SCROL

Safety for Children and their Rights OnLine

Exploring Teachers' perspectives on Online Safety and Digital Behaviour in Nepal:

Perspectives from Child-Led Research

Terre des Hommes Netherlands

POSTCODE LOTERIJ

Executive Summary

This report presents the findings from Phase 2 of the Child-Led Research conducted under the Safety for Children and their Rights Online (SCROL) programme in Nepal. This phase focused on exploring teachers' perspectives on online safety and digital behaviour, particularly in relation to the prevention of Online Child Sexual Exploitation (OCSE).

Implemented across Bagmati and Gandaki provinces, the research was led by children aged 11–17 who voluntarily participated after receiving orientation on OCSE. Through a participatory process, children developed the research questions, identified the respondents, and collected data from 328 teachers across both provinces.

Key Findings:

- While most teachers acknowledged the importance of educating children on online dangers, a number felt unprepared or hesitant to address such sensitive topics.

- Teachers in Gandaki demonstrated stronger familiarity with digital safety laws, whereas teachers in Bagmati showed greater openness towards children's online expressions and emotional wellbeing.

- Misconceptions and stigmatising views of gender expression online were more prevalent in Gandaki, with behaviours often perceived as fraudulent or inappropriate.

- In Bagmati, a lack of awareness and integration of Nepal's internet safety laws in teaching practices was observed, with 86% of teachers not including these frameworks in their classroom discussions.

Recommendations:

- Provide regular, targeted training for teachers on OCSE, digital safety, and psychosocial approaches to handling sensitive issues.
- Develop simplified legal toolkits and orientation materials to strengthen teachers' understanding of Nepal's internet safety laws.
- Promote preventive and supportive approaches within school settings, moving away from punitive responses to students' online misbehaviour.
- Facilitate inclusive and gender-sensitive training for teachers to foster empathy and reduce stigma towards gender non-conforming behaviour online.
- Encourage digital wellbeing practices by involving both teachers and parents in promoting balanced and mindful use of social media.

This research highlights the need for a comprehensive, standardised, and inclusive digital literacy framework for educators in Nepal. It also reinforces the importance of child-led initiatives in influencing policy and practice, and in ensuring that children's voices remain central to the development of safe and supportive digital environments.

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Context

In recent years, the increased use of social media and digital platforms by children and teenagers has heightened concerns about their online safety, particularly regarding the risk of online sexual exploitation.
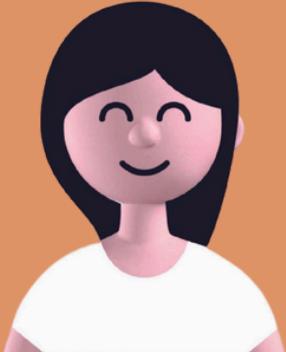
As smartphones and internet access continue to grow, the issue of Online Sexual Exploitation of Children (OSEC) has increased significantly in Nepal. Unfortunately, many teachers and caregivers remain unaware of the dangers, with a common misconception that online exploitation does not constitute real exploitation.

In Nepal, teachers' awareness and preparedness regarding online safety for students is a growing concern, especially with the increasing use of digital platforms in education and daily life. A study Cybersecurity Challenges and Awareness of the Multi-Generational Learners in Nepal (Dhungana, R. K., Gurung, L., & Poudyal, H. 2023, October) highlights that teachers have very low awareness and competencies to protect students from cybersecurity-related challenges. Similarly, during the consultations with teachers and caregivers under the SCROL program, it has been identified that teachers and caregivers lack the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively protect students from online risks, including cyberbullying, exploitation, and exposure to harmful content. This lack of awareness is a barrier to creating safe and inclusive learning environments.

Background

The Safety for Children and their Rights OnLine (SCROL) Nepal programme implemented under the SCROL programme is implemented in three other countries namely Philippines, Cambodia and Kenya.

The programme aims to protect 12 to 18 year children in Bagmati and Gandaki provinces and the National capital Kathmandu of Nepal from Online Child Sexual Exploitation (OCSE) by creating a safe family and community environment through collaborative engagement with Children, Families and Communities, Law Enforcement Agencies, Government Departments, Formal and Informal Human Rights Mechanisms and the Private Sector.

Child-Led Research is one of the major components of "Safety for Children and their Rights Online" – SCROL programme. To enhance the meaningful engagement and participation of children, the programme engaged children in child-led research. The 1st phase of the Child-Led Research was conducted among peers and parents to explore their online experience and safety.

Children from Bagmati and Gandaki reached out to their peers and parents for this research, gaining some significant findings that were disseminated among the duty bearers for their immediate action. The summary reports from the first phase of the child research are referred to as **Report 1** and **Report 2**. As a continuation of the process, Phase 2 of child-led research was conducted, in which children, this time, decided to explore teachers' perspectives on online safety and digital behaviour. The research was led by children and supported by youth changemakers (older adolescents trained to support and mentor younger child researchers), who played a supportive role in guiding the research process and assisting with documentation, as well as the programme team for report preparation.

In the research, children themselves chose the topic and respondents, allowing them to explore online safety from their own perspective. This child-led approach not only empowered children but also helped surface concerns and experiences that adults might have otherwise overlooked.

Objectives of the Research

- To engage children and young people in conducting research on related topics of online safety that matters to them the most.

- To undertake children's research topic on online safety rather than being the subjects of the research.

- To bring children and young people's views to the public debate in order to contribute to addressing the issues that they want to raise on online safety.

Methodology

Identification and Selection of Children Researchers

SCROL has conducted peer-to-peer sessions on OCSE prevention in both Bagmati and Gandaki Provinces. Under SCROL, peer educators reach out to children for OCSE sensitisation, and children who are oriented on OCSE are motivated to raise awareness in their families and communities. For child-led research, the participation of child researchers was completely voluntary. Children oriented on OCSE were approached for the research, and those who wanted to participate voluntarily were selected as the children's researchers. In Bagmati, 64 children showed interest in engaging in phase 2 of the child-led research. In Gandaki, 12 children showed interest in being child researchers and conducting research among the teachers. The children researchers are 11 - 17 years old and those who have received orientation on the OCSE. They voluntarily participated in the research process.

