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Analyzing Students' Achievement for Informing Educational Policy Development in Nepal

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Abstract

Using a quantitative research design, this study examines the level of students' accomplishment in Nepalese schools and compares school-level achievement to the national average. The study studies students' diversity factors such as gender, province, ecological zone, and the effect of bullying on academic achievement. To guarantee national representative, schools were chosen from every province in the Federal Nepal using a multi-stage sampling technique. The results show that the average achievement score is 43, which is lower than the 45-point national average. The study finds that a number of variables, including consistent homework completion, parental academic support, economic status, and assertiveness in the classroom, are associated with students' academic achievement. These findings have implications for policy and action as well as a more comprehensive view of the opportunities and problems facing Nepal's school-level educational system. The study recommends that embarking upon a systemic, holistic approach devoted to identifying life skills, experiential learning, and inclusive practices. It also recommends to draw the expertise of school head teachers and parents to improve student outcomes.

Keywords**:** *Students' achievement, diversity, quality crisis, topography*

Introduction

The Himalayan country Nepal is the resident of about 29 million people with a variety in terms of land topography, cultural, and language diversity. Nepal is divided into seventy-seven districts with seven provinces. The education system of Nepal is structured into basic and high school levels. According to the data available, a total of 34,743 institutes has 4,401,780 pupils studying from 1-5 grades. Also, a total of 6,230,131 pupils from 1-8 grades. Further, a total of 896,919 graders from 9-10 and 3,596 institutions with 415,343 pupils in grades 11-12 (Ministry of Education Science and Technology [MOEST], 2018). In school education, one-fifth of institutions are run by persons usually called private or institutional institutions, and the rest are community institutions i.e., are funded by the government (Education Review Office [ERO], 2015). Literacy rates and school enrolment in Nepal have improved noticeably as per the censure report 2021 (Central Bureau of Statistics [CBS], 2021), reflecting the country's ongoing efforts to expand access to education and enhance educational outcomes across various socio-economic and geographic groups. To improve general school education, the Nepal government has launched numerous intercessions like a broader extension of schools, providing enticements for female and

Dalit students as well as for needy students (MOEST, 2018). Also, the Nepal government made provisions for alternative educational programs; waiving tuition emolument and distributing schoolbooks and workbooks for the pupils reading at community institutions.

Likewise, professional development training, support systems, school supervision, feedback, and other related packages are ingrained within the system to improve the school system throughout Nepal (Acharya, 2020; Thapa, 2015). Attempts made like improving the child-friendly school environment, knowledge of good touch and bad touch, and abandonment of corporal punishment programs are also activities done by the Government of Nepal (ERO, 2013). This situation of education in the public schools in Nepal is now rising the question. In this wretched condition, the MoEST, Nepal government must implement the mechanism of evaluating students' attainment and performance, supervise schools and provide feedback, implement the norms of reward and punishment, and provide feedback to increase overall academic excellence must (Regmi, 2019). To review the system and students' achievement in school education throughout the country, the Nepal government made a separate Education Review Office (ERO) in 2010 BS. ERO has been shepherding the National Assessment of Student Achievement (NASA) in several grades and subjects of school education since 2011 (ERO, 2013; 2015).

As recommended in the School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) prepared by the government of Nepal, ERO has conducted the National Assessment of Students Achievement (NASA) for Grade 8 in 2017 and has the plan to complete run NASA for grade 5 and grade 10 in 2018 and 2019, respectively. Since 2011, ERO has conducted NASA to study and report student achievement in various grades within a specific time interval. NASA studies are designed for students' achievement in different grades in school education in Nepal. This study aims to evaluate students' academic performance in Nepali schools. The study specifically intends to investigate two major questions: first, it investigates the differences in student accomplishment between community and institutional schools across the nation. Second, the study looks at and contrasts students' academic performance in Nepali schools that are located in both rural and urban locations.

