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Factors affecting adolescent and youth girls'  
empowerment: A survey of some areas of rupandehi  
district

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### **ABSTRACT**

The adolescent and youth girls' empowerment is just as crucial as women's empowerment. However, research on women's empowerment has received more attention than that of adolescent and young girls. This study of factors affecting adolescent and youth girls' empowerment may close this gap. A scale with 32 items was constructed and a survey was carried out on 325 adolescent and youth girls of Kanchan Rural Municipality, Gaidahawa Rural Municipality, Suddodhan Rural Municipality and Lumbini Sanskritik Municipality of Rupendehi district of Lumbini, Nepal. An exploratory factor analysis method was employed to explore the factors that affect adolescent and youth girls' empowerment. The factors explored are (i) equality, respect and fairness; (ii) resourcefulness; and (iii) opportunity in making choices. The first and second factors are more or less similar in strength and are stronger than the third. The adolescent and youth girls and their family get benefit from this study because it encourages their empowerment. Additionally, the study's findings might be helpful to governmental and non-governmental organizations that support adolescent and youth girls' empowerment.

**Keywords:** Adolescent and youth girls, empowerment, factor analysis

### **Introduction**

The general understanding of empowerment is authority or power to do something which makes a person's life better and developed. According to Cornwall (2016) the empowerment is not an end point or a fixed state, but a process of change. The change here means change with respect to knowledge, skill, right and ability for better life. UNFPA and UNICEF (2020) state that empowered adolescents critically evaluate their life and the injustices in their society and understand their natural value and the fundamental equality of men and women, boys and girls. In this way they become able to do civic duties and make private and public decisions to take action to better their own lives and the world around them. Therefore, empowerment is mainstream concern for the development of a nation. In context to Nepal, female's empowerment has become a matter of great concern as they are facing problem to be empowered due to various reasons in our society. This condition is mostly severe in rural areas of the country. In this regard this study intends to elaborate the affecting factors of adolescent and youth girls' empowerment.

NGOs/ INGOs and policy makers have recently examined the empowerment of women as a key tool for achieving the objective of gender equality because it affects not only women but the entire society. Therefore, empowerment has been prioritized by policymakers as both individual policy objective and a way to maximize development potential in low- and middle-income countries, and the number of initiatives and policies designed to promote empowerment has grown significantly (Diaz-Martin, Walsh & Glennerster, 2018). Nepal, being a developing country is still in need of such policies because most of the areas of the country have remained undeveloped and one of the reasons of it is marginalization and vulnerability of females in those areas (Ghimire, 2018). Adolescent and youth girls in rural areas of Nepal have been experiencing a variety of issues even today, such as poor access to resources, lower access to health care, less opportunity to education, limitations of opportunities for self-determination and empowerment

(NEAT, 2017). Such discrimination is more severe in the low land plains of the country known as Terai, and the mid- western and far- western regions of the country (Asian Development Bank, 2016). This is how adolescent and youth girls of Nepal are lagging behind.

There seems an urgent need of empowering them for their development as it affects the development of society and country. The Girls' rights are very clearly stated in the Constitution of Nepal, 2015. The adolescent and youth girls, however, are not able to receive their rights due to overlapping social norms. Since this study raises awareness about their empowerment, the adolescent and youth girls will be one step closer to understanding their rights and freedom. For solving any problem, it is necessary to know the causes that affect the outcome. But there is dearth of such literature to examine the factors that affect adolescent and youth girls' empowerment in the context of Nepal. Adolescent and youth girls' empowerment is crucial for their own development as well as for the development of entire society and the nation. There is plenty of literature on women empowerment but few on adolescent and youth girls' empowerment which shows researchers focus on women empowerment mainly. In order to fill this research gap, this study on adolescent and youth girls' empowerment is created.

It is vital to understand in which area the adolescent and youth girls lack the ability to make decisions, how they respond to opportunities, and what resources are available that support them to get empowered. For this reason, this research intends to find out the factors that affect adolescent and youth girl's empowerment. To find out those factors the dimensions (factors) of empowerment as suggested by Kabeer (1999) was taken as foundation to develop a questionnaire for the survey. The dimensions of empowerment as suggested by her are resources, agency and achievement. The items of adolescent and youth girls' empowerment was developed depending on the definitions of resources, agency and achievement as suggested by Kabeer (1999) and those items were developed into questionnaire. Hence, the variables of adolescent and youth girls' empowerment for this study were established based on Kabeer's view on empowerment. Those variables were contextualized in the local context of Nepal to obtain the facts in Nepal's context which are crucial to the study's outcome. Finally, a structured questionnaire was prepared to collect the data from the field.

