

FROM ADVERSITY TO RESILIENCE: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO THE
LIVES OF CHILD CORRECTION HOME IN NEPAL

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AN ABSTRACT

of the dissertation of *Jeni Shrestha* for the degree of *Master of Philosophy in Development Studies*, presented on *16 June 2026*, entitled *From Adversity to Resilience: A Narrative Inquiry into the Lives of Child Correction Home in Nepal*.

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In 2017, I joined the Secretariat of the Central Child Justice Committee as the Program Officer. My role is to assist. The committee is to act as the coordinating officer among district courts, the Child Court, and Child Correction homes in Nepal regarding children in conflict with the law. While I was performing my role, I reviewed various publications on child-related legal cases. I was shocked to learn how different social factors and personal characteristics can lead to criminal behavior among young people. Given this context, this research investigates how children at the Bhaktapur Child Reform Home experience their time, while examining the social, familial, and structural elements that direct their entry into the Child justice system. The study applies an interpretive research methodology to conduct a qualitative investigation through narrative inquiry, which included in-depth interviews with the participants to create detailed insights regarding their lived experience. This research demonstrates that children who encounter legal problems come from families that experience both structural and emotional instability. They face neglect and domestic violence more often.

Their adverse childhood experiences lead to emotional distress and school dropouts, drug consumption, and dangerous peer associations, which heighten the risk of developing delinquent conduct. The narratives show how social labeling processes, structural strain, and institutional constraints determine the participants' future paths. The study finds that all participants display resilience because they cope with their

challenges by developing adaptive skills and following their goals of personal growth from their difficult experiences. The study proposes that society should view child delinquency as a collective behavior that results from interconnected social, familial, and structural factors rather than treating it as a single deviant behavior pattern. The study results demonstrate the urgent requirement to establish stronger family support systems and develop rehabilitation programs that prioritize children.

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16 June 2026

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शोध सार

बिकास शिक्षामा दर्शनशास्त्रको स्नातकोत्तर उपाधिका लागि जेनी श्रेष्ठ थापाको शोधप्रबन्धको शीर्षक “प्रतिकूलतादेखि उत्थानशीलतासम्म: नेपालका सुधार गृहका जीवनहरूमा आधारित एक संकथन” १ असार २०८३ मा प्रस्तुत गरिएको थियो।

.....
सह. प्रा. इन्द्रमणि राई, पीएचडी
शोध निर्देशक

सन् २०१७ मा मैले केन्द्रीय बाल न्याय समितिको सचिवालयमा कार्यक्रम अधिकृतका रूपमा कार्य प्रारम्भ गरें। मेरो भूमिका समितिलाई सहयोग गर्नु तथा कानूनसँग द्वन्द्वमा रहेका बालबालिकासम्बन्धी विषयमा नेपालका जिल्ला अदालत, बाल अदालत र बाल सुधार गृहहरूबीच समन्वय अधिकृतका रूपमा कार्य गर्नु थियो। आफ्नो जिम्मेवारी निर्वाह गर्ने क्रममा मैले बालबालिकासम्बन्धी विभिन्न कानुनी मुद्दाहरूका प्रकाशनहरूको अध्ययन गरें। त्यस क्रममा सामाजिक विभिन्न कारकहरू तथा व्यक्तिगत विशेषताहरूले कसरी युवाहरूमा आपराधिक व्यवहारको विकास गराउँछन् भन्ने कुरा थाहा पाउँदा म आश्चर्यचकित भएँ। यही सन्दर्भलाई आधार मानेर यस अनुसन्धानले भक्तपुर बाल सुधार गृहमा रहेका बालबालिकाले त्यहाँ बिताएको समयलाई कसरी अनुभव गर्छन् भन्ने विषयको अध्ययन गर्नुका साथै उनीहरू बाल न्याय प्रणालीमा प्रवेश गर्न प्रेरित गर्ने सामाजिक, पारिवारिक तथा संरचनात्मक तत्वहरूको पनि परीक्षण गरेको छ। यस अध्ययनमा व्याख्यात्मक अनुसन्धान पद्धति अपनाई आख्यानान्तात्मक अनुसन्धानमार्फत गुणात्मक अध्ययन गरिएको छ, जसअन्तर्गत सहभागीहरूसँग गहन अन्तर्वार्ता सञ्चालन गरी उनीहरूको जीवन्त अनुभवसम्बन्धी विस्तृत अन्तर्दृष्टि प्राप्त गरिएको छ। यस अनुसन्धानले देखाएको छ कि कानुनी समस्यामा परेका बालबालिकाहरू प्रायः संरचनात्मक तथा भावनात्मक अस्थिरता भएका परिवारबाट आएका हुन्छन्। उनीहरूले बेवास्ता तथा घरेलु हिंसाको सामना बढी गरेका हुन्छन्।

उनीहरूले बाल्यकालमा भोगेका प्रतिकूल अनुभवहरूले भावनात्मक तनाव, विद्यालय छोड्ने अवस्था, लागुऔषधको प्रयोग तथा जोखिमपूर्ण साथीहरूको संगततर्फ धकेल्ने काम गरेको छ, जसले उनीहरूमा कसुरजन्य व्यवहार विकास हुने जोखिमलाई अझ बढाएको छ। सहभागीहरूको कथनले सामाजिक लेबलिङ प्रक्रिया, संरचनात्मक दबाव तथा संस्थागत सीमितताहरूले उनीहरूको भविष्यको जीवनमार्ग कसरी निर्धारण गर्छन् भन्ने कुरा देखाउँछन्। अध्ययनले सबै सहभागीहरूले आफ्ना कठिन अनुभवहरूबाट सिक्दै अनुकूलन गर्ने क्षमता विकास गरी व्यक्तिगत विकासका लक्ष्यहरू पछ्याएर चुनौतीहरूको सामना गरेको, अर्थात् उनीहरूमा उत्थानशीलता (Resilience) रहेको पाइएको छ। अध्ययनले बाल कसुरजन्य व्यवहारलाई केवल एक विचलित व्यवहारका रूपमा नभई सामाजिक,

पारिवारिक तथा संरचनात्मक कारकहरूको अन्तरसम्बन्धबाट उत्पन्न हुने सामूहिक सामाजिक परिणामका रूपमा हेर्नुपर्ने प्रस्ताव गरेको छ। अध्ययनका निष्कर्षहरूले परिवारको सहयोग प्रणालीलाई अझ सुदृढ बनाउनुका साथै बालबालिकालाई केन्द्रमा राखेर पुनर्स्थापना (Rehabilitation) कार्यक्रमहरू विकास गर्नु अत्यन्त आवश्यक रहेको देखाएका छन्।

.....

१ असार २०८३

जेनी श्रेष्ठ

उपाधि उम्मेदवार

This dissertation, entitled *From Adversity to Resilience: A Narrative Inquiry into the Lives of Child Correction Home in Nepal*, was presented by *Jeni Shrestha* on 16 June 2026.

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

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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.

.....

16 June 2026

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DEDICATION

I sincerely dedicate this work to every child and young person in various spectrums of life, profoundly believing that every single child in this world deserves love and respect so that love and respect are passed on generation to generation; in the imagination of the world, before Pandora opened the box.

I want to dedicate this work to my son, Shuvam Shrestha, who encouraged me to take this flip saying, “Mom, I Know you can do it.”, my friends who encouraged me to go on when there was the time I thought I would quit MPhil in the middle of the semesters, by guiding and providing resources, especially the group “Beautiful inside Out” and of course my family.

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The authorities and staff members at Bhaktapur Child Reform Home deserve my thanks for providing access and assistance during my fieldwork activities. I want to express my sincere appreciation to my teachers and friends for their intellectual assistance and valuable feedback in supporting my research. Their discussions and suggestions helped me refine my ideas and approach.

I would also express my deepest gratitude to my family for their unconditional love, patience, and moral support throughout my academic journey. Their encouragement and understanding have been a constant source of strength and motivation. I would like to acknowledge all individuals who helped my research study reach its successful conclusion.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CHR	Child Reform Home
CJS	Child Justice System
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
KU	Kathmandu University
KUSOED	Kathmandu University School of Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
UN	United Nation
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Fund

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The secretariat of the Central Child Justice Committee in Nepal received reports on August 23, 2023, that the deceased's peers and family members had started vandalizing the management office at Bhaktapur Child Correction Home. The deceased had been serving his sentence since 2020 at the age of 17. The incident shows that Generation Z has experiences and realities that differ from the usual stories people tell. It also reveals the less visible side of Generation Z life, which often gets overlooked and feels far from the bright, popular image society likes to put forward.

The year 2026 marked a historic moment in Nepal as a civilian protest by Generation Z changed the country's entire political system. Young protesters died in large numbers while they protested corruption, poor governance, limited opportunities and various other systemic problems. The martyred youths have achieved status as national heroes. Generation Z includes people who were born between 1997 and 2012 and who today fall between 14 and 29 years old. This research, which is conducted during 2024 and 2025, examines a different yet equally important group of six Nepali Gen Z individuals who are aged 14 to 17 and currently face judicial custody while their legal trials proceed for suspected criminal activities. It shows their experiences as they go through life in reform homes while working to become better people.

In this Chapter, I have expressed my interest in exploring the stories of the young people living in the child reform/correction home in Sanathimi. As an outside observer and someone who has worked in the child justice sector for more than six years, I can understand their experiences, situating them within the broader context of children and young people in reform homes in Nepal.

The chapter explains the rationale for the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the Study, the research questions, and the significance of the study. The chapter demonstrates openness in research practice by acknowledging my professional involvement and experiential closeness to child justice, particularly in child reform homes. It places the study in the context of the child justice process, pointing out the philosophical and legal underpinnings of Child justice and highlighting that it is different from the adult criminal justice system. Based on the

above flow, this chapter provides the foundation for the study and introduces the context, purpose, and research questions.

Background of Study

There are ten child reform homes in Nepal, located in Bhaktapur, Kaski, Parsa, Nepalgunj, Naubasta (Banke), Jayandu (Banke), Doti, Rupandehi, Makwanpur, and Morang. Children and young people who come into conflict with the law are sent to these child reform homes by the District Child Bench or Child Court, either while the case is still going on, or after the court makes its decision, to serve their sentence. According to Section 43(1) of the *Act Relating to Children, 2018* (Nepal Law Commission [NLC], 2018), child reform homes shall be established for care, reform, rehabilitation, and reintegration of children in conflict with the law.

My perspective on young people who live in reform homes comes from multiple factors, including my firsthand experience with relatable issues in my personal life, my understanding of societal connections, and my belief system. I feel that all children today should be treated as gems for society and the nation. During my visit to child reform homes, I found the young people staying mostly quiet. When I looked into their eyes, their silence was so profound that I feared my own tears would fall. In the Parsa reform home, during my visit in December 2023, I even saw 18 young people crammed into a single room, with two sharing one bed. For me, it was suffocating to be there in that instance.

In this research, one participant was a 16-year-old girl who was months pregnant. When she came into the Bhaktapur reform home, she was quiet and seemed completely broken when I asked, “What happened that you ended up coming to this reform home?” Later, I learned from the social worker and child psychologist, who is the full-time counselor of Bhaktapur Child Reform Home, that she (the young girl) had been convicted of poisoning her in-laws’ members. What would have been the circumstances that a young girl would end up doing such deadly acts? I thought this may have been the consequence of the cumulative adversity she had faced across several phases in the past. Or something else?

In this support, Neupane and Upriety (2021) emphasize that families influence social and religious development, and problems affecting children are often linked to their family dynamics. Changes in family structure can have long-term effects, but effective parenting can mitigate negative impacts. Additionally, the lack of parental supervision, involvement, and unstable marital relationships can contribute to a child's

likelihood of engaging in criminal behavior (Neupane, 2022). Juvenile Justice System in Nepal 2003 further stated:

It is a sad situation for both young offenders and society, as it fails to focus attention on what leads young people into crime, which causes considerable harm at both ends. It is less costly and more efficient for society to prevent young people from entering criminal careers than to pay for the consequences of criminal behavior. (Kathmandu School of Law [KSL], 2003, p. 18)

I hold a similar opinion that government should invest more in employment opportunities, community awareness and of course in education and health. This can help people lead productive lives and prevent them from becoming involved in crime. Prevention is often less costly and more effective than dealing with the consequences later. Similarly, the Act Relating to Children, 2018 clearly states, “The Government of Nepal shall set up child correction homes, as required, for the purpose of keeping the children in conflict with law until their reform and rehabilitation” (NLC, 2018, p. 19).

Given these professional, social, legal background, the research study results from three factors which include my personal reflection, my professional work and my direct experience with Nepal's child justice system. The experience I gained through my fieldwork enabled me to understand how children or young people who face legal issues, as their situations go beyond what the law defines and they deal with multiple social challenges.

My Anecdotes

I serve as a program officer at the Secretariat of the Central Child Justice Committee in Nepal. The Secretariat ¹ the focal body to coordinate between district child court, line Ministries and Child reform homes. In my role as program officer, since 2017 at, I have visited Child Reform Homes across the country, through monitoring visits, facilitating training programs, facilitating district level and province level interaction programs. In 2024, I facilitated one month virtual as well as in-person training program for social workers and child-psychologists. The training consists of case studies and simulation. Social Worker and Child Psychologists have profound role in the Child justice system. The district judges are to give their final decisions² based on the opinion of social workers and child psychologists during the

¹ Secretariate of Central Child Justice Committee is the statutory body of Supreme Court of Nepal (www.cjcc.gov.np)

² The Act Relating to Children 2075. Article 30 (4)

final hearing. I have been reflecting on my work since the beginning because I believe that "successful Child justice" requires multiple effective social preventive structures which stop children³ and young people from entering the legal system. The government system needs to reach maximum strength before this goal can be achieved. These experiences made me think more about prevention. A question always raised in my thoughts, shouldn't investment in preventive measures be promising strategies that may effectively prevent children from entering conflict with the is evident that children in Child Correction Home often experience attachment disorders and developmental delays across social, cognitive, physical and neurological domains (Yin, 2025).

In contemporary society, children are exposed to an overwhelming volume of information via internet from an early age, an exposure vastly different from our own experience when we were adolescents in 1990s. I find it is valuable to recall my childhood experience, for I am today. My world views and attitude stand on the ground of social phenomenon and the culture in which I was brought up. The socio-cultural environment around me, which seemed confusing, when I witness some of the odd situations during my upbringing, the experiences of my childhood have also distinctly guided me to understand the essence of the stories I have gathered from the children of child reform homes. I remember my grandma had wanted me to become a lawyer; but whenever someone asked me what had I wanted to become in future, I used to say, a social worker, though I had a very limited idea what social worker really does, I grew up in a caring environment which many children do not have access to many aspects of childhood. I feel every young person who is in such reform homes may have had ambitions and dreams once they have dreamt of, I feel, had they gotten appropriate support from their family, they may not have ended up in detention.

Recalling an incident from a few years ago, when I was travelling on a local bus, alongside the road of Chabahil, I caught a small child in the middle of trash. Shockingly, the child was sniffing glue using plastic, which is commonly used by street children, I could not distinguish whether the child was male or female who looked just about 3 or 4 years of age. The image is still vivid in my head, and the feeling of "pain" is still in me. I was not able erase the image until I was home that

³ The Act Relating to Children 2075. Article 2(L) defines Children are the person who have not attended the age of eighteen years.

day. Undoubtedly, children are the most important asset for every family, society, and nation. Yet the issues of street children are often ignored or postponed at all levels.

My work with young people in reform homes together with my privileged childhood experiences and the extreme conditions which street children in Chabahil face have driven me to investigate how hardship and inequality affect the resilience which marginalized children develop through their life experiences. Moreover, as suggested by Clandinin and Connelly (2004), I have recollected my personal experience of the participants' stories from a three-dimensional narrative inquiry approach: temporality, sociality and place of lived experience. I see that my thoughts towards the young people in the reform home are the blend of my belief and personal views, my experiences in personal and professional life and with social interactions.

My academic interest in this area further aroused by the numerous official visits to the child reform homes in Nepal. During my several visits to Child reform home in Makwanpur during 2017 there was a boy (under 18 years), who was serving his sentence for the rape case. His wife visited him every day with her child. He said since the family of his wife did not like him, they filed a rape case against him. Likewise, on another visit to the Parsa Child Reform Home (2020), it was observed that "there was no educational facility, no training facility, that was provided for the young people in Child reform homes. Being physically present in the Child reform home for me for only an hour was suffocating, so it was difficult for me to imagine how the participants are doing their living day by day."

Whenever I visit Child reform homes at Central and Regional level, I always come home feeling upset because most of the youth are of my son's age. Whenever I learn about the cases of children in social/ psychosocial study reports⁴ report provided by social workers during counselling, most of such young people are from fragmented families and from very poor economic backgrounds. Therefore, I seek to understand the circumstances that shaped their lives, prior to the conflict with the law that includes an exploration of their familial backgrounds, upbringing, and societal factors with challenges, as well as their current situation within the institution. I think the stories I have collected in this study have contributed to the prevention arena, not to let young people in conflict with the law, which can be pronounced an actual successful child justice system. I also reflect on my experiences, besides embarking

⁴ The Act relating to Children: Act (45) states" individual social/ psychosocial study reports shall be prepared"

on a journey to unearth their stories as external observers. Thus, my research on the lives of minors in the Child Correction Homes in Nepal investigates the experiences, narratives, and viewpoints of the participants and critically examines my own interactions.