Methodology

To guarantee a representative selection of schools from each province in the Federal Nepal, the study used a multi-stage sampling technique. The sampling plan was carefully crafted, accounting for regions within each province that shared comparable geographical or ecological traits. In the first stage, provinces were selected as primary strata. In the second stage, districts within each province were randomly chosen. In the third stage, schools were selected from the sampled districts using stratified or random sampling, ensuring representation based on type (public/private), location (urban/rural), and level (basic/secondary). This approach allowed for diverse and balanced data collection across the country. Districts were randomly selected within each category that was created by classifying them according to similar geographical criteria in order to increase the sample's variety and inclusive. The total population was split into seven strata, which stood in for provinces with comparable topographies, such as Tarai, Mountain, Hill, and Kathmandu Valley.

The total number of pupils enrolled in schools throughout Nepal makes up the research population for this study. Schools were chosen as the main sampling units in order to choose participants due to the study's broad scope. The pupils who are expressly enrolled in Nepalese schools for the 2016–17 academic year grades eight through twelve is the population of the study. Public and private educational institutions are included in the target population for this study. Schools from the Mountain, Hill and Terai regions are included in the scope of this research, which provides the background for an extensive analysis of student accomplishment. A key component

of the research methodology is the use of multi-stage sampling, which involves choosing seven provinces from each of the three main ecological regions Mountain, Hill, and Tarai. This tactical approach makes it possible to conduct a representative and methodological sampling procedure that captures the diversity found in Nepal's educational environment.

The rigorous screening procedure guarantees that the results of the study can be applied to the larger student body in Nepal. Schools cover grade eight to twelve, the study aims to provide light on students' academic achievement in a variety of public and private educational environments. The use of multi-stage sampling, in particular ecological region-based stratification, improves the study's capacity to take geographic variability into account and permits a more in-depth examination of trends in student accomplishment. This methodological rigor guarantees that the research findings make a significant contribution to the comprehension of Nepali educational dynamics and may help guide focused measures aimed at improving the nation's overall educational standard.

Results and Discussion

From the study it was found that the students' achievement in the school is different in different grades. The highest score is for grade nine and grade twelve, with an achievement score of forty-eight each (Fig. 1). The overall average achievement score of boys is 43 whereas it is less i.e., 35 for girls. The grade-wise score shows that the maximum achievement score was obtained by the students of grade nine i.e., 49 among boys and least score is 28 for the girls in grade eight. The overall result shows that the boys performed better in comparison with the girls from grades eight to twelve grades in the schools in Nepal.

The student's achievement of the mountain is 21 percent, hill 29 percent, terai 27 percent

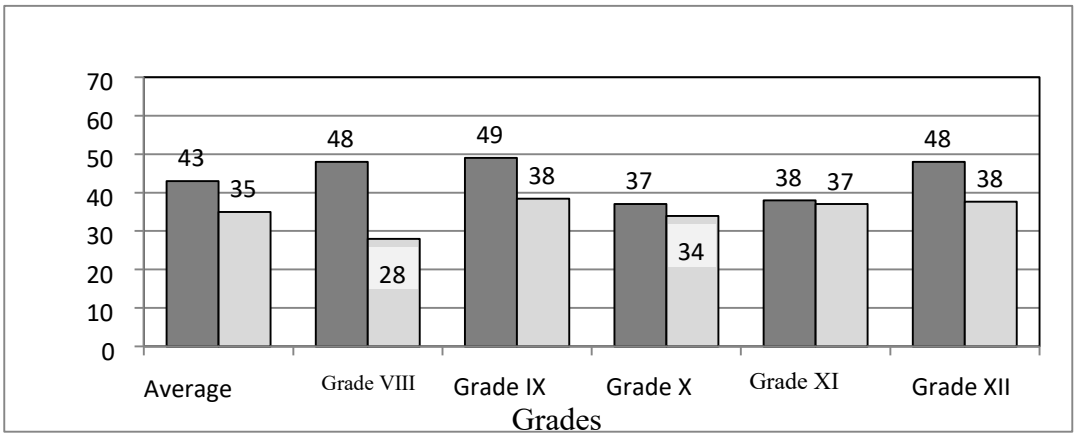

Figure 1. *Achievement Scores of Students*

and the Kathmandu valley is 53 percent. It shows that the students of Kathmandu valley have highest achievement scores i.e. 53% mean score and that of the terai have the lowest i.e., 21% mean score (Fig. 2). The result shows that the students of Kathmandu valley have done a better performance than that of three ecological regions in Nepal.