### **Empowerment in Literature**

Various educators have given their own unique definitions of empowerment. Rappaport (1987, p. 122) who has contributed much to the thinking of empowerment has defined empowerment as a mechanism by which people, organizations, and communities gain mastery over their affairs". Empowerment, according to Cornell Empowerment Group (1989), is a deliberate, ongoing process that takes place in the local community and involves compassion, critical reflection, respect, and group engagement. It enables people who do not have an equal share of valuable resources to obtain access to and control over those resources. In the view of Mechanic (1991), empowerment is a process where people come to recognize a closer connection between their goals and a knowledge of how to attain them, as well as a connection between their actions and the results in their lives. As stated by Perkin and Zimmerman (1995), empowerment is a process that helps people take charge of their lives, participate democratically in their communities, and develop a critical understanding of their surroundings. Zimmerman (2000) also asserts that empowerment includes the perspective that social problems result from unequal access to and distribution of resources, and thus provides a distinctive strategy for designing interventions and creating social change. This implies that getting empowered means to be able to control over important decisions of life, acquire resources and develop the actual power required to significantly enhance the conditions and quality of life in the society.

In line with Narayan- Parker (2002), empowerment is the development of poor people's assets and capacities to engage in negotiations with, influence, control, and hold responsible institutions that have an impact on their life. As defined by Perkin (2010), empowerment is not only a process, it is the result of such a process that transforms the lives and perspectives of people, organizations, and entire communities. Empowerment, actually focuses on the idea, science, and practice of recognizing and understanding all types and origins of oppression present in society for those who are oppressed to realize their full potential. Taking the reference of Gautam (2020), empowerment can be defined as the process of advancing one with social and economic advancement, giving equal access to employment, education, economic opportunity, and social interaction, freedoms and rights that were previously denied. This is all to gain and apply the actual power needed to make important, material improvements in community conditions and one's lives.

From the review of definitions of empowerment, it is found that the majority of definitions emphasize challenges related to acquiring influence and control over choices and resources that affect one's quality of life and some definitions consider structural disparities that impact entire social groupings. However, the main goal of empowerment is developing the ability in controlling life confidently through the expansion of freedom of choice and action. In its broadest sense, empowerment is the process through which unempowered group are made to realize their full potential, their rights to opportunities, resources, decision making, and their freedom to make choices. From the study of definitions of empowerment, I came to understand that empowerment is a process of change from a situation in which one faces constraints and obstacles while making life decisions to a situation in which one has more options to enjoy life decisions.

The definitions of empowerment consistently highlight access to resources, effort, and change in life as the crucial components of empowerment. In this context, Kabeer's (1999) definition of empowerment appears more significant who defines empowerment as the process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such an ability and the definition. It is clarified by UNFPA and UNICEF (2020) by saying that it is about having the material, social and human resources to make strategic choices, and ability to exercise agency, involvement, voice and negotiation in decision making in order to gain achievements or meaningful improvements in life and well-being. Thus suggests, the interaction of individual and social capacity leads to well-being (Singh et al., 2023). Resources are the control over natural, financial, human, and intellectual resources (Kabeer, 1999) whereas agency is the capability and freedom to make one's own decisions in life (Sen, 1999). Achievement, or "functioning achievements," is the result of agency and resources working together and is tied to basic functions that are shared by all people but also includes personal preferences (Kabeer, 1999).