Rationale of the Study

This study aims to explore the childhood experiences of children residing in Child Reform Homes in Nepal and investigate how they exhibit resilience and adversity. The Children who are accused of committing offenses or are in ongoing legal trials are sent to a correctional home for offenses like rape, illegal possession of weapons, murder, and attempted murder. I believe these cases are often the result of broader socio-economic and familial challenges. Under the Administration of Child Justice procedure 2019, such reform homes serve children to correct behavior and equip youth with the skills necessary for successful social and family reintegration.

The actual functioning of these institutions differs significantly from their intended purpose of providing rehabilitation for their inmates. The effectiveness of such programs remains understudied, especially from children's perspectives. Many of these youth continue to face social exclusion, stigma, and limited opportunities. According to Neupane and Uprety (2021), the family environment plays a crucial role in shaping children's social and moral development. Broken families create loopholes towards a lack of parental supervision, catalyzing relationships that are more unstable, leading to delinquency in children at risk (Neupane & Uprety, 2021). Similarly, the Child Justice System in Nepal states, "Youth crime prevention through early intervention activities delivers greater social benefits and lower costs than handling crime aftermaths. The system requires organized efforts to develop educational programs together with rehabilitation processes and methods for reintegrating offenders into society" (KSL, 2003, p. 18). These findings highlight the importance of family support and early intervention in preventing youth offending.

Therefore, to study how children in Child Reform Homes experienced their early years before entering institutional care, and to investigate how social, family, and economic conditions brought them into conflict with the law. The research investigates how young people develop resilience during this life stage and how their experiences influence their ability to socialize with others after their time in institutional care ends. The research study uses personal stories to develop a

comprehensive understanding of their lived experiences that extend beyond their legal status.

Statement of Problem

The number of Child delinquencies is increasing in an alarming rate in Nepal. According to the Nepal Government, particularly the Act Nepal ma Bal Nyaya ko Sthiti Pratibedan (Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs [MOLJPA, 2025), a total of 3,617 cases (4,455 male offenders and 196 female offenders) were registered in 77 district child courts/benches against young people under 18 years of age. The cases were registered against young people in different offenses like rape, murder, drug abuse etc. The young people vandalized the office administration, accusing of not taking the young boy to the hospital for treatment (The Himalayan, 2023). A series of vandalism cases reported to the Secretariat of the Central Child Justice Committee seemed to be the accumulation of several such incidents over time that culminated in a dreadful incident. It is important to understand the factors that lead young people to engage in offending behavior.

At the same time, Child Correction Homes, which exist to provide rehabilitative services for children, face major problems because they operate as punitive institutions. The facilities lack essential financial resources, personnel capacity, and operational materials, which results in insufficient rehabilitation services for children who need to undergo specialized treatment. The facilities experience staffing shortages, which prevent them from providing adequate supervision to their residents during periods of excessive occupancy. The combination of poverty, family problems, violence, and lack of educational opportunities creates a situation that leads children and young people into trouble with the law. The community needs to understand the need for corrective treatment for child offenders and work on preventive measures so that no children of their community should encounter the law. Although there have been some positive recent steps forward in institutional practice, these have sadly come at the price of several young lives, demonstrating the huge human cost of not pushing forward faster.

The issue of Child delinquency requires immediate attention and urgent measures from government authorities, public organizations, and society as a whole (Vashakidze, 2018). According to Vashakidze, the investigation carried out by the Children's Fund of UN are witness that each third teenager who has violated the law was growing up in the conditions of the family trouble, in the atmosphere of cruelty,

but the main cause is an emotional “hunger”, children who are deprived of necessary emotional comfort as a result of their mother is far away or lack of due attention, that have high chances of inclination to imitation toward negative influence (Vashakidze, 2018). Despite the provision of several national and international policies on child rights, the number of child cases continues to rise in Nepal. Although the government has opened reform homes, they are poorly managed and resource-poor. Our legal systems primarily focus on corrective measures for these children; however, the outcomes are mostly unsatisfactory. The voices of these children are not properly documented in academic literature. This study aims to understand the lived experiences of children in child correction homes and to reveal how they transition from adversity to resilience to lead better lives.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to explore and interpret the lived experiences of young people residing in child reform homes, with particular emphasis on the Bhaktapur Child Reform Home in Nepal. By narrating their stories, the study seeks to examine the experiences of both negative and positive, the participants encounter during their upbringing as well as being in the Child reform home, the coping strategies they adopt, and the resilience they demonstrate in the face of challenging circumstances, while they were in the Child Reform Home (CRH). This study also contributes to the discourse on child rights, Child justice, and psychosocial well-being, highlighting the often-overlooked voices of marginalized people.

Research Questions

This research tried to answer the following questions:

1. How do the children/Adolescents narrate their childhood experience before coming into the Bhaktapur child Reform home?
2. How do they exhibit resilience in the face of adversities while staying in Child Reform Home (CCH)?
3. How are these children prepared to lead their lives ahead, after they are released from the Child Reform Hom (CCH)?

Significance of Study

This study contributes to practice by shedding light on the lived experiences of children in reform homes in Nepal, an area with limited empirical research. The study shows how children develop coping skills to deal with their problems throughout their experiences before coming into the justice system and while within it. The findings of

this study enable practitioners, caregivers, and organizations to create interventions which better meet the needs of children who require psychosocial support and need rehabilitation and community reintegration, which I think will trace the string to connect between preventive and curative measures, because in my professional experience, preventive and curative(treatment) programs are implemented in completely parallel dimensions. The research provides specific evidence that will help develop better methods that combine both preventive and treatment solutions.

The study results, based on five participants, demonstrate important findings that will help NGOs, stakeholders, and policymakers develop more effective programs and institutional standards and policies that meet the actual requirements of children who face legal issues. The study will also help policymakers emphasize justice systems that contribute to prevention programs so that children do not come into contact with the law.

The research connects to the theoretical framework of Nepalese Child justice systems by resilience theory to study child reform homes. The study generates new knowledge by presenting children's perspectives and experiences, which serve as a basis for future research. The research leads to additional investigation into risk and protective factors, including early intervention and mental health aspects, to create communities, together with judicial systems, that serve children in the best interests of children. Policymakers and academics can identify key subject areas for further assessment and research.

The study provides researchers and policy developers with a tool to identify essential matters that need further examination and investigation in child welfare research and ongoing policy discussions, by demonstrating the discrepancies between legal rights and duties and the actual conditions faced by children within the justice system. The research results should be interpreted with caution because the study derives its findings from participants' experiences. The gathered perspectives from these individuals offer essential guidance that will help improve the development of programs and policies that meet community needs.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the literature on various environments that children experience during their upbringing. It projects the importance of education in mental health and the role of family management. It emphasizes childhood as a critical and sensitive phase that remarkably shapes both the present and future of young people. It integrates a discussion on resilience theory, explaining these concepts concurrently. It identifies the key research gaps this study addresses.

Definition of Key Terms Used in Research

This section introduces different terminologies used in the research.

Children in Conflict with the Law

According to the Act Relating to Children 2018, young people under the age of 18 are considered children.⁵ Nepal is a state party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Nepal ratified the treaty on 18 September 1989. General Comment Number 24 is the report Nepal must submit every four years. It reflects the developments that have intervened during the period through Acts, Laws, and rules regarding Children's rights in Child justice. To avoid stigmatizing language, the phrase "*Children in Conflict with the law*" is used instead of "*Child Offender*". Children in conflict with the law are those who have not yet reached 18 years of age and are accused of violating the penal law (CRC).⁶

Offensive Act

According to the Government of Nepal, under the Act Relating to Children 2018, an offensive act means a criminal Offense as per the prevailing law (NLC, 2018).

Deviant Behavior

Deviant behavior is defined as actions that violate social norms, including both informal social rules and more formal societal expectations and laws. Deviant behavior is influenced by a wide range of causes, including personality, upbringing, environment, genetics, and social influences (Hartney, 2023).

⁵ The Act Relating to Children 2018, Act 2(J).

⁶ CRC Child Right Convention 1989, General Comment Number 24.

Child Delinquencies

A Child is normally considered immature, innocent, and dependent and easily influenced by human beings but easily comes in conflict with the law, as a child is thought to be incapable of committing crimes and has no intention of criminally harmful who deserves no punishment. It is a broader concept that encompasses many different areas related to working with young people (Ginting et al., 2024)

According to Young et al. (2017), the multifaceted nature of factors like economic migration, loss of proper extended family network, reduced supervision of children, globalization, exposure to lifestyle, social inequality, “Ideals “in modern media, peer influence, educational challenge, radical and extreme views, are contributing to the formation of “youth gang”. As these factors are closely linked with child delinquency, which normalizes deviances and encourage criminal activities.

Child Correction Homes/Child Reform Home (CCH)

Bhaktapur Child Reform was established in 2003 under the Act of Children 1991. The Child reform home at Bhaktapur was established in the Year 2002. The Act relating to Children (2018) and Act established child reform home. Provision relating to child reform home based on the child rights.Nepal Law Commission (2018). The Government of Nepal shall establish the child reform home as required for the purpose of keeping children in conflict with the law until their reform and rehabilitation for return to the family and society. Grounded in the above understanding on different terminologies related to Child practices in Nepal. I now move to examine the literature that explain the emotional and psychological distress faced by these children in reform homes.

Experience of Children in Child Reform Homes and Emotional and Psychological Distress

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC, 2014) works to prevent suffering and coordinates humanitarian assistance and protection activities, drawing on its unique role as the originator of the Geneva Conventions. In its report Children in Detention, 2014, it emphasized that regardless of the management quality of a detention facility or how meticulously children are kept apart from adults, the detention of children is still a source of risks to their health, safety, and overall well-being both in the present and the future. The study takes a rights-based and protection-oriented view, providing only a very small empirical distinction between

the situations of detention. All in all, ICRC's argument establishes that detention is incompatible with children's best interests but there is an analytical gap that will lead to effective non-detention alternatives. This gap highlights the need for more empirical research in developing countries, which would greatly help inform policy and practice.

Similarly, a study done by Tosouni (2014) in a female unit inside a public Child institution in California, offers a strong and unsettling representation of gender abuse that is inflicted upon young women in detention, and it shows the way in which the institutional practices are the source of the psychological harm instead of a rehabilitation process. According to Tosouni (2014), rich interview excerpts and observational data disclose the staff's routine verbal humiliation, intimidation, and retaliation towards the young women, thus depicting a custodial culture that accepts abuse. In this paper, the case of girls shows how formal grievance systems are not working at all, since the girls who are brave enough to speak out are the ones suffering the most in terms of being punished more severely, being isolated socially, and even being subjected to new victimization. This situation not only contradicts due process but also strengthens a climate of fear and compliance among the inmates and the prison staff. The study's primary strength lies in its ability to provide deep qualitative analysis. The firsthand accounts show the constant mocking and insulting behavior that girls endure to their dignity and self-esteem. The analysis shows that this treatment is rooted in gender bias, where attention is placed on appearance, sexuality, and perceived morality rather than the structural and traumatic causes of delinquency. The staff members support this bias through their practice of designating girls as "bad," which results in treatment and rehabilitation methods being disrupted while Child Justice rules protecting child rights are violated.

In this support, Tosouni (2014) notes many critical aspects, pointing out the deterrence-based assumptions that underpin the punitive detention practice. Results indicate that the young offenders were not afraid to commit further crimes after going through isolation and humiliation, bursting with hopelessness, self-doubt, and internalized shame were brought about through isolation and humiliation. The girls' testimony reveals that the abuse of the institution aggravates their already existing trauma and their social disintegration. Tosouni (2014) discusses how deprivation contributes to environments that undermine rehabilitation. The paper also discusses

the reform programs, but it does not say whether the study examined better or alternative solutions.

If we investigate the context of Nepal, thesis submitted to Tribhuvan University by Kunwar (2024), highlights the need for huge changes in the system of Child correction homes in Nepal. All these reforms should be directed towards improving physical infrastructure, making educational and vocational training opportunities more available, making mental health care more accessible, and guaranteeing compliance with both national and international legal standards. If Nepal tackles these issues, it can therefore claim to have achieved the rehabilitative aims of its Child justice system, which in turn would assist with the social reintegration of children and make society safer and more just. The existing literature shows that children in detention, especially female detainees, face severe emotional and psychological distress, which worsens through institutional methods that should provide rehabilitation support. The research shows that detention facilities create permanent damage because they produce traumatic experiences and force social separation, while special gender-based biases make young women face double the burdens of moral evaluation and biased treatment.

Developing nations such as Nepal present evidence that international sources show needs more understanding because detention operates against children's best interests and research demonstrates the realities of abuse and system breakdowns. The research area requires more qualitative studies, which includes children's perspectives, to study how various institutional and cultural elements work together to shape their daily lives. The existing gap requires researchers to conduct more studies which will create better rights-based solutions and non-detention methods for Child justice systems.

The following section introduces the investigation into the impact of family environment and emotional neglect, together with adverse childhood experiences on Child delinquency because dysfunctional relationships with unmet emotional needs create higher risks for deviant behavior. The study reveals a research gap that shows how children in legal conflict experience and understand emotional abandonment inside correctional facilities.

Family Structure and Emotional Development

Several studies have revealed how disrupted family structures and emotional abandonment significantly contribute to Child delinquency. Out of 354 adolescents

(delinquents and non-delinquents), the research shows that low-income family functionality is characterized by weak adaptability, inadequate parental involvement, is strongly associated with delinquent behavior (Neupane & Uprety, 2021).

Punitive parenting, higher exposure to family violence and emotional detachment from caregivers in family settings are reported by the Child delinquents, while Mothers' education, strong parental attachment, proper supervision was common among non-delinquent youths (Neupane & Uprety, 2021). The findings underpinned that family structures with violence, neglect and weak emotional bonds develops emotionally vulnerable children and ultimately vulnerable to delinquent behavior in Nepali Society. (Neupane & Uprety, 2021).

Similarly, children who grow up in unfavorable family circumstances are deprived of emotional support, protection, and care, which can have long-term detrimental effects on their physical and mental health as well as their psychological and behavioral functioning (Alhowaymel et al., 2023). In research conducted by (Leclerce & Wortley, 2015) says children who experience sexual abuse from their relatives or familiar adults typically take time before they report the incident to others. Children from troubled or conflicted families are even less likely to speak out, which increases their risk of continued abuse.

Unmet emotional needs make children long-term risk factors influencing children's physical and mental health as well as psychological and behavioral functioning. The findings Alhowaymel et al. (2023) have demonstrated a significant correlation between higher rates of chronic illness and a cut-point of four or more ACEs. There is general perspective that loss of proper extended family network is driving the young people to form youth gangs, whereas the study done by Abdullah and Rahman (2015) come out with the findings that the respondents from with a very good family management are also involved in delinquent behavior.

Abdullah and Rahman (2015) argues that physiological conditions and behavioral influences during pregnancy, whether positive or negative, create permanent changes which continue to affect people throughout their lives. The development of such positive or negative behaviors occurs through various influences which include both family settings and larger social factors.

Though above research has shown connection between Child delinquency, dysfunctional family context, and negative childhood experiences, most of its correlation ignores children lived emotional experiences in corrective settings.

There is little empirical research on how children who are already in legal trouble perceive, absorb, and deal with emotional desertion. The study is essential to understand how children experience and interpret emotional abandonment, punitive parenting, family violence and emotional detachment which may have high chances, to lead to physical, mental, behavioral, substance abuse and self-destructive problems.

Importance of Education

The research shows how educational experiences in child reform homes shape children's development through their impact on motivation, self-esteem, decision-making, and future chances of successful social reintegration.

Several studies argue as Eccles et al., (2003), if the adolescents' developmental needs do not correspond to the social environments, at home and at the school, where they are getting their opportunities and support, they will likely develop less motivation, low self-esteem, and negative self-perceptions. The author further claims that more supportive and developmentally appropriate family and school environments are created, the fewer difficulties adolescents will experience, and their holistic development will become healthier. Extreme "storm and stress" is not experienced by most adolescents, the reason for this is that the different areas of the human growing process determine the changing needs such as asking for more independence, emotional support, and respect. There are problems when the family and schools cannot satisfy these increasing needs.

According to Marcere et al. (2017), after engaging in more delinquent behavior, a young person started to doubt their identity and self-worth. Conversely, teenagers who thought more deeply about their values, interests, and aspirations were less likely to act delinquently in the future. To put it simply, encouraging adolescents to explore themselves in healthy ways can lessen delinquency, while experimenting with delinquency makes it more difficult for them to develop a stable identity. This implies that fostering identity development through education may be a successful strategy for deterring Child delinquency.

Eccles et al. (2003) reflects the disparity between the developmental requirements of adolescents and the social environments (family and school), while Marcere et al. (2017) research revolves around identity formation and delinquency. However, both studies overlook important aspects, namely adolescents' emotional experiences of being neglected, detached or abandoned in dysfunctional family

settings. The papers fail to include children's voices; quantitative methods are predominantly used in the studies.

