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Is higher education a factor in caste based socio-economic deprivation in Nepal?

Dr. Drona P. Rasali, PhD, FACE*

Founding Moderator

Nepaldalitinfo International

Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
University of Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada

* Fellow of American College of Epidemiology

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Why do we need to measure caste-based deprivation or freedom?

- ▶ In case of Nepal similar to all South-Asian countries, caste-based deprivation stems from religious, political and socio-economic discrimination against traditional occupational class of people leading to centuries of their oppression against their freedom, development and empowerment, depriving their rights to live with human dignity.
- ▶ Any democratic state of 21st century has responsibilities to remove any unjust caste-based disparity that is unacceptable today and requires measuring and monitoring towards its eventual elimination.
- ▶ It is important to develop indicators for measuring the level of freedom from caste-based oppression and deprivation.

Composite measure of caste-based freedom and deprivation

- ▶ Many countries especially in the western world (e.g. Australia, Canada) have developed composite measure in the form of an index of socio-economic deprivation aiming at reducing unjust socio-economic inequities across their sub-populations.
- ▶ Index for caste-based freedom (or deprivation) is a new development especially through the efforts of civil society activism undertaken in India as well as more currently being spearheaded by ICDR.
- ▶ A composite index measuring overall level of caste-based freedom (deprivation in the flipside) requires a large number of measurable indicators for geographic, demographic, socio-economic and socio-political dimensions.
- ▶ Using statistical methods, these measures can be combined to develop a single index score to compare across caste groups.

Why is higher education attainment so important in Nepal?

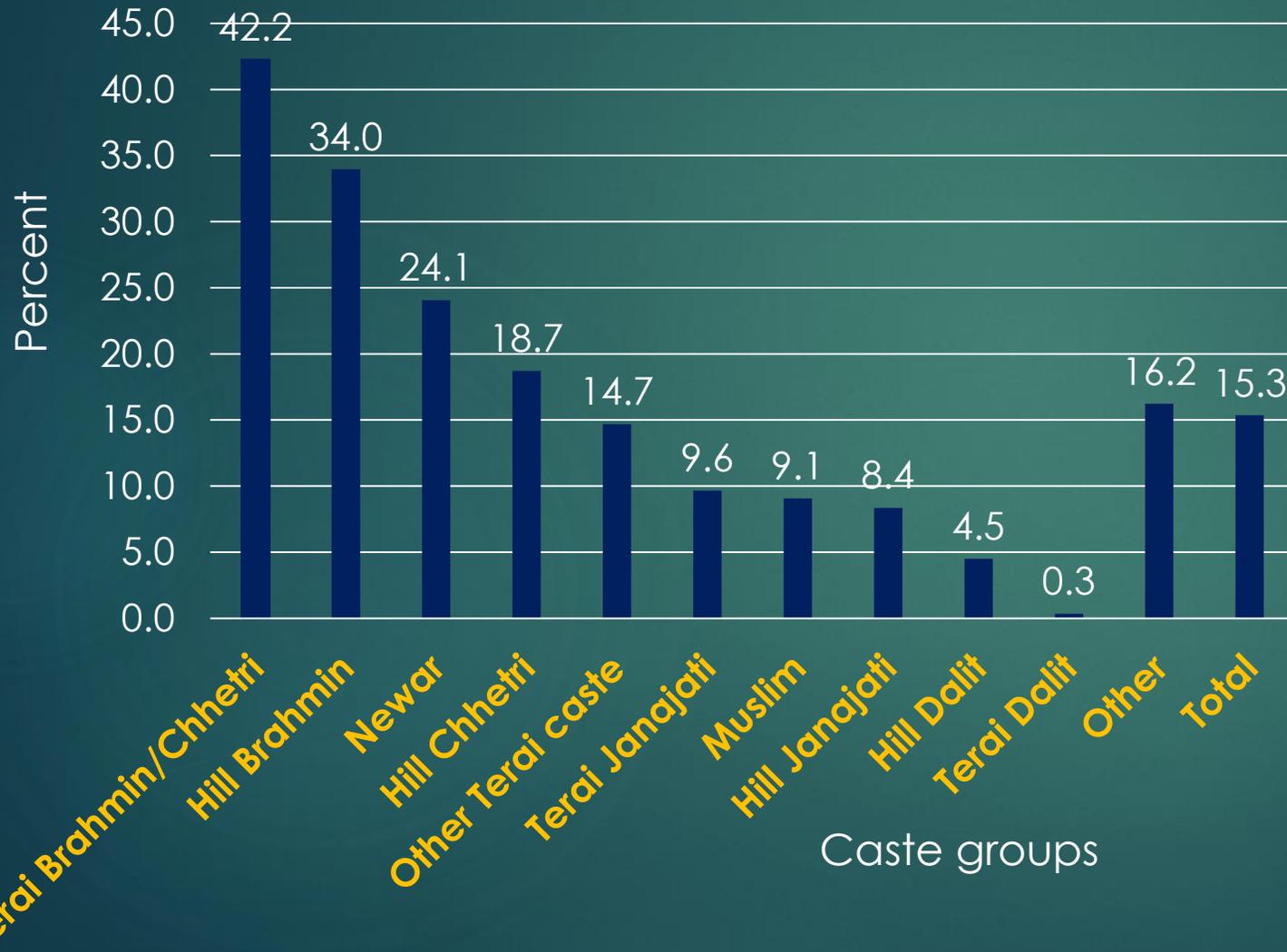
- ▶ With not much natural resources or production systems to tap on, human capital is the single most important economic sector in Nepal today.
- ▶ Nepal has a 'paradox' in education attainment:
 - ❖ Higher education is regarded as a universal way to success in life. There is a general craze for higher education in the society. No wonder, Nepal, one of the poorest countries of the world ranks very high (11th) in the proportion of international students enrolled in the US Universities and colleges.
 - ❖ Higher education is serving as a tool of caste-based deprivation - only the people of so-called 'high' caste have proximity to access it.
- ▶ For this reason, higher education attainment should be taken as an important factor in determining the level of deprivation (or the extent of freedom) and included in multi-factorial analysis of developing a composite index.