### **Background Information on the Idea of Empowerment**

From the literature (Perkins, 2010) it is known that the term empowerment first originated in its current usage in 1976 in Barbara Solomen's book "Black empowerment: Social work in oppressed communities" in 1976. Shortly after that Peter Berger and Richard Nauhaus work on empowerment entitled "Empower people: The role of mediating structures in public policy" was published. Followed by that Julian Rappaport released "In praise of paradox: A social policy empowerment over prevention" in 1981, which later received credit for helping to promote paradigm shift through the concept of empowerment. He encouraged a shift from paternalistic care and advocating for the needy, towards an empowerment model. This paradigm

places a strong emphasis on people taking charge of creating their own assistance and future, while yet understanding their occasional need for support and direction. His next significant contribution to the field of empowerment was an article titled "Studies on empowerment: Introduction to the issues" that appeared in the journal "Prevention in human services" in 1984. Then after, gradually theorists and researchers developed their interest towards empowerment and their studies became important for politicians to bring about development. The more meaningful theories, studies and application of empowerment are available in the literature in social work, business administration, health education and promotion, and specially community psychology (Perkins & Zinnerman, 1995).

### **Empowerment Initiatives in Nepal**

Nepal has also promised to implement the policies of Millennium development goals (MDGs, 2000) and convention of the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW, 1978) by signing on this policy which is centered on women's empowerment. The government of Nepal has launched numerous women-targeted programs in areas including education, health, and microcredit for women's empowerment since the 1980s, when Women in Development (WID) was first integrated in the country's planned development effort (after the Sixth Five Year Plan) (Gautam, 2020). Poverty Alleviation Fund (PAF) created by Nepal government in 2003 can also be taken as supporting program for empowerment as it works to end severe poverty in a sustainable way by including women, Dalits, the poor, and other marginalized groups in the mainstream of development. In a similar vein, the Civil Service Amendment Act, 2014, which embraces inclusivity by setting quotas for 45% of civil service positions at 33% women, 27% Adiwasi Janajatis, 22% Madhesis, 9% Dalits, 5% disabled people, and 4% excluded groups, can be seen as another significant step by the Nepal government in support of empowerment (MoFAGA and PLGSP, 2021).

Gender equity and social inclusion (GESI) strategy 2021-2023 implemented by Nepal Government is the recent activity from the government to support empowerment from the grassroot level of the community. The constitution of Nepal (2015) is a significant step forward in the development of GESI to ensure equal rights for women, the underprivileged, people with disabilities, gender and sexual minorities, residents of remote places, and members of other vulnerable or excluded groups. The constitution explicitly provides a broader framework for ensuring female empowerment through provisions for Rights to equality, Rights of women, provisions for positive discrimination towards women and assurance of special measures for women in education, health, employment and social security. In addition, Article 38 (3) guarantees the protection of women from exploitation, violence, and discrimination based on origin, religion, race, caste, tribe, sex, economic circumstance, language, region, ideology, or any other similar grounds (MoFAGA and PLGSP, 2021).

Different NGOs and INGOs are also active in Nepal's empowerment drive. If we look at recent NGOs and INGOs activity in Nepal, we find a variety of programs emphasizing Nepal's empowerment strategy. A project launched in 2015 jointly by four UN agencies, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD), United Nations Women (UN women), and World Food Program (WFP) has greatly accelerated women's progress toward economic empowerment in five municipalities and five rural municipalities of each of Sarlahi and Rautahat districts of Province 2, which were the project's target area. Likewise, a significant change has been brought in the position of rural women through the empowerment campaign run in Nepal by the consortium of Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) Nepal, Caritas Nepal, International Nepal Fellowship (INF) and

Lutheran World Federation Nepal (LWF Nepal) (Consortium members of ADRA Nepal, Caritas Nepal, INF Nepal and LWF Nepal, 2019). A municipality-level study conducted in 2021 by World Vision International (WVI) Nepal, National Association of Rural Municipalities in Nepal (NARMIN), and Bikash Udhyami (Development Entrepreneurs) has analyzed local governments' initiatives on empowering women economically, highlighted problems and challenges, and also provided recommendations for the future with a focus on 20 rural municipalities throughout Nepal (WVI, 2022).

### **Research Methods**

Since the aim of this study is to find out the factors that affect adolescent girls' empowerment, it seeks to analyze cause and effect relationship. Therefore, it follows quantitative research approach within the post positivist paradigm (Creswell, 2009). The study was done based on the numeric measures of descriptions of the opinions of the respondents. Survey design was used to accomplish this research because Creswell (2014) explains survey design, as a procedure for obtaining quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes or opinions of population by studying the sample of that population. In survey design, this study had been structured as a cross-sectional survey by collecting data at a specific point in time. Cross-sectional survey is a popular method to collect data in survey research design which are frequently used by quantitative researchers (Bryman, 2016). The data from sample respondents was collected through structured questionnaire and an appropriate statistical technique called factor analysis was run by inserting data in SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) to obtain the factors that affect adolescent and youth girls' empowerment.

