the aim of capturing diverse perspectives from females and gaining a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. In the Nepali context, selecting more girls is natural, as girls are often preferred for domestic work.

With the help of head teachers, teachers, parents, relatives, and others I knew beforehand, I selected the respondents purposefully. This is because they stayed in the community for a long time with the children, and so they are better known as children who are burdened with household work. Additionally, the age, maturity, and experience levels of the students were considered when selecting the informants. I made a request to teachers to help me choose the respondents. Finally, 11 children were selected and interviewed. Of the 11, 7 were girls, and 4 were boys. Their ages were 12-17 (studying 9-12) grade (class). The primary reason for selecting this age group was to choose mature students so that I could gather data from in-depth interviews, as well as gain a deeper understanding of the issue I am researching.

The area of my study is a relatively small rural community in my native village, Pyutar (Ward No. 4), and its adjoining locations, namely wards 6 and 7 of the municipality. This community is a typical example of a rural village, like most Nepali rural villages, where children predominantly engage in work at the family

business/farm. Although most children in this community attend school, many drop out at the secondary level. Nevertheless, the everyday life experiences of many children in this community are filled with various household chores.

In the community, the day-to-day experience of almost all the children is filled with different households and seasonal family farms. In most cases, children participate in domestic chores such as cooking, washing, milking, fetching water, and caring for siblings, while their parents go to the field for farm-based work. While on holiday, children also engage in tasks such as collecting grass, fodder, and firewood, as well as planting and harvesting activities on their family farm alongside their parents. Therefore, for this study, I consider these areas to be an appropriate site for investigation.

Being on The Field

Getting Access and Gatekeepers

The nature of children's lives in families and schools means that they are not free to decide for themselves. They are surrounded by adults who act as gatekeepers (Mason, 2004, p. 45). Therefore, to have access to children, permission from adults is needed. In the first group of gatekeepers, I had to obtain permission from head teachers and teachers to conduct interviews. The purposes, objectives, and intentions of the study were explained to them. I visited the schools and introduced myself to them. The head teachers and teachers at the schools helped me to identify the possible candidates for interviews, as well as introduce myself to them. I met them in their schools and introduced myself to them. I again explained to them the topic that I interviewed on. Because it is needed to discuss the topic to make friends with them. I asked them if they wanted to participate in the study, to which they all responded positively. Parents were the second gatekeepers that I had to deal with. Based on the suggestions of teachers and head teachers, I visited the parents, particularly the fathers of the children who were my probable interviewees. I visited their homes and explained to the parents my details and purpose, including the topic and purpose of my study. These parents also keenly accepted me.

Entry and Engagement in the Field

Establishing rapport is an essential component of qualitative research. Rapport refers to the trust and respect that informants and the information they share are valued. It is also a means of establishing a safe and comfortable environment for sharing the interviewee’s personal experiences and attitudes as they occurred. Prior to

data collection, I established a close bond with my participants to facilitate the acquisition of more information from them.

Techniques and Tools for Data Collection

This study employed a qualitative approach to collect, discuss, and analyze data. I carefully considered which methods suited my study and developed a plan that utilized two qualitative methods: participant observation and in-depth interviews with children, to collect the data. Records of field observations, voice records of in-depth interviews, and daily dairies were used as tools to collect data.

Observation

Observational work is vital for researchers, as it helps to foster a greater understanding of the case being studied in relation to pertinent issues (Stake, 1995, p. 60). I opted for observation as one of the methods of data collection, in which I participated in children's day-to-day activities, including household chores and schooling, through observing events in their natural contexts (Given, 2008, p. 598). It helped me to gain a deep understanding of children's everyday work. Before using in-depth interviews, I first employed the observational method. I considered participant observation to be a useful method because it allowed me to directly witness and record their activities of household chores and schooling. As Robson (2002) argues, this helped validate the messages obtained in the interviews.

I traveled to the study area three times and spent almost a month in the community conducting fieldwork, including in-depth interviews. As part of it, I initially visited around 21 households to ensure the appropriate number of respondents. Out of them, I finalized 11 participants. While visiting the households of respondents, I was accompanied by one of their schoolteachers, which helped build friendship and trust with the respondents and some households I was not familiar with beforehand. Prior to that, I met each of the respondents at their school with the help of their teachers. I shared with each of the households about my purpose for visiting, and they cheerfully accepted my proposal and cooperated with me. I then observed the household activities of the participants and those of selected respondents and held an informal discussion on the various household chores in which children were involved. These informal discussions were not recorded, but notes were taken on the spot and afterwards.

In-Depth Interview

I used in-depth interviews as a data source to collect data and gain knowledge from children engaged in household chores and schooling, as it is an effective method for drawing out the views and experiences of interviewees and producing knowledge. The interview helps to progress through and obtain multiple realities or ideas (Stake, 1995, p. 64). I used an interview guide to conduct qualitative interviews. Using a qualitative research technique, In-depth interviews helped to explore the experiences and feelings of children regarding their work and schooling. As In-depth interviews follow a specific set of steps, I conduct individual, face-to-face interviews to gather data. According to this, I first selected participants in line with my research purpose and built rapport with them to obtain accurate data, as accurate data can be achieved when participants trust the researcher and are willing to provide information. After this, I conducted interviews with them. Prior to this, I developed my area of study with the help of my research guide. To explore various issues during the interview, I also created an interview guide. The interview guide was flexible enough to incorporate additional ideas that emerged during the interview sessions. Sometimes I also carry out several follow-up questions so that I can get the views in a better way. I also considered my experience as a data source. Similarly, I wrote my daily reflection during the research. I recorded the interview in my audio recorder so that I could code and thematize the data later.

Background of the Participants

In this section, I will introduce them briefly by their pseudonyms. Arjun (Pseudo name) is a 12-year-old boy who studies in grade 9 at a local secondary-level public school. He belongs to a family of just three members. He has three family members: his father, stepmother, and himself. His family has a small house in the market area of the village, while the agricultural fields and cowsheds are located farther away from his house. His father and mother remain busy throughout the day due to livestock and agricultural responsibilities. Helping their parents before and after school is one of his major responsibilities, in addition to studying. Despite his engagement in household chores, his teachers say that he is above the average student in his studies.

Basana (Pseudo name) is a 13-year-old girl. She has 5 members in her family, including two siblings and two parents, who are associated with the agriculture profession. She is in the 9th grade at a local public secondary school. She is an

average student in her school. Being a rural girl from a family rooted in the agricultural profession, she also frequently engages in household chores.

Another respondent, Fatteman (Pseudo name), is a 14-year-old boy who studies in grade 7 at a local government school. He has one small brother, a father, a stepmother, and an elderly grandmother in his family. The livelihood source of his family is also agriculture.

Likewise, Ganga (Pseudo name) is also a 16-year-old girl who is studying in class 12. She is living with her elderly and sick parents. She has nobody in her home except her aging and sick parents. Her father is an elderly person, while her mother is suffering from a chronic illness. Engaging with a variety of work at home is her compulsion. Due to her intense engagement in household chores, she gets very little time to study, which also affects her educational outcomes and school grades. Additionally, she must travel a considerable distance to get to school. She spends around 7-8 hours on household chores during weekdays.

Dina (pseudonym) is 16 years old and lives with her elderly and frequently ill parents. Although she has three sisters and two brothers, none of them are with her, as all three sisters have gotten married, and her two brothers live in Kathmandu for wage labor. Every day she wakes up early and goes to a nearby jungle to cut grass. In the evening, she also goes to the jungle to cut grass and grill a kettle. Her elderly mother cooks food and takes care of livestock. She often returns late from school; therefore, she rushes home without eating a meal. She often arrives late at school. She spends 8-9 hours on household chores. She gets very little time at home to study. To complete homework, she carries out during free time at school. She also utilizes time, such as on the way to school and grazing livestock.

Eva (a pseudonym) is a 15-year-old girl living with her parents in the family. She studies in class 9. Her father works on the family farm as well as a wage laborer, while her mother is involved in farm-related work, in addition to caring for the livestock. Every morning, she wakes up, cleans up, looks after the goats, cooks food, and then goes to school. In the evening, after returning home, she does household chores, grazes the goats, cooks rice, has dinner, and helps with my homework. On holidays, especially during the farming season, she helps in the fields, goes to the forest to collect firewood, or cuts grass. Largely, she spends seven hours on housework, three hours in the morning and three in the evening.

Isha (Pseudonym) is also a 15-year-old girl. She is a twin girl who has 6 members in her family, including a sister, a senior brother, his wife, father, and Mother. Her family is also rooted in agriculture as a source of family livelihood. She and her sister are 15 years old and studying in grade 11. Prior to attending my current school, she studied at a nearby school. However, she is now studying at a school that is far from her home.

Hari (Pseudo name) is a 14-year-old boy who studies in grade 10. He has four family members: one senior sister, an aging grandmother, and his father. Hari's sister is two years older than him. Hari's sister is older than him, and she also studies in grade 12 at the same school. They don't have a mother at home, as their mother left their father along with them after eloping with another guy when they were very small kids. Hari and his sister were brought up by their grandmother. Now their grandmother is too old to support them. Due to this scenario, all the household chores fall on Hari and his sister. Since Hari's sister is two years his senior, she plays a key role, performing everything from cutting grass and cooking food to cleaning manure, milking buffalo and cows, and washing dishes. In comparison to the responsibilities, he takes on against his sister, Hari, however, performs very little work, as his sister covers all the tasks. It is because she is senior to him, as well as the cultural framing of household chores as feminine.

Another respondent is Jeevan (Pseudo name). He is a 13-year-old boy, the sole member of the family currently residing at his home. He is studying in grade 9. His school performance is average because he hardly gets any time for study, preparation, and homework due to his household chores, absence of his family, and health issues of his father. He does everything by himself as his father is suffering from chronic kidney disease and stays away from home. 8 hours spent on work.

Kamala (pseudonym) is a 15-year-old ninth-grade student. Her family consists of her parents, an elder brother, and a younger sister. Their father, younger sister, and elder brother live in Kathmandu. Their elder brother did not study well in school. She and Their mother live in the village home. Since there is no father and elder brother who could work on a family farm, the responsibility of field work also falls on her mother and her.

Chameli (pseudonym) is a 17-year-old girl who studies in class 11 at a local public school. She has six family members, including her father, mother, grandmother, brother, younger sister, and elder sister. Although they are from the

same family, they, however, live in separate houses. She lives with her old-aged grandfather and grandmother. While doing so, she takes care of her grandfather and grandmother. Due to the age of her grandfather and grandmother, she must do most household chores, except for cooking, because her grandmother usually cooks for the family. His day-to-day work includes milking the cows, cutting grass, washing dishes, cleaning houses, and handling manure, among other tasks.

Nature and Sources of Data

Interpretive inquiry is a qualitative research approach that seeks to gather information from in-depth interviews with participants and analyze that information within the context of the participants (Muganga, 2016). Those who conduct research using interpretive inquiry should have the ability to understand the background of the respondent and the circumstantial factors that shape their answers (Muganga, 2016). As I learnt that methods like in-depth interviews and observations are dominant in the interpretive paradigm (Golafshani, 2003), Interpretive Inquiry puts each respondent within their context by providing informants with an opportunity to express their ideas clearly and engage in conversation with the researcher (Muganga, 2016). In this study, the data I collected pertained to the daily life experiences of working children, including their perceptions of household chores, balancing measures with education, and their relationships with future aspirations. Data was collected through observation, participatory, and semi-structured interviews. I collect primary data through in-depth interviews and observations, and secondary data from various books, journals, case studies, dissertations, and other relevant resources.

Data Management

The goal of interpretive inquiry is to understand individuals' perspectives on their own actions and the actions of others (Given, 2008). The activities of data management include recording, transcribing, and analyzing data. The data analysis involves interpreting the meaning and functions of human actions, primarily in the form of verbal descriptions and explanations (Hammersley, 1990). After the fieldwork, I transcribed and translated all the interviews conducted in Nepali that I gathered in both audio and textual forms. I conducted a word-for-word transcription of the in-depth interviews from the audio recordings and notes into a written text. However, I selectively transcribed only those conversations relevant to my study. Initially, I created descriptive coding in the form of a noun that summarized the topic or context of the text data. This coding of the transcription was generated using the

MS Word tool “Tracking (*New Comment).* Then I identified relationships between initial codes to determine which codes are most significant or common, thereby developing the core category. After this, I categorized and grouped related codes together. Then, I generated and organized themes from the data. A theme is not just a topic but an interpretive finding that explains a meaningful pattern in the data. It helps in analyzing and interpreting in accordance with the theories and concepts discussed in the theoretical chapter. In doing so, I collated codes into potential themes, followed by reviewing and checking whether the themes align with the coded extracts. Further, I refined it and finally knit together the analytical narrative and data extracts.

As the major characteristic of Interpretive Inquiry is thick description (Tuli, 2010), this study aimed to provide a thorough description and interpretation of the children's life experiences. Using interpretive inquiry, I sought to "map the web of shared meanings that shape reality in a community" (Smart, 1998, p. 113). Through this, I explored the perspectives and experiences of my participants within their social and cultural contexts. All 11 participants answered the interview guide, and I analyzed their views on their involuntary household chores and schooling. As Ashley and Orenstein (2005) noted, "Language arises from the needs of human practice and serves human interests. The scope of meaningful human activities depends on values and social context" (p. 36). Thus, by examining the social environment of children who balance household chores and school, I explored their views, the impacts they perceive, and the socio-cultural factors related to schoolchildren’s involvement in household chores.

Quality Standard and Ethical Concerns of the Study

In terms of research quality standards, quantitative researchers use the terms validity and reliability. Qualitative researchers often employ thick descriptions when writing their research reports. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), thick description is a way of achieving a type of validity describing a phenomenon in detail so that conclusions drawn are transferable to other times, settings, situations, and people. In qualitative data, no generalization is made for the entire population. However, it can be done in a single case, provided a study has been conducted. Thus, qualitative researchers do not use the terms validity and reliability. Reliability and validity are conceptualized as trustworthiness, rigor, and quality in the qualitative paradigm (Golafshani, 2003). Trustworthiness of data refers to the relationship between the desired data and the collected data, determining whether the research

truly measures what it was intended to measure or how truthful the research results are (Golafshani, 2003). There are four criteria of trustworthiness developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). They are credibility, which parallels internal validity; transferability, which resembles external validity; dependability, which parallels reliability; and conformability, which is akin to objectivity (Wahyuni, 2012). In this study, I employ the concept of trustworthiness as part of the quality standard. I choose trustworthiness as it is a hallmark of the interpretivist paradigm. In this study, respondents were asked to share their experiences and opinions in a free-flowing manner, both before, during, and after the interview. Whenever confusion arose, I addressed it appropriately. The participants were also shared with the respondents.

Credibility deals with whether the study measures or tests what is intended (Wahyuni, 2012). Credibility is achieved by protracted engagement with participants, persistent observation in the field, the use of peer researchers, negative case analysis, researcher reflexivity, and member checks, validation, or co-analysis (Loh, 2013; p.5, Wahyuni, 2012). To maintain credibility, I visited the participants' homes and the school, spending time with them to make the experience believable to the audience. I did the member checking by making the transcription participants of the interviews available. On top of that, I quoted their verbal expression from the interpretations.

Transferability refers to the reader's ability to generalize the findings of a study to their own context. It refers to the level of applicability in other settings or situations (Wahyuni, 2012). Rich and detailed explanations of research sites and the characteristics of case organizations should be provided to enhance transferability (Loh, 2013, p. 5; Wahyuni, 2012). To maintain it, I provided extensive descriptions of my research context and elaborated on the data generated from the interviews.

Dependability is an assessment of the quality of the integrated processes of data collection, data analysis, and theory generation. It addresses the core issue that the way a study is conducted should be consistent across time, researchers, and analysis techniques. Dependability can be achieved by examining the process of the inquiry, a detailed explanation of the research design and process, such as how data was collected and how data was kept, and the accuracy of data, to enable future researchers to follow a similar research framework (Loh, 2013, p. 5; Wahyuni, 2012). I have maintained dependability in the study by using triangulation to ensure the consistency of findings. I triangulated information collected from fields with my childhood experiences, as well as those of other people who had similar experiences

during their childhood, to better understand the nature of household work and schooling for children.

Conformability is a measure of how well the inquiry's findings are supported by the data collected. It refers to the fact that others can confirm the findings to ensure that the results accurately reflect the understandings of the observed participants (Wahyuni, 2012). In this study, I generated the data and drew the findings from the participants' interviews. No manipulation or fabrication was done. The participants also confirmed it during the member checking in my follow-up visit.

Ethical issues typically involve moral considerations in research. Fetterman (1998) highlighted central ethical codes for qualitative researchers, including doing no harm to the people or community under study, respecting the rights of the participants, maintaining the integrity of the data, and respecting the participants' way of life. Researchers should not impose superiority over the people under study. Researchers should understand that his or her role is not to judge but to learn. Likewise, the interpretivist researcher must ensure the confidentiality of all research participants and guarantee that they will be neither harmed nor exploited by their participation. Van Wijk and Harrison (2013) have recommended that various issues, including no harm to participants, informed permission of participants, no dishonesty of respondents, no violation of privacy of participants, cooperation with collaborators, competence of researchers, and publication of the findings, should be considered as part of ethical considerations for a qualitative study.

Respecting ethical considerations, I adhered to these well-established principles in my study. However, some of the areas of ethical issues I considered included informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, the ethics of not violating privacy, the ethics of no harm, and the ethics of no deception.

Essence of Chapter

This chapter defines the philosophical underpinnings of my study by illustrating the constructivist paradigm and interpretive inquiry as a research design. It was followed by the research process, including fieldwork and participant selection, as well as the data collection process, tools used for data collection, and sources of data.

In this chapter, I have extensively described the participants' background, the field, the data collection process, rapport building, and the approach to data collection,

as well as data interpretation, meaning-making techniques, quality standards, and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER IV
CHILDREN'S ENGAGEMENT IN HOUSEHOLD CHORES: PERSPECTIVES AND SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXTS

In the previous chapter, I provided details of the philosophical assumptions, methodological process, and research design that I have applied to carry out this study. Based on the previous design, this chapter presents data on children's engagement in household chores.

This chapter addresses my first key research question: How do students' involuntary engagement in household chores shape their schooling experience? The participants reveal various types of household chores that rural school-going children engage in in their day-to-day lives. The focus of the chapter is to understand the details of the various types of household chores that school-going children participate in while attending school, which shape their daily school experience.

Light Domestic Tasks on Weekdays but Unholy Holidays

In this section, I address subsidiary questions regarding the common household chores that school-going children are responsible for. My interviewees are involved in a diverse range of household chores, from daily tasks such as cleaning, cooking, and childcare, to gathering water/firewood/grass/fodder, as well as seasonal farm-based work during weekends and holidays in agricultural seasons. I have explored the secondary level student's experience through two lenses: Student's participation in light and daily household chores on weekdays and in seasonal and intensive farm-based work on holidays. According to them, these tasks differ in terms of the time spent, the energy invested, and the frequency of participation, shaping their daily and weekly routines. The difference between light, routine tasks and heavier, sporadic activities highlights the dynamic character of students' contributions to household functioning. During weekdays, they usually engage in basic household chores, while weekends and public holidays are entirely different, at least during peak planting and harvesting seasons.

After analyzing the various types of activities undertaken by them as part of their household chores, I have categorized and divided their list of activities broadly into two types: The first type of household work is carried out before and after school, and referred to as basic, light, and daily activities. The second type of student's chores

is associated with family farm activities, including raising livestock and working on agricultural fields, which are done especially on weekends/ school holidays and are generally intensive.

Arjun, one of the participants, is a 14-year-old boy who studies in the 9th grade at a local secondary school. He is involved in specific kinds of household activities and schooling simultaneously during the weekdays. In the context of his daily household tasks, Arjun says,

> *In the morning, I wake up early, wash my face, have tea, and then go to the cowshed to bring the milk that my stepmother has milked. The main tasks I carry out daily are helping my mother with household chores, including fetching milk from the cowshed to our home, cooking, and washing dishes at home before going to school. Similarly, after returning from school, I go to the cowshed again, feed the cows, and fetch milk home. I spend about three to four hours on household chores daily. However, these activities are light and normal.*

Arjun engages in a range of household chores before and after school on weekdays. These works are not physically challenging but light and basic in nature. Spending around a few hours a day, he mainly assists the family in cooking, washing, and livestock-related household chores. However, the frequency and time of engagements are significantly less.

Another respondent is Basana. Being a child from a family rooted in the agricultural profession, I noticed that she engages in a range of household chores, from cooking and cleaning to washing and collecting grass, in addition to attending school. Basana engages in domestic responsibilities for approximately one-third of a day during school days (weekdays). She engages only in basic household chores related to the kitchen and within the home during weekdays. On weekends, she travels to distant locations and nearby forests to collect grass, fodder, and firewood. The chores within the home are light in nature, while the outdoor tasks are physical and intensive. Regarding her engagement and type of responsibility, she shares:

> *On school days, my main tasks are cooking, washing, and cleaning. In the morning, I make tea for family members, and also in the afternoon. I fetch water from the local tap, sweep the house, cook meals, feed my younger brother, and wash dishes before going to school. Later in the evening, after returning home from school and having a quick snack, I occasionally go out to*

cut grass and herd cattle. Then, I cook food for the evening before sitting down to study and do homework. I spend approximately 3 hours each morning and evening on household chores. On weekdays, due to school, I could not go to faraway locations to collect grass and fodder and chop firewood. I carry this out on weekends and holidays. I also engage occasionally in transporting manure to the field from the cowshed, in addition to planting, weeding crops, harvesting, and other seasonal agricultural tasks.

Chameli, a 16-year-old girl studying in grade 11, lives with her elderly grandparents, who own large land plots (agricultural fields) and livestock together. Like other respondents, she also shares:

I live with my grandfather and grandmother. They are uneducated and are unaware of the importance of education. My grandmother usually cooks food, but due to her advanced age, she can no longer work in the field. Therefore, I engage in day-to-day responsibilities, such as milking buffaloes, cutting grass, washing dishes, cleaning houses, and spreading manure, among others. Since our family owns a large area of fields, I spend my weekends and holidays planting maize, paddy, millet, and potatoes, especially during the planting and harvesting seasons.

During my visit, I noticed Chameli performed a range of household chores for her during weekends and holidays, which are huge due to living with grandparents. Chameli is heavily engaged in planting and harvesting tasks. This reflects the cyclical and strenuous nature of village life.

