



**CHHAUPADI PRATHA**

**Analysing government policies to combat menstrual discrimination: Case Study of  
Shudrapaschim, Nepal.**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis investigates the impact of Chhaupadi pratha on the wellbeing of women and girls practising it in Nepal. Chhaupadi pratha has affected the health and wellbeing of women and girls, the educational and employment opportunities available to them and is one of cultural practices that has caused gender-based discrimination against them. Several initiatives have been taken by the government of Nepal to eradicate chhaupadi pratha but these had limited impact. This paper analyses the reasons for the limited impact of the policies and measures initiated by the government of Nepal in response to this traditional practice. A human rights-based framework, cultural relativism theory, and social norm theory have been mobilised for this purpose. The data was collected by applying primary and secondary methods of data collection. Interviews and a survey were conducted to gather primary data. Based on the research findings, recommendations have been formulated to ensure effective implementation of policies and measures for combating menstrual discrimination stemming from Chhaupadi .

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## Chapter 1 - Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction to the chapter

This chapter presents background information to the study as well as the research problem. The emphasis will be on establishing a foundation for the thesis statement and describing the problematic situation of Chhaupadi pratha as practiced in Nepal, which is explored in depth in this research. This chapter will also state the research objectives and questions, and explain the significance of the research.

### 1.2 Background of the research

This thesis investigates the impact of Chhaupadi pratha on the lives of Nepali women and the reasons for the ineffectiveness of the policies and measures of the Nepalese government for eradicating menstrual discrimination. Nepal is known for its cultural diversity and Chhaupadi pratha is still practised by several communities in Nepal as they consider it part of their culture and a way to preserve their tradition (Sharma & Gettleman, 2019; Forestry Nepal, 2021). Chhaupadi pratha is an expression of menstrual stigma and a period-shaming practice (Gautam, 2017). The practice banishes girls and women from their family homes during the menstruation cycle due to the deeply held belief that girls and women are impure during the menstruation period (Standing & Parkar, 2018). Chhaupadi pratha is a ritual that girls and women are compelled to undertake during menstruation (Kadariya & Aro, 2015). Women and girls are bound to stay in a chhaupadi gotha, a small hut which is away from their residential place. Chhaupadi gotha is an unpleasant place with poor living conditions, such as a lack of ventilation and lack of access to water and sanitation, thus basic hygiene (Rauniyar, 2021).



*Picture 1: A woman sleeping in a period hut*

*Source: (Adhikari, 2019)*

This practice is still exercised in numerous communities, predominantly in Hindu communities, but also among Janajati, Chhetri, Brahmin and Dalits. The traditional practice is commonly prevalent in far and mid-western Nepal. Girls and women are considered unclean, untouchable, and impure during the menstrual cycle. The practice stems from the embodiment of the core idea of 'purity' (suddha or Chokho) versus 'pollution' (asuddha or Jutho) that is prevalent in the Hindu religion and society (Singh, 2019).

According to Thakuri et. al. (2021), it is a detrimental religio-cultural practice existing for centuries that prohibits girls and women to take part in daily activities. It is a centuries-old custom that prohibits girls and women from touching other people or objects during their menstruation. During the menstruation cycle, girls and women thus are subjected to several constraints, including sleeping in a different bed, not eating, or having to sit with family members, not touching water sources, and not participating in religious actions.

Staying in the chhaupadi hut makes women and girls suffer from cold and isolation and puts them at risk of diseases and illness (The Kathmandu Post, 2019). Living away from home and in a shed can also impact the mental and physical well-being of girls and women (Thapa & Aro, 2021). They are vulnerable during this stay as they may get attacked by snakes and other animals. The health of adolescent girls gets severely impacted because of this practice (Gautam, 2017). According to Adhikari (2020), in the Achham district, West Nepal only, 14 cases of death in chhaupadi huts were reported in the last 10 years and these deaths were mainly due to suffocation and attacks by animals. In fact, many women and girls have lost their lives while practising chhaupadi. One such case is of an 11-year-old girl from Achham district, West Nepal who died of diarrhoea and dehydration in January 2010. This diarrhoea and dehydration were the results of her confinement in the shed during menstruation and her family and neighbours refused to take the girl to the hospital as they considered her impure and they believed that they would become impure upon touching the girl during her menstruation period (Morrison, et. al., 2018). During an interview in Dadeldhura an NGO worker reported that women and girls suffered from sexual abuse during their stay in chhaupadi sheds as drunkards sometimes go to these sheds (United Nations, 2011).

So, girls and women face fear and humiliation, poor menstrual hygiene practices, social absenteeism, and menstruation-related shame because of this practice (UN Women, 2017). It has been reported from the western hills of Nepal in the past that girls and women have faced human rights violations, health and psychological implications, and overall development has hindered (Action Aid UK, 2022). The traditional practice has also restricted girls and women from educational and employment opportunities (HNS, 2019). The impact of the practice on Nepali girls and women will be discussed in more detail later in this thesis in the literature section.

### 1.3 Statement of the problem

Menstruation is a natural phenomenon, but is still seen as a stigma in Nepal. It is critical to remove the stigma associated with menstruation to uplift the lives of girls and women (Shapiro, 2019). The government of Nepal took several initiatives to ensure that the rights of girls and women are not violated, in the form of laws, campaigns and policies. The Supreme Court of Nepal outlawed Chhaupadi pratha in 2005. In the year 2017, a law was passed in Nepal under which people involved in forcing girls and women into practising Chaupadi pratha have to pay a fine of 3000 Nepalese rupees or can be sentenced to up to three months in jail (Thakuri, et. al., 2021).

The non-profit organisation Restless Development Nepal, based in Patan, Nepal, has formed a partnership with the UN Trust Fund to educate adolescent people and dispel myths about the menstrual cycle in the societies in which they belong (Joshi, 2022). Directions were issued by Nepal's Ministry of Women, Child and Social Welfare in 2008 for eradicating chhaupadi on a national level. To raise public awareness, an initiative for the destruction of chhaupadi huts (where girls and women stay during the menstrual cycle) was launched by the government of Nepal (Shrestha, 2019).



*Picture 2: Police demolishing a chhaupadi shed in the rural area of Achham*

*Source: (Budha, 2020)*

Despite the outlaws formulated and fines and punishment imposed by the government, chhaupadi pratha is still practised. This reveals failures in the implementation of policies and initiatives to combat the traditional practice (Jullian et al., 2017) and the overall limited impact of the measures initiated by the government of Nepal.

This is a major cause of concern and an analysis of chhaupadi pratha and the reasons responsible for this practice and the failure of government responses can help to identify strategies and ways to eradicate menstrual discrimination stemming from chhaupadi (Cousins, 2019).

#### 1.4 Research objectives

There has been little research on the factors responsible for the limited effectiveness of government policies to eradicate Chhaupadi pratha, which has paved the way for this thesis on the chosen topic. The main objectives of this thesis are to analyse the impact of chhaupadi pratha on girls and women in Nepal, the reasons responsible for the continuation of this practice and for the limited impact of government measures. This analysis may help the government of Nepal to explore ways and initiatives to eradicate this practice. To collect data, primary and secondary methods will be used. Survey and interviews were conducted to collect primary data from menstrual activists, UNICEF staff member, government officials and community members engaged in practising chhaupadi for understanding the issue and coming up with suggestions that can help in filling the policy implementation gap.

The specific objectives of this research have been the following:

- To assess the impact of chhaupadi pratha on the girls and women practising it in Nepal using the human rights-based framework, cultural relativism theory, and social norm theory.
- To examine the reasons responsible for the limited effects of the initiatives and policies undertaken by the Nepali government. The analysis will also cover the impact of intersectionality (caste and class) that contributed to the limited effect of the initiatives and policies.
- To explore approaches that can be used by the government of Nepal for the successful initiation and implementation of policies and initiatives to eradicate chhaupadi pratha in the future.

#### 1.5 Research questions

The research questions formulated for this thesis are the following:

- How is chhaupadi pratha affecting the girls and women practising it in Nepal? This involves:
  - Analysing how chhaupadi pratha has affected the mental, physical, and psychological health of girls and women practising the pratha in Nepal
  - Analysing how chhaupadi pratha is contributing to gender-based discrimination in Nepal
  - Analysing how chhaupadi pratha impacts on the human rights of women and girls in Nepal and educational and employment opportunities available to them.
- Why did the policies and measures initiated by the government of Nepal have a limited impact on eradicating chhaupadi pratha? This involves:
  - Analysing the intersectionality of caste, class
- How can the government of Nepal undertake more effective measures to combat chhaupadi pratha?

## 1.6 Significance of the research

Previous research works lack proper discussion of the reasons for the limited impact of the policies and measures taken by the government of Nepal (Amatya, et. al., 2018). By providing a detailed understanding of the reasons responsible for the continuation of chhaupadi pratha in Nepal, this thesis contributes to addressing this gap. This is meant to generate suggestions for ways or approaches that the government of Nepal could adopt to increase the impact of its policies and initiatives to combat chhaupadi pratha. In a broad sense, this research thus seeks to contribute to the betterment of the girls and women practising chhaupadi pratha in Nepal and to eliminating menstrual discrimination which is restricting them in several ways.

This practice based on a deep-rooted menstrual taboo has impacted the lives of Nepali girls and women observing it in numerous ways. As will be substantiated in section 2.4 of this paper, chhaupadi amounts to violations of the human rights of girls and women and has formed a base for gender inequalities and discrimination (Parker & Standing, 2019). A human rights-based approach will be applied in this thesis with a motive to gain a deeper understanding of the issue, its impact and its reasons. Literature that will be explored in this thesis focuses on themes such as menstrual discrimination, human rights and menstruation, cultural relativism vs human rights, social norm theory, and the social, cultural, and contextual factors causing menstrual discrimination in Nepal.

## 1.7 Structure of the paper

The following chapters focus on the literature used to analyse the research question, as well as the methodology employed to conduct the research findings. The final two chapters will provide an analysis and specific recommendations for taking into account the factors when designing and implementing measures and policies to combat menstrual discrimination stemming from Chhaupadi.

## Chapter 2– Chhaupadi Pratha in the Literature: Impact, Human Rights, Causes, and Interventions

### 2.1 Introduction to the chapter

This chapter will focus on providing a more detailed understanding of chhaupadi pratha and the impact of this practice on the well-being of girls and women in Nepal, based on the existing literature. In addition, various concepts relevant for addressing the research questions are presented. These concepts are Cultural Relativism, a Human Rights Based Framework, and Social Norm Theory. This chapter will explore how chhaupadi is violating the human rights of women and girls, using a Human Rights Based Framework. And finally, an analysis will be conducted of possible reasons for the limited effect of the policies and measures taken by the government of Nepal as documented in relevant literature.

### 2.2 Introduction to chhaupadi pratha

According to Morrison et. al. (2018), chhaupadi pratha is a traditional practice that is practised in Nepal by girls and women. According to this practice, girls and women must leave their homes and stay in a shed during the menstrual cycle. In these huts, conditions are poor and the girls and women are often deprived of ventilation and basic facilities such as access to water, sanitary pads and hygiene (Bobel, et. al., 2020). According to Shrestha (2019), the chhaupadi huts are not safe which makes the women and girls vulnerable to such problems as reproductive organ diseases, snake bites, rape, humiliation, mistreatment, depression, low self-esteem, anxiety, or lack of access to education.

The word chhaupadi refers to a condition of being impure and is derived from “Chhau” which means untouchable (Amatya et. al., 2018). The practice is related to Hindu Dharma which has framed menstruation as a curse and women and girls as impure during the menstruation period (Cohen, 2020). Women and girls violating the related rules were considered as sinful. This concept of chhaupadi pratha has been deeply embedded in the local social structure (Republica, 2019). As a result, throughout their menstruation, women and girls are restricted from participating in regular and social activities. While menstruation is a natural biological process which indicates the entrance of a girl into womanhood, the chhaupadi tradition has also prevented women and girls during menstruation from taking part in religious ceremonies, cooking food, using common wells and tapes, touching cows/buffalos and trees, and consuming dairy products (Dawadi, 2021; Jun & Jang, 2018).



