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The Shaping of Conforming Dispositions of Educationally and Socially Disadvantaged Higher Secondary School Students in Rural Uttar Pradesh, India: A Case Study

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Abstract

This research investigates the role of school practices in reinforcing and informing the conforming disposition of higher secondary school students in India. The study contributes to developing an understanding of the mechanisms by which conformity is incorporated within individuals and how caste is perpetuated through schooling. The project employs Bourdieu's concepts of habitus (its constituent dispositions) and practice to explain the school's role in perpetuating inequalities.

The study is a case study of a low-fee private school situated in a rural area of Uttar Pradesh, a northern state in India, which is educationally, socially, and economically disadvantaged. The Biographical Narrative Interview Method (BNIM) is employed to gather the data. I conducted in-depth interviews with 12 students across three rounds, all from socially and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds, also known as Other Backward Classes (OBCs). Data were thematically analysed to reveal the school's dominant practices and identify the dispositions expressed through repetition.

The study's findings indicate that school's unofficial pedagogic practices of authority, obedience, and hierarchy shape students' dispositions. I captured two aspects of students' dispositions from the data: cognitive and affective. Conforming dispositions represent the cognitive dimension of dispositions, characterised by cognitive patterns of non-questioning and reduced agency of individuals. At the same time, affective dispositions represent embodied emotions of respect, fear and honour. These dispositions possess the potential to provide unthought guidance to the generation of caste-based practices of untouchability and endogamy through which caste inequality is reproduced.

Literature shows that schools enforce obedience and cultural morality characterised by hierarchy. This research presents the next level of analysis of such school practices, demonstrating that the everyday life of school embodies conformity as dispositions, with the potential to reproduce prevailing social relations and undemocratic virtues. Moreover, the significance of the research lies in demonstrating that informal school practices, such as authority, obedience, and hierarchy, should be taken seriously alongside official pedagogic practices, while discussing the role of the school in social reproduction/transformations.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

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Signature:

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Chapter 1 : Introduction

This thesis examines the role of the school in social reproduction and the inculcation of undemocratic virtues among students. The school, through unofficial pedagogical practices of authority, obedience, and hierarchy, shapes students' disposition towards conformity and embodies social hierarchy, with the potential to reproduce caste inequality and to internalise undemocratic virtues. The present research is a case study of a private school in rural Uttar Pradesh, India, focusing on higher secondary students from the Other Backwards Classes (middle castes).

The study employs Bourdieu's theoretical concepts of habitus, disposition, practice, and pedagogic work to explain how school practices shape dispositions and reproduce caste inequality (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Moreover, research also draws on the critical social sciences to define conformity as the opposite of criticality or critique (Agger, 2013; Browne, 2017; Fay, 1987; Sayer, 2009). I employ the Biographical Narrative Interview Method (BNIM) as a research approach to elicit students' habitus and the key school practices that shape it.

This research is situated in a specific Indian context where there is contention between what is 'ideally' expected out of education in relation to social transformation and its 'actual' outcome. The National Education Policy 2020 of India (NEP, 2020) envisions schools' role in developing critical inquiry and the values of equality and diversity, with the aim of achieving social justice through education. However, I have evidence that the school's practices foster dispositions that possess potential perpetuate social inequality and undemocratic values. Thus, though the official position of schooling can be transformative, in terms of actual outcome of education, it is the opposite. How does a school do that, presented in this thesis? Moreover, the literature on Indian schooling shows that schools enforce obedience and cultural values that are inherently hierarchical. This study presents the next level of analysis of what happens with students (or to students' dispositions) who are engaged in such school practices. What is the possible impact of such practices on the perpetuation of social inequalities and the inculcation of democratic virtues?

Everyday life of school involves different types of practices, including official pedagogical practices such as curriculum, teaching, and assessment, as well as unofficial practices like authority, obedience, and hierarchy. Official practices represent practices recommended by policymakers and education officials, while unofficial practices represent those that are not officially recommended or recognised but operate in formal and informal interactions within the school. I focus on unofficial pedagogic practices or unofficial school practices that serve as pedagogic work in shaping students' dispositions that operate both in formal and informal[1] settings of the school (Bourdieu and Passron, 1990). The findings of this research suggest that while discussing the role of school as a site for social transformation and space to inculcate virtues of democratic citizenship, unofficial school practices, along with official pedagogic practices, should be taken seriously.

In the remainder of the introduction, I first acquaint readers with the socio-economic and educational context in which the study is located. The second section provides a brief introduction to the rationale, the key research questions this study aims to address, and the method used to investigate the proposed issue. The following section highlights the study's key contribution, particularly in theory, policy, and practice. Next, I elaborate on the concept of caste, a key aspect considered in the present thesis. The final section introduces readers to various chapters of the thesis.

1.1 Background

This study was conducted in a socio-economically and educationally disadvantaged State and rural region. Moreover, students belong to socio-educationally deprived communities and enrol in a low-fee private school. Understanding the role of the school in shaping/ transforming the lives of students from disadvantaged backgrounds through the everyday life of school is the focus of this research. In this section, I elaborate on the socio-economic and educational context of the study.

[1] The formal setting represents structured, planned set up for curricular and co-curricular transactions, like, delivery of lessons, assessment, morning assembly, or celebration of special days. While the informal context means interaction between students and teachers that is not formally planned, for example, interactions in school corridors, daily rituals of school like greetings, suggestions or informal lessons offered by teachers on various personal and social issues, etc..

The present research was conducted in a school located in a rural part of Uttar Pradesh, a north Indian State. The State of Uttar Pradesh is a socially, economically, and educationally deprived state of India (NITI Aayog, 2024). According to the National Family Health Survey-5 (2019-2021), 22.9 per cent of the State's population faces economic and other deprivations, and it is among the bottom four states compared to 28 states and eight union territories (NITI Aayog, 2023). This State also has a huge urban-rural disparity, where rural areas account for around 76 per cent of the state's population (Halli et al., 2024). Moreover, it is India's most populous State (Census, 2011). According to the Indian Ministry of Health and Family Welfare Projections (2020), the State's estimated population is 235 million, which accounts for 17 per cent of the country's population (as cited in Halli et al., 2024; see also Baliyan, 2016). High population and socio-economic deprivation are reflected in the State's educational deprivation.

The State is among the most educationally disadvantaged states in India. NITI Aayog's report on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in education flags access and quality issues in education in Uttar Pradesh (NITI Aayog, 2024). The enrolment of students at different levels of education varies. Though enrolment in primary classes is high, it drastically decreases with an increase in the level of education. The Adjusted Net Enrolment Rate (ANER) of Elementary classes (classes 1-8), which measures the global targets for the State's Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), is 94 per cent. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for higher secondary classes (classes 11-12) is 50.7 per cent compared to the total population of the same age group who were expected to be in higher secondary classes. The GER for higher education (age 18-23) is 24.10 per cent compared to the total population of similar age groups. The analysis of NITI Aayog's data shows that almost 50 per cent of the eligible population do not register for higher secondary education, and nearly 75 per cent of the eligible population do not register for higher education (NITI Aayog, 2024). This presents a problematic picture of a huge drop-out after primary classes. Regarding the quality of education, only 68 per cent of students who completed primary education in Uttar Pradesh have obtained a minimum proficiency in basic literacy and numeracy (NITI Aayog, 2024). This shows that nearly 32 per cent of students who complete primary education cannot perform basic literacy and numeracy tasks. The above elaboration represents the bleak condition of education in the State. The present study focuses on students who are in higher secondary classes and are in the stage of completing schooling. It provides an opportunity to reflect on students' schooling experiences and their role in shaping students' habitus

belonging to socio-economically disadvantaged background (middle caste group) and educationally and socio-economically deprived regions.

The institution of 'caste' is important for understanding Indian society. Caste is a system of stratification in which people are allocated to closed social groups through birth, and caste is closely connected with socio-economic and political relations, such as kinship, power, and labour relations (Jodhka, 2012). Thousands of castes can be broadly divided into upper, middle (Other Backwards Classes-OBCs) and lower castes (Scheduled Castes-SCs and Scheduled Tribes-STs). The OBC is quite a heterogeneous group, with a common thread within the group being social and educational deprivation of castes. The OBCs comprise 3,743 castes and constitute 52% of the nation's population (Government of India 1980: I, p. 61). Socioeconomically, this group can be placed in the middle range of the caste and class hierarchy (Bharti, 2018). The educational and economic conditions, as well as the political influence of OBCs, have improved significantly post-1990 (Deshpande & Ramchandran, 2014). However, it is unclear whether changes in the educational levels and economic status of OBCs are commensurate with an increased democratic outlook in life and polity, such as rationality in collective life, and demands for social justice, equality, and liberty. One important aspect of present research is to investigate the role of the school in shaping the democratic virtues of students from the OBC community. However, it is not just about students of one community, but also about generating insights into broader school life.

The Indian education system is quite hierarchised (Shah, 2020; Vasavi, 2019; Velaskar, 1990). India has 'the most variegated and most class-based schooling system in the world' (Vasavi, 2019, p. 2). These stratified schools, especially private schools, reflect the stratified nature of Indian society (Mukhopadhyay and Sarangapani, 2018; Vasavi, 2019), and access to different types of schools depends on a family's economic and social position (Jain, 2018). Velaskar (1990) categorise schools based on their hierarchy into four groups: elite and [2]unaided private schools, elite government schools, unaided and aided lower-level schools, and government schools. There is a clear, larger trend regarding who has access to what kinds of schools (Vasavi, 2019; Velaskar, 1990). Both economic class and caste play an important role in directing who goes to what kind of schools in India (Vasavi, 2019). The

[2] Unaided schools represent schools that is not funded by the government. Some private schools funded by government but managed by private trusts while majority of private schools do not get any grant from from government and recognised as unaided schools.

first two categories serve the upper and middle classes, mainly upper castes (Velaskar, 1990). The lower strata private schools (also known as low-fee private schools) mainly serve the middle caste working class students (OBCs) (Dalal, 2015; Gundemeda and Krishnarao, 2020; Kalaiah, 2020; Kalaiah et al., 2020; Shah, 2020). The 'low-fee private schools cater to students whose families have something compared to those who have nothing or are extremely poor' (Majumdar and Mooij, 2013, p. 6). Thus, low-fee private schools serve a large section of OBC students, who are the participants of this study. Government schools, which are at the lowest rank of the school hierarchy, predominantly serve students from the lowest caste, also officially known as the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Gundemeda and Krishnarao, 2020; Kalaiah, 2020; Kalaiah et al., 2020; Majumdar and Mooij, 2013).

The low-fee private schools (LFPS) mushroomed across both rural and urban areas post 1990 (Nambissan, 2012). There is a continuous transition of students from government to private schooling (Kingdom, 2020; Mukhopadhyay and Sarangapani, 2018; World Bank Report, 2024). At the national level, data for the period 2010 to 2016 show a 14.5 per cent decrease in enrolment in government schools and a 38.5 per cent increase in private schools (Kingdom, 2020). The state of Uttar Pradesh is an outlier in terms of enrolment in both government and private schools. In government schools, enrolment decreased by 20.5 per cent, while enrolment in private schools increased by 65 per cent (6.7 million students) (Kingdom, 2020). The high demand for low-fee private schools is founded in parents' aspirations for mobility through schooling, unhappiness with government schools (Vasavi, 2019), and demand for 'English-medium' schools (Nambissan, 2012). The present study explores how a low-fee private school prepares students for social transformation/reproduction in relation to the school's perceived role in mobility through schooling.

1.2 Motivation for this Research

Three key motivating factors guided the envisioning of the present research. First, my personal reflection on the research context, which shows increasing educational expansion/access and improvements in economic conditions, alongside increasing religious and cultural propaganda. How are schools addressing these mixed issues? Second, India's National Education Policy, 2020, recommend that schools inculcate un/democratic values of

critical thinking and equality. And third, literature on Indian schooling suggests that schools propagate values of obedience and hierarchy. I propose to examine how it affects students' dispositions, as it may be linked to the perpetuation of social inequality and the inculcation of democratic virtues.

Although the current research is situated within ongoing debates on the role of schooling in social reproduction/transformation, the initial motivation for this research is rooted in my personal experience with the changing socio-political, economic, and educational landscape of rural North India, specifically the State of Uttar Pradesh. When I compare my childhood observations about schooling and the socioeconomic condition of the region between 2000 and 2020 a period of around 20 years, there is a drastic change. On one hand, there is the expansion of education and access to education for all sections of society, reaching almost universally at least primary education up to age 14. At the same time, with the large-scale privatisation of education, there is a shift towards private schools by those who can afford them. This phenomenon led to the opening of many low-fee private schools and a high level of aspiration for private education. On the other hand, there has been a resurgence of majoritarian politics, religiosity, and traditional cultural values (see Rajesh, 2021). I observed that economically better-off and more educated people are more actively engaged in cultural and religious activities. As OBCs' economic conditions improved more rapidly, they moved in large numbers to private schools and, at the same time, became more actively engaged in religious and cultural activities.

The above situation makes me wonder what education is doing to develop critical thinking. Particularly, I wondered if religious and cultural values, which are inherently hierarchical, dominate; there is a likelihood of continued social deprivation and subjugation for, among others, women and people from lower castes. With OBCs constituting 52% of the nation’s population and being a significant influence in Indian politics, understanding the formation of criticality/conformity among OBC students is of widespread significance for the nation’s future and for Indian society. As a large number of OBC students attend low-fee private schools and OBCs represent almost 50 per cent of the country's population, I focused on researching LFPS and OBC students. In this context, I proposed exploring what the school is doing to inculcate democratic virtues among OBC students.

My personal reflections on education align with India's education expectations. The New Education Policy (NEP, 2020) recommends using education to foster critical thinking and promote social transformation. The broader aims of NEP 2020 are concretised for school education through the development of the National Curriculum Framework for School Education, 2023 (NCFSE, 2023). NCFSE 2023 envisions the role of education in developing a more equitable and just society with capacities in scientific inquiry and 'rooted in Indian ethos and culture' (NCF, 2023, p.16). It proposes pedagogies that are more inquiry-driven, participatory, and activity-based. Some key broader aims of school education include 'rational thought and autonomy', 'democratic and community participation', effective participation in the economy individually and socially, 'acquiring knowledge, capacities and values and dispositions to participate meaningfully and contribute positively to culture' (NCFSE, 2023, p. 23). In light of the above policy recommendation, the current research investigates whether the school enforces critical/conforming attributes among students and whether education is transformative for rural disadvantaged groups in terms of caste hierarchy. If school does so, how does it do so?

The literature on Indian schooling reveals that schools are predominantly engaged in disciplining (Iyer, 2013; Sarangapani, 2003; Thapan, 2014a) and in enforcing cultural morality (Deka, 2014; Gogoi, 2014). It appears that the larger aim of everyday schooling is to discourage questioning and socialising in accepting norms, relations, and practices as they are (Kumar, 2005; Sarangapani, 2003). The current research represents the next level of analysis of what happens to students in a school that enforces obedience and hails the acceptability of a different hierarchy through everyday school practices. Aforementioned broader background and motivation guide the formulation of the research aim and questions, which are presented below.

1.3 Aim and research questions

This project is guided by curiosity to investigate whether access to education can reproduce or transform existing social relations of caste and whether the school enforces un/democratic virtues among students. This research explores the role of a school's practices in social reproduction and inculcation of undemocratic virtues through shaping students' dispositions. The thesis understands and explains the role of school practices in the shaping of students' conforming dispositions (constitutive of habitus).

Research questions

1. *How does a private school influence conforming dispositions of higher secondary school students in rural Uttar Pradesh, India*

The research question will be explored by investigating the following sub-questions:

a. How do school practices reinforce conforming dispositions?
b. What are the mechanisms through which the school reproduces caste inequalities?

This project uses the Biographical Narrative Interview Method for data gathering and thematically analyses them. Through in-depth student interviews, I explored students' educational trajectories. The data analysis reveals the school's dominant practices, which are repeated throughout students' educational journey, and the inherent message they convey and enforce. Moreover, this research critically interprets how students' conforming dispositions shape their engagement with caste-based practices of untouchability and endogamy, reflecting the potential to reproduce caste relations.

1.4. Contributions and Significance

1.4.1 Conceptual contributions

Present research highlights a set of unofficial school practices—authority, obedience, and hierarchy —that have the potential to shape and inform students' dispositions. These practices are in addition to official pedagogical practices, such as teaching, assessment, and curriculum design, which shape students' dispositions. These practices serve as pedagogic work in generating habitus and expanding the pool of school practices employed to explore the role of schools in social reproduction. This research also expands the concept of cognitive disposition by adding a new aspect: conformity. Additionally, this research contributes to expanding the affective aspects of disposition, expressed as respect, fear, and family honour. Moreover, I also expand the concept of caste as embodied affect by adding another perspective, family honour as an affective disposition.

1.4.2 Significance of the study in practice and policy

This study provides evidence of the mechanism by which schools reproduce caste-based social inequities in a specific Indian context. That is, school practices of authority, obedience, and hierarchy form conforming dispositions that guide students' engagement with caste-based practices. Therefore, this research offers educators a perspective on being reflexive about their taken-for-granted practices, which run counter to the recommendations of the New Education Policy, 2020 (NEP, 2020). One important contribution to developing reflexivity among educational participants is understanding why they are doing what they are doing and what values and messages are conveyed and internalised.

The current research has the potential to contribute knowledge on how schools might shape students' habitus towards conformity, including dispositions that inform socially unjust relations and practices. An extension to these explorations is to understand what specific sites are and how to transform social inequalities through schools. Drawing on the theoretical understanding of habitus as dynamic and transformative, the study proposes changing practices to develop attributes of criticality, which can transform social relations (Bourdieu, 1990).

In terms of policy, present research reveals that the school promotes conformity, contrary to the recommendations of NEP 2020, which emphasise the development of critical thinking. This approach also contributes to reproducing unequal social relations, contradicting the expectation of transforming social relations. This requires revisiting policy recommendations and executions. This research also offers insights for critically examining popular policy narratives that the expansion of education (in its current form) changes society.

1.5. Introducing Caste as Social Hierarchy in the Indian Context

The thesis explains a specific form of social inequality, caste inequity, which is perpetuated through Indian schools. In this section, I broadly introduce and elaborate on the concept of caste.

The institution of ‘caste’ is an important sociological concept for understanding Indian society. Caste is a complex system of social stratification and hierarchisation (Gupta, 2000). In broader terms, caste is a system of division of people into different groups based on their birth. These groups are exclusive to each other and hierarchically arranged. The caste system is considered an ideology rooted in Indian tradition and religious practices, and it is closely linked to the social, economic, and political systems (Jodhka and Naudet, 2023). In other words, caste can be understood as a tradition, a means, and a site of power struggles (privilege and deprivation) (Jodhka, 2012). Some key characteristics of the caste system include the exclusivity of groups, restrictions on social intermixing, limitations on marriage outside one's caste, social and religious endorsement of hierarchical arrangements within society, and controls on occupational choices (Ghurye, 1932).

According to classical and orientalist writing (Dumont, 1998), caste has its origin in the Indian religious text, which divides Indian society into four groups (or *Varna*)— *Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaisya*, and *Sudra* in hierarchical order, where Brahmins are at the top and Sudras at the bottom. However, further studies and census surveys from the colonial government show that there is a fifth category, *Achhuts* (Untouchables) (things/people to whom these people touch are considered to become impure) (Cohn, 1968). Thus, the Untouchables are situated at the bottom of the caste hierarchy, below the Sudras.

The Varna system is helpful for broader caste classification, enabling a deeper understanding of the hierarchy. For practical purposes, it has less significance because there are thousands of castes and subcastes with variation in different regions of the country (Jodhka, 2012). Traditionally, from an occupational perspective, Brahmins were entitled to perform religious rituals and deliver education (teaching), Kshatriyas as warriors for protection, Vaishyas in trade, and Sudras in service to the upper-rank social groups, especially in agricultural work and cattle rearing. Untouchables were given menial work, such as cleaning. Depending on the region and their numerical strength, *Sudras* may or may not have land holdings. At the same time, untouchables were landless labourers who were mostly struggling for means of survival. The colonial government enumerated these communities through census surveys (Census Survey, 1901) and added untouchables as an appendix to the main census survey reports, thus designating them as the Schedule Castes (Jodhka, 2012). In post-independent India, affirmative policies are formulated and executed for the Scheduled Castes (SCs) (Jodhka, 2012). Other communities that do not fall under the Scheduled Castes or the

Scheduled Tribes (STs) but remain socially and educationally (and thus, economically) marginalised (the majority of these castes belong to the middle castes) are officially recognised as Other Backward Classes by the Government of India (GOI, 1980).

Gupta argues that, although the ritualistic nature of caste is diminishing, caste remains a dominant force in defining socio-economic and political relations and interactions (Gupta, 2000). Two caste-based practices get frequent reference in the literature around caste-relations, discrimination and perpetuation of caste: untouchability and endogamy (Abraham, 2014; Ambedkar, 1936; Ashok and Rupavath, 2022; Gupta, 2000; Guru and Surokkai, 2019; Jodhka, 2012). Untouchability denotes denial of 'access to human sociality' (Rodrigues, 2024, p.84). That is, some castes, especially belonging to lower/ lowest strata in caste hierarchy, are considered as 'being defiled and polluting' (Rodrigues, 2024, p. 84). Members of lower-caste communities are perceived as making things/ persons impure by their touch; thus, they are denied access to the resources and services available to the general public. Untouchability is a 'mental' fixation that is founded on the notion of 'purity and pollution' and operates through 'prohibition and sanctions' (Rodrigues, 2024, p. 86).

Endogamy is another caste-based practice that predominantly functions in Indian society. Endogamy is the practice of marrying within prescribed groups, that is, within caste or community. Endogamy is the key through which the caste hierarchy is reproduced. (Ambedkar, 1936). Those who try to break it meet with violent means, sometimes reaching murder of a child or sibling, known as "honour" killing (Abraham, 2014; Ashok and Rupavath, 2022). Although purity and pollution of the caste are the foundation (Devi, 2025), they are primarily directed towards maintaining the status quo and power within groups (Abraham, 2014). Opposition to inter-caste or love marriage is vehemently opposed between Dalits and non-Dalits, but also the sub-castes within Dalits (Kuamar and Rupavath, 2022).

Based on the above discussion on caste, I can summarise that caste is a social institution that stratifies society into distinct social groups from birth, and these groups are hierarchically arranged. Caste plays an important role in defining socio-economic and political relations and is expressed and perpetuated through caste-based practices like untouchability and endogamy. The following section provides a brief introduction to the content covered in each chapter of the thesis.

1.6. Structure of the thesis

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Review of literature provides an in-depth discussion of the role of schooling in perpetuating inequalities. It begins by briefly presenting how scholars researched the role of schooling in perpetuating social inequalities globally. Moving ahead, the chapter explains how caste influences or shapes education and schooling in India. Through an analysis of the literature, this chapter shows how everyday school life reinforces a culture of obedience and conformity among students in both global and Indian schools. While discussing the everyday life of school through literature, I emphasise the authority of teachers, their role in shaping school practices, and their possible impact on students from disadvantaged backgrounds. This chapter dedicates a section to Bourdieusian literature that underlines the role of school practices, the habitus of school participants, and the role of habitus in reproducing social inequalities. Finally, in light of the existing literature on school practices, I discuss that the current study contributes to the debate around schools' role in shaping conformity and reproduction of caste inequalities in the rural north Indian context using Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, disposition and practices.

Chapter 3: Theoretical and conceptual framework of research

This chapter introduces and elaborates on the theoretical and conceptual ideas of habitus, disposition, and conformity to conceptualise the ‘conforming disposition’, a foundational concept in current research. It also covers aspects of cognitive and affective dispositions. More specifically, the chapter conceptualises conformity as cognitive disposition and the feelings of respect, honour and fear as affective dispositions. I also elaborate on how the theoretical ideas on ‘criticality’ of critical social sciences are employed to develop the concept of conformity. Moreover, there is an introductory discussion on pedagogic work and school practices are conceptualised as pedagogic work. Bourdieu’s theoretical explication of habitus, disposition and pedagogic work is employed to explore the role of school practices in the reinforcement of conforming dispositions.

Chapter 4: Methodology

The methodology chapter discusses the practical steps and approaches I adopted in conducting research and their philosophical and theoretical foundations. The study employed the Biographical Narrative Interview Method (BNIM) to gather and interpret data, guided by a critical interpretivist epistemology and a relational ontology. Moreover, it discusses how theory can shape the methodology.

Chapter 5: Findings

The findings evidence that the school engages in three key unofficial school practices—authority, obedience, and hierarchy—that play crucial roles in reinforcing conforming dispositions of students. Conforming dispositions signify a propensity towards non-questioning, dependent agency that has the potential to direct students' engagement with prevailing social relations. Moreover, findings also show that social hierarchies are affectively embodied within individuals as respect, fear and honour. These dispositions influence students' engagement with caste-based practices of untouchability and endogamy that express potential towards the reproduction of caste inequalities.

Chapter 6: Discussion

In this chapter, I discuss the key findings of this study in light of existing literature and theoretical ideas in relation to the ongoing debate about the role of education in perpetuating existing social relations and its transformative potential. It also covers the current study's contribution to practice theory, extended by Bourdieusian scholars, by adding a new set of school practices, authority, obedience, and hierarchy. These are unofficial pedagogical practices that operate alongside formal pedagogical practices in school. This chapter also discusses how conformity, as a cognitive disposition, predisposes individuals to not engage critically with social relations, which might influence the reproduction of caste relations. Moreover, social hierarchies are enforced as affective dispositions that provide un/pre-thought guidance to practices which have the potential to reproduce social relations. Finally, the chapter critically examines the role of school in reproducing/ transforming social relations and enforcing un/democratic virtues by shaping students' dispositions towards conformity.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The final chapter briefly addresses the study's key research questions. School practices of authority, obedience, and hierarchy shape students' habitus. The habitus is constitutive of cognitive dispositions of conformity and affective dispositions of respect, fear, and honour that play an important role in reproducing caste inequality. The chapter briefly summarises the study's contribution to practice theory and to debates around cognitive and affective dispositions and offers recommendations for further research. The study's findings suggest that unofficial school practices contribute to the reproduction of caste inequality. Contrary to the expectations of the National Education Policy 2020 of instilling critical thinking, an Indian school enforces conformity among students.

1.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I introduced the project, particularly providing information on the background and rationale for the current research. The study is located in a north Indian state that is socially, economically, and educationally disadvantaged, particularly focusing on rural students from middle-caste groups who are similarly disadvantaged. The larger aim is to understand what schools are doing in terms of social transformation and inculcation of democratic virtues. Moreover, the study addresses the role of school practices in shaping cognitive dispositions of conformity and affective dispositions of respect, fear, and honour. This research contributes to Bourdieusian scholarship on the role of schools in reproducing social inequalities by adding caste inequalities from the Indian context, supplementing with a new set of unofficial school practices, and involving cognitive and affective dispositions.

Conforming dispositions, predominantly shaped by schooling, present a problematic side of schooling. This research does not intend to demonise schools or prevent students from attending school, but rather to present a case of what is wrong with schooling despite its hailed role in changing society. Findings present an opportunity to reflect on the practices to change/ modify to inculcate the virtues of criticality, which is one of the key aspects of social transformation and democratic citizenship. This research suggests that unofficial school practices of authority, obedience and hierarchy, along with official pedagogic practices, require equal attention when considering the role of school in social reproduction/ transformation. In the next chapter, I will review the literature on the role of schools in

perpetuating social inequalities, on school practices that enforce obedience and hierarchy, and on Bourdieusian scholarship that highlights the role of school practices in the reproduction of social inequalities.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Education, in general, and schooling, in particular, contribute to the reproduction and transformation of social inequalities (Kemmis and Edwards-Groves, 2017). The kind of schooling and how it contributes to the reproduction of social inequality has long been a concern for the sociology of education. The sociological explorations aim to understand the mechanisms by which schooling reproduces inequality and how it can be transformed. One way of doing this is to focus on what is happening within the school that contributes to the reproduction of inequalities. One aspect of this chapter is to illustrate how researchers have investigated the role of pedagogic practices in reproducing social inequalities globally. As the present study focuses on the Indian context, I also reviewed studies on Indian schooling and its role in reproducing caste inequalities (a social inequality that predominantly occurs in the Indian subcontinent).

Studies focusing on pedagogical or non-pedagogical interactions within schools have shown that schools across the globe, including those in India, are engaged in inculcating the virtues of obedience and conformity. In this chapter, drawing on the prevailing academic literature, I also highlight how schools enforce obedience among students. Insights from the aforementioned analysis provide the foundation for this study, which examines whether obedience and conformity, which prevail in the schooling process, have the potential to reproduce social inequalities. To understand the mechanism by which schools reproduce social relations, I drew on Bourdieu's theoretical and empirical studies.

Bourdieu's theoretical framework is widely used to explain the role of schooling in reproducing social inequalities. My interest in the application of Bourdieu's work in this research lies in his theoretical explication of practice theory, which explains how social inequalities are embodied within individuals, intuitively guiding their practice and thus reproducing social relations. I reviewed empirical studies that focus on school practices, participants' habitus, and their roles in reproducing social inequalities across various school settings worldwide. Insights from a review of Bourdieusian studies helped in exploring the role of schools in the Indian context in reproducing caste inequality.

This chapter is broadly divided into six sections. The chapter begins with a broader review of the literature that focuses on the role of schooling in reproducing social inequalities. There

is an emphasis on understanding how schools' pedagogic practices contribute to the perpetuation of social inequalities. The second section reviews literature on Indian schooling, focusing on the role of caste in shaping students' school experiences and how schooling perpetuates caste inequalities. The following section covers scholarship (in a non-Indian context) concerning practices that reinforce obedience and conformity in schools. The focus of this section is to understand, through existing literature, whether schools generate values of non-questioning and reduced agency and how they do it.

The fourth section on Indian studies, especially Indian school culture and its role in encouraging/enforcing obedience. Here, I also examine teachers' authority in Indian schools, a crucial aspect of schooling experiences in India. The fifth section analyses the literature that demonstrates how school practices reproduce social inequalities by exploring the habitus of participants in schooling. In the final section, following a critical review of the existing literature, I situate the current study within the ongoing debate on the role of schooling in reproducing social inequalities, with a focus on students' habitus and consideration of caste inequality in a North Indian State.