Kanchan Rural Municipality, Gaidahawa Rural Municipality, Suddodhan Rural Municipality and Lumbini Sanskritik Municipality of Rupendehi district of Lumbini province were chosen as the study area because this study is done for Stromme Research Support Project which has been investing in these areas to empower adolescents and youths for 5 years and now they want to know the factors which affect the adolescent and youth girls' empowerment. The adolescent and youth girls lack empowerment for a number of reasons in the villages of Nepal and finding the true reasons behind it is necessary to implement the necessary strategies. All the girls who are the member of "Graduate forums" under Stromme Research Support Project from Kanchan Rural Municipality, Gaidahawa Rural Municipality, Suddodhan Rural Municipality and Lumbini Sanskritik Municipality of Rupendehi district in Lumbini province of western Terai region of the country were the population of this study. This area has been the focus of Stromme Research Support Project for the past five years and empowering adolescent and youth girls is one of its strategies for which the girls are trained and made known about their rights and abilities and encouraged to share their learned knowledge to other youngers. This is done by making groups in different areas of the villages and named as "Graduate forum".

There are no widely accepted definitions of adolescence and youth, but the United Nations considers adolescents to be those aged 10 to 19, and youths to be those aged 15 to 24 for statistical reasons, without prejudice to other member states' definitions (United Nations, 2012). The adolescent girls who joined the "Graduate forum" when they were already 19 years old are now 24 years old. For this reason, the population of this study belong to both adolescent and youth age group. Therefore, this is the study of adolescent and youth girls' empowerment. There are all together 125 "Graduate forums" in which there are 2717 graduate members. Among 2717 members the girls are 2129 in number. Therefore, the population of this study is 2129 girls of 125 graduate forums who belong to adolescent or youth age group.

Cochran's formula was used to find out the sample size. Cochran (1977) developed a formula to calculate a representative sample for proportions as

$$n_0 = \frac{Z^2 pq}{e^2}$$

Where,  $n_0$  = Sample size

$z$  = Selected critical value of desired confidence level

$p$  = estimated proportion of an attribute that is present in the population,

$q = 1 - p$  and

$e$  = is the desired level of precision

As suggested by Sarmah and Hazarika (2012) to calculate a sample size of a large population whose degree of variability is not known, population proportion ( $p$ ) is taken as 50% ( $p = 0.5$ ) assuming the maximum variability. Then, taking 95% confidence level with  $\pm 5\%$  precision  $q = 1 - 0.5$ ,  $e = 0.05$ ;  $z = 1.96$  (a constant value), the calculation for required sample size will be as follows-

$$n_0 = \frac{(1.96)^2 (0.5) (0.5)}{(0.05)^2}$$

$$n_0 = 384.16 = 384$$

Cochran (1977) proposed a correction formula to calculate the final sample size which is given below

$$n = \frac{n_0}{1 + \frac{(n_0 - 1)}{N}}$$

where,

$n_0$  = sample size without considering the finite population correction factor

$n$  = sample size using the finite population correction factor

$N$  = total population

Using Cochran's (1977) corrected formula, a sample size of 325 was determined. To select 325 respondents from the total population probability sampling method was selected which involves random selection of respondents. In random sampling simple random sampling method was selected as it gives equal opportunity to all respondents to be selected in the sample (Satishprakash & Sukla, 2020). A visit was made to the study area where the adolescent and youth girls were selected randomly to gather data from them. In order to meet the sample size requirement of 325, 81 respondents were chosen from each of the three rural municipalities, namely Kanchan, Gaidahawa, and Suddodhan rural municipalities and 82 from the Lumbini Sanskritik Municipality. The data was collected through structured questionnaire developed in 5-point Likert Scale ranging from almost never to almost always.