Orientation to the Children Researchers

Twelve children from Bagmati and 64 from Gandaki who showed interest in becoming child researchers were oriented toward child-led research on OCSE in the respective provinces by the partner organisations. Furthermore, peer educators were in continuous reach with the peer educators mobilised by the programme.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The collected data were submitted to the peer educators by the children. Through peer educators, it was further submitted to the partners. The data was tabulated and analysed by the partners and two separate reports were submitted to TdH from Bagmati and Gandaki Province.

Selection of Research Questionnaire

As this was completely participatory research, questions were also designed by the children themselves. Within the OCSE topic in Phase 2, children preferred to explore OCSE among their teachers. Hence, consultation was done among the children to develop the questions they would like to explore among teachers. Children came up with 20 questions in Gandaki and 19 in Bagmati Province. To avoid duplication in questions and to make research less heavy for children, 10 questions out of 39 were selected for conducting the 2nd Phase of Child-Led Research among teachers.

Data Collection Method

A simple random sampling method was used to collect data among the teachers. In Bagmati Province, 64 Children and researchers conducted the research among 256 teachers. Each child Researcher reached four teachers in Bagmati. In Gandaki Province, 12 Children researchers conducted the research among 72 teachers. Each child researcher reached six teachers in Gandaki Province.

Ethical Considerations

The study was explained to all the stakeholders, and their right to remain anonymous was respected. The children were made aware that the research is entirely voluntary, and researchers/participants can leave the research at any time. The researchers and participants were informed that they were not entitled to remuneration for partaking in the research. Consent was obtained from all respondents before they participated in the study. Prior approval was taken from the participants for using their story, photos & videos.

Views of teachers on online safety and digital behavior

1) Should children learn about online dangers like child sexual exploitation?

Gandaki:
YES

YES
100%

Bagmati:
Yes
No
Do Not Know

No
4.3%

YES
92.6%
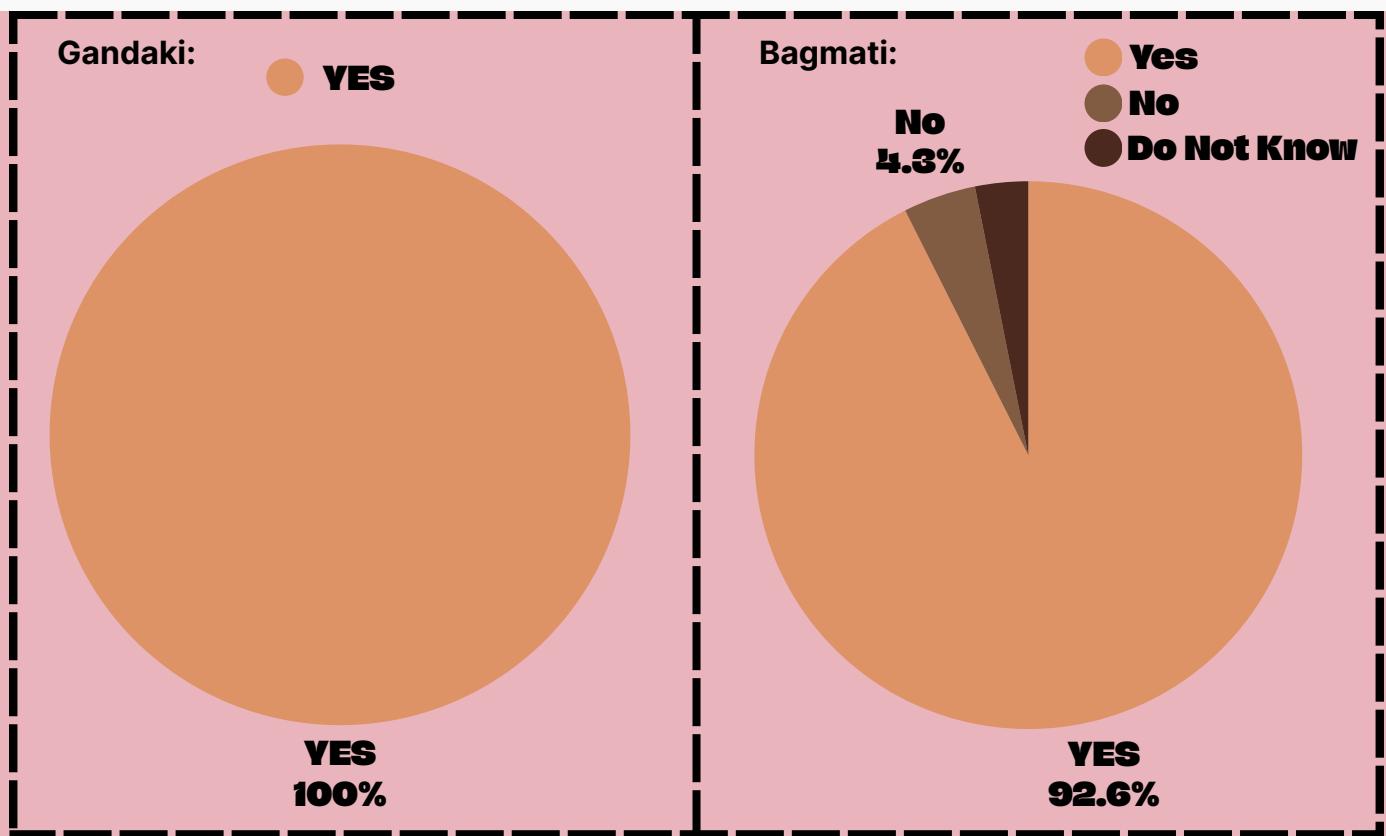
In Gandaki province, out of 72 teachers, 72 (100%) answered "yes" to the question. In Bagmati, 93% agreed that they should be aware of online dangers like child sexual exploitation, especially as we transition into the digital age. 4 per cent shared that it is not teachers' duty to teach children on such sensitive topics. They feel awkward talking about such issues. Three per cent were confused about whether to introduce such topics or not.