2.1 Schooling and Reproduction of Social Inequalities

Scholars have demonstrated that schooling plays a crucial role in reproducing cultural, social, and economic inequalities (Apple, 1982; Bourdieu, 1977; Bowles and Gintis, 2010; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2005; Willis, 1978, 2016). Researchers investigated different aspects of schooling to illustrate schools' role in the perpetuation of social inequalities, for instance, stratification of education and differential access to schooling based on students' family location (Jain, 2024; Saltman, 2014; Vasavi, 2019); educational policy (Ball, 2003; Fitz, Davies and Evans, 2006), school leadership (Gewirtz, 2002). Moreover, the role of formal curriculum in the production of social inequalities is also analysed (Sullivan et al., 2018). Sullivan et al.'s review paper argues that the curriculum reinforces the culture or values of dominant groups, offers different choices for different social groups, and that the language in which the curriculum is transacted plays a role in reproducing social relations (Sullivan et al., 2018). Studies also explored the aspect of hidden curriculum to explicate the relationship between prevailing schooling arrangements and the perpetuation of social inequalities (Netter, 2022). Along with a few aspects of schooling mentioned above that contribute to

the perpetuation of social inequalities, school practices are also widely researched for their role in this process.

School practices include both official and unofficial pedagogic practices. Official pedagogic practices here refer to the school's instructional practices, which are intentional, planned, and grounded in theory. Curriculum planning, classroom teaching, assessment practices, and other co-curricular activities can be included in this group. Scholars have widely researched schooling practices across different contexts and have illustrated their role in reproducing social inequalities. Studies show that curricular transactions (Cui, 2017; Gale et al., 2019; Watkins & Noble, 2013) and academic expectations (Evans, 2020; Handelsman, 2011; Loh & Sun, 2020; Monteiro Nascimento & Markic, 2025;) in schools contribute to reproducing social inequalities. Students' assessment is another key academic area, and though it is intended to improve academic performance, it often results in students from disadvantaged backgrounds failing. Some scholars highlight that the process of school assessment (Evans, 2020; Francis and Mills, 2012; Reay, 2001) and ability grouping in the form of 'setting' in the UK (Archer et al., 2018) and tracking in the USA (Garmon, 2009) reproduces social inequalities through schooling.

Unofficial pedagogic practices refer to actions and activities that are not intentionally related to formal instruction. This set of actions is pedagogical because it is meant to convey messages and provide some instruction, though it is not official. Informal interactions that address larger personal, social, and cultural needs, aspirations, or biases are considered informal pedagogical in nature. Scholars conducted research on various aspects of unofficial, informal pedagogic practices to reveal the role of schooling in reproducing inequalities. Some studies find that teachers' acts of labelling, setting expectations (Simpson, 2024) and identity formation reproduce existing social relations (Archer et al., 2008; Archer & Yamashita, 2003; Hiss and Peck, 2020; Valecia, 1997). Scholars widely discussed the role of dominant discourses that signify middle-class culture and their contribution to the reproduction of inequalities (Hiss and Peck, 2020; Horvat and Antanio, 1999; Hunter, 2004**;** Ingram, 2009; Li, 2019; Mills and Gale, 2010; Warin, 2016).

Overemphasis on aspirations for social and economic mobility through schooling leads to the reproduction of inequalities (Abrahams, 2024; Gale and Parker, 2015; Stahl, 2015;). Some researchers highlight the processes of discipline and surveillance and their role in

reproducing racial, gender, and class inequalities. For instance, scholars have shown that disciplining (Carlile, 2018; Francis & Mills, 2012; Gagnon et al., 2017;) and surveillance (Deakin et al., 2018) reinforce social inequality.

It is evident from the above discussion that schools, which are ideally expected to transform social relations, end up functioning as a dominant site of social reproduction. Thus, I aim to investigate the role of Indian schools in reproducing relations, revealing the nuances through which inequity is perpetuated, even as it is intended to be transformed. Various scholars have examined different aspects of the social inequalities perpetuated through schooling. For example, some scholars underlined the reproduction of racial and ethnic inequalities (Cui, 2017; Reay, 1995; Watkins & Noble, 2013), while others focused on gender (Hunter, 2004) and class inequalities (Juros, 2022; Leaney, 2018; Reay, 2015; Sultana, 1990). I researched a different kind of social hierarchy common in the Indian context, caste inequality, focusing on school practices. In the following section, I elaborate on how scholars have examined caste inequality in Indian schools.

2.2 Indian Schooling and Caste Inequality

In this section, I examine the literature on how caste influences school experiences and contributes to the reproduction of caste (inherent economic) relations. Scholars explore the role of caste (to some extent class) in access to schools (Bailwal and Paul, 2021; Jain, 2018; Shah, 2020). Numerous studies emphasise that explicit caste-based exclusion and discrimination occur within schools, affecting lower caste students (SCs and STs) most severely (Nayak, 2023; Nambissan, 2009, 2001; Ramachandran and Naorem, 2013). Another set of studies explored how caste implicitly operates in the everyday life of schools, or how caste biases lead to differential treatment of teachers towards students of different castes (Kumar, 1989; Malik and Mallik, 2020; Mittal, 2020; Shah, 2020). Ultimately, the discussion culminates in an examination of how caste discrimination and exclusion contribute to the reproduction of caste relations, thereby reinforcing economic privileges and disadvantages (Wankhede, 2013).

2.2.1 Caste and access to schools

Scholars have shown that caste (to some degree, class) plays an important role in determining who attends which type of school. One way in which caste influences access to schooling is through the provisioning of different types of public schools to different sections of society. Bailwal and Paul (2021) demonstrate biases in the opening of public schools in areas with a high proportion of students from marginalised backgrounds. 'The villages dominated by SC/ST population have a lower chance of having public schools [secondary schools] compared to the villages inhabited by non-SC/ST' (Bailwal and Paul, 2021, p. 1831). This kind of provisioning may have an impact on educational outcomes and higher dropout rates for students of disadvantaged backgrounds (Bailwal and Paul, 2021).

The Indian education system is highly hierarchical (Shah, 2020; Vasavi, 2019; Velaskar, 1990), and access to different types of schools depends on a family's economic and social conditions (Jain, 2018). Velaskar (1990) categorised schools by hierarchy into four groups: elite and unaided private schools, elite government schools, unaided and aided lower schools for the lower middle classes, and government schools. Every aspect of the schooling system in India, including organisation, internal structure, content, process, and ethos, contributes to unequal outcomes, especially social inequalities of caste and gender (Velaskar, 1990). An analysis of the literature on access to schooling indicates that there , a larger, visible trend in relation to who access to what kind of school. Government schools predominantly serve the lower caste (Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes) students (Gundemeda and Krishnarao, 2020; Kalaiah et al., 2020; Shah, 2020). A small fraction of Scheduled Caste (SC) students does attend aided private schools, but their academic success is uncertain (Kalaiah, 2020). The OBC students mostly attend low-fee private schools, while elite private schools predominantly serve the upper caste (middle- or upper-class students) (Dalal, 2015; Gundemeda and Krishnarao, 2020; Kalaiah, 2020; Kalaiah et al., 2020; Shah, 2020).

Access to and retention in schools and higher education show pronounced differences by social and economic background. The enrolment record in primary classes from 1991, especially after 2000, is impressive; however, it does not match their presence in school or better learning outcomes (Shah, 2020). Dropout rates range from the upper primary to the higher secondary classes and are more acute in higher education across all classes, while dropout rates among SCs, STs, and girls are more severe (Shah, 2020). In undivided Andhra

Pradesh, nearly 25% of SC students drop out before completing upper primary classes. Nearly two in four students leave either before or after completing class 10. A similar trend is observed among OBCs aged 6 to 16 (Gundemeda and Krishnarao, 2020). Further scholars investigated how caste operates once students enter the schools.

2.2.2 Caste-based discrimination inside the schools

It is not just poverty but the social hierarchy of caste, gender and ethnicity, and practices within institutions that facilitate exclusion (Nambissan, 2009). Caste-based discrimination operates explicitly (Nayak, 2023; Ramachandran and Naorem, 2013) as well as implicitly (Gundemeda and Krishnarao, 2020; Kumar, 1989; Malik and Mallik, 2020; Mittal, 2020; Shah, 2020) within the schools. Nambissan (2009) developed a framework to study caste-based discrimination in school education, which was further tested in empirical studies by Thorat and Sabhrawal (2010) and Nayak (2023). The framework has three aspects: discrimination in access to facilities; discrimination in participation in school activities; and discrimination in interaction among participants (Nambissan, 2009).

Many studies highlight the exclusion and discrimination faced by students from lower castes (SCs and STs) in government schools in terms of access to facilities in schools (Nambissan, 2009; Nayak, 2013; Wankhede, 2013). The SC students face explicit discrimination in the form of untouchability, and other structures and processes cause deprivation from education, while the Schedule Tribes are far away due to their remoteness in forests and rough terrains (Nambissan, 2001). Wankhede characterises caste as a social structure with ‘rigid hierarchy’ that operates through the practice of ‘purity-pollution notions’ and possesses ‘religious sanction’ (Wankhede, 2013, p.183). That means some caste groups are impure and not supposed to be touched. When they touch, they pollute things and are considered untouchable. Dalits or Scheduled Caste (SC)/ lower caste individuals are considered to be untouchables. These embedded cultural beliefs and practices provided the foundation for discrimination in schools, which is predominantly reported in government schools (Nayak, 2023).

Scholars show that the identity of being a member of the untouchable community shapes the interactions in the school in terms of sharing food and water. It is popularly considered that

untouchables are those who pollute things with their touch, thus their access to water sources like taps or handpumps or sharing food is monitored (Nambissan, 2009; Ramachandran and Naorem, 2013). Nayak shows that the serving of Mid-Day Meal (MDM) is a site where discrimination takes a more explicit form (Nayak, 2023). Students from SC/ ST communities are seated separately. Students from upper castes drink first or clean their plates before SC and ST students. (Ramachandran and Naorem, 2013). These practices construct or reinforce superiority and inferiority among students from different caste groups. Students from Dalit communities face 'hostile learning environments in public school' (Nayak, 2023, p. 103). Both teachers and peers of other castes perform explicit discrimination against Dalit students. There are ways through which teachers themselves are engaged in caste-based discrimination. For example, Dalit students are engaged in *menial* work like cleaning (Malik and Mallik, 2020), while privileged caste students serve food and water to teachers (Nambissan, 2009).

Caste also influences students' participation in the classroom from Dalit communities. The SC students are also excluded from curricular and co-curricular activities. For instance, Dalit (SC) students are mostly excluded from signing the prayer, which is considered sacred, due to their lower status (Nambissan, 2009). Some studies highlight that teachers' labelling of SC students as 'weak', inadequate pedagogic attention, and the failure to give them the confidence to ask questions and seek clarification in class lead to unequal participation among students from disadvantaged communities (Nambissan, 2009, p. 26; see also Dalal, 2015). Teachers attribute students' poor academic performance to parents (Dalal, 2015). Parents are not educated and do not take an interest in them; thus, students perform poorly in school (Gundemeda and Krishnarao, 2020; Ramachandran and Naorem, 2013).

Studies demonstrated that students from privileged castes get preferential treatment from teachers; thus, through taken-for-granted practices, schools reinforce the caste hierarchy through schooling (Nayak, 2023). Bright students are preferred for morning prayer and sit in the front rows of the classroom. It is observed that privileged caste students fall into this category (bright students); indirectly, caste discrimination and exclusion operate (Ramachandran and Naorem, 2013). Teachers give more attention to 'bright' students who are largely from privileged castes; thus, students from lower castes are ignored (Ramachandran and Naorem, 2013, p. 44).

Researchers find that teachers in government schools are predominantly from higher castes (classes) and hold low expectations for students from disadvantaged groups (Dalal, 2015; Desai et al., 2009; Sriprakash, 2011). In some cases, caste distance is also important in maintaining discipline. Sriprakash (2011) showed that teachers were mostly from upper castes and students were from lower castes or Dalits. Teachers considered themselves superior, behaved like patrons, and primarily maintained distance (Dalal, 2015). This finding is further strengthened by Nayak's study of Dalit students' experiences in school in Orissa (Nayak 2023). Parents' lack of capital and teachers' discriminatory treatment lead to lower academic achievement among lower-caste students (Desai et al., 2009). Rawal and Kingdom's (2010) study further reestablished the discriminatory treatment of teachers. It shows that the same caste, gender, and religious identity of teachers and students positively influence the students' educational achievement (Rawal and Kingdom, 2010). Analysis shows that persistent social biases based on caste, gender, and religion persist in the educational system and influence educational outcomes.

The significance of caste lies in its persistence, as evidenced by exclusion from education despite improved economic conditions (Wankhede, 2013). Through his studies, Wankhede (2013) shows that caste discrimination led students to drop out of post-primary education in rural government primary schools. In another example, in Mumbai city, even though there is a provision for SC candidates for admission in the higher secondary stage, a middle-class SC girl and her family faced discrimination and humiliation in admission and ended up getting vocational courses despite her unwillingness and the availability of seats. 'The incident is related to caste-based bias and prejudice, which are expressed publicly, resulting in the humiliation and, finally, the helplessness of the victims.' (Wankhede, 2013, p.191).

Many studies show that overt discrimination based on caste has reduced over time; however, subtle discrimination in terms of seating arrangements, offering homework assignments, making a monitor in class, inter-caste friendship, food and water sharing or dining together (Gundemeda and Krishnarao, 2020; Malik and Mallik, 2020; Shah, 2020). The significant aspect of this is that many students from disadvantaged communities, especially SCs, find it 'normal' rather than 'discriminatory' (Shah, 2020, p. 17). Moreover, caste biases also influence knowledge construction (Kumar, 1989) and delivery (Mittal, 2020) while discussing deprived communities and the issue of caste in classroom.

Kumar shows that teachers' construction of specific knowledge as superior/ inferior, and its connection to specific communities/social groups, reinforces the superiority/ inferiority of some groups (Kumar, 1989). The meaning students grasp of specific historical and social facts depends on how the teacher interprets and presents them (Kumar, 1989). Another study found that private schools are caste-blind, and student teachers contend that caste does not exist in schools or society (Mittal, 2020). However, the teacher's social identities, motivation and intention influence the nature, content and process of teaching caste in the classroom (Mittal, 2020). It demonstrated that students' and teachers' 'social identities' and 'lived realities' make them interpret the information covered in textbooks based on the National Curriculum Framework 2005 on caste-related issues (Mittal, 2020, p.101).

To sum up the discussion on the role of caste in shaping schooling experiences and in reproducing caste relations, the literature reveals that caste plays an important role through differential access to schooling across different sections of society. Moreover, the literature also evidences that explicit and implicit caste-oriented practices reproduce caste relations through schooling. This context leads me to consider whether a larger school culture is conducive to breaking or reproducing caste-based relations, particularly in schools where middle-caste students participate. I envision exploring dominant school practices that are not caste-oriented and understanding their relation to caste reproduction, if it exists. A culture of obedience and conformity is widely reported in school literature. In the following two sections, I analyse the literature on the production of obedience among students through school practices and their probable link to the reproduction of social inequalities. The next section examines global studies (non-Indian) that focus on school practices and their role in enforcing conformity/ obedience among students.

2.3 School Practices and Production of Obedience (Non-Indian Contexts)

Studies have demonstrated that the formation of obedient individuals is a significant outcome of schooling worldwide (Adams, 2000; Akyeampong and Adzahlie-Mensah, 2018; Berk, 2025; Johnson, 2018). Based on the analysis of literature on the role of schooling (especially school practices) from different regions of the world, I contend that there are broadly two ways through which schools enforce obedience among students: one through

disciplining and violence (Berk, 2025; Gagnon, et al., 2017; Johnson, 2018), and two through the imposition of socio-cultural morality (Avital and Perry-Hazan, 2025; Chafi et al., 2016; Leibold and Grose, 2019).

This section begins by elaborating on the role of discipline, violence, and control in imposing obedience and conformity among students. It is not only disciplining and control, but also the enforcement of socio-cultural, moral values, that play a role in exacting obedience and submissiveness. Some scholars also emphasise the impact of disciplining and moralising on students, including the development of submissiveness and the shaping of relationships with superiors (Chafi et al., 2016; Lamboy and Lu, 2017). Many studies discuss the authority of teachers, specifically the factors and mechanisms through which it is established and enacted (Buzzelli and Johnston, 2001; Macleod et al., 2012; Namphande et al., 2017; Tanukan et al., 2025). This section considers the literature on the role of schooling and its relationship to obedience and conformity in a global context (outside India).

2.3.1 Discipling and violence

The analysis of literature suggests that disciplining, violence and control are prevalent phenomena of schooling observed across different nations of the world, like Akyeampong and Adzahlie-Mensah (2018) in Ghana, Carlile (2018) in the UK, Ganon et al. (2017) in Florida Schools in the USA, and Yoneyama (1999) in the Japanese context. Schools (through teachers) employ various disciplinary strategies that largely serve to enforce obedience, hierarchy, and other conservative cultural values among students (Adams, 2000; Chafi et al., 2016). Adams conceptualises discipline as ‘progression of some kind of linear training and preparation to attain the desired goal (effect) or mastery of a desirable end’ (Adams, 2000, p.143). Citing the American school context, he argues that discipline is intended to instil obedience among students (Adams, 2000). Analysing data from different countries, particularly in northeastern countries, Deakin et al. argue that, with the use of surveillance technologies, discipline and punishment are shifting toward ‘punitive measures’ (Deakin et al., 2018, p. 2).

The literature on school discipline reveals that punitive disciplinary practices include suspension and expulsion, as well as restraints, control measures, and physical punishment.

For instance, Gangon et al (2017) through studies in schools in Florida, USA, argues that punitive practices of disciplining like ‘suspensions, expulsions, restraints, corporal punishment, and changes of placement’, etc. prevail in the schools (Gagnon et al., 2017, p. 65) Similarly, findings are reported in Philippine schools by Tanuka et al., 2025). Teachers enforce order in the American school through ‘an extensive use of consequences’, ranging from verbal warnings to expulsion, and enforce these expectations’ (Lamboy and Lu, 2017, p.206) and patterns are reported in Moroccan schools as well (Chafi et al., 2016). Certain rituals are defined to enforce order and discipline in the school. For instance, walking silently in taped lines in the hallway, sitting silently in class, greeting with a firm handshake, and responding to teachers in a specific way in class are among the school rituals reported in American schools (Lamboy and Lu, 2017).

Disciplining, especially punitive modes of control, is closely linked with the militarisation of education. For example, Akyeampong and Adzahlie-Mensah show that in Ghana, despite a ban on corporal punishment in schools, military style corporal punishment, control, and monitoring are prevalent in schools (Akyeampong and Adzahlie-Mensah, 2018). The process of disciplining, which is an offshoot of the militarisation of education, pushes for ‘uncritical nationalism and blind obedience,’ rather than fostering democratic, critical values, which are necessary skills of schooling (Johnson, 2018, p. 67). Through the militarisation of education, citizens accept inequitable social, economic, and political relations (Johnson, 2018). Drawing from studies on American schools (Johnson, 2018; Lamboy and Lu, 2017) and African studies (Akyeampong and Adzahlie-Mensah, 2018; Chafi, et al, 2016), Philippine Schools (Tanukan et al., 2025), and dislocated minority school in China (Leibold and Grose, 2019, p. 16), it can be argued that physical discipline is an important aspect of schooling in different countries and enforces obedience and conformity among the students.

Schools are ‘rigidly controlled in policy and practice’ (Akyeampong and Adzahlie-Mensah, 2018, p. 205), which is executed through a standardised national curriculum and ‘official school hierarchy’ (Akyeampong and Adzahlie-Mensah, 2018, p.205). In this kind of institutional arrangement, every aspect of students’ lives in Ghana’s school is controlled and regulated. Official hierarchy and surveillance ‘inextricably prepare students for a life of unquestioning obedience and unreflective conformity.’ (Akyeampong and Adzahlie-Mensah, 2018, p.) 206). It is not just students but also their parents who are controlled

through commitment to ensure their children follow school rules in American schools in the state of Florida (Gagnon et al., 2017). Disciplinary practices are justified in terms of maintaining order, improving academic performance (Chafi, et al., 2016; Lamboy and Lu, 2017), and saving from engaging in physical violence (Lamboy and Lu, 2017).

The landscape of school discipline, punishment, control, and surveillance is shifting transnationally (Deakin et al., 2018). As schools worldwide use sophisticated surveillance and control technologies, such as CCTV, digital fingerprinting, and location tracking, discipline and punishment are shifting toward 'punitive measures' (Deakin et al., 2018, p. 2). Hope (2009) showed that CCTV is used in UK schools for the purpose of social control. Although it is used to ensure students' safety by preventing external dangers, it is also an important means of social control, disciplining students identified by CCTV as misbehaving and punishing them. The significance of CCTV lies in its role in social control through 'system integration' (Hope, 2009, p. 905) or 'smart arrangements' rather than 'shared values' (Hope, 2009, p. 904). CCTV acts as a means of social control through the processes of 'access control' (p.998), 'conduct control' (p. 999), and 'gathering evidence' (Hope, 2009, p. 901).

Based on the above discussion of school culture, characterised by discipline, violence, and control, I contend that school discipline is an essential feature for enforcing obedience among students in everyday school life. However, not just disciplining but also the imposition of cultural values contributes to enforcing conformity among students.

2.3.2 Reinforcement of socio-cultural values

The examination of literature suggests that primary schools in Morocco (Chafi, et al., 2016), dislocated minority schools in China (Leibold and Grose, 2019), High schools in Louisiana Delta, USA (Mingo, 2024) and secondary schools in Malawi, Northeast Africa (Namphande et al., 2017) are emphatically engaged in the imposition of cultural values on students. These values predominantly reflect social hierarchy (Avital and Perry-Hazan, 2025) in the Israeli context and obedience (Paglayan, 2022) in Chilean schools. Through pedagogic practices, schoolteachers impose on students' messages that embody the values and attributes of 'docility, predictability, obedience, and respect for authority' (McLaren, 1986, p. 72). These

values are borrowed ‘from both the religious and secular dimensions of classroom life’ and shape students' ‘belief and conduct’ (McLaren, 1986, p. 72).

By imposing cultural values, schools reinforce social hierarchies. Avital and Perry-Hazan (2025) demonstrated that schools use various opportunities to enforce society's larger hierarchical ideology. For instance, in the Israeli context, schools use the students’ council to enforce the religious values and ‘national-communal values, deeply rooted in the collectivist ideology characterising national religious education’ (Avital and Perry-Hazan, 2025, p. 8). Students show conformism and ‘justify the educators’ restrictions’ and believe that educators work to serve the interests of students (Avital and Perry-Hazan, 2025, p.1). Through students' collective action, schools reinforce cultural values that perpetuate gendered inequity even within activities that are intended to foster equality (Avital and Perry-Hazan, 2025).

A significant study by Mingo (2024) has demonstrated the importance of place (socio-cultural and economic advantages/disadvantages) in shaping social values through schooling, thereby contributing to the imposition of hierarchical cultural values. The study found that the racially hierarchised and religious society of the Louisiana Delta in the US expects deference to authorities, where adults are addressed as sir and ma’am and are more authoritarian than in other regions (Mingo, 2024). The treatment and punishment of black students are guided by social expectations of Children’s position, characterised by ‘obedience’, ‘deference’, ‘respectability’, and ‘compliance with authority’ (Mingo, 2024, p. 1). It has a foundation in ‘disciplinary’ and ‘socialisation’ practices that fulfil the above goals through schooling, reproducing forms of social control and causing harm to black students (Mingo, 2024, p.1).

A child is expected to be ‘obedient’ and comply with the ‘authority’ of adults in school and society, which goes beyond general compliance; instead, it is observed in everyday interactions and not question the authority of adults, including teachers (Mingo, 2024, p.2; see also Chafi, 2016; Namphande et al., 2017). Obedience to authority and to those who are superior in hierarchical social relations operates across different social relations: teacher and student, father and children, master and disciples/students, holder of authority and subordinates, and ruler and ruled (Chafi et al., 2016). In the process, schools complement family and religious institutions in enforcing hierarchy and obedience (Chafi et al., 2016).

The teacher is a crucial figure with legitimate authority to enforce obedience and conformity among students. In the following subsection, I discuss teachers' authority in various types of schools worldwide.

2.3.3 Authority of teachers

Studies on school practices indicate that teachers' authority is a dominant and ever-present phenomenon in schooling (Buzzelli and Johnston, 2001; Chafi et al., 2016; Pace and Hemmings, 2007; Wenren, 2014). In this section, I analyse how scholars captured different aspects of teachers' authority in the classroom. More specifically, studies highlight foundations or constituents of teachers' authority (Chafe et al., 2016; Laupa, 1991; Wenren, 2014), how social hierarchy is superimposed with hierarchies within the school and its contribution towards consolidating the authority (Buzzelli and Johnston, 2001). Moreover, there is a discussion around the role of school authority in reinforcing traditional cultural values of hierarchy and obedience among students (Akyeampong and Adzahlie-Mensah, 2018).

The authority of teachers is almost always exhibited across different activities of school, and once a teacher enters the classroom in Chinese schools (Wenren, 2014). ‘Teacher authority is an ever-present feature of classroom interaction’ in American classrooms (Buzzelli and Johnston, 2001, p. 873). Authority is a ‘fundamental’ aspect of classroom life in American classrooms (Pace and Hemmings, 2007, p. 4). ‘Exercise of authority’ is a ‘routine feature’ of everyday classroom interactions of schools in Morocco (Chafi et al., 2016, p.134). The hierarchical relation between teacher and student is the defining feature of teachers’ authority in school. ‘Learners are subordinate partners in classroom interaction’ (Chafi et al., 2016, p.141).

There are some aspects that legitimise the hierarchically superior position of teachers. These issues include *subject experts* (Akyeampong and Adzahlie-Mensah, 2018; Chafi et al., 2016; Laupa, 1991; Wenren, 2014), *adult status* (Laupa, 1991), *social status/ teaching role* (Laupa, 1991; Wenren, 2014), and *social and cultural values (*Buzzelli and Johnston, 2001; Wenren, 2014). Social positions are characterised by the roles people are hired for. For example, in the American context, a teacher hired for the instructional role holds a position within the

institutional set-up: knowledge and social status are more influential in legitimising authority, which is an essential means of enforcing obedience (Laupa, 1991).

Teachers' hierarchy is enacted through a structural hierarchy in classroom arrangement, which is grounded in teachers' being knowledgeable and subject experts: ‘being more knowledgeable than the student’ (Chafi et al., 2016, p. 143; see also Wenren, 2014). The institutional structure enforces teachers' authority, who maintain constant surveillance and control over students. (Akyeampong and Adzahlie-Mensah, 2018). Teacher-centred pedagogies, specifically the ‘predetermined curriculum’ and the unique positions of teachers as ‘repositories of knowledge and authoritarian transmitters of packaged knowledge’, provide teachers with authority over students in the context of Ghana (Akyeampong and Adzahlie-Mensah, 2018, p. 205). This is linked to the colonial legacy, in which schools enacted control through teachers (Akyeampong and Adzahlie-Mensah, 2018).

Although authority is imposed institutionally and culturally, it is legitimised, exercised, and negotiated in the classroom between teacher and student (Chafi et al., 2014; Macleod et al., 2012; Namphande et al., 2017). Classroom authority is *socially constructed* and l*egitimised* through interaction between teacher and student as presented by Pace and Hemmings (2007) in the American context and Lakshman and Schubert (2015) in Sri Lankan schools. In the changing socio-political context, authority and positions are not fixed but negotiated between students and teachers. (Namphande et al., 2017) in their study in Malawi schools, they underlined that in newly formed democratic countries, the effort to develop democratic citizenship through schooling is a contested terrain. As teachers use their interests and cultural and traditional authority to discipline, control, and shape their understanding, they are responsible citizens and do not intend to give up their privileges. At the same time, students sometimes assert their rights and assert themselves relative to traditional authority. In terms of developing participatory democracy through schooling, hybrid practices have emerged, making schools a contested site for democratic practice (Namphande, et al. 2017).

Authority is enacted in the ‘service of a moral order’ composed of ‘shared norms, values, and purposes’ complicated due to ‘competing and contradictory values’ (Pace and Hemmings, 2007, p. 21; see also, Lakshman and Schubert, 2015). ‘Teachers’ authority is value-laden and culturally sensitive’ (Chafi, et al. 2016, 137). Institutional identity as a teacher, which includes the evaluative power to assess actions and behaviour and the power

to decide what is right and what is not, strengthens their authority in Chinese high schools (Wenren, 2014). Teaching certificates are symbols of tradition and moral values in terms of the consideration of their role in service to students. Moreover, they have a traditionally respectable role (Wenren, 2014).

In broader terms, the teaching process almost always involves ‘unequal power relations’ as well as elementally ‘morally in nature’ (Buzzelli and Johnston, 2001, p. 873). The authority of the teacher is embedded in power and morality. Teachers act as instructors and regulators. Teachers' authority is embedded in unequal power relations among participants, and moral responsibility is placed on teachers. A teacher uses her authority for the purposes of ‘regulating power relations and for moral ends’ in the classroom (Buzzelli and Johnston, 2001, p.881). Sometimes, excessive pedagogical authority leads to authoritarianism in the classrooms that is expressed in the use of ‘coercive power’ that teachers possess and enact it through ‘top-down sanctions and punishment’ (Chafi, et al. 2016, p.137). To these ends, teachers employ their authority to enforce the values of obedience and hierarchy (Chafi et al., 2016; Tanukan et al. 2025).

Pace and Hemmings (2007) analysed how social theorists conceived of teachers' authority. They underline that different ideologies envision teachers' authority differently. Conservatives assert that teachers' authority is necessary to enforce social and cultural values, whereas liberals argue for shared authority between teachers and students, with the potential to shape society's democratic imagination. In comparison, critical theorists oppose ‘authority figures’ and ‘hierarchies’ in schools, which privileged groups dominate; they envision transforming social relations within the classroom to address unequal social relations and empower the disadvantaged (Pace & Hemmings, 2007, p. 22).

2.3.4 Impact of discipling and moralising on students

The literature reveals that excessive disciplining and the imposition of cultural values of obedience and hierarchy develop a specific kind of classroom culture that is characterised by the development of fear, submissiveness, dependent and passive learners (Akyeampong and Adzahlie-Mensah, 2018; Chafi et al., 2016;), and reduced agency (Akyeampong and Adzahlie-Mensah, 2018; Lamboy and Lu, 2017; Lustick, 2021) among students. Moreover,

these practices are particularly harmful to students from disadvantaged groups (Lamboy and Lu, 2017).

School practices in Ghanian schools develop acceptance towards schools' learning culture, which promotes 'learning by rote' and incentivises 'passive learning' (Akyeampong and Adzahlie-Mensah, 2018, p.195). Teachers in Moroccan schools conceptualise classroom order as an environment where students are 'silent and passive'; it is achieved through 'fear' which is enforced through 'issuing verbal threats and sometimes physical assault' (Chafi et al., 2016, p. 140). Excessive control instils fear and hinders students' engagement in the classroom. Many students were silent in the classroom, which affected, especially shy students, their oral communication, as they found it hard to express their thoughts clearly (Chafi et al., 2016). Similar findings were reported by Yoneyama (1999) among High School students in the Japanese context. She argues that the enforcement of excessive discipline and conservative cultural values of obedience and hierarchy affects coherent, logical thinking and expression (Yoneyama, 1999).