*Picture 3: Image of the chhaupadi shed where Deepa (from the western region of Nepal) has spent her first menstrual cycle*

*Source: (Nepali, 2017)*

According to Khadka (2020), on the basis of religious description it was historically believed that gods and goddesses became angry with women and girls who stayed in their homes with their families during the menstruation period. Practices of purity and pollution were defined by multiple actors of society including Dhami, pujari and priests. Dhami refers to the shaman or local deity, pujari refers to the regular worshipers, and the term priest mainly refers to brahmin of the upper caste (Khadka, 2020). Over time, these three actors have forced people to follow chhaupadi by setting the norms of impurity avoidance (Shrestha, 2019). They have established practices which have made people believe that menstruation is a cultural construction rather than natural action. Thus, chhaupadi is seen as a process which helps in maintaining dharma, truth and ensures protection from paap or sin (Khadka, 2020).

Women and girls were influenced in such a way that they started to see the natural biological process of menstruation as polluted (Action Aid UK, 2022). Various myths were formed on the basis of this pratha and these included that a menstrual woman or girl touching the source of water will cause drying up of the source and fruits will dry before ripping time if a menstruating woman or girl touches the tree (Action Aid UK, 2022). During their period, girls and women are also restricted from looking at the sun, and from interacting with family and community members.

## 2.3 The Impact of chhaupadi pratha on women and girls practising it in Nepal

### 2.3.1 Impact on well-being and health

Menstruating girls and women face social exclusion as they are isolated from their families during the menstrual period. This affects their psychosocial well-being. When girls get their first period, they are considered to be ready for marriage, sexual activity, and childbirth. This makes them vulnerable to abuse, child marriage, sexual violence, and early pregnancy (Mukherjee, et. al., 2020).

It is difficult to report the exact number of women and girls who have died while practising chhaupadi pratha as most cases go unreported (Vaughn, 2019). However, it has various health issues have been reported as a consequences of the practice, including abnormal discharge, genital itching, and foul-smelling menstruation. When in isolation during menstruation, women and girls are deprived of sanitation and safety which is a major concern (Summers, 2017). The lack of secured door locks, electricity, ventilation and toilet facilities in the sheds made the situation worse (Chhabi et. al., 2015). Multiple health and safety risks are created by chhaupadi pratha such as pneumonia, diarrhoea, infections, respiratory diseases, suffocation, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, feelings of inferiority, increased chances of being bitten by poisonous snakes or attacked by wild animals, rape, or being deprived of healthy and nutritious food. Chhaupadi pratha is an extreme case of gender-based discrimination as it affects women's access to diverse opportunities for development and growth, particularly education and employment, which is discussed in detail in the following section, 2.3.2 (Chhabi, et. al., 2015).

According to Bobel et. al. (2020), many women have limited or no access to hygienic menstrual materials and disposal options. They also have limited access to clean water to wash their hands and bodies. Women and girls are left with the only option to manage their periods in an uncomfortable and unhygienic manner. Girls experiencing their first menstruation (experiencing menarche) often are confused, scared and afraid and this is because of a lack of preparation and menstrual education (Summers, 2017). Menstruation every month is categorised as an emotional and painful period with negative sensations by various women who took part in an interview conducted by Bobel, et. al. (2020). Chhaupadi only exacerbates this situation for women in Nepal.

### 2.3.2 Impact on educational opportunities

As per Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, every individual has the right to education. However, in Nepal, girls and women are deprived of education during menstruation as it is believed that “Sarswati” (the goddess of education) will get angry if a girl or woman reads, writes, or touches books during their period. This has resulted in interruptions in the school attendance. The gap between girls and boys widened in education due to this practice and it is reported that discrimination has increased (Yilmaz, et. al., 2021).

Among adolescent girls, school absenteeism is common due to menstrual restrictions. In Nepal, school dropout is common among females. The prospects of girls to complete their education get undermined due to menstruation. Poverty and stigma are common reasons for girls missing out on (quality) education. This may result in poor performance at school (Dahal, et. al., 2021).

According to the study conducted by AWON news in the year 2012, 77% of the girls in Nepal studying in grades 6 to 12 were kept in cowsheds during their menstruation period and they were restricted from going to school during this period (Dawadi, 2021). Women and girls were made to drink a few drops of cow urine for purification after the completion of their menstrual days. Only after that were they allowed back into the house and to go to school and social gatherings (Nepali, 2017). This made them miss school for 4 to 11 days a month. As per the national data 2017, 44.2 % of adolescent girls aged 15-19 dropped out of secondary school and the main reason was the inability to attend school regularly with menstrual restriction being one of the leading causes (Dahal, et. al., 2017). This data was further backed by a study conducted by World Vision, in the year 2018, 15 to 22% of girls in Nepal missed school and the leading reasons were poverty, menstruation and lack of family support.

Women and girls practising chhaupadi pratha have a limited educated life. Lack of access to education has even resulted in illiteracy (Dahal, et. al., 2017), Lack of education results in a lack of knowledge and awareness of basic human rights among girls and women (Yilmaz et. al., 2021) which contributes to the continuation of the practice till today. Lack of education has forced women and girls and their families to follow the superstition blindly and risk their lives. Women and girls fear experiencing stigmatisation and prejudice for abandoning or raising their voices against this practice (Ong, et. al., 2019). Thus, fear of negative consequences has also forced women and girls to continue this practice (UNFPA, 2022).

Illiteracy has widened the social gap between males and women and girls which has made males superior (Kandel, 2019). Thus, gender inequalities are reproduced because of menstruation due to which women and girls have limited or no access to social capital resources such as education (Dahal, et. al., 2021).

### 2.3.3 Impact on employment opportunities

Some have labelled chhaupadi pratha as a crime against women which is committed on the basis of superstitions (Kadariya & Aro, 2015). A life of fear is lived by women and girls during menstruation as they feel unsafe and dehumanised (Davidge, 2021). As per the data reported by the Central Bureau of Statistics in 2015, 71% of women and girls between the age of 15 to 49 were practising chhaupadi in mid-western Nepal. They had to miss and drop out of schools and colleges due to this practice. As a result many women in Nepal get engaged in hard and manual labour work as their limited education restricts their employability skills and their employment opportunities.

The Chhaupadi pratha has penetrated the mind of people and is causing disempowerment among women in Nepal (Kadariya & Aro, 2015). The practice has a huge impact on the mental health of women and girls and affects their ability to work as it develops in them a sense of inferiority, insecurity, and dependence on the male members of the family (Sharma, et. al., 2022). Practising chhaupadi restricts girls and women from going to work regularly which in turn reduces the scope of growth, promotions, and career advancement options for them. The practice creates a negative impact on the health of girls and women which forces them to underperform or quit their job (Rothchild & Piya, 2020). Furthermore, menstrual discomfort along with nutritional restrictions affect the health and efficiency of women workers. Women and girls are confined from consuming nutritious food and milk, curd, and ghee. This affects their productivity and performance. However, the current discussions on menstrual leave have had a negative consequences for women in the workplace which has reinforced stigmatisation (Goldblatt & Steele, 2019).

## 2.4 Chhaupadi pratha violating human rights and national and international agreements

### 2.4.1 Chhaupadi pratha violating human rights and national agreements

As per the human rights-based framework, human rights are the fundamental rights and freedoms of an individual. Every individual is entitled to respect and protection. It is crucial to protect the human rights of every individual as this affects the quality of life of the individual (IJRC, 2022).

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has called for recognition of menstrual health as a health and human rights issue rather than a hygiene issue (WHO, 2022). As per the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (article 25), it is the right of every individual to live a standard life with acceptable health care, security, food, clothing, housing and required social services.

In article 20 of the Interim Constitution of 2007 of Nepal, assurance is given for the right to reproductive health and article 12 ensures the right to equality (Kadariya & Aro, 2015). These rights are violated because of chhaupadi pratha as women have faced severe reproductive health diseases like Uterine Fibroids, Gynecologic Cancer while practicing Chhaupadi (The Kathmandu Post, 2022).

Fundamental human rights of women and girls have been challenged by Chhaupadi pratha as the practice has discriminatory elements and creates risks of serious vulnerabilities. These rights include the right to equality and social justice (Article 18) of Nepal Constitution, the right to education (Article 31), the right to freedom (Article 16-46), the right to reproductive health and reproduction (Article 38), the right to food, the right against exploitation, the right to live without discrimination (Article 24(1) and Article 29(2)), the right to live with self-dignity and self-determination and to live in a clean environment (Kawata, et. al., 2022). Women and girls are restricted from enjoying basic human rights due to which a gap is created in society (Joshy, et. al., 2019). There are for instance many unreported cases of physical abuse and rape in chhaupadi sheds and reasons behind these unreported cases include stigma and fear of dishonouring the family name in society (Kadariya & Aro, 2015).

Chhaupadi pratha is violating the right of girls and women to be free from gender discrimination and gender-based violence. Protection against this has been guaranteed under the Constitution of Nepal which provides that all forms of discrimination against women should be eliminated (Khurana & Gujjar, 2021). Chhaupadi pratha is violating Article 18 of the Constitution which provides the right to equality to every citizen of Nepal. According to Article 18, before the law, every citizen of Nepal is equal. Article 29(2) of the Constitution of Nepal states that, no one should be exploited in the name of any custom or tradition and women and girls are severely exploited due

to Chhauapdi (The Kathmandu Post, 2022). Article 38 of the Constitution of Nepal states that every female holds a right to safe motherhood and reproductive health. However, Chhaupadi pratha is restricting girls and women from enjoying these rights as women who have just given birth are made to confine in these shed during the post-natal period. However for this research we focusing on only the menstrual aspect of Chhuapadi (Khurana & Gujjar, 2021).

Despite several policies and measures initiated by the government of Nepal, chhaupadi pratha is heavily practised and violates guaranteed constitutional rights and laws. A cultural relativism lens is useful for understanding this. According to cultural relativism, different cultures have different ethical, ritual practices and moral structures and these should not be judged on the basis of a person's own standards of what is right or what is wrong or what is strange or what is normal (Rosenberg, et. al., 2017).

As per this concept of cultural relativism, chhaupadi pratha is linked with the local belief systems and ways of life. It is a part of the cultural and social identity of several communities and groups in Nepal. In the western region of Nepal, chhaupadi pratha has been followed for centuries and it is deeply rooted in custom and tradition (Thakuri, et. al., 2021). In Hindu custom, menstruation is perceived in a particular way, with cultural and ritual values attached to it (Bobel, et. al., 2020). Cohen (2020) reported some personal experiences of girls practising Chhaapadi. According to a participant belonging to a poor rural family in Nepal, more than 40 types of restrictions were followed by her mother and sisters during the menstrual period and these were related to what to eat, touch and take part in. She also mentioned Rishipanchami, an annual cleansing ritual in which purification is done of the objects 'contaminated' by women and girls in the house during the menstrual period throughout the year

Women and girls are taught that chhaupadi pratha is a part of their culture and religion and they should not question it (Rathore, 2019). Women and girls are treated as a group which is a second-class member of society and has less power, freedom, and autonomy than men (Cameron, 2017). Restrictions are imposed on the mobility of women and girls during the menstruation period which is against their right to freedom and equality. Public interactions of women and girls are limited as they are not allowed to attend public meetings, go to school, or take part in sociocultural activities (Rathore, 2019).

Gender-based discrimination is violating the basic human rights of women and girls in Nepal (Action Aid UK, 2022). Chhaupadi pratha has affected the lives of girls and women practising it in Nepal in numerous ways (Ranabhat, et. al., 2019). Girls and women on the basis of gender perspectives are believed to be impure and polluted during the menstrual cycle (Khadka, 2020). Reinforcement of discriminatory practices is done by the stigmas and norms related to menstruation (Budhathoki, 2021). Due to the restrictions imposed on women and girls during the menstrual cycle, they face unequal availability and accessibility of opportunities. This gender-based discrimination is driven by cultural values which have made the girls and women believe that breaching these practices will cause harm to the family, society, and community (Bader, 2018). Thus, chhaupadi pratha has limited the capability of women and girls to live a healthy, safe, and educated life during their menstrual cycle (Ranabhat, et. al., 2019).