2) What would you do if a student is misusing social media or harming others online?

Gandaki:

In Gandaki Province, 42% of teachers emphasised raising awareness about cybercrime, legal actions, and responsible social media use, highlighting the importance of prevention. Eight per cent of teachers responded by taking disciplinary actions.

Raise awareness about cybercrime, legal actions, and responsible social media use	41.67%
Intervene immediately	22.22%
Counseling	16.67%
Teaching students about the pros and cons of social media usage	11.11%
Taking disciplinary actions	8.33%

Bagmati:

Provide educational materials and raise awareness about cybercrime, legal actions, and responsible social media use,	6.25%
Raising awareness on Pros and cons of social media	55.85%
Taking disciplinary actions	26.17%
Ignore the issue	9.37%
Inform parents/guardians	2.34%

Likewise, in Bagmati Province, 55% of teachers emphasised raising awareness on the Pros and Cons of social media, 26% responded to taking disciplinary actions, and 9% shared that they will ignore the issue.

3) How do you teach students to use the internet safely?

Gandaki:
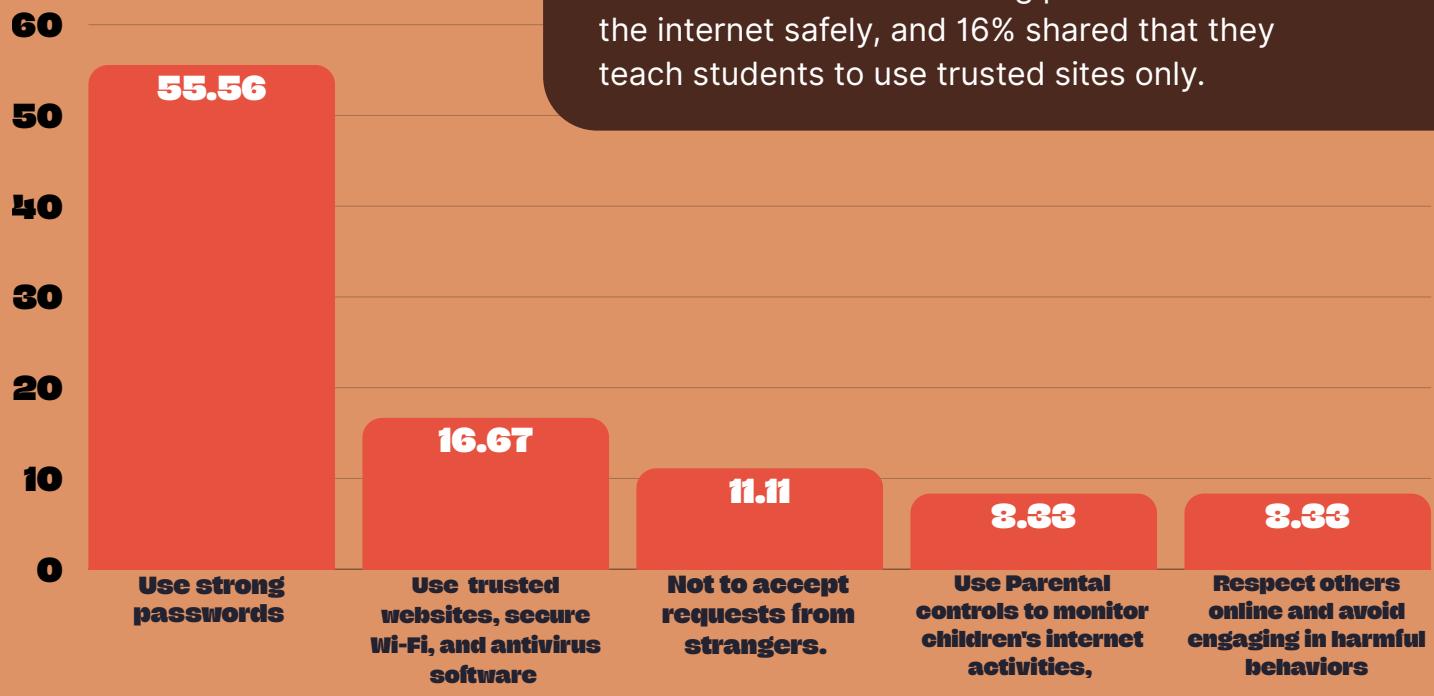
In Gandaki, 56% of teachers shared that they teach students to use strong passwords to use the internet safely, and 16% shared that they teach students to use trusted sites only.