Although the literature that is already available confirms that there is a close relationship between unfulfilled developmental needs, weak identity development, and adolescent crime, it does not clarify how the children who get into trouble with the law perceive their family disintegration and emotional neglect subjectively, especially in the case of Nepal. My research takes this gap and highlights children's stories and emotional realities within child rehabilitation homes, as well as how family violence, neglect, and detachment influence their mental health, identity formation, and hence make them delinquent.

The following section focuses on education and values. The section studies how educational experiences achieve two results. The first result is academic progress. The second result is the development of moral values and attitudes and social behavior. The study shows how education creates young people's understanding of their responsibilities and their need to follow societal rules and their need to treat others with respect. The section shows how educational institutions help students develop their values because they create safe environments in society.

Education and Value System

The part of the theme focuses on education and values. The section studies how educational experiences achieve two results. The first result is academic progress. The second result is the development of moral values and attitudes and social behavior. The study shows how education creates young people's understanding of their responsibilities and their need to follow societal rules and their need to treat others with respect. The section shows how educational institutions help students develop their values because they create safe environments which result in students changing their negative behaviors to succeed in their return to society.

The relationship between Child delinquency and school performance has been the topic of several studies for over 100 years. While no direct cause-and-effect relationship has been proven, poor academic performance does directly affect a child's behavior, and early behavioral problems can also lead to school failure. Research also shows that low academic performance is closely related to recidivism. Significantly, successful academic intervention programs are associated with declines in both delinquency and recidivism. (Katsiyannis et al., 2008).

In the other paper, Singh and Punia (2018) “Role of Value Based Education in Reducing Child Delinquency at School level”, Value-based education in school can reduce Child delinquency by promoting self-expression and confidence, cooperation and universal brotherhood, while addressing media, peer influence, and family factors. The society of India has been negatively affected by the rise of contemporary technology and social networking, and as a result, the adolescents’ growth and development have been hindered. Mobile phones, television, and the internet, when used excessively without adult monitoring, contribute to the emergence of stress, jealousy, depression, and impulsive behavior among teenagers.

The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) in India (Singh & Punia, 2018) reported that the number of crimes committed by minors in conflict with the law rose by 89.28% from 2005 to 2016, and the number of rapes involving minors increased by 143% between 2002 and 2012. Maturation is a physical process, but many youngsters who are just physically grown-up are not yet aware of their rights, values, ethics, and even humanity. Thus, it has become a necessity to break Child crime in India. Value-based education (VBE) and a nurturing school environment are two main pillars in the child’s proper development. This study looks at the application of values-based education at the school level. Engaging in extracurricular activities and VBE supports the children’s process of self-expression, self-confidence, team spirit, and sense of universal brotherhood. Besides, the research identifies media exposure, peer influence, social exclusion, and family environment as the main factors that affect Child development. Teachers' views and approaches toward value education are particularly significant in bringing about positive behavior change in the youth. (Singh & Punia, 2018).

Academic failure, on the one hand, is an amplifying factor for Child delinquency and recidivism. On the other hand, strong academic and value-based school interventions can bring about a significant reduction in the rate of such behaviors. Hence, through educational support and value-based teaching coupled together, schools are placed in a significant preventive position concerning Child delinquency because they encourage the development of good behavior.

Maruna (2001) illustrates that even those who engage in serious crimes multiple times can turn their life around. Author goes on to tell how some people who were presumed to continue criminal activities, instead made a positive and meaningful choice. Maruna (2001) portrays personal transformations that occur only when the

criminals invent “*new tales*” about themselves, tales that enable them to comprehend their past, seek worth in lawful activities, and have confidence that they can shape their future. The author, by utilizing concepts from narrative psychology, asserts that “*listening of offenders' life stories is a prerequisite for actual rehabilitation*”. The book puts up a fight against conventional methods of dealing with criminals and suggests helping criminals take a new perspective of their personal narratives as an approach that can lead to change for the better (Maruna, 2001). Maruna's Making Good hypothesis is that repeat offenders cannot be changed was supported by the fact that crime dissociation is intimately connected to the building of positive self-narratives. For kids from divorced parents, emotional neglect and abuse usually create negative self-narratives that make it easier for them to think of themselves as failures and delinquents.

Maruna's (2001) research majorly concentrates on adult criminals, but it also raises the question of how such stories are created in childhood and adolescence, especially in family disintegration contexts. The present research is based on Maruna's narrative theory and investigates how young people in Nepalese reform homes interpret and narrate their family experiences and self-concept. Therefore, I believe my study views that dealing with emotional neglect and aiding positive identity reconstruction are the cornerstones for effective rehabilitation and long-term prevention of crime.

The current literature contains critical deficiencies which create problems for scholarly work. First, most studies examine education either in terms of academic performance or value-based interventions but there is limited research which shows how these two academic areas interact to shape the actual experiences and behavior changes of children who break the law. Second, most studies use Western or Indian research settings while there is a lack of empirical studies which examine Nepalese child reform facilities. Third, while Maruna (2001) shows the significance of identity and self-narratives researchers have not sufficiently studied how educational settings help institutionalized children develop positive self-concepts. The research study will investigate these research gaps by studying how young Nepali reform home residents experience educational systems and value systems. The study investigates how educational access and value development programs create identity changes which result in behavioral modifications that enable individuals to successfully reintegrate into society.

Trauma and Abuse are an Underlying Reason for the Cause of Conflict with the Law

Trauma and abuse are now recognized as essential factors which lead children to develop legal problems. Currently research investigates how children living in child reform homes experience emotional and psychological development through their first encounters with violent events and family breakdowns. Childhood trauma, which includes physical and emotional and sexual abuse, creates developmental interruptions that affect how children view themselves and their likelihood of engaging in dangerous and unlawful actions. The assessment of these initial negative experiences becomes crucial to understanding both the reasons behind criminal behavior and the methods that can support rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

Article “Relationship between childhood traumas and criminal behaviors” came up with findings, that there is the correlation between traumatic experiences in childhood and criminal activities. It examines definitions of trauma and crime, incidence rates of child maltreatment, and psychological and environmental factors as well as the patterns of criminal behaviors that influence crime. It concludes that physical, sexually, emotionally abused, neglected, and other forms of trauma during childhood are more frequent among offenders than the public and they greatly affect the type and frequency of subsequent criminal acts. Therefore, raising society's awareness about child abuse will help in crime reduction. (Li, 2023). According to Li (2023), recent studies show criminal behavior of a person at present is connected to childhood trauma. However, most studies are based on the statically relationships rather than exploring the lived experiences of children who grow up with abusive parents.

In the other study (Rees et al., 2023) explains single parents' households were studied about navigating socio-economic challenges regarding the strengthening of child support, its findings came out to be high academic achievement, though two-parent households may receive, in some ways more, overall support for their academic achievement, children from single parent families can be supported to achieve at high levels academically with the appropriate supports and resources. In addition, it concludes that the family structure is not an important predictor of educational outcomes, and emotional wellbeing is related to the quality of child-

parent relationship, and how balance the family dynamics are, to nurture stable psycho-emotional environments for children.

I feel a large part of the research is from western settings, there is a lacking about dynamics in Asian setting, as in Nepal, especially among the kids in reform homes or Child justice system. The association between childhood trauma and delinquency is evidently pronounced, in the article, but the process of emotional neglect and family breakdown that affects children's experiences and identity, is scant in most studies hence I feel it is very important to comprehend these experiences in the Nepali reform homes because they would be the key to the disclosure of the psychological factors that lead to delinquency.

The literature which researchers studied demonstrates that childhood trauma and family environment create a strong link to Child delinquency, yet crucial research needs still exist. Existing research primarily depends on statistical measurements which quantify data relationships while failing to capture how children who experienced trauma and abuse perceive their world. Emotional neglect and family breakdown need more investigation because these factors affect identity development and behavior patterns than existing research shows through its examination of family structure and socio-economic elements. The research studies mostly focus on Western and non-Nepali settings which results in substantial contextual difficulties that researchers face when they try to study how these processes function in Nepal especially with children who live in reform homes. The research study shows limited understanding of how trauma and educational experiences and value formation work together to shape children's development and their processes of rehabilitation. The research study will investigate these research gaps through its examination of how Nepali child reform home experiences shape children's development of identity and behavior and their capacity to return to society after experiencing trauma and family issues.

Theoretical Underpinning: Resilience Theory

The lived experiences of young people, especially those involved in difficult social justice-related situations is understood through Resilience Theory. According to Ungar (2018), resilience is the capacity to recover from stressful situations and maintain normal operations. Resilience not only investigates how people handle problems but also studies their ability to endure difficulties and create successful outcomes. The term resilience in its most basic form describes an individual's ability

to endure hardships and maintain their growth throughout challenging times. A child who overcomes poverty and family conflict and social stigma to pursue education while developing positive behavior demonstrates resilience.

The ability of families and institutions and societies to adjust their operations during times of crisis or stress demonstrates their capacity to handle difficult situations. Similarly, Ungar (2013) explains in another article that resilience is not only a personal quality but is also strongly influenced by a person's social environment, such as family, community, culture, school, and social support systems.

Resilience theory can also connect with the children's adversity, staying in Child reform homes of Bhaktapur. According to Van Breda (2001) certain factors protect vulnerable children from dysfunction, and secondly vulnerable person's life course can change at any time. There are social factors, interpersonal relationships that are toxic that led every day. Childhood trauma directly leads to adult psychopathology. Resilient children are those who are exposed to risk factors but can avoid the negative outcomes such as delinquent behaviors, academic difficulties, psychological maladjustments and physical factors (Van Breda, 2001). In this study, resilience theory helps explain how childhood trauma related to delinquent behavior and how psychological support can aid rehabilitation. Without proper support, however intervention may unintentionally push offenders closer to a life of crime. Resilience Theory is relevant in understanding how children develop coping mechanisms throughout their journey from pre-conflict to correctional stay, to society reintegration. It examines how resilience strategies evolve amid adversity.

My argument over the theory in relationship with the condition of children are vulnerable when it comes to societal factors. Societal factors provoke something that results in stigmatization while speaking of children who come in conflict with the law. Therefore, resilience theory is used to define how experience has consequences for the connection between narrative inquiry and personal thought. From the above discussion, it can be understood that resilience theory provides a useful lens for understanding how children cope with adversity and rebuild their lives. However, little research has explored resilience through lived experiences of children in Nepal's child correction homes. This study addresses that gap by examining their experiences through a resilience perspective.

Policy Review

The Child justice system in Nepal, depends on national laws of Nepal and International legal instruments. The legal frameworks which operate under these systems provide definition and protection of children's rights while determining their obligations in cases of legal violations.

Parens Patriae

Parens Patriae is the principle that established the state acts as the fundamental guardian for all children within its jurisdiction (Sloan, 2022). In alignment with this foundational responsibility, Nepal ratified the UNCRC in 1989 and its Optional Protocols which established the country's commitment to protect children's rights through their rights to survival and development and protection from abuse and access to education and their right to participate and express themselves (Thomas, 2005).

National Policy

Constitution of Nepal

The Constitution of Nepal 2015 serves as the basis for these legal provisions which need to comply with international human rights standards. Under Article 39 (Right of the Child) Section 8, it is clearly stated that "Every child shall have the right to Child friendly justice" (Constituent Assembly Secretariat [CAS], 2015). The legal framework requires Nepal to protect essential human rights standards. The legal framework requires Nepal to protect essential human rights through its constitutional and international human rights obligations. Parens Patriae is the concept that realizes the nation is the ultimate caretaker of the children living in the territory (Sloan, 2022). Every Child has fundamental rights which include the Right to Survival and development as well as the rights to protection against violence abuse and neglect and the right to education.

The Act Relating to Children, 2018

The Act Relating to Children, 2018 (Nepal) defines children as persons under 18 and formalizes a separate child justice system prioritizing their best interests. It introduces diversion, restorative justice, and mandates capacity building for professionals involved in child justice administration. Social workers, child psychologists, and legal officers must be trained continuously to support children's mental health, family reintegration, and legal needs.

Administration of Procedure of Child Justice 2019

The Regulation covers complaints of offensive behavior, how to take a child into custody, how investigations are conducted, and the precautions that must be taken when questioning minors. Additionally, it offers child-friendly case hearings, social worker and child specialist appointments, diversionary measures, and evaluations of the child's physical and mental health.

While the framework is progressive in design, the child justice system suffers from critical execution deficits. A primary issue stems from raising the age threshold to 18 without really setting up the proper institutional groundwork. So, Child rehabilitation centers which are already stressed by resource and infrastructure deficits, they end up being severely congested. The situation gets worse when it's reported that people over 18 falsify documents, basically to tap into reduced criminal accountability, then they can stay in Childcare longer. Out of a total resident population of more than 1,167 across eight correction homes, over 640 are adults. That disproportionate demographic underscores a profound failure in age-verification protocols and oversight mechanisms.

Section 43(4) of the Act relating says that children who reach 18 years of age, while remaining in correction homes, should be kept separately from the younger ones, while also considering behavioral improvement, education and skill continuity. But in real life, children and young adults get accommodated in the same premises quite often, even if they are in different rooms. This kind of arrangement still brings up compliance issues with child protection norms, and it can also expose the younger children to intimidation, violence, and exploitation. The recent deaths that were reported in the Bhaktapur and Banke Child Correction Homes also point to serious gaps in safety, monitoring, and day-to-day management systems.

Although adding one more correction home in Naubasta, Banke might temporarily cut down overcrowding, expanding infrastructure itself cannot really fix the deeper, structural weaknesses within the child justice system. There is still not enough investment in trained human resources, plus psychosocial support, rehabilitation services, functioning monitoring mechanisms, and real institutional accountability. Even if the Act Relating to Children, 2018 puts rehabilitation and reintegration upfront, vocational training and livelihood programs are still only weakly institutionalized. Young people leaving correction homes often end up without employable skills, economic openings, and even social acceptance, so the chance of

recidivism goes up. Likewise, children who are tied to drug-related offences are frequently placed in correction homes instead of rehabilitation centers.

This pattern shows a more punitive than therapeutic approach, which is sort of the opposite of what the system should try to do. The Act also gives rather limited attention to children with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities, there are insufficient provisions for specialized care, and disability-sensitive rehabilitation. While psychosocial assessment reports are legally required, their practical value is reduced because coordination is weak among social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, investigators, prosecutors, and judges. Adjudication delays then worsen everything, they help keep correction homes crowded, even while policy statements push for child-friendly, timely justice. Similarly, the proposed Diversion and Restorative Justice Guidelines could reduce institutionalization, but in practice their use is limited. The main reasons seem to be lack of operational clarity, not enough trained personnel, and poor institutional coordination. Consultations with NGOs and INGOs also suggest that frontline practitioners are seldom meaningfully involved in policies.

Global Policies

United Nations Rights of Children

Nepal ratified UNCRC on September 14, 1989, along with the two Optional Protocols (1 Optional Protocols on the involvement of children in Armed Conflict and Optional Protocols against the sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography). Under the terms of agreement, the Nepal Government are required to meet children's basic need. Every Child has fundamental rights. That includes Right to Survival and development, right to protection from violence, abuse and neglect, right to education right to participation and right to expression. Article 37 of CRC states to ensure the state parties to the prohibition of torture, cruel treatment or punishment.

Child Justice System

Child Justice System distinguishes young individuals in conflict with the law. The Child Justice system emphasizes correctional and reintegration/ restorative approaches. Young people who come into conflict with the law are sent to correctional institutions to help them recognize the damage they have done to the victim and themselves.

According to the United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (Riyadh Guidelines) (United Nations [UN], 1990), children in conflict with the law must be treated with dignity and supported through preventive and reintegrative measures:

The detention of a child shall be used only as the last resort and for the shortest period”. b) “in case of deprivation of liberty, children should be provided with a physical environment and accommodation with the rehabilitative aim of residential placement, they should have the opportunity to physical exercise, right to education, should receive vocational training and design to prepare to return to society.

General Comment Number 24

General Comment number 24 is the periodic report that replaced General Comment number 10. General Comment No.24 (2019) states that “*for the few situations where deprivation of liberty is justified as a last resort, ensuring that its application is for older children only, is strictly time limited and is subject to regular review*”. It is the Human Rights document focused on Children’s Right. General Comment number 24, reflects the development and evidence of effective practices, related to restorative justice. The literature shows that although Nepal strong child justice polices backstopped by international protocols, their implementation remains weak. It also reveals limited research on the lived experiences of children in child correction homes, highlighting the need for this study.

Chapter Summary

The literature review shows that Child delinquency is multidimensional, not just one cause, it is shaped by family climate, emotional neglect, trauma, social inequality, labeling, educational exclusion, and weak policy follow up. A lot of studies point out that dysfunctional family setups, violence, poverty, adverse childhood experiences, and missing emotional warmth really increase a child’s risk of turning toward delinquent actions. Research also mentions that children inside correction homes often face emotional and psychological distress, stigmatization, social exclusion, and not enough rehabilitation support. Many existing studies further argue that detention environments can end up worsening trauma, rather than helping with reintegration, especially when institutional systems depend more on punishment than on psychosocial rehabilitation. Even though education, value-oriented learning, and vocational training are viewed as protective factors, child reform homes in Nepal still

struggle to offer solid schooling, mental health help, livelihood skills, and safe rehabilitative settings. In this study, resilience theory provides a theoretical lens to understand how those children can cope with adversity, adapt to different circumstances and rebuild their life. These discussions provide a strong foundation and present existing research gaps in exploring lived experiences of children in Nepal's child correction homes, highlighting the need for this study.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The chapter presents the study's research methods, research framework, and the philosophical foundations that guide the study. The research adopts an interpretive research framework because it focuses on understanding the lived experiences, meanings, and social realities of young individuals who face legal issues. The study tries to understand how young people experience their circumstances while they study facts and legal procedures. The interpretive framework helps explore the human side of their experiences by recognizing that social reality is created through personal meanings, emotions, interactions, and social contexts.