As per the Achham Women's Development Officer, chhaupadi pratha is practised by more than 95% of women and girls in the Achham district. Menstruating women and girls are not permitted to attend social gatherings which makes them feel inferior and impure during this period (Mukherjee, et. al., 2020). Mobility restrictions and social exclusions during menstruation have widened the gap between males and females and contributed to an increase in gender bias in Nepal (Giampietrri, 2021).

#### 2.4.2 Chhaupadi pratha violating international obligations

The international obligations violated by the Nepali government are Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which focuses on the right of every individual to live a standard life with basic needs such as care, food, clothing and housing (Khurana & Gujjar, 2021). The practice violates this article, for instance because restrictions are imposed on the food consumed by women during their menstruation.

The International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 18 December 1979. This convention focuses on monitoring the situation of women and promoting their rights. Its spirit is rooted in the goals of the UN for reaffirmation of faith in fundamental human rights, dignity and equal rights for men and women (OHCHR, 2011). Nepal signed this convention on 5 February 1991, and ratified it on 21 April of the same year (UNTC, 2022). Several CEDAW articles call for the elimination of discrimination against women. The continuation of chhaupadi pratha in Nepal amounts to a violation of these articles. These articles are articles 2 to 5, and 10 to 14 (OHCHR, 2022). These articles are discussed in detail below



*Picture 4: Awareness drive against chhaupadi pratha in Nepal*

*Source: (Himalayan News Service, 2015)*

Article 1 of CEDAW describes the term discrimination as restricting women on the basis of their gender which affects their fundamental freedom and rights. Article 2 talks about establishing legal protection of the rights of women, refraining from engagement in discriminatory practices and repealing the national penal provisions that are constructing discrimination against women. Article 3 covers legislation for ensuring the complete development and advancement of women so that they can enjoy their human rights and freedom (OHCHR, 2022). These articles have had a limited impact as is expressed in the fact that the majority of the personnel in charge of carrying out legal actions or legislation to combat Chhaupadi have family members (mothers, sisters, or wives) who adhere to monthly menstrual restrictions either by force or willingly (The Kathmandu Post 2022).

CEDAW Article 4 talks about the special measures adopted by States Parties for ensuring equality between men and women. Article 5 places the focus on appropriate measures to be taken by States Parties for modifying social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women. The focus is on the elimination of the prejudices forming the base for stereotyped roles of genders and ensuring that proper understanding is there in family education for maternity as a social function (United Nations General Assembly, 2022). Article 11 is about appropriate measures that should be taken by States Parties for eliminating discrimination against women in employment opportunities. Article 12 is about appropriate measures that should be taken by States Parties for eliminating discrimination against women concerning health care services. Article 13 is about the elimination of discrimination against women in economic and social aspects. Article 14 is about the elimination of discrimination against women in rural areas by ensuring access to adequate healthcare facilities, social security programs, participating in community activities, obtaining training and education and enjoying adequate living conditions such as housing, sanitation, electricity, water supply and communications (OHCHR, 2022).

These articles stress the importance of state parties enhancing women's status in education, health care, employment, and rural space. The government of Nepal has launched several initiatives to expand the availability of opportunities for women's development. However, in reality, the access to such aspects of women and girls is restricted due to practises such as chhaupadi, as well as the prevailing stigma, shame, and restrictions associated with menstruation in society. Another factor that may influence the implementation of these articles is that members of the state parties may be hesitant to take a strong stance against chhaupadi pratha for fear of losing their large number of supporters, which will have an impact on the vote bank (The Kathmandu Post, 2017). As a result, the effectiveness of the initiatives is limited.

## 2.5 Government interventions and reasons for the continuation of chhaupadi pratha in Nepal

One of the major reasons for the continuation of Chhaupadi is the ineffective implementation of government policies and measures. In the year 2017, the Criminal Code Bill was passed by the Parliament of Nepal for banning this practice. As per this bill, imprisonment of three months or a fine of NPR 3000, or both, is to be imposed if anyone is found involved in forcing women and girls to practice chhaupadi pratha (Yadav et. al., 2018). However, five months after adoption of the new law, not even a single complaint was filed relating to chhaupadi pratha (Rai, 2019). Various death reports came to the police in 2016. These showed that the practice of chhaupadi was still being practised. As per a more recent human rights report, Achham and Dailekh Districts have the highest death rates due to chhaupadi pratha, but not even a single police complaint has been registered there (Kathmandu, 2019). As per National Human Rights Commission, in Sudarpaschim province, 16 women and girls and children died in one year due to the chhaupadi tradition (Online Khabar, 2019).



*Picture 5: Picture of Rajkumari, a police constable helping in tackling period shaming*

*Source: (ActionAid UK, 2022)*

Politicians, local leaders, and police are also engaged in this practice which has restricted the successful implementation of the laws and policies formulated for combating menstrual discrimination (Budha, 2020). Thus, coordinated efforts are required on the part of the administration, police, court, health facilities, schools, family, society and community (Dawadi, 2021). The lack of adequate mechanisms resulted in a loophole in the implementation process of the policies formulated by the government of Nepal and has resulted in violations of international agreements (Dawadi, 2021).

Various questions have been raised by women's rights activists regarding the bill passed in 2017. They questioned whether the enforced law will be able to change the centuries-old practice (Morrison, et. al., 2018). The Municipal policy and plan, issued by the government of Nepal which focused on committing to the implementation of education and awareness campaigns for ensuring hut-free municipalities. But this initiative has been ineffective as no secured budget was allocated for this policy and plan (Thakuri, et. al., 2021).

As per the report of the multi-indicator cluster survey 2019, 21.1% of women and girls were practising chhaupadi pratha in Sudurpaschim province. WASH in Schools Programme has been initiated which is based on a child-rights approach and the implementation of this programme is supported by UNICEF Nepal along with the Government of Nepal, local communities and NGOs since 2000 (Dhakal, 2019). This programme was initiated for providing safe drinking water, and better sanitation facilities and to promote good health outcomes for menstruating women and girls. But the continuation of chhaupadi shows an ineffective implementation of this programme (Morrison, et. al., 2018). Cultural barriers restricted the sound implementation of this programme (Wali, et. al., 2020).

The Supreme Court of Nepal outlawed the chhaupadi system in May 2005 and a directive was issued to the Government of Nepal for formulating laws for the elimination of the related practices. In the year 2007, the Interim Constitution of Nepal focused on bringing an end to discriminatory practices and ensuring the right to equality and social justice. This provided additional legal backup to the efforts made for ending the practice of chhaupadi (Asher, 2010).

Despite the presence of health and social policies on the health and reproductive rights of women in Nepal, there is no mention of the eradication of chhaupadi pratha in the Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Rights Act 2018. The Local Government Operation Act 2017 covers ward-level jurisdiction for the eradication of harmful practices such as chhaupadi, but there is an absence of procedural laws. There is an absence of sound formation and execution in some policies along with inadequate coherence in the policies. The National Education Policy 2019 does not refer to the challenges faced by girls in receiving education during the menstruation period which shows a clear shortcoming in the Government efforts (Thakuri, et. al., 2021).

The Ministry of Women, Child and Social Welfare issued guidelines in the year 2008 for eradicating chhaupadi pratha all around the nation in the form of Chhaupadi pratha Unmulan Nirdesika of 2064. However, these guidelines have not been adhered to completely. For instance, even after the guidelines for establishing committees at the district level for addressing chhaupadi were issued, many committees were not formed (Yilmaz et. al., 2021). Women and girls practising chhaupadi pratha tend to have limited or no knowledge of the laws formulated for banning chhaupadi pratha which is a serious practical limitation (Nash, 2021).

Another attempt to eradicate chhaupadi pratha is the Criminal Code Act (2017). The government has faced several challenges in the effective implementation of this Act. Criminal charges may be brought against persons who forced women and girls to practice chhaupadi pratha and stay in huts (BBC, 2017). But the loophole is that the persons will usually be a close family member and filing a criminal case against them could result in breaking relations and creating social pressure on the girls and women. The only specific policy of Menstrual Hygiene Management is the Dignified Menstruation Policy issued in 2019 by the government of Nepal, in order to ensure freedom from all forms of menstrual discrimination through 16 days activism, which has not been endorsed yet.

Ineffective legislation and lack of commitment from the local leaders are responsible for the continuation of chhaupadi pratha. While several legal provisions have been formulated for eradicating chhaupadi pratha, this practice is still followed in various areas. Finance and time have been invested by the government but this declaration is limited to papers which have formed a reason for this practice still being followed in Nepal (Vaughn, 2019). Lack of education and awareness among people of the harm of this practice have affected the implementation of the policies and measures adopted by the Nepal government.

The government at some stage resorted to destroying chhaupadi sheds under the “Signature campaign against chhaupadi pratha” but this was not enough to combat this practice either. People started using cowsheds and animal sheds in the place of chhaupadi sheds. It is essential to uproot the practice from beliefs and superstitions which are ingrained deeply in tradition and culture (Republica, 2019).

Social norm theory defines social norms as the rules and standards which are understood and followed by members of a community or group to guide the social behaviour of the community or group without the force of law (Johnson, 2012). These social norms related to menstruation have resulted in the continuation of chhaupadi pratha. A powerful influence is exerted by social norms on the behaviour of individuals in a community or group (Kumar & Maity, 2021). Social norms followed by different communities practising chhaupadi sustain harmful behaviour toward menstruating women and girls rather than stopping it (Thakuri, et. al., 2021). Social norms have formed the base for menstrual restrictions and have made girls and women believe that not following the social norm will lead to misfortune for the family members and community (UNICEF, 2018).

The superstition of the power of god is a key factor responsible for the continuation of this harmful practice. This practice has been driven by a superstitious belief among people that keeping women and girls at home during menstruation will make the god angry (Kadariya & Aro, 2015). There is a belief in the communities practising chhaupadi pratha that bad luck can be caused by menstruating women if they do not practice chhaupadi pratha. This has forced them to stay in a shed outside the house (Preiss, 2017).

General lack of support for females is another reason responsible for the continuation of the practice. Several women and girls want to discontinue this practice but they lack support from family and society due to which they cannot raise their voices (Fry et. al., 2022). It is tough for women and girls to stand up against their families and they need support from the local community and government for doing so (Bam, 2020). The government has formed laws but practical implementation is missing as, in practice, women and girls cannot file a complaint against their family members due to social ostracisation and fear of consequences. Lack of guarantee regarding support from the local community develops fear among women and girls. In several cases, police have declined from registering the complaint even when local villagers tried to get deaths of women inside the sheds registered (Rathore, 2019).

## 2.6 Concluding remarks

Power and hierarchy are part of the community and this paper will later cover the aspects of caste and class which are complicating the practice of chhaupadi in Nepal and limiting efforts to combat discrimination and inequality. Future research shall focus on analysing the different impacts the practice has on the people belonging to different communities in Nepal.

The theoretical lenses of Cultural Relativism, a Human Rights Based Framework, and Social Norm Theory have been applied to the research topic. These lenses have supported in providing theoretical evidence as to the reasons for the continuation of practice as well as the impact of it on the lives of women. The discussion has been done on the various reasons responsible for the limited impact of the policies and measures initiated by the government of Nepal.

## Chapter 3 - Research Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction to the chapter

In this section, the methods and approaches used for generating this thesis are discussed. Their advantages and limitations will be discussed as well. The reasons behind the selection of the methods and approaches for the purpose of the accumulation and analysis of the required data will be covered in this chapter too. Limitations or challenges faced while conducting the thesis are also discussed in this chapter, along with ethical considerations.

### 3.2 Research Theory

The research onion theory has been followed in this thesis. This theory suggests strategies that can be included by a researcher to collect the required data. The illustration of the steps that describe a methodological study is given in this theory. A series of stages is defined with the help of which a research methodology can be designed (Melnikovas, 2018). This theory covers the description of all the main layers that are crucial for formulating a sound research methodology (Abdelhakim & Badr, 2021).