Scholars argue that disciplinary and punishment practices disproportionately harm students in disadvantaged communities (Berk, 2025; Carlile, 2018; Erickson, 2022;). One way they influence students from racially black communities in US schools is that teachers are inequitable and harsher towards students from advantaged backgrounds (Erickson, 2022). Corporal punishment is not equally applied but somewhat unequally distributed, particularly where you live (Erickson, 2022). Boarding schools in the US use to enforce social rules, norms, and values on marginalised students of dominant groups, and such impositions affect later life (Berk, 2025). Schools in the United States employ a sorting mechanism targeting Black students through suspension and surveillance to enforce compliance (Lustick, 2021).

Lamboy and Lu argue that extreme discipline and conformity have serious consequences for the students of disadvantaged communities in different aspects of their lives, 'including self-determination, intrinsic motivation, creative and rigorous analytical reasoning, self-advocacy, and self-respect' (Lamboy and Lu, 2017, p. 226). Similarly, Lustick argues that suspension and surveillance are the prevailing features of American schools dominated by students of colour and restorative practices in such urban schools to ensure restorative justice and minimise the brutal form of disciplining that actually maintains social order in school, thus reproducing racial inequalities (Lustick, 2021).

There is a complex interaction between 'authority, conformity, and identity' (Berk, 2025, p. 580). Thus, disciplinary practices in American boarding schools contribute to the reproduction of social inequalities. In another context, Carlile shows that practices such as 'zero tolerance' in disciplining and control can perpetuate 'inequity, injustice, and institutional prejudice' in UK schools (Carlile, 2018, p. 29). Additionally, disciplinary practices, such as suspension, expulsion, or corporal punishment, are employed to enforce social values and norms (Mingo, 2024). Enforcement of respectability, order, and compliance in the school, even by black teachers, is considered a means to social mobility and protecting students from engaging in physical violence (Mingo, 2024). However, these practices of disciplining and enforcing values generate 'passivity' among students (Mingo, 2024, p. 11).

Extremely disciplined and focused on perfectionism in charter schools, though claimed as helping disadvantaged students of colour, end up causing serious harm to them (Lamboy and Lu, 2017; see also, Lustick, 2021). As students could not fulfil the expectations, it led to shame and the realisation of the negative self-respect: 'the shame-focused instructional and disciplinary practices described above may undermine the development of self-respect along these dimensions' (Lamboy and Lu, 2017, p. 219). Moreover, practices of discipline and control limit students 'personal agency and ability to 'independent thought and action' (Akyeampong and Adzahlie-Mensah, 2018, p. 206; see also Lamboy and Lu, 2017).

In this section, I examined the literature on schooling, its role in enforcing obedience and conformity, and its impact on students of disadvantaged communities in a global (non-Indian) context. The following section analyses the literature on Indian schooling, focusing on its role in enforcing conformity and obedience among students and its potential to reproduce social inequalities.

2.4 Schooling and Production of Obedience in Indian Schools

The examination of literature on Indian schools indicates that the development of obedience is a key function of Indian education (Deka, 2014; Kumar, 2005; Matthan et al., 2014; Sarangapani, 2003; Thapan, 2014a, 2014b). Schools enforce obedience among students through school practices (Iyer, 2013; Kumar, 2005; Sarangapani, 2003). Techniques of

disciplining and control (Iyer, 2013) and the enforcement of cultural morality (Deka, 2014; Gogoi, 2014) are crucial for fostering obedience among students (Kumar, 2005). Practices involving disciplining, violence, and moralising in socio-cultural values are vital aspects of Indian schooling. I explore these two issues in greater detail in this section. Typically, teachers are primarily responsible for implementing discipline and control, and for imposing cultural values on students (Sarangapani, 2003). In the Indian context, teachers hold a unique socio-cultural and institutional status (Gogoi, 2014; Kumar, 2005; Majumdar and Mooij, 2013; Sarangapani, 2003; Sriprakash, 2011) that authorises them to perform these functions. Consequently, I also aim to discuss the authority of teachers within Indian schools in this section. Finally, I examine the impact of disciplining and moralising practices on students from disadvantaged communities.

The Indian schooling system is quite diverse and hierarchical, so it is difficult to generalise the culture of one type of school with others (Jain, 2024; Vasavi, 2019; Velaskar, 1990). However, because schools exist within social contexts and societal culture influences schooling, common patterns of school culture can be identified with respect to disciplining, obedience, hierarchy, and authority structures, as discussed in various studies. Schools' ideological and religious orientations shape students' achievement of different goals; however, discipline, obedience, and the adoption of broader cultural values are similar across schools (Froerer, 2007).

2.4.1 Discipling and violence in Indian schools

Scholars emphasise that discipline, violence, and control are the essential features of schooling in India **(**Sarangapani, 2003; Thapan, 2014b). The practice of disciplining here entails training students to obey prevailing rules, norms and codes of behaviour. The broader aim of disciplining is to cultivate an obedient, loyal, and subservient person: discipline creates ‘obedience, loyalty, and subservience’ (Thapan, 2014b, p. 165; see also Deka, 2014; Iyer, 2013; Thapan, 2014a). . Schools use different mechanisms of disciplining, including promoting discipline as a desirable virtue by school authorities, the routinisation of academic practice, surveillance and control over students, and corporal punishment.

Authorities, especially the school principal, emphasised the importance of discipline for the ‘goodness’ of students (Deka, 2014; Gogoi, 2014; Thapan, 2014b). Discipline and its inherent message of obedience as a virtue or a symbol of ‘goodness’ are reinforced in morning assembly through poetry, verses, sharing stories, weekly drills, and inspections of school uniforms (Thapan, 2014b). Academic practices are used to enforce discipline where students are expected to silently complete the task that the teachers give: 'Learning was seen as a passive, silent, and individual activity’ (Iyer, 2013, p.163). Patterns of teaching in the Indian classroom carry the legacy of colonial schooling, in which the prescribed curriculum, textbooks, and examinations controlled and defined teachers' roles in the classroom (Kumar, 2005). The school environment is ‘boring, fearful, and unattractive’, and the curriculum is imposed on students (Majumdar and Mooij, 2011, p. 141).

Surveillance and control of students are other means of disciplining students. Scholars have shown that control over students is exercised through the physical presence of a teacher, CCTV cameras, and the appointment of a monitor among the students in the class (Sharma, 2014; Sarangapani, 2003; Gogoi, 2014). The CCTV camera for the school's security serves as a means of surveillance by the principal, thereby encouraging self-discipline (Gogoi, 2014). Through her study, Gogoi shows that the school principal monitors not only the students but also the teachers. Teachers themselves, or their appointed monitors (the ‘extended’ control eye of the teacher), maintain strict control over the students (Sarangapani, 2003, p. 409).

Punishment is an important means of disciplining and controlling in everyday life. It ranges from name-calling to corporal punishment, physical violence, verbal threats, humiliation based on family background, kneeling in the sun, and deducting marks in tests and examinations (Anand and Dalal, 2022; Dalal, 2015; Iyer, 2013; Sarangapani, 2003). Based on reports in national media between 2009 - 2013, Nawani argues that ‘children were physically abused, often quite brutally, mentally tortured, humiliated and even sexually abused in schools’ (Nawani, 2013, p. 23; see also Anand and Dalal, 2022; Iyer, 2013; Sriprakash, 2011). Corporal punishment is a standard feature, and as ‘teachers are like fathers, beating up students does not raise any questions as it carries the legitimacy of parental authority and control’ (Alam, 2013, p. 236). The significance of this observation is that both government and private schools employ corporal punishment, and incidents in private schools outnumber those in government schools (Nawani, 2013).

Despite the legal prohibition[3] Corporal punishment still prevails in schools (Nawani, 2013; Sarangapani, 2003; Tiwari, 2014). Nawani argues that punishment in school goes back to the culture of violence that prevails in families (Nawani, 2013). Teachers believe that since students are beaten at home, they can understand things or ways to interact, as there is violence within the home (Anand and Dalal, 2022). Student-teacher relations are similar in many aspects to parent-child relations in families and communities (Sarangapani, 2003; Sriprakash, 2011). Society's attitude that children should be disciplined shows the continuity of family and school in terms of violence against children. Adults should control and decide what is *good* for the children, and for this, adults have social sanction (Nawani, 2013).

Students themselves have internalised that 'discipline [punishment] is for their own good' (Gogoi, 2014, p.121; see also, Froerer, 2007). Students believe that discipline is necessary in school; thus, punishment is considered necessary for their well-being (Gogoi, 2014). Some parents find corporal punishment suitable for classroom management and learning until the student is harshly beaten or reaches the level of bleeding (Majumdar and Mooij, 2011). Students consider a good school to be one where there is strict discipline and hard work: 'the strict discipline and the hard work that children were made to do' (Sarangapani, 2003, p. 410).

The physical body is important for enacting discipline by controlling and regulating body movements and applying punishment (Deka, 2014; Thapan, 2014b). In some cases, it is not only the physical body but also the mind that is disciplined through schooling (Deka, 2014). For example, in her study, Deka shows how disciplining of the mind happens in a specific kind of school. 'Disciplining of the mind is to do with thought, conduct and a general everyday philosophy of life' by organising practical training through spiritual and moral lessons by a religious Guru and Yoga, inviting a religious leader for weekly assembly (Deka, 2014, p.78). Disciplining body and mind as a mechanism to enforce 'school rules and norms' (Deka, 2014, p. 74). These rules and norms essentially represent society's cultural values, specifically obedience and hierarchy. Based on an examination of the literature on Indian

[3] The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, prohibits physical punishment and mental harassment in school. Article 17(I) of the Act prohibits physical punishment as a punishable offence in school (RTE, 2009). Moreover, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights suggests the prohibition of physical punishment and elaborates on different forms of physical punishment enacted by teachers in schools (NCPCR, 2011, cited in Nawani 2013; Wadhwa, 2012).

schooling, I argue that school disciplinary practices are primarily intended to enforce obedience and conformity among students to the norms, values, and relationships prevailing in the school. Along with disciplining, Indian schools are also engaged in propagating conformity and hierarchy as cultural moral values, which I discuss below.

2.4.2 Reinforcement of socio-cultural values

The literature on Indian schooling points out that schools have two broader aims: one, imparting academic knowledge and skills for career success, and two, inculcating socio-cultural values (cultural morality) in students (Deka, 2014; Gogoi, 2014; Sarangapani, 2003; Thapan, 2014b). Among the cultural values, respect for authority and obedience are inculcated through schooling. Though cultural morality is not part of the explicit curriculum, it is realised in everyday practices (i.e., the hidden curriculum). These practices include morning assembly, moral lessons in and outside the classroom, quotations on school walls, images and pictures, monitoring actions in and outside the classroom, disciplining body and mind, rewards and punishment, comparing school with ritually sacred place like temple, and others (Deka, 2014; Gogoi, 2014; Kumar, 2005; Matthan et al. 2014; Sarangapani, 2003; Sharma, 2014; Thapan, 2014a, 2014b;).

Construction of the 'ideal student' is another means of enforcing obedience and hierarchy among students (Sarangapani, 2003). Teachers create categories of 'good' and 'bad' students to identify and reward those who are disciplined and blind followers of teachers or who fulfil their expectations, while 'bad' students are those who are undisciplined and do not strictly follow what teachers say or expect. Moreover, the propagation of the identity of a 'good' student is an important means of enforcing cultural values through schooling (Matthan et al., 2014). 'Good' behaviour is contextual; although it is primarily cultural and normative, it shows some variation across gender and religious groups (Matthan et al., 2014). Moreover, the *goodness* of a student lies in 'complete obedience to elders and teachers, showing respect to them and being attentive' in the classroom (Sarangapani, 2003, p. 413). 'Good' behaviour also includes aspects of 'religious morality', gender, and cultural morality (Matthan et al., 2014, p. 240). Many studies have found that schools explicitly inculcate gender norms, reinforcing gender inequalities (Gogoi, 2014; Matthan et al., 2014; Thapan, 2014b;). For example, Matthan et al. (2014) underlined that in a Muslim minority dominated school, there is emphasis on moral education that enforces the existing gender norms of the community.

Good manners and *honour* (of the family) are critical components to the moral education of girls (Mattan et al., 2014).

Disciplining and moralising go hand in hand and complement each other. It can be observed that morning assemblies are among the most important sites in almost all Indian schools and a key site for enforcing discipline and moralising simultaneously. For instance, in morning assembly, students are made to standing in queue, following commands, religious and patriotic songs, national anthem, highest attention, lectures and homilies on 'good' behaviour (Thapan, 2014b, p. 164), and effort to inculcate 'good' thought and 'peaceful mind' (Thapan, 2014b, p. 165; see also Kumar, 1990). From daily assemblies to classrooms, the disciplinary and moral regime focuses on creating obedient, docile bodies (Froerer, 2007). It focuses on discipling 'the body to mind: corporal, moral and ideological disciplining' (Froerer, 2007, p. 1047).

In the above discussion, I examined the literature and argued that schools enforce obedience among students by disciplining and moralising them. Teachers' authority in the Indian context is an important factor that legitimises and empowers them to discipline and enforce cultural morality. In the following sub-section, I discuss the authority of teachers in Indian schools.

2.4.3 Authority of teachers in Indian schools

Sarangapani argues that 'school is not a totalitarian, coercive institution' where norms are coercively imposed; instead, students and teachers recreate their identities through everyday school activities (Sarangapani, 2003, p. 403). Teachers and students make sense of their daily interactions, which are grounded in the 'local ideology of childhood and education' (Sarangapani, 2003, p. 404). The teacher-student relations in Indian schools are 'multilayered' and 'curriculum-referred relationship' is one of them (Sarangapani, 2003, p.405). Other than modern institutional relationships, there exist 'dyadic relationships of adult–child, parent–offspring, *guru–sishya* (teacher–student) and patron–protégé' between student and teacher (Sarangapani, 2003, p. 405; see also Dalal, 2014, 2015; Kumar, 2005; Sriprakash, 201).

Cultural authority

In the Indian context, teachers generally symbolise the identity of a *guru*, which has roots in ancient traditions (Kale, 1970; Kumar, 2005; Sarangapani, 2003; Sriprakash, 2011). Guru refers to a 'teacher in the pedagogic sense to the spiritual guide and mentor' (Kale, 1970, p. 371). In other words, a teacher as a *guru* means 'religious, spiritual knower, whose authority springs from being closer to salvation, and God' (Sarangapani, 2003, p. 406). Through various rituals and discourses, schools confer sacred status on educational institutions. For instance, Gogoi, (2014), in her study on government school higher secondary school, finds that students describe schools as '*mandir* or temple*'* (Gogoi, 2014, p.114*),* 'guru or the teacher like *pujari (*priest) who gives *gyan (*wisdom/ knowledge)' (Gogoi, 2014, p. 115). Auspicious and religious positions of a school is expressed through various activities, such as students touching teachers' feet to seek blessings, morning assemblies as prayer or Puja, Saraswati as the goddess of knowledge and wisdom, and the celebration of Teachers' Day, among others (Gogoi, 2014).

The significance of the propagation of the student-teacher relationship as *guru-shishya* legitimises the hierarchy and obedience, comparing it with the ancient mythical characters. For example, Sarangapani underlines that in ancient literature the relationship between teacher and student is 'intentionally emotional' and 'essentially unequal' that requires 'complete surrender of the *sishya's'* to the 'sacred authority' of teachers (*guru's)* (Sarangapani, 2003, p. 406). Similarly, Deka (2014) finds that those stories of ancient texts of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* are cited in school to emphasise to naturalise obedience among students. The most significant aspect of the image of the teacher as *guru* is 'unquestioned faith in the teacher's authority, knowledge and indispensability' (Kale, 1970, p. 372). Teachers carry over this identity even today and find it difficult to adjust to circumstances in which students question or challenge the information or explanations (Kale, 1970).

Teachers' authority to punish comes with comparison of education with ancient '*Ashram*-type education' (Kumar, 2005, p. 89), which represented the 'quasi-feudal order' (Kumar, 2005, p. 89). The training of disciples in the Ashram was meant to develop a personality that shows 'total allegiance to authority, unquestioning obedience, capacity for enduring hardship and self-sacrifice' (Kumar, 2005, p. 90). Folklore and stories about the auspicious

position of the teacher are more common among rural and poorer populations than among the urban middle class (Kumar, 2005). This brings forth another relationship between teacher and student: a patron-protege relationship.

When there is a gap between teachers and students in terms of area of residence and cultural 'backwardness' in terms of urban-rural difference and disparity, teachers consider them superior and offer 'benevolent patronage' (Sarangapani, 2003, p. 116; see also, Sriprakash, 2011). For example, in her study, Sriprakash showed that while some teachers identified their position as guru, they emphasised their superiority over the region's existing 'backwardness' (Sriprakash, 2011, p. 19). Moreover, scholars examined teachers' patriot/martyr identity in relation to their work as selfless service (Sarangapani, 2003; Sriprakash, 2011). They derive this similarity from ancient traditions where *Brahmins* (the teachers) claim that they renounce property to become teachers, by virtue of which they get moral authority (Sarangapani, 2003). Patron-protégé relationship in terms of the superiority of higher castes. Urban, English-medium educated teachers and children aspired to become, like their teachers, 'successful men' (Sarangapani, 2003, p. 408).

Another teacher-student relation that is underlined in the studies is the parent-offspring relation (Kumar, 2005; Majumdar and Mooij, 2011; Sarangapani, 2003). Before entering school, students believe that teachers are elders and act like parents; thus, they should be respected and obeyed. As parents, especially fathers, are traditionally considered to be absolute authority in the home and do everything for the well-being of their children, a similar understanding is superimposed on the teacher-student relationship, where teachers are considered to act like parents or guardians (Kumar, 2005). This relationship gives teachers the 'respect and unquestioning obedience' similar to that of parents (Sarangapni, 2003, p. 406).

Institutional authority

Teachers also possess institutional authority in terms of 'subject matter and pedagogy' that provides a 'legal-rational' basis for their authority (Sarangapani, 2003, p. 405). Teachers in Indian classrooms possess 'absolute authority'. They 'wield' their authority and 'exercise power' (Sarangapani, 2003, p. 405). Teachers possess both 'regulative and epistemic

functions' (Sarangapani, 2003, p. 404) and regulate behaviour, 'maintaining moral order' (Sarangapani, 2003, p. 405). Pedagogic means of asserting authority are through 'voice control, blackboard work, questioning and recapitulation—all such conventional means are used to direct children's attention towards the prescribed content' (Kumar, 2005, p. 87). Textbook and curriculum background where a teacher hides his powerlessness and employs 'dictatorial authority' on 'docile children' (Kumar, 2005, p. 88). In actual practice, students do not know that teachers are powerless.

Though teachers possess authority culturally, ideologically, and institutionally, it is not absolute and is contested in specific and changing economic and social circumstances. All the studies on Indian schooling unanimously accepted the fact that teachers possess power and authority over the students in the school (Anand and Dalal, 2022; Dalal, 2013, 2014; Deka, 2014; Gogoi, 2014; Kale, 1970; Kumar, 2005, 2011; Sarangapani, 2003). But at the same time, the hierarchy of schools (Vasavi, 2019), the neoliberal onslaught on schooling (Kumar, 2011), the privatisation of education, the colonial legacy of control over education (Kumar, 2011), and technological changes (Singla, 2017) are challenging the authority of teachers.

Kale (1970) argues that teachers' identities as gurus or professionals are complex issues. They depend more on an individual's career pattern, stage, and informal organisation of the school setting. Senior teachers with good pay and respectable status in the school and community can claim guru status, while those in private schools in their early careers with low pay consider it a profession. Kumar (2005) argues that teachers are powerless because the teaching profession is at the lower end of the hierarchy of professions and the education department; this is similar in the case of private schools, where teachers are poorly paid.

Under that neo-liberal regime, there is a focus on 'efficiency', 'accountability' and 'quality' (Kumar, 2011, p.37). The idea of cost-effectiveness and quality is directed at teachers. Teachers are considered service providers who are supposed to deliver the designed curriculum in the stipulated quality. Administrators in government or private schools deny accepting teachers as 'human beings'; only their 'productivity interests them'; no one has 'any empathy for the teacher' (Kumar, 2011, p.38). Government schools have overcrowded classrooms (Nawani, 2013). Despite their claim as a guru, their social status as a primary

school teacher is low in society. As their educational background is lower than modern higher education technical degrees (Sriprakash, 2011).

Singla argues that teachers 'respect and position changed with the arrival of new technologies and growing privatisation of education, feminisation of education, and dominance of the textbook (Singla, 2017, p.177). However, Kumar (2005) argues against it and says the prescribed curriculum is an important means through which teachers assert their epistemic authority. Though teachers assert cultural authority, analysis of literature shows that this has changed, as their use of authority is considered undemocratic (Singla, 2017). Vague ideas on child-centred education and the lower status of government schools diminish the authority of teachers (Singla, 2017). She argues that teachers need new forms of authority as traditional forms of authority are diminishing (Singla, 2017, p. 179); however, the majority of the literature on teachers' authority in Indian schools shows that teachers do have authority, this may be at least over the students (Kumar, 2005; Sriprakash, 2011; Sarangapani, 2003).

Despite the challenges and changing circumstances in which teachers work, scholars overwhelmingly reported that teachers in the classroom have a superior position and authority to regulate or control behaviour. The cultural authority of teachers, being guru, adult, parent, and patron, along with institutional authority, gets embedded at the 'subconscious level of the psyche' of individuals, which ultimately establishes the 'moral and cultural superiority' of teachers (Sarangapani, 2003, p. 408). How does a school culture characterised by obedience and authority impact the students of disadvantaged communities, discussed in the following subsection?

2.4.4 Impact of disciplining and moralising on the Indian students

Practices of disciplining and moralising have a differential impact on students of different social and economic backgrounds. Multiple Indian studies highlight that students negotiate the imposition of cultural moral values (Bhandari, 2014; Deka, 2014; Gogoi, 2014; Matthan et al., 2014; Thapan, 2014a). This signifies the presence of students' agency in the context of the imposition of values through schooling. 'Students are not passive actors and engage with, and construct, the world as much as they are constrained by it through 'discipline' and 'rules' (Thapan, 2014a, p.9). However, based on the analysis of the literature, I contend that

the agency of students to negotiate differs based on their families' social and economic position. For example, girls from underprivileged backgrounds in Urdu-medium schools in Ahmedabad during the post-riot period respond more obediently to school rules (Matthan et al., 2014) than girls from convent schools in Delhi who belong to middle- or lower-middle-class urban families (Bhandari, 2014). Moreover, disciplining and moralising serve different purposes for different social groups. The urban middle-class group adopts discipline to get profitable employment (Deka, 2014), while students from disadvantaged groups internalise fear, inferiority, and dependency through disciplining and moralising (Majumdar and Mooij, 2011; Thapan, 2014b). Through these practices, schools reinforce social hierarchy and reduce students' agency, particularly among students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Disciplinary and moral regimes train individuals in different forms of social hierarchies. Schools train students in different types of social hierarchy, for instance, training in religious hierarchy, that is, Hindus over the other minorities (Froerer, 2007), gendered hierarchy (Matthan et al., 2014; Thapan, 2014b), and the superiority of literate over illiterate (Sarangapani, 2003). Through moral disciplinary practices and moral education, schools enforce the superiority of Hindus over other minority students (Froerer, 2007). By enforcing cultural norms, schools reinforce the superiority of males over females through the regulation of female bodies (Matthan et al., 2014; Thapan, 2014b).

Classroom interactions show that students understand hierarchized work in the family and community based on class, gender, and caste (Manjrekar, 2013). This understanding shapes their aspirations regarding the occupation they intend to pursue (Manjrekaar, 2013). Teachers indirectly reinforce those occupational hierarchies in mind through discussion, thus reinforcing existing relations (Manjrekar, 2013). Additionally, Alam (2013) emphasises the absolute authority of teachers and the hierarchies between teachers and students, and between senior and junior students, which are internalised to foster respect for and acceptance of elders' authority in homes and families. The learning of hierarchy in school is based on profession, which reduces agency or prevents students from realising the agency that transforms their position (Manjrekar, 2013). Alam (2013) argues that in a religious school (*madrasa),* students are socialised not to challenge the authority of teachers and religious teachings, thereby further reducing the agency of students from economically and socially disadvantaged minority backgrounds who often lack self-esteem.

Scholars argue that schools, to a large extent, generate fear among students. (Majumdar and Mooij, 2011). Students learn not to question the authority of teachers: 'In almost all schools, children are to respect authority, as the teacher is never wrong' (Majumdar and Mooij, 2011, p. 140). 'Schools do not encourage enquiry' among students who learn not to ask questions (Kumar, 2005, p. 93). Sarangapani contends that as students learn obedience through schooling, they do not learn 'questioning, investigation, curiosity, or independent decision-making'; instead, they tend to accept the 'rationality of a larger scheme of things' (Sarangapani, 2003, p. 415). Based on the aforementioned literature, I argue that schools foster non-questioning attitudes among students and prevent them from critically thinking about the prevailing social inequalities. The school practices that shape obedience are also influenced by broader socio-economic and political arrangements. Neoliberal policies have influenced the overall character of education. Neoliberalism changed how the state, corporations, international organisations, and individuals perceive and act towards education. I briefly discuss the role of neoliberalism in shaping schooling in India, particularly the subjectivities of students and parents, and its influence on NEP 2020.

2.4.5 Neo-liberalism, impact on schooling and enforcement of obedience among students

Neoliberalism is a political ideology that thrives on the premise that 'human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills' (Harvey, 2005, p.2). It emphasises private property, free markets and trade, contractual relations, a data-oriented approach to decision-making, and information technologies (Harvey, 2005). Additionally, neoliberalism demands 'deregulation, privatisation and withdrawal of the state' from social sectors (Harvey, 2005, p.3). Researchers argue that neoliberalism has become a dominant force and has been incorporated into common sense, which guides how people interpret, understand, or indeed live in the world (Baruah and Mohanty, 2022; Harvey, 2005; Kumar, 2011). The reflection on the principles of neoliberalism offers insights into the changing landscape of the Indian educational system and into how neoliberalism shapes educational policy and practice.

Since the liberalisation of the Indian Economy in 1991, neoliberal discourses have dominated Indian education policies and practices. Georg et al. argue that economic

terminologies and discourses grounded in market economics become visible in the field of education (George et al., 2022). The *consumer metaphor* is more frequently used where education is treated as a commodity, a student is a buyer/consumer, and a teacher is a producer (George et al., 2022). Thus, the educational market needs to respond to consumers' (students') preferences and sellers' (institutions') profit (George et al., 2022). How neoliberal policies influenced educational policies can be observed in the recent educational policies of the Indian government, such as the New Education Policy, 2020, which appears to prioritise short-term economic gain over long-term social and intellectual development (George et al., 2022). The NEP policy places a lot of emphasis on foundational learning in reading and numeracy, aspects of standardisation and accountability, and the inclusion of private players, etc. (NEP, 2020).

Since the 1990s, the Indian educational landscape has changed with the expansion of both government and private education. However, the expansion of private schools leads to school stratification, mirroring the existing socio-economic inequality in Indian society (Mukhopadhyay and Sarangapani, 2018). Among private schools, a large share were low-cost private schools (Kingdom, 2020). Scholars such as Tooley and Dixon (2007) and Kingdom (2017), and research reports such as ASER 2014, 2018, argued in favour of low-cost private schools and presented them as an alternative to mitigate the challenges posed by failing government schools. The failure of government schools is measured against market principles of quality, efficiency, and accountability (Mukhopadhyay and Sarangapani, 2018).

The larger neoliberal market-linked principles of quality, efficiency, and accountability are employed to justify low-fee private schools in India as better alternatives to failing government schools (George et al., 2022; Kumar, 2011). It was argued that government public schools are ‘inefficient’ while private schools are ‘efficient’ in delivering quality (Mukhopadhyay and Sarangapani, 2018). With neoliberal focus on standardisation, ‘quality’ in education is expressed in terms of ‘measurable learning outcomes’ (Mukhopadhyay and Sarangapani, 2018, p. 1). This conceptualisation of ‘quality’ of education leads to measuring quality in terms of foundational literacy and numeracy among school children, particularly those from low socioeconomic backgrounds and rural areas. The ASER report showed that only approximately 50 per cent of students from both government primary and upper primary schools could perform the expected reading and arithmetic tasks recommended in their

respective classes or age groups (ASER, 2014). The foundational learning goals became *quality* imperatives to compare government and private schools (Mukhopadhyay and Sarangapani, 2018). Thus, the NEP 2020 highlights foundational learning as a key aspect, and programmes such as the Nipun Bharat Mission (GOI, 2021) have been launched to address this issue. Thus, focusing on the *quality* of education through measurable outcomes in Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) not only legitimised low-cost private schools better than government schools but also shaped national policies and practices.

Efficiency of schools in India is measured in terms of basic infrastructure, teachers' presence in school and time-on-task, putting students' achievements at the forefront (Mukhopadhyay and Sarangapani, 2018). A significant aspect of schooling in a neoliberal regime is the importance of data in decision-making and defining the educational process. Teachers in Indian schools, both in government and private schools, spend a considerable amount of time in 'formally planning, describing, justifying and assessing their own activities', that is, in generating data (Kunar, 2011, p. 37). The data generated by the teachers on the above aspects is used by management to 'assess quality and efficiency' (Kunar, 2011, p. 38).

The concept of *accountability is* used to hold teachers accountable for the poor learning achievement of students in government schools, particularly in comparison to private schools (Mukhopadhyay and Sarangapani, 2018). The concepts of efficiency and accountability are used to measure the delivery of public services, such as education, in terms of input costs and measurable learning outcomes education' (Mukhopadhyay and Sarangapani, 2018). Neoliberal technologies (efficiency and accountability) become foundational aspects for measuring the value-for-money invested in services (educational services here). Thus, the salaries of government schoolteachers are compared with those of private school contractual teachers, and it is argued that paying high salaries to government schoolteachers is a waste, as government schools are inefficient and teachers are unaccountable. This led to a policy of contractual teachers, similar to those in private schools, guided by the neoliberal principles of contractual relations and performance (Kumar et al., 2001).