Students' Achievement by School Types

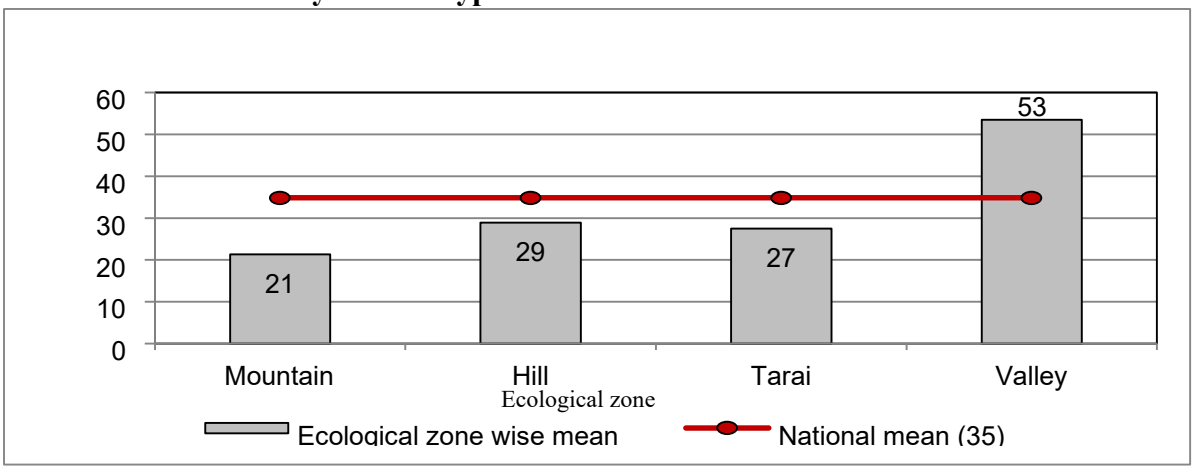

Figure 2. *Students Achievement on Ecological Belt and Kathmandu Valley*

Student achievement in public schools in Nepal achieves below 30 percent whereas it is higher in institutional schools. It shows that the student's attainment in institutional schools is comparatively more than that of the public schools in Nepal (Fig. 3).