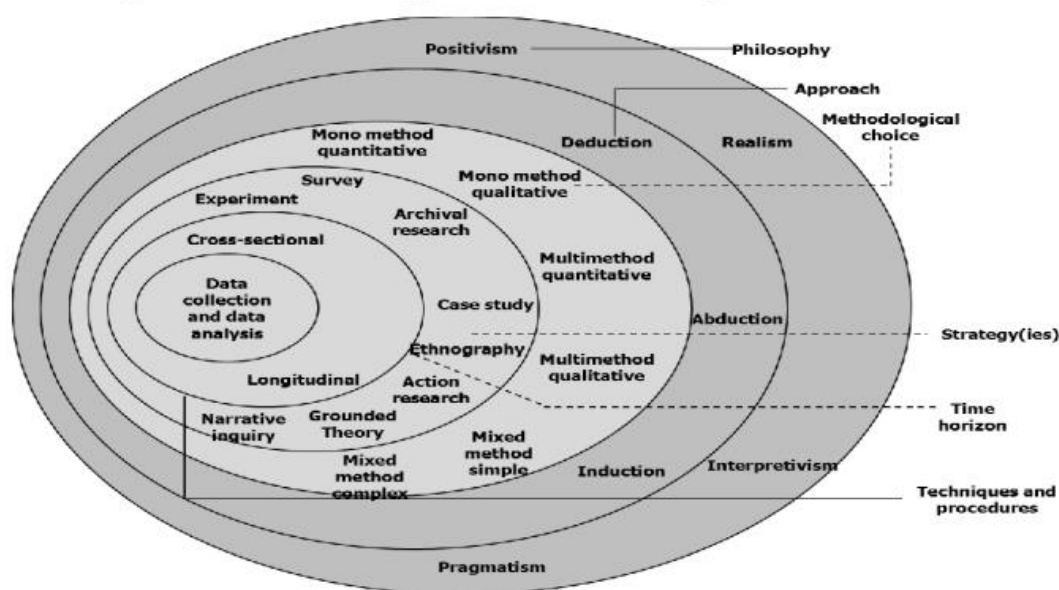


Figure 6: Steps or layers of research onion theory

*Source: (Abdelhakim & Badr, 2021)*

The above-attached diagram shows the different stages on the basis of which the research methodology for this thesis has been designed.

### 3.3 Research method

A qualitative methodology has been chosen for meeting the requirements of the research objectives of this research.

Qualitative methods focus on the collection and analysis of non-numerical data such as text, audio and video for the purpose of gaining an understanding of the concepts, experiences and opinions. The motive behind using a qualitative method is to accumulate in-depth insights into the problem and generate new ideas for the research work. In a qualitative method for collecting data, first-hand observation such as interviews, questionnaires, participant-observation, case studies or secondary research may be used by the researcher. The focus of qualitative research usually is on preserving the perspective of the participants (Busetto et. al., 2020). In this research, a questionnaire, interviews, and secondary data have been used to analyse the reasons responsible for the limited impact of policies and measures initiated by the government of Nepal.

This research method is flexible and helps in gaining meaningful insights. New ideas can be generated on this basis and real-world contexts form the base for the data collection. Quality data has been collected directly from some women and girls who are practising chhaupadi pratha, one menstrual activist, one UNICEF staff member, and one general attorney general. In this method, respondents are motivated to respond as per their knowledge and experience (Mohajan, 2018).

A qualitative method often is an open-ended data collection process. The human experience may be incorporated into the method and importance can be given to diverse perspectives. It is a perspective-based approach which lets human instinct play a crucial role (Abdelhakim & Badr, 2021).

In interviews, open-ended questions were asked to the respondents. This has helped in gaining an understanding of the impact of chhaupadi pratha on the women and girls practising it, of the reasons responsible for the failed efforts of the government of Nepal to combat chhaupadi pratha, and of measures that could be adopted by the government for eradicating chhaupadi pratha in the future.

There are a few limitations to a qualitative method as well, and these have been taken into account. These include high time consumption and research questions being prepared by the researcher so there may be chances of bias (Oun & Bach, 2014). To avoid this, the focus has been placed on conducting interviews so that open-ended discussions could be conducted with the interviewees.

### 3.4 Research design

An explanatory research design has been selected for this research. The focus of an explanatory qualitative research design is on exploring a situation, issue, problem, or phenomenon which has not been explained adequately yet. It is explained as a “cause and effect” model which focuses on investigating the patterns and trends in the existing data (Bentouhami, et. al., 2021). The focus is placed on analysing and discovering the causes behind a particular pattern. A complete understanding of the relationship can be developed between variables by using this design (Rahman, 2016). It is important to understand the causes responsible for the continuation of the

chhaupadi pratha in Nepal and how this practice is affecting the women and girls practising it. This design can help in understanding this cause and effect.

This design focuses on answering the “why” and “how” questions which ensure a better understanding of the problem so as to gain clarity regarding future research initiatives. Different research methods are available in this design for collecting data and these are literature reviews, interviews, case studies and focus groups and observations. Better meaning is given to the previous research as the gap is filled by collecting information regarding the reasons behind the phenomena. It is considered as a flexible approach which is cost and time effective. This design allows the researcher to use previous research for guiding the research (Sallee & Flood, 2012). By applying this design, a better understanding of the problem can be developed. This design provides a better understanding of the topic which helps by enhancing the effectiveness of the conclusions of the research (Ansari, et. al., 2022).

### 3.5 Action research approach

An action research approach has been selected. Action research is used by a researcher in a real situation. This approach is not applied in experimental studies as the focus of this approach is on solving real problems (Tavares, 2014). Real-world problems are dealt with by this approach and it has been used by researchers for enhancing the conditions and practices in the healthcare and social change environments. This is considered suitable by researchers who focus on linking theory to practice for driving social change (Doğanay & Öztürk, 2017). By applying this approach, an analysis of the issue of “continuation of chhaupadi pratha” can be done in a detailed manner which can form a base for analysing the measures that can be effective in bringing the required change in Nepal.

Problems and weaknesses are diagnosed in this approach too. It provides mainly practical results. Emphasis is placed on analysing and solving the problem for the purpose of bringing social change. Action research permits the researcher to work on the issue and use multiple sources for yielding rich data. Practical concerns of the people in the real situation can be analysed by using this approach (Souto-Manning & Mitchell, 2010).

With the application of this approach, new perspectives can be gained into the reasons for the limited impact of the measures and policies taken by the Nepal government to eradicate chhaupadi pratha.

### 3.6 Data Analysis

The qualitative data analysis approach selected for this thesis is content analysis. The content analysis approach is used for describing and categorising common words, phrases and ideas in the case of qualitative data (Akinyode & Khan, 2018). Content analysis is considered a sound approach to the views, opinions, and experiences of people with the help of interviews and survey responses (Vespestad & Clancy, 2020). With a content analysis approach, a better analysis of the experience of the women and girls practising chhaupadi can be done.

The purpose of this analysis approach is to organise the data and produce meaning from the data for drawing realistic conclusions. This approach is a systematic method for analysing qualitative data. The focus of a researcher is on understanding the context surrounding the emotions, experiences, thoughts, and behaviour of an individual (Belotto, 2018). By using this approach, it is possible to quantify and analyse the meanings and relationships of certain words and concepts. Research can access valuable cultural and historical insights using this approach (Gale, et. al., 2013).

Social interactions can be analysed by applying a content analysis approach and the cost of the research can be reduced (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017).

Recorded data is used in the content analysis approach which helps in eliminating the risk of remembering the data incorrectly. This approach is considered a transparent research method. It is considered a safe process relatively. Focus group interviews and open-ended questions are analysed well in the content analysis approach. The psychological and emotional state of people and groups can be determined by applying this approach. Patterns can be revealed in the communication content (Dierckx de Casterle', et. al., 2011). Insights can be gained into the complex models of human thoughts and experiences using the content analysis approach (Elo, et. al., 2014). Better learning about the issue of chhaupadi pratha practised by several women and girls in Nepal can be gained as well.

### 3.7 Data collection methods

Data has been collected through primary and secondary data collection methods. A combination of these methods has been selected on the basis of the analysis of the requirement of the research.

A primary data collection method can be understood as the method which provides first-hand data directly collected from the respondents. This form of data is collected directly from the main sources by the researcher specifically for the research. Data of a specific nature get collected with the help of this method and updated information can be gained (Paradis, et. al., 2016). More accurate data can be gained by using the primary method. Data which gets collected using the primary method is specific to the problem (Lowry, 2015). With the help of primary data, data related to the specific existence of chhaupadi pratha in Nepal has been gathered. Updated information and specific reasons for the failed efforts of the government of Nepal have been collected by applying this method.

There are different methods for collecting primary data and these are direct and indirect personal interviews, questionnaires, focus groups and observations (Paradis, et. al., 2016). For this thesis, interviews and a questionnaire have been used to collect primary data directly from the main source. Interviews have been conducted with one menstrual activist, one UNICEF staff member, and one general attorney general to collect first-hand information (for interview questions see Appendix 1). The questionnaire has been used to collect data from 30 women and girls who have practised chhaupadi (for the questionnaire, see Appendix 2). The research was conducted with the support of an local Ngo which works on various issues and one of them being Menstrual Health and Mangement in Shudrapaschim District. Initially, respondents were hesitant to share their thoughts because they were concerned that their names would be published, which could cause them problems. However, once the objectives of the study were made clear, that it was for academic purposes only and that complete anonymity would be maintained, the respondents were willing to contribute to the research.

The secondary data collection method can be understood as the method which provides second-hand data which other researchers have collected for their work. Data which has already been collected and has gone through necessary analysis is used in the secondary method (Johnston, 2014). For collecting secondary data, journal articles, authentic websites of governmental, non-governmental and media organizations, academic literature and grey material have been accessed.

### 3.8 Sample and Sample frame

Interviews and a questionnaire have been used for accumulating the required data. The interviews were conducted with three people, including one menstrual activist, one UNICEF staff member,

and one general attorney general from Nepal. 30 women and girls who are practising chhaupadi pratha and or have practised chhaupadi pratha in Nepal were targeted for collecting primary data with the help of a questionnaire. The questionnaire has been distributed among 30 women and girls in Nepal with the help of an NGO. The age group targeted was that of 18 to 29 years old women belonging to different backgrounds (in terms of ethnicity, family occupation, marital status, education level, and family income). All respondents targeted in the survey practice chhaupadi pratha. A random sampling technique has been used to select samples from the total population because there was no prior requirement for respondents to belong to a specific caste or class. The random sampling technique offers equal opportunity to every sample to get selected (Bhardwaj, 2019). This technique ensures the representation of the total population in an unbiased manner (Taherdoost, 2016).

### 3.9 Research limitations

Research limitations can be seen as the challenges that are faced while conducting the research (Greener, 2018). These limitations could have affected the research but sound approaches have been considered to deal with them. Participants may have not talked freely as they were interacting with a foreigner. This could have impacted the quality of the interview. My focus was on ensuring that they felt comfortable while communicating and I clearly communicated the objective of the research to them to gain their support. Menstruation is still a taboo in Nepal due to which men were not willing to take part in a questionnaire and this has limited the research to be conducted on the basis of female respondents only. However, this practice has affected the lives of women and girls so it is positive that they have provided first-hand data for the research. Online data collection has a few limitations as well such as being time-consuming, lack of face-to-face communication, lack of follow-up data, and lower response rates. I faced issues in collecting primary data through the interview as initial interviews to be were five, unfortunately due to a flood in the village, two potential respondents whom I was supposed to interview were later not available. I, however managed to conduct interviews with the other three respondents.

### 3.11 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations can be defined as the ethical values or principles which are followed for completing the activity (Yip, et. al., 2016). Ethical principles must be followed by a researcher to ensure that no misconduct has been done while conducting the research (Gajjar, 2013). Ethical values and principles which have been followed in this research work are confidentiality, honesty, respect for the participants, fair subject selection and independent review. Participants have asked to keep their details confidential. The interview has been conducted with three people and the details of these interviewees have been kept confidential to protect their privacy. No harm has been done to the interest of the participants who have provided primary data. Information collected is presented in a fair way to present the actual data collected. Selection of the subject has been done fairly and an independent review has been done in this research. Secondary sources used have been appropriately acknowledged in this work.