Another respondent, Fatteman, is a 13-year-old boy. His role is a bit different than others mentioned above. In this context, he says:

I have five family members, including my father, stepmother, a 2.5-year-old younger brother, and an aging grandmother. We are keeping cows and goats. My stepmother usually cooks food and fetches grass and fodder for the animals in the morning, while my father remains busy working in the field. Therefore, I need to support them with household work while they are at work. My daily tasks are taking the kettle to graze. I also need to look after my little brother when my stepmother is engaged in other activities, while my grandmother is too old and remains sick most of the time. I engage in 6 to 7 hours of household chores a day. I love taking care of my brother, while I feel very bored herding the kettles.

Family situations are also detrimental to engaging in the types of jobs they perform as part of household chores. Fatteman's household chore engagement is not cooking and cleaning but herding livestock and caring for his younger brother. Although these household chores are not labor-intensive, hours of engagement are significantly high, which consumes a lot of time for school-going children.

Ganga, a 12th grader and 16 a 16-year-old girl, is living with her elderly and sick parents. She engages in a variety of work at home, including both indoor tasks and outdoor tasks during the planting and harvesting seasons, as well as *labor exchange (parma).* She shares:

> *After waking up at around 5 a.m., I cook food for the buffalo, milk it, fetch water, sweep the house, chop vegetables, cook food, wash dishes, and go to school at around 9 a.m. After school, I eat a snack, graze the goats, milk the buffalo again, wash clothes if needed, chop vegetables, cook food, and wash dishes, among other tasks. I spend around 5-6 hours during weekdays doing these household chores. In addition to working on basic household chores, especially during weekends and holidays, I also must participate in labor exchange (parma) for planting, weeding, and harvesting crops.*

Ganga's daily life is a challenging schedule that combines household responsibilities and school attendance. The list of activities is significantly higher, ranging from light and normal chores during weekdays to seasonal *labor exchange (Parma)* during weekends and holidays. This reflects the realities of the work nature of children in rural society.

In this context, the case of Hari is relevant. Hari is a 16-year-old boy studying in the 10th grade. There are four members in his family, including one senior sister, an aging grandmother, and his father. Her sister is two years older than him and studies in grade 12 at the same school. As their mother does not live with them, as she left them and eloped with another person when they were very small kids. They were brought up by their grandmother. Now their grandmother is too old to support us. Therefore, all the household chores fall on my sister and me. My sister and I share household chores, such as cutting the grass, cooking food, cleaning the manure, milking the buffalo, and washing the dishes. Hari shares, *"I engage in scores of household chores before and after school. In comparison to the responsibilities taken by her, I engage in very minimal work as she covers all the tasks."* However, my sister plays a key role, where she performs everything.

Hari, who lives with a single-parent family, shares that he also engages in various outdoor works. He says, *"As part of that, my sister and I also engage during the weekends or public holidays in livestock and field-related work in addition to chores like cleaning, cooking, and washing. Except for some days, on weekends or school holidays, I engage in the fields to plant and harvest crops, sow corn, or graze goats, collect grass and fodders, transport animal waste to the field, etc."*

This highlights the core dynamics of children in a rural context. As mentioned, the weekends and public holidays are significantly burdensome for children, who, in addition to indoor household chores like cleaning, cooking, and washing, engage in labor-intensive agricultural tasks such as planting and harvesting crops, sowing corn, grazing livestock, collecting grass and fodder, and transporting animal waste to the fields.

Another respondent is Jeevan, a sole member of the family currently residing at his home. He is studying in grade 9. As his entire family lives away from him due to his father's chronic kidney disease, he does everything by himself in the house. In this context, he shares, *"In the morning, I cut grass to feed the goats. My neighbor's sister helps feed the goats during the daytime when I am in school. After school, I graze the goats first and start preparing dinner. After the evening meal, I sit to study. I do all the household chores by myself. I spend around 7-8 hours on household chores on a normal day."* Jeevan's situation illustrates the burden of household responsibilities faced due to the limited family support, due to the absence of family members, and due to his father's kidney ailment. By dedicating 7-8 hours daily to chores, this reveals a pattern where children, often facing family health issues, take on extensive responsibilities.

Kamala is a ninth-grade student aged 15 years. She lives with her mother in the village home. Since there are only two people currently in the family, the responsibilities of all the household work, including the work of the family farm, also fall on her mother and herself. In this context, Kamala shares:

> *My family consists of my father, mother, elder brother, and younger sister. My father, younger sister, and elder brother live in Kathmandu. Her elder brother did not study well in school. My mother and I live in the village home. Due to the absence of our father and elder brother, who could work in the family and field, all the work, including collecting firewood, fodder, and grass, planting seasonal crops and harvesting them, cooking, cleaning, and transporting*

> *manure to the field, needs to be done by ourselves. Due to my schoolwork, I carry out chores such as cooking, washing, and cleaning, which are limited to inside the home or in the courtyard. But my mother does all the necessary work. On the weekends and public holidays, my mother and I go to the forest to cut firewood, grass, and fodder, and graze goats. All the plantation and harvesting crops are also scheduled for public holidays or statutory. During the plantation season, I need to engage in tasks like sowing corn, planting paddy seedlings, and harvesting crops like paddy, maize, wheat, potatoes, etc.*

Kamala shares those weekends, and holiday are entirely different from the nature of chores she faces in comparison to weekdays. According to her, the nature of jobs done during the weekend, such as farming, planting, and harvesting, is heavier and more intensive than the tasks done during weekdays, as they are not limited to the house but are typically done outside the home and on the family farm.

Children generally engage in light and soft types of chores during the weekdays because schooling does not allow them to undertake heavy work. The common types of work that they engage in at home are light tasks such as sweeping the house, cleaning the yard, washing clothes, preparing meals, chopping vegetables, including rice, lentils, and vegetables, fetching water, washing dishes, looking after younger siblings, including feeding and taking care of them, assisting elderly family members in their daily tasks among others. Children's daily chore involvement may impact various factors, such as gender; age, family composition (elderly parents, illness in family), family status (girls, women, presence of mother, presence of step mother/father) number of family members at home (more family members), economic status, and among others also play roles for types of work, amount of time in engagement and frequency and of involvement in children's household chores.

Apart from basic indoor chores, children also engage in farm-based work as it is a source of family livelihood. Due to the rush on regular school days, children do not often get involved on regular weekdays. However, on Saturday (weekend) or on public (school) holidays, they get more time. Therefore, they are assigned intense work, such as collecting firewood, gathering grass and fodder from distant locations, and engaging in farm-based tasks like planting and harvesting crops.

Rural agriculture relies heavily on a large number of seasonal laborers, as paid laborers are scarce in villages. Likewise, due to the nature of farming, hired labor is unaffordable. Due to this reason, parents employ children, especially during the

planting and harvesting season. Therefore, parents either schedule planting and harvesting on weekends (Saturday) or on public holidays. These types of chores are prevalent in rural areas, and seasonal agricultural work is more intensive and demanding than typical domestic work.

Students' Framing of Their Chore Role

Regarding why they engage in household chores and how they feel about it, children see it from various perspectives. In this section, I address subsidiary questions about what and how children feel while engaging in household chores. I have explored children's construction of the meaning of their chores through three lenses: familial compulsion, cultural and traditional practice, and economic reality.

Household Chores as Norms and Traditional Practice

One of the respondents, Ganga, notes that students' engagement in household chores is rooted in societal norms and intergenerational practices within society. She shares that she engages in various household chores at home, and she is told to engage in such roles, and she takes it as a normal part of life, like other students in her society. She argues, *"It is prevalent in my village. It is because my parents and grandparents say that they did it in their times, and I am also doing it, therefore it has been going on for generations."* Ganga further shares that her parents' view is that household chores are a way to teach children responsibility and prepare them for adult roles. She also shares, *"not only me, but everyone in our communities does also it. Some do it less; some do it more, and that's the only difference. It has become a continuous practice."* Ganga presents chores as a cultural and traditional practice that is profoundly rooted in the social framework of his rural community. Chores teach children responsibility and prepare them for adult roles. This norm persisted across generations and was reinforced through shared participation.

In the same context, Fatteman shares his view regarding how parents assign roles and children's responses. He shares that contributing to the family by students is normal in his society and almost every child engages in some part of household chores irrespective of economic status. The difference is just the amount of work. He shares, *"parents assign me a range of activities like cooking, cleaning, fetching water, firewood, or tending to livestock, planting and harvesting crops, and others. Like my friends, I have been doing it. Parents rely on my support, normalizing their contribution as essential."* Fatteman outlines household chores as a cultural and traditional practice deeply rooted in societal norms, where students' contribution is

essential for family livelihood. This practice, continued through parental guidance, serves as both a practical mechanism for household survival and a cultural tool for instilling values of responsibility, cooperation, and family unity.

Fifteen-year-old Eva, the daughter of uneducated parents who never attended school, shares similar experiences, and she doesn't find it absurd. When I visited her house on a Saturday, she was busy weeding at the maize field. As she shared, she spends a lot of time doing household chores because her parents do not understand how important her studies are for my future. She shares:

> *My parents performed chores in childhood and are passing these expectations to me. Neighbors also help with household chores for children as a normal part of rural childhood. To them, helping at home is just as important as going to school. Because of this belief, I also feel that household work is normal, as it's just a part of our lives. It doesn't feel new, as everyone has been doing for generations. I believe that household work strengthens family bonding, and abiding by parental orders is my responsibility toward the family*.

Eva acknowledged that performing household chores is normal, as it is a part of their life, a practice that has been continued across generations. It is also considered a responsibility towards family, which strengthens family ties and embeds it as a valued tradition.

Another respondent, Arjun, echoed the sentiments of others and shared that his participation in household chores serves as a tool for socializing him into future adult roles. According to him, the assignment of chores to children teaches duties, discipline, and essential life skills despite trying to avoid it. He views household chores as practical training for future agricultural or domestic responsibilities. He says, *"daily tasks such as cooking, cleaning, fetching water, and other tasks help to prepare us for adulthood, where such skills are vital for survival and household management in the present as well as the future."* According to Arjun, chores serve as a vital tool for teaching discipline, life skills, and family duty, preparing children for adulthood and strengthening cultural values of responsibility and cooperation.

Isha, another respondent, shares that cultural norm also guide types of chores assigned to boys or girls because girls are preferred for domestic tasks like cooking, cleaning, and washing dishes, while boys mainly handle outdoor tasks like herding or working on family farms. Isha further shares,

> *In my society, all children, regardless of gender, participate in household chores alongside their schooling. However, girls are increasingly engaging in indoor chores such as cleaning, cooking, and washing. Therefore, I engage in various chores, such as cooking, washing, and cleaning. My parents emphasize that girls must learn basic skills for doing indoor chores, which have been practiced for a long time in society. It is because girls need to develop these kinds of skills; otherwise, it will be difficult to handle after getting married.*

Isha views chores as a cultural practice embedded in societal norms, with a strong gender dimension that prepares them for future domestic roles. Domestic tasks like cooking and cleaning serve her as both a practical contribution to family needs and a cultural tool for socializing girls into expected gender roles.

Respondents in the study view household chores as a norm and traditional practice. Household chores for children are deeply rooted in intergenerational cultural norms and traditional practices in rural communities, serving both pragmatic and socialization functions, and are deeply ingrained in societal norms. Household chores promote collaborative work among family members, boosting family unity and collaboration. It instills responsibility, fosters cooperation, and promotes unity within the family and community as a natural part of life. Household work for children provides practical training for future agricultural or domestic responsibilities, preparing them for adult roles. As girls are traditionally expected to handle domestic tasks in their future life, it plays a vital role in preparing them for the future. Respondents value children's participation in household chores, as parents and neighbors reinforce this practice by passing it on to the next generation. It also serves as a vital tool for teaching the culture of discipline, life skills, family duty, and survival.

Household Chores Preparing Girls for Future Role

In Nepali society, it is clearly visible that a male’s primary responsibility is outside the home while a female’s is within. Therefore, this also reflects in case of school-going girls opposite of their male siblings. For girls, the home is not just a residence but also a training ground. However, this responsibility at home has caused as compromising dimension for schooling.

Isha is a 16-year-old girl from an agriculturally rooted family. On my home visit, I found Isha busy with chopping vegetables and cooking food as part of getting

ready to go to school. As on that day, her daily routine starts as early as 6 am in the morning. After waking up, her twin and she lit a fire in the kitchen and started to chop vegetables and cook food, making it ready by 8.30 AM. Since it takes 1 hour to travel to school, she along with her twin eat and get ready by 9 AM. Her nature of household chores that she engaged in, Isha shares, "*I engage in indoor chores like cooking, cleaning and washing. Being a girl, I consider it normal. This has been a long-standing practice in our village. However, we are unable to engage in more chores except kitchen work during weekdays due to long distance from school. Morning and evening combined, I spend about six hours a day on household chores."*

Isha engages in multiple types of kitchen related chores which are often termed as light work. These responsibilities illustrate the combination of cultural expectations and traditional gender roles.

Isha compares the household chore role with the age of the children. In this context she shares, *"being born as a girl means you must start working from a very young age and have a wide range of responsibilities. Doing household chores doesn't feel too difficult but it is time consuming. However, it's a matter of tradition and culture. In villages, it's also a necessity."* Indu sees chores as part of gender norms meaning preparation for future roles as a wife and mother in society. She internalized that girl typically undertake a heavier load of domestic work, and these duties are time-consuming and an integral part of social tradition, culture, and necessity in village life.

Basana is another girl who responsibility dominates involuntary domestic household often being portrayed as female tasks. She shares her experience regarding gender roles in household work in this way:

> *When I was small kid, my mother used to teach me that cooking, washing and cleaning related domestic chores are basic (female's) girls' work, and I must work as it sharpen the skills of it. As we grow older, my parents start sending my brother to the field, he also takes him with father, especially during weekend. Instead, they ask me to perform tasks like cleaning, cooking, washing clothes and dishes and milking and looking after cattle. This pattern is normal to all. Everyone including my neighbor also says so. These are overloaded although not hazardous. Due to workload, I do not get time to during the morning barring post dinner for homework and assignment.*

Basana's experience is a classic example of the gender division of household chores, whereas girls are socialized from childhood into domestic roles. These reinforces embedded traditional norms that assign outdoor or field work as masculine tasks and cooking, cleaning, washing, and animal care as famine tasks. Whether just a routine chore needs to be done or in case of domestic emergency, the girl's study time affected. This gender division of work confines girls' opportunities for education. Substantial chore duties at home reduce girls' time for homework and extra curriculars affecting academic performance and retaining in school.

A teenage girl Chameli spends most of the time apart from school hours during the weekdays at domestic tasks basically termed as 'female job' in the rural society. She shares, *" I cut the grass, milk the cows/buffalos, and clean the house, while my grandmother can manage the cooking, and my father and mother can work longer hours in the fields or look for daily wage work without worry. My work is the hidden wage in our home. I hand most of the task my mother had been handling when I was small kid."* She shares that she is the support system in the family that makes her family poverty manageable as her work has a clear economic value for her family. This support system she contributes to her family is her expected duty to be a girl. Although grants the family stability in the cost of hindrance in schooling and independence.

Ganga highlights how her mother shaped her what girls need to do from very early. She shares her experiences as below:

> *Whenever my mother comes from the field in the evening and there is domestic work pending like chopping vegetables, unwashed dishes and dirty courtyard among others she shouts at me: why didn't I accomplish work? 'How could I handle the in-law's house after getting married in future? According to my mother, I must know how to carry out these things. What will my new family say after getting married if I fail to grasp the skills of domestic work? Therefore, she supervises me to do work at household although she is sick. This work is not just for now, but it is for the future as well. However, I have seen many boys participating in cooking and other type of household work in my village.*

This illustrates intergenerational transmission of patriarchal traditional norms as mothers ensure daughters meet societal expectations in future households. However, preparing girls for future domestic roles does not come without affecting

their personal development or educational opportunities. Despite being enrolled in school, it treats girls' education as a secondary choice.

Kamala is 15 a 15-year-old girl who lives with her mother in a village and studies in class 9. Since her father, who drives as a profession, lives in Kathmandu along with her elder brother and younger sister. Since her father and elder brother are not with her, her mother often has to devote herself to field-related work, and all the domestic chores, including cooking, washing, cleaning, and livestock care, often fall under her responsibility. In this regard, she shares:

> *From my earliest memory, this home has been my classroom. I learned by watching my mother's work, such as chopping vegetables, washing dishes, cutting the grass, and cooking food. Although she never says, 'this is your primary job,' her example was the lesson for me. As she goes outside the home for outdoor work, the responsibility to manage the house falls on my shoulders. I became a secondary mother, as I am responsible for all the domestic tasks, including grazing the goat, milking the cattle, and cooking the food. I frequently miss school classes whenever there is seasonal agricultural work.*

Kamala's involuntary responsibilities, such as chopping vegetables, washing dishes, cooking, grazing goats, and milking, are gender modeling through the silent observation of her mother's work. As her mother handles her father's role, her mother's role shifts to her mother's domain, and this highlights how girls in rural settings are socialized via maternal modeling into unpaid labor, perpetuating gender responsibilities. In class 9, Kamala's extensive responsibilities do not come without the expense of academic progress.

Being a girl, Eva also has a similar story to share. Her day begins and ends with household work such as cleaning, cooking, and scrubbing the house almost every day. As she shares, *"Before school, I handle kitchen jobs, while after school, I must take care of livestock and goats. My labor here is essential, as it allows my mother to work more on the farm and my father to take on extra wage labor.* This experience of Eva clearly manifests how the gender socialization of girls takes place in society. Girls are molded in a society where household capability is not just a skill, but a principal element of their value. When mothers shift to outdoor work, the household workload doesn't go to the fathers or brothers rather it shifts down to the daughters.

This unpaid household work for girls provides their parents with the freedom to work outside the home.

Girls often take responsibility for time-intensive indoor tasks, such as cooking, cleaning, washing, and livestock care, from a very young age through maternal modeling, supervision, or even learning by observation, while boys frequently engage in outdoor/field work, if not always. The experiences of participants reveal that household chores are often framed as inherent female jobs and essential for future roles in adult life. This division of work is however normalized by tradition and community, Household chores often conflict with girls schooling, hindering performance and independence.

Chore as Familial Duty and Contribution

Children see their household chore responsibilities from diverse perspectives. One of the prospects is to see it as a duty to serve the family. In this context, one of the respondents Arjun, who extends hands to his parents for various household works, shares that he is waking up early in the morning and goes to the cowshed to collect the milk and transport it home every morning and evening. Apart from that he also carries out chores of cleaning house, cooking food and occasional support in the family field–based works are his other responsibilities. He says, *"my chores help my family survive financially strained conditions. Despite being a school-going child, the main reason I support my family at home is to make things easier and more convenient for family members. I cook food so that they can eat directly coming from field and livestock related work with their exhausted body"*. Despite being a school-going child, Arjun undertakes various types of daily chore responsibilities reflecting a deep sense of duty to support the family. It also contributes to the economic needs of families indirectly. It underscores the cultural and economic obligation in rural family dynamics, where chores are not merely tasks but integral contributions to collective survival and well-being.

Basana, another respondent, shares that her parents work hard in the field for the sake of family as they are working to feed, educate, and fulfill their needs and desires as kids. She, being a daughter, feels it's her duty to provide support to them as much as they can. She takes on tasks like cooking or cleaning to support her parents, who are busy with labor-intensive jobs. She says, *"In our community, helping with chores is a traditional way to share responsibilities. Although parents do not expect too much from me, I feel that I need to extend my hands for their support whatever I*

can contribute to even though I am studying too." During my visit, I noticed Basana was giving water and grass to the buffaloes and preparing to milk them. Her tasks contribute to parental workload relief through cultural expectations as she expresses a strong sense of responsibility to hold up her parents, who work hard in the fields for family livelihood and survival. Despite her parents' expectations and her own commitments as a student, she feels compelled to extend her hands to household chores to alleviate their burden and reciprocate their efforts.

In the same context, another respondent, Kamala, argues that supporting parents in household work is traditional societal practice in society. She shares:

> *There are 21 students in my class. They all do some sort of work at home. My father, mother, grandfather and grandmother also shared to me their stories about how they would carry out various household tasks whenever they were small kids. I am also doing it. Fortunately, I am doing very little household chores in comparison to them as told by them. The basic idea for this is to assist parents, share responsibilities and cooperation based on our culture which is common for children as everyone does in the village.*

Kamala shares that the children's responsibilities of household chores are not merely tasks, but a shared familial duty rooted in Nepali societal tradition. Her practice is not determined by parental demands but by a societal norm as children's assistance is seen as part of family functioning and survival in a rural context.

Some children take family duty of engagement in chores as a matter of pride for helping the family. Jeevan, who never experienced the care of mother in his life as latter abandoned when he was 6-month-old was taken care of by grandmother, thereafter, takes assistance to family as a matter of repaying the family has provided him with debt.

> *My sister and I were abandoned by my mother at a very early age. As my grandmother said, my sister was 2.5 years old while I was 6 months old when she left us. Then we were taken care of by grandmother and father. My grandmother is very old now. Since there is my elderly grandmother on her last days on this earth and aging father and two-year senior sister in my family, I feel very proud to help them through engagement in household chores by understanding family situations. I contribute through chores to repay my parents for their sacrifices in providing food and shelter. I feel very proud because my grandmother, sister and father are everything to me.*

Jeevan's engagement in household chores is framed as a proud and voluntary act, driven by a deep sense of appreciation and love for his family rather than an imposed compulsion. This reflects a strong emotional motivation to support the family unit, particularly grandmother and the father's condition. It also highlights that chore serves as both a duty and an expression of familial loyalty, strengthening bonds in a family.

Other respondents term the emotional and social motivations behind their engagement. In this context, Dina shares that she feels like she should help her parents as they are getting old and every now and then they fall ill. She argues, *"if I don't take care of things, who will? If we don't help to raise cows, buffaloes, goats, or chickens, there will be no source of income. Without external resources and support, my participation in one household chores is a necessary contribution to keep our household running."* Ganga also shares that she must work because my parents are getting old, and when she works, she feels like it's for my own benefit. She says, *"At the same time, if I manage my studies along with it, it feels like everything will be fine, and it doesn't feel new or strange. Neighbors emphasize asking me that children's chores, like harvesting, are essential to family welfare."* Both Dina and Ganga express a strong sense of duty to support their aging parents, who are vulnerable to illness, emphasizing the critical role of children in maintaining family stability. Dina's perspective underscores a pragmatic and protective stance, recognizing that her involvement in chores is essential for the family's primary source of income while Ganga frames her participation in household work as both a necessity due to her parents' aging and a personal benefit, suggesting a sense of empowerment and agency in contributing to the family's welfare.