Thus, neoliberal discourses in India that portray private schools as better than government public schools not only cause a shift of students from public to private schools (Kingdom,

2017, 2020) but also prompt larger policy changes to incorporate private institutions into education delivery. The government adopted the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model, in which Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) were engaged in delivering education at different levels (Kumar, 2011; Srivastava, 2013). The government proposed a school voucher scheme under which it will pay for the education of students from disadvantaged sections in private schools (RTE, 2009; NEP, 2000). Under the Right to Education Act, 2009, 25 per cent of seats in private schools are reserved for marginalised students, and the government proposed to pay for them. The States supported vouchers to enable children to access private (English medium schools) (Nambissan, 2010).

Another important aspect of neoliberalism is the shift towards English-medium education (Nambissan, 2010). English is a marker of 'social class, educational achievement, economic success, power and privilege' (Baruah and Mohanty, 2022, p.54). To ensure a better future for their children, Indian parents invest in English-medium education. English is propagated as a 'wise investment' among the middle classes (Baruah and Mohanty, 2022, p.61). Parents from disadvantaged backgrounds invest in English education in the hope of achieving social and economic mobility. However, due to limited education and awareness, parents from disadvantaged backgrounds have a limited understanding of the rules and regulations governing English education (Baruah and Mohanty, 2022). Due to the disadvantaged cultural capital of the family, despite investment in English education, students from a deprived background may not achieve economic mobility (reproduction through education - Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990)

Neoliberal discourses and practices in Indian schooling, around quality, efficiency, and accountability, subsumed educational ideals of 'liberal democratic thought' and the citizenry (Kunar, 2011, p. 38). These practices promote the measurement of students' achievement in a very narrow sense, in terms of foundational learning, and dictate policy and practice, for example, the NIPUN Bharat Mission. These discourses and practices ignore the sociological, psychological, and economic factors associated with students coming from extremely diverse backgrounds, and with a large number of students from poor backgrounds (Nambisan, 2010). Children's experience of deprivation within families' socio-economic conditions, like hunger, malnutrition, violence and insecurity, as well as social deprivation of caste, gender, and ethnicity, are not taken into consideration while considering the achievement of children (Nambisan, 2020). It also does not consider aspects of individual

agency empowerment, which are important goals of education (Kumar, 2005). Thus, neoliberal practices not only exacerbate social inequalities by offering different education to different sections of society but also deprive people of social and political empowerment for social transformation (Nambissan, 2010). Thus, as Apple argues, neoliberal education emphasises managerialism and performativity, and discourages critical social consciousness, which is an essential aspect of democratic citizenry (Apple, 2006).

In the neoliberal discourse, education is considered an investment in a child's future; thus, middle-class parents buy privileges through private schooling (Baruah and Mohanty, 2022). Parents from disadvantaged backgrounds invest in low-cost schools through the discourses of broader neoliberal regimes (e.g., the English education for economic mobility; Nambissan, 2010). Families remain more focused on the 'quality' aspect, the measurable achievement of students. Thus, neoliberal regimes reinforce obedience among students by focusing on narrow, technical aspects of education for those who move from public to low-cost schools in the hope of social and economic transformation. Thus, families' expectations to perform well in tests as a value-for-money measure, leading to further pressure on students to conform (Ball, 2016).

Thus, the neoliberal onslaught on education, though presented as 'transformative', reproduces social and economic inequality, reduces democratic citizenship, and promotes conformity among students. In the following section, I review the literature on school practices and their role in reproducing social inequalities, drawing on the concept of habitus. This section intends to analyse empirical evidence on how schools, through everyday life, reproduce social inequalities.

2.5 School Practices, Formation of Habitus, and Reproduction of Social Inequalities

This section focuses on Bourdiuesian scholarship that explored the role of school practices and habitus (mainly students' habitus) in perpetuating social inequalities. School practices here: practices directed by teachers in interactions with students, intended to elicit specific learning outcomes. Some scholars analysed the role of school practices in the formation of students' habitus and their role in reproducing social inequalities (Finneran, 2025; Leaney,

2018; Watkins, 2005; Watkins and Noble, 2013). Though the formation of habitus causes symbolic violence, some studies exclusively focus on the symbolic violence aspect of school practices for the imposition of dominant culture on students of disadvantaged backgrounds without emphasising the process of structuration of habitus (Hiss and Peck, 2020; Horvat and Antonio 1999; Ingram, 2009; Mills and Gale, 2010; Stahl, 2015). Another group of scholars examined school practices to reveal how teachers' habitus influences practices that perpetuate inequalities (Cui 2017; Gale et al. 2019). Moreover, some researchers analyse the different aspects of students' habitus in relation to their role in perpetuating inequalities, that is, affective (Juros, 2022; Leaney, 2018; Reay, 2005; 2015; 2017;), and cognitive (Finneran, 2025; Nash, 2003; Watkins, 2005; Watkins and Noble, 2013;). However, the aforementioned categorisation as affective and cognitive is not mutually exclusive, as habitus encompasses both cognitive and non-cognitive aspects (Charlesworth, 2000); rather, it offers a perspective for examining an individual's habitus.

The literature suggests that both curricular and non-curricular/ co-curricular practices structure students' habitus (Finneran, 2025; Leaney, 2018; Watkins, 2005; Watkins and Noble, 2013). Practices of disciplining in and outside the school (around curricular and co-curricular tasks) shape students' habitus in relation to their engagement in academic work (Watkins and Noble, 2013; see also Watkins, 2005). Watkins and Noble's study focus on differentiated capacities of cognition and the body developed through family and school practices, in relation to performance on academic tasks and their resultant impact on the reproduction of racial inequalities in the Australian context (Watkins and Noble, 2013). That is, Students from different ethnic backgrounds develop differential capacities for learning, which are embodied through different practices that reproduce inequalities. Similarly, emphasising the practice of students' voice in the classroom, schools reinforce 'middle-class way of being and doing' that structures the habitus of students from an advanced social background in a way that privileges their position, thus reproducing inequities through schooling (Finneran, 2025, p. 1).

Many Bourdieusian scholars underline the role of school practices in imposing and legitimising the narratives, values, and practices of dominant groups on the dominated groups that causes symbolic violence on the students of disadvantaged backgrounds (Ingram, 2009; Hiss and Peck, 2020; Horvat and Antanio, 1999; Mills and Gale, 2010; Stahl, 2015). The role of school practices and symbolic violence in perpetuating social inequalities is

discussed in the aforementioned studies and others**.** One of the significant modes of reproduction of social inequalities is to *valourise* (Reay, 2001a, p. 334) the culture of the dominant class (white, middle-class, male) and *pathologise* (Reay, 2001a, p. 342) the culture of disadvantaged groups (black/ ethnic minorities, working-class, female). This is done through the construction of an 'ideal pupil' in the school (Archer, 2008; Ingram, 2009; Hiss and Peck, 2020). Dominant discourses around 'the ideal pupil' result in valorising one group and 'demonising' or 'othering' another group (Archer, 2008, p.94).

Many Bourdieuian studies highlight the demonising/pathologising of the culture of disadvantaged groups – working class (Ingram, 2009; Mills and Gale, 2010), racially African students (Hiss and Peck, 2020; Horvat and Antonio, 1999; Valecia, 1997), Chinese ethnic minority (Cui, 2017; Archer, 2008), Indian working class (Dalal, 2014), and others. The demonisation of the culture of disadvantaged groups not only deprives them of the benefits of cultural learning through primary socialisation but also leads them to internalise the inferiority of their social position and knowledge (Mills and Gale, 2010). For example, in their study of young people from working-class families, Archer and Yamashita (2003) found that students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds felt inferior to others. Students describe themselves as 'not feeling good enough' and 'knowing [their] limits' (Archer and Yamashita, 2003, p. 58; see also Mills and Gale, 2010). Some students described themselves as *"dumb" (*Archer and Yamashita, 2003, p. 58, emphasis in the original). Students internalised their 'educational failure' (Archer and Yamashita, 2003, p.58). Moreover, practices of negligence regarding the value or presence of knowledge, culture, or persons from disadvantaged groups constitute symbolic violence. Studies highlight how, through discursive as well as concrete practices, persons (Hiss and Peck, 2020; Reay, 1995), knowledge (Cui, 2017), and culture (Ingram, 2009) of disadvantaged groups are ignored in the everyday life of school.

In terms of pedagogic practices, the school ethos that emphasises performance pressure, sidelines the social and emotional aspects of learning, and misrecognises the capital of the working class reinforces marginalisation through schooling (Simpson, 2024; see also Mills and Gale, 2010). School ethos is – 'unspoken values and assumptions' as well as 'conscious selection of values' that direct the behaviours and practice (Simpson, 2024, p.252). Schools emphasise certain subject-specific virtues and assessment procedures as means of educational mobility and excellence in education. However, closer analysis reveals that these

practices favour students from advantaged backgrounds and negatively impact those from disadvantaged backgrounds (Evans, 2020; Handelsman, 2011; Loh and Sun, 2020; Monteiro Nascimento and Markic, 2025;). For examples, scholars analysed that focus on subject specific disposition, science related dispositions (Monteiro Nascimento and Markic, 2025), reading disposition (Loh and Sun, 2020), curriculum and assessment (Handelsman, 2011), causes symbolic violence as overemphasis on these issues without considering the aspects of family and its role in academic habitus, deprive students from disadvantaged background. Students' assessment is another key academic area, which, though directed towards increasing academic performance, ensures the failure or further disadvantages to the of students from deprived backgrounds (Archer et al., 2018; Evans, 2020; Franscis and Mills, 2012; Garmon, 2009; Reay, 2001a).

School practices are not only the site of formation and revelation of students' habitus, but also reflections of teachers' habitus. Some scholarly works on school practices focus on teachers' habitus to understand its role in shaping practices, students' habitus, and its relation to the perpetuation of inequalities (Cui, 2017; Gale et al., 2019). Cui employed 'teachers' racialised habitus' as a tool to explore the perpetuation of racial inequality for the Chinese ethnic minorities in Canada (Cui, 2017, p.1152). By formal pedagogies or hidden curriculum, teachers malign or misinterpret the history of racialised minorities, devalue non-Western knowledge or perspectives, have high expectations for white students and low for ethnic minority students, and occasionally slip racist remarks (Cui, 2017). In another study, teachers' habitus is analysed through school practices in the Australian context (Gale et al., 2019). Teachers' classroom practices are examined to reveal the social justice dispositions that guide their practices in Australian advantaged and disadvantaged schools (Gale et al., 2019).

The habitus is constitutive of dispositions (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990). Bourdieusian scholars identified different aspects of dispositions. Charlesworth argues that habitus is constitutive of an individual's cognitive and non-cognitive aspects (Charlesworth, 2000). Wacquant (2011) identifies three aspects of habitus: bodily, cognitive, and attitudinal/emotive. Some Bourdieusian studies analyse the emotive aspects of students' habitus and their role in reproducing social inequalities (Juros, 2022; Leaney, 2018; Reay, 1995, 2005, 2015, 2017). Another group of scholars focuses on the cognitive aspects of dispositions (Loh and Sun, 2020; Nash, 2003; Watkins and Noble, 2013). This categorisation is not exclusive, and

habitus includes coherence in all three aspects of the individual: cognitive, affective, and corporeal: A ‘generative dynamic between thinking, feeling, and practices’ pertaining to class relations (Reay, 2005, p. 912). However, for analytical purposes, some aspects are emphasised in specific studies.

Some scholars focus on the cognitive aspects of students’ habitus and its role in reproducing inequalities (Loh and Sun, 2020; Nash, 2003; Watkins and Noble, 2013). Nash highlights that ‘embodied cognitive schemes’ act as a guiding principle in terms of engagement with academic tasks (Nash, 2003, p. 174). Studies indicate that these mental schemes are variably structured for students from different social backgrounds and influence their engagement and outcomes in academic tasks, thereby reproducing class inequalities. For instance, Watkins and Noble’s study focuses on differentiated cognitive capacities developed through family and school practices and their impact on performance in academic tasks, which has the potential to reproduce racial inequalities (Watkins and Noble, 2013). Students from different ethnic backgrounds develop differential capacities for learning, which are embodied through different practices that reproduce inequalities (Watkins and Noble, 2013). Some scholars use cognitive dispositions as mental skills in performing abstract academic tasks (Loh and Sun, 2020). They employ mental skills in performing engaged academic tasks as dispositions that contribute to reproducing class inequalities (Loh and Sun, 2020). Because students from different social backgrounds possess varying cognitive skills in performing reading tasks, this variation in performance reproduces existing social relations. Exploration of the cognitive aspects of habitus in relation to performing academic tasks provides insight into how even attending the same school may reproduce educational inequalities, which in turn translate into social inequalities.

The affective/emotive aspect of habitus offers an important perspective for exploring the role of school in reproducing social inequalities (Juros, 2022; Leaney, 2018; Reay, 2005, 2015). Scholars identified different kinds of emotions in different contexts that constitute the habitus. For example, Juros highlights the emotive schemas of ‘pride, shame and fear’ (Juros, 2022, p.71) while Reay underscores the dispositions that represent inclinations and propensity towards feelings of ‘fatalism, ambivalence, resilience, resentment, certainty, entitlement or even rage’ (Reay, 2015, p.10). As part of habitus, emotive dispositions structure durable patterns of emotion that guide perceptions, thoughts, and actions within the field (Threadgold, 2020). More specifically, in terms of class relations, emotive aspects of

social class are expressed in ‘feelings of ambivalence, inferiority and superiority, visceral aversions, recognition, abjection’, which play a significant role in directing how we ‘feel and act’ (Reay, 2005, p.911).

The psychic aspect of habitus is helpful in exploring and explaining habitus as embodiment. One key characteristic of habitus is the embodiment of objective structures within the subjectivity of the individual (Bourdieu, 1990). Social inequalities are embodied in individuals' psyches and experienced emotionally (Leaney, 2018; Reay, 2015; Threadgold, 2020). Habitus is representative of histories which are ‘embodied and felt’ or ‘temporal and affective’ (Leaney, 2018, p. 207). Reay (2005) emphasises that social class is embedded not only in society and culture but also in an individual’s psyche. Reay (2017) underlined that class is ‘lived on both a conscious and an unconscious level’, the focus on which reveals that complex affect is generated as a response to prevailing inequality of class in education (Reay, 2017, p. 155). This signifies the embodied aspect of habitus (Bourdieu 1977, 1990).

This section examines the relationship between school practices and students' habitus and dispositions. It elaborates on how school practices form students' habitus/ dispositions. Additionally, students' or teachers' habitus generates the practices. School practices play an important role in reproducing social inequalities mediated through the habitus of schooling participants. This section also highlights the specific aspects of dispositions (cognitive and affective) that constitute students' habitus and that perpetuate inequalities. The significance of analysing Bourdieusian literature lies in providing evidence and a lens for examining school practices to reveal their role in social reproduction. In the following section, I discuss the position of the current study within the Bourdieusian community of practice, with respect to the role of schools in perpetuating inequalities and instilling un/democratic virtues.

2.6 Situating the Present Research in the Field of Educational Research

This study contributes to understanding the role of schools in shaping students' disposition toward conformity, as well as schools' role in reproducing caste inequality and fostering undemocratic virtues. This research examines the educational landscape in India, with a specific focus on the north Indian rural region. In relation to literature on schooling, the

current study extends the discussion around school culture that fosters obedience, hierarchy, and authority. It investigates how the ordinary, everyday life of school affects students' cognition within a school whose everyday life is characterised by obedience and authority, and the role of this culture in perpetuating social inequality of caste.

Multiple studies in the global (Chafi, 2016; Mingo, 2024; Namphande et al., 2017) and Indian contexts (Bhandari, 2014; Deka, 2014; Iyer, 2013; Sarangapani, 2003) show that school discipline and control generate obedience. Schools employ violence, which generates fear and obedience among students (Chafi, 2016; Akyeampong and Adzahlie-Mensah, 2018; Yoneyama, 1999). Additionally, schools enforce cultural morality, which further enforces obedience and hierarchy among students (Avital and Perry- Hazan, 2025; Leibold and Grose, 2019; Mingo, 2024). However, studies largely do not extend the discussion what happen to students who are part of the school culture mentioned above. The present study is situated in this context to continue the discussion of the culture of obedience and authority in schools, its impact on students' cognition, and its possible role in reproducing social inequalities. To make it more concrete, I take the example from Akyeampong and Adzahlie-Mensah's (2018) study, which discusses aspects of obedience, non-questioning, and reduced agency, but does not discuss how these aspects influence students' dispositions or whether they are related to the reproduction of social inequalities. My focus is on understanding how everyday school life shapes students' orientation towards social relations. How does the formation of attributes towards culturally good, obedient, and submissive contribute to the reproduction of social inequality? It complements Bourdieusian studies that explore the role of schools in the reproduction of social inequalities.

In this study, I examine the role of schools in perpetuating caste inequality. Some studies focus on caste-related access to schools, thereby reproducing caste inequalities (Bailwal and Paul, 2021; Gundemeda and Krishnarao, 2020; Kalaiah et al., 2020; Shah, 2020). Many studies in the sociology of education on caste-based relations focus primarily on explicit discrimination, exclusion, and related aspects (Nambissan and Rao, 2017). Studies talk about the issue of poverty, the apathetic behaviour of parents in the participation of lower caste students in education and how explicit discrimination and exclusion operate within the school. The studies talk about explicit structural (Shah, 2020; Vasavi, 2019; Velaskar, 1990) and functional (Dalal, 2015; Desai, et al., 2009; Sriprakash, 2011) aspects that contribute to the reproduction of caste, thus, allied social relations (Nambissan, 2009; Nayak, 2023;

Ramchandran and Naorem, 2013; Wankhede, 2013). This study aimed to investigate whether caste is reproduced through schools where the explicit aspect of caste is silent.

Another aspect of the literature on caste and schooling is its dominant focus on lower-caste groups, mostly Dalits and tribal communities (Kalaiah, 2020; Majumdar and Mooij, 2013; Nambissan, 2009; Nayak, 2023; Ramchandran and Naorem, 2013). Sometimes there is discussion of strategies for privileged classes, but the question is: what do middle-caste groups do through schooling? Is there anything inherent that silently reproduces caste relations? What is implicitly going on in the school that neither directly enforces nor transforms caste relations? Do those things have the potential to reproduce caste relations if not directly connected? Through this research, I explore whether it conceptually and empirically reproduces the caste.

In the case of private schools, explicit discrimination might not be underlined in the studies. Mittal's study suggests that, in a general sense, private schools are largely caste-blind (Mittal, 2020). The question arises whether private schools reproduce or transform caste relations by ignoring them. To understand the role of private schools in reproducing caste relations, I focused on practices that represent the school culture but are not overtly caste-oriented. These practices include practices of disciplining and moralising. In the case of low-fee private schools, discipline is a more explicitly sought-after aspect of the schooling (Jain, 2018; Thapan, 2014b). Schools employ different methods to discipline students and parents, particularly in low-fee private schools. School justifies its actions by emphasising its civilising role. Since students come from low-SES backgrounds, discipline is essential to 'educate and civilise' (Thapan, 2014b, p. 172). This offered the opportunity to understand what schools do with students from disadvantaged backgrounds through the process of disciplining and moralising.

Thapan argues that the study of schooling in India requires focusing on two aspects: one, 'access, quality, and equity' is of education; and two, 'the *experience* of education' within the institutional settings of the school (Thapan, 2014a, p. 5). Exploration of life within the school provides an opportunity to examine the social and political context (structure) that shapes the culture of the schools, and how participants, especially students, engage (employ their agency) in everyday life of schools that involve 'meaning making' process through reception and negotiations of norms, values of schools (Thapan, 2014a, p.5). The current

study contributes to the discussion regarding schooling experiences and their role in shaping students' agency in a specific rural, disadvantaged context. This study critically engages with discussions of the school's role in social reproduction/transformation and in inculcating un/democratic virtues among students.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter examined empirical studies that underscore the role of the school in reproducing social inequalities, particularly through pedagogic practices. I began the discussion by briefly outlining how scholars from different parts of the world have examined the role of schooling in reproducing social inequalities, with a focus on both academic and non-academic practices. In addition, I reviewed Indian literature on the relationship between caste and schooling. Caste influences access to schooling and educational experiences. Through explicit and implicit caste-based biases and practices, schools reproduce caste relations. The next two sections examined the schools' role in shaping obedience and conformity among students through disciplinary and moralising practices in the global and Indian contexts, respectively. Moreover, these sections underscore the role of disciplining and moralising students from disadvantaged communities. The fifth section presents specific evidence of how school practices reproduce social inequalities employing Bourdieu's concept of habitus. Finally, in light of the prevailing literature on schooling and its role in reproducing social inequality, I propose to investigate how schools shape students' conforming dispositions and how schools reproduce caste inequalities and instil undemocratic virtues among students in the north Indian school context. In the next chapter, I will discuss the theoretical and conceptual framework developed to explore how school practices reproduce caste inequalities by shaping students' habitus.

Chapter 3: Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This chapter discusses dispositions as a conceptual tool for understanding the reproduction of social inequities and the theoretical and conceptual ideas that underpin this. The current research project is theory-driven; thus, social theory is employed to understand how a school shapes students' dispositions (the constituents of habitus) and how these dispositions contribute to reproducing social inequalities. This thesis employs Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, disposition, and pedagogic work (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990), as well as the concept of conformity, which is drawn from critical social sciences (Agger, 2013; Browne, 2017; Fay, 1987; Sayer, 2009) in analysing the role of a school in social reproduction.

The chapter is divided into four sections that introduce and explain key theoretical concepts used in this research. The chapter begins by introducing the concepts of habitus and dispositions. I also elaborate on habitus and dispositions as embodiment and their characterisation as a dialectic of structure and agency. This explanation is grounded in Bourdieu's theoretical framework, which posits that structural inequalities are embodied in the individual body and that agency has the capacity to transform the social structure through the interaction between structure and agency (Bourdieu, 1990). The second section deals with cognitive and affective aspects of habitus/ dispositions. Here, specific to the Indian context, I elaborate on how caste inequalities are embodied as affective dispositions.

The third section conceptualises the term conformity. Drawing on critical social sciences, this thesis conceptualises conformity as the inverse of criticality, characterised by non-questioning attributes and subdued agency which possess the potential to perpetuate existing social relations (Agger, 2013; Fay, 1987; Sayer, 2009). The characteristics of conformity and dispositions are synthesised to evolve the concept of conforming dispositions. The final part of the chapter explains the concept of pedagogic work (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). The section focuses on conceptualising school practices as pedagogic work and their role in shaping students' conforming dispositions. In Bourdieu's terms, pedagogic work encompasses all kinds of school practices directed by school authorities or teachers that convey meaning and messages. Thus, pedagogic work encompasses both official and unofficial pedagogic practices of teachers.

The present study offers a glimpse into the role of schools, whether they reinforce or change experiences that consolidate or modify dispositions that will guide practices in the field, both inside and outside the school. The theoretical framework of the present thesis not only problematises the role of schools in reinforcing and reproducing social inequality based on caste but also their role as sites that inculcate un/democratic values.

3.1 The Habitus and Disposition

This section begins with the introduction of the concept of the habitus and its characteristics. Moreover, I discuss disposition and its characteristics, which align with the characteristics of habitus. Finally, this section addresses one key characteristic of habitus/disposition: its embodied aspect. The above two concepts, that is, habitus and dispositions, are drawn from Bourdieu's theoretical and empirical explication of these concepts (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

3.1.1 The Habitus

Bourdieu developed three key conceptual tools (the habitus, field, and capital) to understand and explain social phenomena, particularly the perpetuation of social and economic inequalities. The Habitus is a *thinking* and *explanatory* tool to explore complex social phenomena that require combining theoretical understanding with empirical investigation (Maton, 2008). It offers a 'sociological gaze' to seeing the world (Maton, 2008, p. 49). The thesis understands Bourdieu's notion of the habitus as being *unthought in action* (Bourdieu, 1977). Habitus represents meaning and interest, which lie beneath the conscious, calculated discourse and representation (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

Moreover, habitus presents 'a system of (partially or totally identical) schemes of perception, thought, appreciation and action' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990, p.35). The schemes/ patterns are formed or reformed by the social system in which students participate (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Here, the pattern or scheme represents an ordered structure of thought, feeling and actions. Though schemes show characteristics of individuals, they are shaped by social structures (Bourdieu, 1977). Indeed, social structures or social relations are incorporated within individuals as habitus (Bourdieu, 1990). Bourdieu and Wacquant described habitus as 'structuring and structured structure' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992,

p. 139). Here, *structure* refers to schemes or patterns of mental frames or social constructs that are shaped by past and present experiences and that form or reform social structures or relations (Maton, 2008). That is, social structures consciously or unconsciously frame one's mental and social constructs (Grenfell and James, 1998).

The above underlined characteristic of habitus offers a theoretical insight into how social relations are internalised within individuals. In the context of the present research, habitus provides a framework for understanding how social relations, outcomes of the prevailing social structures in schools and in larger society, are internalised by students. One key significance of habitus is its conceptualisation as 'dialectical' relations between objective social structure and subjectivity of individuals (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 83). There is a 'dialectical relationship between the objective structures and the cognitive and motivating structures' of individuals (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 83). Habitus underscores the deeply rooted cognitive structure of the habitus, which has become an integral part of the unconscious status of mind and body. The characteristic of an individual's habitus is defined by the social conditions of one's existence (Bourdieu, 1990). That is, the individual subjectivities which represent habitus differ based on one's social locations. In the present research, I investigate the habitus of students which are shaped or reshaped by the relationship between students and teachers. Or how school social structures are incorporated into students' habitus.

Habitus is *acquired* through life experiences (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Habitus represents an 'acquired system of schemes' – 'abilities, categories, and desires' which are incorporated rather than being innate (Rowlands and Gale, 2017). That is, individual schemes of perception, thought, or action towards existing social relations are acquired through experiences in everyday life, whether in school or in society. What patterns of perceptions and actions constituted or reinforced existing social relations of caste is the point of investigation in this research.

One important characteristic of habitus is its conceptualisation as a dialectic of structure and agency (Maton, 2008). For Bourdieu, habitus allows free formation of schemes of perceptions, thoughts and actions but within the 'constraints and limits' imposed by objective conditions in which habitus is formed (Bourdieu, 1990, p.55). Thus, the habitus with generative capacity has freedom to generate limitless thoughts, actions, perceptions and expressions; however, at the same time, it is constrained by conditions of its formation

(Reay, 2004). Therefore, habitus neither leads to the mechanical production of conditions nor offers capacities or opportunities for limitless novelty to create (Bourdieu, 1990). Thus, habitus offers not only frameworks to explain the reproduction of social relations but also insights into how it can be transformative by empowering agency.

Habitus shows characteristics of durability and transposability (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). Aforementioned characteristics of habitus reflect their unchanging nature until there is a change in circumstances or field. Habitus allows for the 'constancy of dispositions, tastes, preferences' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990, p.131). The schemes of perceptions and thought that one embodies direct the thinking or actions in another field, which represent transposable characteristics of habitus. For example, once obedience to authority is instilled within an individual in the school, a pattern of thought may emerge that leads to obeying social and political authorities outside the school. That is, patterns of thought and perceptions as constituents of habitus incorporated in school, transposed to other fields.

Though habitus is durable and transposable, it is not static but evolving with changing circumstances (physical and social) in which individuals live (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990; Maton, 2008). Bourdieu contends that changing social, economic and political conditions that offer new experiences play a role in transforming habitus: 'habitus change constantly in response to new experiences' (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 161). However, this change in habitus is not radical, but rather originates from a previously structured habitus within the family, society, or other institutions (Bourdieu, 2000). In the case of schools, if they are unable to provide new experiences compared to whatever is gathered in the family, habitus remains unchanged. When a new habitus is not formed, previous experiences emerge on the surface, directing actions unconsciously. This is a critical point in the use of the habitus — explanatory tool to understand the reproduction/ transformation of caste relations through an Indian school. Drawing from Bourdieu's conceptualisation of habitus, it can be contended that caste, as a social structure incorporated within individuals in society, possesses the potential to direct practices in the field (Bourdieu, 1990). Does the school contribute to the transformation of habitus? Insights from this study may help guide the role of schools in social transformation by changing students' habitus.

Habitus is constitutive of a 'system of dispositions' (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 5; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.135 see also Bourdieu, 1990; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). In other

words, habitus represents ‘a set of *acquired* dispositions’ (Wacquant, 2011, p.5, emphasis original). An explication of the relationship between habitus and dispositions by Bourdieu and other scholars signals that disposition is a foundational element of the habitus. The further discussion on dispositions is covered in the following subsection.

3.1.2 Dispositions

Disposition signifies ‘*a habitual state… a predisposition, tendency, propensity, or inclination’* (Bourdieu 1977, p. 214, n.1, emphasis original). That is, dispositions represent the incorporated specificities of intellect, body, emotion, and social behaviours, imbibed over time, that predispose one to act in certain ways. Dispositions are ‘socially constituted’ and ‘acquired in practice’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.121). Every day, mundane, repetitive practices carry some messages or implicit meanings which are internalised over time (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). These messages are incorporated within the individual's body and unconsciously guide the actions. The intuitive common sense developed towards social relations expresses embodied dispositions. A theoretical understanding of the role of practices in shaping dispositions provides a framework for observing repetitive actions and hidden messages conveyed in the school.

Bourdieu contends that ‘the word *disposition* seems particularly suited to express what is covered by the concept of habitus (defined as a system of dispositions)’ (Bourdieu 1977, p. 214, n.1). Therefore, some characteristics of habitus can be used in explication of concept of disposition and its usefulness in explaining the reproduction/ transformation of social relations through schooling. Some key virtues of dispositions discussed in this subsection include: dispositions as an incorporated social structure, capable of directing practices unthinkingly, and their formation/ shaping through the ordinary practices of everyday life.

Bourdieu explains that disposition is shaped by the objective social conditions in which an individual lives (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990). In other words, subjective propensities or inclinations towards ways of perception, thought, and action are shaped by objective conditions (Bourdieu, 1990). The objective conditions are ‘durably inculcated’ within individuals that constitute the dispositions (Bourdieu, 1990, p.54). In the process of inculcation of dispositions, ‘improbable’ practices are excluded and made ‘unthinkable’

(Bourdieu, 1990, p.54). In everyday life, individuals develop an understanding of what is possible and what is not for them to do or achieve, depending on their social and economic conditions. Thus, it becomes sensible to think and act in a certain way, and this gradually becomes a habitual aspect of an individual that signifies their dispositions. For instance, in their study of disadvantaged students in the Australian context, Mills and Gale (2010) demonstrate that students from marginalised communities often embody negative stereotypes associated with themselves and their communities. Students unconsciously regulate their actions towards social and economic mobility (Mills and Gale, 2010, p. 73). The economic and social deprivations experienced by family and community shape an individual's inclination or propensity to think and act in specific ways. Students have a practical understanding of what is possible and what is not.