## Chapter 4 – Research Findings and discussions

This chapter cover the analysis of the data collected using the primary method of data collection. The method of interviews and survey have been used for collecting primary data, respectively. For a better understanding of the primary research findings, graphs and charts will be prepared. A summary will be provided of the findings from secondary research.

### 4.1 Primary research findings

#### 4.1.1. Interview findings

The interviews were conducted through online platform. The section below will provide an overview of the findings which are later connected with the research objective of the study as well as supported in forming recommendations in the final chapter.

*Interview questions asked in the interview are attached below in the appendix section (Refer to appendix 1).*

According to an attorney general of Shudrapashcim district, who has lead and advised on various governmental measures to combat chhaupadi believed that the pratha is a deep-rooted cultural practice related to menstruation. The interviewee mentioned that chhaupadi pratha is also practised at his home along with other restrictions like the wife is not allowed to enter the kitchen during the menstrual period.

**“My mother has restrictions with my wife during her period, but in the absence of my mother I have no issue with my wife entering the kitchen”**

According to him, education and urbanisation have decreased belief in chhaupadi pratha. This pratha is practised at large in the western part of Nepal which is predominantly rural (Kornally and Shudra paschim province). According to the attorney general, the whole life of women and girls gets affected due to chhaupadi pratha. He also stated that chhaupadi pratha has compromised the human rights of females and usually it is the older women of the house who promote chhaupadi pratha. The interviewee also referred to the new Criminal Code Act as making the act of forcing females to practice chhaupadi pratha a punishable offence. He also referred to awareness programmes initiated by NGOs and UN organisations but, according to the attorney general these had limited effects on dealing with chhaupadi pratha. The main reasons according to the interviewee for limited effect are implementation gaps, religious and cultural barriers (superstitious and ancestral beliefs), lack of education, and not considering chhaupadi pratha as a human rights violating issue. The interviewee suggested fighting superstitious beliefs with the help of education, awareness amongst religious leaders, women empowerment and better law enforcement.

The key finding of this interview for me was his position that chhaupadi has a substantial impact on women, with life-long impact.

According to interviewee two, a menstrual activist, who has headed various human rights based intervention in the field of menstrual discrimination stated misconceptions and superstitious have contributed towards the continuation of chhaupadi pratha. She confirmed that girls and women face physical and mental health issues while practising chhaupadi pratha. Women are detached from society and they are made to feel contaminated. The interviewee has also explained that chhaupadi pratha is violating article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and that that it contravenes the rights to equality and reproductive health stipulated in articles 12 and 20 of Nepal's Constitution 2072. Then, she emphasized that a ruling was passed in 2005 by which the

Supreme Court may impose a fine or imprisonment or both if anyone found guilty of forcing women or adolescent girls to practice Chhaupadi .

According to the second interviewee, more people and government programmes are needed to reach remote districts so that laws can be effectively implemented. The inability of the government to reach remote areas is an important reason for the limited impact of the efforts of the government. The superstitious belief of getting punished by God for violating the practice is also responsible for the continuation of chhaupadi pratha. Sound participation of the administration (senior officials of the Nepal government) and involving local leaders can help in better implementation of the laws as well. Education too can help in spreading awareness and combating chhaupadi pratha by making women and girls aware of menstrual hygiene, their human rights and the ill-effect of this practice.

A core insight gained through my interaction with Interviewee two is her position that **“although the rules and laws are in place, and the government is taking steps to increase awareness about menstruation, the tradition is so deep-rooted within the society that the process is very slow in terms of bringing about a change” (Interview 2).**

As per interviewee three, with a UNICEF staff member, who has worked on various children development projects, many focusing on adolescent girls stated the impact of chhaupadi pratha on the females practising it can cause a life-long trauma. Many adolescent girls in Nepal are inclined towards educational dropouts because of the stigma and shame attached to menstruation and the lack of availability of clean menstrual management at schools and universities. Chhaupadi dramatically adds to the chances of discontinuing education. In the words of the interviewee, in any case often **“this results in 2-3 months of missing school per academic year (going by the average menstrual days in a year)” (Interview 3).**

According to the third interviewee, sexual and reproductive health rights are violated as a result of the practice and the associated threats include physical, psychological and health threats. Chhaupadi pratha amounts to a violation of international treaties signed by Nepal.

Interviewee three is the father of two girls and he never wants his daughters to practice chhaupadi pratha. However, there are women co-workers at UNICEF who practice Chhaupadi. The interviewee shared that, in his view, the government campaign to destroy menstrual sheds has had reverse impact and left women with no option other than to sleep in the open. This made them even more vulnerable to exploitation. The initiatives of the Nepal government have at best been only partly effective as cases of death, rape and sexual abuse have been reported even after the formulation of laws. Reasons for the limited effect of the policies and measures of the Nepal government as per the interviewee are family pressure faced by females for staying in menstrual sheds, societal pressure, and lack of support from police and local leaders in the matters of menstrual rights.

Interviewee three rejected the cultural relativism narrative as according to him, **“any practice which violates the basic and fundamental human rights of people must be abolished” (Interview 3).** The respondent believes a middle path is required to ensure a balance between cultural identity and upholding human rights ensured by the Constitution. According to the interviewee, to combat chhaupadi pratha, the government of Nepal must see the phenomenon as a bigger issue, and a human rights issue, which affects the education of females and their economic empowerment. Awareness must be spread with the help of campaigns focusing on family, parents, and men. Women emancipation is required so that females can be free from societal pressure. According to Interviewee 3, an investment must be made by offering menstrual necessities to females to ensure adequate menstrual health management. Interviewee 3 in particular gave me a

perspective on the possibility of positive change, through his position that “it will be a slow, generational change as the new generation is already questioning the relevance of this pratha” (Interview 3).

#### 4.1.2. Survey

The respondents of the survey were all girls and women, in the age of 18 to 29 years old from the Shudrapaschim District, West Nepal. As the figures presented below show, they are of various castes/ethnicity and diverse in terms of family occupation, family income, marital status, and educational background. The survey respondents were affiliated with to a local NGO, associated with which the research has been conducted.

##### Age

18-21	12
22-25	15
26-29	3

##### Caste/Ethnicity

Brahmin (Upper Caste)	11
Kshatriya( UP)	7
Vaishya	3
Shudra	9

##### Family Occupation

Agriculture	19
-------------	----

- Land owners	6
- Framers	12
Labour	8
Jobs and services	3

### **Marital Status**

Unmarried	11
Married	19

### **Education Level**

Illiterate	18
Secondary Level Education	7
University level	5

### **Family Monthly Income**

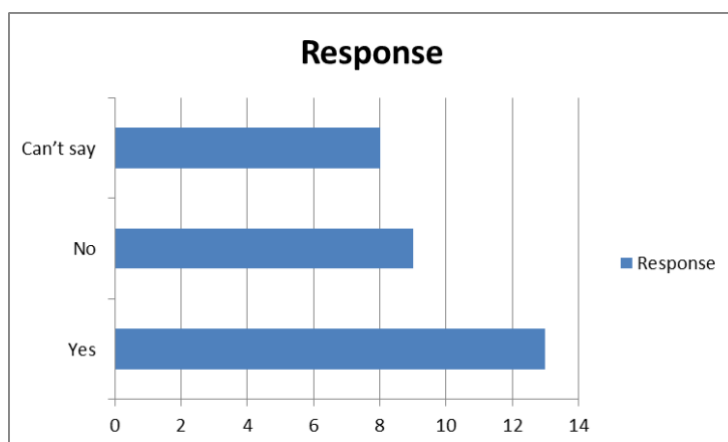
<NRS 5000	6
5-15 thousand	15
15-30 thousand	5

Above 30 thousand	4
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\*All the respondents were aware of the meaning of chaupadi pratha and gender-based discrimination.

**Responses to Survey Question 1: Has chhaupadi pratha contributed to gender-based discrimination?**

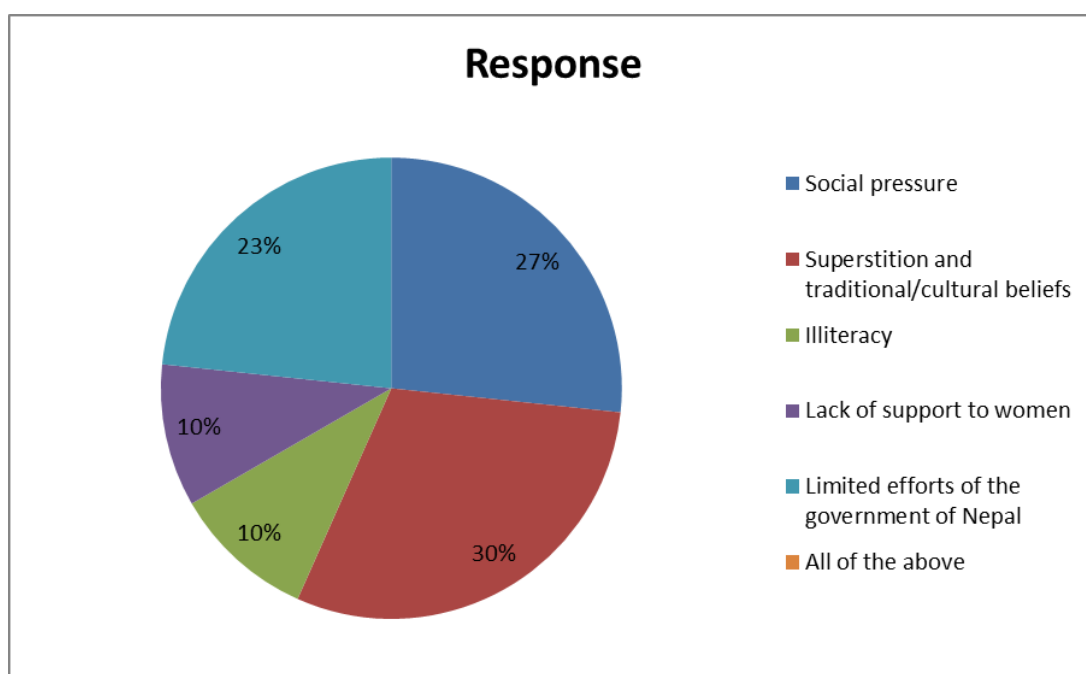
Options	Response
Yes	13
No	9
Can't say	8



**Analysis:** 13 out of 30 respondents stated that they face gender-based discrimination due to chhaupadi pratha. As per these respondents, they are treated as untouchable during the menstrual period and they are not allowed to stay at home, attend social gatherings and go to school and college. They are also not allowed to come in contact with a male members of the family. The respondents reported that the women belonging to the lower caste experienced more restrictions and limitations especially during their menstruation.