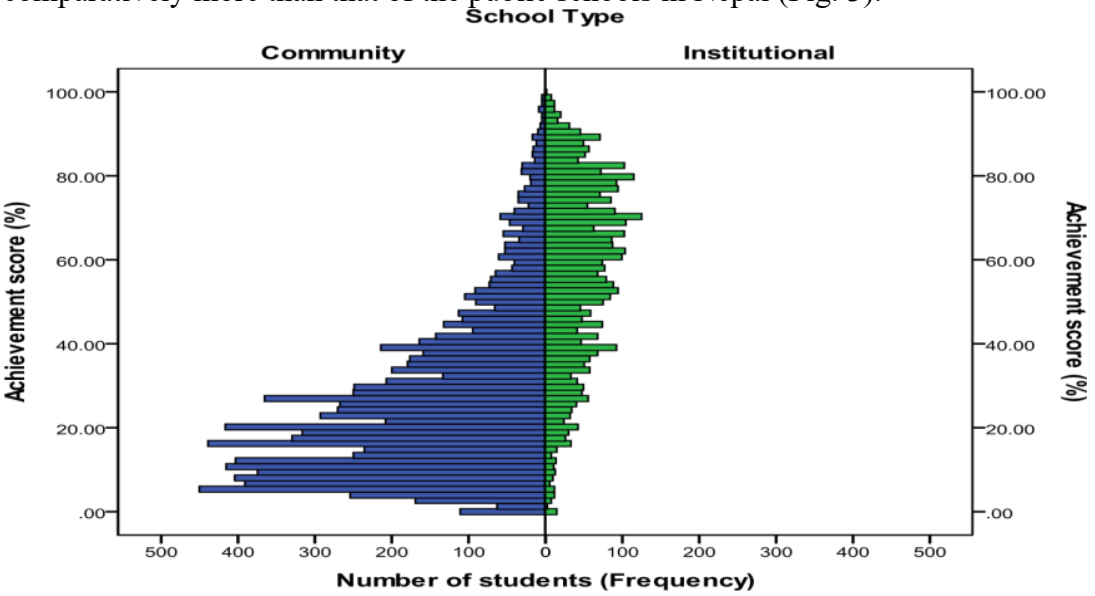

Figure 3. *Student Achievement by School Types*

Schools of Nepal are divided into public (government funded) and private (private funded). The mean achievement scores of the students studying in community schools is 26 whereas it is 57 in the institutional schools. It shows that the achievement scores of students in private is more than double in comparison of the students studying in public schools in Nepal (Table 2).

Table 1. Students Achievement in Private and Public Schools

School Types	N	Mean
Community	10,332	26
Institutional	3,934	57
Total	14,266	35

The information in Table shows on how well pupils in public and private schools perform academically when they are divided into community and institutional. Community schools have mean accomplishment ratings of 26, which suggests that they perform academically less than institutional schools, which have a substantially higher mean score of 57. The educational differences between the two school types in the context are highlighted by this significant discrepancy. The combined mean achievement score for public and private schools is 35, which indicates a reasonable performance level. The large difference in mean scores between community and institutional schools begs more research into the causes of this discrepancy and calls into question the effectiveness of the current educational frameworks.

Upon deeper inspection, the data shows that there are significantly more kids attending community schools (10,332) than institutional schools (3,934). In community schools, there are more students enrolled, but the average achievement level is still much lower. This draws attention to possible resource inequities or structural issues that could be lowering the standard of instruction in community schools. Conversely, institutional schools have a substantially higher mean accomplishment score, suggesting a potential advantage in terms of educational quality, despite having a smaller student body. In order to create a more equitable and inclusive education system and guarantee that all children, regardless of the type of institution they attend, have access to high-quality education, it becomes important to address the educational gap between community and institutional schools.

Student Attainment in Schools by Location

Schools in Nepal located in village areas have very lower achievement scores (mean value 28). It is almost double in the schools of city areas (mean value 52).

Table 2. Student Achievement in Rural and Urban Schools

Type of school	N	Mean
Rural	10,308	28
Urban	3,958	52
Total	14,266	35

Student Achievement in Various Language Groups

From this study, it is found that the students who speak the Nepali language, and those non-Nepali speakers have different achievement scores. The mean achievement score of the students who speak the Nepali language is 37 percent whereas it is only 28 for those who are Non-Nepali speakers.

Table 3. Student Achievement in Various Linguistic Clusters

Linguistic Clusters	N	Mean	SD	SE
Language Nepali	12009	37	24.9	0.2
Language non-Nepali	2557	28	20.9	0.3

The achievement score of students who speak the Nepali language seems better than those who speak the non-Nepali language. The difference between them is seen by 9 percent (Table 4). There are notable discrepancies in the data on student accomplishment across different language groupings. With 10,453 pupils, the Nepali language cluster has a mean achievement score of 37, a standard deviation of 24.9. By comparison, the language cluster that does not include Nepal, which has 4,047 pupils, has a mean accomplishment score that is lower at 28, along with a standard deviation of 20.9 and a somewhat larger standard error of 0.3.