Value	Category
55.56	Use strong passwords
16.67	Use trusted websites, secure Wi-Fi, and antivirus software
11.11	Not to accept requests from strangers.
8.33	Use Parental controls to monitor children's internet activities,
8.33	Respect others online and avoid engaging in harmful behaviors
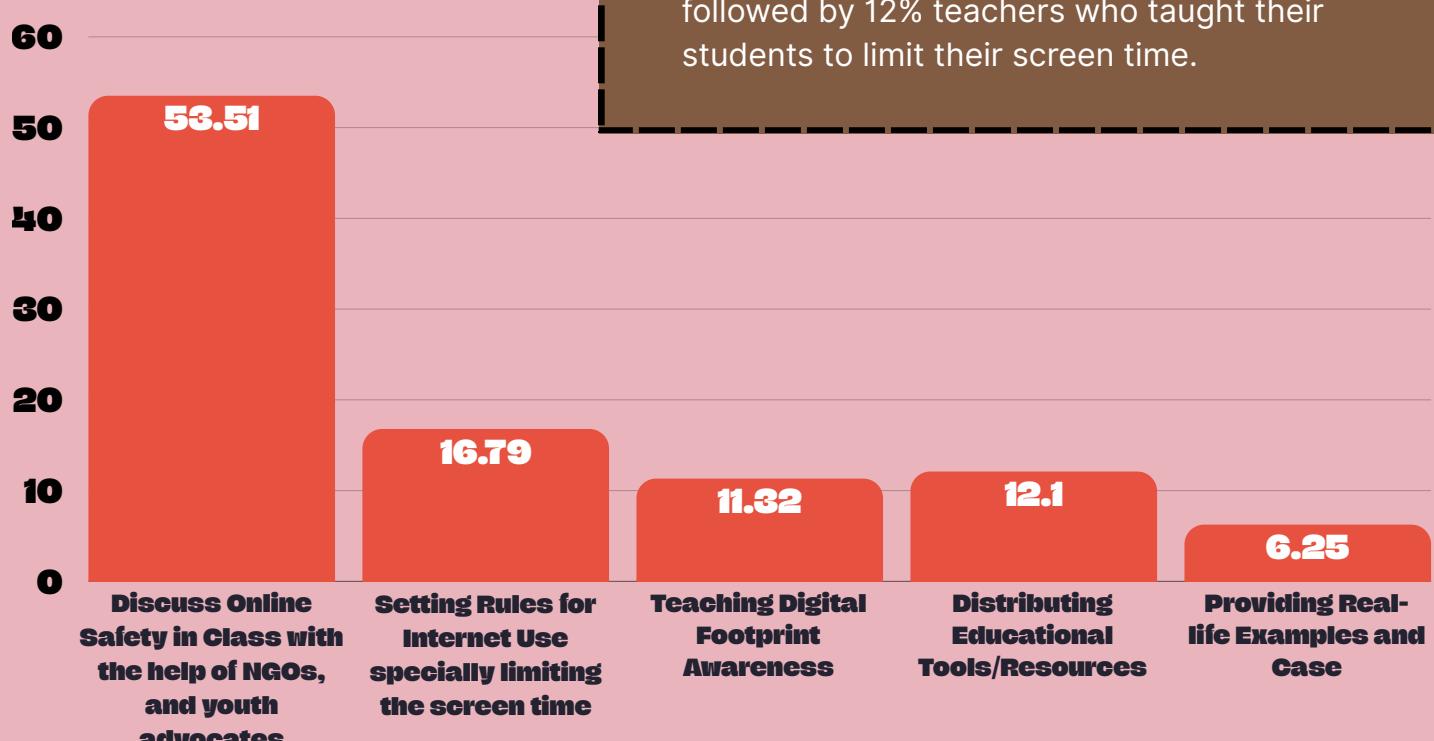
Bagmati:

In Bagmati 53% teachers shared that they discussed online safety with their students followed by 12% teachers who taught their students to limit their screen time.

Value	Category
53.51	Discuss Online Safety in Class with the help of NGOs, and youth advocates
16.79	Setting Rules for Internet Use specially limiting the screen time
11.32	Teaching Digital Footprint Awareness
12.1	Distributing Educational Tools/Resources
6.25	Providing Real-life Examples and Case

4) Do you follow Nepal's internet safety laws in your teaching?

Bagmati:

Gandaki:

14.1%

85.9%

●Confused
●No

5.6%

94.4%
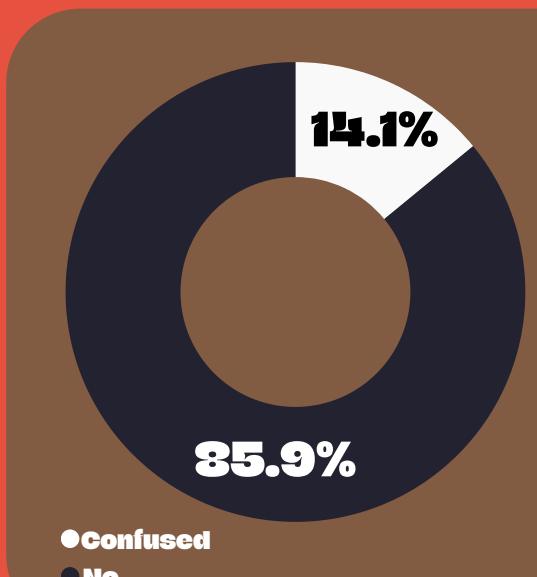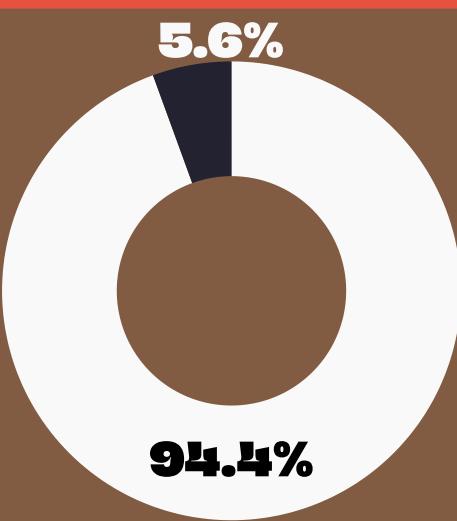
● **Adhere to Nepal's Internet Safety Laws in their teachings**
● **Do not follow the Laws**

In Gandaki, 94 per cent of respondents shared that they adhere to Nepal's internet safety laws in their teaching. In contrast to Gandaki in Bagmati, 86 per cent of teachers said they do not include Nepal's Internet Safety laws in their teaching, and 14 per cent shared that they are not clear on it. This shows the critical need to inform teachers about existing laws and policies to prevent children from online child sexual exploitation in Bagmati Province.

5) Are you connected with your students on social media? If yes, which platforms?

Gandaki:

Facebook and Messenger	72.22 %	**Tiktok**	2.78 %
Viber	9.72%	**Snapchat**	1.39%
Instagram	5.56%	**Zoom**	1.39%
Whatsapp	4.17%	**not connected on Social Media**	2.78 %

Bagmati:

Facebook and Messenger	23.82%
Instagram	3.51%
Whatsapp	17.96%
Others	1.56%
not connected on Social Media	53.12%

In Gandaki, 97 per cent of teachers were found connected with their students on social media, and only 3 per cent were not associated with their students. The majority, i.e. 72% of teachers, were connected on Facebook, followed by 9% on Viber. In Bagmati, only 47% of teachers were connected, and 53% were not on social media. Likewise, in Gandaki, approx. 24 % of teachers were connected through Facebook, followed by 17% on WhatsApp.