**Responses to Survey Question 2: Please select the root cause for the continuation of chhaupadi pratha in Nepal**

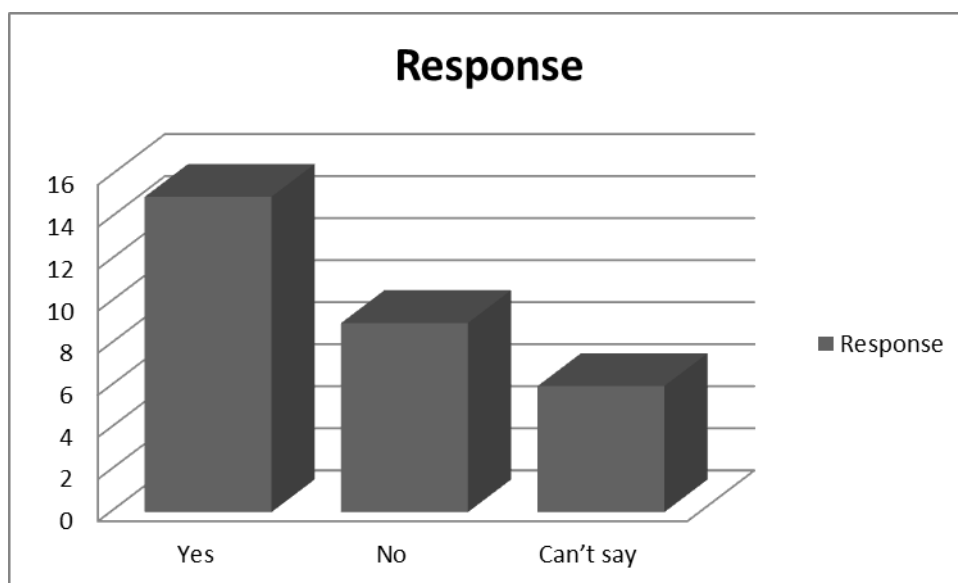
Options	Response
Social pressure	8
Superstition and traditional/cultural beliefs	9
Illiteracy	3
Lack of support to women	3
Limited efforts of the government of Nepal	7
All of the above	



**Analysis:** When analysing the survey results, it is clear that according to the surveyed women, different reasons are responsible for the continuation of chhaupadi pratha in Nepal. The most important among those reasons are superstition and traditional/cultural beliefs, social pressure, and the limited efforts of the government to eradicate chhaupadi pratha in Nepal. One respondent stated that “just because the practice is criminalised it does not mean it is wrong. It is a part of our identity and defines who we are.” Another respondent stated that “I practice the pratha because I do not want to be criticised in society. There was a girl in my class whose family was not strict about Chhaupadi. She used to get scolded by teachers and had no friends. It was very embarrassing.” This underlines that superstition and social pressure are main factors responsible for the continuation of chhaupadi pratha in Nepal.

**Responses to Question 3: Does menstrual discrimination affect the educational opportunities available to women?**

Options	Response
Yes	15
No	9
Can't say	6

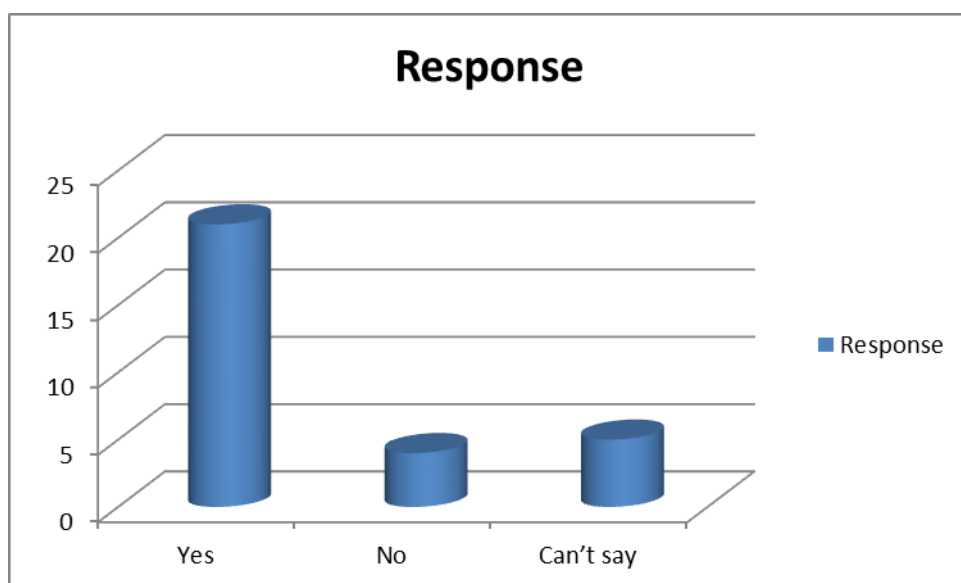


**Analysis:** 15 out of the 30 respondents stated that the educational opportunities available to them got significantly affected due to the menstrual discrimination faced. 9 stated that menstrual discrimination had no impact on their educational opportunities. Respondents stated that they are not allowed to go out during their menstrual period due to which they skip school for 5 to 7 days a month, a few dropped out of school and a few never went to school.

As per the caste demonstration, 3 vaishya and 1 shudra (i.e. lower caste) women dropped out of school as they had low attendance due to practising chhaupadi pratha. Most respondents with university-level education showed resistance towards the practice of chhaupadi pratha but they continued the practice because of family and social pressure.

**Responses to Question 4: Does the practice affect the mental, physical and psychological health of women?**

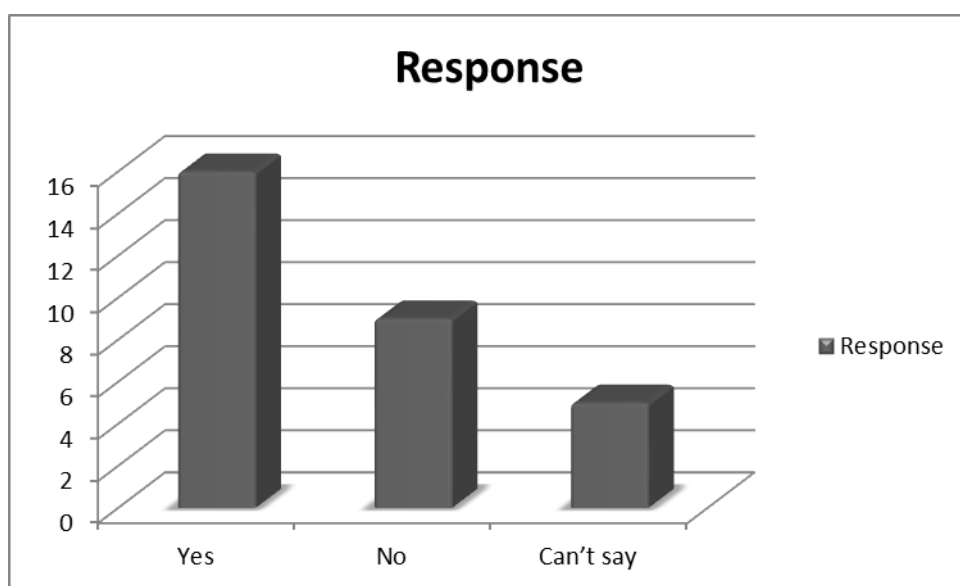
Options	Response
Yes	21
No	4
Can't say	5



**Analysis:** The majority of respondents stated that practising chhaupadi pratha has affected their mental, physical and psychological health adversely. The 21 respondents who had a family income of less than 113.45 US\$ (15000 NPR) used cow sheds during menstruation which lacked toilet facilities, had unhygienic environment, lacked water, and made them were prone to sexual abuse. More severe restrictions are imposed on the women and girls who have agriculture and labour as family occupations. Few women and girls (respondents) reported fever, suffocation, and urinary tract infections because of the chhaupadi pratha. However, respondents who had a family income higher than 113.45 US\$ (15000 NPR) were often made to isolate in a different room within their household, thus reducing the risk of health and sexual exploitation. However, all the respondents reported the sense of shame, embarrassment and lack of confidence attached to menstruation in general.

**Responses to Question 5: Are the human rights of women and girls compromised due to chhaupadi pratha?**

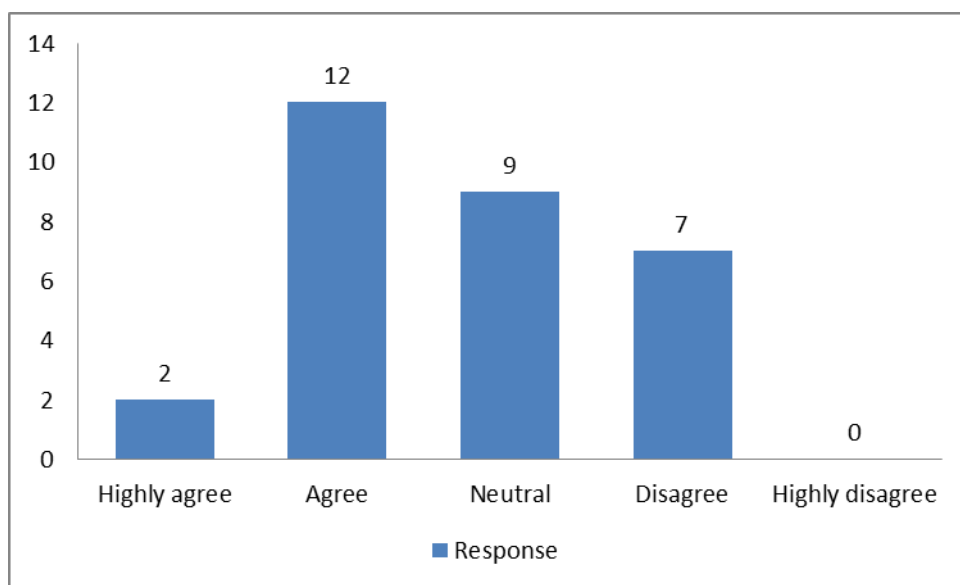
Options	Response
Yes	16
No	9
Can't say	5



**Analysis:** As per the survey ,16 respondents agreed with the statement that the human rights of females are getting compromised due to chhaupadi pratha. They reported that they are deprived of their basic and fundamental human rights such as the rights to equity, freedom, reproductive health, and education because of chhaupadi pratha. They face menstruation discrimination which is against their fundamental human rights.

**Responses to Question 6: Can menstrual educational programs help in eradicating menstrual discrimination and chhaupadi pratha in Nepal?**

Options	Response
Highly agree	2
Agree	12
Neutral	9
Disagree	7
Highly disagree	0



**Analysis:** In total 14 out of 30 respondents agreed, 7 disagreed with the question asked and the other 7 are neutral. Respondents who have university-level education and secondary education argued against practising chhaupadi pratha and largely took the position that lack of awareness has affected the mindset of people. They believed social pressure and taboos related to menstruation can be lifted by conducting a menstrual education program. These programmes would provide awareness which will help in eradicating menstrual discrimination in Nepal.

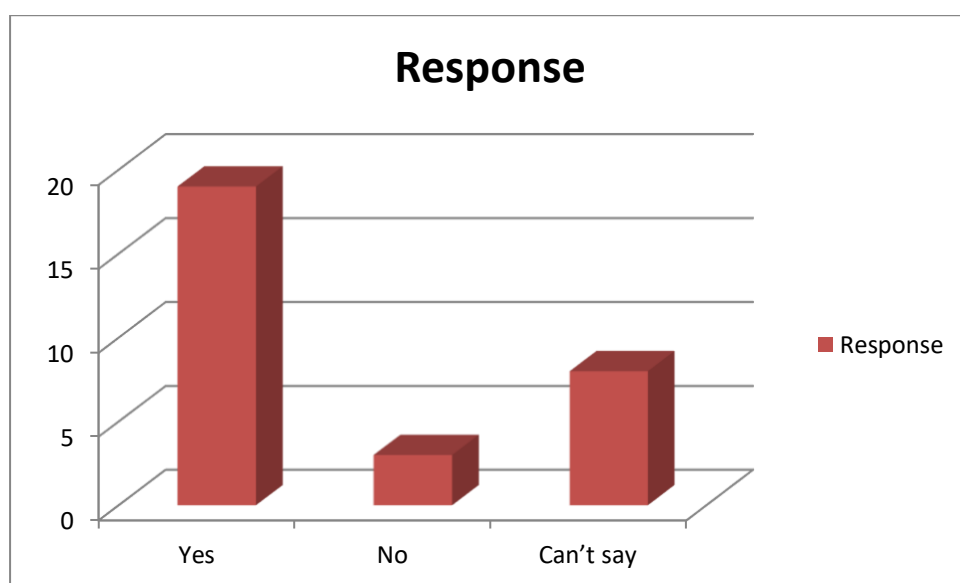
This data itself indicates that the accessibility and availability of education might bring about a change in the thinking of people and initiate resistance to the rationale of chaupadi pratha, as the respondents who are arguing against the practice are educated young women.

**Responses to Question 7: Can collaboration between the government of Nepal and NGOs help in eradicating chhaupadi pratha in remote areas such as the far western region?**

Respondents were hesitant to provide an answer to this question as they lacked proper knowledge of how this collaboration would work. Respondents were free to answer the questions asked in the survey as per their will. No conclusive answer could be generated to this question.