The reliability of the study was established by pilot testing of the questionnaire. The Cronbach's alpha value of test items of the construct was checked to see the consistency as

Bryman (2016) says reliability is the consistency of a measure of a construct. Alpha was found 0.87 which assured the internal consistency of the set of scale or the test items of the construct. It was sufficient to ensure that the scale's items measure the same thing (Kline, 2016; Taber, 2017). Further, all the requirements for factor analysis were met while conducting principal axis factoring on the data. Data in five-to-seven-point interval scales, sample size greater than 300, retention of items with item loadings greater than 0.30 (Field, 2013; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014), retention of factors with eigen values greater than one (Field, 2009; Maskey et al., 2018), average extraction communalities greater than 0.5 (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007), Kaiser -Mayer-sampling adequacy more than 0.5 (Kaiser, 1974; Field, 2009), and at least three items in a factor (Kline, 1993; Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007) are the requirements listed in the literature for exploratory factor analysis. All the mentioned criteria were met as data was taken in five-point Likert scale, the sample size was 325, item loading was 0.40, the factors were retained with eigen values greater than one, communalities of an average extraction exceeded 0.5, Keiser-Meyer - Sampling adequacy was .81 and the factors retained have the items three or more than three. the factor analysis was carried out with the items to get the factors affecting adolescent and youth girls' empowerment. These reinforced the study's reliability.

### **Study's Findings**

#### **Demographic characteristics of respondents**

The demography of the respondents along with their own and their parents' educational background, source of income of their family and their economic condition were also asked. The age, area of their residence such as rural or urban, religion, ethnicity and mother tongue were included in demographic information. All of the girls were enrolled either in school or in colleges at the bachelor's level. Out of 325 respondents, 32 have illiterate fathers (10.2%), 263 have literate fathers (80.9%), 27 have passed SLC or Class 12 (8.3%), which is equivalent to the current SEE or Class 12, 1 has a bachelor's degree (0.3%), and 1 have master's degrees (0.3%). Similarly, 225 respondents' mothers are literate (69.2%), 86 respondents' mothers are illiterate (26.5%), 12 respondents' mothers have passed SLC or Class 12, which is equivalent to SEE or Class 12 in the current context, and two respondents' mothers hold bachelor's degrees (0.6%).

As the study was conducted in villages, they all belong to rural area. In village, families of 105 respondents (32.3%) depend on employment for their income, those of 200 (61.5%) on farming, those of 13 (4%) on entrepreneurship, those of 2 (0.6%) on poultry farming, and those of 5 (1.5%) on livestock farming. Regarding economic condition of the family, 58 (17.8%) barely survive, 140 (43.1%) do some saving but the most fluctuation happens throughout the year, 108 (33.2%) economic condition is stable, some investment is made but there are times when it is difficult, and 19 (5.8%) have secured financial situation.

Talking about religion, 314 (96.6%) respondents are from a Hindu family, 5 (1.5%) are () Buddhist, 3 (0.9%) are Muslims, and 3 (0.9%) are Christians. In terms of caste, 3 (0.9%) are brahmins, 8 (2.5%) are chhetris, 81 (24.9%) are Dalits, 69 (21.2%) are Janajatis, and 164 (50.5%) are members of other castes. Regarding mother tongue, 77 (23.7%) of them are native speakers of Nepali, 31 (9.5%) of tharu language, and 217 (66.8%) of other languages. Awadhhi was one of the other languages that was utilized frequently.