Participants of study share that household chores as familial duty and contribution as children's involvement in household chores in rural families are not just chores for economic obligation but also assistance to share survival and well-being. Children see chores as a vital duty to support and help their family livelihood as well as a duty to contribute to family function, survival and well-being. Being a responsible family member of a family, children feel that they should also extend their hands through engagement of household chores to alleviate parental burdens since the parents remain busy for the entire day in the fields. Children think that providing contribution through household chores like cooking and farming, fulfilling cultural expectations, supporting overworked parents, and filling resource gaps, is driven by a

sense of obligation and community norms. They take it to pay back their efforts towards their children. According to them, household chores help increase family unity and strengthen bonding thereby socializing them into cultural values of responsibility. Apart from that it increases familial loyalty, tools to support their aging and sick parents maintaining family stability.

Children's Participation in Domestic Chores as Economic Necessity

Household chores of children are often associated with the family's livelihood. Various household activities such as cooking, washing, cleaning, herding goats/cows, cutting grass, or working in the family field are not just chores but direct or indirect contributions to the family's economic survival.

Children's participation in household chores and the economic or poverty status of the family are among the principal areas of debate where children's contribution is a vital necessity for family livelihood in low-income households. In this context, Isha shared:

> *I am not from a well-off family. Agriculture and livestock are sources of earnings. I cook food, wash dishes and clothes, and collect grass and fodder for livestock so that my father, mother, brother, and sister-in-law can go to the field as well as for wage work during the peak agricultural season. As my sister and I undertake such chores, I notice that the children of the wealthy don't have to work as much as I do. My sister and I must work because my father remains busy running our family. I believe that my family's low socioeconomic status is one reason I engage in household chores.*

Isha associates the family's weak economic status with the responsibilities of household work. Her household chores allow her parents to participate in the family field. Due to parents' labor-intensive field work, it restricts them from contributing to household chores, forcing children to step in and take on jobs like cooking, cleaning, and sibling care. The outmigration of youths from villages to cities or even foreign countries is creating a labor deficit in villages, which keeps parents busy either on their own farms or in *Parma,* resulting in children being tasked with household chores.

Eva also points out the economic status of the family behind his participation in the household chores. She shares that her father works on the family farm as well as a wage laborer but does not find work regularly and her mother engages in farm related work apart from looking after the livestock. She believes that her parents do

all things to the best of their ability, but a weak economic status makes everything harder. She shares, *"I help my mother clean the house, wash dishes before and after school. Fetching water, tending to the cattle, cooking, and preparing for school consume most of my time. Sometimes, I also need to go to the farm with my father when he needs help planting, weeding, and harvesting crops. Besides that, I also take care of goats. I don't have fun doing these jobs, but I know it is important for my family, as there is no availability of an agricultural workforce due to rapid outmigration from villages."* Eva shares that her father's irregular wage labor and her mother's responsibilities for the farm and livestock necessitate her participation in the household. She believes she performs morning chores, such as cleaning, fetching water, and tending to the cattle, and assists her parents with field work due to the family's economic struggles. Her family's economic hardship forces children to work in household chores to supplement income or reduce expenses and family survival.

Hari highlights the economic constraints his family faces as the reason behind his participation in household chores. Hari has five members in the family, but the father is the only earning member of the family. According to him, the earnings of the father are adequate to cover the family expenses, including the medicines of my grandmother. That's why he works and does so much work at home helping family, so that he gets adequate time for wage earning. He says:

> *Every morning, before going to school, I help my mother look after the livestock and prepare food. After school, I go to the field where we grow vegetables and food plants. On weekends, I spend most of the time collecting firewood with my sister or helping my father in the fields. I do these chores to support my family so that they can earn a living. Although I wish not to indulge in such activities, I am unable to do so due to my family's economic status.*

Hari highlights that his father is the sole breadwinner of the five-member family. His participation in chores is out of compulsion due to his family's economic status, so that his father could devote time to other work, including wage labor.

Dina shares an emotion/story in a similar context. Her family status is what drives her engagement in household chores. She is doing many chores, such as planting, weeding, and harvesting, during peak agricultural seasons because of the family's financial struggles to cover day-to-day household costs. Her family relies on my contributions due to poverty and lack of economic alternatives. She shares, *"As I*

am told, my father got no parental property, including land. Neither does my father have stable employment. Therefore, agriculture and occasional labor are sources of livelihood. For that, my support through participation in household chores is essential for survival through tasks like keeping goats, chickens, and participation in seasonal farm-based work, etc., helps sustain daily family needs."

Financial constraints within the family are a major driving factor for Dina's involvement in household chores. The intergenerational poverty of her family forces her to perform essential chores like weeding and harvesting during peak agricultural seasons and raise livestock to support family sustenance as a critical survival strategy due to the lack of viable economic alternatives in an agriculture-based economy.

Children's participation in domestic chores is shaped by financial constraints and socio-economic contexts. Children in rural families are trapped in intergenerational poverty, and they need to perform essential chores supporting family sustenance as a critical for survival due to the lack of income alternatives in an agro-based economy. The rural economy is primarily agriculture-based, requiring manual labor, and children's contributions are vital due to the limited availability of human resources. Since family farming is not for commercial purposes, people cannot hire outside labor; therefore, family contribution, including the support of children, is vital. According to respondents, parents' labor-intensive and long-hour work limits the time available for household tasks. Children's involvement in chores helps alleviate family poverty, freeing their parents to pursue income-generating work. Likewise, it contrasts wealthy children, who rarely do chores, with rural children, whose significant contributions are driven by poverty and a tradition tying work to livelihood. Likewise, participants believe that rural families do not have regular income from wage labor or farming; therefore, children's chores either supplement income sources, reduce expenses, or allow their parents to go for wage labor for family survival. These perspectives illustrate how economic necessity compels children in impoverished or rural settings to undertake chores, thereby supporting family survival and highlighting workload disparities based on socio-economic status.

Chores as Means to Prevent Negative Behaviors

Children enjoy playing and socializing with friends, in addition to their educational tasks. However, there is always a lot of risk if parents do not pay enough attention to them. Rather than indulging in disruptive or bad activities like playing cards, smoking, and drinking-related activities, engaging in chores is viewed as a

productive use of free time as it reduces the risk of developing bad habits and fosters discipline that aids academic engagement.

In this context, Eva describes chores as tools at least to keep them focused away from negative peer influences. Spare time is always dangerous as it provides opportunities to meet many peers and develop friendships with the wrong colleagues. She thinks small amounts of household work are fine because they keep them disciplined and prevent them from wandering here and there due to too much spare time. She states, *"excessive free time may lead to boredom, nurturing disruptive behaviors such as defiance, aggression, or absenteeism, and may seek inspiration through risky activities or negative peer influences. This situation influences children's likelihood of catching up with bad habits and even committing crimes."* Eva sums up that household chores at home (in small amounts) are beneficial, as they promote discipline and prevent idleness.

In a similar context, Chameli shares that too much free time puts the children at risk of falling into the company of the wrong people. Her parents share with her that household responsibilities prevent a person from falling into bad company and do not allow time or opportunity to drift from discipline. Otherwise, it increases exposure to peers engaging in undesirable activities, such as substance use, vandalism, or delinquency, due to a lack of supervision or purpose. She shares, *"I agree with my parents to some extent that when children do household and farm work, it makes us responsible, and we do not get a chance to wander or roam aimlessly. Those who contribute to the household responsibility become hardworking and more focused on educational goals."* Chameli believes that household responsibilities help disassociate children from negative influences and engaging them in household and farm work fosters responsibility, preventing them from wandering or roaming aimlessly.

Other participants, Jeevan shares, *"idle time correlates with getting fewer chances to develop practical, social, or life skills through chores, which also hinders preparation for future careers."* Likewise, Isha opines, *"Prolonged idleness contributes to feelings of boredom, loneliness, or low self-esteem, potentially leading to anxiety or depression."* Meanwhile, Hari shares, *"idleness erodes a sense of purpose and discipline, diminishing their drive to set or achieve goals. Without structured routines, they may struggle to develop time management or self-regulation skills."*

Household chores are a vital tool for preventing negative behaviors in children by fostering discipline and responsibility. According to respondents, household chores help children to shape their behavior, attitude, morality and discipline. Small amounts of chores promote discipline and prevent excessive spare time, which can lead to negative peer influences and harmful habits, including potential criminal behavior. According to respondents, the higher the free time, the more chances of developing behavioral issues, feelings of boredom, and loneliness, which lead to anxiety or depression and reduced motivation. Due to a lack of family supervision, it may lead them to nurture wrong behaviors such as aggression, undesirable activities, such as substance use, playing cards, and drinking alcohol. By engaging in household or farm work, children develop positive behaviors, attitudes, and essential life skills. Chores limit opportunities for undisciplined actions and disassociate them with negative influences, keeping them constructively occupied and socially grounded. Respondents note that lack of physical activity led to poor fitness, but children's household chores keep them fit and agile.

Effects of Excessive Household Chores

In this section, I address subsidiary questions of how their domestic responsibilities influence their ability to complete homework and prepare for exams. I have explored children's construction of the meaning of their chores through three lenses: familial compulsion, cultural and traditional practice, and economic reality.

Children highlight that the engagement in chores has some apparent benefits to the children. However, they have also shared that when excessive m it has some negative consequences as well. In this section, the impact of chores on children's physical and emotional states, as well as the educational costs associated with them, has been discussed.

Chores Cause Physical and Mental Stress

Respondents have emphasized the traumatic and mental toll of chores. In this context, one of the participants, Arjun, shares that he has occasionally experienced tiredness and physical trauma due to the engagement in field-related work, especially during planting and harvesting seasons. When he does heavier work or goes out into the fields, it is burdensome, which leads to fatigue. He says, *“I particularly feel this while transporting animal dung/manure before planting maize and transporting harvested maize to the home. Due to fatigue, I insist on going to bed early without doing my homework. Due to heavy workloads, sometimes it also causes a lot of stress,*

not being able to go to school because of physical exhaustion, and skipping classes impacts educational attainment and achievement." Arjun highlights that child who engage in extensive household or field work face some sort of burden, leading to fatigue and insufficient time for exam preparation, which hinders studying.

Likewise, Chameli also shares her feelings of stress while engaging in household chores in this context. She states that she is currently responsible for many household responsibilities. She notes, *"On one hand, I have responsibilities of fetching grass fodders and grazing livestock, and on the other, I am having the burden of periodic exams, unit tests, and homework. After exams, the expectations of parents, teachers, relatives, and neighbors about the results increase stress. I feel like if I didn't have to do so much work, I could have studied better."* According to Chameli, periodic exams, unit tests, and homework add further burden to her. Due to intense engagement and detaching from friends, she feels left out. Long hours of household chores and staying up too late at night to study lead her to sleep deprivation and mental exhaustion. Post-exam expectations from family, teachers, and neighbors increase her stress. She believes that reducing her household work would have improved her academic performance.

In the same context, Basana highlights both physical and mental pressure resulting from her involvement in chores. She says that when she engages in intensive physical work, such as transporting paddy, wheat, and manure from the field, it causes physical fatigue, making it difficult to focus on studying and completing homework. Too much work also puts her in a state of mental stress, hindering attending school or exam preparation occasionally. Household chores such as cutting grass, climbing trees, lifting heavy loads, cooking, and tasks associated with various tools like axes, sickles, shovels, hoes, and others can be hazardous and lead to traumatic accidents, including burns, cuts, falls, or other injuries. She shares:

> *The prolonged time of indulging in the household chores is detrimental to getting less time for rest, study, and meals. Likewise, participation in household chores leaves them little or no room for personal choices or interests. Physical exhaustion from chores impacts my ability to learn and concentrate on education. The burden of exams and homework also makes me uncomfortable. Likewise, failing to grasp the lesson taught by teachers or being intimidated by a teacher's behavior has caused stress and worry.*

Basana shares excessive and intensive chores that put her at mental health risk. The physical demands of chores cause fatigue, making it difficult for her to focus on her homework and exams, which in turn increases stress and discomfort.

Participants believe that their participation in household chores is causing them physical and mental stress. Household chores, including those on family farms, involve long hours of work, and lifting heavy weights can have a negative impact on a child's developing body. Excessive household or field chores, or prolonged engagement in household chores, significantly impact children's physical and emotional well-being, leading to fatigue and stress. Children who handle substantial household tasks alongside periodic exams, unit tests, and homework face overwhelming burdens that hinder study time and focus. The physical demands of intensive chores cause fatigue, making it challenging to concentrate on academic responsibilities. As part of children's chores, tools like axes, sickles, shovels, hoes, and others can be hazardous and lead to traumatic accidents, such as burns, cuts, falls, or injuries. Due to intense engagement and detachment from friends, they feel a sense of being left out. Reducing the amount of household work could alleviate these pressures, fostering better academic performance and emotional well-being.

Low Performance and Low Grade

Regarding household chores, children participating in them often refer to the hindrances to their quality of study and the availability of time. In this context, Fatteman says that his engagement in household work is detrimental to educational compromise, especially during the seasonal harvesting, weeding, or planting seasons, deterring school attendance and causing students to arrive late or pull out of school for days. He says, *"Due to long hours of work, I become tired, which makes it hard to focus on homework or studies. Apart from that, too many responsibilities decrease my time to study at home. It also causes a delay in completing my homework. It reduces my time and hampers me to prepare for exams. Tasks like looking after siblings, fetching water, or grazing cattle lead to situations where I am unable to study with focus"*. Fatteman explains that excessive household chores cause fatigue, making it challenging for him to concentrate on studying, as they decrease his study time, leading to incomplete homework and insufficient exam preparation.

Another participant, Jeevan, also faced jeopardy with education due to household tasks. As he lives alone, there is a lot of work to be done for him, and he spends more than 8 hours on household work. Due to this, he does not get enough

time to study. He says, *"Had I lived with my parents, it wouldn't be so hard for me, and I could focus on studying more. The main burden for me is the goats, as I need to cut grass and collect them for the goats. Since I must do household chores, cleaning, cooking, eating, and looking after the goats myself, it's hard to find time to study."* Jeevan says that these chores directly cause loss of time for attending school, studying, and completing homework. He sums up that living alone requires him to handle numerous household tasks, which negatively impact his studies. He believes that living with his parents would alleviate these burdens, allowing him to focus more on his studies.

In the case of Isha, another participant argues that daily household chores, as well as the long distance between school and home, also cause her a lot of tiredness, which is detrimental to her educational progress. She says that her major household chores during weekdays are cooking and washing dishes. She and her twin sister share these chores together. Apart from this, during the weekends/holidays, she and her sister go together to collect grass and firewood in the nearby jungle. During weekdays, they do not have time to do basic chores, as our school is located far away from home and it takes 1-1.30 hours one way. Her total hours of household chore participation are 6 hours a day. She notes, *"daily traveling to school in addition to household chores makes me very tired, which makes it hard to focus. Apart from that, a full day of school and several hours of chores leave me feeling tired, dedicating time to homework, reviewing lessons, or preparing for exams. This makes an impact on our homework and exam preparation. And it has been reflected in my year-end results or grade."* She also shares that a lot of time is occupied in travelling, which leaves insufficient time for exam preparation. Isha states that long journeys to school are exhausting to her, making it difficult for her to focus on education. This results in incomplete homework and hampers exam preparation.

Hari also shares a similar situation. He spends 5-6 hours a day on household chores on weekends. Apart from carrying loads of firewood, grass, fodder, and harvested crops, it often causes strain, fatigue, and back pain to him. He has also suffered cuts on my foot due to tools like a spade, a sickle, and an axe during fieldwork. Household chores can reduce the time available for studying, homework, and exam preparation. While cutting grass and firewood, and climbing trees, there is also a risk of falling, cutting, and injury. However, her sister, who covers up his responsibilities, is making it easier. He shares:

> *The difficult nature of chores leaves me physically and mentally fatigued, making it difficult for me to concentrate and learn effectively. After school, I work briefly grazing goats and collecting grass and fodder for a kettle. Then, I don't have to work in the evening; my sisters take care of everything, including cooking, washing, milking buffalo and cows. I haven't failed the examinations yet, but the grade that I scored is very low. However, since my elder sister has completed her school, she extends her hand to support me, making it easier to concentrate on studying. Otherwise, on Saturdays and holidays, I would have to engage more in the fieldwork.*

Hari highlights the impact of long hours, heavy, and hazardous work on his educational outcomes, particularly in relation to household chores. The 5-6 hours of engagement on chores during weekends, combined with after-school tasks, reduce the time and energy available for academic work, resulting in lower grades and educational compromise.

Ganga also shares the experience of how it is impacting her. She is responsible for a range of household chores, including cooking meals, washing clothes, cleaning dishes, and caring for her parents, who often fall ill. Their sickness puts her burden of household work further. It even prevents her from attending school for several days and limits the time she spends studying. She shares,

> *I don't have much time to study or complete homework in the morning, as I'm often occupied with chores. When I spend excessive time on chores, I get less time for rest. Likewise, my life is focused on chores and family needs, and therefore, I get little room for personal choices. As household chores often consume the time I would otherwise spend playing, they also hinder my ability to socialize with friends or engage in leisure activities.*

According to Ganga, her parents' illnesses add further burden to her household chores. This situation at home makes it difficult for her to find time for studying or completing homework due to caregiving responsibilities.

Regarding how it could hamper, Dina shares similar experiences. Except 9.30-4.30, which is a regular school day, from very early morning until the evening meal, she remains busy with household chores. She does not have time to even turn a page of a book or copy. After the meal, she sits to study and do homework. In addition to this, the assignments and homework given by teachers make her anxious and overwhelmed regarding what to do and what not to do. She states, *"This affects the*

accomplishments of my assignments and hampers exam preparation due to time insufficiency, thereby causing lower academic performance. It also causes a delay in submitting the teacher's assignments due to the time spent on tasks such as cleaning or weeding fields. This becomes detrimental for low marks in examinations." Dina highlights a struggle between household chores and academic performance, explaining how excessive home responsibilities surely lead to a compromise in academic success. She further points out that she has reduced free time due to intensive household chores, which span from early morning to evening meals, preventing her from engaging in academic tasks, such as reading or completing assignments during the day.

Another respondent, Arjun, shares a similar plight. According to him, during exam preparation or while doing homework, household responsibilities prevent him from studying due to a lack of time. In such cases, when he goes herding, he carries his notebooks with him, and even while looking after his younger siblings, he tries to read books alongside him. He also says that he even reads notebooks on the way while travelling to and from school on foot. He, however, says, *"Household chores consume a lot of time, and many household chores require heavy lifting, long hours, so it is physically challenging to my body. Physical fatigue from household chores can impact learning and concentration in school. To compensate for the inadequate time, I stay late to study, often due to chores that deprive me of good sleep. The amount and intensity of chores, together with academic demands, is traumatic."*

Arjun clarifies that household responsibilities disrupt his exam preparation and homework, leaving him with insufficient time for study. To cope, he brings his notebooks and books while herding and trying to read them, all while looking after his younger siblings.

Table 1

The Nature and Impact of Children's Household Chores on Schooling

Theme	Key Findings	Specific Details
Nature & scope of chores	A strong division exists between day-to-day, light indoor chores and intensive, seasonal outdoor farm work.	- Weekdays: Light chores like cooking and cleaning. Time engaged is 3-6 hours daily. - Weekends/Holidays: Heavy farm-based work like planting, harvesting. Time engaged 8-10 hours in a day

		- Gender, family composition like ill or aging parents and absence of members and economic status determine the type/amount of work are influencing factors
Framing household chore role	Cultural and traditional practice: Chores are a normalized and socializes children into future roles	- Practice transferred through generations - Normalized because everyone gets involved in it - Imparts discipline, duty, and vital life skills - Transmission from one generation another and maternal modeling - Economic value and unpaid labor
	Household Chores Preparing Girls for Future Role	- Normalization and cultural internalization -Girls are socialized into indoor chores as preparation for post-married household roles - Socialization for future roles - Gendered division of work
	Familial Duty & Contribution: Chores are seen as a necessary and proud contribution to family survival and well-being.	- Aiding overworked or aging/sick parents. - Ensuring family income from livestock and agriculture. - A way to repay parents for their sacrifices. - Strengthens family bonds and unity.
	Financial obligation: Domestic chores are inevitable due to poverty and agrarian economy	- Children's chores fill resource gaps, allowing parents to engage in labor work to earn livelihood - Vital for survival of low-income families who cannot afford hired labor and teenage children fill gap of labor-deficit due to outmigration - Children from wealthier families do less work

	Prevent negative conducts: Chores viewed as constructive use of time inspiring discipline and preventing idleness	- Keeps children occupied, away from bad company, negative peer influences - Prevents boredom, otherwise leads to delinquency, substance use or weak self-esteem - Nurtures a sense of purpose and structure
Negative effects of excessive chores	Physical and mental stress: Demanding chore schedules lead to fatigue, injury risks, and psychological strain	- Fatigue, body aches, injuries from tools, and hazardous tasks are physical stress - Stress from balancing school and work, sleep deprivation, anxiety over academic performance, and feeling left out from social activities are mental stress
	Educational compromise and poor grades: Excessive chores reduce the time and energy available for schooling, leading to poor showing in exams	- Reduced time for homework, exam preparation, and lesson review - Less concentration in class due to exhaustion - Causes tardiness, absenteeism and unfinished assignments - Results in poor grades and educational achievement is compromised

Despite the apparent benefits, respondents believe that children's participation in household chores leads to educational compromise and, consequently, lower grades. Household chores such as milking cows/buffaloes, feeding livestock, fetching water, preparing meals, tending crops, collecting firewood, or caring for younger siblings often cause children to miss school completely, arrive late, or leave early. This leads them to skip lessons and disrupt the learning process. The agricultural season also prevents school attendance for days or weeks. Children's physical tension and exposure to hazards further disrupt school attendance and performance. Chores cause late accomplishments of assignments, resulting in poor preparation for examinations and lower academic achievement, grades, and poor mastery of subjects. Household chores also limit their participation in after-school activities, such as clubs, sports, or remedial classes, which are crucial for both academic and social development. Compromises in education, becoming responsible for a cycle of

poverty, or even dropping out of school, are less likely to secure better jobs in the future.

Essence of Chapter

This chapter has analyzed and discussed a total of three themes generated from the interviews with all 11 respondent children. They experienced the nature and scope of household children's chores, both on weekdays and holidays, as well as children's framing of their household chore roles, and the adverse impacts of excessive household chores on children.