**Responses to Question 8: Have financial instability and lack of education widened the gap between men and women and does this force women to practice chhaupadi pratha?**

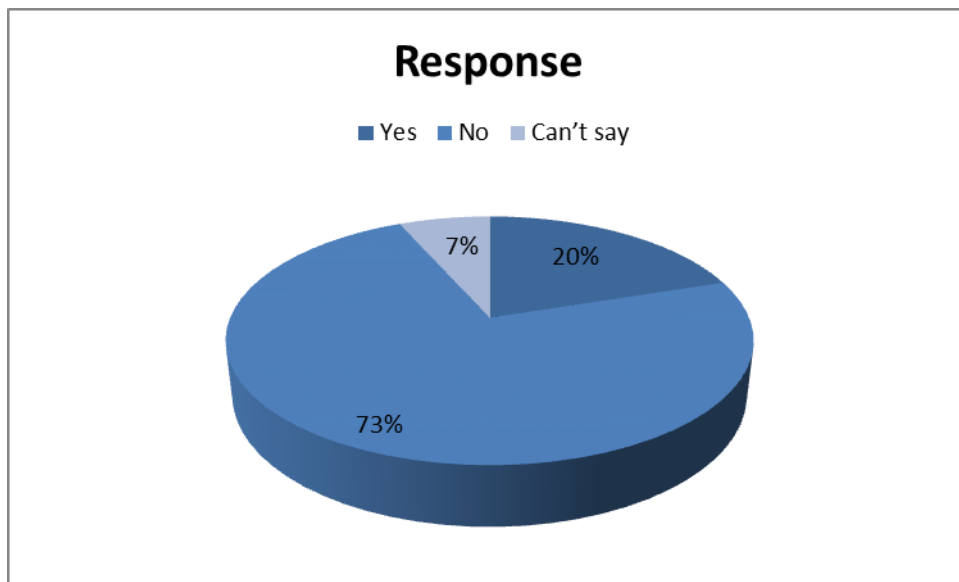
Options	Response
Yes	19
No	3
Can't say	8



**Analysis:** The majority of the respondents replied positively to the question asked. Financial instability restricts women from maintaining proper menstrual hygiene and lack of education, limits their financial independence and makes them dependent of the family income. Respondents reported that because their current family income is already stretched thin, practising proper MHM is of secondary importance. Financial stability and education can provide support to a female to stand against this practice. These factors have widened the gap between males and females. A few respondents disagree with the statement though as they feel that there are other factors which force them to practice chhaupadi pratha such as lack of support from the government and family members.

**Responses to Question 9: Were government policies and measures successful in combating chhaupadi pratha? If not, please specify the reasons**

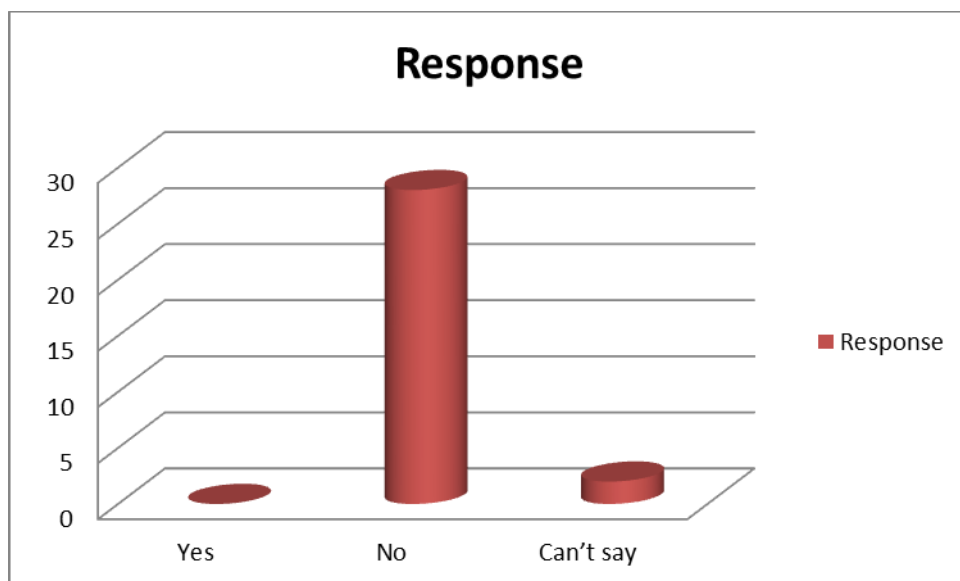
Options	Response
Yes	6
No	22
Can't say	2



**Analysis:** 22 out of 30 respondents believed that government policies and measures were unsuccessful in combating chhaupadi pratha in Nepal. As per the respondents, limited initiatives were taken to change the mindset of people while that is a root cause of gender inequality. Shame and taboos related to menstruation were not challenged by the government initiatives. Policy initiated by the government of Nepal failed to address the lack of toilets, sanitation, water, and Menstrual Health Management. The efforts of the government had limited reach to rural areas. Poor and unequal development of various regions has affected the effectiveness of the policies initiated by the Nepal government.

**Responses to Question 10: Was destroying sheds to abolish chhaupadi pratha sufficient? If not, please specify what can be done to abolish this pratha in the box.**

Options	Response
Yes	0
No	28
Can't say	2



**Analysis:** 28 out of 30 respondents stated that destroying sheds for abolishing chhaupadi pratha was not sufficient. In fact, according to the women, this has caused more harm to the females practising chhaupadi pratha in Nepal. The only place where females were staying during their menstrual period was destroyed which pushed them to live in cow sheds or open air. This increased risk to their wellbeing and even lives. Destroying the sheds did not destroy the taboo and myth related to menstruation which was the main reason for the continuation of menstrual discrimination. As per a respondent: “there need to be initiatives for building clean and menstrual friendly toilets, increased availability and accessibility of sanitary products as well as provision of menstrual education for adolescent girls”. In the words of another respondent: “there need to be community-driven initiatives which involve men, addressing menstruation as a biological process and not a socially constructed taboo phenomena”.

#### **4.1.3. Overall Analysis**

It is also worth noting that social and cultural menstrual beliefs do not impose uniform restrictions on menstruating women and girls. The severity of these restrictions varies, in Nepal in particular according to women's specific caste and class. Survey respondent K, 21 years born into a lower caste, stated that she experienced more and severe restrictions in comparison to the girls belonging to the upper caste. Respondent Q, 25 years old, stated that people from the upper caste, including menstruating upper caste women would discriminate against and consider women from the lower caste impure even when they were not menstruating. Thus, on menstruating days the discrimination would be worse, with severe restrictions imposed on their mobility, eating habits and community participation. Respondent W, a 26-year-old domestic helper, stated that when the

house owner's daughter (Kshatriya caste) got her first periods, the family celebrated with a ritual that demonstrated "coming out into society", implying that the girl is eligible to marry. However, when the respondents' period arrives, she is not permitted to enter the house, particularly the kitchen, and is forced to work outside, such as in the garden or cleaning the main porch of the house.

These findings highlight the notion as mentioned in the theory of double oppression (Crenshaw, 1986). Firstly, the general stigma and discrimination around menstruation stemming from the concept of impurity limits women's potential to achieve equality and their ability to develop holistically. Secondly, the established caste-based social hierarchical structure makes women from the lower caste more vulnerable to exploitation and limits their decision-making ability to experience safe and hygienic periods as and when compared to the women belonging from the Upper caste. Thus, it is essential to address menstrual discrimination from the perspective of caste.

Similarly, respondents from higher-income families (upper class) practise Chaupadi differently than those from lower-income families. Upper-class respondents were forced to isolate within their own home, but in a separate room, for example with separate utensils to eat with. During Chhaupadi, women from the lower classes were living outside their homes in dilapidated menstrual sheds or animal sheds, with limited amenities to practise safe, hygienic menstruation and nutritional food consumption.

## Chapter 5 - Conclusion and suggestions

### 5.1 Introduction of the chapter

This section will cover measures that can be adopted by the government of Nepal for combating menstrual discrimination and eradicating this practice along with a summary of the key findings of the thesis. The recommendations made in this session are driven from the interview discussions, respondents feedback as well as local Non profit organisations based in the Western Region of Nepal.

### 5.2 Overview of the Primary and Secondary Research findings

**Objective 1: To access the impact of Chhaupadi pratha on the girls and women practising it in Nepal.**

It can be drawn from our primary and secondary research findings that Chhaupadi prohibits women and girls during the menstrual period from participating in routine activities such as attending social gatherings, cooking, eating with everyone, consuming dairy products, touching common wells, tapes and trees and touching cows (Chhabi, et. al., 2015). According to Vaughn (2019), the impact of this practice is seen in the mental, physical and psychological health of a woman and girls. Girls and women have to comply with the rules defined in this practice otherwise they are considered evil (Kathmandu Post,2022). Many women fear losing their social status if found guilty of not following the menstrual restrictions and rules. (Mukherjee, et. al., 2020). They face social exclusion as their families isolate them during the menstrual period. According to Bobel, et. al. (2020), there is a lack of secured door locks, and sanitation and safety concerns. Women and girls practising chhaupadi pratha stay in a hut outside the home which makes them prone to various diseases,sexual abuse, harassment and rape and attacks from animals like a snake. According to Yilmaz, et. al. (2021), several cases of death have been reported because of chhaupadi pratha but the majority of cases go unreported due to stigma and fear of dishonouring the name of the family in society.

Various human rights of women and girls are being violated by chhaupadi pratha and these include the right to be free from gender discrimination article 24(1) and 29(2), equality and social justice article 18, reproductive health article 38, work, education article 26 of the Universal declaration of human rights and access to water and sanitation and those women can access all the basic facilities necessary to ensure their wellbeing and hygiene (Kawata, et. al., 2022). The articles violated by chhaupadi pratha are articles 12 and 20 of the interim constitution of 2007 Nepal (Nepali, 2017). As per cultural relativism, local belief systems and ways of life in Nepal are linked directly to chhaupadi pratha as it is a part of the culture and social identity of different communities in Nepal (Rosenberg, et. al., 2017). Socio-cultural norms and traditional beliefs form the base for this practice which is resulting in fear and feeling of dehumanisation among women and girls in Nepal. The mobility of women and girls is restricted during the menstrual period which is violating their right to freedom and equality (Kandel, 2019). The continuation of chhaupadi has violated various international agreements including The International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The articles violated in this convention are articles 1 to 5 and to 14 (United Nations General Assembly, 2022).

Gender-based discrimination is the outcome of practising chhaupadi pratha as women are restricted from attending schools and colleges during the menstrual period which is resulting in absenteeism. School dropout is a common issue among women and girls in Nepal and the menstruation taboo is an important responsibility for this. The performance of girls also gets affected due to absenteeism. As per a report published in 2018, 15 to 20 % of girls missed school in Nepal due to menstruation (Dahel, et. al., 2017). This creates lack of knowledge, skill, education and resources which in return affects their employment opportunities and financial independency (Goldblatt & Steele, 2019). The performance of women and girls get affected on the job due to menstruation which limits their career growth chances (Rothchild & Piya, 2020)

**Objective 2: To examine the reasons responsible for the limited effects of the initiatives and policies taken by the Nepal government.**

There are several reasons for the government of Nepal's limited success in effectively implementing policies and measures. These factors are responsible for the continuation of chhaupadi pratha in Nepal. As per our research finding, based on primary and secondary data, superstitious and traditional belief towards chaupadi was the most common factor which contributed towards the continuation of Chhaupadi. This has been followed by social pressure by the society and limited efforts of the government of Nepal, which has affected the effectively implementing policies and measures. The beliefs and superstitions in the communities have paved the way for the continuation of chhaupadi pratha. Thus, cultural barriers are restricting the implementation of the laws and policies (Vaughn, 2019).