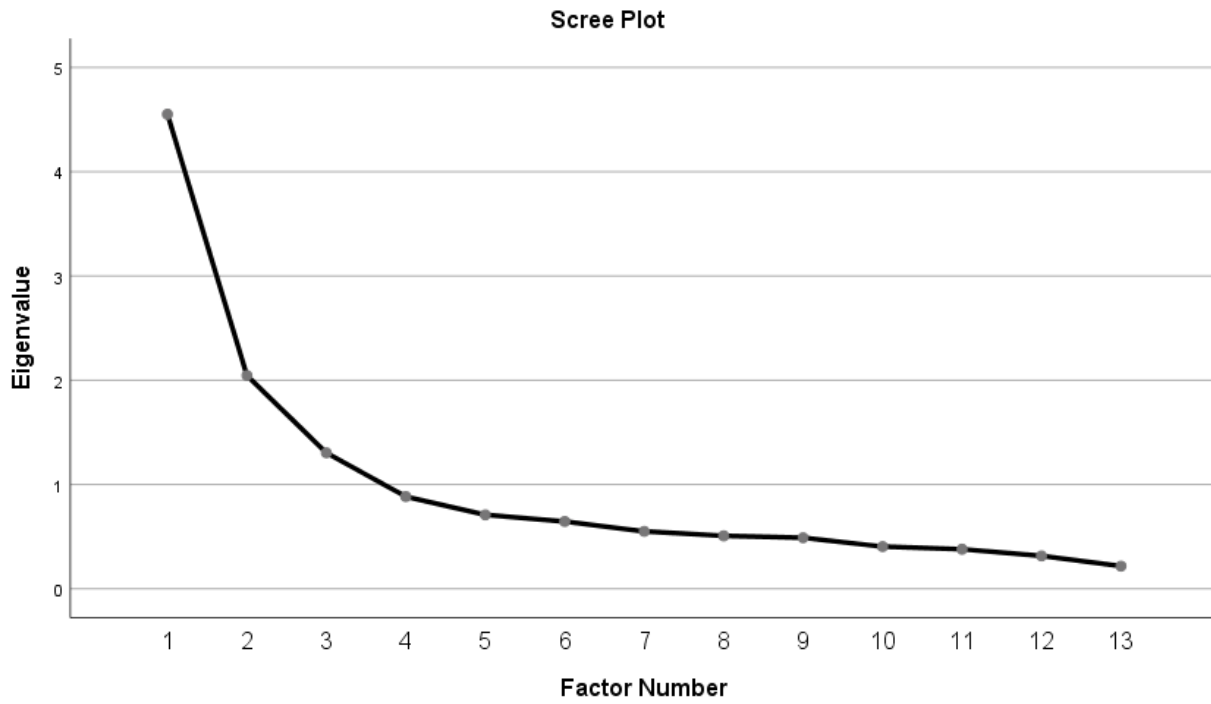
#### **Result of Factor Analysis**

As a result of Factor analysis conducted in 32 items, 13 items were retained under three factors. All the safety check rules of factor analysis and scree plot (Fig 1) were used to determine an appropriate number of factors to retain. The structure matrix from the varimax (i.e. orthogonal) rotation is presented in the table 1. This structure matrix revealed that factor 1 and 2 contained 5



items in each and, factor 3 contained 3 items. These three factors combined to explain 50.08 % of the total variance. The first factor which explained 19.03 % variance, was labeled as "gender equality, respect and fairness", the second factor which explained 17.42 % variance, was labeled as "resourcefulness", and the third factor which explained 14.35 % variance was labeled as "chances to make choices". The score reliability of all 13 items was 0.81.

**Fig 1**  
*Scree plot*



**Table 1**  
*Factors of adolescent and youth girls' empowerment*

Items	Factors			Communalities
	1	2	3	
I strongly support giving daughters the same educational opportunities as sons	<b>0.755</b>	0.021	0.054	0.574
I can object if somebody tries to abuse me	<b>0.739</b>	0.021	0.183	0.581
I can object if somebody tries to use rough language with me	<b>0.603</b>	0.095	0.160	0.399
I object if somebody brings up gender inequality in conversation	<b>0.581</b>	0.190	0.095	0.383
I won't hesitate to object if somebody tries to rule over me in society	<b>0.527</b>	0.192	0.182	0.348
I know about the reservation given to women in jobs	0.069	<b>0.831</b>	0.083	0.702
I know about the reservation given to	0.051	<b>0.695</b>	0.324	0.591

women in local political institutions				
I know about women's right in property	0.119	<b>0.638</b>	0.108	0.433
I able to carry out the necessary task using my bank or cooperatives	0.059	<b>0.493</b>	0.361	0.376
I have knowledge on female reproductive health education	0.216	<b>0.487</b>	0.111	0.297
I am capable of making decision regarding my study	0.143	0.130	<b>0.789</b>	0.660
I have the chance to choose my own future	0.295	0.257	<b>0.677</b>	0.612
I am capable of making decision regarding my job	0.221	0.271	<b>0.660</b>	0.558
% Variance	<b>17.88</b>	<b>17.69</b>	<b>14.51</b>	<b>50.08</b>
Extraction method: principal axis factoring				

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Rotation method varimax with Kaiser normalization

Within each factor, the bolded numbers represent practically significant coefficients.