Dispositions represent an open system ‘constantly subjected to experiences’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.133). Therefore, experiences play a crucial role in reinforcing or modifying structures. When experiences are repeated, they reinforce dispositions, the embodied subjectivity that generates practices (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Extending this explication, the present study offers an opportunity to critically analyse the role of school in reinforcing or altering the experiences carried from families, which can play a significant role in consolidating or modifying students' dispositions and, in turn, generating practices in the field, both inside and outside the school. Moreover, once formed, dispositions cannot be reversed until they are replaced by another ‘irreversible disposition’ (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990, p.42). This explores the role of schools in avoiding the engagement with dispositions formed through primary socialisation within the family or community.

Dispositions are not only shaped by past social and cultural environments but also provide the foundation for engagement in current situations. Drawing on Bourdieu, Gale et al. argue that dispositions that express ‘tendencies, inclinations, and learnings … provide un-thought or pre-thought guidance for social practices’ (Gale et al., 2019, pp. 50-51; see also, Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Disposition integrates ‘past experiences, at every moment as *a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions’* (Bourdieu,1977, pp. 82-83, emphasis original). This theoretical understanding serves as an analytical tool for understanding how students perceive and comprehend existing social relations that are predisposed to conform to established patterns.

One important characteristic of disposition/habitus is its embodied nature. In the following subsection, I explain the embodied aspects of habitus and disposition, as well as their relevance in explaining the social reproduction of caste inequality.

3.1.3 The embodied aspect of habitus/disposition

Underlying Bourdieu's thinking is that the habitus not only appears as a mental construct reflecting 'attitudes and perceptions' but also as embodied characteristics (Reay, 2004, p. 432). Embodied aspects of habitus signify that social and physical conditions are incorporated in the individual body. Once social conditions are embodied as habitus, they appear in the form of 'a durable way of standing, speaking, walking, and thereby of feeling and thinking' (Bourdieu, 1990, p.70). Embodiment is described as a process through which the 'social necessity' and 'material conditions' are inscribed on the biological body (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 79; see also, Kregan, 2012). Indeed, embodiment denotes the biological body as a 'socially structured site', where social meanings are constructed, negotiated, or imposed in multiple ways (Murphy, 2021, p. 233).

The embodied aspect of habitus underlines that social necessities are inscribed on 'motor schemes' (Bourdieu, 1990, p.69). The motor scheme refers to the structure of body muscles that automatically take action without conscious thought. Specifically, habitus represents capacities or propensities of the biological body that are controlled and regulated by social necessities to generate actions. Moreover, performing tasks makes more sense than knowing about the task, which is informed by 'common sense' (Bourdieu, 1990, p.69). That is, social and cultural habits are inscribed in the biological body of the individual, shaping the agent's thoughts and feelings and influencing the individual's behaviour in different situations (Grenfell and James, 1998; Reay, 2004).

The concept of habitus as embodied subjectivity of objective social relations offers an explanation of how social hierarchies of gender, class, caste, race, ethnicity and others are embodied within the individual body. Moreover, how embodied hierarchies as habitus generate practices, which in turn reproduce social relations. Embodied ideas appear in the form of 'posture', 'gesture', and 'movements' (Bourdieu, 1990, p.70) of the body. Bourdieu highlights that gender discrimination or hierarchy operates through the socially constructed

body, manifesting in bodily presentations (postures) and interactions (gestures), as well as in bodily mobility. For instance, maleness is signified by ‘firmness, uprightness, and directness’ while femaleness is by ‘restraint, reserve, and flexibility’ (Bourdieu, 1990, p.70). Virtues orient movement of the female and male body in specific directions: female- ‘downwards, towards grounds’ while male- ‘upwards, outwards and other men’ (Bourdieu, 1990, p.70).

The embodied aspect of habitus helps theoretically explain how habitus operates unconsciously. In this regard, the individual's body acts as a ‘memory pad’ that automatically acts and unconsciously incorporates the mind (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 68). The body acts as a ‘repository’ of values, forming the ‘symbolic thought’ (Bourdieu, 1990, p.68). These values and beliefs are instilled in children from childhood on and through the physical body. A physical body carries thoughts and feelings on itself and defers conscious recall. Being repositories of social necessities and social order, conscious thinking about social relations may be deferred in a specific context but reappear when the body is placed in a context similar to the conditions in which it was formed. Placing the body in a specific posture or space recalls the associated thoughts and feelings, which are unconsciously embedded within the individual's body as habitus.

Moreover, Bourdieu contends that ‘physical potency [is] inseparable from social potency’ **(**Bourdieu, 1990, p. 78). This conceptualisation offers an important perspective on understanding justifications offered in modern society's social division / discrimination or hierarchy. In the Indian context, understanding of a ‘casteness’ in the physical body represents a cognitive hierarchy that aligns with the social hierarchy of caste. Those who are higher in caste hierarchy socially are considered to be intellectually superior to those who are lower in caste. This consideration justifies the discourses around *merit* in the Indian context. Those who belong to higher castes are meritorious, and those who are lower caste are considered popularly inferior in merit (Subramanian, 2019). In another context, those who are of the lower caste believe that their body are inferior and should not be touched. This offers a foundation for the practice of untouchability in Indian society. Those who are from lower castes are considered impure and cause pollution or spoilage by touch; thus, they should not be touched. Thus, the inferior bodies of lower castes give rise to the practice of untouchability and endogamy, as marrying in lower groups would pollute or spoil the clan.

Thus, the embodied aspect of habitus provides a theoretical framework for understanding and explaining caste hierarchy, which is embedded within the body. In the current research, I conceptualise the caste as an embodied aspect that is affectively realised in the field (discussed in more detail in section 3.2.2). As they are incorporated within the body, they unconsciously continue to generate practices that, in turn, reproduce caste relations. After introducing the concepts of habitus and dispositions, in the following section, I discuss two specific types of dispositions: cognitive and affective.

3.2 The Cognitive and Affective Aspects of Habitus/ Disposition

Scholars identified three facets of habitus/ disposition: 'cognitive, affective, and corporeal' (Dalal, 2016, p. 234; see also Wacquant, 2011, 2014). Dispositions signify the propensity or inclination to think, feel, or act in certain ways. Therefore, dispositions encompass aspects of cognition, affect, and the physical body. Wacquant argues that one can 'analytically differentiate and empirically document' the three components of habitus/ dispositions: cognitive, conative, and affective (Wacquant, 2014, p. 8). Jenkins contends that dispositions include 'a spectrum of cognitive and affective factors: thinking and feeling, to use Bourdieu's own formulation, everything from classificatory categories to the sense of honour' (Jenkins, 2002, p. 76). A 'system of cognitive and motivating structure' that constitutes habitus and dispositions of individuals offers understanding about the practical world, which is realised in terms of 'ends- procedures to follow, paths to take' (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 53). In this study, I employ the cognitive and affective dimensions of dispositions to explain the role of schooling in perpetuating caste inequalities.

3.2.1 Cognitive dimension of disposition/ habitus

Cognitive disposition refers to thinking patterns/ schemes that operate without conscious effort to think in a certain way (Jenkins, 2002; Nash, 2005a). The distinction between cognitive and non-cognitive dimensions does not draw separate lines among different aspects of habitus; rather, the employment of cognitive aspects of disposition is to analyse 'thought processes' (Nash, 2005a, p. 603). In broader terms, cognitive dispositions present aspects of thinking that represent 'classificatory category' (Jenkins, 2002, p. 76). The concept of the cognitive disposition provides a framework for analysing the characteristics of cognition, particularly patterns of thought and their social formation (Nash, 2005a;

Wacquant, 2014). It represents the 'categories of perceptions' that enable an agent to analyse the social world (Wacquant, 2011, p.8). The consideration of the cognitive disposition in the present research is guided by a curiosity to understand how students habitually engage with social relations and how those inclinations towards social relations are formed. This research aims to understand whether students show an inclination to analyse prevailing caste relations/ practices or accept them as given.

Nash conceptualises cognitive dispositions as modes of thought or schemes of *thinking* in certain ways that are embodied and socially formed (Nash, 2003; 2005b). Cognitive dispositions are characterised as 'embodied cognitive schemes, acquired by children in classed environments, are a principal cause of observed class variation in educational performance' (Nash, 2003, p.171). Lizardo argues that Bourdieu's habitus can be characterised as 'a socially produced cognitive structure, composed of systems of bodily operations that generate practical action' (Lizardo, 2004, p.393).' These embodied mental habits shape tendencies and abilities to act in a certain way in the field (Nash, 2005b). In what ways a school shapes the cognitive dispositions of students in relation to their engagement with social relations is one of the key points of investigation in this research.

Social class structures cognition toward learning school subjects in varied ways, providing an explanation for the variation in educational performance. . For instance, Nash argues that cognitive schemes shaped that are influenced by class variation plays an important role in reproducing class relations (Nash, 2003). Watkins and Noble (2013) demonstrate in their study that students from different ethnic backgrounds develop differential learning capacities that are embodied through different practices. 'Differently capacitated bodies' represents the varied bodies' skills to learn, attitude towards learning, and cognitive habits to learning, thus reproducing the ethnic inequalities (Watkins and Noble, 2013, p.136). Thus, socially structured or situated cognition offers an alternative explanation for the reproduction of social inequalities, as it shapes students' cognition differently through family and school, thereby affecting their educational performance.

Cognitive abilities are 'a matter of embodied habits that had become almost automatic' (Watkins and Noble, 2013, p. 137). Moreover, it represents the 'acquired tendencies formed through repeated and calibrated performance' (Watkins and Noble, 2013, p.137). They can be considered second nature in that they seem 'natural' but are 'cultural' (Watkins and

Noble, 2013, p.137). Moreover, embodied dispositions signify the 'readiness of body' or capacities of body (Watkins and Noble, 2013, p. 137). Drawing on the foregoing explanation, I can argue that if the school places an emphasis on not asking questions, it can become a mental habit that systematically weakens the ability to formulate questions to explore and challenge social relations (Nash, 2003).

Thus, cognitive disposition signifies the patterns of *thinking* that are shaped/ reshaped through social structure in the everyday life of a family or school. This disposition provides pre-thought guidance on how to think or engage with prevailing social relations mentally. How patterns of feeling are characterised or shaped are discussed ahead.

3.2.2 Affective dimension of habitus/ disposition

The affective aspect of habitus represents inclinations and propensity towards specific sets of feelings and emotions (Reay, 2015). Some Bourdieusian scholars employed affective dimensions to explain the perpetuation of social inequalities (Ignatow, 2009; Juros, 2022; Reay, 2015; Threadgold, 2020). The conceptualisation of affect as dispositions underscores its consideration as an embodied nature rather than just a psychic expression (Probyn, 2004; Reay, 2015). The use of the term 'affect' in place of emotions makes more sense, as emotions do not dominantly appear in Bourdieu's writing and are mostly discussed in relation to body (physicality) and body experiences (Probyn, 2004). The following discussion encompasses aspects of embodiment of social inequalities as affect: cultural values, and morals are incorporated in the body as affect; and construction and realisation of affective dispositions through practices.

The social hierarchies are expressed in patterns of emotions (feelings of superiority and inferiority) inscribed over the body that are continuously repeated in different contexts (Ignatow, 2009; Probyn, 2005; Threadgold, 2020). The emotional patterns vary in different conditions. The consideration of affect as disposition intends to identify the commonality that describes the affective and bodily schemes of feelings that are not instinctive but incorporated in the body historically (Probyn, 2004). The conceptualisation of affective disposition promises to think about affect 'simultaneously social and physical' or emphasise 'feeling body' (Probyn, 2004, p. 225). For example, Shame, which largely has a

psychological aspect, exhibits a physiological impact, as evidenced by lowered eyelids and head.

Scholars have widely researched and presented that social inequalities are embodied and expressed in patterns of affect (Ignatow, 2009; Juros, 2022; Probyn, 2004; Reay, 2015; Threadgold, 2020). The focus of aforementioned scholars is to explain how affect is embodied, which incorporates social inequalities within the emotive structures of the body. Threadgold explains that individuals' everyday lives are filled with diverse experiences, which stimulate feelings and emotions (Threadgold, 2022; Turner, 2010). These experiences are ‘accumulated into our memory pads’ and ‘stick to form affinities’ (Threadgold, 2020, p.105). The embodied ‘experience, affinities assembled through repetition that transforms feelings and emotions into beliefs, temperaments and preferences’ (Threadgold, 2020, p. 52). For instance, Reay underscores ‘hidden, embodied and psychosocial injuries of social class’ that are inflicted through an embedded unequal society (Reay, 2015, p.21), which are expressed through propensity of feeling towards ‘fatalism, ambivalence, resilience, resentment, certainty, entitlement or even rage’ (Reay, 2015, p.10). Thus, social inequalities are affectively realised and these form patterns of emotions.

Threadgold contends that affects (feelings and emotions) are expressions of symbolic violence generated through hierarchical relations (Threadgold, 2020). Processual relations cause affective violence through which hierarchies are ‘naturalised’ (Threadgold, 2020, p. 11). Affects play a role in the realisation of positions, develop understanding about the possibilities of mobility, thus directing actions and developing reasonableness about what is practically possible (Threadgold, 2020). Limitations are set up regarding what is desirable and what ought to be done, and what is not ‘felt as much as known’ (Threadgold, 2020, p. 56). The habitus shapes the ‘reasonable expectations and practices’ developed through individual trajectory (Threadgold, 2020, p. 138; see also Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Reasonableness represents practical understanding of what is and is not possible in a specific setting.

Efforts to connect Bourdieu's concept of habitus with the affective aspects lie in accounting for ‘aspects of power, values, morals’ in analysing social relations (Adam and Galinsky, 2012). Feelings are shaped by ‘norms and expectations’ of a specific social setting (Threadgold, 2020, p. 7). ‘Cultural taste and morality are feelings as much as

knowledge: you feel that you like or dislike something before you 'know' it. Sometimes you feel it in your gut' (Threadgold, 2020, p. 106). Thus, moral values are incorporated into feelings which intuitively guide the actions. 'Cultural repertoires' constituted of 'intuitions, emotions, and deeply held ideas about that body' act as a framework to evaluate others' ideas or indeed to evaluate others. (p. Ignatow, 2009, p.109). Thus, affective schemes act as a framework for defining social relations in terms of who is superior/ inferior, and the same applies to values.

The body acts as a 'repository' of values, forming the 'symbolic thought' (Bourdieu, 1990, p.68). Values and beliefs are instilled from childhood on and through the physical body (Bourdieu, 1990). A physical body carries thoughts and feelings on itself and defers conscious recall. Norms and expectations of a specific social setting construct the feelings (Threadgold, 2020). 'Social norms (symbols, values, morals, aesthetics, tastes, genres and so on) coalesce to become an affective order' (Threadgold, 2020, p. 11; see also Sayer, 2004). For example, Threadgold emphasises that moral and aesthetic values like what is 'beauty and ugliness, moral and immoral, deserving and undeserving, tasteful and vulgar' stimulate feelings accordingly, what is *desirable* and *good* (Threadgold, 2020, p. 103). The values that enforce the hierarchy or favour the dominant group are considered valuable and acceptable: 'everyday encounters, moments and situations are filled with the heavy immanence of social hierarchies misrecognized as natural everyday social relations' (Threadgold, 2020, p. 106).

In everyday interaction, recognition and reward for some morals, values, or actions, and 'social sanctions and stigma' on others, produce an affective inclination towards specific values that are an important aspect of the dispositional aspect of habitus (Threadgold, 2020, p. 106). Inability of individuals to adhere or to reach those values are affective realised. For example, feelings of shame, guilt, frustration, or anger are expressions of inequalities where the subordinate group is not meeting the expectations of the dominant group. The 'moral emotions' are the realisation of the self's worth in the community and engagement in fitting in within the group (Ignatow, 2009; see also Rozin et al., 1999). These emotions motivate individuals to 'behave in a culturally acceptable fashion' (Rozin et al., 1999, p. 574). They are self-conscious and take efforts to control or manage their behaviour by themselves to fit with the dominant culture and values, which in turn legitimise the dominant culture and values and reproduce relations.

Not only are inequalities embodied in the body through practices, but also social interactions summon 'emotions and feelings', and structural inequalities come into existence and are *felt* (Threadgold, 2020, p. 27). For example, Reay argues that psychic economy of class relations is expressed in the form of feelings of 'ambivalence, inferiority and superiority, visceral aversions, recognitions and abjection' that are internalised in everyday interactions or practices (Reay, 2015, p.21; see also Reay, 2005). In Bourdieu's terms, as doing makes sense, knowing and the process of doing via the body bring back thinking and feeling that is incorporated into the body historically (Bourdieu, 1990).

The above discussion on the affective dimensions of habitus underscores that affect is not just the psychic aspect of the individual, but embodied patterns of emotions that are constituted through practices and incorporate social hierarchies, beliefs, values, and morals. In this research, the conceptualisation of affect as dispositions offers a framework to explore caste relations embodied affect (section 3.4.1). Affective dispositions also serve as frameworks that guide actions and judgments about others, and they contribute to the enforcement of social relations. Specific to the Indian context, caste inequality is a dominant form of social inequality. I elaborate further on the conceptual framework of caste inequality as embodied affect.

Caste inequalities as embodied affect

Bourdieuian scholars have explained, both conceptually and empirically, how social inequalities are embodied within individuals and realised as affect inequalities (Juros, 2022; Leaney, 2018; Reay, 2015; Threadgold, 2020). Drawing on the theoretical framework of scholars who examine social inequality as embodied affect (Reay, 2015; Thredgold, 2020), this section discusses caste as embodied affect.

Gorringe and Bhoir (2023) argue that caste is 'routine and banal'; it can be observed in caste performances and everyday interactions. Therefore, it becomes part of everyday experiences and can appear through our senses of 'touch, smell, taste, and hear' (Guru and Sarukkai, 2019, p. 13). Scholars discussed the embodied nature of caste (Gorringe and Rafanell, 2007; Lee, 2021; Pal, 2024). Gorringe and Rafanell discuss that the embodied structure of caste operates as a durable structure that 'simultaneously constitutes both social and personal

identity and macro-structural phenomena' (Gorringe and Rafanell, 2007, p. 102). They underscored that embodied caste directs how individuals perceive and evaluate the symbolic world (Gorringe and Rafanell, 2007, p. 100). Lee (2021) specifically discusses caste as embodied affect. That is, he develops the 'affective theory of caste and untouchability' (Lee, 2021, p.310). This theorisation is supported by Pal, who contends that socio-psychological analysis of individual behaviours has significance in exploring caste relations as caste: 'Caste exists in the Indian psyche' (Pal, 2024, p. 122).

Based on the analysis of vernacular sources of privilege and disprivilege, Lee highlights that disgust (*Ghrna*) is an affective aspect that repulses lower castes (untouchables) from the privileged castes and as a means to perpetuate caste (Lee, 2021). 'Disgust motivates observable behaviours – recoiling, physical withdrawal, 'panicky commotion' – that communicate a sense of hierarchical difference that contradicts explicit avowals of equality' (Lee, 2021, p.311). Disgust is not an internal condition of emotions, rather 'as a social *affect*' … as a 'intersubjective force' … 'in group socialisation, in the collective habitus' (Lee, 2021, p. 324, emphasis original). Thus, disgust plays an important role in maintaining social order. Guru and Surokkai discussed the humiliation, indignity, and shame experienced by lower caste groups through the practice of untouchability (Guru and Surokkai, 2019).

Everyday experiences influence engagement with the social structure (Guru and Surukkai, 2019). The meaning of 'social' is not only imbibed through what is taught, but also through everyday experiences. It might be rational for the privileged caste to practice untouchability to avoid inter-caste marriage, so rationality differs for different social groups. The practice of untouchability is an expression of caste-based hierarchy, and its continuation has the potential to reproduce hierarchical caste-based relations (Guru and Surukkai, 2019; Jodhka, 2012; Lee, 2021). The disgust of privileged castes (Lee, 2021) and humiliation, indignity, and shame of lower castes (Guru and Surokkai, 2019) are the emotion that embodies the caste hierarchy of superiority and inferiority among the two social groups, respectively.

The affective aspect of habitus/ dispositions was not part of the initial theoretical framework of this research. However, the findings of this research reveal that emotional and moral aspects predominantly appear in the data, suggesting potential to direct action in everyday life. This leads to revisiting the theoretical framework to understand how affective dispositions are shaped through schooling and how they influence the reproduction of caste

relations. The following section discusses the conceptualisation of the conforming disposition.

3.3 Conceptualising Conformity

The current project examines the role of a school in social reproduction, implicitly acknowledging how it can facilitate social change. It is based on the premise that developing an understanding of how schools perpetuate social inequalities may pave the way for social transformation. The previous chapter illustrated that Indian schools engage in constructing/ reinforcing obedience among students in a big way. Drawing on literature about the culture of Indian schools, I propose that Indian schools instil the value of conformity in their students. This section operationalises conformity as dispositions, drawing on and developing the concept of conformity from critical social sciences.

I conceptualise conformity as inverse to criticality, where understanding about criticality is broadly drawn from critical social sciences (Agger, 2013; Browne, 2017; Fay, 1987,1996; Meyer-Emerick, 2005; Sayer, 2009; Watts and Hodgson, 2019). Here, criticality refers to a set of attributes with the potential to transform oppressive social relations (Fay, 1987; Sayer, 2009; Meyer-Emerick, 2005; Watts and Hodgson, 2019). Extrapolating from this, I envision conformity as a set of attributes of individuals with the potential to perpetuate prevailing social orders if internalised. Watts and Hodgson argue that domination and subjugation have their origin in social structures; thus, education should illuminate social relations in the form of oppression and domination (Watts and Hodgson, 2019; see also Fay, 1987, 1996). The importance of critical social science lies in *explaining, criticising,* social relations, practices, one's understanding of self and their foundations as well as *empowering* individuals for social transformation (Fay, 1987; Meyer-Emerick, 2005; Özbilgin and Erbil, 2024; Sayer, 2009). Critical social science stance expects taking a position that serve the 'voices and interests of disadvantaged groups to repair uneven relations of power.' (Özbilgin and Erbil, 2024, p.2; see also Fay, 1987; Sayer, 2009). To further explicate the concept of conformity, I first briefly discuss the characteristics of criticality, which provide the foundation for characterising conformity.

The term ‘critical’ employed in the project is broadly equivalent to the term ‘critique’. The critique (critical) broadly involves analysing and challenging existing social relations and understanding oneself to transform them (Agger, 2013). A critical instance, with regard to social relations, entails ‘sustained negative evaluation of social order’ (Fay, 1987, p.25) based on ‘explicit’, ‘rational’ criteria (Fay, 1987, p.26). Critique involves analysing and criticising ‘practices’ and ‘ideas’ that inform the practices (Sayer, 2009, p. 769; see also Özbilgin and Erbil, 2024). Understanding social relations is a prerequisite for political actions and intervention for transformation (Fay, 1987). Critique includes an appreciation of the multiplicity of injustices and ‘delegitimising of the formerly held uncritical positions’ (Browne, 2017, p. 14). It entails understanding the exploitative features of society or people’s sufferings in a manner that motivates people to transform them (Robinson, 1992). Analysis should identify the ‘systems of social relationships’ that guide individuals' actions (Fay, 1975, p.94). It may include the historical formation of social relations. Moreover, there is a need for an analysis of suffering that begins to focus on current issues, with the understanding that suffering is unjust and can be avoided or transformed (Agger, 2013; Browne, 2017; Robinson, 1992; Sayer, 2009).

Another characteristic of criticality is challenging existing unjust social relations. There is a need to challenge existing social arrangements (Keucheyan, 2013). Moreover, it involves ‘contesting normative (mythological and ideological) values, concepts, principles and the ways knowledge is produced and reproduced’ that legitimise prevailing social relations (Simpson, 2020, p.4; see also, Sayer, 2011). Thus, criticality also involves challenging existing social arrangements with the intention of changing them. Understanding is not enough; the next step is to take action after analysis. A vision for an alternative order within the existing context can provide a foundation for challenging existing relations (Robinson, 1992).

Finally, criticality entails empowering individual agency by developing autonomous *will,* belief in the individual or group’s power, and faith in change (Watts and Hodgson, 2019). The educative process is expected to shape the ‘will’ to be autonomous. Individuals possess their own will and forge their own laws, administering them accordingly (Fay, 1987, p. 75). It further entails a self-directed approach to life, based on informed choices and the belief that individuals possess the power to express their wishes (Agger, 2013). Moreover, being critical means developing a reflective understanding of the operations of power and

developing a belief that the oppressed are not powerless. Dominated are not 'powerless' though it is 'implicit and dormant' (Fay, 1987, p.120; see also Freire, 1970). Power can be both domination (used by the dominant) and empowerment (used by the oppressed). One of the important aspects of criticality is empowering agency (Agger, 2013).

Thus, the term critical can be broadly considered equivalent to the critique discussed above. Being critical entails questioning social relations and oneself. Based on the above understanding, I derive two characteristics of individuals who are critical and possess the potential to transform social relations: questioning attributes that reveal social relations and challenging existing relations; and empowered agency characterised by self-directedness and belief in individuals' will and power.

I conceptualise *conformity* as the opposite of criticality, with the potential to reproduce existing relations once internalised. Drawing from the above characteristics of criticality, I characterise conformity as *a non-questioning attribute* and *a dependent, passive, and powerless* agency. Here, individuals' non-questioning attributes represent a tendency not to ask questions that reveal social relations or pose a challenge to prevailing ones. Conforming agency or reduced agency encompasses an approach characterised by dependency, passivity, and a lack of faith in the power of self and change.

One important characteristic of conformity is being unreflective towards social relations, practices, or values, rather than considering them as given. In fact, individuals often present an ahistorical analysis of prevailing social relations, considering them as *natural* (Agger, 2013). This represents the attributes of accepting the superficial, causal, and visible explanations of current social and economic conditions. Moreover, individuals often assume that existing relations are historically unchanged and everlasting. It is similar to what Horkheimer says, acceptance of the superficial reasoning of social relations and practices (Horkheimer, 1972). It is characterised by one's acceptance of reasoning for normative social practices without recognising that these practices not only influence almost every aspect of one's own life but also shape the practices of the larger society, which is inhuman. People's presumption of existing relations as 'given' makes them abide in an 'automatic, uncritical way' and unknowingly participate in their oppression (Fay, 1987).

Another aspect of conformity is a non-challenging approach to existing hierarchical relations or their foundations expressed in practices and values. One important expression of conformity is obedience to authorities rather than questioning them. It is a highly regarded characteristic of the Indian education system (Kumar, 1989; Sarangapani, 2003; Thapan, 2014a). It is similar to what Adorno et al. say: '…obedience and respect for authority were the most important virtues that children should learn that a person should obey without question' (Adorno et al., 1950, p.330).

Subdued agency is another attribute of conformity, represented by a dependent, passive, and powerless agency. Individuals develop misunderstandings about themselves, their needs, desires, and capacities. (Agger, 2013; Browne, 2017). 'Agency is a relative trait': 'one can have more or less of it' (Fay, 1996, p. 67). The capability to decipher social relations and reflect on one's skills and attributes to engage depends on one's position in the social order (Sayer, 2011). Individuals from the dominant group tend to employ their agency more effectively, while those from the oppressed group use it less effectively (Fay, 1996). Expression of one's agency lies in recognising that one is an 'agent' capable of taking independent direction and bringing about change (Fay, 1996, p. 67). The concept of conformity suggests that an individual may exhibit ineffectiveness in terms of realising their individual agency or capacity to take action and effect change. As Freire pointed out, the oppressed do not recognise the capacity of their agency; thus, they employ it hesitantly and in less effective ways (Freire, 1972).

Further to the above discussion, I propose that the attributes of conformity are embodied as dispositions within individuals' bodies, which intuitively show a propensity not to ask questions and a pattern of dependency on authority/superiors/other. The following subsection provides a more detailed discussion of this topic.

3.3.1 Conformity as disposition

I combine the concepts of conformity with the concept of habitus or dispositions to devise a conceptual framework for examining the attributes inculcated in students through schooling. The research particularly focuses on attributes that contribute to reproducing social relations. The significance of considering conformity as a disposition lies in its unthought or pre-

thought appearance in practice (Bourdieu 1977, 1990; Gale et al., 2019). Their appearance is a *natural* instinct in everyday life without conscious effort. Critical social sciences also support this consideration of conformity as an embodied aspect, which emphasises the 'non-idealistic' aspects of human behaviour (Meyer-Emerick, 2005, p. 549). That is, 'ideas' are not the core of human behaviour, and rational arguments are not enough to change or empower individuals (Fay, 1987). While conceptualising conformity as a disposition, I consider conformity a cognitive dimension of habitus. The cognitive dimensions of habitus/ disposition broadly encompass patterns of cognition, thought, or perception (Nash, 2003, 2005b; Wacquant, 2014), as well as mental capacities for abstract thinking (Watkins and Noble, 2013).

The first characteristic of a conforming disposition is its shaping, structuring, and expression through the practices of the school. The attributes of conformity are not taught but_rather practised in everyday life. Everyday practices consistently generate specific messages, which are embodied within individuals as schemes of thought, feeling, and action (Bourdieu, 1990). School practices structure/ shape students' schemes of thought in a way that tends to discourage them from questioning social/ institutional relations or attitudes of followership towards authorities. These attributes are built into thought or action as habits and unconsciously or subconsciously guide, control, or regulate further actions in the field (Bourdieu 1977, 1990). Consideration of conformity as a disposition signifies the habitual or common-sensical approach to thinking or perceiving (Bourdieu, 1977). Thus, conformity as a disposition offers a conceptual framework to reveal the patterns of thinking towards reflections on existing social relations, challenging them, and realising one's agency.

Conforming dispositions are *acquired* dispositions (Bourdieu, 1990). This indicates that specific ways of being and acting are learnt and incorporated. The Collective and individual histories play a role in shaping these attributes. Opportunities, expectations and motivations developed through family, community and school influence the formation of these attributes. For instance, in the case of families with authoritarian parents, a cultural system that expects children to obey almost all orders may lead to conforming attributes because the practices (i.e., forms of pedagogic work) instil 'new abilities, categories, and desires' requisite for forming attributes (Wacquant, 2011, p. 87). An explanation of conforming dispositions, as acquired dispositions, provides a theoretical foundation for discussing the role of the school in shaping and modifying the dispositions of conformity that influence practices within and

outside the school. In extension to this, it offers opportunities to problematize the role of the school as a reproductive/ transformative site.