Analysis of male higher education attainment in Nepal, NDHS, 2011

- ▶ In this presentation, I am examining higher education attainment across various caste/ethnic groups of Nepal to demonstrate the extent of its disparity across them at the sub-region level of Nepal.
- ▶ I have used National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS), 2011 data for my analysis.
- ▶ Male recode dataset of NDHS 2011 was selected for the analysis assuming that the males are potentially the demographic group that would have attained the higher proportion in higher education attainment in all caste groups.
- ▶ Simple frequency and cross-tabs were analyzed:
 - ❖ By caste/ethnic groups
 - ❖ By sub-regions (Development regions x Geo-ecological zones)

Nepal's case

Percentage of male population (15-59) attaining higher education by Caste groups, NDHS 2011

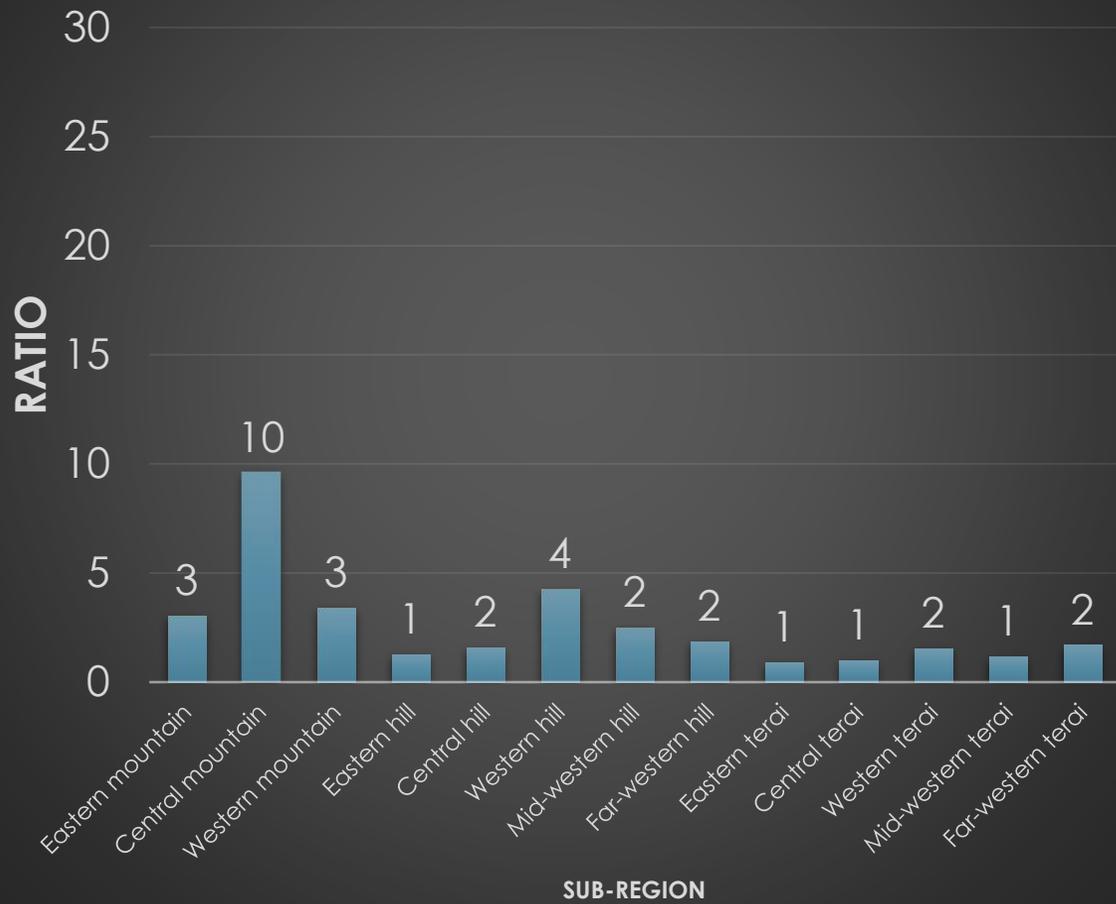


- ▶ Clearly, Terai Brahmin/Chhetri, Hill Brahmin, Newar and Hill Chhetri have highest to higher proportion of 25 to 59 year old people attaining higher education, above the national average of 15.3%
- ▶ Muslim and Janajati groups have the lower proportion of higher education attainment.
- ▶ Terai Dalit (0.3%) and Hill Dalit (4.5%) are the lowest and second lowest in the ranks.