6) Sometimes, harmful apps pop up on social media. What should children/students do?

Gandaki:

Avoiding clicking on suspicious link	4.16%
Blocking	23.61%
Deleting/removing/hiding	20.83%
Phishing as concern	2.7%
Consulting parents, teachers, or experts for guidance.	8.33%
Suggested reporting	2.7%
Combination of blocking and ignoring harmful apps,	8.33%
Ignore harmful apps	29.16

Bagmati:

Category	Value
Blocking and reporting	4.29
Deleting/removing/hiding App	26.95
Consulting trusted adults parents, teachers, or experts for guidance	47.26
Encourage students to talk with youth advocates	21.48
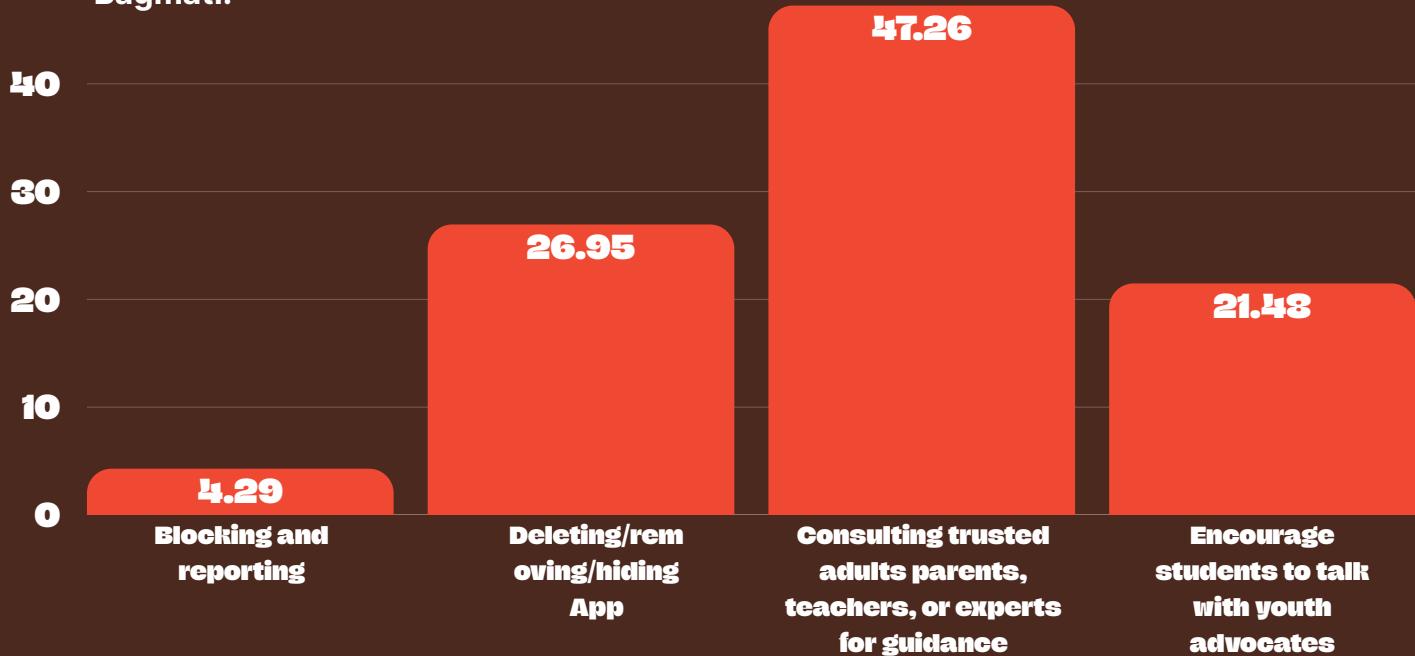
In Gandaki, 29 % teachers shared that children should ignore such harmful apps, and 24 % shared that children should block such content. 21% say they should delete or remove such content from their feed. Approx 3 per cent suggested reporting of such pop-ups. In Bagmati, 47% teachers shared that children should consult with their trusted adults, parents or teachers, 27% shared that children should delete such content, 22% shared that they should contact the peer support network, such as the Red Ant group, and 4% suggested blocking such content.

7) What are the effects of not using social media at all?

Bagmati:

Category	Value
Limited Exposure to Information and Updates:	12.89
Better Focus and Less Distraction	76.95
Social Isolation	2.73
Not Affected by Social Media Trends	7.42