Table 4. Students Achievement among Language/ Ethnicity Diversity

Language/Ethnicity	N	Mean	SD
Newari	282	47	23.9
Gurung	78	32	13.8
Tamang	587	32	19.5
Magar	260	27	18.3
Limbu	133	23	16.0
Tharu	328	22	17.1
Sherpa	53	22	21.5
Rai	47	20	14.1
Others	2268	27	20.9
Nepali	10453	37	24.9

Table 5 shows that about fifty percent achievement level is shown by the students of the Newari-speaking category in comparison with other linguistic groups. Students belonging to the Rai ethnicity group secured twenty percent in school achievement. In the same way, students from Sherpa language groups secured more than one-fifth percentage i.e., 22%, and Limbu got one percent more in comparison with the Newari students. Further, Gurung and Tamang students secured the same achievement score i.e., thirty-two percent (Fig. 4). Significant differences can be seen in the data on student accomplishment across various linguistic and ethnic groupings. With a mean achievement score of 47, Newari students top the list, followed by Nepali pupils, who had a mean score of 37. Students from the Tharu and Rai ethnic groups, on the other hand, have mean scores that are lower, at 22 and 20, respectively. The standard deviations show variations in the distribution of accomplishment scores within each ethnicity, as do the other group variances. This information highlights the need of taking linguistic and ethnic diversity into account when developing educational initiatives. It also highlights the necessity for focused interventions to reduce inequalities and guarantee a more welcoming learning environment for students from different backgrounds.

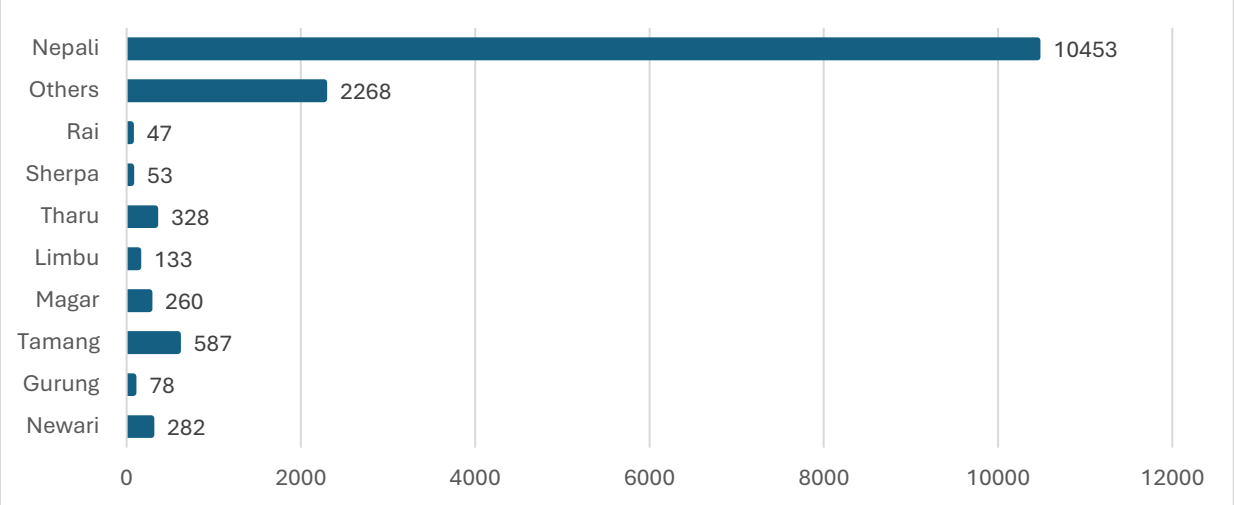

Figure 4. *Castes of Students and Achievement*

Students Achievement of Ethnicity

It is found that the achievement of Dalit students is very low i.e., 24 mean value. The highest score was obtained by the students of Brahmin/Chhetri ethnicity (mean score of 40).

Table 5. Ethnicity and Students Achievement

Ethnicity/caste	N	Mean
Brahman/Chhetri	5330	40
Janajati	5051	36
Dalit	1428	24
Madhesi	1302	29
Minorities	38	28
Others	698	37
Total	13847	35

Other ethnic groups like Janajati, Madhesi, minorities, and others have the mean value of 36, 29, 28, and 37 respectively (Table 6).