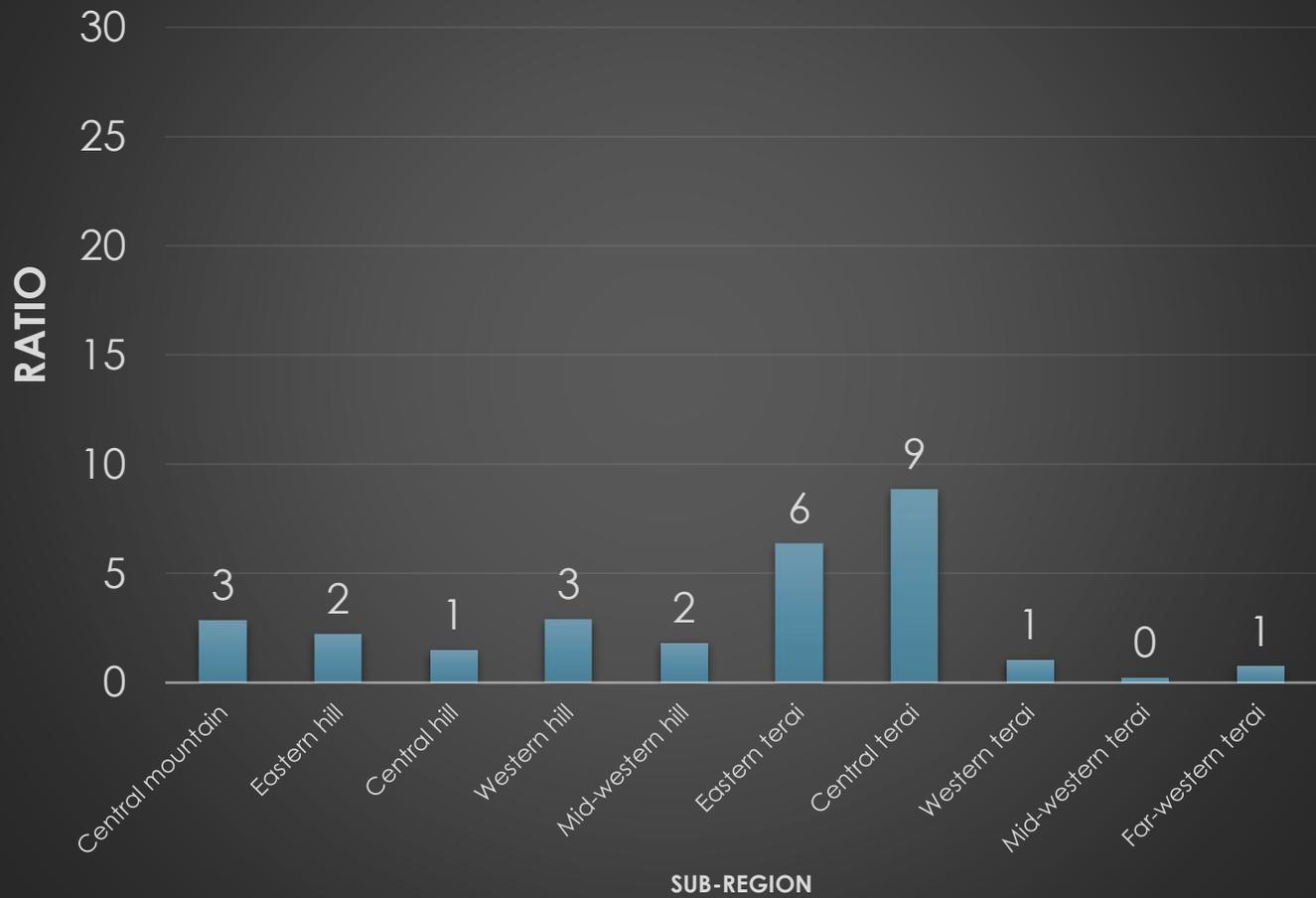
Nepal's case

- Hill Brahmin had higher education attainment ranging from equal to 9 or 10 times more than Hill Chhetri and Newar depending upon the sub-region.

Disparity ratio of higher education level between Hill Brahmin and Hill Chhetri, by Sub-region, NDHS 2011.



Disparity ratio of higher education level between Hill Brahmin and Newar, by Sub-region, NDHS 2011.