### Discussion on Findings

The factor 1 consists of the items: I strongly support for giving daughters the same educational opportunities as sons, I can object if somebody tries to abuse me, I can object if somebody tries to use rough language with me, I object if somebody brings up gender inequality in conversation, I won't hesitate to object if somebody tries to rule over me in the society. These points collectively emphasize for gender equality, self- respect, and the rejection of unfair treatment or discrimination'. Therefore, the name "equality, respect and fairness" was given to this factor. Selection of these items reveal that the girls are able to advocate in the favor of gender equality, self- respect and fair treatment which is the sign of empowerment. This shows that the girls are empowered and their emphasis on these items indicate that equal and fair treatment with them without any hindrance in their dignity and self-respect is one of the essential factors of empowerment. The items of these factors are sufficient to show what can actually be achieved if there is empowerment. The essence of these items tallies with Kabeer's (1999) third dimension (factor) of empowerment, what she calls "achievement".

The factor 2 includes the items: I know the reservation given to women in jobs, I know about the reservation given to women in local political institutions, I know about women's right in property, I am able to carry out the necessary task using my bank or cooperatives, I have knowledge on female reproductive health education. The above two items show provision of government resources to support women's reservation in local political institutions and job opportunities. Women's right in property is a significant resource for women in terms of financial security. Their activities with bank or cooperatives is related to financial resources and services which can help them access loans, savings and other financial tools. Reproductive health education is knowledge and information which is a valuable resource for women health and wellbeing. Hence, these items represent different types of resources. the government resource, property rights, financial services and knowledge. Kabeer's (1999) also has found "resource" as one of the three dimensions of empowerment in her study and she says resources include not only material in the more conventional economic sense, but also the various human and social resources. The resources are gained through a variety of social interactions that take place within different institutional domains. Therefore, capturing the essence of these items a suitable name "

resourcefulness" was given to this factor. This shows that girls have given emphasis towards resource as an important element of empowerment. Sen (1999) have also told that lack of resources means deprivation of capabilities, and vice versa, when no development can take place.

The factor 3 has the items: I am capable of making decision regarding my study, I have the chance to choose my own future, I am capable of making decision regarding my job. These items convey the essence of making choices about their education, career and future. Therefore, an appropriate name "opportunity in making choices" was given to this factor. This is similar to Sen's (1999) view who said freedom is essential for development. By freedom, he means freedom to make and exercise choices. Kabeer (1999) has also drawn attention towards choices for the attainment of empowerment. In her view, choices are essential for achievement. The items incorporated within this factor tallies with her idea of "agency" which is the second dimension of empowerment in her finding. According to Kabeer (1999) agency is more than just outward behavior; including the meaning, inspiration, and goal that people bring to their work, as well as their sense of agency or inner strength (Kabeer, 1999). So, the ability of decision making is a form of agency.

### **Conclusions and Implications**

This research done to find out the factors that affect adolescent and youth girls' empowerment in some village areas of Rupandehi ditrict of western Nepal situated in Lumbini province gave three factors: (i) equality, respect and fairness; (ii) resourcefulness; and (iii) "opportunity in making choices" as affecting factors of their empowerment. The factors are supported with literature review. The strength of first and second factors is almost equal and is greater than that of third. Among the 32 items, only 13 items were retained by exploratory factor analysis. The retained items show that gender equality, taking their self-respect into account, treating them fairly, providing them with resources, and giving them the power to make decisions, are crucial for adolescent and youth girls' empowerment in the Kanchan Rural Municipality, Gaidahawa Rural Municipality, Suddodhan Rural Municipality and Lumbini Sanskritik Municipality of Rupendehi district in Lumbini province of Nepal. And, the fact that, no retention of any of the items indicating family assistance demonstrates that adolescent and youth girls in these areas rely on resources other than family assistance for their empowerment, such as support from the government, financial services from banks or cooperatives, and knowledge resources they have acquired through study. The findings of this study can provide useful insights to the bureaucrats and policy makers on what strategies and policies are to be implemented for the empowerment of adolescent and youth girls. In this way, adolescent and youth girls, their families, societies and country as a whole can get benefit from it.

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**Ethical approval** The authors declare that they follow ethical standards.

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