The research site, participant selection, fieldwork procedure, data collection methods, and analysis and interpretation techniques are all covered in detail in this chapter, which also discusses the use of narrative inquiry as the research approach. The research process used several methods which ensured research quality and research reliability and research ethical standards.

Ontological Stance

The research establishes its ontological framework through the understanding that young people currently exist in their present conditions while their current behavior and environmental context exist because of their previous life challenges. People construct their understanding of reality through their direct experience of different elements in their social environment and family relationships and institutional settings and cultural traditions (Gergen, 1999). The study shows that participants experience multiple realities which develop through their individual backgrounds and social surroundings. The study connects present Child reform home experiences with past family disruptions and abuse and neglect and social exclusion through its examination of current experiences.

Epistemological Stance

According to Borsboom (2005), the branch of philosophy that explores the nature of knowledge and its acquisition is known as epistemology. Its central inquiries pertain to defining what constitutes knowledge and determining the methods by which knowledge is obtained. Reality is socially constructed by and between the people who experience the world (Gergen, 1999). Here, in the research my epistemology is mostly

the perceptions of my participant's experience during interaction on their past experiences, their observation towards their family and society as well as my observation towards the participants body language, their expression during the interview and their existing environment, I observe during the interview. I have generated information from in-depth interviews, field observation and narratives of the participants and from my own knowledge.

Axiology

Axiology is a philosophy that is mostly about values, and it helps people sort of understand what is good or bad in actions and behavior. It kind of supports values-based education, where they stress that human life is the greatest value, though also that actions, objects and ideas should not just exist, they should serve to protect and improve life. So, it concerns the arguments, values and experiences of all the participants. Each participant will have their own value. So, when I analyze the data, I have not put together the data analyzing but rather have treat each of them separately maintaining their value. During my research, I have valued research participants in my study. I valued their experiences, arguments and narrations, their assumptions. My research has explored my own narratives, created my own values and expressed own practice and realization of the knowledge. Therefore, the axiology of my study has examined the narratives regarding the lived experiences of young people in their childhood as well as the experience of the present situation in child reform home while preparing themselves to reintegrate in society.

Research Paradigm

This research adopts an interpretivist paradigm. There is a close relationship between interpretivist paradigm and qualitative methodology as one is a methodological approach, and one is a means in collecting data. Researchers who are using interpretivist paradigm and qualitative methods often seek experience, understandings and perceptions of individuals for their data to uncover reality rather than rely on numbers of statistics (Thanh &Thanh, 2015). Qualitative methods enable researchers to study human experiences through their complete range of emotional and social connections which people use to understand their world. I have used interpretive methods to reveal the participants' complex realities through their personal experiences which they share in their own words.

In the paradigm, when it is accepted that the process of creating knowledge or meaning is entirely founded on the assumptions of the individual set of experiences,

the problem of how two people can communicate arises. While individuals have their reality, the process of meaning-making takes place in a group or social setting where people construct meaning and communicate. (Willis, 2007). Multiple well-argued interpretations of the same phenomenon exist, one interpretation is not chosen or preferred over others as the "correct" one, but the existence of multiple knowledge is accepted with the recognition that different researchers bring different perspectives to the same issue. (Willis, 2007)

I dedicated several weeks to fieldwork because I wanted to acquire an enhanced understanding of both the research environment and the daily experiences that Children undergo in child reform facilities. The research investigates how young people derive meaning from their experiences which they develop through their first-hand institutional social relationships and daily contact with their environment according to the principles of interpretivist research. The research examines how Child subjects perceive their life experiences through their actual life stories. The research examines how youths in reform homes experience their time there through their personal stories which show their ability to discuss childhood challenges and social isolation and legal troubles and life in institutions and the negative judgment from others and their methods of handling these challenges and their desires to return to their communities. The interpretivist paradigm of narrative inquiry research establishes its methodological foundation through this approach because it focuses on how people develop their understanding of social environments through their personal experiences and their process of understanding social situations.

Research Approach: Narrative Inquiry

I have used the narrative enquiry research design to understand the family background, socio-economic status of the children and their relationship with family, before they commence to the conflict with the law. I believe that the environment of the upbringing, negative and positive experiences the children have faced would strongly impact through their behavior, character value and belief the young people would carry onto. Narrative inquiry is the record of experiences of an individual or a group, expressing the experience or perspective of the individual, usually mostly through interview, that is often recorded as biography (Deakin University Library, 2024).

Moreover, as suggested by Clandinin and Connelly (2004), I have recollected my personal experience about these young people's stories from a three-dimensional

narrative inquiry approach: temporality, sociality and place of lived experience”. In this study, a narrative inquiry approach is used to dig into the lived experiences of young people in child reform homes, using their own personal stories and reflections. Using the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space suggested by Clandinin and Connelly (2004), the research will look at temporality (past, present, and future experiences), sociality (feelings, relationships, and everyday social interactions), and place (the surroundings, and the wider contexts where their experiences take shape).

Information was collected through in-depth interviews, informal conversations, observations, plus field notes, so that the researcher can grasp how participants make sense of what they went through related to family ties, trauma, correction homes, rehabilitation, and finally reintegration. Overall, the work is meant to create room for participants to share their voices emotions, and the meanings they attach to their day-to-day realities within Nepal’s child justice system.

Research Site and Selection of Participants

The research was carried out at Bhaktapur Child Reform Home, located in Sanothimi, Bhaktapur, is one of the major child correction homes in Nepal. Young people under 18 who are accused or convicted of offences are kept there, with the intent of helping them reform their conduct and then reintegrate back into society successfully. The purpose of the reform home is not punishment, but rehabilitation through schooling, counseling, skill strengthening, and psychosocial support, so that children can grasp what went wrong, build healthier attitudes, and get ready for a better future. A school is operated inside the Bhaktapur Child Reform Home, to keep education going without interruptions. Along with formal learning, different vocational and livelihood skill training such as driving, plumbing, and electrical training institutes are also built inside the correction home arena, which are also offered to the participants, so all the young people can become independent and economically stronger after release. The location was chosen as it is one of the largest government-owned facilities that houses and rehabilitates children with legal issues in Nepal and the nearest accessible for me to visit time and again.

Alongside that, life-skill programs, recreational activities, awareness initiatives, and health camps are organized regularly too, to support both physical and mental wellbeing. The reform home also has professional staff including a social worker, child psychologist, and legal officer working full time to serve the children daily in need basis regarding, their cases (to follow up in the concerned district court

for trial, for appeal) so that the case is decided at the earliest possible considering best interest of children.

The research site acted well as a source of young people with whom I have spent most time and was able to have potentially high-quality data because of their previous life experiences (adverse childhood experiences, institutional life and area of reintegration/preparedness). The existence of professional social workers, counselors, and psychologists in the institution made it easier to support and maintain a child-sensitive research process and at the same time ensure ethical engagement with the vulnerable participants.

I made three visits to the Child reform home during which I conducted in-depth interviews with the participants. The social worker of the reform home facilitated the meeting with the participants to ease and ensure emotional safety and ethical compliance. I used to take small gifts such as candies and chocolates to the participants whenever I visited, but of course with the permission of the social worker. I tried my best to nurture and create an atmosphere of trust and safety.

The study had five participants: four girls and one boy, between 14 to 17 years old. Each participant was still a child who had come into conflict with the law, at the time of the study they were living in child correction home, Bhaktapur. I chose them purposively, mostly aimed at younger adolescents, so they could dig into their childhood experiences, family setting, social culture and even the everyday ways they were raised. In that sense, the selection was not random. Also, I chose both boys and girls, so there would be broader views and different lived experiences. The higher number of girls was intentional, to capture those experiences that are often emotionally sensitive, but also less frequently brought up, and the mix of sex give stronger understanding, thinking that might contribute more depth to the whole issue, which will bring the results of the study more meaningful and impactful. Moreover, the participants were from Province 3 and Province 2, thus giving the study an opportunity to obtain different regional and social contexts while at the same time keeping its research scope focused and manageable. The institutional setting enabled me to spend extended periods of direct participant interaction, which resulted in trust development and deeper understanding that help to produce qualitative data.

My Participants

Changed name “Jasse” a girl whose age was 17 by the time I visited her in June, 2025. She came to the Child Reform Home in the case of murder and Dacoit.

She was from Bagmati Province. Her mother and father were separated because of his alcoholic behavior.

Changed name “Hari Maya” is a 14 year old girl, who was convicted for Illegal weapon transmission “*Hathhathiyar Kharkhajana*”. She lived with her uncle and aunt. She was from province 2.

Changed name “Babari”, a girl who was convicted of murder, was 15 when I visited her in August 2024. She lived with her mother as her parents were separated. She was from Sudurpachim Province.

Changed name Jyoti, was convicted in the case of attempting to murder. When I visited her in August 2024, she was 17 years old and 05-month-old pregnant when she came to Child Reform home. Changed name Ajay, who was convicted of rape was 14 when I visited him in September, 2024 in child Correction home in Bhaktapur. He was from Sudurpachim Pradesh.

Data Collection Methods

I interviewed about their childhood experiences, current experiences in institutions, and their preparation for returning home and re-entering society. I interviewed five young people (4 girls and one boy), aged between 14 and 17 years, in Bhaktapur Child Reform Home, regarding their experiences.

This study examined what Child offenders have lived through, both in the past and now, what they’re still hoping for later, and how they imagine reintegration into family and society. A qualitative research design was used throughout the work. The data were gathered from Child offenders through in-depth, open-ended interviews, informal chats, and observation during extended interactions at the child correction home. With the open-ended questioning, participants could share their lived experiences and emotions more freely and in greater detail. During the study, I had requested follow-up interviews and remained flexible with scheduling, often arranging these sessions during government holidays to accommodate these children’s routines.

Crafting Narratives

In relation to my research questions, I did my best to gather data through in-depth interviews, observations, and review of related information, so I could get a deeper feel for what the young people who live in Child Reform Homes experience.

The main participants in this study were the young people currently residing in reform homes. Also, key informants, such as social workers, provided details on counseling and routine support mechanisms within the reform homes.

The social worker is a full-time employee at Bhaktapur Child Reform Home and works closely with the issues these young people face daily. The information collected from social workers was used to triangulate and further strengthen what we already found from the young participants. In a way, this made it easier to set side by side and validate different viewpoints on the children's actual day-to-day experiences. After the data collection, the interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed. From those themes and concepts, a descriptive analysis was developed, providing a preliminary framework.

My Field Reflection

Beginning the Fieldwork

I visited Child Reform home Bhaktapur, in February 2024, to discuss my study with the social worker, after making an appointment with her. She has been working in the organization for more than two years. The social worker of Child Reform Home said that the participants, especially girl children, since she has been counselling them on a regular basis, who have been convicted of attempting murder and drug transmission, may take a bit of time to speak. She also said that initially, when young girls came into the reform homes, they stayed quiet for more than weeks, and did not have conversation at all, with nobody. But later in due course of time, after being counselled daily, the girls gradually started communicating with the social workers. To have these young girls communicate with her she had to attend personally to their rooms, sit with them, wherever they were sitting around at the garden or the terrace trying to talk, but would not talk. This happened for two to three weeks. Now they have started coming frequently to her office, to talk about their health issues and other related hygiene.

My First Visit

On 26 August 2024, I visited Bhaktapur Child reform home Sano Thimi at around 11:00am in the morning. First, I had a brief meeting with the social worker of Bhaktapur CCH, on how we should start conversing with them, so that they feel comfortable and come up with comfortable and open conversation before we called them into the counselling room. We decided that social workers would started introducing me as a researcher who is here to hear and write their stories.

I decided to interview three girls on my first visit, (accused of weapon transmission, murder, and attempt to murder). All three of them were in a child reform home serving pretrial by the order of District Courts. The names are changed to Hari Maya, Babari and Jyoti. The Social worker explained to them that I am here for research purposes, and I am here with them today to write their stories so that the people will get to know why they must take care of children; to avoid any mishappening and unlawful actions that may come across unknowingly.

To that I introduced myself as, I work as the program officer in Secretariat of Central Child Justice Committee, and I told them that I am here to gather the stories that will be published as “storybooks”, to explain in simple language what “thesis of MPhil” “research” means, because they did not seem to understand when I said “for my thesis”, I thought this could be the easier sentence for them to understand. I explained them that the purpose of “story book” is to tell the people, and make them understand the reasons, why such incidents are happening in the community, that what could be the reasons behind that the young people encounter with the law, and what could be the possible preventive measure to take in the early days, that may avoid spending their valuable time within confinement, the stories will click as the alarm and warn for the lives out there, who may be prone to such situation. I assured them that the actual name, place and age will be kept confidential. I took verbal consent if they were ready to converse with me. I took consent before recording their voices in my phone and writing down in notebooks. I assured them that the recording will be kept confidential with me only.

My Second Visit

My second visit was on 7 September 2024. In which, I visited Bhaktapur Reform home around 12: 30pm. This visit was very brief. I arrived at the Child reform home unannounced; I thought that would not make much difference, I was around Bhaktapur on my personal errand that day, I thought, I would get to talk to the children and social workers, anyway. But to my amusement the day happened to be the day of regular counselling and medical checkup from the organization named TPO. The young girls were lined up in the social worker’s room. I apologized for showing up unannounced, I said I would turn up next day, but the social worker was very polite and hospitable to arrange another room for me for the meeting. Though she was quite occupied with the health project she called 1 boy, she called Ajay

(changed name) the interview, who were serving pre-trial and were charged for case rape.

My Third Visit

On June 9, 2025, I arrived early, reaching the facility around 9:15Am. Since interviews with the young residents require the presence of a social worker, I had confirmed our meeting for 9:30 am the previous day. While waiting, I noticed a girl on the terrace tossing bits of tree leaves down to a boy below, who responded playfully. The scene struck me as both innocent and telling. During previous interaction programs, both the Social Worker and the Child Psychologist had repeatedly expressed concerns about the risks of co-educating boys and girls, citing several recent incidents where a girl and a boy were found in an inappropriate situation witnessed by mentors on multiple occasions.

As I waited for the Social Worker, with the office still closed, I observed that the grounds were better maintained than before, with neatly trimmed grass. The building housing thirty-seven girls was a two-story structure, with one flat accommodating all the young women varying ages.

While waiting (social worker), I seated myself in the bench with one of the women police officers, who was in a casual wear, I asked her where she was staying and if she has a child, she said she had a daughter who studies in class five. She said she was assigned here in a child reform home for second time, and this time she resumed just a month before. I asked her generally, how's everything over here, especially with the series of vandalism that unfortunately took place in Bhaktapur Child Reform home. The Police Officer said the attitude, behavior, tone of the young people residing in Bhaktapur Child reform home have changed a lot than she was here, three four years back.

By then the Social Worker arrived, I inquired whether the school had started operating for the day. She explained that, due to certain incidents where the administration found a girl and a boy having affairs within the Child Reform home, the girls were no longer allowed to attend school. For now, they are confined to their flat for both education and other extra curriculum, as it is considered too risky to allow them more freedom. I felt it bit irony, while reform homes are intended to provide corrective measures and foster growth through education, recreation and productive activities, these girls are instead confined, unable to attend the school within the area. I think such restrictions not only create a stifling environment but also

risk contribute to behavioral problems that could harm both the children and the institution. I had wanted to visit all the girls and boys I had interviewed before, Hari maya, Babari, Ajay. I get to talk to “Ajay” and “Babari” and one another young girl “*Jashee*” who was convicted for murder and dacoit” for 16years, confinement in Child reform home. Hari Maya and Jyoti had left the Child Reform home on my third visit as they were set free to go home after the decision from the court. I had wanted to visit all the girls and boys I had interviewed before, but Harimaya, Babari, Ajay. I get to talk to “Ajay” and “Babari” and one another young girl “*Jashee*” who was convicted for murder and dacoit” for 16years, confinement in Child reform home.

Quality Standards

As experienced, in social science research needs to add qualitative indicators to make their finding authentic. In this support, Tracy (2010) identifies eight criteria for high-quality qualitative research, including a worthwhile topic, rigorous inquiry, sincerity and reflexivity, credibility, reader and participant resonance, meaningful knowledge contribution, ethical conduct, and coherence between purpose, methods, and findings. To maintain trustworthiness in my research, I employed a range of strategies, including conducting fieldwork in a natural setting, understanding the context, engaging with participants, and using reflective analysis. I have kept field notes and audio recordings of participants during my visits to Child Reform Home to enhance the trustworthiness of my research.

I have adopted an interpretive paradigm to maintain the quality standards of my research. The research has been analyzed largely through qualitative methods using an interpretative approach. I hope my research will help identify the difficulties and challenges faced by young people living in a child reform home. The research has followed the trail of evidence to support the conclusion, which will help build confidence in the study's trustworthiness.