Analysis of the student's achievement scores as per the ecological regions, students of the Terai region of Nepal did better than that of the hill and mountain regions in all the ecological regions. The lowest achievement was secured by the students of the mountain region of the mid-western development region (mean value of 10).

Table 6. Ecological Regions and Student Achievement

Ecological Zones	Eastern	Central	Western	Mid-western	Far-western	Valley	Total
Mountain	14			10	24		20
Hill	20	28	26	20	21		23
Tarai	23	27	23	14			22
Valley						41	41
Total	22	27	25	19	23	41	24

In the similar vein, grade wise comparison of the achievement score of students studying in the schools in Nepal, the highest score was obtained by 9 graders whereas the score of the students studying in grade 12 have the lowest score (Fig. 5). The information regarding student achievement and gender paints a complex picture. Boys perform better than girls, with a little lower mean score of 33 and a similar standard deviation of 24.0. Boys have an average achievement score of 38 and a standard deviation of 24.2. On the other hand, the mean achievement score for boys and girls as a whole is 35, indicating a moderate level of academic competence. In order to guarantee equal educational opportunities and outcomes for all students, regardless of gender, a closer examination of contributing factors and the development of targeted strategies are necessary. The comparatively higher mean score for boys raises questions about potential gender-based differences in educational outcomes.

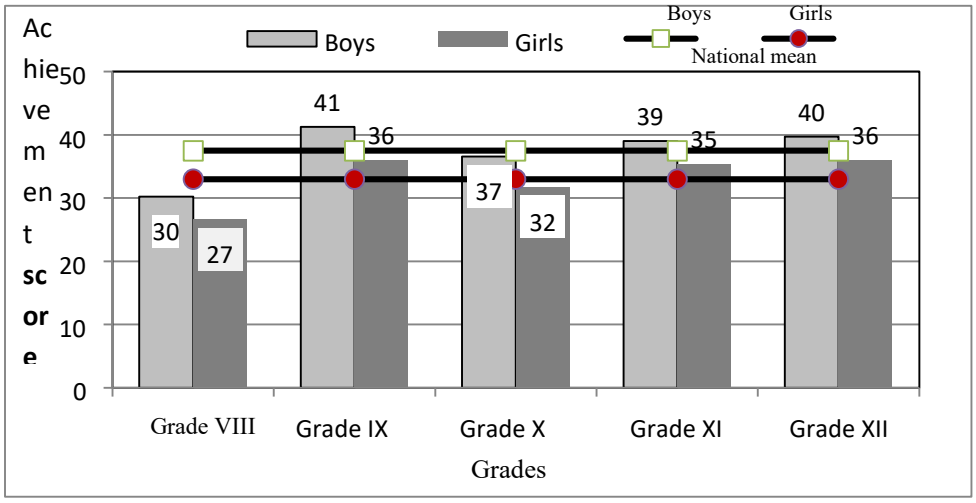

Figure 5. *Grades and Achievement Score*

From this study, it was found that Brahmin boy students scored the highest (42%) whereas Dalit girl students scored the lowest (23%) (Fig. 6).

Gender and Ethnicity/ Caste

The result shows that Brahmin/ Chhetri students have the highest achievement score i.e., 42% for boys and 37% for girl students. The minimum score secured by the Dalit students. Dalit boys have an achievement score of 25% whereas it is only 23% for girl students. Boys from Janajati ethnicity and that of Madhesi were the same i.e., 34% of each. The overall achievement score of boys is 38% and that of girl students is 33% (Fig. 6).