In Bagmati, approx. 77% teachers shared that not using social media will lead to better focus and fewer distractions in studies. However, 2% of teachers shared that it may result in social isolation.
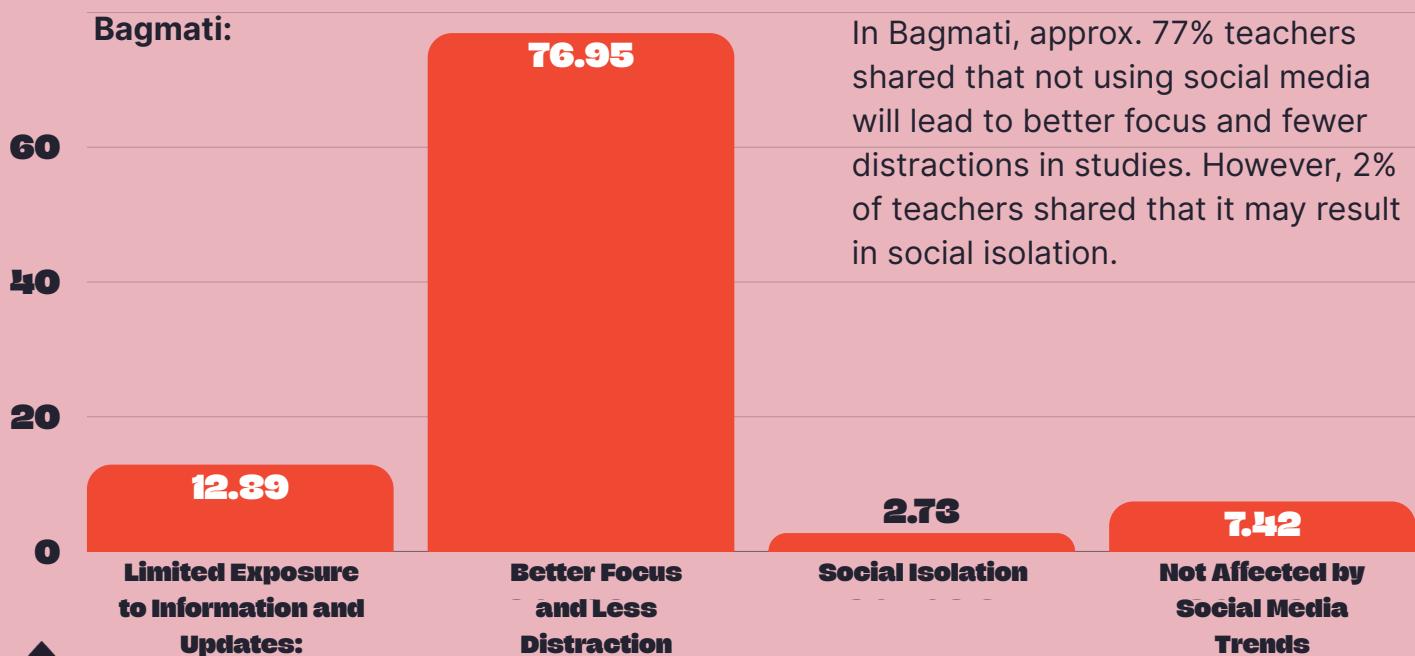
Gandaki:

Limit social interactions and online learning opportunities	16.67%
Missing of information and updates.	38.88%
Enhances productivity, focus, and mental well-being but could also lead to feeling disconnected from social and professional networks.	11.11%
Reduce anxiety and stress	8.33%
More free time and mental clarity	6.94%
Better time management but might leave individuals disconnected from trends and events	5.56%
Avoiding social media enhances privacy and productivity	12.5%

In Gandaki, approx. 39% per cent of teachers shared that not using social media can lead to missing information, and 17% shared that it may lead to limited social interactions. 8% shared that it will help to reduce anxiety and stress.

8) Some boys act like girls and some girls act like boys online. How should we understand this?

Bagmati:

Bar chart:
- Form of self expression: 38.28
- Gender identity exploration: 14.06
- Could be influenced by peer pressure: 3.51
- May reflect confusion or curiousity: 44.14
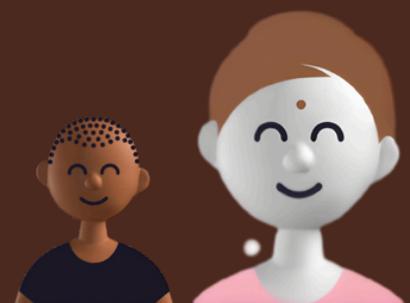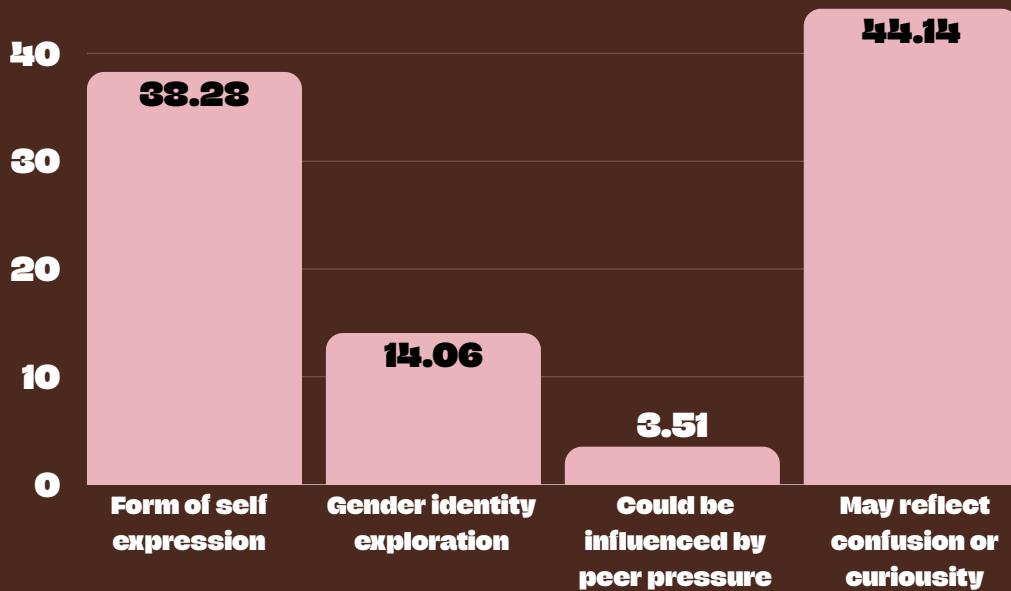
Gandaki:

|				
Fraud	19.44%	Expression or non-binary identity.	9.72%
Cybercrime and cyberbullying	13.89%	Pranks or cybersecurity risks	8.33%
Social media misuse	12.5%	Acting or role-playing	6.94%
Fake identities	11.11%	Attraction toward the opposite sex	5.56
Identity theft	4.17%	Motivations before reacting.	5.56%
Bisexuality	2.78%		

In Gandaki, the majority of teachers, i.e. 19.44% shared that it is fraudulent. 14% shared that it is example of cyberbullying and cybercrime, 12.5 % shared that it is misuse of social media, 11 percent shared that it is fake identities, 9.72% shared that it is expression of identities, 8% thinks that it is prank, 4.17 % thinks that it is identity theft and 2.78% shared that it is due to the bisexual nature of some children. In Bagmati, the majority, i.e. 44.14 % of teachers, shared that children do it out of confusion and curiosity, 38% teachers shared that it is a form of self-expression, 14% teachers think that children explore their gender in such ways, and 3% of teachers believe that it could be peer pressure.
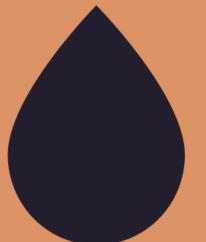
9) Students see words like gay, lesbian, and transgender online. What does that mean and why it is not discussed by teachers?