Ethical Consideration

In social science research, maintaining ethical aspects seems important to add quality in research. In this support, Taquette and Souza (2022) note, from an ethical perspective, that research with vulnerable populations requires additional safeguards, as data gathered through more intimate conversations on sensitive matters can delve into personal and politically charged issues, placing participants in uncomfortable or contradictory positions. I obtained permission from the head of Bhaktapur Child Reform Home to conduct observations and interviews, as well as from Kathmandu

University School of Education. Since young people were under institutional care, and their parents were not available, ethical approval was obtained from the social worker, who was providing them counselling on daily basis. I have informed both the institution and the participants that the actual names, places, and ages of their identities will be kept confidential. I adhered to ethical principles, ensuring respect for participants' privacy, rights, and beliefs; therefore, no actual information on names, age, or place of origin is disclosed. Participants were clearly informed about the study's purpose and procedures to enable voluntary, informed participation. Privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality have been strictly maintained throughout.

Chapter Summary

This Chapter established the interpretation of research methods. The study gained a better understanding of legal issues through its application of ontological, epistemological, and axiological approaches. The chapter presented the research sites and the process for selecting participants, the fieldwork methods and data collection techniques, and the analysis methods, thereby creating an effective and ethical research framework. The qualitative data is trustworthy because I have conducted extensive work at the Child Reform Home through in-depth interviews, observations, and their subsequent reflective analysis. The chapter established credibility of study through its rigorous research processes and ethical research practice that support the study results shown in later chapters while enhancing the study's contribution to research about Child justice and rehabilitation and child centered research practices.

CHAPTER IV

SOCIO-CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS OF CHILDREN OR YOUNG PEOPLE

The chapter examines the narratives of children in Bhaktapur Child Reform Home, showing how broken family structures, emotional abandonment, trauma, and disrupted education shape their pathways into conflict with the law. Their stories reveal recurring patterns of parental death, separation, neglect, domestic violence, and poverty, which left them vulnerable to substance abuse, risky peer networks, and early school dropout. The Chapter discusses the themes of the first research question, “How do the Children/ Adolescents narrate the Childhood experience before coming into the Bhaktapur Child Reform Home?”

This chapter is organized into the following sections: broken family structure and emotional abandonment; development of identity through education; education and value system; formal or alternative learning pathways- as a missed opportunity; trauma and abuse are underlying causes of conflict with the law; and summary and synthesis.

Broken Family Structure and Emotional Abandonment

Children who grow up in stable family environments receive important emotional security and developmental progress for identity. Children who experience broken family relationships and parental separation, neglect, and emotional abandonment lose access to essential parenting, nurturing, and protective resources. Such experiences create feelings of isolation, insecurity, and frustration, which make children susceptible to dangerous influences and unprotected activities. The story of Babari, Jaya, Jasse, and Ajay describes how broken family structures and emotional abandonment have impacted their lives.

Babari comes from a disrupted family background where her father left her mother for another woman when she was very small. “*My dad took another woman and left my mom*”. This background contributed to early emotional distress, limited supervision, and social instability, factors frequently present in the lives of institutionalized children.

When I met Jaya, she was expecting and looked emotionally withdrawn. In Jasse’s trajectory to substance abuse, theft, and violent crime was rooted in a chaotic home environment, which was initiated by inter-caste conflict, maternal alcoholism,

and prolonged neglect. According to Paudel et al. (2026), when a child's emotional and psychological needs are not met in the family, he or she may look for validation, protection, or even an identity in the wrong place. This led her to peer and drug networks, which in turn fostered risk-seeking actions and increased criminal activity. Ajay's case highlights the severe impact of economic struggles and parents living apart, with exposure to domestic violence in his early childhood, limited to insufficient education, which ultimately led to legal difficulties. The family disruptions, together with emotional neglect and economic difficulties, which affected their life paths, created a common pattern that emerged from the stories told by Harimaya, Babari, Jaya, Jasse, and Ajay. Young people who experienced parental absence, family separation, and parental abandonment developed intense feelings of loneliness, uncertainty, and emotional pain because of their family situation.

The combined effect of poverty, absence of parental attention, and projection of emotional neglect is evident in the participants' backgrounds. This is also argued by Duncan and Menestrel (2019), who contend that socio-economic hardships, coupled with family instability, create long-lasting developmental vulnerabilities. ng Paudel et al. (2026) mention, migration, especially mothers' migration, is one of the major reasons their children are typically left with their grandparents, as in the case of Ajay, who lived with his grandmother, who required more love, care, and understanding

Their lived experiences show unmet emotional and psychological needs often pushed them toward risky peer associations, survival behaviors, and harmful environments in search of belonging and validation. The study by Duncan and Menestrel (2019) shows that socio-economic hardship and family instability combine to create long-lasting developmental problems, while Paudel et al. (2026) demonstrates that children who lack emotional support will turn to deviant peer groups for identity and protection.

The stories of fractured family and emotional neglect are looked at by Ungar (2013) resilience theory, which stressed that resilience is not just a personal trait, but more like a negotiated process that gets shaped by the resources that are reachable, socially, culturally, and through institutions. So, in Harimaya, Babari, Jaya, Jasse, and Ajay show how resilience can get squeezed when protective supports like caregiving, emotional attend, and even when just a safe home setting are missing. When those supports are absent, children often end up searching for other forms of attachment,

sometimes in peer groups that offer closeness, and sometimes in networks that are risky, yet feel familiar. Ungar's model also suggests that what might look like "maladaptive" behavior—like survival strategies, early independence, or the choice to stick with deviant peers can be understood as coping methods used to maneuver through hardship in environments that don't provide much. It's not necessarily a built-in flaw or a deficit, rather it is a response to constrained opportunity.

This also fits with *A Roadmap to Re-Engage Children in Poverty* (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2019), which maintains that child development is deeply shaped by ecological systems. And it argues that real recovery from poverty-related adversity depends on strengthening multi system supports, including family stability, community care, schooling, and mental health services. Structural deprivation limits the coordination of protective systems, which then narrows positive adaptation and makes harmful trajectories more likely, even if the child is trying to survive and belong.

Perspectives from different arenas suggest that it cannot be explained only by family issues; many other social and community factors also play a role. Sometimes, children's single parents can exhibit resilience through adaptive thinking, effective emotional regulation, and seeking support from trusted adults (Rees et al., 2023). In some cases, children raised by grandparents also show significant family resiliency (Lee et al., 2015). Occasional incarceration by parents acts as a protective factor during the development of healthy relationships with parents. (Morgan et al., 2021). All I could think was that wherever the child lives, only a stable home atmosphere and constant emotional support are among the most important factors for a child's healthy development.

Development of Identity through Education

The educational process establishes a crucial connection through which young people develop their personal identity and self-esteem, as well as their professional goals. Educational experiences enable every child and young person to acquire academic knowledge while developing their self-confidence, social skills, and discovering their life purpose.

Education serves as a transformative force, bringing hope to children and youths who have overcome challenging situations by creating pathways for their personal growth and better prospects. Babari, Harimaya, Jaya, and Jasse demonstrated

that, upon arriving at the Child Reform Home, educational experiences helped them develop their identities and shape their self-perceptions.

When I asked Babari what she generally likes to do, she said she likes to sing and dance. She said she had studied till class five before coming into the child reform home. Now, she is continuing regular studies inside school of Child Correction home. Her projection sensed strong hope and a feeling of self-identity. I found that the way Babari maintained her enthusiasm for physical activities, such as sports, served as a window into her inner world of hope, which was beginning to take a positive turn. I sensed the sweetness of childhood dreams that allowed her to continue even within the institutional setting she is in at present. At that moment, I sensed she allowed herself to be passionate about innovative pursuits for her own benefit and had not entirely lost her emotional growth, despite whatever had happened in the past.

Ajay's version of his education offers an interesting trajectory. He said he had to stop going to school after class three to work and support his family. He used to make flags and garlands. He found education interesting while in a child reform home. When I heard this, I felt how ironic and unfortunate it is for adults like us to learn that the child, "a life, a human being", gets basic needs in a "confined" situation but not from his own "home". It shows that young people at child reform homes come there because of structural and social pressures that create poverty, few income opportunities, and a lack of access to good schools.

Jasse stopped going to school in mid-session nine, leading to early exposure to drugs and street life. The Loss of educational engagement coincided with the loss of stable identity makers; she became more defined by her drug use and survival strategies than by personal aspirations. Her case exemplifies educational disengagement during adolescence, which affected her sense of identity and future direction. This is evidenced by Marcere et al. (2017), who explain that delinquency disrupts the normal process of identity formation by creating confusion, uncertainty, and a weaker commitment to personal goals and life choices.

The development of identity through education in the lives of Babari, Harimaya, Jaya, and Jasse can be theorized through Ungar's (2013, 2018) resilience framework, which understands resilience as a dynamic, culturally embedded, and system-dependent process rather than an individual achievement. From this perspective, education functions as a key "navigation of resources" that enables young people to access meaning, structure, and future orientation, especially in contexts of

adversity such as poverty, family disruption, and institutional care. For Babari and Harimaya, continued engagement with schooling and hobbies within the Child Reform Home reflects what Ungar (2018) describes as systemic resilience, where supportive institutional environments partially compensate for earlier deprivation by offering opportunities for identity reconstruction and positive adaptation. In contrast, Jasse's withdrawal from education and early exposure to drugs illustrates how the loss of structured educational engagement disrupts access to protective systems, narrowing identity development and increasing reliance on survival-based roles. This aligns with Mercer et al. (2017), who argue that delinquency and identity formation are mutually linked processes, where weakened educational attachment contributes to unstable or negatively constructed identities during adolescence. Similarly, Jaya and Ajay's narratives show that interruptions in schooling due to early marriage, economic pressure, and labor demands constrain identity exploration, limiting the formation of coherent future goals. Integrating Ungar's theory with Mercer et al. (2017), it becomes evident that education is not only a site of learning but also an ecological pathway through resilience and identity.

This shows that even in restrictive environments in child reform homes, young people like Babari maintain a sense of purpose and self-worth through fond memories of schooling and hobbies. Such potential also indicates successful entry points for rehabilitation and reengagement with education and personal growth. Her narrative explains how aspiration can survive institutional adversity. Likewise, Jaya, who was convicted of attempting murder, had studied till class eight. She said she thought she would continue her education even after her marriage, but the opposite happened. Since it was her decision to marry, she may not have been able to ask her parents for help.

Education and Value System

As we all know, educational institutions serve as the primary means through which students acquire their moral principles and behavioral patterns and learn to fulfill their duties as members of society. Through learning experiences, children and youths develop understanding about discipline, respect, right and wrong, and their roles within society. Educational environments shape the process through which young individuals develop their personal value systems and make choices throughout their everyday activities.

Jasse reflected, *“If I had received proper support from my family, my life would have been different today.”* She added *“If only my friends had stopped me from doing that”*. Her reflections show that she made life choices guided by her emotions rather than by wisdom and values. This is due to a lack of supportive family and positive peer guidance. This aligns with Bandura’s statement that education is a primary conduit for transmitting societal norms, fostering empathy, and developing future-oriented thinking (Bandura et al., 1996). It shows that a lack of supportive family and positive peer guidance.

Babari recalled her father leaving the family for another woman when she was too young. I could feel the situation as a parent, what may young child have gone through, with the psychological fights, when she could not continue school after five, being exposed to negative experiences during childhood, that reduce self-confidence, emotional security, and make it harder to develop positive moral values amid chaotic relationships between her parents.

Jaya only completed her eighth-grade education before she was found guilty of attempting murder. The social worker’s psychological evaluation revealed that while conversing with Jaya, she said that her husband had promised to allow her to go to school before the incident happened. The social worker said that Jaya reported suicidal thoughts and memory issues, even though she did not disclose much about her past. Jaya needed much emotional care and medical attention in the initial state.

These problems imply that her capacity to acquire healthy values was impacted by early trauma and lack of supportive family members, who did not help to provide basic needs as education. The stories show how parental absence and interruptions in regular school attendance contributed to a negative image and value system towards society and acquaintances.

Ajay’s story shows how financial hardship limited his educational journey at an early age. He left school after grade three to make flags and garlands, helping his family financially, despite domestic violence and poverty. The irony is that it was only after entering the correctional setting that he could enjoy education, as a path to personal development.

The educational trajectories, and the moral development, of the participants can be understood with Ungar’s resilience framework, especially where he stresses that resilience is negotiated, culturally situated, and not just something individuals “carry” on their own (Ungar, 2013). In the cases of Jasse, Babari, Jaya, and Ajay, it

seems like disrupted schooling, family instability, and emotional deprivation restricted their access to ecological resources like dependable caregiving, emotionally safe spaces, and value guided instruction that are normally needed to keep adaptive developmental processes running. Ungar (2018) adds that systemic resilience grows out of how people and their surroundings interact, so institutions (such as family and the education system) can either support or block positive adjustment. The participants' moral and behavioral vulnerabilities aren't merely personal shortcomings, but the result of weakened systemic support that did not ensure continuity in education, emotional regulation, and normative orientation. This reading also fits Ibarguen and Jiménez (2025), who contend that education acts as a transformative social force, shaping values, reinforcing social bonds, and redirecting youth toward more constructive life routes when it is linked to supportive community attitudes and long-term institutional dedication. Without that kind of joint support, which shows up in the participants' narratives, education loses its stabilizing function in moral formation, children often draw the value system available in their immediate social context, which may be delinquent or survival driven. The research demonstrates that family disruptions negatively affect students' academic performance, emotional control, and decision-making abilities, putting them at risk of developing dangerous life patterns that lead them to encounter the law.

Therefore, I thought the gap in education reflects not just poverty but also a value system in which education was neither prioritized nor sustained, especially during crises. Ibarguen (2025) also admits that, to actualize meaningful educational reform, there must be an accompanying change in society's collective attitudes and mindsets for the best interest of children.

Formal or Alternative Learning Pathways- as a Missed Opportunity

While narrating their childhoods, the children frequently framed education in terms of missed opportunities, either as a loss they regretted or as a newfound benefit in the correctional setting. I saw the feeling of regret in them from being exposed to violence, drugs, and realizing the importance of education, the education that shapes moral values.

The stories demonstrate that lack of formal education is often the first casualty of domestic instability. Children like Ajay (dropped out in grade three), Babari (grade five), and Jaya (grade eight) were pulled out of school due to economic pressures, family breakdown, or the need to work. Education or (NFE) Non-formal Education

seems to be a missed opportunity for the participants. Vocational training, such as mobile repair, driving, and plumbing, could have been worth missing formal, regular schooling to divert them from committing crimes. Non-formal education is a learning process that centers on individual development through educational activities outside traditional school systems (Almeida & Morais, 2025).

Jasse, Ajay, and Babari said they are getting vocational skills, such as driving, plumbing, knitting, and making garlands, said to my question about whether they are receiving any training at the Child Reform Home, Bhaktapur. Singing and crafting are some of the children's hobbies that support their identity in strict environments. But if children are not given regular instruction and guidance, these activities might slowly fade away. In situations like this, children are more likely to succumb to their peers' negative influence and may adopt destructive behaviors (Maruna, 2001). I could sense that the participants need to be engaged in skill development for income generation within the child reform home. I suggested to the social workers that maybe the young people living in the child reform home can be engaged in gardening.

The stories of Ajay, Babari, Jaya, and Jasse show that educational exclusion is a more serious process that results in social exclusion, restricting children's access to opportunities. Had they been able to acquire alternative skills, if not regular education, from their guardians, they would have been able to support themselves and support their family, possibly may have been diverted from wrongdoing.

The research shows that non-formal education and skill development programs serve as both economic development pathways and protective systems that enable individuals to build self-empowerment, discipline, and social connections with future aspirations. The narratives demonstrate that the national system should establish structured educational and vocational programs, with therapeutic programs, as preventive measures in communities and schools.

Trauma and Abuse are Underlying Causes of Conflict with the Law

The experiences of young people in this research demonstrate the significant influence of their social surroundings on their struggles and healing processes, both prior to and during their stay in the child reform home. The fundamental problems that cause youngsters to run afoul of the law result from abuse and trauma that they endure as children. *“Jaya used to stay alone and cut off. During the conversation with her, she did not have eye contact, she suddenly started laughing and crying uncontrollably,”* the social worker said. This shows that she may have been carrying

her own unresolved trauma, which could be why she took such a drastic step. The trauma of physical and psychological pain was clearly presented by Jaya's situation. The social worker said she had clinical signs of extreme trauma when she entered the correctional facility, pregnant, and displays symptoms like suicidal thoughts, emotional instability, and withdrawal all the time.

Jasse's turning point in her life was a disrupted childhood marked by maternal alcoholism, inter-caste family conflict, and early drug use, which led to her involvement in theft and violent crime, which was fostered by chronic trauma that ultimately eroded protective factors. "Sometimes I think I would not be in this place if I had listened to my mother. I also think, had my mother not struggled with alcoholism, and had she been able to acknowledge and respond to my feelings, my life would have been different", Jasse said during our conversation.