According to respondents, they engage in two types of household chores: light indoor chores during weekdays and intensive seasonal farm work during holidays. Children often frame household chores as a familial duty and contribution, social norms and traditional practices, and economic necessity and livelihood options. Likewise, the respondent children also frame household Chores as means to prevent negative behaviors, as it impacts educational compromise and low grades and causes physical and mental stress

CHAPTER V
STRATEGIES AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS TO COPE WITH HOUSEHOLD CHORES AND SCHOOLING

In the previous chapter, I addressed research questions regarding how household responsibilities shape their daily school experience. Providing various insights regarding types of household chores and their relation to shaping children's day-to-day schooling and experience.

This chapter addresses the key question of in what ways children manage their household duties while continuing their education. I have explored how children make strategies to manage dual responsibilities of education and chores, or in balancing household chores and schooling. It has been explored from four lenses as presented below.

Dichotomy of Household Chores: Barrier and Complement to Education and Careers

This section addresses the subsidiary question of children's understanding of their participation in household chores in relation to their educational and career goals from two perspectives. The first is that children's excessive engagement in household chores serves as a barrier, while the second is that children's engagement in household chores is complementary to achieving educational and future career goals.

In this context, Dina, one of the respondents, highlights both positive and negative outcomes of her engagement in household tasks. She has been engaging in various daily activities, including cooking, washing, cleaning, and taking care of livestock, among others, and only studies in the late evening. She shares that prolonged hours of these activities are obstacles to her schooling. Because there’s neither enough time to do homework nor time to go to school every day due to household chores. It gives her a lot of pain. Time-intensive chores limit her study opportunities, resulting in incomplete homework and inadequate exam preparation. However, the more pain she feels, the more effort she puts into academic tasks. *“I feel like I should turn this pain into great success to show others. But intense household work and farm work are time-consuming and physically challenging. The more I get involved in household chores at home, the weaker my academic performance*

becomes. The less I get involved in household chores, the more time I get to study," she says. She assumes extensive household responsibilities, which constrain educational opportunities and cause emotional distress, even though it also fuels transforming adversity into success.

Another respondent, Fatteman, echoes the same sentiment as above, highlighting the impact of intensive household chores in comparison to basic chores. He says,

> *Basic household work is fine for me. My father always tells us that if you stay without work, you will become starved, or you cannot get to eat [haat khali bhayo bhane Mukh khali hunchha]. Likewise, learning the tasks of cooking, washing, taking care of siblings and farm-based work equips children with skills for potential careers in hospitality or agriculture and management. It helps individuals become self-reliant or entrepreneurs, such as opening a small tea shop or selling crafts. Therefore, I feel happy that I am helping my parents, as my family is not in a good situation economically.*

Fatteman shares that work and life are closely intertwined, and it is a natural part of life's survival. He emphasizes the positive roles because practical skills gained through children's household chores provide a foundation for future vocational careers.

Ganga points out the opposite relation between intense farm work on education of children. According to her, children from families with weak financial conditions often work a lot. She felt that doing too much work can be problematic in terms of concentrating and allocating time to study. Additionally, performing others' work (permanently) can always be physically demanding. Basic household chores, such as cooking, cleaning, and washing, are manageable, but doing outside work is not easy. She says, *"I believe that too much work has a negative impact on education. Carrying heavy household chores can cause fatigue, reduce concentration in class and academic engagement, and ultimately lead to poorer grades by hindering educational outcomes and career aspirations.* Ganga emphasizes that children from low-income families are hindered in their ability to focus on education due to excessive advocating for limiting such work to necessary household chores.

In this context, Hari floats the arguments over life skills vs weak education. He feels that household work for children can be both a steppingstone to success and

a barrier. Too much idle time with children can also be harmful, as it exposes them to the risk of adopting bad habits.

> *No matter how much I study, I ultimately need life skills, which I learn from doing household chores. Studying alone isn't enough. Whether I get a job or start a business, I need skills like cooking or gardening. However, household work can also be problematic because it prevents us from focusing on our studies, making me weak in examinations. If studies suffer, I might end up doing the same farming or manual labor in the future.*

Hari stressed the household could work as both a valuable source of life skills and a potential obstacle that can hinder academic focus and future opportunities if it becomes excessive. He opines that moderate chore engagement teaches practical skills, such as time management and life skills, which support educational and career aspirations. He also highlights the importance of learning discipline and teamwork through tasks such as cleaning or caregiving.

Basana focuses on the benefits, especially the overall development of children through their engagement in basic household chores. According to her, doing too much work can reduce the time available for studying and lead to missing school classes. Due to missed classes, there is anxiety about falling behind friends, lower motivation, and academic confidence, and it can limit future career paths. However, she argues that moderate engagement in household chores is not bad. It contributes to family assistance and cooperation. It also helps build skills such as managing livestock or repairing agricultural tools, teaches practical problem-solving, inspires interests in careers, and enhances career readiness. She says, *"That's why I give as much attention to my studies as I do to my responsibilities. The harder I work, the more it motivates me to move forward. Household work nurtures leadership and teamwork as it helps collaboration and builds interpersonal skills, preparing us for roles requiring leadership."* Basana holds a positive view towards basic household chores as they work complementary to the family livelihoods, while the heavy workload may reduce the time of students in their studies, perpetuating

Another respondent, Eva, opines that doing household chores helps because it teaches her that work makes it easier to do any kind of work in the future. She has various responsibilities at home, in addition to her studies. She normally hears from parents and villagers that without jobs, you do not get to eat [kam nagari mam paidaiana]. *"Therefore, I feel that through this work we get a livelihood, and another*

reason is that it is helping me develop essential life skills that will be useful in the future. For example, if I want to become an athlete tomorrow, the journeys I take to school, walking through fields, and the running I do while herding goats or cows are helping me build the skills to become an athlete." Eva highlights that household chores alongside studies develop essential life skills, like athletic abilities from walking and herding, preparing me for future work.

The respondents' view on the one hand, that heavy domestic chore loads are perceived as barriers to study time and academic performance due to physical pain, fatigue, or lack of time for homework/assignments, exam preparation, while basic domestic chores are not necessarily bad, rather they play a positive and complementary role in achieving educational and future career goals. Spending prolonged hours on household chores has a negative impact on the educational achievements of children. It is because household chores and the responsibility of caring for children force them to miss school classes, especially during farming seasons, disrupting the continuity of learning. Engaging long hours in household chores limits study opportunities, causing reduced preparation for exams, leading to gaps in knowledge and thereby lower academic performance. Carrying heavy household chores can cause fatigue, reducing concentration in class and academic engagement, which in turn leads to poorer grades by hindering educational outcomes and career aspirations.

Likewise, children's household chores, such as cooking, washing, taking care of siblings, and farm-based work, equip them with skills for potential careers in hospitality, agriculture, and management. These practical skills provide a foundation for vocational careers, enabling self-reliance or entrepreneurship, such as opening a small eatery or selling household products in the community. Balancing chores like cleaning and caring for siblings with schoolwork teaches valuable skills such as time management and perseverance. Household chores involve collaboration or responsibility, which builds interpersonal skills to prepare children for roles requiring leadership or community engagement.

Smart Schedule: Mornings for Chores, Evenings for Study, Farm Work on Breaks

As I observed the children regarding their involvement in chore environments in their day-to-day life, I came to know that they either themselves or their parents allocate a specific time period of the day for their household chores and study

(homework or exam preparation) to ensure both responsibilities are met without compromising schooling as much as possible. Regarding the question: How do various types of household chores that rural school-going children engage in shape their daily schooling experience? The interviewees responded based on their practices at home and experiences, as well as the types of activities they are involved in, along with the associated factors.

One of the common responses from the respondents was that they are involved in a range of household chores in the morning, and as a result, they do not have time to study or complete their homework. The time they have for homework is from the evening meal until midnight. I asked the interviewees how they strategies to ensure they complete their schoolwork while fulfilling their responsibilities at home, or divide their time between school and household chores

In this context, Chameli shares that she does not have adequate time for homework and study, and therefore, she tries to complete her homework at school itself. She revises lessons on the way to school (walking while reading), especially during exam time, if she can't study enough at home. She says:

> *In the morning, I don't even have time to study a single word, as I have numerous domestic responsibilities, such as cooking, cleaning, and others. In the evening, after returning from school, I must do additional chores in addition to cooking evening meals. In addition to this, school is missing many times a month. Due to a lot of farm-related work, I frequently need to take leave from school. I miss school classes about 5 to 7 days a month. In the evening, after dinner, I start doing homework around 8 PM. During exam time, if I can't study enough, I study even on the way to school. If I have free time and manage to get things done, I even do my homework at school.*

As I also observed, Chameli strategically manages her time to study in the evening, from around 8 PM onwards, because she gets busy with chores in the morning. She is frequently absent from school due to farm/household responsibilities. She completes her homework even at school, during free time, or between classes.

The fate of Isha is also not entirely different. In addition to engaging in household chores in the morning and completing household work, homework/study in the evening, Isha was also found to have engaged in farm work and time-consuming, tedious tasks like cutting firewood during holidays, including Saturdays. As I observed her, I found that she was involved in cooking food, washing dishes, and

preparing for school in the morning. According to her, she gets time to study only after the evening meal. During homework or exam time, my mom and sister-in-law cook food and wash dishes. She says, *"During exams, I don't do big or time-consuming tasks. Household and farm work, such as cutting firewood or fieldwork, is typically done on Saturdays or during long holidays. My parents arranged it accordingly."* Isha handles morning chores, such as cooking and dishwashing, and studies in the evening after meals. While carrying out the homework on regular days or during the exam periods, her mother and sister-in-law extend their hands to help Isha, whereas long-hour tasks like cutting firewood and fieldwork are scheduled for weekends or holidays.

Basana's household chore routine is not fixed but flexible. Her family members are cooperative and extend their support, especially during examinations and periods of high study load. To compensate for the inadequate study time, she either stays up late at night or gets up early the next morning. She says:

> *Even while working at home, my family tells me that they should take care of my chores and ask me to study. Sometimes, I balance both household work and studies by managing my time effectively. At times, I express my inability to carry out any chores. If I miss studying or doing homework due to work and can't prepare for exams, I continue to study late into the night or wake up early in the morning to study. I also sometimes study while doing certain light tasks.*

Basana balances household work and studies through effective time management. When chores interfere with schooling or exam preparation, she studies late at night or even early in the morning, and sometimes studies while performing light tasks to maximize time.

During my field visit, I noticed that Fatteman's primary household chore during busy farming periods is caring for younger siblings, allowing parents to focus on planting or harvesting. As part of indulging in household chores, especially during times like planting crops, harvesting, or bringing in the crops, his responsibility is only to look after my younger siblings. He shares, *"My parents leave me with the siblings and get involved in planting or harvesting themselves. While looking after my siblings, I complete my homework and any other study-related tasks. There's no time to study in the morning, but after eating dinner in the evening, I study and do homework late into the night. On holidays, I study while looking after my younger*

sibling". Fatteman manages time by caring for siblings during parents' farming tasks, studying late at night after dinner, and multitasking homework with sibling care on holidays, ensuring schoolwork progress despite no morning study time and busy household responsibilities. Since morning study time is unavailable to him, he studies and completes his homework late at night, after dinner.

Children have also revealed that to make the most of their free time for studying, they often accomplish household chores quickly or perform chores and study simultaneously to maximize time for homework at home. Interviewees report that they often study while performing light chores or speed through tasks to free up study time, which helps them balance their studies. Dina does the same. Apart from studying in the evening, she even studies and works simultaneously. Apart from school, her main study time is from 8 PM to 10 PM in the evening. She carries out the revision of the chapter while doing chores. Sometimes he forgets the answer to the questions, so he writes them on small pieces of paper and studies them. She says, *"Even when I go far to cut grass, I study a little bit. I don't carry a notebook, but I take pages from a book and read them. During exam time, my parents help with small tasks, allowing me to focus on preparing for the exams. The bigger pending tasks I do after finishing the exams"*. Dina's primary study time is in the evenings after meals. During exams, parents handle small tasks, allowing them to focus on preparation, with larger tasks deferred until after exams.

Eva shares her strategy for allocating time for studying over household chores. She finishes household chores first and then makes time to study. During exam time, she only does essential and small tasks at home, managing my time by doing the remaining tasks after the exams. The easiest time for her to do homework and study is after eating dinner in the evening. Eva strategically manages time by completing chores before studying, focusing on small tasks during exams and deferring others, studying after dinner, and allocating specific times for work and study to balance household responsibilities and academic progress effectively.

One strategy to balance chores is for children to delay heavy household tasks until after key academic milestones, such as exams. Children negotiate with family members to prioritize study during exam periods, postponing heavy chores until after examinations. In this context, Ganga shares her experience that, although she hasn't established a fixed routine, she studies and does her homework in the evening. It is because there's no time to study in the morning; evening is the only time for studying.

Planting crops, harvesting, and bringing in the crops usually happen during holidays. Especially during examination time, she requests that her parents not schedule any planting or harvesting activities, but to postpone them until after the examinations. She says, *"I only engage in essential tasks and study. Other tasks are done only after the exams are over. On other days, I ask them not to plan it during the weekdays to avoid missing school classes due to responsibilities of planting and harvesting crops."* Ganga's parents also arrange farm work on holidays most of the time. In case of missing classes, she asks her friends about it the next day.

Regarding children's balancing chores and education through smart chore schedules, Children design a strategy in which most of them engage in household chores in the morning while allocating evening time, especially after a meal, for study. Children also request their parents to schedule major seasonal planting and harvesting activities on holidays/Saturdays. Children request to minimize the workload during the peak of academic time, acknowledging their inability to continue with intensive and time-consuming household chores. Likewise, they also prioritize essential chores during weekdays while non-urgent tasks during weekends to ensure their participation does not conflict with academic terms. It has also been found that children seeking help from parents or siblings take on additional chores during peak academic periods, allowing them to focus on studies. Likewise, to review lessons while engaging in light chores, children also opt for study tools such as flashcards (pieces of paper) and practice pages.

Guidance from Parents in Balancing Chores and Schooling with Support and Flexibility

To allow children more time for studying, parents may take over some chores themselves or adjust others. Participants in the study report that their parents also encourage their children and provide support for their educational efforts, making study materials available on time. Children describe their parents motivating them to study.

To learn how to balance schooling and household chores, I asked about how parents and extended family members support children in managing both work and education. In this context, Arjun shares that his parents haven't put much pressure on him regarding work. His family members don't force him to do work either. He contributes as much as he can on his own. Even when there is work to be done, they encourage him to focus on his studies rather than forcing him to do chores.

Sometimes, when there's a lot of work at home, other family members help him with my tasks. Arjun argues, *"This ensures that I don't have to spend too much time on work or deal with excessive tasks, especially during exam periods. They avoid involving me in work as much as possible and tell me to focus on studying. I don't feel any pressure or hassle because I manage it in a balanced way. I don't prioritize household chores in a way that disrupts my studies."*

Another respondent, Basana, shares that one of her measures to balance the chores and Education is seeking parental support or sharing the chore responsibility. She says, *"To ensure that the children do not feel pressure from work and chores do not cause stress, my parents encourage me and make frequent interactions with me."* According to Basana, to make the chores less burdensome and balance them, her parents distribute household chores in a balanced way, considering age, capabilities, and study time for children. Their belief is that children should work as well as focus more on their studies.

In stark contrast, Chameli, however, hardly gets support from parents and siblings. She must do everything by herself, no matter what. According to her, she lives with her grandparents, who are elderly and unable to do much work. Her grandmother, who frequently falls ill, hardly helps her with household chores, except for cooking and occasionally washing dishes. She does not live with her siblings, as they live with her father and mother separately. Chameli says, *"There is nobody to share my responsibilities except aged grandmothers. I must do everything by myself."*

Dina, however, shares the good words, care, and solace she has received from her parents, guardians, and neighbors regarding her intense engagement in household responsibilities despite her school attendance and educational responsibilities. She shares:

> *My elder siblings are not with me and have left home to earn their livelihood. Due to old age and frequent illness, my parents can't do the work themselves, so I must help them as it is unavoidable. My neighbors advise me to prioritize my studies overwork, suggesting that if I work hard now, I won't have to struggle later in life. My parents also express their unhappiness over my inability to concentrate on studying due to my engagement in household work. They also encourage me that if I study hard, I won't have to suffer later. This is based on the experience that my elder siblings regret not continuing their studies and quitting school early; hence, they are now facing hardships.*

Dina has no other way but to indulge in chores due to issues of frequent sickness and aging parents, while her elder siblings have gone away from home for jobs. Although her parents have good wishes for her studies, they are not in a position to facilitate them.

Fatteman also has no alternative but to complete the tasks due to his parents' busy schedule, which is unavoidable for them. When he is sick or not feeling well, his parents cover up with the tasks that he usually does. When there's a lot of work at home, his grandmother and father also lend a hand. Since his grandmother remains ill most of the time, my father and mother are often busy with fieldwork, so they can't help much.

In the case of Isha, she shares another interesting experience. Whenever her parents are free from their daily responsibilities, they cover my responsibilities at home. When she is overburdened with school responsibilities or an examination is approaching, she tells her parents, and they occasionally take care of her routine work. When they realize that she is overburdened with too much work, her family members adjust their schedules and share her responsibilities if possible. She says, *"I find myself in a situation where I must do both household chores and schooling, and I manage my time by doing them together."*

In the case of Hari, his sister covers up his chores responsibilities that he is supposed to accomplish. He shares that schooling is precious and without it, he can't stand on his own feet. He tries to accomplish the given responsibilities, but it is not always possible. His mother is not with him. His sister is like his mother. He studies in the evenings, but only if his sister covers up his chores; otherwise, he studies only at night. He shares, *"During exams, my sister tells me to study and covers up my work. During farming season, I go to work in the fields to plant crops, weed, and harvest. At such times, I work during the day and study only at night."* Most of the time, he and his sister share the household chores at home. Sometimes, his sister tells him that she will handle them and asks him to sit down for his studies.

Kamala, however, has different views to share. Although her father also lives away from her, she lives with her mother, who always shows her love and support. However, basic household work is unavoidable. She lives with my mother. They share day-to-day work. However, Kamala must engage in basic household chores. Although Kamala's father lives in Kathmandu due to his professional responsibilities, he encourages her to continue studying and has a deep realization of the importance of

education and schooling. Kamala says, *"Whenever he comes home, he helps me with the work. He always emphasizes that work should not interfere with my education."* She, however, shares that, due to having just two members of her family living at home, some household responsibilities are unavoidable for her.

Parents' support and guidance in balancing chores & schooling with support & flexibility are some of the measures that help children balance day-to-day chores responsibilities together with schooling and academic activities. Participants take that upon the request of children; parents adjust chore schedules by assigning tasks like fetching water or cooking to weekends or holidays to prioritize school attendance and study. Likewise, parents also adjust the chores responsibilities based on age and capability, giving children lighter chores for small children while demanding tasks for older ones. Similarly, parents take over or remove children's chore responsibilities, such as cooking or caring for siblings, during exam periods, allowing children to focus on their studies. They also coordinate with siblings or extended family to share chores, reducing the burden on school-going children during peak academic periods. To provide relief from the burden during academic activities, parents also prioritize essential tasks over non-urgent ones so that the latter can be postponed for later.

Peer and Teacher Support: Notes, Extra Classes, and Flexibility to Ease Chore Challenges

Engaging in farm work and household chores for a long time is certainly challenging, as children often feel tiredness, physical and mental exhaustion, in addition to stress from missing classes. Regarding balancing the schooling and household chores of children, I asked the question how they handle a lack of study time, or missing school classes due to work, with a major focus on teachers and peers' support and cooperation to manage both work and education.

The interviewees revealed that borrowing class notes from peers, seeking revision classes with teachers and peers to stay on track regarding missed classes, are some of the measures they use to balance schooling and household chores. In this context, Arjun shares that he hasn't faced a situation like this, forcing him to skip classes so far. However, he has felt that his fellow students have missed classes where they are required to attend school, especially during the farming season, due to sudden household responsibilities or seasonal work. Arjun, however, shares, *"Such situations are considered normal in our village. This leads to missing classes, incomplete*

homework, or falling behind in studies". Although he has not personally faced class absenteeism, he has supported others to cover up missed homework or classes.

In order to overcome the results created due to missed classes due to household responsibilities, Basana shares that when I can't go to school due to household responsibilities, I feel frustration as a lot of things come into her mind, such as what teachers might have taught and how to bring the missed classes on track. She says, *"Initially, the very next day, I asked friends regarding the missed classes and the lessons taught by teachers. My friends in the class help to share the lesson and assignments. I also want to discuss with teachers the lessons I've missed and request an explanation for them. I submit my homework late by asking them for extra time."* Basana, who feels frustrated by missing school due to chores, overcomes challenges by seeking friends' help with lessons and assignments. Meanwhile, teachers provide explanations of missed lessons and extra time for homework, being sympathetic to her situation to ensure she catches up on missed classes.

Chameli also explains how she covers up the missed classes and lessons whenever she skips school and classes due to household chores. She says:

> *I miss school frequently because of working from home, and it feels extremely bad. When I miss classes, some teachers also share the homework through Messenger. I do ask my friends and the teacher to explain it the next day. My friends give their notebooks to copy the class notes and make the missing lessons clear in simple ways. Their help makes me feel I can make up for the missing lessons. I also asked the teacher for study materials. My teacher is very helpful and provides me with extra time to complete assignments, learn missed lessons, and sometimes even teach me after the class.*

Upon missing school attendance, Chameli feels extremely upset. For this, she relies on teachers sending homework and sharing notebooks from friends, as well as receiving additional time and after-class support, which helps her catch up on missed lessons.

Dina, too, feels worried and frustrated when she misses classes. However, like others, she also consults with fellow students and teachers to cover up the missed lessons. She says, *"missing school makes her feel like she will be weak in her studies and hard to keep up. At those times, my heart feels heavy. The next day, I asked my friends, and they explained the missing lessons and let me copy their notes. Their help makes me believe I can still do well, even with all the responsibilities at home."* Dina,

who was burdened by chores such as grazing cattle, missed school and felt inadequate, but her friends shared notes and study sessions, alongside teachers' small tasks, which helped build her confidence to succeed academically despite her household responsibilities limiting her study time.

Eva is also sharing a similar story, as she says she misses school due to field work, such as planting and harvesting, during busy farming seasons. Overtiredness from household chores causes worry of not doing well in the examination, like SEE, owing to the limited time available to study. She shares:

> *I must work in the fields, like planting and harvesting, so I miss school, mainly during the farming seasons. I have often felt exhausted due to the intensity of my household chores. As I don't get enough time to study, the fear of failing SEE exams often haunts me. As I was unable to finish my homework on time, my teacher facilitated and allowed me to submit it late without penalty. My friends also provide me with their class notes apart from explaining lessons during free time and session breaks.*

Like other students, Eva has also frequently missed school due to involuntary farm work, struggles with fatigue, and fears of failing exams. However, the cooperation of teachers and friends provides hope to continue studying despite demanding household chores.