Bourdieu argues that social structure is incorporated within individuals and realised subjectively as habitus/ dispositions (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990). In the process of embodiment, social necessities are inscribed on 'motor schemes' (Bourdieu, 1990, p.69). In the process of conceptualising conformity as a disposition, I contend that the hierarchical relationship between teachers/school authorities and students shapes the students' cognitions in terms of not asking questions that reveal or challenge existing relations. Teachers' authoritative positions shape students' thinking patterns in terms of not asking questions that challenge their positions. Thus, the subordinate positions students are in, as realised subjectively, are those of not asking questions. Thus, the schooling process shapes the students' dispositions in a way that it becomes common sense not to reflect on or challenge the relationship between teachers and students. Moreover, everyday school life also reinforces the subdued agency in terms of habitually training them to follow what teachers (authorities) direct/ guide. Conformity as a mental habit possesses the potential to guide/ direct action in relation to reflecting on and challenging other social relations, and to offer a framework for examining the role of a school in social transformation.

Finally, considering conformity as a cognitive disposition involves the mental capacities to formulate and ask questions. Cognitive abilities 'a matter of embodied habits that [has] become almost automatic' and signify the 'readiness of body' or capacities of body (Watkins and Noble, 2013, p. 137). Dispositions are formed through practice, and a culture where asking questions is not allowed or practised makes it theoretically unviable to develop skills to formulate and pose questions. Thus, the conceptualisation of conformity as a cognitive disposition includes a propensity and inclination not to ask questions, as well as the development of cognition that reduces mental capacities/ skills to formulate questions and explore and challenge social relations (Nash, 2003). This conceptualisation helps to engage in discussion on the role of practices in forming cognitive dispositions and their role in the reproduction of social relations.

The above characteristics of conforming dispositions broadly represent the cognitive aspects of habitus. These characteristics not only provide a framework for analysing students' embodied conformity but also help explain the potential role of conforming dispositions in

reproducing caste inequalities. As habitus is formed through pedagogic work, the following section discusses the concept of pedagogic work and the role of school practices in enforcing/ reinforcing habitus.

3.4 Pedagogic Work, Practice, and Shaping of Dispositions

Bourdieu's theory offers a coherent account of the crucial role of school in social reproduction and transformation across generations (Harker, 1990). Bourdieu provided an analytical explanation of how dominant groups perpetuate their culture through schooling, thereby reproducing their social position (Harker, 1990). Schools play an important role in achieving 'cultural consensus' that represents the 'common sense which is the prerequisite for communication' (Bourdieu, 1967, p. 341, in Harker, 1990). Education as a form of 'cultural practice' plays a role in reproducing social inequalities, but not in a 'mechanistic way'; instead, it follows a complex process of formation of habitus, which generates practices within constraints (Harker, 1990, p. 102).

Bourdieu developed and employed the concept of habitus to explain the reproduction of social inequalities, which is formed through pedagogic work (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). Pedagogic work (PW) is a mechanism through which objective social structure, in the form of social relations, norms, and values, is inculcated within individuals that structure the habitus (Rowlands and Gale, 2017). Habitus serves as the guiding principle for generating practices that reproduce social relations (Bourdieu, 1990). This study is theoretically informed by Bourdieu's work, which holds that pedagogic work moulds students' dispositions (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). Reflecting on the findings of this study, I consider school practices as pedagogic work with the potential to either reinforce or alter students' habitus. This section introduces the concept of pedagogic work, the conceptualisation of school practices as pedagogic work, and its role in shaping dispositions. Moreover, I briefly discuss the relationship between practice and habitus (dispositions), drawing on Bourdieu's practice theory, with the intention of understanding the mechanisms by which habitus is structured (patterned) and how inequalities are perpetuated.

3.4.1 Pedagogic work

Pedagogic work (PW) is a set of ordinary, everyday actions or activities that are repeated over time, producing '*durable training'* in the agent (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, p.31, emphasis original). Pedagogic work is a prolonged process, informed by a series of pedagogic actions (PAs) (Gale and Mills, 2013). Pedagogic action (PA) represents foundational actions that lead to pedagogic work (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990; Rowlands and Gale, 2017). Pedagogic actions refer to functions that are instructive/ educative in nature and perfromed in families or schools. It essentially represents the imposition of the culture of dominant groups over another as a legitimate culture, or a culture is arbitrarily imposed (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). The enforcement of culture is considered to be arbitrary because the cultural values, norms, and practices that are considered worthy of practice are not based on logical/ valid facts or reasons (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). The power relations that underpin this action remain hidden (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). The importance of the concept of 'pedagogic action' (PA) lies in explaining how structural inequality is reproduced through the cultural route. For instance, the perpetuation of patriarchy by specifying norms, values and practices for females, embedding them as tradition and culture. When pedagogic actions are repeated over a longer time, they result in pedagogic work that forms/reforms the habitus.

PW refers to the mechanism through which social conditions are internalised within individuals as habitus (Rowlands and Gale, 2017, p. 96). Inscribing inequalities over the body, pedagogic work structures/restructures the cognition or mental attributes that generate the practices in the field (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). The inculcated subjectivities (the habitus) generate the practices, which in turn produce the relations of which these subjectivities are formed. Pedagogic work (PW) reproduces social structures of which it is the product '*…through the mediation of the habitus'*, (Bourdieu and Passeron,1990, p. 33, emphasis original). In the present study, I propose that the structural hierarchy between teachers and students shapes cognitive and affective dimensions of students' habitus.

PW is executed by those granted pedagogic authority (PAu). Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) highlighted the characteristics of pedagogic authorities: agents or institutions endowed with the legitimate right to impose cultural messages, the right to specify what is legitimate and what is illegitimate to be practised; hiding power relations that produce legitimate culture,

etc. An agency (person or institution) with legitimate rights to impose a cultural message through repetition. On one hand, it has the autonomy to practice, on the other, it is representative of the dominant class/ group, inculcating cultural messages and preparing dominated agents to accept inequalities as legitimate. In this research, the school and teachers possess pedagogic authority to impart cultural messages.

Pedagogic work can cause symbolic violence to the dominated group or person (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). Symbolic violence represents the imposition of domination by a privileged group over disadvantaged groups, without being realised by the dominated, and the power relations that underpin this domination are hidden (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). For instance, Archer et al. (2018), through their study on the practice of setting[4] argue that 'setting' as pedagogic work, employed through pedagogic authority, hides power relations of class and race, which are a source of better performance for middle-class white students. 'Ability' and its 'natural' formation, and grouping according to 'deservedness', conceal the powers of dominant groups and cause symbolic violence against dominated students who implicitly accept the larger logic offered in favour of the setting's doxa (Archer et al., 2018). In the present research, I employ this theoretical framework to understand how teachers in the school utilise their pedagogic authority to legitimise the domination of a group while concealing the actual source of domination.

PW comprises primary and secondary types, which shape students' habitus. The primary type involves internalising cultural mores from family and community, while the secondary type signifies cognitive, emotional, bodily, or social attributes internalised within school or workplace settings. The effectiveness of secondary pedagogic work depends on its relation- whether close or distant- to the habitus formed by primary pedagogic work (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). Pedagogic work creates 'an irreversible disposition' that cannot be suppressed but is replaced by a 'new irreversible disposition' (Bourdieu,1990, p. 42). In educational institutions — spaces for secondary pedagogic work — if the attributes learnt at home align with those cultivated at school, the early learned cultural specificities are reinforced. Dispositions formed within families provide a foundation for further development of dispositions in school. This study examines the role of a school in shaping/

[4] Setting- setting is the practice of segregation of students of the same class into different ability groups based on their academic performance in the UK. It is also known as tracking in the USA context.

constituting dispositions, particularly exploring whether schools establish, reshape, or reinforce dispositions related to social injustice that are carried forward from families.

To identify the pedagogic work performed in the school, drawing on Bourdieu and Passeron (1990), I highlight some key characteristics of pedagogic work. These characteristics provide a framework for identifying a process that functions as pedagogic work within the limits of schools. Pedagogic work:

- operates over long periods
- has an implicit or explicit purpose and meaning: 'stamps' cultural message/s
- is inculcated through institutions endowed with pedagogic authority
- hides the power relation from which it originates
- imposes the domination of one group/ class over the other
- ensures both intellectual and moral integration

Based on the above framework, I propose that unofficial school practices act as pedagogic work that structures/shapes students' cognitive and affective dispositions. Schools engage in school practices that are recommended officially by policy makers or government officials to be performed in the school that include curriculum planning, transaction, assessment, etc.. At the same time, schools are also engaged in practices that are not official recommended but part of informal and formal interactions of school life, such as shaping aspirations, identity formation, punishment, moral lessons, etc. This study highlights unofficial practices and their role in shaping of conforming dispositions. Dispositions formed through schooling (as continuation or modification of habitus formed in the family) signify the potential to perpetuate unjust relations of society. The research aims to investigate the school culture through practices that produce/ reproduce dispositions that can potentially inform socially unjust relations of caste. The identification of practices that inform/form/ reform dispositions of students' dispositions offers opportunities to reflect on those that show potential to perpetuate social inequalities. The alternation of practices may mould students' habitus towards criticality, thus helping address unjust social relations. The following subsection provides a theoretical explication of Bourdieu's practice theory, in relation to the role of practice in the formation of habitus.

3.4.2. Relationship between school practices and students' habitus

This subsection presents a theoretical and conceptual explication of how practices (particularly unofficial school practices) play a role in generating the habitus (students' habitus) in the everyday life of school. Practice refers to activities that have some purpose and meaning (Rowlands and Gale, 2017), rather than merely being a 'mechanical reaction' (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 73). For instance, in her study on primary school children, Sarangapani found that students in classrooms stand up from their seats when a teacher enters (Sarangapani, 2003). For an outsider, the aforementioned practice may be just an activity, but it holds meaning and intent for the participants. The authority of the teacher is established through this practice, often in the name of culture, and students show respect for teachers by standing in the classroom. The present research aimed to consider actions, activities, or narratives that frequently occur in the school. Drawing on the theoretical explication above, these actions, to be considered practices, need to convey explicit or implicit meanings or messages.

Bourdieu contends that a child learns through copying others' actions rather than through modelling (Bourdieu, 1990). In the process of learning new things, i.e., physical world, social relations, or actions of the world, a child needs to learn 'a small number of principles coherent in practice(s)' that construct the social world (Bourdieu,1990, p.74). Through repetition, actions provide a coherent 'key' to understanding the tangible world (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 74). The key/ pattern is appropriated and embodied as 'a principle generating practices' that is structured and functions in a similar rational fashion as its foundational conditions (Bourdieu, 1990, p.74). These activities convey cultural messages, imposed and internalised by pedagogic authorities—such as teachers and school administrators—and repeated until they are internalised. This research considers that the ordinary practices of the school, as pedagogic work, form and reform participants' conforming dispositions. The authority of teachers also legitimises what should be practised and controlled, excluding others that they name as illegitimate (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990).

In order to achieve practical mastery of the foundational scheme (pattern) that signifies habitus or disposition, structured exercises need to be performed in 'structured space and time' (Bourdieu, 1990, p.75). School practices, including official curricular and co-

curricular activities, as well as unofficial actions and activities, are part and parcel of everyday school life. What are the key activities and actions that are performed frequently and that have an inherent message of conformity, the focus of current research? These actions are performed in the structured space and time of the school, thus theoretically have the potential to strengthen dispositions that have been formed/ reformed.

Bourdieu's Algerian study presents a theoretical and empirical account of how practices play a significant role in structuring individuals' habitus (Bourdieu, 1990). Bourdieu gave an example of how fear of supernatural powers is incorporated into the everyday life of a community. He explains that people do not just issue warnings about supernatural power and develop fear; instead, they engage in multiple activities (utterances and ritual practices with hidden meanings of danger and the power of supernatural beings). Thus, the fear of supernatural beings is embodied as habitus through rituals or practices. The entire group, as a social institution, is involved in establishing relationships between the child and the world. The aforementioned example provides a theoretical justification for considering school practices as a site for eliciting students' habitus, which is constituted by conforming dispositions.

Bourdieu argues that the 'divisions and hierarchies' between things, among members of the inhabited house, and among practices, show the seed of classification and hierarchisation (Bourdieu, 1990, p.76). In the Indian context, caste hierarchy is inculcated in the home and family, which is realised through different practices. Through this research, I investigate whether the school plays a role in perpetuating/ altering the caste hierarchy that is learnt in families. The thesis focuses on school practices, the dispositions they foster, and how these dispositions relate to caste relations.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter elaborates on the theoretical and conceptual framework I employ to explore the role of the school in shaping conforming dispositions and in reproducing caste. In the process, I introduce and operationalise the concept of habitus (constituent dispositions) as an embodied aspect that not only embodies social inequalities within individuals but also offers unthought guidance to the generation of practices that reproduce the objective

structure. In this section, I also elaborated on conceptualisation of caste inequality as embodied affect. Additionally, drawing on critical social science, I conceptualise conformity as a disposition, which is empirically explored in this study. The chapter also covers aspects of cognitive (conforming dispositions) and affective dispositions that possess the potential to generate the practices. Moreover, there is discussion of another Bourdieusian concept, pedagogic work, which shapes students' dispositions in everyday school life. Here, unofficial school practices act as pedagogic work that moulds dispositions towards conformity, as well as incorporates social inequality as an effect.

The above theoretical explication offers a framework for understanding the role of a school in shaping students' habitus through secondary pedagogic work (through school practices). Bourdieu's theorisation of the consolidation and transformation of habitus through practices helps locate whether students' habitus is consolidated or transformed in the everyday life of school. Bourdieu's practice theory provides theoretical guidance on what to look for when investigating the role of school in structuring/ restructuring students' habitus. In other words, it offered insights to not only analyse data highlighting repetitive actions, activities and hidden messages but also to discuss findings in a larger community of practice, evidencing role of school in perpetuating social inequality. The next chapter discusses how the above theoretical and conceptual ideas are applied in practice to explore the role of the school in shaping/reinforcing conformity, embodying hierarchy, and reproducing caste inequality.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

This chapter covers the practical aspects of conducting this research, as well as the principles and assumptions that guide the research process. The present research is a case study of a rural private higher secondary school in Uttar Pradesh, India. The participants included students from classes 11 and 12 from the Other Backward Classes social group. The data was gathered through the Biographical Narrative Interview Method (BNIM), which necessarily involved in-depth interviews with students and was analysed thematically. The BNIM approach helps to explore the conforming dispositions of students shaped through the schooling process. This is theory-driven research; therefore, the theoretical explication of Bourdieu (1977, 1990) not only helped operationalise conforming dispositions but also guided their capture through an analysis of school practices. A critical interpretivist approach to epistemology and relativist ontology was adopted in the research.

The chapter begins by briefly introducing the context, reemphasising the research's purpose, and presenting the key questions this research aimed to answer. The following section addresses the research design, focusing primarily on philosophical considerations and the methodology used to explore students' habitus. This study employed a relational and embodied ontology, a critical interpretivist epistemological approach, and BNIM as the methodology. The third section addresses the actual research process, focusing on participant selection, data generation, data analysis, ethical considerations, and the challenges encountered.

4.1 Background

The background of the research presented in this chapter aims to provide clarity on the research's purpose and establish a foundation for selecting the research methodology. Crotty argues that when developing a research idea, a researcher needs to explicate the methodology used and justify the selection (Crotty, 1998). The selected methodology must be grounded in the research's purpose and the type of research questions being asked. The present research examines the role of a school in shaping students' dispositions and their potential role in the reproduction of caste relations. This research aims to provide empirical

evidence for analysing the role of a school in social reproduction/ transformation in changing socio-economic and educational contexts in India.

My focus was on capturing and analysing what students and teachers do in the school, rather than what they say. Understanding from social theory guides that everyday practices in which students engage shape/ reshape students' habitus (Bourdieu, 1990; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). This leads to devising a research method that can help capture major school practices and their role in shaping students' habitus in specific ways. To finalise an appropriate research method, I drew on Burke's work, which examined the role of students' habitus in graduate employment (Burke, 2014, 2016). The present research used BNIM as a methodology to capture students' dispositions toward conformity, moulded by the school's practices, and to examine its potential role in reproducing caste inequality in India. The biographical narrations of students provided rich information about the everyday life of school in which students were involved for a long time.

The primary purpose of the research was to investigate the school's role in social reproduction/transformation and in inculcating un/democratic virtues. This Research is guided by the question of whether a school reinforces or changes the values inculcated in families and its potential influence on social reproduction and transformation. I consider students from disadvantaged communities due to their social position (OBCs) and geographically marginalised location (rural), but who have access to 'better' schooling. The students selected for the interview complete their schooling (classes 11 and 12). What did schooling contribute to students of a disadvantaged community, in terms of social transformation and inculcating values that strengthen democratic citizenship?

4.2 Research Design

This research employs a qualitative research design. A qualitative inquiry intends to investigate and describe people's lives 'narratively' and the meanings behind their actions or interactions (Erickson, 2018, p. 87). This research focuses on students' schooling experiences and the meanings they construct throughout their schooling. Therefore, a qualitative research design is suitable for this study. The qualitative research process includes three interconnected activities that are 'theory, method and analysis or ontology, epistemology, and methodology' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018, p. 52). Social theory is an

integral component of empirical investigation and complements it, working in tandem with it (Bourdieu et al., 1991; Wacquant, 1993). All the aspects of empirical research are influenced by theory (Bourdieu et al., 1991; Costa and Murphy, 2018).

A theory represents a 'cluster of beliefs and values which underpin our understanding of things' and works as a foundation for further explanation of the phenomena (Pring, 2004, p. 57). Social theory and research practice are closely connected and mutually influence one another (Grenfell, 2008; Pring, 2004). Theories assist the research process at different stages: on the one hand, theories help conceptualise and operationalise research; on the other, research findings substantiate existing theories and provide grounds for revising or rejecting them (Murphy and Costa, 2022). This research employed Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, disposition, and practice (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990), as well as the concept of conformity drawn from the critical social sciences (Fay, 1987; Sayer, 2009), to operationalise conforming dispositions. Bourdieu's explication of practice theory and its role in the constitution of habitus or dispositions provides direction to capture the habitus of students through school practices (Bourdieu, 1990; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). The findings of this research contributed to an understanding of the appropriateness of Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, cognitive, and affective dispositions in exploring the social reproduction of caste through schooling in the Indian context.

This research was intended to explore and elucidate how schools reproduce caste inequalities. For this exploration, I need to examine what happens inside the school and the impact of activities on students. This leads to the school's practices and students' habitus being key aspects in exploring the phenomenon of reproducing social inequality. In the process, Bourdieu's habitus serves as a key theoretical and methodological tool guiding the exploration of social phenomena. Habitus is a theoretical and methodological construct that provides a framework for exploring and understanding social phenomena (Maton, 2008; Reay, 2004;). For Reay, Bourdieu emphasises the use of habitus as a conceptual tool for empirical research to understand and question social issues (Reay, 2004).

A key characteristic of habitus is its dialectical conceptualisation, which breaks the binary of structure-agency, theory-empiricism, and objective-subjective (Maton, 2008). The structure and agency binary is broken so that it can be understood more comprehensively and entirely: Habitus simultaneously analyses 'the experience of social agents and … the

objective structures which make this experience possible' (Bourdieu, 1988, p. 782, as quoted in Reay, 2004). Habitus is constituted of dispositions, norms and values (Bourdieu, 1977). They are formed through practices in the field (Bourdieu, 1990). Thus, in the present study, students' dispositions formed through school practices represent internalised objective conditions that are subjectively realised. Habitus, being an unconscious or preconscious propensity to generate actions in certain ways, requires a method suited to capturing the habitus that operates at the pre- or unconscious level, appropriate for this ontology.

The critical stance adopted in this research is also guided by social theory. The critical position in social research is grounded in the understanding that issues must be understood in their entirety within a specific socio-political context, with the intention of transforming unjust relations (Agger, 2013). Theoretical understandings from Bourdieu's practice theory (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990) and the critical social sciences (Agger, 2013; Browne, 2017; Fay, 1987) help to elucidate probable mechanisms by which schools reproduce caste inequality, as well as possibilities for transforming it. Therefore, a critical stance, guided by social theory, underscores the need for a 'moral commitment' in the research process to foster a more just society (Grenfell, 2012, p. 213). The following subsection discusses the philosophical foundations that guide the research process.

4.2.1 Philosophical foundations

Aligning with Bourdieu's theoretical conceptualisation of social reality and knowledge, I adopt a relational approach to ontology and a critical interpretivist approach to epistemology for this research.

Ontology of research

This research considers a relational ontology in conceptualising and inquiring into the perpetuation of caste inequality through schooling. For Bourdieu, 'the real is the relational' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 97). The relational ontology is important for Bourdieu's theoretical concepts and his adoption of methodologies to explain various social phenomena (Rowlands and Rawolle, 2020). The prevailing social reality can be understood in relation to objective structures and subjective habitus, or the relation between social structure and individual agency. To understand the social phenomena of the perpetuation of caste

inequality, one needs to understand the relationship between students' habitus and the social structure of hierarchical relations that generate practices.

The relational nature of reality in the present school context is captured through BNIM. The biographical narrative interview method captures students' habitus, shaped by the interaction between the objective structure of the school and students' agency. BNIM, as a methodology, not only helped in understanding the social structure and the inculcation of messages through schooling, but also in examining students' subjectivities through their reflections on school practices and prevailing school relations.

The relational aspects of social reality offer a framework to explain the reproduction of inequalities and opportunities to intervene in one to change the other. The relational approach to the construction of reality offers Bourdieu's theoretical concepts transformative potential. In the present research, students' habitus of conformity is a subjective propensity; it is shaped by unequal relations between students and teachers and realised through practices. Methodologically, to alter the hierarchical social relations can be started by changing the habitus of students from conforming to critical.

Epistemology of research

The use of a critical social science suggests accepting the participants' knowledge or understanding. The critical standpoint is adopted to understand reality from the perspectives of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The critical interpretivist approach to epistemology is employed to understand how participants' values and unconscious patterns of thought are shaped in the school's everyday life. The 'common moral values' serve as the foundation for the community's identity and individuals' judgment of what is valuable and what is not (Christians, 2018, p. 157). However, the critical interpretivist approach to epistemology is critical and susceptible to multiple levels of interpretation, as it considers the dialogical nature of knowledge generated through the interplay of structure and agency, as well as the interplay between theory and empirical evidence. That is, critiquing the participants' understanding while critiquing the researcher's knowledge and understanding.

To understand a person's behaviour or actions, it is essential to understand their own interpretation of them. In social life, one interprets one's own and others' actions, ascribing meaning to them. That is the subjective meaning/s that participants attach to different actions or behaviours. These interpretations are necessary to understand the light of intention or motive behind the action (s), embedded in specific physical and social circumstances (Pring, 2004). 'To understand other people, therefore, requires understanding the interpretations which they give of what they are doing. We need to know their intentions.' (Pring 2004, P. 98).

However, there is a need to critique the commonsensical understanding of participants. Grenfell suggests to 'beware of words', being aware of common-sensical assumptions and meanings of words that are socio-historically constructed and legitimised through group power relations (Grenfell, 2012, p. 220). Bourdieu looks to rupture what is 'pre-given' or 'pre-constructed' (Grenfell, 2012, p. 215). This provides a foundation for questioning the highly acclaimed common-sensical understanding of democratic schooling in contemporary France (Grenfell, 2012). In this context, habitus is useful because it depends not only on individuals' narratives but also on the awareness that objective conditions shape it.

A critical social science approach 'focuses on structures of power and systems of domination' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018, p. 80). Social theory provides the background for understanding which individual attributes can be transformative. That is, the ability to critique social relations and empower agency; these are important tenets of critical social sciences. However, these must be embodied and act intuitively. Bourdieu's practice theory theoretically explains how these are incorporated. If some attributes are opposite, they are formed or internalised. Thus, social theory helps operationalise concepts and test them through empirical investigations.

Bourdieu emphasises the importance of self-reflection on one's position as a researcher, as well as reflection on one's knowledge of theories and the field. He recommends an *epistemological break* from common sense regarding the researcher's role in the social world and the presumption about concepts or methods used in the research; thus, the researcher needs to be self-reflective (Bourdieu et al., 1991). I use theoretical work to design the research in line with these recommendations. However, at the same time, I was open to modifying my theoretical understanding in the light of empirical findings. I specified my

position in the ethics application to address issues of power dynamics when working with younger individuals. I am aware of the context; I was conscious that my prior knowledge of the context should not influence my data collection and interpretation.

Epistemological challenges in researching habitus

Because habitus is a conceptual tool that incorporates both theoretical and empirical aspects, as well as structural and agentic elements, it is useful for comprehensively understanding and explaining the social phenomenon of caste inequality. Reay argues that habitus represents *an indeterminate, fluid concept that* lies between objective structure and subjective individual (Reay, 2004). In other words, it should be seen as a 'permeable' entity that responds to context (Burke, 2011, p. 4; see also, Reay, 2004). Being dynamic in nature, empirical investigation of habitus is a challenging task.

Burke (2011) suggests that researching habitus and constituent dispositions is challenging for two main reasons: first, because they are unconscious, intuitive, or subtle; and second, because they involve a dynamic, fluid relationship between social structure and individual agency. For Burke, Bourdieu suggests looking for 'repetition' (Burke, 2011, p. 4; see also Costa and Murphy, 2015). Bourdieu writes, 'practical identity reveals itself to intuition only in the inexhaustible series of its successive manifestations' (Bourdieu 1987, p.3 as cited in Burke, 2011). To address these challenges in researching students' habitus, I employ a biographical narrative methodology in the present study.

4.2.2 Research Methodology: Biographical Narrative Interview Method (BNIM)

This research employed BNIM as a methodology suitable to capture students' habitus formed through school practices. The selection of the BNIM methodology draws parallels with Burke's work, which explored the role of habitus in graduate employment (Burke, 2011, 2014, 2016). Moreover, I draw on Wengraf (2001, 2008), Schutze (1992), and Rosenthal (2003) for both theoretical and practical considerations of the BNIM methodology. In broader terms, BNIM is a method of data gathering in which participants reflect on and narrate experiences from their life trajectories, as captured through in-depth interviews.

As the name suggests, BNIM has characteristics of biographical research and narrative inquiry. The BNIM possess characteristics of the ethnographic method (Burke, 2015). The researchers place the participants' narrations at the intersection of space and time. A researcher examines how various processes/events influenced an individual's thoughts, perceptions, and attitudes (dispositions) over a specific period. This method helped in exploring how different processes/events shaped thoughts.

The biographical approach presents a method that binds structure and agency (Miller, 2000). Moreover, it helps explore how experiences of structure influence agency or agency strategies understood in context. ‘Through the richness of biographical research, we can begin to focus on individuals within structure/society and understand how individuals affect that same structure/society’ (Burke, 2014, p. 3). Wengraf contends that ‘narrative expressions’ encompass both conscious concerns and unconscious cultural, societal, and individual presuppositions and processes (Wengraf, 2008, p. 1). In this context, the focus of biographical research was on incorporating and recognising everyday life (Ellliot, 2005). That is, analysing a biographical journey can reveal the practices that shape participants' life trajectories. As this research focuses on the formation of habitus, theoretically, it aims to examine the actions/ activities that are constantly performed.

Practices convey symbolic messages that are internalised over time and become part of the unconscious. Participants' ordinary reflection on previous actions and future plans represents their incorporated symbolic mastery, which is continuously conveyed through the practices (Burke, 2016). ‘Ordinary reflection is the narrative signifier of the level of symbolic mastery an individual is able to apply to a situation.’ (Burke, 2016). Thus, ordinary reflections expressed as biographical narrations offer an analysis of repetition.

Two characteristics of BNIM make it suitable for observing the repetition of behaviour, values, or beliefs: one characteristic of longitudinal studies, and two virtues of ethnographic interviews. As participants describe their biographical journey through BNIM, researchers can report ‘repetition and ordinary reflections’ (Burke, 2016, p.30). BNIM, as a form of ethnographic interview, offers rich data to underline the repetition of beliefs or actions and ‘the passive nature of the interview also allows the researcher to record levels of symbolic mastery and reflection.’ (Burke, 2016, p.31). From the reflections and narrations of the

participants, the ‘repetitions of attitudes and practices’ signified the dispositions identified from the interview transcripts (Costa et al., 2018, p.5).

4.3 Method

This research is a case study of a rural private higher secondary school in Uttar Pradesh, India. The participants included students from higher secondary classes (age group 16 and 17 years). I conducted an offline survey of students to identify potential interview participants. Furthermore, data were generated through in-depth interviews following the three-stage interview method used in the BNIM method (Burke, 2016; Miller, 2000; Wengraf, 2008) and were analysed thematically (Creswell, 2014). In this section, I discuss not only the actual methods of data gathering and processing but also elaborate on the ethical procedures adopted to safeguard the interests of participants.

4.3.1 Rationale of the selection of participants

Uttar Pradesh is an economically, socially, and educationally deprived state in India, ranking near the bottom alongside Bihar (NITI Aayog, 2024). This research explores the role of schools in addressing social deprivation, particularly in relation to caste hierarchy. How does school culture contribute to social transformation/ reproduction in a specific disadvantaged State? While many studies focus on urban and primary schools, this study focuses on rural and higher secondary schools.

Data show a significant shift in student enrolment towards private schools in Uttar Pradesh (Kingdom, 2020), specifically, and across the country generally (Kingdom, 2020; Mukhopadhyay and Sarangapani, 2018; World Bank Report, 2024). There is an expansion of private schools across the country, and more rapidly in the State of Uttar Pradesh (Kingdom, 2020). Students from the OBC community are moving in large numbers to low-fee private schools (Gundemeda & Krishnarao, 2020; Kalaiah, 2020; Shah, 2020). The OBC community is the largest population, comprising around 52 per cent of the country's population (GOI, 1982). The democratic virtues instilled in students of the OBC community through schooling may have a significant impact on the country's social and political democracy. As OBCs are socially and educationally disadvantaged groups and are moving

in large numbers to private schools, particularly low-fee private schools, I intend to investigate these schools and OBC students.

In terms of caste-based discrimination or perpetuation of caste inequalities through schooling, a large number of studies focused on primary classes, government schools and Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes students (Dalal, 2015; Majumdar and Mooij, 2012; Nambissan, 2009, 2001; Nayak, 2023; Rawal & Kingdom, 2010; Ramachandran and Naorem, 2013; Sriprakash, 2011). This study focuses on OBC students who belong to mostly middle caste groups who are oppressed and oppressors in terms of caste relations, and how schooling experiences shape their engagement with caste relations. Moreover, this study also explores the role of schools in perpetuating caste hierarchy.

Finally, I selected students from higher secondary classes aged 16-17 years. On one hand, they are about to finish their schooling; this study captures their schooling experiences and the formation of conformity dispositions through different school stages. On the other side, as they will become eligible for voting rights at the age of 18 years in a year or two, how did their schooling experiences shape their values towards social democratic virtues of equality among citizens of the country? I consider students of both genders to understand their experiences and reflections on the attributes of conformity and caste. Moreover, I included parents' education as a criterion to examine whether it shapes schooling experiences differently in terms of conformity dispositions. The social demographic information and parents' education were collected through an offline survey.