Secondly the respondents also mentioned the lack of adequate mechanism has created loophole in the implementation process. For instance, the lack of endorsement of the Menstrual Hygiene Management policy issued in 2019 has also contributed towards the continuation of this practice. The lack of procedural laws in the Local Government Operation Act of 2017 and no explicit mention of eradicating chhaupadi pratha in the Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Rights Act of 2018 have left the objective of these acts vague and open to diverse interpretation, creating lapses in the fight against menstrual discrimination (Fry, et. al., 2022). Furthermore, the lack of education and awareness resulted in the use of improper approaches such as destroying chhau sheds which forced girls and women to use cowsheds and animal sheds, thus enhancing the it vulnerabilities to diseases, exploitation (Preiss, 2017). Chhaupadi pratha is practised at the homes of politicians, local leaders, and police (BBC, 2017). The coordination is absent among the administration, police, court, family, schools, society and health facilities.

Another factor which has been limiting in is the geographical location of western Nepal, as mentioned by the Attorney General of Shudrapaschim. The Government is unable to reach remote areas which have contributed to the continuation of this practice in remote areas. Lastly, lack of support for females from family and society has restricted them from raising their voices against injustice (Rathore, 2019).

**Objective 3: To explore the approaches that can be used by the government of Nepal for the successful initiation and implementation of the policies and initiatives**

Chhaupadi pratha is deeply rooted in unfounded fears and ignorance and this must be eradicated. The government needs to adopt sound measures for the formation and implementation of the policies in a better way. A few measures that can be adopted by the government to uplift the condition of females practising Chhaupadi pratha in Nepal and combating menstrual discrimination are discussed below:

**The policy needs to take into account the complexity of caste and patriarchy** which affects the way women are menstruating. Menstrual taboos are intended to maintain caste and patriarchal systems in order to continue the dominance of the upper caste men (Sukumar, 2020). These taboos, which consider women to be unclean and contaminating during their periods, relate to the belief system that women are subordinate, allowing men to influence and control women and their sexuality. The current discourses on menstrual equity do not recognise ritual purity as a mechanism for perpetuating social inequality and the caste system (Sukumar, 2020). Therefore, it is important to see the issue of menstrual inequality from an intersectional lens, instead of applying an all encompassing blanket policy which will affect the effective implementation of policy.

**Spreading awareness by targeting young female influencers and gaining media attention to this matter:** The focus of the government of Nepal should be on spreading awareness to eradicate this practice and for this purpose, young female influencers can be targeted. Social media platforms are widely in use and these platforms can help in spreading awareness by sharing information related to the taboos related to menstruation (Evans, 2022). Gaining the support of social media influencers and celebrities can help in breaking down the taboos related to menstrual health and hygiene. Behavioural change can be brought about by trusted local influencers (Evans, 2022). Movies are used by people to spread awareness of the social taboos which are affecting the lives of people adversely. Various movies are being made and offering free tickets to people to view the movie can help in spreading awareness (Proulx, 2019). Few of these movies are *I am not untouchable*. *I just have my period* – a short film, *Panchayat* and *Padman* (ANI, 2018).

**Menstrual educational programs:** Initiating menstrual educational programs can be of great use for spreading awareness and making females aware of their rights. The educational program can help in busting the myths and taboos related to menstruation. The perception and opinions of people can be influenced by initiating menstrual educational programs (Bam, 2020). Menstruating women face harmful behaviour because of social norms but by ensuring menstrual education, adequate knowledge can be transferred into society. Including menstrual discrimination in the education system can help in bringing up the issue in society and making people aware of the harm of this practice. With the help of menstrual educational programs, de-stigmatisation of menstruation (Pokharel & Regan, 2019). Gender-based hierarchies can be broken with the help of education as illiteracy results in the feeling of inferiority in females. Education will empower women and girls which will help them in standing against menstruation discrimination and fight for their rights (Welle, 2022).

**Forming an audit committee which will be responsible for checking the progress and effectiveness of the policies and measures initiated by the Government of Nepal:** Laws and

policies formulated are being implemented well or not must be checked on a regular basis so that the people involved in implementation are not misusing the power (Mishra, 2019). Gaps in the policies and measures can be identified with the help of this audit committee (Kathmandu Post, 2022).

**Investment in sanitary pads, clean toilets, access to water and other hygiene facilities required for clean menstrual management:** Government must invest in these facilities for females as they have limited or no access to these facilities (Ozturk, 2020). Investing in these can help in ensuring clean menstrual management and eliminating the chances of diseases suffered by females due to unhygienic menstrual practices. Shame and taboos associated with menstruation can be overcome with the help of this initiative (Recnick, 2021).

**Initiating an awareness campaign to educate males and females about the basic human rights of females and motivate them to report the cases:** Camps and campaigns can be organised by the government at different locations so that they can spread awareness regarding menstrual discrimination as a harmful practice (Urban, 2020). Government can initiate skits or role-play campaigns for presenting a better picture and making people aware of the harm. These campaigns can help in communicating the rights of females and making them aware of the procedure to report the cases (Biggs, 2021). It is essential to spread awareness and educate males in society so that social pressure can be eliminated and support for females can be generated in their families. It is important to target the mindset and taboo related to menstruation which is restricting females from enjoying their basic fundamental and basic human rights. Participation of males is also required for the eradication of this pratha from its roots (Rai, 2022).

**Considering discrimination related to menstruation as a human rights issue:** There is a gap between the forming and implementation of laws and this gap can be filled by considering menstruation discrimination as a human rights issue (Kathmandu Post, 2022). Sound enforcement is missing in the laws and bans as the implementation process has been slow. A need for better enforcement is there along with the establishment of sound policies by considering practical aspects (Baumann, et. al., 2019).

**Anonymous complaint system:** Females do not wish to report the case because of the fear and boycott by the family and society. An anonymous complaint system will help in motivating women and girls to register the case of chhaupadi pratha without the fear of being caught by the family and society for filing a complaint (Amnesty, 2019). Social pressure and fear restrict the females from reporting the case of chhaupadi pratha. Under this complaint system, the name and details of the person reporting the case of chhaupadi pratha will be kept confidential to protect the person (Almeida, 2020).

**Involving leaders and politicians:** Involving the leaders and politicians in incorporating and implementing the laws can help in changing harmful social norms. The role of community members is crucial for the successful implementation of the laws and policies for combating menstrual discrimination. These leaders and politicians can bring this system into the limelight and encourage others to change their behaviour. They have the power to influence others in a positive way so involving them in the implementation process of policies and measures can ensure better control of the situation (Joshi & Acharya, 2022). They have a strong reach even in remote areas so involving them can help in combating menstrual discrimination in urban as well as rural areas. Examples can be set by the leaders and politicians in their areas so that people get motivated to adopt the changes. It is important to change the mindset of people towards menstruation so that chhaupadi pratha can be eliminated (Republica, 2019).

**Partnering with international and local organisations:** The government of Nepal can focus on partnering with global and local organisations as this collaboration will help in reaching remote areas for eradicating this practice. These organisations are working against menstrual discrimination so that better conditions can be offered to females (Sharma, et. al., 2022). By collaborating with these organisations, the Government of Nepal can access remote areas well as spread awareness regarding the harmful practice of chhaupadi. Better support and reporting system can be established which will motivate the females to register their complaints without any fear. A few of the organisations are MHM Alliance, GIZ, Restless Development Nepal and Artsy (Samiti, 2020).

### 5.3 Conclusion

Thus, chhaupadi pratha is a practice related to menstruation which is followed in Nepal. This thesis has investigated the impact of chhaupadi pratha on the well-being of women and girls and the reasons responsible for the limited impact of the policies and measures taken by the government of Nepal. Chhaupadi pratha banishes girls and women from enjoying their basic human rights as they are forced to stay in a shed which is unsafe.

Chhaupadi pratha is a part of the culture and tradition of Nepal due to which it is deeply rooted in Nepal. Various cases of death go unreported due to the fear of humiliation in Nepal. Laws and policies have been introduced and international agreements are signed by Nepal government to eradicate chhaupadi pratha. But the continuation of chhaupadi pratha in Nepal shows the violation of these laws, policies and international agreements.

Women and girls suffer social exclusion and depression as they are forced to stay away from their families and are not allowed to go outside. Several rights have been violated by the chhaupadi pratha and these include the right to education, freedom, equality, access to health care, reproductive health and access to housing, sanitation, water supply and electricity. The ineffective implementation of government policies is the main reason which resulted in the failure of the efforts of the government of Nepal. The lack of participation of politicians, local leaders and police also resulted in the continuation of chhaupadi pratha in Nepal.

Limited or no access to remote areas in Nepal is another factor. There is an absence of an adequate mechanism for the implementation of the policies. The superstition of the power of god is contributing towards the continuation of chhaupadi pratha. There is no support for females which restricts them from raising their voices against the menstrual discrimination. Several measures that can be adopted by the Nepal government are discussed in this thesis.

### 5.4 Summary of the chapter

This chapter has covered recommendations in the form of a few measures that can help the Nepal government in eradicating chhaupadi pratha. A summary of the thesis has been discussed in this section with a motive to summarise the key points.

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## Appendix

### Appendix 1 - Interview Questions

Question 1: What is Chhaupadi pratha? Who is practising this pratha?

Question 2: Why this pratha is practised by several communities?

Question 3: What is the impact of Chhaupadi pratha on the women and girls practising it in Nepal?

Question 4: Do you think Chhaupadi pratha is resulting in compromised human rights of women and girls? If yes, then please mention which rights and how?

Question 5: What are the initiatives and measures taken by the government of Nepal in this direction?

Question 6: What do you think about the effectiveness of the steps taken by the government of Nepal?

Question 7: What do you about the reasons behind the limited impact of the Nepal government in implementing laws and policies for combating menstrual discrimination?

Question 8: What are your suggestions for enhancing the implementation of policies and measures for uplifting the condition of women and girls by completely banning this practice?

## Appendix 2 – Questionnaire for survey

Hello,

I am conducting a thesis on “Chhaupadi Pratha: Analysing governmental policies to combat menstrual discrimination in Nepal”. To collect primary data for the thesis, I have prepared a questionnaire for the survey. You are requested to provide your valuable contribution in the form of information related to the questions asked in this survey. I would like to express my gratitude for your contribution to this work. I ensure that confidentiality will be maintained while presenting the collected data in the thesis. Please answer the questions mentioned below by putting a bullet (●) in the response column in front of the option you agree with:

**Gender:**

**Age:**

**Case/ethnicity:**

**Family occupation:**

**Marital status:**

**Education level:**

**Family monthly income:**

Question 1: Has chhaupadi pratha contributed to gender-based discrimination?

Options	Response
Yes	
No	
Can't say	

Question 2: Please select the root cause for the continuation of chhaupadi pratha in Nepal

Options	Response
Social pressure	
Superstition and traditional/cultural beliefs	

Illiteracy	
Lack of support to women	
Limited efforts of the government of Nepal	
All of the above	

Question 3: Menstrual discrimination affects the educational opportunities available to women?

Options	Response
Yes	
No	
Can't say	

Question 4: Mental, physical and psychological health of women gets affected while practising chhaupadi pratha?

Options	Response
Yes	
No	
Can't say	

Question 5: Human rights of women and girls are getting compromised due to chhaupadi pratha?

Options	Response
Yes	

No	
Can't say	

Question 6: Menstrual educational programs can help in eradicating menstrual discrimination and chhaupadi pratha in Nepal.

Options	Response
Highly agree	
Agree	
Neutral	
Disagree	
Highly disagree	

Question 7: Collaboration between the government of Nepal and NGOs can help in eradicating chhaupadi pratha from remote areas such as the far western region?

Options	Response
Yes	
No	
Can't say	

Question 8: Financial instability and lack of education have widened the gap between men and women which has forced women to practice chhaupadi pratha.

Options	Response
Yes	

No	
Can't say	

Question 9: Government policies and measures were successful in combating chhaupadi pratha?  
If not, please specify the reasons

Options	Response	Reason for response
Yes		
No		
Can't say		

Question 10: Was destroying sheds to abolish chhaupadi pratha sufficient? If not, please specify what can be done to abolish this pratha in the box.

Options	Response	Reason for response
Yes		
No		
Can't say		