Hari's story is not entirely different. According to him, there are many days when he hasn't gone to school. He can't attend due to household responsibilities. Especially during the farming season or when urgent household work comes up, he has no choice but to miss school. "*Such situations are natural, and what can I do? I ask my friends what the teacher taught and what the homework is. But I manage by asking friends or teachers for notes and studying in groups with classmates. I copied notes from my friends. I also ask the teacher when I go to school*", he says. Henry, missing school due to exhausting field work and chores, also relies on friends for lesson updates and group study to catch up on academic challenges despite recurrent absences during farming seasons.

In this context, Isha has similar stories. Although chores are a major reason behind skipping classes, there are, however, similar methods to catch up on the missing lessons and homework/assignments. She says, sometimes, during the farming season, when there is work at home, or when her parents fall ill, she is unable to attend school. Such a situation is normal. Because of this, studies are incomplete,

homework remains unfinished, and she falls behind in her studies. She shares, *"I worry about missing my studies. When this happens, I ask the teacher the next day about what was missing. I request extra time from the teacher and submit the homework later. My friends also help by telling me what I missed and letting me copy their notes."* Absences lead to missed studies, incomplete homework, and falling behind, causing worry for Isha. To make up for this, she asks teachers for clarification on missed lessons and requests extra time for homework. Her friends support her by sharing what was missing and providing notes to copy.

As part of balancing the household chores and children's schooling, fellow students and teachers play vital roles. Whenever children miss school classes due to household chores, they use various means to catch up on the missed lessons and homework through the help of peers & teachers, such as sharing class notes, attending extra classes & flexibility to ease chore work. Household chores, such as seasonal agricultural activities like planting and harvesting, also cause children to stay away from the classroom. To cope with the situation or catch up on missed classes, children adopt measures such as copying class notes from schoolmates, seeking friends for further clarification on the missed lessons or class lectures. Likewise, children also seek teachers to provide clarification on lessons and to offer a flexible timeline and schedule for submitting homework and assignments. Apart from that, teachers also become flexible in submitting the homework/assignments.

Table 2

Balancing Household Chores and Schooling

Theme	Key Strategies	Specific Methods and Behaviors
Dichotomy of chores: Barrier vs. complem	Heavy household chores as a barrier to schooling	- Restricts time for study, homework, and exam prep - Causes physical fatigue and emotional pain - Forces school absenteeism, creates learning gaps - Impairs concentration in class, low grades

ent	Moderate chores as a complement to education and future careers	- Imparts practical life skills like cooking, farming - Nurtures self-reliance, discipline and entrepreneurship - Shapes time management and perseverance -Mature interpersonal and leadership skills through collaboration
Smart scheduling	Strategic time allocation	-Mornings devoted to chores, evenings reserved for homework -Major farm work scheduled for weekends and holidays -Basic chores only on weekdays while non-urgent tasks postponed
	Schooling priority and negotiation	-Demanding parents to postpone heavy chores until after exams -Seeking reduced chore load during peak academic periods - Family members taking over chores during exams
	Multitasking and efficiency	- Studying while performing light chores -Using tools like flashcards or copy pages to review while working -Concluding chores quickly to free up time for study
Parental Guide: Support & Flexibilit	Direct assistance and load reduction	-Taking over children's chore tasks during exams -Adjusting chore schedules to prioritize school - Allocating chores based on age, capability & study load

y	Emotional and Motivational Support	-Regret about their inability to provide more support - Encouraging children to prioritize studies - Positive interactions to reduce stress
	Structural constraints preventing parental help	- Elderly or ill parents are unable to contribute - Absence of siblings in the household - Inevitable financial necessity needing the child's labor
Peer & Teacher Support	Institutional flexibility from teachers	- Requesting for additional time to submit homework - Asking teachers for explanations of missed lessons
	Emotional comfort	-Feeling that academic success is possible despite challenges -Reduced stress and anxiety about falling exams

Essence of Chapter

This chapter has analyzed and discussed a total of three themes generated from the interviews with all 11 respondent children. They are the Dichotomy of household chores: Barrier and complement to children's schooling and future careers, Smart schedule: Mornings for chores, evenings for study, farm work on breaks, fewer chores during exams, and Parents' guide: Balancing chores & schooling with support & flexibility.

According to the respondents, children, they experienced that household chores have both proved to be barriers and complements to their schooling and future careers, revealing both negative and positive aspects of it. Similarly, children share that to balance the household chore load, they create a schedule like they engage in household chores in the mornings, in the evenings they sit for study, while they engage in farm work mostly on breaks or school holidays, less chores or school holidays, while they engage in chores significantly during the during exams.

CHAPTER VI
CHILDREN'S ENGAGEMENT IN DUAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND THEIR FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

This chapter addresses the leading research question of how children perceive their educational journey and future aspirations in relation to the responsibilities they assume at home. The other subsidiary questions it addresses in this chapter are how do children perceive the value of education in relation to their current duties at home, how do children get motivation to continue both their schooling and responsibilities at home, how do children understand their household responsibilities in achieving their educational and career goals, how their experiences with household and farm work do influenced their career interests and what are the challenges and how do these challenges motivate children indulged household chore in achieving their educational and career dreams.

I explored how children perceive the role of household chores in their educational pursuits in future aspirations, emphasizing the linkage between domestic responsibilities, education, and career goals through seven lenses in this chapter. They are children's chores and education as a route to economic prosperity, cultivating hard work and self-reliance, household chores as a pathway to develop life skills, household chores shape career interests, childhood hardships: A motivation for a brighter future, engagement of children's household chores builds resilience and role models, and lessons from others as motivation to continue schooling.

Children's Chores and Education as A Pathway to Socio-Economic Mobility

In this section, respondents were asked what motivates them and how they continue both their education and their responsibilities at home despite these difficulties. Their responses were challenging; children being engaged with household chores perceive that education is a pathway to economic prosperity and increased societal status or prestige.

Children who engage in household chores view education as means to achieve financial stability and secure better employment opportunities, thereby compensating for the burdens of domestic chores. The respondents associate completing education with escaping poverty or obtaining professional jobs. In this context Kamala shares

that her parents engage in family farms the entire day. To share the burden of parents, she also engages in such work. Regarding the work she remembers her parents as saying, "if we do not work, we stay hungry [kam garen bhane mukh ma mad lagdaina]". She shares, *"Despite working today, my household chores, I believe that education is the main mode to escape the hardships of poverty, and it motivates me to keep moving forward. My desire to make my life better than it is now inspires me to dream of becoming a successful or important person in the future"*. Kamala states that her family faces economic hardship and relies on farm work. So, she helps parents pursue education to escape poverty and achieve their dreams of success.

Arjun views household chores as a means of personal growth and a way to improve his family's economic status. He highlights that his parents' agricultural work just sustains the family. The very reason he helps with household tasks is to pursue education for personal growth and future economic prosperity. According to him:

> *To generate an income to support our family's cost of living, my parents are involved in agricultural activities. Despite working hard, agriculture does not yield much and merely fulfills the basic needs of family life. As a family member, I extend my hand to help them by engaging in basic household tasks. In contrast, I view education not only as a means for personal growth but also as a way to improve my family.*

Despite his household responsibilities, Arjun continues studying and views education not just as a way to gain knowledge but also as a path to generate economic prosperity in the future.

Jeevan takes teaching as his ideal profession and wants to become a teacher in future. Despite hard work, his wish to become a teacher motivates me to manage my time between work and education. He says, *"this motivation comes in my mind from the existing status of my family. It is because future professions like teaching can earn a good salary and social status which could improve my own as well as my family's financial situation."* Jeevan argues he balances work and education for a better future, hoping it ends his family's financial woes.

Chameli, the next respondent, highlights the hard work together with education that shapes future career success. Her family is currently in financially difficult condition. She sees uneducated seniors in society struggling and facing hardships. This situation prompts her to engage in schooling despite her household chores. She feels that if she focuses on education now, she won't have to work like

this forever, and her future will be stable financially. She shares, *"the work I do today could help me build a successful future. By completing my studies, I can get a good job. But if I say I don't have time to study because of work and if I give up schooling, I'll be stuck doing the same work tomorrow with no other options."* Chameli highlights that facing family hardships, she balances chores and education, believing it's the key to a brighter future with better job opportunities. She is convinced that education is the main way to escape financial challenges, and it inspires her to move forward saying that if she studies today, she could achieve a good career or even business tomorrow and won't have to live like she is now.

Hari also links education and household chores as prospects of getting jobs, economic independence and individual success. Likewise, he views it with the perspective of a better future. He says he understands that schooling despite household chores is critical. Education is the only way to improve my future. It's the key to a better life, a good job, and improving his family's financial situation. He says, *"I believe that by studying, I can stand on my own feet, get a good job and become a successful person. Therefore, I get motivated to keep studying, no matter how tough things get. That's why I chose agriculture as a subject in class 9, hoping it will help me find a job quickly."* Hari asserts that balancing chores and education, his study of agriculture as part of technical SEE is to secure a future job/profession, motivated by the promise of a better, self-reliant future.

Children involved in household chores see education not only as a way for personal growth but also to improve family livelihood. Education, which helps to come out of poverty, motivates them to move forward. Exposure to education to children provides academic and vocational skills which enhance employability and economic mobility despite socio-economic challenges. Education equips children with literacy and critical thinking skills and offers qualifications that lead them to higher-paying careers, which helps them lift their families out of poverty cycles. Education also provides knowledge of sustainable farming practices, increasing family farm efficiency and economic output. Regarding the motivation of children to continue both their education and their responsibilities at home despite these difficulties, children perceive that education is a pathway to economic prosperity and increased societal status or prestige despite the challenges posed by it.

Chore as Pathway to Develop Life Skills, Cultivating Hard Work and Self-Reliance

In this section, I have included how children view household chores in relation to their participation. Although it is challenging, chores engagement obviously teaches children practical skills that enhance children's ability to manage schoolwork and prepare for future responsibilities. The acquisition of future-ready skills will be vital in future for self-determination and adulthood. It makes them develop coping skills in any situation. According to them, those who come through chores become hardworking and self-dependent. The respondents were asked what are motivating factors and how they contribute to achieving their educational and career dreams despite difficulties and how children perceive the value of education in relation to their domestic chores. Responding to the question of how their experiences with household chores and farm work influenced their career interests, children emphasize the important role of households preparing themselves for future adult life.

In this context, Isha, who engages in household chores at home shares that the child work culture made her carry out household tasks. She performs various household tasks, including cooking, washing clothes, preparing meals, working in the fields, cutting grass and firewood, and participating in community activities, laying the groundwork for a future of useful skills. She has been doing this from a young age. Isha states that household chores build life-useful skills for the future which teaches planning, task delegation, and problem-solving abilities. She believes that these chores teach her management skills like the ability to plan, delegate tasks, and solve problems when they arise. These household chores are independent and self-reliant and won't need to depend on anyone to do various tasks such as cooking, washing clothes and cleaning etc. It will also be useful for her in the future developing a habit of hardworking. She says, *"even though I am required to travel long distances to go to school, I cook food, chop vegetables, wash dishes and clothes on my own. It has become a habit now and I have no hesitation in doing that."* Isha performs household tasks and field work which help to build life skills. These tasks help her learn to plan, delegate, and solve problems, making it a strong foundation for her future. Isha also shares the exposure to chores and farm work nurtures life skills, hard work, self-reliance, and resilience. The qualities developed through regular practice could be valuable for their future.

Dina learns household and farming skills, which her parents say can be future professions, like her mother's traditional carpet-making, building a foundation for future success by sharpening skills connected to potential careers. Dina also terms that education is an important aspect of her life and by gaining education, she believes that the harder she works today, the greater success she will achieve tomorrow. According to her, on one hand, household chores are an obstacle because she doesn't have enough time to do homework, nor can she always attend school. Sometimes, she wonders how she can study amidst such difficulties. On the other hand, she thinks that the learnings she gained through difficulties is utterly valuable. She shares:

> *By doing various tasks at home and farming, I have learned skills. My parents say that Habits from a young age, knowledge when grown up [sainaidekhi bani, thulo bhaepachhi jane]. Therefore, it will be useful in the future, and we can also adopt those skills as a profession later. Parents also say that work done in childhood sets the foundation for the future. When I work at this age, I could also sharpen skills, and I can connect these skills learned from household work to my future professions. For example, my mother has the skill of making traditional handmade mats (Gundri) at home. I can acquire that from her, and I could also carry out that work later.*

Dina also shares that the skills she learns now can help her to be independent. She can stand on her own feet and be self-reliant. The more hardships she faces, the more effort she puts in. She feels like she needs to achieve great success through this struggle to show others. She believes that if she keeps pushing forward with determination, she will surely reap the rewards of my studies. She views household work as a steppingstone to climb higher. Because the hardships she endures, the more it inspires her to move forward. Dina also emphasizes the value of life skills for future success. She states that childhood household tasks build skills that can be applied professionally later. These tasks create a foundation for the future, allowing children to continue in those professions. As she is struggling to balance household work and studies, Dina values education's role in fostering self-reliance, using hardships to motivate success and viewing chores as a source of motivation to an independent future through determination and learning.

Chameli opines that engagement in chores from childhood is very beneficial as it helps her to be self-dependent. Her parents tell us that hardship in life teaches lessons in life. She shares, *"if I participate in this, it prepares me to learn how to fight*

in such situations in real life in the future. It enables me to adapt to any situation. Therefore, everyone must learn it from childhood." She further says, if children face challenging situations in early life, it makes them better people. She can cope with challenging situations. This makes her hardworking and self-reliant. *"For girls like me, it is more contextual as I have to manage the household in the future,"* she shares. Chameli sums up that life's hardships teach valuable lessons preparing them to face future challenges. If they learn this from a young age, it fosters hard work, and self-reliance.

Kamala also highlights that childhood chore's association with the future professions. According to her household work, it helps because it teaches her methods of working. It could be useful in any situation in the future. As household work teaches life-skill, the experiences from household tasks influence decisions about choosing in the future. She shares, *"engaging in farming or animal husbandry with family fosters agriculture-related knowledge, which can be pursued as a profession in the future."* Kamala believes household work teaches work methods and life skills, influencing future decisions, while farming and animal husbandry build agricultural knowledge, enabling her to pursue these as a profession for a successful future.

In this context. Hari stresses on the need of learning skills through hard work. He says, *"despite having some obstacles like preventing getting adequate time for study and play, household work is a steppingstone to success. No matter how much I study, my life requires skills that are learned through household work. I feel studying alone is not enough. I need to balance between them. I need skills in life that I learn from doing household chores."* According to him, household chores of children foster a self-dependent attitude in person, reducing reliance on others in the future. His father and neighbors would share with him that children's early engagement of work is like training. It shapes their skills and habits which are very important aspects of adult life. His father also says that when children learn to work from a young age, it builds a self-dependent attitude and need not depend on others in the future. He shares, *"I also realize now that they are true. By shaping our habits, attitude and skills at an early age, the household chore helps to kill our laziness and passiveness, making us hardworking."* Hari states that household work serves as a pathway of success. He also learned from his father and neighbors that early household chores shape skills, temperament, and habits. Despite extensive study, life demands skills acquired through household tasks, as education alone is insufficient. It nurtures self-

dependence and reduces reliance on others and builds a hardworking character essential for adult life.

Eva sees household tasks as teaching children's skills for new professions, nurturing self-reliance, preparing them for life's challenges, and upholding a tradition of age-appropriate work that builds a strong foundation for learning how to work effectively. She shares that she can connect the skills learned from household work to new professions. The lessons gained from household tasks prepare her life's challenges. She states, *"these makes me self-reliance and could shape my future careers. This has been a tradition and obligation in our sociey. I must do it as much work as I can do as per the age."* Eva further says the skills she learns from the chores can apply to new professions and it prepares her to meet life's challenges supporting career choice. Apart from building skills, these experiences also influence individual's thinking and interests.

In nutshell, children's involuntary participation in household chores fosters hard work, cultivate essential life skills, and promote self-reliance. Participating in household chores and prioritizing tasks shapes discipline and a sense of responsibility which is foundational to a strong work ethic. Domestic tasks with academic responsibilities impart children to allocate time efficiently and prioritize responsibilities. Managing chores alongside schooling builds self-reliance. Managing tasks like harvesting crops or organizing household duties develops life skills. Working alongside family or neighbors on tasks like farming nurtures a sense of community and teaches children how to cooperate effectively. Engaging in shared household chores helps children develop their ability to communicate, negotiate, and build relationships.

External Influences and Household Experiences Shaping Aspirations

This theme explores how household chores and external role models influence children's career choices and educational commitment. In order to get the data from respondents in this context two questions: How do children understand their household responsibilities in achieving their educational and career goals and how did their experiences with household and farm work influence their career interests in future were asked.

Household Chores Shape Career Interests

Exposure to specific household chores is often associated with influencing factors for children's interest in related to their future professions. In this section, children explain how household chores sparked their curiosity about future careers.

Arjun describes that children's household chores are deeply tied to the future professions. He says the experiences from household chores influence his thoughts, interests, and decision-making processes about the future. By helping parents with field-related work, he develops a fondness for agricultural work. He argues, *"I learn about crop production, other farming techniques, and timing helps me to opt for farming as a profession in the future. By consistently engaging in responsibilities like cooking, caring for younger siblings, or cleaning and balancing all the tasks, I have gained experiences that develop an inclination toward service, education, or management".* Arjun underscores that his household chores shape his thoughts and career choices, with fieldwork nurturing his agricultural interests, while responsibilities like cooking and caregiving inspire a fondness for service and education, influenced by his childhood family environment.

Basana highlights that household chores provide her with opportunities to learn skills which could be useful to convert it into a future profession. According to her, schooling teaches her knowledge specific to subjects while household chores also equip her skills like cooking and enhance her working personal capabilities. She says, *"in the future, it might help me to opt for it as a profession and a chance to cook food for big hotels in case of failing to achieve my intended jobs"*. Barbara views household chores like cooking as skill-building opportunities for future careers in hotels besides in her own family life, complementing school knowledge.

Dina also emphasizes that her childhood household work builds skills which can be directly applied later. Combining education with these skills enables her to develop new professional paths. Skills ensure self-reliance, such as opening a small teashop or farming, even without a formal job. The work she is doing now teaches skills and gains experience which could be useful later in life. She says, *"if my family prioritizes education, I can connect the skills I learn from household chores to a new profession. For example, I've learned to weave mats like my mother, and it will be easy for me to convert it as my profession in the future"*. Dina's childhood household chores like cooking help learn skills for future profession and entrepreneurship. She shares, *"even if I study and can't find a job, or if I can't do anything else, I can rely*

on the skills learned from household chores to open a small restaurant, tea shop, momo, or chowmein stall to make a living." She also feels that by working in the fields, she could adopt the farming profession too and sustain herself. She believes that household chores can inspire small businesses and jobs, enhancing career paths, ensuring a strong foundation for success, even if job opportunities are limited.

Fatteman also connects the skills learned from household chores to a future technical profession, preparing him for life's challenges. Fatteman, who wakes up early every morning, takes care of his little brother and sometimes fetches grass from the field in the morning. After school, he takes the goats to graze before school, and in the evening, he collects firewood for cooking. He says, "sometimes, I help my father fix things, like patching the roof of the house or repairing broken electronics and agricultural tools. I've learned how to use tools and figure out how things work. I like solving problems, like fixing radio, watch, plough, hoe, water pipe etc.". According to Fatteman, his friends aspire to be lawyers or teachers, but he thinks he wants to be a technician because he enjoys fixing things and making them work better. He shares, doing chores makes him fun and confident.

Ganga also connects her childhood cooking and cleaning house chores with her future professions like running a restaurant business. Cooking food in the morning is her primary responsibility. After school, she also helps her mother cook dinner. She has learned how to make bread, cook rice, curry and chop vegetables properly. Doing these chores makes her feel like she can run a restaurant in future if she fails to do well in academic endeavors. She says, *"despite doing good in study, if I can't find a job, or if I can't do anything else, I can utilize the skills learned from household chores to open a small tea shop, momo, or noodle stall to sustain my life."* Ganga believes that skills and experience gained from cooking and field work opens the door for alternative professions if her academic or job opportunities fall short.

Another respondent Hari, who often engages in family farm related activities with his parents, connects this association with his agro-business in days to come. He says, while engaging in farming and animal husbandry with my family, he has developed knowledge related to agriculture. This can draw his future professions toward agriculture or related fields. He says, *"I engage in planting crops, storing grains, and raising goats or chickens. And I sell eggs and chickens for buying stationary items. This skill has given me confidence that I can do such professions commercial manners in future"*. According to him, by participating in small-scale

household production and sales, he has learned about marketing skills and skills like livelihood options. For him, these skills could be easy to shift to this profession in case he wants to adopt this as a profession.

Isha also connects her future aspirations with the agriculture profession. She cooks food and wash dishes almost every day. She also works in a vegetable farm and a water vegetable garden. Her mother says that she is good at taking care of things and cleaning. She shares, *"I like how my household chores make our house nice and clean. Sometimes it's hard to finish my chores and homework, but I've learned to do things step by step, and it makes me feel I can do anything if I try"*. Isha believes that doing household chores like cooking, washing clothes, preparing rice, working in the fields, collecting grass and firewood, and participating in community work builds a foundation for my future through practical life skills.

Respondents share that household chores such as cooking, farm-based work, fetching grass and fixing tools, cleaning houses, keeping chickens and livestock, selling eggs and milk etc. are strongly associated with factors for children's interest related to their future professions. Exposure to agricultural practices such as planting, harvesting, or tending livestock ignites their interest in agricultural careers by teaching practical farming skills. Likewise, cooking or food preparation chores inspire entrepreneurship such as running teashops, snack houses and restaurants. Household chores like repairing tools or maintaining electronic and farm equipment nurture children's interest in technical careers. Similarly, household chores like selling produce or eggs teach marketing skills.

Role Models and Lessons from Others as Motivation to Continue Schooling

Inspiration from successful and unsuccessful individuals to continue education despite household chore-related difficulties. They cite community professionals or remorseful seniors as influences on their educational aspirations.