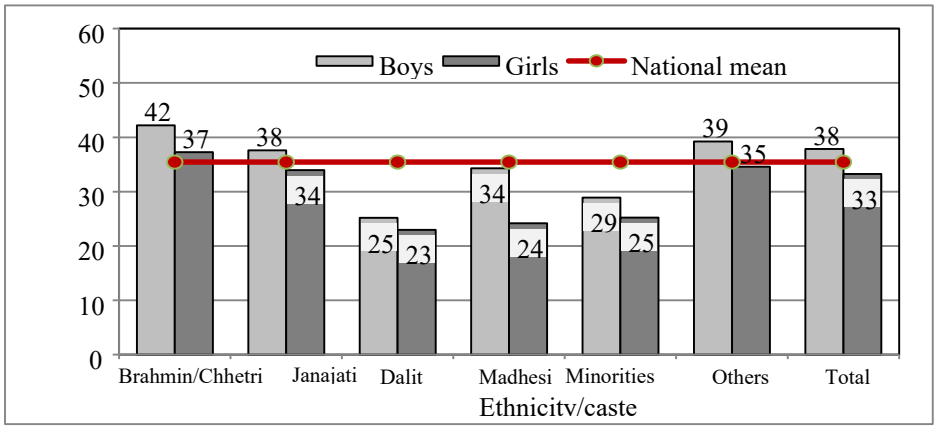

Figure 6. *Ethnicity and Achievement*

Bullying and Students' Achievement

Following questions are asked to know the condition of bullying of students and their achievement scores in schools throughout Nepal. The most common type of bullying is stealing goods like pencils, pens, tiffin, books, and copies in the class. 24.7% of students said that one of these items are stolen from the class. Moreover, 15.7% of students said that friends call them bad

names i.e., nicknames during school hours. Physical and mental hurt type of bullying was experienced by 14.3% of students in schools in Nepal.

Table 8. Types of Bullying in the School

Type of Bullying	No (%)	Yes (%)
Something was stolen like a pencil, pen, meal, copy, and books.	75.3	24.7
Calling me with nicknames and friends laugh.	84.3	15.7
Hurt by other students.	85.7	14.3
Friends do not provide me with an opportunity to do work.	88.9	11.1
Friends did not provide me to share my opinion in group activities.	90.6	9.4

The information on the different kinds of bullying that occur in schools' sheds light on the

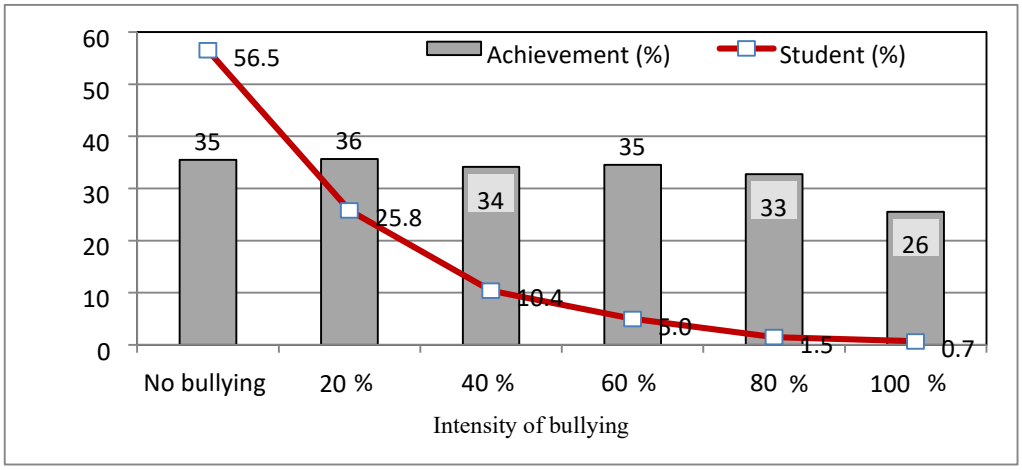

Figure7. *Diversity of Bullying*

range of abuse that students endure. The numbers show that some forms of bullying practices are worryingly common. Theft of personal property is the most often reported type, with 24.7% of students saying they have been involved in such cases. Mocking and name-calling come next, impacting 15.7% of pupils. Additionally, the research shows that a sizeable percentage of students (14.1%) report having been harmed by peers, and a sizeable percentage (11.1%) feel that their friends have excluded them from group activities. The high frequency of these actions highlights the necessity of an all-encompassing anti-bullying plan in educational settings. It is imperative to do a thorough analysis of the fundamental factors and patterns that give rise to these cases of abuse, put preventative measures in place, and cultivate an environment at school where pupils are treated with respect and tolerance. Furthermore, specialized interventions that target the types of bullying indicated by the data should be created in order to guarantee a secure and encouraging learning environment. In the case of bullying of students in the class and in the school hours, harassment is erratic in the schools. The relationship between bullying and students' achievement shows that bullying decreases students' achievement scores in schools in Nepal. The result shows that by increasing the intensity of bullying, students' achievement decreases (Fig. 7).