Gandaki:

|	
Due to societal, cultural, or religious beliefs.	25 %
Not included in the curriculum	19.44%
Feel unable to open up	13.89%
Teachers lack proper training or knowledge to address gender and sexual identity.	11.11%

Considered sensitive, controversial, or inappropriate for children	8.33%
Discuss these topics in certain lessons	6.94 %
Need to provide clear and accurate information	5.56%
Avoided due to parental concerns or community pressure.	5.56%
Mocked or laughed	4.17%

In Gandaki, 25% teachers avoid discussing LGBTQI+ topics due to societal, cultural, or religious beliefs. Additionally, 19% mentioned that the topic is not included in the curriculum, which prevents open discussions in classrooms. Aprox 14% shared that students feel unable to open up to teachers about these subjects, while 11% stated that teachers lack proper training or knowledge to address gender and sexual identity. Furthermore, 8% respondents noted that these topics are considered sensitive, controversial, or inappropriate for children. Meanwhile, 7% teachers shared that they do discuss these topics in certain lessons, and 6% emphasised the need to provide clear and accurate information.

Bagmati:

Value	Category
30.85	Teachers feel unprepared or untrained to discuss LGBTQ+ topics sensitively and accurately.
35.93	Teachers report past experiences of angry phone calls, letters, or school board complaints after mentioning LGBTQ+ topics
33.2	Due to culture of silence
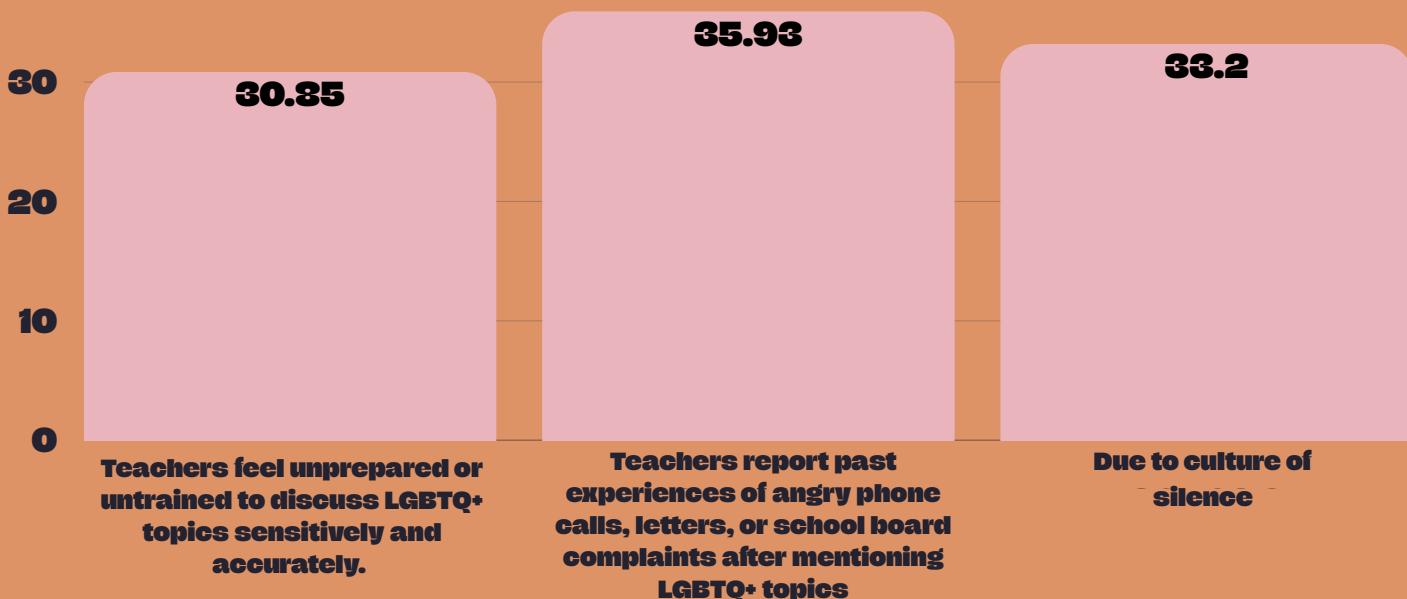
In Bagmati, 35% teachers shared that they got complaints and angry phone calls by parents and guardians when they discussed the issue if LGBTQI+ in the school which restricts them to speak about such issue. 30% teachers shared that they feel untrained to discuss about such sensitive issue. 33% teachers shared that they find the issue very sensitive and remain silent on speaking about such issue.

10) If students have questions about online child exploitation, who should they ask at school?

Gandaki:

Should ask teachers	66.67%
Peers, either alone or alongside teachers	16.67%
School administrators, such as the principal, vice principal, or school counselor,	8.33%
GESI focal person	6.94%
Due to shame, emphasizing a barrier to seeking help.	1.39%

In Gandaki, 66% of teachers stated that students should ask teachers. 16% mentioned peers, either alone or alongside teachers, 8% included school administrators, such as the principal, vice principal, or school counselor, indicating that some students recognize the role of school leadership in addressing these concerns. 7% cited the GESI focal person as a resource, showing that designated individuals handling social issues are also considered important.

[1]**Bagmati:**

[1]In Bagmati, 57% children shared that the children should reach out to the Red Ant youth change makers, 27% shared that they should reach out to the computer teachers, 7% shared that they should ask the trusted teachers, 5 % shared that they were not sure whom to reach out.