Eva is inspired by her teachers and decided to follow in their footsteps in future. Despite long hours of household work and sleepless nights, she persists with her schooling and education. Her source of inspiration is the teachers at her school. She says, *"I always dream of becoming a teacher. That is why I am continuing school despite the hard work and sleepless nights. If I study, I can achieve something. If I don't study, I could spend my whole life doing household chores and farming"*. Eva has internalized that to find progress in the future; she needs to continue to study and shouldn't stop studying even while working. For her, giving up studying now because

of tiring or workload results in a lifetime hardship. She dreams of becoming a teacher, persists with schooling despite hard work, believing that studying prevents a lifetime of chores and farming, ensuring future progress, while quitting risks enduring lifelong hardship.

Gaga wakes up early to perform household chores like cleaning and making tea. Then she helps her mother with other household chores including cooking and washing before school. After school, she comes back home and then helps clean the courtyard and carry fodder, cooking food before doing homework. It is physically tough, time-consuming and boring. She says, *"but still, I am continuing my studies. I have heard about many older sisters and brothers in the village who studied despite hardships, and this has inspired me to think that I can do the same. I have seen people in my community who dropped out of school at a young age to get married now suffering hardships. This inspires me to do well in terms of schooling."* Ganga tackles tough household chores like cleaning and cooking daily yet persists with studies. It is inspired by community seniors to avoid future hardships faced by school dropouts. She believes that balancing work and education is vital to secure a brighter future through determination.

Chameli's cousin's sister, who studied at the same school where she is now, inspires her to continue her schooling. Her cousin completed college studies in Kathmandu and is now working as a teacher, proving the value of education. According to Chameli, her senior cousin is always a source of inspiration for her to continue education. Chameli shares, *"if I give up schooling under the pretext of household chores today, I'll have to keep doing the same work tomorrow with no other options. But if I study today, I can pursue a good profession or business tomorrow. I won't have to stay in the same situation as I am now."* Inspired by her cousin who studied, attended college, and became a teacher, Chameli persists with education despite work, believing it will lead to a good profession or business, avoiding a future languishing to the same chores she faces now.

Jeevan's source of inspiration is his eldest brother, who quit school, and his second brother balanced chores and studies, earning average grades.

> *Unlike me, my eldest brother would study here in the same school where I am studying now 9 years back when I was a small kid then he quit school and went to Kathmandu for a job as a driver helper. He then went to Malaysia as a security guard. These days whenever I talk to him, he regrets quitting*

> *school. He realized this during his work in Malaysia. He says that at least he should have passed SEE. The second brother younger than him has successfully completed his study with average grade and now he has gone to Japan for higher education. My second brother also emerged from hard work but continued schooling.*

Jeevan's role model is two of his senior brothers. Jeevan learned very important lessons in his life from his seniormost brother's remorse of quitting school very early in his life as well as his second brother's success in balancing chores and studies. It also stimulated him to give importance to schooling to avoid future regrets.

Dina's parents and sisters faced hardships in their lives due to lack of education. This motivated her to persist with schooling. She says:

> *Seeing the hardships my parents and sisters are experiencing because they didn't study, I've never given up on my education, no matter how tough it gets or how much work I need to do. My parents and sisters say their life continues like this because they weren't educated, and they warn and encourage us, saying, "You must study, otherwise you'll face hardships like us." Because of their advice and the belief that studying can make me a good person, I keep studying even while managing household chores. None of my siblings pursued education, but I feel compelled to study no matter what, driven by the thought that I must work hard and get an education.*

Dina persists with schooling despite chores, driven by parents' warnings and her desire to become a good person, inspired by her parents' and sisters' hardships from lack of education, unlike her siblings, to avoid future struggles through education.

Isha's source of motivation is her fellow villagers' suffering due to dropping out and seeing educated individuals secure good jobs. She engages in household chores every day from cooking, cleaning to washing and milking cows and buffaloes. On Saturday and holidays, she even went to the jungle to collect grass, fodder and firewood. She needs to walk more than an hour every day to go to school. Despite that she is continuing her schooling. It is because she has seen other people in the village suffer their entire lives because they dropped out of school at a young age. She says, *"I have also seen many who studied well and secured good jobs. Having witnessed how not studying can ruin lives; I feel that no matter how much hardship I face, I must continue to study.*" Isha manages daily chores like cooking and milking, collects

fodder on weekends, and walks over an hour to school, driven to study by witnessing villagers' suffering from dropping out and others' success through education, despite facing significant hardships.

Individuals who have achieved success and earned a respected position as well as people who are living pitiable lives after being dropped out of school before inspiring them to move ahead despite difficulties. The respondents revealed that they were motivated to continue the education (schooling) from the inspiration from teachers, fellow villagers, their brothers or sister and other individuals who have achieved good position and social prestige who have gone through similar sort of fate before. They have also got inspiration or learned lessons from some negative results of those who had early school dropouts and now living life like hell.

Chores as a Driver of Motivation and Resilience

This section focuses on how chore-related challenges fuel motivation for educational and career success of children and inspire resilience. The main question is dealing with what factors motivate children to continue schooling, despite the engagement of household chores, and how these challenges motivate children in achieving their educational and career dreams?

Overcoming the difficulties of chores cultivates resilience in the children, which they may apply to academic and future career challenges. In this context, the participants were asked what the challenges are and how these challenges motivate children in achieving their educational and career dreams. Children shared their experiences of persisting with studies despite demanding chore schedules at home while continuing education.

In this context, Chameli shares that her household chores together with schooling build resilience by nurturing for a future profession. According to her, those who grow up working hard and handling many tasks learn to grasp the purpose of education early on. She shares, *"I have a willpower to pursue a good profession in the future. My effort and time to continue schooling even after fulfilling the responsibilities of household chores, develops passion to push through fatigue. The struggles I face today inspire me to move forward with what I want to do tomorrow."* Chameli household chores as a student reinforce the value of education. Hard work in multiple tasks fosters early understanding of education's purpose. Current struggles build her determination and inspire forward-thinking career decisions

In this context, Kamala balances schooling and household chores, learning to prioritize and manage time effectively. Managing responsibilities builds resilience, supporting her future life and decision-making. She shares that despite the tight schedule of household chores, she manages her time for school attendance, homework and exam preparations which help her decide what is important and what needs to be done. She says, *"Household chores assist me in this because they teach me work habits that make it easier for me to work in any situation in the future. Managing family expectations, including household chores and schooling pressures, teaches me how to cope with challenging situations. I think understanding and managing household responsibilities supports me in my future life"*. Hence, Kamala builds resilience through balancing studies and household chores, learning time management and work habits that prepare her for future challenges, as managing responsibilities strengthens her ability to prioritize and adapt effectively in any situation.

Jeevan reflects that balancing work and study builds resilience and household chores inspire him rather than hindering their future aspiration. He says that the education he gains through difficulties is long-lasting. But he feels that hardship and struggle give me the energy to move forward. Despite the household chores don't hinder progress; they inspire further to do well. He shares, *"Although I need to study, I can't avoid work. Therefore, I must balance both working and studying afterwards. My schooling together with households is valuable. Though challenging, balancing household chores and studying fuels his determination to progress, it rather household chores inspire resilience"*. He recognizes the need to balance work and studies effectively.

Basana highlights her perseverance towards the future despite her ongoing challenges. She works hard at home along with schooling. While also attending school, her chore responsibilities include fetching water or cooking. This has taught her to keep pushing forward even when things are tough. She says, *"I don't score good grades because I have less time to study. But I've learned to remain confident and hard working. Despite tiredness after chores at farm, I remain focus on continue my schooling because education is only way to take life forward"*. Basana balances household chores with school attendance. This perseverance makes her committed to doing well. She says, *"in the future, if I face personal difficulties, I'll keep trying, just like I do now"*. Although she gets less time to study due to chores, she is committed to focus on schooling despite fatigue. This resilience prepares her for future aspiration.

Regarding what makes Chameli resilient, she stressed emotional strength through family support. The time she spends on household tasks, such as washing clothes or helping her parents in the fields, means she has less time for studying, which affects her schooling and impacts her academic outcome. She says:

> *Balancing dual responsibilities of household chores and schooling has made me emotionally strong, although I don't always secure good grades. My classmates at school become sad when they score badly on exams. But I have learned to counter it and learn from it to do better next time. Encouragement from family and teachers also help keep me going. My dream of becoming a teacher in future inspires me. This hope makes me resilient.*

Despite Chameli's household chores responsibilities negatively affecting her, her emotional strength keeps her motivated. Her wish to be a teacher in future provides hope, enhancing resilience.

Arjun highlights that household chores make person capability to adapt uncertainties of life. Managing chores and schooling help him to adjust to changing circumstances. He thinks it will make him to be resilient in the future. He says, if he needs to help parents with farming or sudden household tasks, he adjusts his schedule. He says, "*This flexibility teaches me how to deal with unexpected situations. Whenever I face problems in the future, while doing jobs or moving to a new place, I am confident that I can adapt and find a way forward."* Arjun, who balances chores and schooling, develops adaptability. Adjusting his schedule for farming or sudden tasks imparts flexibility in handling unexpected situations. He believes this makes resilient to face future challenges.

Eva believes that her housework prepares her to face challenges in life. He thinks that it makes her self-reliant and facilities to adopt new careers. She connects the skills that she learned from household chores to new professions. The lessons she gains from household work prepare me for life's challenges. It makes her self-reliant and helps her adopt new careers. She says, *"I feel that the education I get while managing household responsibilities is a strong foundation for my future. It makes me someone who can adapt to any situation. The hardships I face today teach me what struggle is and how to overcome it"*. Eva believes her household chore skills will be useful for her future professions. Lessons learned from household chores make her capable of fighting challenges. Balancing education and chores build her adaptability in any situation.

Table 3

Household Chores as a Platform for Learning and Future Preparation

Theme	Core Concept	Key Findings
Pathway to socio-economic mobility	Education is perceived as principal route to economic stability, escaping poverty, and promoting social status	- education as an escape from present hardships - academic success with secure, professional jobs - improve personal as well as family's economic situation
Cultivating hard work and self-reliance	Chores impart a strong work ethic, discipline, and independence	- chores as means to kill laziness and build a hardworking character - nurturing an attitude of not depending on others - fosters a habit of perseverance
Developing life skills	Chores are practical training ground for essential skills needed to manage adult life	- learning management skills like planning, delegating, and problem-solving - mastering practical tasks like cooking, cleaning, farming - building a foundation of habits from a young age
Shaping career interests	Make exposure to specific chores sparks and shapes concrete career aspirations	- agricultural chores inspire people to develop interests in farming or agro-business - cooking inspires dreams of hospitality careers restaurants, tea shops - repairing tools fosters an interest in technical professions - Small-scale selling of eggs and agro produce impart marketing and business skills

Motivation from hardship	Difficulties in balancing chores and schooling fuels a determination to succeed	- help turn pain into success mentality - education gained through struggle is more valuable - present hardships as a motivational force to persevere.
Building resilience	Managing dual responsibilities cultivates emotional strength, adaptability,	- develop emotional strength to handle academic setbacks - help learn adaptability and flexibility in scheduling - building perseverance to continue efforts
Role models and lessons from others	Observing the outcomes of educated and uneducated individuals of community provides powerful motivation	- positive inspiration from teachers and educated relatives who have achieved success - negative inspiration from older siblings or community members who regret dropping out and face hardship throughout their life

Children’s engagement in household chores with schooling nurtures adaptability, determination, and self-reliance, develops resilience through the combined challenges of intensive chores and hard-earned education. It nurtures flexibility, determination and emotional strength which are critical for countering hardship of children. Education provides knowledge and aspirations, setting groundwork for overcoming barriers while children's household chores inspire practical skills and responsibility. Learning to adjust to tight schedules like morning livestock care and evening studies; children learn to manage conflicting responsibilities by nurturing adaptability. Management of dual responsibility of household chores and schooling pressures impart children emotional coping capacity.

Likewise, facing recurring failures and struggles in everyday life together with academic challenges also teaches determination. Further, children's taking ownership of dual responsibilities inspires a sense of obligation and strengthening resilience. Household chores and education also build confidence and independence.

Essence of Chapter

This chapter has analyzed and discussed children's engagement in household chores and their future aspirations where a total of four themes were generated from the interviews of all 11 respondent children. They are children's household chores and education as a pathway to socio-economic mobility household chores as pathways to develop life skills, cultivating hard work and self-reliance, external influences and household experience shaping aspirations and Household chores as a driver of motivation and resilience. The children's respondents experienced that children's chores and education prove as a pathway to socio-economic mobility. Likewise, household chores also work as pathways to develop life skills, cultivating hard work and self-reliance. Similarly. For the children engaging in dual responsibilities, the community members with success or failures as well as their struggle household experiences shape their future aspirations including career interests and motivates them to continue schooling. Lastly, respondents also shared that their engagement in household chores also acts as a driver of motivation and resilience.

CHAPTER VII
INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSIONS

In the previous chapter, I presented the results of data and information collected from the field. The data were gathered through interviews, observations, and interactions with study participants, providing me with adequate information.

In this chapter, through thematic analysis of participant responses, I present the findings and discuss and analyze the results or data presented in Chapter IV, V and Chapter VI. I discuss and reflect on why and how children participate in household chores; how do they balance the schooling and chores and how do they see their future aspirations in the context of challenges posed by their participation of household chores together with education/schooling. The main findings of the study are that children term household chores as familial duty and contribution, norms and traditional practice, economic necessity, and means to prevent negative behaviors. Likewise, participants call chores to cause physical and mental stress, as a result, they are unable to prioritize time for educational activities, resulting in low grades in exams. Children also expressed varied views on household chores as involuntary work during schooling age, mainly during their teenage years, turned out to be both barrier and an opportunity for children to be capability in the face of adversity. Children also pointed out balancing the chore through the help of peer & teacher through support like sharing class note, extra classes & flexibility to ease chore challenges, parent's support and guide to balancing chores & schooling with support & flexibility, encouragement and balancing chores and education through smart chore schedule such as making routine for mornings for chores, evenings for study, farm work on breaks, less chores during exams.

Regarding the children's future educational aspirations, they note children's chores and education as a route to economic prosperity, chores as a pathway to nurture hard work, develop life skills and self-reliance, chores shape career interests, children's household chores build Resilience, and role models and lessons motivate them to continue education.

Interpretation of the Study

This study is focused on exploring students/children's experience on involuntary household chores and schooling. To carry out the research, three major questions were addressed. The first question focused on exploring the perceived views and experiences of students regarding the influence of household chores on the shaping of their schooling experience. The second question centered on how children balance their household duties and schooling while the third question, how children engage in involuntary household chores and schooling learn and prepare for future aspirations. In this section, I have organized the major findings of this study into 12 key themes under the three categories.

Household Chores Parallelly Shape and Impasse Children's Schooling

Excessive Chores as Barrier While Light Chores as Useful

Participants highlighted that household chores function as both barrier and complement to student's education and careers. On one hand, learning cooking, washing, taking care of siblings and farm-based work equips them with skills for potential careers. These skills provide a basis for vocational professions.

On the other hand, spending prolonged hours on household chores as well as staying late in the night for study causes missed school classes, especially during farming seasons, limiting study opportunities, causing reduced preparation for exams. Household chores participation could be hazardous at times. Long hours of household chores, lifting heavy weights and repetitive motions cause negative impact on a child's immature body causing physical exhaustion and stress impacting on ability to learn and concentrate on education. Household chores associated with various tools like axe and sickle lead to traumatic accidents and injuries. Tiredness and injuries force skipping classes, impacting educational attainment and achievement. They term their household chores participation prevents socialization process since it consumes the time that they would otherwise spend playing, socializing with peers, or engaging in leisure activities. Detachment from friends due to chores causes feelings of being left out. Long hours of household chores force students to stay up too late at night to study, leading them to sleep deprivation.

Excessive/Intensive Work Affecting Educational Attainment and Achievement

Participants note that household chores reduce their time to study, homework, assignment, and preparation for examinations. Seasonal agricultural responsibilities affect school attendance for several days which negatively correlates in their

schooling and education. The physical exhaustion and exposure to students' hazards also interrupts school attendance. Household chores also limit the participation in activities after schools affecting schooling and social affairs. Balancing multiple family responsibilities and schooling causes fatigue and stress and makes it difficult for them to focus on learning and retain knowledge. The hindrances to their schooling performance also cause stress and emotional well-being.

Tools for Economic Necessity and Survival

Participants also associated household chores with family economic factors, as their household chore role became an essential contribution to their family's financial stability and survival, thereby mitigating the poverty impact. They share that rural families are trapped in poverty, and they need to perform household chores to support family sustenance as a critical for survival due to the lack of income alternatives in an agro-based economy. Since the rural economy is agriculture-based and requires manual labor, students' contribution is vital due to the availability of an inadequate labor force due to out-migration of youth either for employment or study, and low productivity of non-commercial family farming. According to them, students from wealthy families rarely work, while students from poor families continually work. Labor-intensive and long-hour work of parents limits their household task time. Therefore, students need to take on household chores to support their family's needs. Students' household chores allow their parents freedom to participate in family farm-related activities.

Tool for Socialization and Preparing for Future Roles

Students engage in household chores just not due to demands of parents, but as a part of continuation of intergenerational cultural and social norms regarding shared duties. Participants term household chores as a deep-rooted intergenerational cultural norm in the rural community as it is practical training for future agricultural or domestic responsibilities and prepares them for adult roles, specifically the girls in future.

Girls are socialized from early childhood into intensive indoor tasks, whereas boys are educated towards outdoor activities, including fieldwork. This is normalized by tradition, family, and community in society. Involuntary domestic chores are not just day-to-day tasks but also perpetuate girls' adult roles as wives and mothers. The transmission of such skills is imposed by mothers, who supervise and model domestic work. Girls' domestic work provides critical, unpaid economic support, enabling

parents to participate in economic activities that sustain the family's livelihood. It, however, does not come without an impact on academic outcomes, as it directly conflicts with knowledge retention and personal independence in schooling.

Tool to Fulfilling Familial Duties and Responsibilities

Participants of the study note that their participation in household chores is driven by affection, appreciativeness, and obligation towards family members, particularly aging or sick parents. For them, household chores are means to pay back the contribution of parents towards them. Students take household chores as an instrument of increasing family unity and strengthening bonds through indirect support in family livelihood, cooking and cleaning and other domestic work so that they can work outside of home and support their aging and sick parents as part of maintaining family stability.

Tools to Perpetuating Morality and Discipline

Participants also note that household chores serve as means to prevent negative behaviors, as they help shape their behavior, attitude, morality, and discipline. A lack of household chores and a structured routine result in a lower chance of developing discipline, responsibility, and time-management skills. It nurtures their discipline in life, while idleness may take them into the hands of wrong people or negative peer influences and prevent them from developing essential life skills. Household chores keep them fit and agile.

Navigating Chores and Classrooms for Student Success

Students Using Personal Agency

Students balance schooling and household chores by designing a strategy in which they engage in household chores in the morning while allocating evening time, especially after meals, for study. They further prioritize non-urgent tasks during weekends to avoid conflict with school tasks. Meanwhile, they adapt multitasking strategies like studying while performing light chores, using tools like flashcards or copy pages to review while working and concluding chores quickly to free up time for study. They also seek to reduce the workload during the major academic period and to postpone heavy chores until after exams. To create time for study students also request their parents and siblings to take over additional chores during examinations.

Peer or Teachers' Help for Balancing Responsibilities

Participants highlight that in case of missing or skipping classes at school due to household chores responsibilities at home, they seek help from peers and teachers

for support such as sharing class notes, extra classes & flexibility to ease chore challenges. Household chores and seasonal agricultural activities like planting and harvesting cause students to stay away from the classroom. To catch up with the missed classes, students adopt balancing measures like copying class notes from schoolmates between chores and schooling. Students seek friends to clarify further the lessons or class lectures they missed. Students also seek teachers to provide clarification on lessons and offer a flexible timeline and schedule for submitting homework and assignments.

Seeking Parent or Siblings Help Balancing Responsibilities

To balance day-to-day chores responsibilities together with schooling activities, parents, upon the request of children, adjust chore schedules by assigning basic tasks during weekdays and intensive household chores during weekends or holidays to prioritize school attendance and study. Students negotiate with parents to adjust major seasonal agricultural tasks in holidays and weekends. Parents also adjust the chores responsibilities based on age and capability, such as lighter chores for small children and intensive chores for older ones. At times, considering the schooling responsibilities of children, parents take over responsibilities themselves. To provide relief from burden chores during academic schedule, parents prioritize essential tasks over non-urgent ones postponing it for later. Parents also motivate children by providing encouragement for academic success and requesting senior students at their schools to guide them to solve difficult problems.

Balancing Chores and Schooling fosters Resilience and Professional Aspirations

Growth of Character and Transferable Skills

Children's household chores nurture hard work and essential life skills and approve independence and resilience. Careful household chores and arranging tasks nurtures discipline and develops sense of responsibility. Handling chores together with schooling builds resilience as it helps to overcome exhaustion, time constraints, and adversity. Dealing household chores and academic pressures impart emotional and coping capacity while handling tasks like harvesting and household duties inspire them to make informed decisions. Engaging in shared household chores enhances their capability to communicate, negotiate, and build relationships.

Shaping Career Aspirations

Various kinds of household chores shape career interests in several future professions. Children’s exposure to agricultural practices ignites their interest in

agricultural careers. Experience and skills of cooking and preparing vegetables help to opt for alternative profession in hospitality sector in case of failing to achieve intended success. Tasks like repairing tools or maintaining farm equipment nurture interest in technical careers. Household chores like selling agro-produce like milk or eggs in community impart market skills and lead to entrepreneurship or small business. Skills and experience of taking care of siblings and managing household chores nurture interests in professions like care giving and nursing.

External Motivations and Role Models

Professionals or seniors in society who emerged from the same kind of struggles and perseverance are motivating factors to keep them continuing their education despite the difficulties. Successful people in society inspire students to progress despite difficulties. Role models like teachers and their dream of becoming a teacher inspires them to continue education. Seniors who studied well and achieved certain positions in professional careers despite the hardships are also sources of inspiration for them. Negative examples such as people living in hardships and sufferings after being dropped out of school at an early age are also sources of motivation to continue education.

Catalyst for Resilience

Despite their challenges, participants engagement in household chores function as a powerful catalyst in developing resilience motivating toward their future aspirations. For them, fighting with household responsibilities with their schooling develops a form of determination and emotional strength. It also develops mindset to continue their education as a pathway to a better future. Furthermore, persistent negotiation with dual responsibilities equips them with adaptive aptitudes. Balancing acts of dual responsibility involves vital skills like time management, prioritization, and work habits. As a result, it fosters a sense of self-reliance and the ability to adapt to a situation. For them, hardships are not mere hindrances but a foundation for a strong base, a source of emotional strength, and a platform for learning from failure.