4.3.2 Sample

First, I conducted an offline written survey of students to understand their demographic and social background. Based on the survey, I identified and recruited students from different castes within the Other Backwards Classes and conducted in-depth interviews with them.

Identifying the school and getting permission

I selected a private school through the purposive sampling method. I gathered information about the private schools from the District Inspector of Schools' office (DIOS). This office oversees secondary and higher secondary schools in a particular district of the State. I kept a few criteria for selecting a school: being located in rural areas, having student enrolment in classes 11 and 12 of more than 50 students each, the number of OBC students being higher compared to other categories, and being conveniently accessible through public transport from the district headquarters. I selected a school that fulfilled the above criteria and was listed first. My acquaintance with local tutors or teachers helped me finalise schools that were located on roads accessible through public transport. After finalising a school, I visited the school for more information and provisional permission to conduct the research. Once the school granted provisional consent, I obtained written permission from the District Inspector of Schools and submitted it to the school's head.

Recruiting participants and collecting data

I conducted this research in two stages. First, I administered an offline written survey of class 11 and 12 students to collect their demographic and socioeconomic information. The survey collected information on name, age, gender, social categories (officially recognised by the government for affirmative action/ scholarships), and parents' educational level. The only purpose of the survey was to identify participants for the interview. Therefore, a survey is used as a tool for participant identification, not for data collection. With the class teacher's permission, I explained my project to the class and asked for their participation in the survey. I handed over the survey form (see Appendix 1), consent form (see Appendix 6), and Plain Language Statements to students and Participant Information Sheet for the parents (see Appendix 7) and requested that they complete the questionnaire after discussing it with and obtaining permission from their parents on the consent form.

The information obtained through the survey was helpful in identifying potential candidates for interviews. This survey is critical to ensure the participation of students from diverse social (caste, gender) and educational backgrounds (of parents) within OBCs and other social groups. This survey took approximately 15 minutes to complete. Twenty-seven students, including those from both classes, participated in the survey. The second stage of data generation (interviews) used the Biographical Interview Method (BNIM) to explore adolescents' dispositions.

I used three criteria to select interview participants: caste, gender, and parents' educational level. The reason for asking about caste is to select students from the OBC category. Moreover, I wanted to include the experiences of both male and female participants from the OBC category. Moreover, I planned to include students from diverse family backgrounds, based on their parents' education within the OBC, to understand whether their agency is shaped differently by their parents' education. The overall purpose of the above criteria is to include students from diverse experiences within OBCs.

The Government of India classifies different castes into four categories based on the social/economic positions of different caste groups. This categorisation of castes helps the union or state governments implement affirmative action policies (commonly known as the reservation policy in India) through scholarships, admission to government educational institutions, government jobs and other government services.

Knowing the name of the caste is the easiest way to understand to which larger official category one belongs. Caste can be identified through two methods: by surname as a caste name and by asking about it in a written survey. In most cases, participants' and their parents' full names include the caste name (surname). The final word of an individual's full name in North India typically denotes their caste. Sometimes, if a student's name does not include a caste name, their parents' names may include caste names. Therefore, asking participants' names or parents' names is one way to identify the caste, thus the larger social category. Another way to know one's caste is through a written survey. However, the caste name will be optional in the survey, and participants may choose to provide it or decline to disclose their caste (see Appendix 1). The official categories for OBCs (NCBC Commission), SCs (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment), and STs (Ministry of Tribal Affairs), along with the caste names published by the respective ministries, are used for applying for government scholarships and services. I requested a larger official category in the survey and kept the caste identity optional. I also included nearly an equal number of male and female participants. Regarding parental qualifications, I requested three categories of information on parents' educational levels: whether they completed high school, higher secondary education, or higher education.

Social category	Castes hierarchy	Castes in Uttar Pradesh (Examples)
General	Upper Caste	Brahmins, Rajputs, Baniyas, etc.
[5]Other Backward Class (OBC)	Middle Caste	Yadav, Maurya, Pal, Prajapati, etc.
[6]Scheduled Caste (SC)	Lower Caste	Kannaujia, Pasi, Kori, etc.
[7]Scheduled Tribe (ST)	Tribals*	Gond, Kharwar, Bhuiya, etc.

Table 1: Official Caste Categories in Uttar Pradesh

*Tribals are considered at outside the caste stratification and socio-economically at the bottom near the lower castes.

From the 27 participants surveyed (see Appendix 3), I conducted interviews with 12 students (see Appendix 2). I planned to recruit one male and one female participant from each OBC caste. Within the same caste, students with different parental educational backgrounds were included in the interview, even though the number of participants from the same caste increased to more than two (one male and one female). Five different caste groups among OBC students were identified in this study's survey data. Ideally, one male and one female participant from each caste should have been included in the interview pool. owever, students could not be recruited neatly according to the aforementioned criteria because the number of students from different castes varied, and there was unequal representation of male and female participants within each caste. I adopted purposive sampling, with participants' diversity in mind and adherence to the initial selection criteria. Table 2 illustrates the number of students selected from different castes, based on the aforementioned criteria.

As shown in Table 2 below, participants from five different OBC castes were present at the school and invited to an interview. I took nearly an equal number of male and female participants. Survey data in this research indicate that most participants' parents did not complete high school. However, a few parents did graduate. I reached out to include participants whose parents had a bachelor's degree or passed higher secondary school to assess the potential impact of parents' education on schooling and the development of

[5] Drawn from the National Commission of Backward Classes, Government of India data

[6] Drawn from the Ministry of Social Justice, Government of India data.

[7] Drawn from the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India data

conformity. As the school had more students from the Ahir/Yadav caste, this was reflected in the number of participants from this caste.

Caste	**Boys**	**Girls**	**Parents' Education as a criterion for selection**	**Total**
Prajapati	-	1*	-	1
Pal	-	1*	-	1
Maurya	1*	1*	-	2
Sahu	1*	1*	**1a**	3
Yadav	1*	1*	**1b; 1c; 1d**	5
Total Participants	3	5	**(girls-2 +boys-2)**	12

Table 2: Number of Interview Participants from Different Castes and Educational Levels of Parents

*** Parents' education is class 10 or less**

1a. A boy who belongs to the Sahu caste, but his father has completed higher secondary education and was thus selected for the interview.

1b. A girl who belongs to the Yadav caste and his father completed class higher secondary.

1c. A boy from the Yadav caste whose father had a bachelor's degree in a social science subject.

1d. A girl from the Yadav caste whose mother was a graduate**.**

4.3.3 Method of Data Generation: Interview

I adopted the BNIM approach to conduct student interviews. Broadly, this method involves conducting unstructured semi-structured in-depth interviews with participants to elicit their life stories and trajectories. BNIM is traditionally conducted in three phases (Bogner and Rossenthal, 2014; Burke, 2011, 2014, 2015; Miller, 2000). That is, each participant is interviewed in three sessions, each lasting almost an hour and conducted approximately one week apart.

The first session served as an introductory phase, during which participants were asked to discuss any aspect of their educational journey. The second session is the elaboration phase, in which the researcher asks participants to discuss in more detail the topics introduced in the first session. The final session is researcher-directed, during which the researcher can, in

addition to elaborating on previously discussed topics, pose questions they believe are important to address, grounded in their theoretical or conceptual framework or research topic. This method allows both the researcher and the interviewee to reflect and engage in the interview.

Session One

The first session allows participants to begin with the events, activities, or feelings they want to discuss related to school (Burke, 2011, 2014). It is participant-led, and I do not intervene much by asking questions; instead, I let participants reflect and talk about their schooling experiences. Drawing on Tom Wengraf's (2008) Short Guide to BNIM, I formulated the following indicative questions to guide a biographical narrative interview. The ideal method of initiating the interview is to ask a Single Question aimed at Inducing Narratives (Wengraf, 2008). Following Wengraf's (2008) instructions, I presented a single question and waited for participants' responses. I asked participants, "Could you please talk about your schooling experiences?" At the same time, I informed them that they could start whenever they wished. If they want, they can take some time. Moreover, I would listen and refrain from interrupting at the start. I asked for their permission to take notes on some points from the narration so I could ask questions later.

However, I observed that most participants talked very briefly when I stuck to the initial one-question approach. They briefly discussed issues such as the names of their previous schools, whether their current school is good or bad, whether they are studying for a job, and whether school discipline is effective. After that, there was silence, and the story could not progress. After interviewing a few students for the first session, I realised that simply asking a single question to discuss their life experiences or schooling journey was not revealing much. It was similar to what Yoneyama (1999) found in a Japanese study, where students were given short or broken thoughts and expressions. Going back to Wengraf's BNIM guide, I decided to facilitate participants in narrating their experiences of schooling (Wengraf, 2008).

Indicative themes to facilitate narrations on the schooling journey and experiences

Here are some of the themes I suggested students discuss when they stopped talking after their brief responses. I also informed them that they could discuss anything related to school life in any order.

- Tell something about your school present or previous that you still remember
- Daily routines are followed in the primary school.
- Some special events are organised in the primary school.
- Interest/disinterest from the school- reasons behind
- Daily routines of the secondary school
- Special events of the secondary school
- Things you like about primary/ secondary or higher secondary school
- Things do not go as planned in schools
- Teachers who like or do not like you in your present and previous school
- Changes one realised with transitions from primary to secondary to higher secondary.
- Something you want to share or talk about from your side about school life.

During the first session, though I facilitated discussion by suggesting some themes, I largely remained silent or non-interruptive. I took notes on a notepad and audio-recorded the interview.

Session Two

In this session, the researcher can ask questions on the topics that students discussed in the first session in the same order as they were discussed (Burke, 2014). This is known as the elaboration phase because the researcher asks for explanations or elaborations on the issues that students briefly discussed or touched upon in the previous session. Based on notes from previous sessions and points I noted while listening to the narrations from the first session, I identified a few themes and discussed them in more detail with the participants.

I focused on the issues that students discussed in the first session, in the order they had previously discussed. However, I remain vigilant about discussing issues that elicit school practices. For instance, students commonly referred to discipline and respect of teachers. I asked them to talk about specific events or explanations related to discipline and respect for teachers. I adopted the approach suggested by scholars, like focusing on Particular Incident Narratives (PINs) (Burke, 2011; Wengraf, 2008). This provided an opportunity to capture students' reflections or subjectivities regarding the issues they named or discussed in the first

session. Sometimes I asked probing questions, emphasising the CUE words used by the narrators.

Session Three

The third session is organised when further clarification is needed on the issues discussed in the previous two sessions, or when the researcher feels the need to explore them further (Burke, 2014, 2011; Wengraf, 2008). It mostly takes the form of in-depth semi-structured interviews (Wengraf, 2008). In this research, I generally conducted session three with students approximately one week after session two. Before conducting the third session, I reviewed the interviews from the previous two sessions and noted points for further elaboration and general questions to elicit repetition or patterns. In this session, I primarily discussed the school's social hierarchy and how it addresses these issues. Moreover, I discussed other forms of social hierarchy, such as gender and age, which the school explicitly reinforces.

4.3.4 Method of Data Analysis

Data collected through the interview were qualitative in nature. The qualitative data, in the form of narratives of experiences, understandings, or reflections on various school life events, are interpreted inductively as well as deductively (Calvo and de al Cova, 2024; Merrills and West, 2011; Tsindos, 2023). This research employed a thematic analysis approach to analyse the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Merrills and West, 2011). I used both inductive and deductive approaches in data analysis. The initial coding was not guided by the theory; I coded the transcript inductively. In this method, all parts of data were coded that were ‘identified as representing something of potential interest’ and ‘labelled’ (Robson and McCartan, 2016, p. 461). Then, similar codes were grouped together to construct subthemes. Different aspects of data, including ‘specific acts and behaviour’, ‘events’, ‘activities’, ‘strategies, practices or tactics’, ‘meanings’, ‘relationships or interactions’, ‘consequences’, ‘settings’ and ‘reflexivity’ were prominently coded from the interview transcripts (Robson and McCartan, 2016, p. 472-73).

Drawing on Tsindos (2023), I used three terms (code, category, and theme) to analyse, interpret, and present the data. The data analysis began with the transcription and translation of the interview recordings. A basic understanding of the field data was developed during the interview period by listening to recordings of the first and second sessions to identify points for discussion in the second or third sessions. I used both field notes and audio recordings to make a broader sense of the data. I translated transcripts from Hindi to English. I familiarised myself with all transcripts by reading and taking notes on the issues students generally discuss in schools, mainly in the first and second sessions, when the interview was mostly student-directed. Thus, the transcripts were coded manually through a paper-and-pencil format.

In the second round of analysis, I grouped similar codes into a single smaller group, which Tsindos (2023) named a category. A category represents 'active grouping or organisation of codes that are related to each other through content or context' (Tsindos, 2023, p. 139). I grouped various codes into smaller units, which are recognised as categories or subthemes, and presented them in Appendix 5. Similar categories or subthemes are clubbed together to form the themes. The major themes emerged from the organisation of subthemes, including three sets of school practices, dispositions of conformity, and emotive dispositions of students (details of codes, categories, and themes are presented in Appendix 5).

While classifying and grouping codes into common themes/subthemes across the transcripts from different participants, it was guided by Bourdieu's theory (Bourdieu, 1977). The focus was on understanding how schools shape / reform students' dispositions. The theoretical understanding that dispositions are formed/reformed through pedagogic work (PW) provided a framework for considering relevant codes and placing them into one category (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1992). Routine actions/activities, discourses, and narrations directed by teachers with implicit messages are grouped together. Drawing from the theoretical framework, these actions/ activities have the potential to function as pedagogical work to shape dispositions. Conformity, as a disposition that was reflected in the form of non-questioning and reduced agency, was kept in another group. Although initial coding was inductive, the generation of key themes was guided by theory.

The interpretation of data in relation to proposed research questions is guided by a theoretical framework. It was found that the theory aligns with the data and aids data interpretation, but

some categories did not make sense within the proposed theoretical framework. These concepts appeared in the repeated patterns of emotions or affect, and almost all participants discussed them. Participants' reflection indicated internalised patterns of emotions that broadly appeared in the form of respect, fear and honour. I revised my theoretical framework to incorporate the affective and cognitive aspects of dispositions that were shaped through schooling. This revision provided a coherent framework for discussing the role of schooling in shaping students' dispositions. Thus, school practices as pedagogic work shape the students' dispositions, which are reflected in their reflections towards different social relations and practices.

Based on these themes, I interpreted data by constructing a framework to explain the phenomenon of caste reproduction. Students were not explicitly discussing the school's hidden caste-based practices. Another aspect that students and teachers discussed was endogamy, but hardly anyone addressed its foundations: the caste system. Here, the theoretical understanding of the mechanisms of caste operations helped interpret the phenomena. Here, I drew from theory to explain the findings. The characteristics of habitus discuss the durability of habitus formed in the family, which is not altered in schools. As the school did not engage with caste and developed a propensity not to question prevailing relations, caste relations can continue to perpetuate. Thus, theory and empirical evidence together provided a framework to explain the phenomenon of caste reproduction through the school, although the school is generally silent on caste-related practices.

4.3. 5 Translation

First, I carefully listened to the interview data and analysed the field notes to better understand the knowledge constructed. The data analysis process started with the transcription of interview data. The original data was recorded in Hindi, which I translated into English. My acquaintance with Hindi enabled me to engage more deeply with participants in conversation and elicit their subjectivities and dispositions. Indeed, knowledge of participants' language is beneficial in engaging and getting meanings expressed in phrases, sayings, and jokes in the local language.

Due to the different sentence structures of the two languages, a literal word-for-word translation from Hindi to English proved difficult. Thus, I conducted sentence-by-sentence

translation without losing the essence of the narratives. I re-read the translated paragraphs and compared them with the original answers to double-check the translation errors. The aforementioned procedure was followed throughout all the transcripts to ensure that the meaning was not lost in translation.

The major challenge during translation was determining the hidden meaning behind the narration, an important aspect of the critical interpretivist approach. It was crucial to extract the meanings of specific phrases and sentences used in the interview. For example, students used terms like ‘Samman’ for teachers, which has a literal meaning in English of ‘respect’, but its hidden meaning is not questioning teachers or authority; it is an expression of respect. Here, respect did not mean equal treatment, but rather somewhat hierarchical relations, with students being in a lower position. I wrote the emotional responses in parentheses to provide nuances of conversation in certain parts of the translated transcripts. The field note was an essential tool in this process. I wrote longer notes after each interview session and used them, along with the recordings, during transcription and translation to convey meanings through phrases and specific sentences.

In this thesis, mainly in the findings chapter, I used two types of parentheses. The round parentheses are used to present the explanation or contextual meaning for the reader. In some cases, the exact English equivalent for the Hindi word is not available; in such instances, I retained the Hindi word in the transcript and presented a similar English word in round parentheses. For example, the Hindi word *guru* is explained in parentheses as mentor, guide or someone with religious, spiritual authority to teach or perform an instructional task. On some other occasions in the transcripts in the next chapter, I give contextual, broader explanations in parentheses for the terms used in the transcripts. For example, the term "respect" has a specific meaning, which is subordination to authority, not equal mutual treatment; this is explained in parentheses and also in footnotes. The Square parentheses are used to fill in the missing words to make the meaning more explicit, as well as make the sentence grammatically correct.

Biographical narratives carry conscious and unconscious thoughts, beliefs, and feelings; therefore, this research requires attention to the meaning embedded in these narratives (Wengraf, 2008). Therefore, it requires constructing meanings from narratives or interview texts. Manual transcription, translation, and data analysis were beneficial in eliciting the

dispositions of conformity and its role in shaping their engagement in relation to social relations. I manually generated codes using coloured pencils and printed transcripts. Then, I focused on the common areas, ideas, or topics students discussed, and kept themes within larger areas or ideas. It helped identify the discussion around students' responses to different activities, their relationships with teachers, social hierarchies, and their beliefs and thoughts on social relations, among other topics.

4.3.6 Ethical Issues

British Educational Research Association's (BERA) *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (2011, 2024) provided guidance on understanding and executing ethical issues in the research. Moreover, the present research is approved by the University of Glasgow College of Social Sciences Ethics Committee (see Appendix 9). In this research, I adhered to standard ethical procedures, including obtaining *informed consent, anonymity,* maintaining participants' *privacy,* and addressing issues related to research involving young people. Working with young persons, I took mandatory precautions (BERA, 2011, 2024; Robson and McCartan, 2016). I obtained written permission from the District Education Authority (District Inspector of Schools- DIOS) and informed them about the project. This letter was submitted to the ethics approval committee at the University of Glasgow before the start of field work. It is not attached in the Appendix to ensure the privacy of participants. I also obtained the school principal's written permission. Moreover, I obtained the consent of the parents and the students to interview them. Along with the above-mentioned ethical issues, I also dealt with contextual ethical issues, such as *power relations* between the researcher and the interviewee, being an adult and holding academically higher positions, interviewing girls by a male researcher, and obtaining information on caste and social category. Key ethical issues identified during fieldwork planning, along with the strategies adopted to address them, are discussed below.

BERA (2011) guidelines suggest that researchers should obtain voluntary informed consent from participants prior to the start of data collection. Participants should understand the process they would engage in, why their participation is important, and how the data collected will be used and to whom it will be reported (BERA, 2011). Moreover, they should be informed that their participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw from the research process at any time. At any level, individuals should not be coerced to participate in research

(BERA, 2011, 2024). I informed students in the classroom verbally about the research process and the purposes of the survey and provided a plain-language statement (See Appendix 7) to students and a participation information sheet (see Appendix 7) to parents to provide clear information to both groups. Before the interview, I verbally informed each student and his/her parents of the terms and conditions. At the same time, I also provided a plain-language statement (see Appendix 7) to students informing them about their participation in the interview, and a participant information sheet (see Appendix 7) to parents to inform them about the interview and obtain their consent for their sons/daughters. I also provided a consent form (see Appendix 6) for the survey and interview, which ensures that students and parents understand the clauses of the information sheet, and also gets their written permission to engage in the research process.

To safeguard the participants' interests, I anonymised the location and pseudonymised the participants' names. The research data is shared only among the researcher and the supervisors. In the privacy notice, I informed participants and their parents that their privacy would be maintained, except in cases where disclosure could cause harm to participants or others (see Appendix 8). Participants and their parents are also informed that the data will be used to write dissertations and publish research papers; however, all identifiers will be removed. Moreover, I informed them that pseudonymised transcripts would be stored with the university for 10 years. As the research involved participants from vulnerable groups, I obtained consent from concerned authorities and parents.

There was an issue of power relations between the researcher and the students. This power relationship might have arisen because my position is adult compared to the students' youth. Another could be due to my entry into the school through the local education authority and with the head of the school's permission. This power relation might have led to a feeling of obligation to participate in research. In this context, the role of parents became important. Moreover, I repeatedly informed students, both individually and in groups, that their participation was completely voluntary and would not influence their school relations in any way (see Appendix 7). Additionally, I mitigated this ethical issue by getting parents' informed consent. The informed consent of the parents is sought to maintain the checks and balances for the voluntary participation of the young persons. Therefore, parental consent was obtained for each stage of data collection (see Appendix 6). Before requesting that students complete the survey, I explained that participation is voluntary; they may take part

in the survey, or skip it in full or in part, if they do not want to. I gave them a participant information sheet (see Appendix 6), a privacy notice (see Appendix 8), a consent form (see Appendix 6), and the survey form (see Appendix 1) to take home. I also asked them to discuss the project with their parents (or others) before completing the questionnaire survey.

After identifying potential interviewees based on the survey data, I spoke with them and explained the kinds of information I would seek through biographical narrative interviews. I clearly specified that, though I am seeking their participation in the project, this participation is voluntary, and they can abstain from participating at all or at any stage of the interview. I met some parents (mostly fathers) of identified participants in the parent-teacher meeting in school, on the occasion of the declaration of the results of the term-end examination. Further, I met other parents whom I could not meet and got their consent at the students' homes. I sought their consent for the participation of their ward in the interview. As the interview was a longer process and involved both boys and girls, I met the parents and sought their permission. I also clearly explained that participation was voluntary, and participants could withdraw at any stage of the interview, even though they had initially consented to participate.

There is one practical ethical issue in disclosing caste identity. Caste identity is commonly used to identify candidates for implementation of the government's affirmative action policies and by society members to define/regulate different kinds of social relations. However, explicitly asking the caste's name sometimes appears annoying, as people generally try to avoid discussing caste openly. To mitigate this ethical challenge, I kept the question regarding the name of the caste optional in the survey. Rather, I attempted to gather information about the caste through the names of participants or their parents. However, in some cases, if it could not be obtained through the above means, I proceeded to larger social categories, such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, and Unreserved or Economically Weaker Sections. I anticipated that identifying a larger social category is important for applying for scholarships and other government affirmative action programmes, and that can be shared comfortably. I observed that almost all participants selected the larger social category, but some students left the caste name blank. As my research focuses on one social category, Other Backwards Classes (OBCs), I needed information about caste or broader social categories to recruit participants for interviews across different OBC groups. In most cases, students' or parents' full names include the caste

name. I identified students from different castes based on the information provided in the survey form. It helped identify different castes and social categories without raising ethical issues.

Another ethical challenge I anticipated would arise regarding the interview of girl participants by a male researcher. Culturally, interaction between young/adult females and an outsider male is not particularly conducive, if not impossible, for social-traditional reasons. Because of this practical challenge, Pathania and Tierney (2018) interviewed only male participants at an Indian university while exploring students' caste dynamics in Indian higher education institutions. I anticipated a similar challenge in my research as well. However, I obtained parental consent, and the school had classroom CCTV, so I could interview both male and female participants equally. Additionally, as the girls' participants were curious to participate equally to boys, this helped remove any hesitancy prevailing in interviewing girls. I requested the school principal switch off the microphone of the CCTV camera in the room where I was interviewing the students. He agreed to do so, which helped maintain students' privacy and comforted school authorities to allow both boys and girls to participate in the interview.

4.4 Summary

This chapter covered the theoretical and philosophical assumptions that guided the research and the empirical procedures adopted to explore schools' roles in shaping students' conforming dispositions and in reproducing caste inequality. Bourdieu's theoretical concept of habitus is the key theoretical and methodological framework discussed for explaining the proposed social phenomena. I adopted a relativist approach to ontology and a critical interpretivist standpoint to epistemology. The biographical narrative interview method (BNIM) is a methodology for exploring the mechanisms that shape students' habitus through school practices. This study conducted interviews with 12 students in three rounds each, and the data were analysed through thematic analysis. A dialectical approach to structure-agency and to social theory-empirical evidence was discussed to explain caste reproduction comprehensively. In the next chapter, I will discuss the study's findings, revealed through the analysis and interpretation of data in tandem with the theory.

Chapter 5: Findings

This chapter presents three key school practices and their role in shaping students' habitus and its constituent dispositions. School practices of authority, obedience, and hierarchy mould students' cognitive (conforming) and affective (respect, fear, and honour) dispositions. The chapter presents an analysis and interpretation of data to elucidate how school practices shape conforming dispositions, expressed as pre-thought or unthought inclination or propensity towards non-questioning and reduced agency. Moreover, it provides evidence through data on how school practices embody social hierarchies within individuals as affect. The exploration of habitus (partly constituted by cognitive and affective dispositions) provides a foundation for discussing the potential role of a school in perpetuating caste inequality.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The chapter begins with detailing how the authority of teachers is legitimised and enforced in the everyday life of the school. The practices that serve the aforementioned purpose are recognised as practices of authority. The discursive construction of the teacher as guru, elder, guardian, well-wisher, and knowledgeable person establishes his/her superiority and authority. Along with legitimisation of authority in school, practices of authority inculcate cognitive dispositions of conformity and affective dispositions of respect. The next section elaborates on how practices of obedience involving disciplining, controlling, and moralising shape the dispositions of students. Practices of obedience signify students' subordinate positions and are intended to enforce compliance and followership. These practices play a dominant role in instilling conformity as dispositions and fostering social hierarchies as fear among students.

The third section provides evidence of how social hierarchies of age, gender and caste are either practised or discursively justified in school. Actions that legitimise or enforce social hierarchies are clubbed together as practices of hierarchy. Similar to the above two practices, the practice of hierarchy also plays a crucial role in shaping the affective disposition as honour, respect, and fear, as well as conforming dispositions. In this section, I also discuss how conforming and affective dispositions interact and have the potential to perpetuate caste inequality. The conforming dispositions reinforced through all three practices above intuitively guide the perceptions, thoughts, and actions towards practices of untouchability

as non-interfering, reflecting potential for the reproduction of caste relations. At the same time, conformity to the practice of endogamy and the affective realisation of the need for its continuation for the sake of family 'honour' interact to play a dominant role in the reproduction of caste relations.

The school practices indicated in this chapter mainly include the unofficial practices performed/ directed by teachers. I consider these practices for discussion because students frequently discuss them when asked to reflect on their school experiences and journey, and they are also prominently featured in the interview data collected through the BNIM method. These practices spread across different arenas of school life, curricular, extra-curricular, and routine formal/informal interactions. These practices, though not officially recommended by the school education authorities, are prevalently practised in the school.

5.1 Practices of Authority

One set of practices evident in the school revolves around the teacher's authority. In broader terms, practices of authority represent the actions that legitimise superior positions or entitle someone with power to command or influence subordinates. Practices of authority include ordinary or routine actions and activities that assert and legitimise the authority of teachers and school officials within the school and beyond. The authority of teachers is legitimised through various practices, including daily greetings, the annual celebration of Teachers' Day, moral lessons that emphasise the role of teachers as *guru*, well-wisher, guardian, and the right to direct academic practices, as well as families' recognition of their superiority as *guru.* The legitimised authority of teachers plays an important role in directing or regulating other practices and in informing and shaping students' dispositions. Specifically, the practices of authority shape students' dispositions toward conformity. Additionally, it embodies the hierarchically superior position of teachers within students, which is emotionally realised as 'respect'[8].

[8] Respect here in this chapter does not represent the mutual equal recognition, status, or value. It refers to hierarchal relationship between that is subordinate is expected to follow the authority without questioning or challenging. Respect here represents unquestioned followership by the subordinate or those who are lower in hierarchy.

5.1.1 Legitimisation of teachers' authority

The findings suggest that school practices, such as daily greetings, special events like the celebration of Teachers' Day, and recognition of superiority in other curricular and co-curricular activities, strengthen teachers' legitimate authority. Discursive practices around teachers as *gurus*, guardians, well-wishers, superiors in knowledge, and seniors in age further strengthen this authority.

Daily greetings to teachers are one way to establish their authority and superiority. Daily greetings involve students wishing teachers *namaste* on arrival and departure from school. Saying *namaste* (literal meaning 'bowing to you') is a common practice, and students often say it to all teachers. For instance, Kusum narrates that students greet teachers with a "*Namaste*" upon arrival and departure: "Boys… [and] girls must do *namaste* with folded hands…Boys touch feet, bow down, but girls must do *namaste* with folded hands". Some students wish 'good morning' and 'good afternoon' on arrival and departure. While some boys touch the feet of teachers instead of saying *namaste.* For instance, Himanshu says: "It is tradition, we (boys) touch the feet of both male and female teachers".

Another common practice at the school is for students to stand from their desks or chairs when a teacher enters the classroom. This is common practice across all the schools as students shared their experiences from previous schools as well. Not standing in class is considered disrespectful to teachers, and this practice is forcefully implemented. Prakash talks about his experience of not standing in class at his previous school, he explains that if anyone does not follow the rules, he/ she is either rebuked or punished by the teacher. Prakash says: "… When someone does not stand, then the sir scolds him (her). He (teacher) says that means you (students) don't respect me (by not standing)".

Another cultural practice predominant in the school is not taking the names of teachers. Rather, they are addressed as 'sir' (for male teachers) and 'madam' (for female teachers). It is observed in interview data that students generally refer to teachers as 'sir' and 'madam'; however, in cases where they want to make a distinction for recognition, they take the name and then add 'sir' or 'madam' after the name, such as 'Sunil sir' and 'Neelam madam'. Mundane everyday practices embody the teacher's authority over students. Use of terms 'sir' or 'madam' signifies teachers' superior position to students.