Ajay's narrative explains additional aspects of traumatic experiences in childhood: exposure to domestic violence, when his father comes home drunk, and never-ending economic strain. These cases collectively establish literature linking childhood trauma and abuse, which subsequently result in delinquent acts. Adverse Childhood Experience (ACEs) disrupts normal neurodevelopment, compromises executive behavior, and fosters maladaptive behavior (Alhowaymel et al., 2023)

The participants' stories show that early trauma and abuse are drivers of their entry into the justice system. When all lawful paths that society recognizes become inaccessible to children, they start to seek out other paths, which most people consider illegal, even though they have not committed any crime. Children face wrongful delinquency charges because hidden delinquent organizations, which include adult groups and powerful people, use their social vulnerability against them, making them easily identifiable as offenders who will face punishment.

The experiences of the participants can be theorized through Ungar's resilience framework, which basically reconceptualizes resilience not as some fixed individual trait but as a process that is negotiated within contexts and cultures. It is shaped by what protective resources are around, and by how capable the systems are to respond when adversity shows up (Ungar, 2013). Looking at it this way, the traumatic histories of Jaya, Jasse, and Ajay show chronic exposure to abuse, neglect, and household instability that can erode the ecological supports that are needed for healthy development, like dependable caregiving, emotional regulation, and relational settings that feel safe. Ungar (2018) adds that there is also systemic resilience,

meaning that in difficult conditions outcomes depend on how effectively connected systems, family, community, and institutions coordinate to provide resources so individuals can adapt in positive directions. When that coordination is missing, the participants' narratives make it clear that trauma does not just sit in the background. It becomes cumulative, almost woven into everyday life, affecting emotional dysregulation, disrupting decision-making, and increasing vulnerability to risky environments. This theoretical lens also helps to clarify why social environments that include exploitation, adult manipulation, and structural neglect push vulnerability even further, reinforcing cycles of harm, and closing off access to protective routes that might otherwise steer development toward healing and reintegration.

Summary and Synthesis

I found that the childhood memories the participants shared weren't just sad in one way but seemed to stack up as cumulative adversity, of family disruption, emotional neglect, poverty, interrupted education, seeing violence, and even substance abuse, all of it formed a kind of pathway that later pulled them into legal conflict. Children like Harimaya, Babari, Jaya, Jasse, and Ajay talked about growing up with family structures that were already broken, with parental separation, domestic violence, emotional abandonment, and constant financial strain. A lot of them described schooling that got interrupted, early responsibilities that they weren't ready for, and not much parental guidance, and in some cases, there was also parental substance misuse, community discrimination, plus peer pressure quite early. In general, these things took away stable emotional connection, chances for learning, and healthier role models, exactly during those crucial stages of development. Their stories also seemed to say offending behavior didn't just pop up from isolated, personal decisions, but rather it grew out of years of childhood hardship and a lack of feeling of protective ties. These results show that adverse childhood experiences, family instability, socio-economic hardship, missed schooling, and emotional deprivation tend to heighten a child's risk for risky behavior, substance misuse, and juvenile offending (Duncan & Menestrel, 2019; Johnson et al., 2006; Paudel et al., 2026). Other research also notes that even though family disruption is a major risk factor, resilience can still arise when supportive caregivers, grandparents, schools, and communities step in, especially if protective systems are in place (Lee et al., 2015; Rees et al., 2023). These studies highlighted that adverse childhood experiences,

family instability, socio-economic hardship, missed schooling, and emotional deprivation tend to heighten a child's risk for risky behavior.

These stories make sense that their childhood was not only a chain of unlucky happenings, but it was also more like way too gap between emotional, educational, and social needs, that turned out to be the delinquent act ending up in Child Correction home. Their stories show that childhood adversity is deep rooted inside a wider ecological web of families, schools, communities, and those structural inequalities that keep repeating. If we look at it through Ungar's resilience lens, it feels misleading to say these children were missing resilience. More precisely their resilience was squeezed, because nurturing relationships were hard to reach, and the systems around them weren't responsive enough to cover their developmental requirements. Even with serious hardship, many participants still held on to hopes about getting an education, finding meaningful work, repairing relationships within the family, and building a better tomorrow. So, the stories include not just trauma, but also persistent aspirations for change. In short, the results suggest that children's routes toward conflict with the law were not random, they were socially and structurally made, formed through cumulative disadvantages. At the same time, their narratives still carried a kind of agency, a hope, and a wish to rebuild their lives, especially if the right kinds of support are available.

CHAPTER V

RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY WITHIN CHILD REFORM HOME

The Chapter highlights the real experience of the participants residing in Bhaktapur Child Reform Home, reciprocity between personal trauma, institutional setbacks, and huge social inequalities. It shows how the participants' involvement in conflict with the law often is further exacerbated by peer exploitation, bullying and systemic neglect in institutions. The chapter explains themes that have been developed related to the second question of this research, "*How do young people exhibit resilience in the face of adversity in Child reform homes?*" to showcase the actual experiences of young people who lived there.

This chapter is organized into the following sections: emotional and psychological distress; gender specific experience/power imbalance and peer exploitation; bullying and exploitation; substance abuse-related behavioral issues and aggression; delayed justice and prolonged stay in child reform home; institutional harm, self-destructive and coping mechanism; and summary and synthesis.

Emotional and Psychological Distress

Children who reside in Child Reform Homes experience emotional and psychological distress as their primary shared experience. Young people experience multiple emotional difficulties which include sadness, fear and anxiety, loneliness and hopelessness in the early stage, because of different reasons such as family separation, past traumatic events and institutional living conditions. Their distress produces two main effects which include impairing their mental health and disrupting their social interactions and daily activities in the institution. The following narratives reflect the emotional struggles and psychological burdens experienced by the participants during their stay in the reform home.

In my first visit to Hari maya and Jaya they seem to be mentally exhausted and reluctant to speak, while they were answering to my questions. Since I sensed the exhaustion in her, I had to stop conversing with them for a while.

Babari exhibited emotional and psychological distress, sadness and reluctance to speak second time when I visited her, that suggested she must be experiencing trauma, fear and depression. The social worker said that Babari desires to return home as soon as possible once the district court decides, she misses her family when seeing

visitors of her peers. This emotional notion highlights her longing for familial support and normalcy. Her preference to stay quiet or say “*everything is okay*” may be a coping mechanism to avoid further scrutiny or fear of retaliation as a reaction from her peers.

Ajay expressed, “*Whenever I deeply miss my family, the memory that comes to me most vividly is us having dinner together*”. His statement shows how institutional stay makes people suffer from three different types of emotional pain which include separation, feelings of loneliness and loss of attachment which is reflected in the study of (Johnson et al., 2006), that highlights, children who grow up in institutional environments face problems with building relationships which affect their entire development pattern including social skills, cognitive abilities and emotional development. According to what I have observed in my profession, during the several visits to Child Reform homes, young people deprived of emotional care and parental guidance are prone to lower resilience to life stressors. As Ungar (2018) argues, resilience exists when people demonstrate their capacity to handle stressful situations through various survival methods which differ between individuals. The narratives of Ajay, Jasse, Babari, Hari maya show how resilience developed through their persistent hope and desire to return home and live a normal life after experiencing their hardships and emotional suffering and institutionalization. Young people in difficult situations demonstrate their emotional strength and ability to envision the future through their persistent hope for a better life.

Gender Specific Experience /Power Imbalance and Peer Exploitation

The Child Reform Home was home to boys and girls who experienced gender-based experiences from visiting family members and sometimes by the administration of institutions. There are instances reported regarding peer victimization because of power imbalance that exists between seniors and juniors of the institution.

Ajay reported that his grandmother and mother visited him at the reform home while his father stayed away from him. I had a feeling how emotional caregiving tasks get passed to female family members while male family members tend to keep their emotional distance. Ajay received emotional support from grandmother despite his father neglecting him. Generally, girls like Babari, Jaya, Jasse and Hari maya face unique vulnerability related to their social roles, and on top of that the stigma attached to female offender make them more vulnerable in social setting and institutional

setting as (Tosouni, 2014) has stated in her study done in California girls-juvenile correction home.

Babari reported infrequent visit from her family. Babari stated that her mother would come to see her at times, but no one visited her after her mother passed away. The absence of family existence as emotional support made her feel more emotionally isolated because she believed her other family members had abandoned her. Jaya experienced both gender-based violence and emotional abuse through her marriage. She displayed a silent mode of communication during discussions with others yet her body language and depression and speaking reluctance showed she experienced traumatic events which left her with ongoing fear.

The institutional environment clearly displayed evidence of gender inequality. After the school authorities enforced the “unacceptable incidents” that included the incidents of witnessing closeness between one of the girls and boys within the facility, Made the administration rule, which affected only girls. The administration suspended regular school attendance for girls for certain period. Though the gender specific experience was not seen in this study, I felt there was the presence of disparity between boys and girls when there was a strict restriction for only girls. Suspension of vocational training, after the vandalism between the girls in girl’s apartment in Bhaktapur Child Correction home, which curtailed girls access to skill-preparation for rehabilitation educational restrictions. The incident resulted in greater limitations for their educational opportunities and skill development for rehabilitation needs.

As per the social worker, there was a time when the power imbalance between students became apparent in girls’ because older girls used their authority to take food and money and other belongings which younger girls had received from their families. The situation caused younger girls to experience, fear insecurity and emotional distress. These narratives underscore the importance of adopting gender-responsive frameworks within Child justices’ system to bridge the unequal treatment within correctional settings as Tosouni (2014) says in one of her studies mistreatments are usually, may not be accidental or hidden but rather normalized within the institutional environment. Such experiences highlight how institutional practices can directly damage the dignity, confidence, and emotional wellbeing of young women living in reform setting.

I think this is the lack of ineffective supervision and protection mechanism inside the reform home that only cultivates the environment of more fear, mistrust and

insecurity among younger children. The situation demonstrates both inadequate supervision and insufficient protection systems which exist at the reform home. The situation demonstrates how the facility environment creates increased fear and mistrust and insecurity for young people who reside there.

Above narratives depict several challenges that present obstacles to achieving progress but demonstrate how resilience enables the participants to keep pursuing their goals. The child reform home restricts their identity search, but they pursue education and sports and music and vocational activities. This shows that human beings develop mechanisms to handle stress, change and return to their normal state. Young people face negative circumstances, but they use emotional withdrawal and silence and avoidance and inner resilience as coping strategies to manage their distress as stated by Ungar (2018) though the institutional environment force children to develop adaptive behavior because they need to maintain their mental well-being.

Bullying and Exploitation

The power imbalance between young people in child reform homes leads to two main forms, bullying and exploitation that creates multiple traumas among young people, within the institution.

Ajay shared a painful memory from his time in the Child Reform Home during my third visit. He said that older boys constantly mistreated him and other younger children “*but now its ok*” he said. The social worker later elaborated that there were some senior boys who would demand money and threaten to beat them, if they didn’t give it. These gang would seize the food and money that the younger ones receive from their families. This created an environment of fear and helplessness among younger children.

These young boys are scared to do and say anything about these gangs inside the homes, that they believe this gang of older boys have connection outside the Child reform home (CCH). These older boys would threaten them if any complaints made to the administration or staff, would result to repercussions even after their release as in the paper Tosouni (2014), says, female unit inside the public Child institution in southern California, there were issues that arose where older residents intimidated younger ones, creating “informal economics” and peer governance structures, as an exploitation.

This fear silenced the victims, preventing them from approaching the administration social workers, or counselors for help. A social worker revealed during

an interview that the frequency of visits and consultations by these younger children had noticeably declined, indicating that they were too frightened to seek support. I reflected this scenario with a podcast “*Gulabi Smabad*” that was released of the young boy who was released from Child reform home Parsa said that they were given stale and less food.

It is obvious that overcrowded conditions increase stress, tension, and frustration among inmates, which may result in behavioral issues, disciplinary problems, and conflicts both between peers and with staff and continuous challenges can undermine the success of rehabilitation programs. The participants’ experiences can be mapped using Ungar’s resilience framework. In this support, Ungar (2013) stated that reworks resilience not as a stable personal trait but as something that’s negotiated within specific cultures and settings, shaped by what protective resources are around and by the ability of systems to react when adversity hits.

Substance Abuse-Related Behavioral Issues and Aggression

Substance abuse among children and youths in reform homes leads to multiple issues, which include behavioral problems and emotional instability and aggressive actions, that impact their personal well-being and their ability to interact with others. Jasse shared:

My mother started drinking alcohol when my parents fought, and she would try to stay out of the home most of the time. I think my father also used drugs, though I don’t know to what extent, otherwise I may not have been in the use of the same and in this condition.

The Social worker also highlighted that some young people, particularly those with a history of drug abuse, have been causing serious disruptions within the reform home as Duncan and Murnane’s (2019) findings, that socioeconomically disadvantaged communities often compound the effects of family instability, leaving children more vulnerable to antisocial behaviors that have many chances to landing into substance abuse.

During casual conversation with the social worker, she said one of the girls other than the participants, involved girl who had been sent to child bench had used educational tools such as pencils and sharpeners as weapons. In one alarming episode, the warden of the Bhaktapur Child Reform Home was physically attacked and severely beaten by group of girls who accused her of being biased in treatment between the girls in the reform home.

In my experience of working in Secretariate, almost all Child Reform Homes are built below the minimum required standard, making it difficult for them to properly support children's rehabilitation. This includes not enough educational materials, very few spaces for vocational training, and a lack of proper recreational areas. The poor physical condition of many of these facilities does not meet the standards needed for proper rehabilitation, which lowers the morale and motivation of both girls and boys living there (Kunwar, 2024).

In my years of experience most of the child justice programs, and interaction programs with partner agencies and stakeholders, it is iterated and reiterated that it is crucial to separate Childs who have substance abuse problems so they can receive the right kind of medical treatment and care and other young people are not negatively influence. This means creating special units inside the reform homes that focus only on substance abuse treatment, where affected youth can get medical help, counseling, and programs designed for their specific needs. Such separation helps improve rehabilitation, protects other Childs from being exposed to substance use, and creates a safer, more supportive environment for everyone (Kunwar, 2020). This situation can be understood with Ungar's ideas of resilience, as kind of a context depending on the systemic lens, not only personal.

Supporting the discourse, Ungar (2013) says that trauma and resilience are formed not just by what someone lived through, but also by the social and cultural setting where children are growing up. Here, the fear that older youths created around substance abuse seemed to make it harder for the younger children to reach protective resources like social workers, counselors, and institutional backing. So, their own ability to cope with adversity became weaker. Their silence reveals that when an environment feels unsafe, resilience can get undermined because help becomes inaccessible, or at least not meaningful enough. In a similar way, Ungar (2018) stresses that systemic resilience depends on whether institutions can set up conditions that encourage safety, protection, and constructive progress. From that angle to separate children with substance abuse problems into specialized rehabilitation units is not simply a disciplinary move, more like a systemic intervention that strengthens resilience, because it cuts down harmful influences, improves access to focused treatment, and builds a safer environment where children may feel calm enough to ask for assistance. Overall, this helps both the individual children and the institution to

respond better to hardship, and it supports healthier developmental results, and more successful rehabilitation processes.

Delayed Justice and Prolonged Stay in Child Reform Home

When the process of justice delivery is delayed, children must stay in reform homes for extended periods, as legal outcomes remain undecided for extended periods, resulting in young people experiencing multiple emotional problems which include uncertainty, frustration, hopelessness and distress.

Jaya, Harimaya, Babari and Ajay were in pretrial state, on my first visit. In my third visit with the Babari, she was in child reform home already for a year. It is said that justice delayed I justice denied. With her exhausted eyes she said " *if only the court gives the decision, it would be easier for me*" During our conversation with Babari, the social worker said there used to be young people who were proven "not guilty", after they stayed in the child reform home for more than five years.

Ajay was also experiencing similar anxiety regarding the decision of his case. He said private lawyers cannot be afforded by his family and hence his family has not hired a private lawyer. When asked with the legal officer of Child Correction home, why the cases have been prolonged, she said the court does not give the dates for hearing even after many follow-ups.

Had their cases not been prolonged to make decisions with or without any significant reasons, the participants may not have to go through emotional exhaustion, when they could not escape days without having enough nutritious food and living in congested places. While in casual conversation with former District Judge about the delays in decision, he said:

Even District Judges have expressed frustration over these delays, that it's the inefficiency of the system. The reason for delay in deciding cases are most of the time, is the report from lab that cannot be obtained within 120 days.

There is legal alternative to detention such as diversion, for the minor delinquent act such as theft. However, the court has not been able to effectively implement these provisions due to practical difficulties. This contributed to the unnecessary stay in institution, and prolonged stay that contributed to the policy and institutional gap.

When I met Babari on my third visit to the Child reform home. She looked pale, though she was smiling while conversation, her eyes were sad. The social worker facilitating my meetings with the participants, who provides counseling to

them, said Babari has lost weight due to a vandalism incident involving the girls and the assault of the warden by a gang of girls several months ago. The older individuals intimidate the younger ones by taking food that was given to them by family members and forcing them to give them money. This form of older individuals manipulating younger ones occurred not only in the boys' child correction home but also in the girls' child correction home. The cumulative effect of bullying, peer exploitation, aggression, and systemic delays contributes to severe psychological distress among children in CCH. The system that does not resolve case in time may develop feelings of hopelessness and distress towards authorities. For children already coming from traumatic backgrounds, the reform home environment may exacerbate their feeling of insecurity rather than alleviating them.