Discussions

Children's Household Chores, Schooling, and Growth Through an Ecological Lens

In this section, I have discussed the understanding and experiences of daily household chores of children and their schooling experience in separate subsections through Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Model of Human/Child Development with the

guidance of my subjective nature relationships with the children. The major components of Ecological model of Child Development are Micro, Exso, Meso and Macrosystem.

Negotiating Childhood: Microsystem Dynamics of Household Chores and Schooling in Children's Lived Experience

The environments where children participate in tasks and interact directly are known as the micro-system, the innermost layer of the Ecological Model of Child/Human Development (Yang & Oh, 2024). Home, schools, parents, siblings, classmates, teachers, and neighbors are part of the micro-system environment of children (Stanley & Kuo, 2022). In this immediate environment, the most direct influences on children's lives are found and day-to-day balancing acts happen between household chores and schooling.

Home Environment Shaping Schooling and Household Chore Experiences of Children

The family is the most powerful force in Students's micro-system which plays a critical role in the Students's overall development as various factors such as family material conditions and lifestyle, parent-child relationships, parenting styles, family structure and family atmosphere (Yang & Oh, 2024, p. 250). Family defines responsibilities of Students through a blend of cultural norms, economic pressures, and social values. In this setting, Students experience their everyday reality and immediate socialization (Paat, 2013) where Students interact with the parents, siblings, and their immediate neighbors. Their roles and responsibilities are established and negotiated through direct interaction with family members. For them, responsibilities of household and farm work are not mere chores but are integral to the family's subsistence and economic survival (Bray, 2003; Kelly & Agarwal, 2004; Putnick & Bornstein, 2016, p.106).

Parents, Siblings and Home Environment

One of the findings of this study is that the basic types of chores are performed by Students at home before and after school, are the task including cooking, cleaning, washing dishes, fetching water, and caring for younger siblings and are lighter in nature and less time consuming while heavier cores such as the tasks like planting, harvesting and collecting fodder, grass firewood are usually scheduled for weekends or holidays and are heavier in nature and time consuming. These wide range of chores of Students at home are practically grouped into two main types: basic and intensive,

in terms of the nature of tasks and time it takes for accomplishment as found in the field. It emerged from the field that during the weekends and holidays, children's responsibilities go beyond home to the fields where they engage in planting, weeding, harvesting, herding livestock, plowing, and other physically demanding agricultural tasks. My personal childhood experience also resembles this, as the lighter chores that I involve in ranging from three to four hours daily while the heavier chores were time-consuming, exceeding eight hours in a day.

This study revealed various perceived reasons for children to participate in involuntary household chores. Some of them are *"parents' engagement in field work for the entire day", "aging and sick parents and taking care of younger siblings"*. Children share that *"absent family members or a lack of siblings to share the burden"* force significantly higher and more demanding responsibilities. Apart from that traditional practice of engaging children as part of socialization and preparing girls for future roles are also other reasons. Some claim that helping with chores is a traditional way to share responsibilities and they help families to survive financially strained conditions. They cook food so that parents and siblings can eat directly coming from field. They also claim that it is a necessary contribution to keep our household running.

Children socialize in their work roles at home from a very young age, that is rooted in cultural traditions of rural life. The intergenerational practice socializes them into cultural values and prepares them for future adult roles, particularly for girls who are traditionally expected to handle domestic tasks. According to participants, *"participation in household chores is prevalent in their society and their parents and grandparents did it in their times and it has been going on for generations"*. Children treat such household tasks preparing adulthood especially for girls after getting married. Girls are more in comparison to boys as they are preferred to give domestic responsibilities such as cooking, cleaning, fetching water and firewood, and caring for younger siblings (Hu, 2015; Kelly & Agarwal, 2004; Putnick & Bornstein, 2016, p. 108). Contrary to this, whenever I was small child, my parents would assign me cooking tasks along with milking cows and buffalos, making evaporated milk solids and chopping vegetables and cooking food while my sister is assigned to cutting grass. The reason was, I used to dislike cutting the floor-based grass (although I love to cut the tree-based grass). The cooking tasks would also allow me to go through books sometime.

This is a finding that children's exposure to specific chores at home not only builds domestic work skills but also sparks and shapes concrete career aspirations by providing early, hands-on experience in various fields. This practical engagement allows children to discover and develop interests that can shape their future professional paths. The chores at home shape potential careers and build the foundational confidence to pursue them. For instance, children's experience in the agricultural field help career pathways professional farming and agro-business. Similarly, chores at home serve as a foundation for entrepreneurial inspiration, where domestic tasks are reimagined as commercial ventures. Participants connect their acquired cooking skills to *"a plan to open a small tea shop*", *"run a momo stall, or noodle stall"*. Other participants who have regular experience with "fixing tools and electronics demystified technology" and motivated their specific desire to become a technician.

One finding of this study is that participation of children in household chores is source of resilience and life skills, including hard work, self-reliance, time management, and practical abilities like cooking or farming and it shapes their behavior and prepares them for independence within the home microsystem. Children understand that household chores are vital for success by instilling a strong work ethic and independence. Participants term participation of household chores nurtures a foundation for lifelong hard and prepares them to handle real-life challenges, develop independence, and shape future career paths. For them, self-reliance is a necessity which equips practical skills needed to stand on their own feet. Children's day-to-day household chores serve as strong internal motivators for future success. Resilience is not just about undergoing difficulty but also about vigorously adapting, planning, and sustaining a hopeful position. The realization of one of the participants as *'the hardships of household work have imparted to me that I must study today to do better in days to come'* and the belief of other participants that their education, even while managing household chores, forms a *'robust footing for my future'*, symbolizes this deep-seated strength. Accepting hardship as motivation, such as *"the more pain they feel, the more effort they put in,"* and hoping to *"turn this pain into great success" is evidence that* participants realization towards it. The statement of participants *"seen many who studied well and secured good jobs"* contrasts sharply with those who dropped out and now *"suffer their entire lives."*

While performing these chores at home, children interact with their parents and siblings and shape their life progress (Yang & Oh, 2024, p. 250). It has emerged from the field that the persistent difficulty of balancing demanding household chores with academic responsibilities, while challenging, serves to develop crucial resilience that prepares children for future obstacles. They say that *"chores at home teaches work habits that make it easier for them to work in any situation in the future"*. Likewise, for them *"hardship and struggle give me the energy to move forward"*. They frame ongoing struggles as motivational fuel, teaching work habits and resilience that prepare them to overcome future challenges and chase their aspirations. They build resilience, taking the hardships in their day to life as a source of motivation. These types of personal attributes become a key factor in navigating the challenges they face in their day to life.

Gender is another family microsystem dimension that shapes the division of household chores. Girls are mostly assigned domestic tasks like cooking, cleaning, and caring for younger siblings, which are categorized as 'female jobs.' One of the girl participants overtly share that these roles are assigned to her because of her gender identity, and parents other participants believe that girls must learn these skills in preparation for marriage. The gendered allocation of labor within the family socializes them into traditional roles from a young age. As Leaper (2000) claimed, the gender-typing of activities within the family is a powerful mechanism for underpinning societal gender norms, demonstrating how the microsystem serves as the immediate context where broader cultural values are enacted and internalized.

However, chores at home force physical and mental stress on the children due to their long-hour work, heavy lifting and reduced personal time for play or socialization with peers. It leads to exhaustion and sleep deprivation for them (Kyei-Gyamfi, 2025). Had there been no occupation of time by extensive household work, they would get time to play or socialize with peers/friends. The combination of intense work and late-night study also results in sleep deprivation, feelings of being left out and mental exhaustion, further hindering their ability to learn. On the contrary, children also share that too much free time at the family or at home is also not good as it led them to negative peer influences, boredom, or undesirable activities like substance use.

Parental Style and Material Condition

Good parent-child relationships are critical in the socialization of children contributing to, emotional development and cognitive, social, and behavioral patterns of children (Yang & Oh, 2024, p. 252). A finding is that parents cooperate through coordination with siblings or extended family to share chores, adjust chore schedules and take over or remove children's chore responsibilities during exam periods even though parents force children to work most of the time when there is no academic overload. Warm, supportive relationships provide emotional security and help children develop emotional regulation and social competence. In contrast, conflictual relationships can lead to anxiety, insecurity, and behavioral issues. The findings of this study also echoed my childhood experience where my parents would free me off the household chore responsibilities in the time of examination and when I am overburdened with academic responsibilities such as assignments and homework.

However, the sickness or absence of parents in the family also influences children's schooling and household chores. In this context, children with elderly or sick parents, or children whose parents are not with them are therefore forced to shoulder a substantially demanding load of household chores. This is evident in the field, where children living with elderly and sick parents spend 5-6 hours a day on chores. Likewise, it is also found in the field that children are managing the household chores alone due to their father's chronic illness. This aligns with Bronfenbrenner's idea of 'proximal processes' enduring forms of interaction in the immediate environment as the primary engines of development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006, p. 797).

Material conditions and lifestyle of a family are concerned with the economic status including income, housing quality, and access to resources which also corelates with child's development. It is found in the study is children from poor families work more while children from rich families work less. Participants shared that *"as the agriculture and livestock are sources of earnings, our handling of household chores would allow their parents for field work as well as for wage work in the peak agriculture season."* This is evident in my childhood life as well. My engagement in household chores and even in *parma* indirectly help my parents to earn money so that it can be used to buy education materials as well as paying school fees. Besides, this economic need also forced us to collect wild fruits like gooseberry and other herbs and sell them in the market to collect money fulfilling the demand of education

materials. Apart from this, the poverty level is also associated with cognitive development of children. Since children from rich families work less such families can provide better educational resources and living conditions, which support cognitive development. Conversely, children who work more become exhausted from the workload resulting in mental stress and economic stress and inadequate living conditions can lead to emotional and behavioral problems.

Nonetheless, within these micro-systems, influences are reciprocal (Antony, 2022). Children do not remain passive but also actively affect the system as well. A finding of the study is that children demonstrate agency to navigate the conflicting demands of their micro-systems using various strategies to counter the effects of household work. It has emerged from the field that during the examination time when they are needed to accomplish more school assignments, children simply request their parents to reduce the workload. Apart from that, children also proactively design strategies such as making routines like mornings for chores, evenings for study. If it is not enough, they stay late at night to study at home. Supportive parent-child relationships enhance children's capacity to cope with challenges and stress they face (Hosokawa & Katsura, 2024) laying the foundation for establishing strong peer relationships and successful adaptation to school environments. This micro system helps children balance household chores and schooling. To manage household chores alongside education, children develop strategies like adjustments to chore schedules during exams or sibling support within the family adopted by parents including siblings.

Schools, Teachers, Classmates and School Work

As part of the micro-system, the school is a place for knowledge dissemination and an important platform for children's socialization (Yang & Oh, 2024, p. 252). The demands of the family micro-system impact children's performance in the school micro-system. In school children engage in academic responsibilities like attending classes, doing homework and assignments, exam preparations, attending exams and among others. The finding from the field is that dichotomy of household chore as a barrier as well as compliment to children. One part of finding is that burden of household chores reduces their available time for studying, carrying out homework, and preparing for exams. Household chores tasks like tending livestock or fetching water as well as planting, weeding and harvesting during peak agricultural seasons force them to miss school, delay to arrive or leave school early. As they share the

burden of school and household work, it impacts their ability to concentrate in class, complete homework, and attend school regularly, especially during peak agricultural seasons. Participants share that they miss school classes about 5 to 7 days a month also highlight that *"more they get involved in household chores at home, the weaker their studies become"* while other say *"carrying heavy household chores causes fatigue, reducing concentration in class"* and "*too much work stops us from focusing on studies, making me weak in the examinations."* This situation as they say, *"causes them to poorer grades and they might end up doing the same farming or manual labor in the future."* Thus, such loads of household chores directly linked to compromise education resulting in poor academic performance or grades and, in some cases, dropping out of school. Therefore, this component of the micro-system also deals with the relationship between teachers and students. Another finding from the field is that there exist some balanced measures such as providing additional time by teachers to students for accomplishment of incomplete homework and assignments.

Positive teacher-student relationships enhance academic performance as well as foster emotional regulation and social adaptation (Yang & Oh, 2024, p. 252). The teacher who understands and recognizes the children's home situation exhibits supportive behavior which influences their educational journey and motivation towards learning. However, student absenteeism, late arrival and early leaving school, due to household chores, various factors affect the schooling of the children. To mitigate this, children ask teachers for clarification on lessons and ask teachers for a flexible timetable and schedule for turning in homework. In this situation, as children share, "*they ask the teacher the next day about what was missing and request extra time from the teacher."* and *"teacher also understands and allows them to submit assignments late without punishment."* According to them, the willingness of teachers to provide extra classes & flexibility for homework and assignment is micro-systemic support. As children who predominantly engage in household during my personal childhood also experience such situation. However, different from this as we students were fearful of seeking their help due to fear of physical punishment that teachers would put to us. We had no cordial relations with teachers. Instead of teacher I would seek help from seniors from the schools in case of missing causes due to absenteeism due to mostly household chores responsibilities

Peers is a vital component of the micro-systems providing a space for socialization, shared understanding, and mutual influence (Yang & Oh, 2024, p. 252).

The study found that children who miss school classes due to household responsibilities are supported by peers helping to copy class notes from schoolmates and clarifying missed lessons. The statement of children such as *"the next day, they ask their peers to explain the missing lessons, seeking help for copying their notes and their help makes them believe they can still do well*" complement that when children interact with colleagues, they learn how to navigate similar challenges of balancing school and household work. Peer-to-peer interaction within the school microsystem is an essential coping strategy that lessens the detrimental effects of absences due to chores on academic performance. To cope with missed classes, children rely on a crucial support network such as peers provide notes, explanations, and group study sessions, while teachers offer flexibility with deadlines, extra explanations, and after-class help, which together provide emotional hope and practical means to continue their studies.

Negotiating the Family-School-Peer Mesosystem in the Context of Children's Dual Responsibilities

The relationship between the family and the school is critical in terms of the dynamic meso-system. This interaction mechanism shows that family-school cooperation not only enhances children's academic achievement but also has a positive effect on their emotional and social development (Yang & Oh, 2024, p. 252). Children face responsibilities of household chores at home as well as study at school at the same time. However, the relationship between the school and family micro-systems is both complementary and opposite (Bray, 2003; Kyei-Gyamfi, 2025).

Linkages Between Family and School

Children's engagement in household chores is often considered an outcome of economic necessity (Camilletti et al., 2025). It emerged from the field that on one hand, the school micro-system demands school attendance, examination, homework and assignments, extracurricular activities on other hand the family's agrarian micro-system demands regular engagement in time-consuming household chores and seasonal farm-based work. It interacts with school demands and impacts their educational continuity. The duties of household chores on children during planting, weeding and harvesting seasons and heavy or long-hour work cause fatigue results in difficulties in concentrating in study, school attendance, inability to complete homework and assignments, and poor exam preparation. Children are obliged to engage in household chores as parents share to their child, *"if you stay without work,*

you will become starved, or you cannot get to eat [haat khali bhayo bhane Mukh khali hunchha]" and without jobs you do not get to eat [kam nagari mam paidaiana]". As a result, as they say, this sort of engagement makes interruption in learning and acquiring knowledge and as a result perpetuates poor academic performance and lower grades. As a child, I would also experience the same because I did not get enough time to prepare for the examinations. Due to before and after school household chores such as herding goats and oxen and duties, cutting grass and fodder, time for exam preparation would be significantly reduced.

However, for long term, the family-school linkage found that children's household chores are complementary in various ways (Kyei-Gyamfi, 2025). One of the findings of this study is that household chores contribute to developing transferable skills, fostering discipline, and learning time management skills of children. This micro-system serves as a training ground for these important abilities. In this connection participants shared, *"learning the household chores equips with skills for potential careers helping to become self-reliant"* and *"life skills are needed ultimately no matter how much one study and it is learned from doing household chores."* According to them, the practical skills learned by children through hands-on tasks such as cooking or weaving under the supervision of family members, management skills from dual or multiple responsibilities they are assigned to and leadership skills from the coordination tasks are directly or indirectly contributing to academic or schooling as well.

One of the participants' experienced of exhaustion from a long walk to school compounded by household chores, which affects her grades, is a touching illustration of the tension between these two microsystems. The tension between home and school is especially severe during peak annual agricultural seasons as children are forced to miss school to help with planting or harvesting. It is evident in the experience of one of the participants as she shared that absenteeism of 5 to 7 days a month creates a significant barrier to her educational progress. However, it has been also revealed from the field that strategies that children and families use to traverse these challenges, demonstrating efforts to initiate a more functional mesosystem such as *"study of children until late or study in the early morning, and reduce chore load of children during exams by parents at times"* and *"teachers and peers playing a role by providing notes and extra classes."*

Although parents dictate to their children to participate in household chores and family field, it emerged from the field that parents/siblings extend their support to lessen this family-school conflict through balancing household chores and schooling by making flexible chore schedules, such as scheduling tasks to weekends or holidays. This is another critical meso-system connection is parental and sibling support to children (Romano et al., 2009). This reduces workloads for the children especially during exams and helps balance the demands of home and school mitigating the conflict between home and school. Children as well as parents demonstrate proactive attempts to create cooperative connections to represent a meso-system in operation. Parents develop and adjust chore schedules by creating routines. Children even proactively schedule their household chores in the morning and study in the evening prioritizing essential tasks during the week to free up time for study. As they shared children even develop multitasking ability by reviewing study materials while performing light chores. They also negotiate with parents for fewer chores during exams. One of the methods of doing is children, especially during the examination time, they request their parents not to schedule any field related tasks instead of the essential tasks at home and study deferring them until exams are over. During exams, they don't do big or time-consuming tasks. To cover up the study missed by household chores, they continue to study late into the night or wake up early in the morning to study. I also sometimes study while doing certain light tasks. This study also found that some parents even offer motivation, encouragement and guidance, even requesting older students or neighbors or teachers for extra classes and tuition to fulfill the gap. To support the child's education, the family actively interacts with the school as part of meso-systemic interaction. With demonstration of resilience, these coping mechanisms highlight the systemic nature of the problem and reflect the value of positive connections between home and school for student success (Epstein, 1995).

Linkages Between School and Peers

Peer-to-peer interaction proves to be a critical coping mechanism that helps them keep up with their studies. Positive peer relationships can significantly enhance children's self-esteem, social competence, and emotional regulation while negative peer interactions (exclusion, bullying, or marginalization) can have significant negative impacts on children's mental health and behavior ultimately affecting children's school adjustment and social functioning (Yang & Oh, 2024, p. 252). Peers build a link of support to the family microsystem through the role of informal

teachers. This study revealed from the field that when children are unable to attend classes due to household tasks, fellow classmates help to bridge the gaps caused by the school absence. Peers take on various ways including copying class notes from schoolmates and helping by clarifying on the missed lessons. This is one of the common remedial mechanisms for children of missing lessons is that they ask friends regarding the missed classes. Their friends in the class share the lesson and assignments. Upon request, peers even make explanations and clarification regarding the missed lessons apart from helping in completing and submitting my homework. This collaborative environment helps to manage the academic deficiencies caused by their dual responsibilities

The classroom, students in the class, and teacher create a microsystem for an individual student (Crawford, 2020). Positive relationships with teachers Peers build a link of support to the family microsystem through the role of informal teachers. This study revealed from the field that when children are unable to attend classes due to household tasks, fellow classmates help to bridge the gaps caused by the school absence. Peers take on various ways including copying class notes from schoolmates and helping by clarifying on the missed lessons. This is one of the common remedial mechanisms for children of missing lessons is that they ask friends regarding the missed classes. Their friends in the class share the lesson and assignments. Upon request, peers even make explanations and clarification regarding the missed lessons apart from helping in completing and submitting my homework. This collaborative environment helps to manage the academic deficiencies caused by their dual responsibilities foster a student's academic performance, emotional regulation, and social adaptation (Yang & Oh, 2024, p. 252). Trust and support from teachers can increase motivation and reduce anxiety of children. In this study one of the findings is that children ask the teacher to give them a flexible timetable and deadline for turning in their assignments and homework whenever children miss school due to household chores as part of balancing household chores and schooling. As shared by them, *“when they miss classes, the teachers send the homework/tasks via social media and gives them extra time to learn missed lessons, sometimes even teaching me after class.”* This is critical meso-system connection, where teachers understand children's home situations and provide support by offering them extra classes, clarification of missed lessons, and providing flexibility on deadlines for homework and assignments. Children also communicate the family's limitations to school officials while

negotiating the relationship between the two systems. Similarly, children take the teachers or senior students from the school as a source of motivation and inspiration to continue education as role models despite having similar chore burdens. This provides inspirational connections that strengthen aspirations across home and school settings.

To cope with missed classes, children rely on a crucial support network like peers provide notes, explanations, and group study sessions, while teachers offer flexibility with deadlines, extra explanations, and after-class help, which together provide emotional hope and practical means to continue their studies.

External Strains: Exosystemic Constraints of Farm Economics and Inflexible School Policies on Children's Double Burden

The exo-system refers to the external environments that indirectly affect children by influencing their immediate environments such as school, home and peers. Dimensions like work stress, schedules, and job stability of parents are directly impacted by parents' emotional states and quality of life in family together with the impacting children's development through quality and quantity of parent-child interactions (Yang & Oh, 2024, p. 252).

Parental Workplace and Socio-economic Status

The family socioeconomic status exo-system is a powerful one that shapes the development and experience of children through the interaction of rural economy (Mishra et al., 2023; Yang & Oh, 2024). As the economy does not offer steady employment, families rely on subsistence farming and manual labor for survival. The exo-system forces the nature of rural economy shaping the actions of the children's family as well as their responsibilities This study revealed that children’s family economic situation leads them to contribute to household work and family farming by being a responsible member of the family. Good socioeconomic status creates a positive atmosphere for children's development while weak socioeconomic status linked to economic strain, resource scarcity, and increased family conflict failing the family’s ability to support the child causing developmental risks (Yang & Oh, 2024, p. 252). Workplace and work conditions of parents are exo-system components (Lawson et al., 2016). Parents' labor-intensive agricultural work or community economic conditions impose children's chore involvement without direct participation of children. Nepal’s structure of rural economy is an agro-based system where parents work which is negatively influenced by exo-systems.