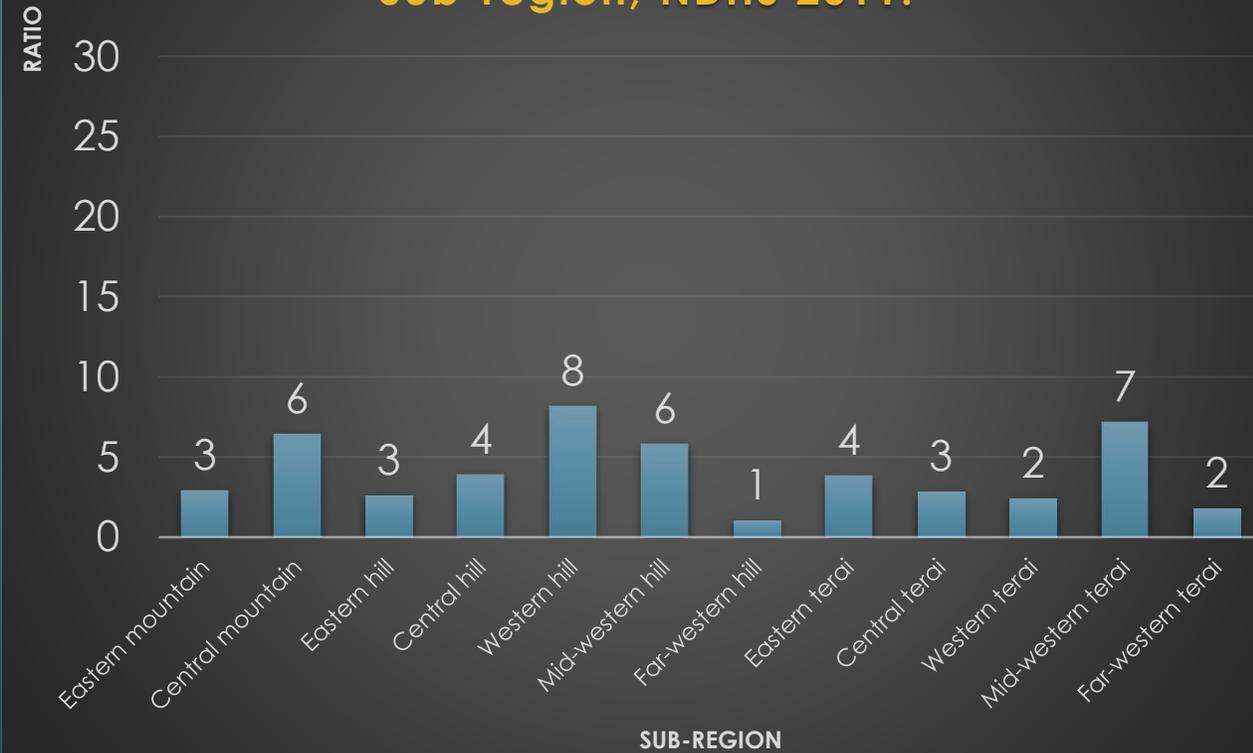


- Hill Brahmin had higher education attainment as high as up to 24 times more than Hill Dalit, depending upon the sub-region.
- Hill Brahmin had higher education attainment as high as upto 7 or 8 times more than Hill Janajati depending upon the sub-region.

Disparity ratio of higher education level between Hill Brahmin and Hill Dalit, by Sub-region, NDHS 2011.



Disparity ratio of higher education level between Hill Brahmin and Hill Janajati, by Sub-region, NDHS 2011.



Conclusions

- ▶ **Analysis of data for men across caste/ethnic groups in Nepal**
 - ❖ shows clear evidence of caste-based disparity in higher education attainment, and it is a candidate indicator for caste-based freedom (or deprivation)
 - ❖ This indicator should be included in the Caste-base Freedom Index or any caste based deprivation index.
- ▶ **Similar analyses of data are needed for many other indicators relating to geography, demography, socio-economic and political dimensions are needed.**



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Thank you for your attention!

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The presenter Dr. Drona Rasali, a member of Dalit community of Nepal. He is the founding moderator of *nepaldalitinfo* international network for Dalits of Nepal. Dr. holds an academic position of Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research at the University of Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada and carries a professional designation Fellow of American College of Epidemiology (FACE). Currently, he serves as a leading professional in the field of population health surveillance in Canada, and is based in Vancouver, British Columbia.

He can be reached at: drona.rasali@gmail.com



(Disclaimer: The opinions expressed by the presenter do not represent the position of his professional employment in BC's Provincial Health Services Authority in Canada, but are contributions as part of his giving back to his own community on voluntary basis.)