In this support, Tosouni (2014) stated that one of the girls who was experiencing drug withdrawal was humiliated in public. As there are young people who are convicted of substance abuse cases, such young people should be provided with dedicated treatment to prevent negative influences on other inmates. This approach involves creating specialized sections within Child correction homes dedicated to substance abuse recovery, where Children affected programs tailored for their specific needs. This segregation not only aids in more effective rehabilitation but also protects other children from potential harm.

Institutional Harm, Self-Destructive and Coping Mechanism

The young people who experience neglect, abuse, fear, isolation and extended confinement in institutional settings develop self-destructive behaviors and different coping strategies to handle their painful experiences.

Jasse's story shows how many layers of trauma built up in her life. She grew up in an inter-caste family that faced social pressure and conflict at home. Her mother's growing alcohol use and frequent absence made the home emotionally unstable. By grade 3, her uncle, one of the few steady caregivers placed her in a hostel. After she left school in grade 9, her life became even harder as she became involved with drugs, unsafe relationships and street life. She was moved many times, first to hostel to different districts with her relative and then to her boyfriend's place.

Each move was meant to help her, but none dealt with the real causes of her struggles: emotional abandonment, substance use and pressure from peers. Her involvement in robbery and a planned murder attempt did not come from intentional criminal behavior but from trying to survive drug withdrawal, financial problems and

the absence of any real support. Her repeated returned drug use shows she was using substances to cope with pain, which is common for trauma survivors as mentioned in Research Bulletin name Substance Abuse and Mental health Services Administration (SAMHSA, 2014).

Jasse also mentioned having thoughts of suicide, when asked how she manages now, she said “*Whenever I feel bad, I sing a song to divert my mind so that I do not harm myself*”. This response shows how emotionally fragile she still feels, even inside the structured environment of the correction home. As "Inspire: Seven strategies for ending violence against children," explains, trauma in adolescents often shows risky behavior, emotional numbness, and delinquency when they do not receive proper therapeutic support.

Across the narratives of Jasse, Ajay and Babari’s trauma appear in different forms domestic violence, substance abuse, emotional neglect, forced responsibilities, and gendered exploitation. In each case, the children’s early exposure to trauma profoundly shaped their behavior and sense of identity. The justice system recognizes their actions as criminal activities, but their stories reveal unacknowledged “cry for help”, protection and healing. A comparative analysis reveals, Jasse often internalized trauma, leading to withdrawal, self-harm, or explosive reactions while Ajay a male externalized his trauma through behavioral acting out (theft, underage drinking), but also displayed resilience at emotional state. All three of them experienced emotional neglect as a defining feature of their early years. None of them received early trauma-informed care, allowing unresolved distress to escalate into legal infractions.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989, Article 40) emphasizes that children in conflict with the law have the right to treatment that promotes their sense of dignity and worth, reinforces their respect for human rights, and facilitates their reintegration into society. The issues that child reform homes deal with, from my observations, are not merely confined to these institutions, but rather they are human problems of a whole society.

The undervaluation of values-based education, the continuation of societal inequalities, and the insufficient state support were the main reasons for my astonishment. Moreover, I observed that the youth, boys in particular, often tried to show off as “cool” and disconnected emotionally. The participants’ emotional restraint can be understood via Ungar’s resilience idea, as a kind of contextually and culturally negotiated process, rather than something that sits only within the person

(Ungar, 2013). so, from that perspective, the limited way of emotions showed up among the young people might not mean positive adaptation, or “resilience” in the simplest sense. It could instead be a response to settings where being vulnerable is viewed as risky, unsafe, or not really tolerated. Ungar also says that coping strategies don’t appear out of nowhere, they are shaped by the social and cultural contexts where people live; thus, suppressing emotions can work as a survival move, something learnt and refined within peer groups, family climates, or institutional spaces where emotional disclosure is discouraged. Also, Ungar’s (2018) framing of systemic resilience points to the fact that resilience tends to show up when social systems make room for safety, ongoing support, and real, meaningful participation. If those ingredients are missing, young people might lean toward emotional withdrawal, quietness, and general silence, more as protection than as choice. so, the participants’ reluctance to say how they feel, can be read as “constrained resilience”, meaning not a lack of coping ability, but a reaction to social environments where emotional expression is neither encouraged nor experienced as safe, at least not in a stable way. This show of emotional restraint came across not as a manifestation of resilience but rather as a marker that exists for emotional expression not to be safe.

Summary and Synthesis

The findings reveal that young people in Bhaktapur Child Reform Home experience adversity related to emotional trauma, institutional shortcomings, peer victimization, substance abuse, delayed justice, and gendered inequalities. Participants talked about deep emotional pain that came mostly from being separated from family, not knowing where their legal cases were going, overcrowded living spaces, and long stretches of institutionalization. In the narratives from Babari, Jaya, Harimaya, Ajay, and Jasse, there were sadness, fear, loneliness, and hopelessness, plus emotional withdrawal and a feeling of psychological exhaustion. Younger children seemed especially exposed to bullying, intimidation, and exploitation by older peers. At the same time, girls faced extra hurdles through gender-based restrictions related to education and training pathways for work, not just general restrictions. When judicial proceedings got delayed, frustration and uncertainty grew stronger. Even when diversion is legally possible, many children still end up staying a long time in pre-trial detention. Participants who had prior substance abuse histories often showed behavioral instability and aggression. Meanwhile, rehabilitation was basically

constrained by inadequate infrastructure, overcrowding, and fewer psychosocial services than would be needed.

These results match earlier work suggesting that institutionalized children can develop attachment difficulties, struggles with emotional maturation, and a higher likelihood of facing violence, exploitation, and substance abuse (Duncan & Murnane, 2019; Johnson et al., 2006; Tosouni, 2014; Kunwar, 2024). The findings also show that adversity inside Child Reform Homes isn't only tied to children's past experiences but keeps getting shaped by the institutional setting and those broader systemic failures. Even so, participants did use coping strategies such as silence, emotional withdrawal, peer support, singing, hope for family reunification, and they also held on to aspirations for a better future. Still, when you look closely, these answers seem more like ways to survive, rather than proof that the institution was truly rehabilitative, or even fully healing. If viewed through Ungar's resilience framework (2013, 2018), adversity can be seen as something that is produced socially and institutionally, where resilience hinges on whether children can reach meaningful protective resources, and whether the systems around them respond in a humane and useful way. In this study, several protective systems, timely justice, safe institutional environments, trauma-informed care, educational continuity, and effective supervision are insufficiently responsive. Because of that, young people had to negotiate their adversity mostly through their own coping mechanisms, sometimes at a cost. So, the study suggests that adversity in Child Reform Homes is both personal and structural. Yes, children show remarkable perseverance in the face of emotional pain, institutional neglect, and constant uncertainty, but their accounts also highlight how urgent it is for child justice systems to do more than manage cases. They need to actively build safe, supportive, and rehabilitative environments that can genuinely promote recovery and support successful reintegration into society.

CHAPTER VI

REINTEGRATION PREPARATION

This chapter articulates how children in Child reform homes (CCH) in Bhaktapur, Sanothimi are being prepared mentally with institutional help for reintegration into society and in their own family, after release from child reform home. It analyses themes developed and interpreted in relation to the narrations of the participants in relation to the third research question, “*How are these children prepared to lead their life ahead after they are released from CCH?*”. The chapter delved into the institutional system, how the structural operation contributes the preparation to the readiness of rehabilitation of the participants equipping them with educational opportunities, vocational skills, and emotional readiness.

This chapter is organized into the following sections: preparation of young people for life after release from Bhaktapur CCH; emotional resilience as survival preparation; hope, aspiration, and future orientation; and summary and synthesis.

Preparation of Young People for Life After Release from Bhaktapur CCH

The study showed that young people who lived in Bhaktapur Child Correction Home used their time at the facility to prepare themselves for life after their institutional period ended. The youths at the reform home wanted to transform their lives through education, employment, skill training and family relationships. The young people experienced dual emotions because they faced anxiety about getting accepted in society and being judged by others. The young people's ability to reintegrate into society depended on institutional practices and their personally developed resilience and coping methods with future goals and survival skills they possibly had learnt during their stay in reform home.

During conversation with the social workers, the children are given training for vocational training like candle making, incense preparation, and garland, to support themselves after release from Child Reform homes. These training courses were given to mostly girls. For boys mechanical training, driving, plumbing and electrician training are given with enrollment in School of Child Correction home

Supporting the conversation, Jasse said:

I am learning bead weaving, making of incense, tailoring that I had never thought about. We are sometimes busy preparing different types of handicraft

materials like small chairs, paper houses, key rings, and other skill-oriented things. These tasks help us grow hands on abilities, which are useful for us, even after life at the center.

Continuing the discourse, I also asked and the participant replied. *“I think I can make money, after I am out this place.”* When I asked what have you thought to do once you are released from here, Ajay said *“I would like to do the Korean language training and go out of country if possible.”* I passed this information to the social worker. If they could provide the language teacher. Jasse said *“I will take some trainings”* *“I did nothing, I must stay here, but I am happy that I am learning many things”*. While talking to all the participants, they seem to be understanding about independence and importance of income generation and expressed satisfaction about the livelihood skills they were getting. Ajay felt that he feels responsible that man must be bread-earners of their family, as he stopped to study, and make garlands, to make money for family. Regular education with the board exams is provided to all these young girls and boys in the school within the Reform home premises. When I asked what would you want to do after you are released from here, to Babari, she said *“I like to play football, so if I can.”*

As mentioned in Meera et al., (2025) even though many participants said they wanted to become teachers, tailors, and drivers, those dreams seemed hard to reach while they were in the child reform home. Children Like Ajay want to learn foreign language but he is being training with mechanical trainings, that felt like the career guidance and rehabilitation work was less helpful to step back into society and family life, that created real pressure because of limited resources, and it reduced what they could get in terms of individualized care, education, vocational training and even psychological support. This matches what’s reported in Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Children in Conflict with Law in India (Meera et al., 2025), where it explained that weak infrastructure, overcrowding, and few rehabilitative services can quietly spoil reintegration. In practice it means fewer chances for education, fewer chances for learning skills, and less psychosocial help that children need for a smoother return. When conditions like this persist, reform homes can end up acting more like containment spaces than places for rehabilitation, self-development, and social reintegration.

In CCHs, the vocational and educational programs showed gendered division of labor at some point, as girls are given training in housekeeping and craft-based

skills that include sewing, candle making, and garland preparation, while boys are trained in the areas of mechanical, driving, plumbing, and other income-generating trades. This positioning of girls hinders their career exploration, limits their chances to build up sustainable living and pulls back their dreams of being liberated.

Additionally, factors like overcrowding, lack of resources, violence, and gender-based confinement during internal conflicts make matters worse, preventing girls from taking full advantage of education and vocational training. It is imperative to indicate that while reform homes provide some vocational and educational opportunities, scope is rather limited. As a result, many young people live in the reform home without skills and confidence, these circumstances may create more difficulty for them.

A qualitative study done by Hassan and Rosly (2021) involving 16 boys and girls from two Child approved Schools in Malaysia brought out the fact that vocational education is a major contributor to the rehabilitation of young offenders. In fact, these programs not only help them to better get along with the other inmates, but also support their rehabilitation, boost their self-esteem, and get them ready for a return to the community. Quite a few youngsters mentioned that they found vocational courses like baking and carpentry to be the most enjoyable activities of the day, and this was especially true for the ones who either had difficulties in regular classes or had already dropped out of school. The feeling of happiness, being useful, and the like of students rather than prisoners was experienced by those who attended classes which then made their stay in the institution more hopeful and normal.

The participants' experiences of preparing for life after release can be understood through Ungar's idea of resilience is shaped by access to meaningful resources and chances within one's social world, rather than something that sits only inside the individual (Ungar, 2013). What Jasse, Ajay, and Babari say about their aspirations shows a real sense of agency, hope, and future orientation... like they're trying to steer through hardship and craft better, more constructive identities even while being involved with the justice system. Still, Ungar (2018) insists that resilience relies not just on personal capabilities, but on how well the broader systems respond to young people's needs and hopes. So, in this view, vocational training education, and skill-development activities inside the child correction home can work as resilience promoting resources, because they may strengthen self-esteem, improve employability and support social reintegration. At the same time, the gap between

what the children want to do career-wise and what training is offered, limited resources, and the periodic interruptions to educational access cracks in how strong the institutional set up is for positive adaptation. Even so, the participants did show resilience through their willingness to learn, pick up skills, and imagine better futures, but their reintegration in the end hinges on whether the institution can deliver fair, significant, and individualized opportunities that genuinely align with their aims. In other words, resilience came from more than just determination, it seemed to be produced by how young people's inner strengths interacted with institutional structures that either helped them move forward or quietly held them back,

Emotional Resilience as Survival Preparation

Building emotional resilience for the young people in child correction home is a crucial part of preparation. Young people develop coping strategies for handling trauma, loneliness, and shame through peer support, counseling, and activities such as singing, dancing and drawing. For example, Jasse found solace in singing to divert her mind so that she does not harm herself, which defines resilience as a form of survival. Such emotional strategies are crucial for self-regulation and psychological readiness to reenter society.

I remember during my visit to Doti Child Correction Home, chief of the reform home said even though the young offender appears in exam their results come as “absent”. It is imaginable, that this will add emotional damage to the young people living in Child Correction Home under so much pressure. I feel that this may be one point that accumulates less trust towards the system and contributes towards building the feeling of being excluded from the normal society, even if the young offenders in child reform home wants to correct themselves and move on to the correctional path/right path. It looked like resilience in this context, however, is reactive rather than fostered; it results from hardship rather than from methodical psychosocial growth. As a result, the CCH encourages endurance rather than necessarily empowerment as (Bouler & Bibbs, 2026) in their study among the resilience of Black youth.

The young people interviewed living in Bhaktapur Child Reform Home are positive and are thinking about their education and future job opportunities. The boys see themselves in technical jobs and the girls in teaching or tailoring. But the initiation of these children does not have proper career counseling, vocational linkages, and systematic reintegration support that seem to make their wishes weak

and entirely dependent on personal strength and no institutional support. The research confirms that young people in CCHs become emotionally strong using different ways like peer support, counseling, art music and other life skills like yoga which allow them to cope with trauma and mentally get ready for reintegration. But this strength is mostly reactive, formed by difficulties instead of structured psychosocial support, thus there is a focus on endurance rather than true empowerment.

The way emotional coping strategies showed up among the young people in the child correction home can be read using Ungar's view of resilience, like it is something that keeps coming out through those interactions between the individuals and the social surroundings, not like it is a fixed personal trait (Ungar, 2013). In other words, things such as singing, drawing, dancing, and reaching out to peers for support seemed to help participants deal with trauma, loneliness, shame, and all that uncertainty. It also shows that resilience is not just "in the self" but it gets negotiated through what resources are close by in their everyday context. So Jasse using singing to avoid self-harm, can be seen as a survival-oriented reaction to hardship, helping her stay emotionally steady even while the setting is restrictive. Still, Ungar (2018) also maintains that "systemic resilience" needs the institutions to offer steady opportunities, acknowledgment, and supportive structures that actually help positive adaptation happen. The fact that some children were marked "absent" even though they were sitting for exams, seems to point to a broader systemic shortfall. That kind of failure can weaken their sense of achievement, belonging, and trust in social systems. And if the practice is like that, it can push exclusion and stigma forward, which then blocks access to the social resources they would need for healthy development and later reintegration. From this angle, the resilience we see in these young people looks more reactive than

Hope, Aspiration and Future Orientation

The children show their desire to achieve a better future despite facing systematic limitations which control their efforts. All the participants expressed hope to continue education and secure decent life after release from Bhaktapur child reform home.

Boys envision themselves working in technical or intellectual careers while girls easily access soft technical jobs which include tailoring and teaching. According to United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2021), the students need

structured support which includes career counseling and vocational linkages and community reintegration strategies to strengthen their dreams.

The participants demonstrate strong resilience through their aspirations to become teachers, drivers, tailors and mechanics. Supporting the discourse, Chowbe and Mahale (2022) stated that their wish for societal progress through personal development while worrying about social stigma while they doubt their acceptance in family and community after release. The process of preparing for their future looks like conflict between what they want to accomplish and what institutions ignore.

The children acquire their motivation from personal determination instead institutional assistance. The absence of organized post-release monitoring prevents successful reintegration which happens through individual efforts instead of planned initiatives. The young people identified with a lack of career counselling and systematic reintegration programs while conversing with them.

The participants' aspirations for education, employment, and a meaningful future could be read using Ungar's resilience theory. In that framing, resilience is a moving, not fixed, process that comes from how a person's own agency meets the supportive social and institutional resources around them (Ungar, 2013). The young people's hopes, like becoming teachers, mechanics, drivers, tailors and other professionals, show resilience through future orientation, a sense of self-efficacy, and a stubborn determination to rebuild their lives even after they have had to face adversity, stigma, and institutionalization. Still, Ungar (2018) notes that resilience cannot be kept alive by personal strengths by themselves. It also requires systemic resilience, meaning institutions have to offer fair access to resources, chances, and supportive relationships that help young people adapt in constructive ways. In this study, even if participants displayed real motivation and optimism, a few gaps mattered. There was no individualized career counselling, limited gender-equitable vocational opportunities, insufficient structured monitoring after release, and not much in terms of community reintegration support. These factors likely made it harder for aspirations to turn into achievable outcomes. So overall, their resilience seemed to be carried mostly by their own determination, rather than being reinforced by coordinated institutional responses. This interpretation also leans into Van Breda's (2001) strengths-based viewpoint, but with a sharper angle: personal capacities like hope, confidence, and problem-solving can be important, yet they do not go far enough unless systems recognize and respond to young people's developmental

needs. Because of that, successful reintegration should be understood as a negotiated back and forth between resilient young people and resilient institutions.