The parents' occupations, mainly agriculture and wage labor, are a significant influence. The seasonal nature of agricultural work dictates the peaks and troughs of children's chore loads. One of the participants' father's irregular works as a wage laborer imposes her contribution in the fields, affecting directly her time for play and study. Another participant explains that her family's poverty and her father's lack of stable employment make her contribution to household chores essential for survival. This aligns with the study of Conger and Donnellan (2007), who found that economic difficulty affects parenting practices and, so as the development of child. The economic strain on families, an exosystemic factor, is thus rendered into heightened responsibilities for children within their microsystem. It has emerged from the field that parents remain busy for the entire day in fields and engage in labor-intensive and long-hour work. As a result, their engagement in labor-intensive and long-hour field work for the entire day prevents them contributing to household responsibilities, forcing their children to perform household chores to support the family's needs. Further, those children who come from low-income households take on household chores more because it allows their parents to work for wages for income-generating activities. This study revealed that children must fill in because parents' labor is so tough and provides no regular income. Children's involvement in household chores gives their parents the freedom to engage in family farm-related activities in addition to occasional wage labor work. According to children, parents assign them a range of activities as they rely on support for children, normalizing the fact that family's low economic status is one reason for engagement in household chores. Children also credit their father's irregular work and family economic struggles for this fate. Their support through participation in household chores is essential for survival and tasks like keeping goats, chickens and other farm-based works help sustain daily family needs. Had their parents contributed to the household chores, children wouldn't have to engage in the household chores. Similarly, children enable their parents to interact with external ecosystems through the contribution of household chores as part of the family's survival. Wealth disparities in the community mean children from poorer families perform more chores compared to those from richer ones.

Almost all farming in rural areas is done for domestic consumption and there are issues of affordability of outside labor and availability of paid labor. It has emerged that the apart from household chores, the *parma* (labor exchange) system is the alternative to fill the gap of unavailability of paid farm laborers in the form of

older children during peak seasons putting them the burden of work for the family's sustenance, preventing them from participating in schooling. Further, it has also been found that the health condition and age of family parents also play a role as children must take care of their sick or elderly parents and bear the burden of domestic work. They share that missing school for farm work of children is a wide acceptance community which can be called an exo-systemic factor.

To balance or cope up with the household chore responsibilities together with schooling, students and families use a variety of balancing techniques to minimize the tension between household chores and schooling.

School Policies: School Calendar, Regulations

The schooling system’s policies and structures are also exo-system factors and policies of the education system are not developed with consideration of the realities of the children in relation to rural agro-economy. Policy regulations involving education is also exo-system factor for children’s development (Yang & Oh, 2024, p. 252). Children’s seasonal agricultural responsibilities like planting or harvesting crops restrict their school attendance for days and weeks. Children from especially rural areas miss schools due to their engagement in farm-based work for planting and harvesting seasonal crops. It not only prevents children from attending school classes but also impacts physical and mental exhaustion of children. As results, it impacts their education and grades. Education authorities, a part of an exo-system, set such a school calendar which is inflexible and does not sync with agricultural cycles. As a result, children face educational compromise. To navigate this exo-system, children request teachers to provide a flexible timeline and schedule to submit homework and assignments.

It has been revealed from the field that household chores as a critical economic imperative. Their household chore is essential for family survival in agrarian economies, with workload directly linked to family poverty levels, contrasting with the lesser burdens on wealthier children.

Cultural Blueprint: Macrosystemic Norms Weave Children's Dual Roles through Livelihood, Loyalty and Gender

The macro-system of ecological model defines the world of children as made up of societal values, traditional customs, economic structure and prevailing cultural norms. Macro-system represents the broad cultural context, and these influence the children's experiences (Yang & Oh, 2024, p. 252).

Cultural Values and Norms: Tradition, Family Loyalty, Gender Roles

One of the findings of this study is that children's household chores are deeply rooted in a cultural belief system that frames a household chore as not a burden for children, but a fundamental aspect of their identity and moral responsibility. As a strong macro system, children's lives are rooted in a culture that normalizes children household work as a necessary part of life which competes and contradicts with educational goals of children. Children term their participation in household chores as a long-standing tradition and a normal part of rural childhood. Community also sees it as platform to teach responsibility, discipline, and essential life skills, a practice passed down through generations. It socializes them into cultural values of responsibility, discipline, family loyalty and an instrument of increasing family unity. It is evident as one participant states, *"it has been going on for generations"* and other notes that '*almost every one of children engages in some part of in household chores in their village*'. This normalization of children's work is a powerful macrosystemic influence that makes it an undisputed part of life in these rural communities. As Weisner (2002) argues, as cultural routines and practices are central to children's development, the household chores are a key cultural routine in this context. This study found that there is widespread expectation that children are part of family functioning and survival and that has been passed down through the generations. It is a cultural belief as they share that if there is no work, you do not get to eat. This works as motivating factors to link household chores directly to survival and livelihood. Children also take household chores to compensate for their parents' contribution to them. This makes children's contributions not just helpful but essential for the family's well-being.

Children's household chores serve as practical training for future agricultural or domestic responsibilities (Kyei-Gyamfi, 2025). While all children work in rural areas, gender patterns are obvious and are another compelling macrosystemic force. Gendered expectations are set by the macro-system, and this study shows that girls are assigned household chores as part of preparation for their future roles. It is an expected part of childhood and reinforced by parents, neighbors, and the community. This indicates that the girl's roles and responsibilities are encoded by traditional norms of society and shape their responsibilities from an early life.

One of the participants recollect her father as saying, "*girls need to be trained for their future roles as wives and mothers through household chores*" and

internalization of it by another participant reflects what Ridgeway (2011) calls ‘gender frames’, the shared cultural schemas that shape our understanding of gender and our expectations for gendered behavior. This prepares girls for domestic roles while boys for field roles.

The macro-system recognizes household chores as a tool for socialization (Wang et al., 2022). It provides practical training, imparts discipline, basic life skills, develops robust work ethics and prepares for future adult roles. This societal belief system frames demanding household chores of children not just as a necessity, but as a morally positive activity that builds resilience and a strong work ethic. This cultural belief frames household chores not just as labor but as a fundamental part of the moral and practical growth of children.

A significant macro-systemic belief is that household chores prevent negative behaviors by keeping children productively occupied. Idleness of children is termed as a risk because it could lead them to bad peer influences, substance use and even aggression. This belief is taken as a strong cultural justification for need for keeping children busy with household tasks.

Rural Economic System: Agro-based, Subsistence Economy

Agro-based economy is one essential aspect of the macrosystem that directly contributes to the need for child work. Rural society believes that children's household work is a direct result of family economic necessity. Children from low-income families understand that their chore support is a critical economic input. Their chores in agriculture and livestock management are directly tied to the family's livelihood, freeing parents for other income-generating work. One of findings is that due to lack of income alternatives of parents, children are trapped in intergenerational poverty and contribution of children at home is critical for survival due to this macro-economic reality in an agro-based economy. According to them, as farming is not done for commercial purposes, people cannot hire outside labor owing to low productivity. Similarly, these days villages youth are migrating to cities either to study for higher education or seeking jobs and some even leaving villages for foreign employment. This tendency has been causing huge agriculture workforce deficit in the villages and lack of agricultural workers in the rural areas is posing challenges. Therefore, to fill this gap, children take responsibility for household work so that their parents can give full time to the family farms. Likewise, teenage children themselves are also forced to indulge in seasonal agricultural and family farm activities. This

creates a societal norm where children's work is not termed as unusual activity but a normal part of work. Hence, the dual responsibilities of children define a macro-system. Likewise, the views of children that wealthy families rarely work at home while children from economically weak families perform more household chores demonstrate how the economic inequality of the macro-system produces childhood experiences depending on socioeconomic status.

Societal Beliefs: Importance of Schooling

In addition to the belief that household chores are traditional norms of society, there is also growing societal belief regarding the importance of education or schooling. Children recognize schooling and household chores not as conflicting demands, but as complementary pathways toward socio-economic mobility. One of the findings of this study deals with schooling as the main mode of escaping poverty where children contribute to the family's immediate survival as well as invest in education for their long-term prosperity. Participant of study shares that *"education is the main mode to escape the hardships of poverty"* and *"essential for improving his family's economic status"*. Their primary motivation for pursuing education stems from the desire for future financial stability and the attainment of professional employment, which they view as essential for improving their family's economic status and ending inherited financial struggles, observed through their parents' arduous agricultural labor. School is seen to associate them with dignified professions that offer better salaries and a higher social status.

This study also revealed that the influence of successful people such as teachers and seniors in the village who studied well becomes symbols of this new macro-value. The positive and negative examples in their communities' work as role models for children. Successful and educated figures inspire children to do better. One of participants share she looks to her cousin who became a teacher as proof education brings better opportunities. Their success encourages juniors to continue hard work despite the difficulties that investment in education does not go in vain. Conversely, negative examples such as remorseful people who regret quitting school or the visible hardships of parents and sisters due to lack of education, serve as powerful motivators, complementing their belief in the need of continuing the studies. One of the participants learns from his eldest brother's regret about quitting school, and another is motivated by her parents' and sisters' hardships due to lack of education. They developed the thought of needing to study hard from seeing negative

examples of society such as current pitiful life people who previously had dropped out of school losing their fight with household chores.

Essence of Chapter

In this section, I have presented the major findings of the findings of the study followed by the discussion of the findings through the lens of Ecological Model of Human /Child Development developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979). In this chapter I have grouped the findings as per the three research questions. The discussions of the findings have been done through Micro, Meso, Exso and Macrosystemic frame of the Ecological Model of Human /Child Development developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979).

CHAPTER VIII
INSIGHTS, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION,

This chapter deals with the reflection conclusion and implication of this study. In doing so, I present the conclusion first abstracting the essence of the study. Followed by my insight and the implication of the study.

My Insight on a Research Journey

I chose the topic of teenage children's household chores and their pros and consequences in relation to schooling; how do they see it as part of future aspirations and how do they develop coping mechanisms. First, the selection of topics was challenging. It was because it is a neglected issue, and everybody is taking it for granted for a long time. It is done within children's own family therefore mostly taken as not harmful after all they do under the interest of parents and family members. Therefore, it is not defined as child labor. It is basically unpaid and the hard work that children devote their early life to is used as nobody, not even family members, does not regard or give it as if it does not earn or yield cash. Since my early life experienced it, it gave birth as a research problem to be investigated.

Although I chose it as my research problems, I develop the research proposal then I happen to know initially or I hardly find literatures regarding children household chores as most of the literatures were regarding the child labor which is bit different like children's engagement as paid labor entirely giving up the education and earning money for themselves and their family.

Anyway, I developed the proposal but in between, Nepal faced a massive earthquake in 2015. It created a roadblock to my research together with other family issues such as the birth of a daughter and a new job at an NGO devoted to the reconstruction of earthquake damaged houses in Dhading, Nuwakot and Dolakha. I spent almost four years outside the home in this period and gave up the research. Until last few years back, I never thought that I would ever back on track and accomplish this study. However, ultimately, I rethink it, and I proceeded to conduct this research. My family members and colleagues encourage me to accomplish it. I became energized by them. Then I took it as a mission. Since it was the issue of my experience, I felt it would not be too hard. I explored it based on the children of

Bagmati Rural Municipality as my field of study. However, I met a problem of transportation following a Bagmati flood, there were no roads that were swept away following landslides and floods or severely damaged and not reconstructed so I had to reach there on foot mainly two wards of the municipality. Nonetheless I accomplished the observation and interview.

Since the study was qualitative research designed to explore children's experience on their participation in household chores and schooling, I chose the respondents purposely best suited to my study. I used interpretive inquiry as research methodology and in-depth Interview and observation as data collection methods to collect the information, considering the importance of data collection in a natural setting. An interpretive paradigm was used while analyzing the data.

During the in-depth interview of children, the first challenge was how to identify and select children who don't feel shy or willing to participate in the interview. During the actual interview, I realized that some of the respondents were talkative which means if I had more of such respondents among my informants it would make the interview lengthy and make it difficult to analyze. While some of the respondents were very shy and spoke very few words. This was also challenging to me because this data fit as per the scope of qualitative study. For them I had to ask complementary questions. All the interviews were conducted at home to get their free time. The reason is that by the time I was supposed to take the interview, there was school vacation after the final examinations for up to grade nine while class 10 students were preparing for SEC examination and class 12 students were also doing preparations for the examinations.

However, I faced a problem during the interview. As a researcher, especially for a qualitative researcher, I need long textual information with elaborate answers to any question asked but except for a few all the children replied to me like objective answers to the questions. It was not useful for me. Then I stopped the interview initially and again redone the next day after developing more rapport with them making them easy. I thought that they were still uncomfortable speaking with me. Apart from that I had to adjust the question and develop several follow up questions so that I could get the expected answer so that I could use it as data.

When I look back on my journey with this study, I think that qualitative research is a transforming process which helps understanding and interacting with context. As far as I am concerned, this involves that a researcher understands the basic

philosophical ideas of ontology, epistemology, and axiology. It helps me to fulfill the great knowledge gap regarding the research, qualitative.

One of the noteworthy insights from this study is that the prevalence of children's household chores particularly in the rural context is extensive when senior members of the family including siblings and father have moved to city areas or even to foreign employment although I know about it due to my previous experience. But even 30 years after my involvement, I found no changes in it, which was remarkable. However, I found one scenario changed. As rural villages to city migration of youths have been increased more which creates agricultural workforce which forces children to engage in household chore and family farms.

This experience taught me that the component of research is an essential component that aims to investigate any phenomenon at a deeper level. Exploring students' day-to-day experience of household chores and schooling in society can only be accomplished by thoroughly addressing the how and why part of a study problem. Simultaneously, I saw the value of qualitative research in answering the how and why questions.

Doing evidence-based research to guide programs and policies in the areas of education and development, as well as any concerns pertaining to development, would be very beneficial to me. In this study, I analyzed the children's experience of household chores and school through the lenses of Ecological Systems Theory which provided a profound theoretical insight.

While seeing the children's day to household chores and schooling experience through the ecological system theory, the life of children is not a single event but a complex interaction of nested environmental systems. In terms of micro-system, home and school of children, shape their daily reality and socialize children into viewing chores as a familial duty, a cultural norm, and an economic necessity. Instead of passive agents, children exhibit agency by negotiating chore schedules and designing study routines at home while it demands attendance, homework, and academic performance at school, creating a direct conflict. At the meso-system level, home-school linkage is featured by conflict household chores and schooling. At the exo-system level, parents' labor work at the fields, the lack of alternative income, and the community's acceptance of child labor in farming that forces the need of children's engagement in household chores. At macro-system level, the cultural belief is that chores are essential for teaching responsibility, preventing idleness, and preparing

children for adult roles, especially nurturing gendered divisions of labor. At macro-system level, children's work is normalized as a moral and practical good which believes household chores of children are not as exploitation but a valuable part of their growth and a vital component of the family's survival in a subsistence economy.

Conclusion of the Study

In this research, I explored the children's experiences in household chores and schooling as evolving issues based on the perceptions and practices of children. I have drawn five key conclusions as given below.

In a society embedded with cultural norms and economic necessity, engagement of students, irrespective of gender, in household chores is common phenomenon. From the cultural perspective, it is an intergenerational practice that socializes children into values of familial responsibility, loyalty, and unity, preparing them, especially for girls, for their future adult and domestic roles. From an economic perspective, it is a critical survival technique for families trapped in intergenerational poverty within an agro-based economy. Seasonal agriculture demands involvement of students to fulfill the dearth of agricultural labor force due to male out-migration from rural areas in Nepal. This phenomenon has forced children, mainly girls, to serve either as substitutes for agricultural laborers or supplementary maternal domestic roles due to parents' engagement in the field. With parents occupied in the fields all day and a lack of alternative income, children's labor becomes essential for family sustenance. This creates a hierarchy where children from unprivileged families work in comparison to the children from richer families.

Students' engagement in household chores work as both barrier and complement to children's schooling and careers. Prolonged hours of work at home and late-night study causes stress, exhaustion fatigue, reduces concentration in class, and missed school classes, especially during farming seasons and leads to poorer school engagement, reduced study time and exam preparation hindering school outcomes and career aspirations. Similarly, learning cooking, washing, taking care of siblings and farm-based work equips them with skills for future livelihoods and potential careers.

However, Students' excessive household chores responsibilities and children's schooling are negatively linked. The main hindrance is the time it consumes and endures physical demands. Long hours of household chores consume time otherwise to be given for studying, homework, and rest, which deprives sleep and exhaustion of

reducing the ability to concentrate in class, delaying assignments, inadequate exam preparation, and lower academic achievement. Apartment of that seasonal agricultural chores also cause missing school class impacting learning gaps. Furthermore, operating heavy lifting and hazardous tools causes injuries and stress acting as barriers to academic success.

To navigate double burden of household chores and schooling responsibilities, Students designs strategies or make adaptations such as chore in the morning while allocating evening time, especially after meals, for study, stay up to late night or wake up early in the morning. Apart from that students prioritize non-urgent tasks during weekends while heavy tasks on weekends, adapt multitasking strategies (light chores and study together) and finish up chores quickly to free up time for study. Students also get the help of peers and teachers, with support such as sharing class notes, extra classes & flexible deadlines for homework. To balance day-to-day chores and schooling activities, parents, upon the request of students, adjust chore schedules by assigning light tasks during weekdays and intensive household chores on weekends. Students also seek to reduce the workload during the major academic period and to postpone heavy chores until after exams.

Household chores are a tool for moral development of children. According to them, it imparts discipline, a work ethic, and a sense of responsibility. While the absence of structured routines, idleness could jeopardize children leading to harmful behaviors like substance abuse and aggression, household chores can keep children fit, agile, and mentally occupied, preventing them from indulging in bad habits. On top of that, the challenge of balancing household chores with academic stresses nurtures qualities and skills like time-management skills, and emotional coping capacity. This influences children to develop attributes that are instrumental for overcoming future life challenges.

Household chores and farm-based tasks offer skills that shape children’s future career paths. Household chores are not only a task but also a basis for training for specific professions. Exposure to farming practices can spark an interest in farming or agri-business in future. Duties related to cooking can inspire future jobs in the hotel sector. Likewise, selling small scale agriculture products imparts marketing skills and skills of repairing tools could foster technical interests of children in future. Similarly. Taking care of siblings develops skills like care-giving professions like nursing.

Finally, students' engagement in household chores contributes to both character building and resilience. Household tasks and schooling experiences act as a catalytic force for personal growth. Navigating the complexities of responsibility, they develop transferable skills, like time management, negotiation, and informed decision-making. Apart from that, the challenges and hardships inherent in these duties help children build resilience and emotional strength. This coping mechanism of dual responsibility fosters a mindset of self-reliance and determination. Experiences of handling complex responsibilities prepare children with adaptive abilities vital to steer hard times and pursue their long-term aspirations.

Implication of the Study

The findings of this study are useful to the students who participate in family farm responsibilities especially during peak agriculture seasons. Education policy and systems can stress the need to adapt to realities of children as there is conflict between the agricultural calendar and the school calendar. Considering children engage in family farms during peak planting and harvesting seasons, more flexible educational policies regarding school hours and attendance. Likewise, the findings of study are useful for children who miss classes due to household responsibilities. Additional classes can be managed for students who miss school. Similarly, to align with the skills children are learning at home, it can integrate practical, vocational skills into the formal curriculum. Since children's household chores are vital for family survival, policies only cannot eliminate children's household chore participation. Thus, economic interventions like alternative income generation or subsidies to farm labor to families could reduce the use of children in household chores.

One of the findings of research is that male particularly the youth's out-migration from rural areas in Nepal has triggered either dearth of agricultural labors or structural change of agriculture. This phenomenon has forced children and girls to serve either as substitutes for agricultural laborers or supplementary maternal domestic roles due to parents' engagement in the field. This study revealed the importance of labor-substitution patterns of students, a double burden that compromises academic attendance and cognitive engagement. Therefore, this useful for future research to be done with focus on how shifting migration patterns or absence of adult males redefines the division of labor in rural areas which affects subtly engraining gendered educational gaps and hindering long-term human capital development villages.

This is useful for future research be this study has explored the perception and experience of children how their early life exposure to household chores helps shape character of individuals and build resilience. However, the same study can be done with the adult or mid aged professionals regarding how their early-life exposure to household chores helps shape character of individuals and build resilience when they move beyond domestic sphere and professional life could be another issue to be researched.

The findings of the study are also useful for those who cannot afford to send children due to household responsibilities. Introducing social protection programs can compensate for the economic opportunity cost of sending children to school. Awareness campaigns emphasizing the long-term economic returns of education targeting parents can be helpful.

The findings are also useful for preserving positive factors and reducing negative factors associated with children's household chores. Intervention programs can preserve benefits of a household while mitigating the harm it causes to children through encouraging community that age appropriate, balanced household chores are a helpful source of cultural socialization, development of practical skills and building characters.

The findings of the study are useful, discouraging the community that physical and mental health impacts of children caused particularly farm-based chores. It can help by recognizing and addressing issues like physical exhaustion, stress, sleep deprivation, and injuries resulting from household and farm work through community health programs. Likewise, schools can be aware or asked to carry out mental health support to children faced with pressure due to balancing heavy domestic responsibilities with academic demands.

The findings of the study are useful to children as role models within their community can be a powerful tool to sustain their motivation and aspirations. The findings of this study are also helpful as the practical skills learned through household chores can be a foundation for future livelihoods of children. Apart from that, such career counseling and vocational training programs further enhance connecting the skills they learn at home to formal career pathways in agriculture, hospitality, entrepreneurship etc. The implications should vary significantly based on socioeconomic status, gender, age and capabilities of children. Therefore, programs

must be sensitive to and aim to transform the gender division of labor, poverty, and younger and older children.

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ANNEX

Interview Guidelines

1**. How do students' involuntary engagement in household chores shape their schooling experience?**

- What are the common household chores that children are responsible for?
- Why do children engage in household chores?
- How do their domestic responsibilities influence their ability to complete homework and prepare for exams?
- How do parents and community members view and tell the involvement of children in household and farm work?
- How do children feel while engaging in chores?

2. In what ways do children balance their household duties and schooling?

- How children's strategies to ensure they complete their schoolwork while fulfilling their responsibilities at home or divide their time between school and household chores
- How do teachers, parents, guardians and extended family member support children in managing both work and education?
- How do children handle exhaustion, lack of study time, or miss school due to work?

3**. How do children engage in involuntary household chores and schooling learn and prepare for future aspirations?**

- How do they perceive the value of education in relation to their current duties at home?
- How do children understand their household responsibilities in achieving their educational and career goals?
- How did their experiences with household work influenced their career interests
- What motivates them to continue both their education and their responsibilities at home despite these difficulties?