Refer student to WYESHR or RED ANT	57.03
Need to ask computer teacher	27.73
Need to ask to Principal	2.73
Ask to the trusted teachers	7.42
Not Sure	5.07

Recommendations and Suggestions

These recommendations are based on the key findings shared by the child researchers during the second phase of the Child-Led Research. The children led the data collection and helped analyse the results. Their ideas shaped the main suggestions. The programme team supported by helping to organise and present the content clearly, while ensuring the recommendations stayed true to the children's views.

1

Enhance Teachers' Capacity on Online Child Protection

While most teachers agree children should learn about online dangers, a small percentage in Bagmati are uncomfortable or unsure. Hence specialised training and sensitisation workshops on child sexual exploitation and safe digital practices, especially in Bagmati is required. Psychosocial support techniques can be helpful to equip teachers in handling sensitive topics confidently.

2

Promote Uniform Understanding and Use of Legal Frameworks

86% of Bagmati teachers do not include Nepal's internet safety laws in their teaching. It seemed necessary to orient teachers on Nepal's Internet Safety Laws and Child Online Protection guidelines. Development of easy-to-understand legal toolkits for teachers can be helpful in this regard.

3

Foster Preventive, Non-Punitive Responses to Digital Misuse

A notable number of teachers in Bagmati were found to rely on disciplinary actions or ignore misuse of social media. Hence necessity is identified for the prevention-focused approaches in school policies, including digital literacy and counseling

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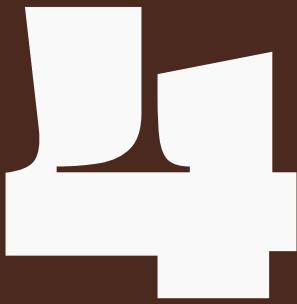
Create Awareness About Balanced Social Media Use

Promotion of digital wellbeing education, including risks of overuse and benefits of mindful use can be helpful for the balanced use of social media. Engaging parents in conversations about healthy screen habits and social media use will also be helpful for the preventive measure to keep their children safe online.

Promote Gender-Inclusive Understanding of Online Expression

5

The findings revealed that some teachers, particularly in Gandaki, held negative views towards gender expression online. To address this, it is important to provide training that promotes gender sensitivity and inclusivity. Teachers should be supported to distinguish between harmful impersonation and genuine gender exploration, and to approach such behaviours with empathy rather than judgement. It's also essential to avoid framing gender-nonconforming expression as "fraud" or "cybercrime," and instead foster an inclusive understanding of identity, self-expression, and the diverse ways young people explore gender online.

Conclusions:

The comparative analysis of teachers' perspectives on online safety and digital behavior in Gandaki and Bagmati provinces reveals both strengths and critical gaps in their understanding and engagement with digital child protection issues.

Teachers in Gandaki display a stronger alignment with technical digital safety practices and adherence to legal frameworks, indicating a relatively structured approach to online safety. However, their views on gender expression online reflect conservative attitudes, with many interpreting it as fraudulent or deviant behavior, suggesting a need for more inclusive and gender-sensitive training.

In contrast, teachers in Bagmati show more openness and empathy toward children's online behaviors and expressions, especially in matters of identity and emotional wellbeing. They are more inclined to encourage support-seeking and self-expression. However, the province faces significant challenges in awareness and integration of Nepal's internet safety laws, and shows a more punitive or dismissive approach to online misuse by students. The lower teacher-student connectivity on social media and less emphasis on technical safety practices further highlight gaps in digital engagement.

Overall, while both provinces recognise the importance of online safety for children, the inconsistency in approaches—ranging from legal awareness to gender sensitivity—signals the urgent need for a comprehensive, standardized, and inclusive digital literacy framework for teachers. Bridging these gaps will not only strengthen child protection in digital spaces but also foster a more informed, empathetic, and responsible teaching environment.

Questionnaire

1. Do you think students should learn about online dangers like child sexual exploitation?
2. What would you do if a student is misusing social media or harming others online?
3. How do you teach students to use the internet safely?
4. Do you follow Nepal's internet safety laws in your teaching?
5. Are you connected with your students on social media? If yes, which platforms?
6. Sometimes, harmful apps pop up on social media. What should children/students do?
7. What are the effects of not using social media at all?
8. Some boys act like girls and some girls act like boys online. How should we understand this?
9. Students see words like gay, lesbian, and transgender online. What does that mean and why it is not discussed by teachers?
10. If students have questions about online child exploitation, who should they ask at school?

Annex 2

Glossary of Acronyms

SCROL	**Safety for Children and their Rights Online**
SEC	**Sexual Exploitation of Children**
OCSE	**Online Child Sexual Exploitation**
OSEC	**Online Sexual Exploitation of Children**
TdH NL	**Terre des Hommes Netherlands**
GESI	**Gender Equality and Social Inclusion**
SOGIESC	**Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics**

About Safety for Children and their Rights Online (SCROL)

The Safety for Children and their Rights Online (SCROL) programme by Terre des Hommes Netherlands (TdH NL) aims to combat Online Child Sexual Exploitation (OCSE) in Cambodia, Kenya, Nepal and the Philippines. The programme envisones that all children regardless of gender, class, religion, ethnicity, and abilities are protected from online child sexual exploitation in a safe family and community environment through proactive and collaborative engagement of policy makers, child protection systems, judiciary, law enforcement agencies, private sectors, and children themselves.
As part of the programme Terre des Hommes rolled out this research to understand the online experience of children and youth from various SOGIESC (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics) categories in Nepal.

About Terre des Hommes Netherlands (TdH NL)

Terre des Hommes Netherlands (TdH NL) is an international child rights organisation working in 29 countries across Asia, East Africa, Europe and the Middle East. We catalyse systemic change to stop child exploitation and place children at the centre. In Nepal TdH NL implements SCROL in its two provinces i.e Bagmati and Gandaki Province. The programme has been able to directly reach more than 5,000 children on OCSE prevention and reporting during its implementation.

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