The Secretariat organized a training program in 2020 which trained social workers and child psychologists to improve their abilities to track and support young people who were being reunified with their families and communities. The monitoring process showed that the reintegrated youth suffered from severe stress and psychological distress because he had to support his entire family as the only income provider which demonstrated the financial and emotional difficulties that young adults experience after their release from care.

It looked that staying hopeful and adapting positively despite challenges, that included confidence in oneself (Self-efficacy), believing one has control over life events, staying strong and motivated align with theory of resilience. Van Breda (2001) says in her article that theory of resilience in social work puts emphasis on the positive aspects of the individual and their capabilities to cope, thus pointing out the changing connection of the profession with resilience through the strength's perspective and narrative and solution-focused therapies.

Summary and Synthesis

The findings indicate that children in the Bhaktapur Child Correction Home are prepared for life after release through education, vocational training, emotional coping strategies, and aspirations for future employment. Participants valued opportunities to learn practical skills such as tailoring, handicrafts, mechanical work, and formal education, believing these would help them become financially independent after release. However, the preparation remained limited by inadequate career guidance, gender-stereotyped vocational training, insufficient resources, and the absence of structured reintegration planning. These findings are consistent with previous studies (Hassan & Rosly, 2021; Meera et al., 2025), which suggest that vocational education enhances self-esteem, employability, and rehabilitation, while weak institutional infrastructure restricts successful reintegration. The findings also support UNICEF (2021), which emphasizes that effective reintegration requires career counselling, vocational linkages, and community-based support beyond institutional care. Interpreted through Ungar's Theory of Resilience (2013, 2018), the children's resilience is shaped not only by their personal determination but also by the availability of meaningful social and institutional resources. Although participants demonstrated hope, agency, and emotional resilience through coping mechanisms

such as peer support, music, art, and future aspirations, these strengths were largely reactive to adversity rather than fostered through comprehensive psychosocial and reintegration services. Therefore, successful preparation for life after release depends on strengthening institutional support systems that provide individualized career pathways, emotional support, and coordinated post-release follow-up, enabling young people to translate their resilience into sustainable social reintegration.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter concludes the study by summarizing the main findings, presenting conclusion, discussing their implications, outlining the study's limitations, and presenting recommendations for policy, practice and future research.

Summarizing the Main Findings

Chapter I laid the base of the study, with explanation of the rationale, the background, the problem statement, the research questions, the significance, and the methodological positioning. It basically placed the study on the wider picture of Nepal's child justice system, which underlined a clear gap between what the law says in rehabilitative terms, and what children go through when they live in Child Correction Homes. In this sense, the chapter leaned on my personal reflections as well as my work experience which stressed that children in conflict with the law should not be seen only through their offences, because their lives are usually molded by tough childhood events, family instability, poverty, social exclusion, and the with the fact that opportunities are limited. Because of that, there is a need to look at their lived experiences using a narrative inquiry approach becomes something more than just logical the chapter also maintained that listening to children's stories matters, not only for improving rehabilitation and reintegration, but also for shaping preventive interventions that lower the chances of children ending up in the justice system in the first place. With the voices of young people in the Bhaktapur Child Reform Home, this study aims to add to scholarship, policy, and actual practice in child justice. It is meant to generate knowledge that ties individual experiences to the larger social, familial, and institutional conditions around them. Overall, this chapter positions the research as an attempt to support a more child-oriented, preventative, and rehabilitative justice approach, one that genuinely protects the best interests and rights of children in conflict with the law.

Chapter II critically reviewed the literature on children in conflict with the law by looking at how adverse childhood experiences, family surroundings, trauma, schooling, emotional neglect, and institutional care relate to child delinquency. Overall, it showed that children's participation in offensive behavior is seldom caused by just one single factor; it usually shows up from the mix of family instability,

poverty, abuse, social exclusion, limited educational chances, and weak support structures. The chapter also pointed out that even though child reform homes are meant to encourage rehabilitation and reintegration, many studies say the institutional setting often does not manage to meet children's emotional, psychological, and developmental needs in a proper manner. In that sense, the findings stress that it is more useful to understand children lived experiences rather than seeing them only through their offences. The chapter then laid out the theoretical and policy backbone of the study by bringing Resilience Theory, all within Nepal's child justice system. The review suggested there are noticeable gaps between the progressive legal and policy promises and how things work on the ground, especially when it comes to rehabilitation, psychosocial assistance, vocational preparation, and reintegration.

In addition, the literature highlighted a lack of qualitative research that truly captures what children in Nepalese Child Correction Homes say and feel. Because of these gaps, this study becomes necessary, it aims to interpret children's narratives and produce evidence that may support more child-centered policies, preventive interventions, and better rehabilitation practices within Nepal's child justice

Chapter III enlightens the methodological bases of the study, its philosophical assumptions, the research paradigm, and qualitative narrative inquiry style which used to explore the lived experiences of children who are residing in the Bhaktapur Child Correction Home. Under interpretivism, the study basically treated children's realities as something socially built, not just "given", emerging from how they interact with their family, the community, institutions and the wider socio-cultural environment. The chapter described the research place, how participants were selected, what data collection steps were done, plus the field reflections and analytical processes too, that highlighted how narrative inquiry worked to understand participants' experiences through time, connections, and specific locations. It also showed, in a more careful way, how the study-maintained trustworthiness and ethical integrity by explaining the techniques used for credibility, reflexivity, confidentiality, and protecting participant well-being, during the whole process. With depth interviews, observations, and those reflective fieldworks, the study managed to generate detailed stories that seem to hold the complexity in children's experiences before, during, and after institutional care. In general, this overall methodological setup gives a solid, somewhat rigorous foundation for interpreting the findings that come in later chapters, and it also

supports the study's relevance for child justice, rehabilitation, and narrative research, within the Nepalese context.

Chapter IV shows that the childhood experiences the young people talked about seemed like, less about the “one single bad moment” but more like “slow building of cumulative adversities”, that deposited gradually in the long duration of time in their past. Their narratives kept returning to broken family structures and emotional neglect, plus poverty, domestic violence, and education that got interrupted, there was also trauma, and limited access to supportive environments. Over time these factors seemed to raise the chances of conflict with the law.

The results align with, the study about adverse childhood experiences, ACEs, family instability and socio-economic stress as meaningful predictors of juvenile offending in Duncan and Menestrel (2019), in Alhowaymel et al. (2023), and as Paudel et al. (2026) depicts in their study. The findings also back Ungar's (2013, 2018), Resilience Theory, which basically claims resilience isn't just a personal trait; it is a moving process influenced by whether supportive family, educational, community and institutional resources are there. So, from this angle the participants were not “resourceless” in the sense of having no resilience, it's rather that their ability to cope was squeezed because the protective systems required for healthy growth were largely missing. Even then, their hopes about education, meaningful work, and better family relations show that resilience can show up, when supportive opportunities do arrive from my perspective, this chapter really reinforces that children in conflict with the law should not be viewed only by the offences they committed but by what happened in their lives before those offences. Their stories suggest that many entered the justice system after years of emotional needs, educational gaps, and social shortcomings that went unanswered. I think society often reacts only after children have been offended, and not before, which is something this study makes harder to ignore.

Chapter IV underscores that resilience among young people in the Bhaktapur Child Reform Home is not something simple or linear, and it is not just an individual. Rather it is constantly being negotiated, in that harsh mix of institutional routines and social realities, where things keep pulling against them. Most participants described ongoing emotional as well as psychological strain that seemed to come from family separation, trauma, delayed justice, peer exploitation, bullying, overcrowding, and what felt like an insufficient level of institutional support. Such pressures usually

eroded their emotional wellbeing and slowed down the whole rehabilitation process. Still, the young people managed to show resilience in multiple ways, not because everything was fine, but because they kept holding onto hope for reunification with their families. They also talked about education and employment goals, joining sports, music, vocational work, maintaining peer ties, and using personal coping methods like emotional regulation, and making sense of what happened to them.

These findings align with Ungar's (2013, 2018) Resilience Theory, which views resilience as a shifting interaction between the person and the social, cultural, and institutional resources around them, instead of treating resilience like some fixed personality trait. In a similar notion of work (Duncan & Murnane, 2019; Johnson et al., 2006; Kunwar, 2024; Tosouni, 2014) who also argue that when institutions fail on safety, trauma-informed care, timely justice, and psychosocial support, children's developmental outcomes tend to get weaker. Even if the child has inner strengths, the environment can still dampen progress during rehabilitation. I think resilience shown by these young people should not be taken as proof that the Child Reform Home is already sufficiently rehabilitative. Instead, it points to something else entirely, like strong determination, to keep surviving even with serious systemic gaps.

Chapter VI highlights that preparation for reintegration in the Bhaktapur Child Reform Home seem to lean toward rebuilding young people capacity to live usefully after release, through education, vocational training, emotional strengthening, and future hopes. The participants said, with some clear intensity, that they really want to keep studying, gain workable and employable skills, help their families again, and become economically self-reliant even with what they went through earlier. Still, the study also made visible several constraints in the reintegration process, like the lack of individualized career counselling, the gender stereotyped way vocational training is being offered, not enough psychosocial services, narrow educational options, and, importantly, no structured follow up after release. These outcomes match prior research (Hassan & Rosly, 2021; Meera et al., 2025; UNICEF, 2021), because those works also suggest that reintegration succeeds when it includes full vocational learning, career guidance, emotional support, and community-based services. Similarly, Ungar (2013, 2018) suggests that resilience gets stronger, not only because young people themselves try hard, but also because they have fair access to supportive educational, institutional, family, and community resources. Even so, while the participants did show hope, agency, and emotional resilience, those strengths appear

to be kept alive by their own determination than by any comprehensive support system from institutions. From my perspective, rehabilitation should not only be judged by whether children finish their sentence, or whether they collect a few vocational skills, but rather by whether they are truly ready to rebuild their lives with dignity after release from Child Correction home.

Conclusion

This study shows that the pathways of children in conflict with the law are often tied to cumulative adversities from earlier childhood, such as family instability, poverty, trauma, educational disruption. Using a narrative inquiry approach, the research makes clear that resilience is not static, it moves along, and it is formed through how children relate with family resources, institutional mechanisms, and community provisions. Even so, the participants still displayed hope, a stubborn will, and clear goals around education, work, and family reunification, but when it comes to rehabilitation and reintegration, their progress got squeezed by systemic issues, like justice that takes too long, insufficient psychosocial services, support that was not individualized enough, and follow up after release that stayed weak or inconsistent. The results basically point to the fact that correction for the young people or Children in conflict with the law should be more than just institutional confinement, it needs child-centered, trauma-informed, and rights-based interventions that strengthen the protective systems before, during, and after institutional care. With the stories of young people in the Bhaktapur Child Reform Home, this study adds evidence for strengthening Nepal's child justice system, and it also underlines that real rehabilitation, and a steady reintegration are possible only when families, institutions, communities, and policymakers coordinate. Then, every child can have a real chance to rebuild a dignified and productive life.

Implications

Based on the data sources, this research has concluded with meaningful findings that directly contribute to child protection. As mentioned in the conclusion, the research directly and indirectly has following implications.

Policy Implication

Formal education and vocational skills are found to be key in developing identities and helping the young people in reform homes to integrate as capable citizens when they are released. However, findings show that there lie other underlying problems such as bullying, psychological distress, and physical violence

inside reform homes. These needs to be addressed collectively through value education, counselling, legal guidance and proper regulation, so that a peaceful and sound learning environment is created.

The policies that provide uninterrupted education, availability of psychosocial services, and support for re-entry into society after institutionalization of the youth. Incorporating rehabilitation and inclusive educational strategies instead of punitive methods can assist in averting the long-term exclusion of these youths from society. Administration of Child Justice (Procedure) Regulation 2019 states that the districts court needs to dispose of children's cases in 120 days and alternative measures such as diversion and restorative can be implemented at the time of intake.

Overcrowding in the reform homes should be addressed as a way of overcoming the institutional and structural barriers by policy makers since it has been known to cause increased levels of stress, frustration, misbehavior and discipline problems among others. There should be creation of special units for dealing with the issue of substance abuse in the reform homes that will offer specialized medical and rehabilitation services to the children. Coordination between the judicial and forensic systems of justice should also be improved because laboratory results take time to reach the judges thus causing prolonged time in decision-making.

Policies that are realistic with the vision that of reducing number of Child reform home, rather than increasing; means policies that programmed to be more successful in prevention level and curative level. The Minimum Standard for the Child Correction home should be developed and implemented. The directive of Diversion and Restorative should be implemented from the point of entry wherever possible, by investigation officer, adjudication officer.

Practical Implications

The practitioners who deal with young people, like educators, social workers, counselors, and personnel in Child wards need to have open mind and listen to the voices of the young people. The police, courts and social services organizations which operate in the area face problems because they lack effective collaboration. I found that there lies a power hierarchy between staff and youths, and senior and junior youths. Due to which frequent conflict arises. It must be ensured that no one is discriminated against and everyone is treated equally and heard. These results emphasize the role of education as the main area for the positive identity growth of children. The practitioners who deal with young people, like educators, social

workers, counselors, and personnel in Child wards should utilize the approaches that are supportive and non-stigmatizing. The educational activities that give priority to emotional support, life skills, and self-esteem can play a major role in fighting against negative labeling and lessening the impact of social and economic difficulties. The training of the workers on the front line is critically needed to make sure that the practices in the institutions foster rehabilitation instead of hardening the deviant identifiers.

Theoretical Implications

This study leaned on sociological theories, to make sense of what young people in Child correction Homes have gone through when they were out of justice system, how they end up in conflict with the law, and how they are building themselves up to return to their community. Taken together, these ideas point towards how structural inequalities, social reactions, family environments, internal emotional states, and institutional practices all play a role in shaping child behavior, which basically suggests that people can move toward deviant or illegal conduct when socially valued aims like education, belonging, financial security, dignity, become hard to reach through normal legitimate channels. In the end, these circumstances tend to trigger frustration and hopelessness, also they block aspirations and that makes it easier for risky or delinquent behavior to show up. So, the study demonstrates that structural disadvantages and unmet developmental needs can directly feed children offending.

This framing also advances Ungar's resilience theory. While Ungar focuses on resilience as access to and navigation of resources, findings of this suggest that children's resilience is not just negotiated with what resources are there, but it's also pushed along or held back by when those resources show up, how strong the support is, and whether it stays steady across their life course. This is a meaningful conceptual addition, because it shows resilience doesn't appear at all at once, it develops through pathway, from piled up adversity, to encounters within institutions, and then back into reintegration, and each little stage shapes what comes next.

The results suggest that social stigma, the way institutions treat people, rejection, and even weak community acceptance may widen emotional distance. And once that happens, the risk of secondary deviance tends to rise. Overall, the accounts show that societal reactions have a strong effect on self-percept. Even in continuous unfavorable circumstances, resilience is found where individuals amid limited

opportunities build in a hope of creating new lives after release through their adaptability.

Cumulative Adversity to Negotiated Resilience Theory ties things together since it plugs three research questions into one overall explanatory frame, and it makes the whole thing feel more coherent, not just scattered around. This framing also advances Ungar's theory. While Ungar focuses on resilience as access to and navigation of resources, my findings suggest that children's resilience is not just about the resources that are around for them, but also about when those resources land, how much assistance they actually get, and if that help keeps going, over time. In other words, this creates a fresh perspective, like resilience does not magically show up all at once. It's more like it builds bit by bit as children go through experiences that stack up, and they keep receiving steady, long-term support along the way. This is a meaningful conceptual addition, because it shows resilience doesn't appear at all at once—it develops through a kind of pathway, from piled up adversity, to encounters within institutions, and then back into reintegration, and each little stage shapes what comes next.

Limitations

This research focuses on five young people of Bhaktapur Child reform home; therefore, it involves limited numbers of cases that may not cover everyone's experiences and story. Going into society and family of these children may not be possible for scrutiny of the information received from the children. Hence the research might not fully reflect all the socio-cultural differences of the lives of these children.

For Future Research

The future research is likely to follow the conclusions and will focus on investigating the longitudinal effects of educational interventions on youth identity development. Besides, the research can be conducted in parallel contexts or involve the opinions of parents, teachers, and government officials to be able to explore the topic deeply to know the role of the system in youth resilience and social reintegration.

Moreover, I wished to visit the participants who had already left the Child correction home and wanted to know about their life after Correction home, Therefore, I think there should be thorough research for the returnee into society, and the one who comes again into the correction home means research in recidivism.

Chapter Summary

This chapter summarized the main findings of the study, presented the conclusions, discussed the policy, practical, and theoretical implications, and acknowledged the study's limitations and offered future research possibilities. Overall, the study highlights the need for a child-centered and rehabilitative approach to strength Nepal's child justice system.

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