Discussion

This study indicates the veracity of the student's achievement in the schools in Nepal. The result of the extant study is in contour with Khanal et al., (2020) arguing that the achievement scores of students vary with gender as the girls are more sincere in study. In the same way, a study was done by Khanal and Ghimire, (2022) found challenges to increase students' performance as it is influenced by many factors such as geography, parents' occupation, bullying of children, medium of instruction, and the type of schools. Similarly, Hamlet et al., (2015), assertions that sanctioning pupils to performance, exertion and study definitely increase their achievement scores.

Also, Subedi (2003) further argues that engaging students in activities based on the curriculum assures higher scores. Skills improvement proved a significant role in increasing students' performance. Moreover, Joshi et al., (2022) found that students taught by female teachers attained ominously greater marks than those imparted by male instructors. Along the same line, Khanal et al., (2022) researched that accepting the background situation of principals at the institutions of Nepal can increase the excellence of learning. Likewise, creating a student-friendly classroom setting helps to increase pupils' achievement scores (Acharya, 2016; Subedi & Shrestha, 2020).

Furthermore, it is found that there are many challenges to promoting students' academic achievement in the schools in Nepal. This finding is in line with Joshi et al., (2022) argued that learners' sensation of proprietorship through hands-on actions is essential to foresee an effective increase in scores in different subjects. However, learning from the activities have an important role in obtaining better result (Acharya et al., 2020; Acharya, 2019; Thapa, 2015). Connecting the challenges and problems of the schools and the students, Bhattarai et al., (2009) said educational philosophies need to link up teaching and learning that help to connect schools to increase students' achievement scores. Similarly, Carney et al., (2017) suggest incorporating parents' experiences blended with the curriculum of various subjects in the school curricula in an integrated way to ensure better achievement. This paper is prepared by using the secondary data obtained from the reports published by the Education Review Office, Nepal. Further study is necessary to explore the causes of low and high achievement scores subject-wise through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions.

Conclusion

This study offers insightful information about the complexities of student accomplishment in Nepalese schools. Notably, the study is consistent with other research emphasizing the role that curriculum design, teacher qualities, and parental participation have in supporting academic performance. The study's challenges highlight the necessity of focused actions aimed at resolving inequities and improving overall educational attainment. Future studies should use qualitative techniques like focus groups and interviews to get deeper into the factors that determine achievement in a given subject. This study establishes the foundation for additional research and intervention techniques targeted at improving student achievement in Nepalese schools. It is based on secondary data from the Education Review Office (ERO) reports.

The study's findings highlight how diverse student accomplishment is in Nepalese classrooms. The results are consistent with earlier studies, showing that a number of environmental factors, parental education, and gender have a major impact on academic success. The study highlights the value of creating a supportive learning environment in the classroom and recognizes the influence of various factors on students' academic performance, including parental occupation, geography, bullying, and the medium of instruction. It supports the idea that implementing curriculum-based activities, helping kids acquire life skills, and designing classroom environments

that are welcoming to all students can have a good effect on academic results. The study does, however, also draw attention to the difficulties in encouraging academic success in Nepalese schools, pointing to the necessity of educational philosophies that close the gap between instruction and learning. Subsequent investigations including comprehensive interviews and focus group discussions are suggested to explore topic-specific elements impacting both high and low accomplishment scores.

Because of the study's dependence on quantitative approaches, it's possible that subtle qualitative elements that support student achievement is missed. Additionally, even though the study looks at a number of variables, there may be more elements that aren't fully understood because of how complex student accomplishment.

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