It is not only daily rituals, but also special events (such as Teachers' Day), that are used to reinforce/ express the authority of teachers. Teachers' Day is an annual event celebrated in schools to recognise the contribution of an Indian educationist. Teachers' Day in India is celebrated on September 5 every year, marking the birth anniversary of former Indian politician and educationist Dr Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan. It is also celebrated as a day to acknowledge the contribution of teachers to society. On this day, students from the current school contribute money among themselves, purchase snacks and cake, decorate their classroom, ask the class teacher to cut the cake, and other teachers visit the classes. Different students discuss what happened on Teachers' Day and provide reasons why this day is celebrated. Seema narrates what happened this year's Teachers' Day, and she is of the opinion that Teachers' Day is celebrated to make teachers happy. She says:

> "We decorate on the classroom. Make coloured designs of the floor (*Rangoli banate hai).* We bring cake, snacks (*Samosa and Namkin)* and so many things to eat. And (we) invite teachers in the classroom. We celebrate Teachers' Day so that teachers become happy".

Most participants say it is a day to show respect to teachers. For instance, Nitish says that students touch their teachers' feet on this day and receive their blessings. Nitish narrates:

> "… We decorate our classroom. We bring sweets, snacks, and cake. Manoj sir comes and cuts the cake, gives us *Ashirvaad* (auspicious best wishes) and talks about education (importance of education)".

Here, *Ashirvaad* is an expression of the auspicious superior position of teachers and bowed down to get the best wishes. One key interpretation of data from the celebration of Teachers' Day is how this opportunity is used to express and embolden the superiority of teachers rather than remembering and discussing the contributions of Dr Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, whose birth anniversary is celebrated. Expect a few; no participant remembered his name, but instead said this day is celebrated to show respect to teachers.

Apart from daily practices, explicit moral lessons about the superior position of teachers are occasionally offered. It is evident from interviews with students that teachers justify their authority through moral lessons, portray themselves as well-wishers of students, act as guardians, and adopt a religious identity as *gurus.* Through moral lessons, teachers explain that they are well-wishers and work 'only' for the students. Teachers' age acts as another layer in asserting superior authority over younger teachers. The interview indicates that senior teachers are more frequently engaged in delivering moral lessons. For instance, senior teachers such as Manoj sir (a teacher in his fifties with a more religious orientation), Ketan sir (head of school, also in his fifties), and Neelam madam (a senior female teacher) are mostly cited by students for moral lessons. For instance, Himanshu recalls the incident when Manoj sir explained that he works for the students' well-being and will not lose anything if students do not study properly. Himanshu describes:

> "He (Manoj sir) sometimes tells us that education/studying is important. If someone does mischief in class, he does not scold them but makes them realise *(Samjhate hai)* how important education is. For example, yesterday, one of the parents complained about no proper teaching or record keeping (notebook completion), especially in the Hindi (language/literature) class. He (Manoj sir) explained that the student had remained absent many times and had not completed his work. He said he works for the students' well-being. If a student is not serious, he (Manoj sir) is not going to lose anything. He will get the salary, but the student will be at a loss".

Moral lessons proposing teachers as well-wishers provide them with the legitimate right/ power to justify their actions, especially punishments. For example, Ketan sir (school headmaster) punished the whole class for poor performance on the test. Later, he soothes the anxiety of students, justifying his act of punishment as an act performed for their well-being. Hemlata narrates:

> "Once, in class, Ketan sir beat the whole class. He took the test and told all the students they got lower marks. But he explained (preached) so many things. He said, "You all study properly, this is for your good only. Your life will improve. I am not going to lose anything. I will come, do my work, and go whether you study or not. This is the age of the educated or literate, so do your work, otherwise you will regret life".

Data also shows that teachers present themselves as guardians both implicitly and explicitly, taking on the role of a parent or elder in the school. Teachers present themselves in the role of parents in relation to the well-being of students. As parents remain concerned about the well-being of their children at home, similarly, teachers are concerned at school. Nitish narrates the instance when Neelam Madam (a senior female teacher) offers moral lessons in the classroom, presenting herself and other teachers as guardians.

> "… In class 8, Neelam Madam has an arts period (teaches arts). But she does not teach arts but rather talks about life lessons.... she explained everything like a mother at home. She told us what was good and what was bad for us".

The data also show that discursive practices in schools, families, and communities construct the identity of teachers as *gurus* (mentors/teachers, drawing connotations similar to religious teachers). Almost all the participants referred to teachers as *gurus*, and they deserve respect from students. Students appear to implicitly compare school with temple (*mandir)* where the structure and functions of a temple are imposed on schools. In fact, the findings also reveal the school's structural and functional arrangements, underscoring its religious inclination. In a temple, there is a statue of a god or goddess, and prayer or worship of the God is conducted and mediated by a revered priest. Similarly, the school has framed a photo of the Goddess of Knowledge *(Saraswati*). A prayer to God is the collective action of the morning assembly, and the teacher is like a priest of the temple. Thus, the teacher is recognised as a 'revered' entity, culturally referred to as a *guru.*

Teachers' and students' participation in religious rituals further strengthens the school's religious position. All students participate in the morning assembly, which involves prayer to God along with other activities. Some students voluntarily worship the statue of the goddess as well; for example, Kusum says she worships the statue of the goddess at school, and Madam changes the garland from the photo. These practices represent an inclination to recognise schooling as a religious process as well. Thus, teachers get a religious connotation to their identity. Students believe that religious rituals are an integral part of education. In response to my question around the need for prayer to God in school, Seema says, "Our day (in school) starts with a prayer to God (in the morning assembly) … (we) should do prayer (to God)".

Teachers' identity as *guru* shapes relationships and interactions between teachers and students. For example, boys touch the feet of teachers on arrival at school in the morning, and girls bow down with folded hands. Students stand every time teachers enter the classroom to recognise their higher position. On a special day for teachers (Teachers' Day), students (especially boys) touch the feet of teachers and are offered auspicious well-wishes (*Ashirvaad).* These actions have religious connotations in relation to the position of teachers. As a student Nitish narrated, we touch the feet of teachers and get *Ashirvaad* (auspicious best wishes).

Along with cultural authority, teachers also possess institutional authority as subject/ area experts. Data shows that teachers are the key or absolute voice in academic issues. This may be particularly due to the participants' low levels of education, rural context, and lack of access to alternative resources and skills, which confer greater authority on teachers in educational matters. This specific context and circumstances provide authority to teachers in the academic context. Teachers have the authority to determine legitimate means of imparting knowledge. Teachers also have the authority to punish students for imparting knowledge despite a legal ban in schools. The family recognises teachers' authority regarding knowledge and skills and places them as superior to students. For example, Kashish says in the interview that she was punished by a teacher and wept, but could not tell her parents at home because she would only be blamed for not being attentive and studying properly. Kashish says:

> "… In class 10, the teacher gave a translation of the English subject (from Hindi to English), and no one could do it in class. So, the whole class get punished with a stick. I wept (due to punishment).
>
> Dinesh- Did you complain at home about that?
>
> Kashish—No. They will ask me back why I did not study properly (you did not study, so you get the punishment)".

The expressions of students also show teachers' internalised authority over the knowledge and skills to be imparted in the school. Some participants emphasised that they are scared in classes where they are weak. Students internalised the authority of the teacher in relation to

imparting knowledge in different subjects. It is at the discretion of the teacher if he/ she recognises the student's effort. For instance, Seema says, "…I still get corporal punishment. Most of the time, I get punished by the sticks on my hands in English class because my English is poor". Hemlata further adds to the above and narrates, "I am worried about the English teacher, I do not know why, but when I see him, I get fearful…I prepare to respond to the answers he gives to learn. But when [I] stand before him to answer, then I forget it". The aforementioned cases highlight the authority of teachers, achieved through their recognition of their expertise in subjects/areas. With this recognition, they have the authority to use any means to impart knowledge and, at the same time, the possibility of authority in other areas of school life.

Teachers' authority is strengthened by offering different seating arrangements for teachers and students. Findings show that the authority of teachers is recognised and enforced by offering teachers a special place to sit. The chair meant for teachers to sit in the classroom during teaching or spare time is considered superior to students' chairs/ benches. Students are not allowed to sit in the teacher's chair. It is another means to signify the superiority of teachers. If a student sits on the teacher's chair, he or she is scolded or punished. For example, Girija narrates an incident in which she sat on the teacher's chair, was caught on the school's CCTV camera by the school manager and was scolded and warned. In fact, she herself considers it as bad to sit in a teacher's chair.

> "… once I sat on the chair (teachers' chair), I did not realise that there was a camera. Then, sir (the school manager) saw the CCTV, came into the class, and asked who was sitting on the chair. I said, sir, I was sitting, then he scolded me and said Don't sit on the chair again.
>
> Dinesh- What do you think about sitting on the chair or not?
>
> Girija- No (one should not sit on the chair meant for the teachers). I just sat by mistake. One should not sit.
>
> Dinesh- why?
>
> Girija- One should not sit here (means in school) because it is meant for the *gurus*. It is for teachers. If the teacher says that one can sit, otherwise (one) should not sit".

The above narration suggests that a hierarchical relationship between teachers and students is reinforced institutionally through explicit recognition of teachers' superior position. Unequal relationships between teachers and students defined who can sit where and why that teacher is superior, and have a separate, recognised place to sit. Those lower in the hierarchy are not supposed to occupy that place. And the practice is legitimised by the school official. The practice internalises teachers' authority subjectively when students recognise it. That unequal relations are imposed through the practice of controlling the place to sit.

The above discussion underscores that teachers' authority is reinforced by recognising the teachers' identity as *guru,* guardian and well-wisher. This represents the cultural and religious authority of teachers. The authority of teachers is further strengthened by the recognition of their pedagogical authority in directing curricular and extracurricular matters. The legitimised authority of teachers serves as pedagogic authority (in Bourdieu's terms) and has the potential to convey broader messages to students about social relations through the ordinary practices of the school.

Practices continuously convey certain messages, and those messages are realised in practice, not explained. These messages can be inferred from taking a critical interpretivist approach to teachers' and students' actions. Further below, there is a discussion of how practices of authority implicitly convey a message that shapes cognitive dispositions towards conformity and affective dispositions towards 'respect'. The contribution of practices of authority to shaping students' dispositions is elaborated in the following two subsections.

5.1.2 Practices of authority and shaping of conforming dispositions

The imposition of authority by teachers in the everyday life of schools has an impact on shaping students' dispositions towards conformity. It is evident from the above discussion that the school makes considerable efforts to legitimise and impose the authority of teachers and school authorities. The interpretation of data suggests that the imposition of authority plays a crucial role in shaping cognition towards conformity. There is hardly any instance observed in the interview data that shows a critical voice or recognition of individuality or agency of students. Rather than challenging, students are engaged in accepting whatever is directed by the authorities. The tendency to accept whatever is commanded by teachers/

authorities has the potential to shape the agency of students, as dependent agency. This signifies a context in which the dependent agency constituent of a conforming disposition is shaped.

The above assertion can be substantiated considering Girija's case, which is cited in the previous subsection. When Girija was caught sitting in a teacher's chair, she was reprimanded by the school authorities for doing so. This practice has an impact on subjectively realising the authority of teachers and guiding their responses and actions. In the interview, she reflected on the incident and acknowledged that she should not have sat in the teacher's seat. This is an example of how practices of authority can shape students' disposition towards conformity.

Cultural and religious recognition of teachers as *gurus* often silences critical voices and fosters reverence. Practices such as bowing in salutation, standing when teachers enter the classroom, and addressing teachers as 'sir' and 'madam' rather than by name establish the superior position of teachers. Moreover, taking on the role of family elders provides added authority, as well as the continuation of cultural values that are enforced within the family. As is the prevailing tradition in Indian families, not to question elders or relationships, the same applies to teachers in schools. This understanding can be drawn from Hemlata's narrations, where she says that the elders of the family and teachers should be followed (Quoted in 5.3.1).

The above practices of authority convey a message of not questioning teachers' authority. There is an inherent message in these practices that students are not supposed to reflect, analyse or challenge the authority, but rather accept it. This can be traced to cases where students justify whatever is propagated by those in authority, whether in school or the family. Offering a reverent position, influenced by a mix of cultural and religious factors, thoughts relating to challenging or analysing their relationships are unimaginable, as most students spoke in favour of following whatever is suggested.

The legitimisation of teachers' authority through schools and families left limited space for students to assert their agency or question the actions of teachers. However, a few students do not accept the absolute superiority of teachers from inside, though they have accepted it

from outside. A student says teachers should be respected, but teachers should not force authority irrationally. The significant aspect is that those who are critical of teachers and their actions are considered to be ‘bad’ students. For example, Vaibhav is considered a ‘bad’ student who challenges the school authorities and is punished for it. Vaibhav says:

> “… (one) should follow the teacher, but the teacher should also behave properly. Teachers should also tell us what our fault is. For example, Nikesh sir has expelled one student from the class/school without any reason. What was his fault? Actually, he was not coming to school for the last few days. Nikesh sir asked if he had completed the written work. He stated that the work was not yet completed. Sir just expelled him from the class. He (sir) might have told to the boy to complete the work. For this small thing, he was expelled from the school. [Vaibhav shows his anguish over the expulsion of one student from the class against a teacher in the interview]”

A closer analysis of Vaibhav's statement shows his desire to recognise students' agency and rationally justify some actions. However, he does not challenge teachers' hierarchical positions. Similarly, Prakash believed teachers should not discuss local and political issues but focus only on the curriculum. On another occasion, Suman was not happy with the teachers' authority when they controlled students' movement in the school corridors during lunch breaks. Though a few individual expressions show signs of criticality in some trenches, they do not form a prominent, coherent theme that presents their internalised critical dispositions. The crucial aspect of this discussion is that, though individuals show some signs of criticality based on their experiences, the school's institutional arrangement is directed towards enforcing conformity among students. The interview data suggest that the school is engaged in enforcing and legitimising teachers' authority to a large extent. At the same time, these practices also incorporate the hierarchy between teachers and students within individuals, which is emotionally realised.

5.1.3 Enforcement of teachers’ superiority as a feeling of ‘respect’

The reflections of students on the prevailing practices of the school and prevailing relations between participants of schooling show that students have internalised the superior position of teachers, which is expressed as ‘respect’ for teachers. The data suggest that practices of authority not only legitimise teachers' authority but also incorporate their superior position

within students. Practices of authority incorporate hierarchy within students in the form of 'respect' as affects. Students' narratives indicate that teachers' recognition as gurus is their dominant identity, implicitly conveying an understanding of their superior position. Since teachers are superior, they should be respected. Here, 'respect' represents the incorporated hierarchically superior position of teachers. Almost all the participants echoed this view. Girija says teachers are elders to us, so they should be respected. For Girija, "… they are *Gurus*, elder to us. So, we should respect him".

Hemalata considers teachers equal to or, in fact, superior to parents and thus should be respected. Hemlata feels education is meaningless if it does not teach respect for parents and teachers.

> "Hemlata- …why should (we) not respect the teachers? Children are more fearful of teachers than their parents. Therefore, (students) respect them…for us, mother father and '*Guru*' (means teachers) are important. If we do not respect these three, then it means our education is meaningless".

Similarly, Prakash says, "… the teacher is in a way bigger than the father. They are *guru*. They give us *shiksha (*education)*".*

The recognition of a teacher as a *guru*, as a 'revered' figure, offered him/her a superior position in relation to students. Family culturally influences the understanding of teacher-pupil hierarchical relations, and it is further reinforced and perpetuated in everyday school life. On many occasions, teachers' superiority is explicitly conveyed rather than implicitly derived. For example, Girija explains that her parents told her that teachers should be respected because they are elders and superior to her.

> "Mother and father tell us. I heard once when I was younger [small child], [my] father was telling to *Bhaiyya* (elder brother) that [he] should never disrespect the *Guru* teacher…they (teachers) are *Gurus*, elder to us. So, we should respect them".

Thus, the religious arrangement of schools, parents' messages to their children, and the recognition of a teacher as a guru place them above students. The recognition of the school as a sacred place and teachers as sacred mentors offers them moral authority. The moral authority of teachers places them in a crucial role in reinforcing cultural values and messages that have significance in shaping social relations.

The students' reflections in the above examples represent the students' dispositions, which are incorporated. These dispositions are reflected in the form of feelings or moral obligations to embody their subordinate positions. These embodied hierarchies are shaped in the everyday life of the school and also direct its actions within it. For example, students not only learn how to show respect in everyday life, but also recognise what is disrespectful if there is an act that challenges their authority or positionality. This also signals that cognitive dispositions of conformity and affective dispositions of 'respect' act together to reinforce the hierarchy between teachers and students.

To summarise this section, the evidence suggests a set of school practices that collectively reinforce teachers' authority, which, in turn, influences students' dispositions. School practices, including daily greetings, the annual celebration of Teachers' Day, moral lessons emphasising the role of teachers as guru and well-wisher, and curricular practices, as well as families' recognition of their superiority as *guru,* legitimise the authority of teachers. These practices shape students' cognitive dispositions towards conformity and embody the superiority of teachers as a feeling of 'respect'. The next section discusses how teachers utilise their authority in directing another set of practices: obedience and hierarchy, which further shape students' dispositions.

5.2 Practices of Obedience

The current study's findings suggest that schools inculcate obedience in students to those in power or superior positions. Practices of obedience signify actions/ activities through which legitimised authorities make subordinates comply with commands or orders. Data from the interview shows that practices of obedience enforce compliance and submissiveness to orders, laws, and authorities. The inherent messages enforced through obedience form conforming dispositions characterised by attributes of non-questioning and dependent

agency. The students' narratives indicate that obedience, as a socio-cultural value, is constructed within the family and reinforced and legitimised in school. Practices of obedience in this context broadly include the enactment of punishment on students, processes directed at maintaining order, and mechanisms of institutional control. These practices shape the cognitive dispositions of conformity and the affective disposition of fear.

5.2.1 Punishment and its role in shaping the conforming dispositions of students

The data suggest that punishment is the most common practice employed by the school, especially by teachers. Punishment is the means of forcing students to conform without their consent through painful consequences. Based on the narrations of students, it can be interpreted that teachers employ different modes of punishment. These include physical (corporal), emotional/ mental punishments. These punishments are both individual and collective. In interviews, all participants reported receiving physical punishment in some form at least once in the last few years. Mostly, students are either beaten with sticks on their hands or made to stand in the classroom.

For example, Seema recounts an incident in which she received corporal punishment in English class. Seema says, ‘I still get corporal punishment. Most of the time, I get punished by the sticks on my hands in English classes because my English is poor (she responded in a lighter tone)’. Similarly, Hemlata recounts the incident in which the whole class was punished with a stick because they all performed poorly on a subject test. She says, “Once, in class 10, Suraj sir (social science teacher) beat the whole class. He took the test and told all the students had got lower marks (so, he beat the whole class)”.

Moreover, Himanshu underscores the prevalence of punishment in his class. He says students in his class commonly receive corporal and emotional punishment. He describes:

> “In almost all classes, we get punished (beaten by a stick or a duster) (with little laughter). But the Hindi subject teacher does not beat, but beats by words (insults through sarcastic comments). He insults everyone in the class, so everyone tries to

complete his work before anyone else. He makes us feel ashamed if his work is not completed, so we remain more focused on his classwork".

From Himanshu's narrations, it appears that both corporal and psychological punishments are commonly employed in the school. In fact, emotional punishment in the form of scolding, rebuke, and insult is more prevalent than corporal punishment. The interview shows that almost all the students face mental/ psychological punishment at some point, even though they are in the good books of teachers. For example, Hemlata says, she is mostly scolded but sometimes gets corporal punishment. Hemalata says, '…[I] sometimes get scolded and sometimes with a stick, but rarely, most scolded'. Similarly, Nitish describes that he generally does not receive corporal punishment but is mostly scolded for breaking norms. He says, 'I do not get much (corporal punishment), sometimes for homework, but mostly scolded'. Hemalata talked about a social science teacher who often scolds and rebukes students when schoolwork is not completed. She says, 'Sometimes used to scold when work is not done. He used to rebuke and scold in class'. The above instances, along with many more from the interview, indicate that teachers frequently use scolding and rebuke as modes of punishment to achieve disciplinary goals. Additionally, the school also uses expulsion or rustication as another means to put pressure on families to ensure students follow the school's commands.

The practice of punishing students for various reasons using different modes plays a significant role in shaping students' dispositions towards conformity, as well as fear, as an affective disposition. Further discussion explains how punishment shapes the students' dispositions of conformity and fear.

Enforcing conformity as dispositions through disciplining/ punishment

The aims of the punishment, derived from the data, can be divided into two broader categories: explicit and implicit aims. The explicit aim of the punishment is to improve students' academic performance, inculcating 'desirable' values and behaviour, and maintaining order in school. The implicit aim of punishment is to inculcate and enforce conformity among students. In the interview, students often use the terms 'punishment' and

‘discipline’ interchangeably. They broadly referred to discipline as a punishment or a mechanism for controlling behaviours.

Hemalata says that students are punished when they fail to meet academic expectations, do not unquestioningly follow teachers, and breach the school's rules. Hemalata narrates:

> “If we do not complete the work or do not listen to the teachers, then we might get scolded. Or sometimes roam around (here and there within the school), and then also get scolded. Or [if students] always go for drinking water unnecessarily. Scolded for [not] making two braids, for [not wearing a proper] school uniform”.

Another explicit aim of the punishment is to modify/instil ‘good’ behaviour. For example, Prakash underscores that a disciplined person is one who appears like a ‘cultured’ person. That is, one needs to adopt the popular expected behaviour of the school. Prakash elaborates the meaning of discipline — “…(it) means wear good clothes (proper uniform), talk properly (respectfully with teachers and elders), and should appear like a cultured person”.

In fact, discipline/ punishment is needed to control behaviour. Nitish believes that discipline is needed to put students on the right path. That is, students are expected to follow the path decided by the authorities and not deviate from standard behaviour. Prakash says, “Discipline should be in the school; otherwise, children will be spoiled”.

Furthermore, maintaining order and silence in the classroom in the absence of a teacher is another purpose of punishment cited by the students. Himanshu clearly understands the purpose of inflicting punishment that maintains order in the classroom. It is expected that students will be in the classroom and refrain from making noise when the teacher is not present. Himanshu narrates:

> “If children are disciplined and inside the class, then it is fine, no need to scold (inflicting punishment). But if children are going out of the classroom or school, discipline must be maintained. Children should be under discipline in school”.

Here, Himanshu not only clearly underscores the role of punishment but also shows the imperative that students should cooperate in maintaining order.

Although students discuss the explicit aims of the punishment, a deeper examination of the data reveals the implicit aims of the punishment. The implicit aim of punishment is to instil conformity among students towards the authorities (in the school context, towards teachers and the school's owner/ authorities). The findings show that practices of punishing students employ both direct and symbolic violence to inculcate obedience among students towards the authorities. Based on the findings, I argue that practices of punishment cognitively predispose students towards conformity (non-questioning and reduced agency) and affectively embody a hierarchy between teachers and students through fear.

Teachers commonly administer punishment to students to ensure they follow their commands. Students are supposed to follow the order, whether they want it or not. Teachers use violence to assert authority and enforce conformity through punishment. Thus, punishment carries the implicit meaning of not questioning or challenging their actions or orders. For instance, Suman recounts the incident in which she was made to stand outside the classroom for refusing to follow the sports teacher's order. Once, the game instruction teacher asked us to write about the games. Suman said it was a game period; therefore, the teacher should take the students to the playground rather than make them write in class. However, the teachers did not listen and asked all the students to take note of the details about the sports. Suman refused to write; therefore, she was asked to stand out of the class in the corridor. Suman narrates:

> “Last week, sir (sports teacher) said that those who do not want to write (during the sports period) can go out of class, but cannot sit in the class. So, I went out. We are already writing throughout the day. Now writing in sports class, I denied. Then my class teacher saw me in the corridor, he questioned why I was standing outside the class. I said I don’t want to write (in a sports class). Then, class teacher asked to go in the smart class (inside another classroom) where younger children were watching Cartoons. I sat with them. Later when I came back (to her own classroom), sir (sports teacher) was not there (in the classroom). My friend asked me to sit inside. I sat down, then again sir (sports teacher) came. He again asked me to stand outside the classroom and come when class is over. Then, I went out of the classroom”.

The above narration shows that teachers employ corporal punishment to enforce obedience. It also sends the message that we should not challenge teachers' actions but rather accept their authority. Moreover, it shows that the agency of students is reduced when their suggestions are not valued or accepted, instead developing a tendency towards followership.

The data indicate that it is not just the school alone, but also families support schools in enforcing obedience among students. When the school fails to enforce obedience among students, the school engages families to ensure compliance with rules and norms. Complaints to parents is another means of punishment when behaviour does not come under control with commonly used means of scolding, beating or moral lessons. When a complaint goes to families, the perspective of the students is neglected in the families. The participants' narrations underscore a common perception that if a student is punished in school, it will be the student's fault. It is not just the students; parents also believe in teachers' authority in shaping students' behaviour. For instance, Nitish said he was punished for not completing his work at school, and at the same time, he was scolded at home for the complaint from the school.

> "… I was in class 10, once, I was not feeling well. So, I sat on the back bench of the class. It was mathematics class. I did not write anything, so the teacher complained to Sunil sir (the manager of the school). At the same time, the mathematics teacher also knew my family member, so he complained to my elder brother. I was scolded at home. The (school) manager called my father and told that he would rusticate me from the school (if my behaviour does not improve). That is why I was severely scolded in school as well as at home… I told the teacher (that he was not feeling well, which is why he was not writing in the class), but he did not listen. The reason was that some other students were doing mischief in the class. I have not written (class note) due to illness, but dragged and scolded".

This case shows how the teacher's (school's) authority reached the home, and how family members forced the students to follow the teacher's dictates. No one was ready to listen to the student's side. The students' opinions and thoughts are not recognised in school or in the family. This develops patterns among students that they do not have the agency to express an opinion or convey their standpoint independently; rather, those in power or authority

command what happens, and students are expected to follow. Such actions contribute towards reducing students' agency.

Expulsion or rustication from the school is another means the school uses to pressure families into ensuring students follow its commands. Students are rusticated from school for a few days or entirely expelled from school if they do not come under control despite scolding and punishment. Or if some behaviour seems appalling, then some students are expelled from the school. For instance, Vaibhav was expelled from school for bringing a mobile phone to school. He narrates:

> "Once, I was expelled (from school) because I brought a mobile phone to school. I go to coaching classes (group tuition) at 5.00 am, so I need it. Once I brought the phone to school. It was time for admission to the next class. So, they asked for an email address. I said to the teacher, "I don't know, just take my mobile phone, and see the email from there and fill in the form. They questioned whether I had brought a phone to the school (with surprise). Then he (the teacher) said you cannot be admitted to the school. I asked why you are not admitting. If you want, you can keep the phone with you and hand it over only when my parents or guardian comes to collect it. But he didn't give me admission and asked me not to come to school. Then my father came and promised that I would not bring my mobile to school again then [I was] given admission after 15 days".

Vaibhav's case illustrates how schools utilise authority to compel families to adhere to school rules, and parents are held accountable for students violating school norms. Thus, schools assert their authority by making students follow norms and not challenge or deviate from them. As challenging school or teachers' authority is met with consequences, over time, students internalise the message that they are not supposed to question those in power and instead employ their own agency in working independently or thinking critically about established school norms.

The above cases demonstrate how the authority of the teacher (school) extends to the home and family members, forcing students to follow the teacher's directives. It is evident from the above example that no one was ready to listen the student's side. There is a possibility

that whatever the students narrate is not entirely true, and he might be involved in mischief along with other students and does not write the notes, which leads to a complaint to the family. However, data highlight how the authority of the school extends beyond the school to families, not only strengthening teacher and school authority but also playing a crucial role in inculcating conformity among students. Moreover, the other perspective (an alternative to teachers' or the school's perspective) is not recognised. Thus, teachers use families as well in blocking the alternative perspective or opinion and enforcing conformity towards a single perspective that side of the authorities (that is, the school or the teacher here).

Data also suggests that teachers engage in enforcing conformity more forcefully than families. Most participants stated that they (students) get scolded at home for various kinds of work, but the school uses varied and severe punishments to control and regulate their behaviour. For instance, some students report being scolded at home, while others claim they are not. Physical punishment is not common as they grow up in their homes. However, all students get some form of punishment in school. This suggests that school authorities have a greater impact in instilling conformity through punishment than families do.

The findings show that maintaining order or the *status quo* in the school is another key function of disciplining. Individual and collective punishment are inflicted to enforce submissiveness towards rules and norms that signify the school's order. It can be seen in various forms, such as school uniform norms, hairstyle requirements, and a set of expected behaviours in different situations in school. Collective punishment is one of the powerful means used to modify the behaviour of the group to maintain order. The purpose is to internalise the *status quo* and not think or act in a way that disturbs the order established. In the case of disturbing existing arrangements or norms, one faced punishment.

Nitish talks about an incident in which Sunil sir (the manager or owner of the school) imposed collective punishment for not trimming hair for a long time, despite a warning. A few students kept long hair and did not trim it, but the entire group of boys from class 6 to class 12 was punished for their hair. It is a clear message to all students that those who do not follow the rules are punished, but those who follow the rules but think of breaking them will also be punished. Nitish narrates:

> “Once, I remember Sunil sir (the manger) has beaten all the boys across the school from class 6 onwards those who has long hair (in morning assembly). There were some students who didn’t trim hair to smaller after saying many times, so he punished everyone”.

Group pressure to enforce obedience and conformity among critical voices. In the previous section, I discussed the case of Manoj sir, who declared not to take up the class teacher role for the class 12 science stream. The reason was a few boys who did not follow his orders and made a ruckus in the class. He used his moral authority and decided to punish the whole class by refusing to take up the class teacher’s role. Manoj sir was considered as ‘ideal’ teacher by many students, so they wanted him to take up that role. Finally, due to group pressure, ‘bad’ boys of the school gave in and committed to following orders and maintaining silence in the class. In the end, he agreed to take on the role of class teacher. Thus, collective punishment is a mode not only of modifying group behaviour but also of creating pressure for ‘abnormal’ behaviour within the group to control its members' behaviour. It shows that teachers also use peer pressure to enforce conformity among students.

The findings also suggest that teachers not only enforce obedience but also reward it by absolving students from punishment when they occasionally break the rules or norms. For instance, Hemalata recounts the incident in which she was spared punishment. Hemalata is an obedient student and already follows school rules. In a specific circumstance, when she broke the rule, she was not punished but was advised to follow the rules. Hemalata narrates:

> “One day I was late for school. I was having work at home (so, she reached school late). Then the sir asked- at what time do you get up (from bed). I told him that I had work at home, which is why I was late for school today. Then he said- Get up a little earlier, finish work, and come to school on time. I mostly do two braids (school rules for girls require two braids). Sometimes, I do one, then Madam does not scold, but rather says that I mostly do (follow rules). But (teachers also suggest) taking out some time to make two braids so that it appears that you are a student”.

It is not just about applying pain to control behaviour; rather, it is also about using moral lessons to control behaviour. In this context, students themselves prepare to be disciplined. In fact, students give justifications in favour of disciplining. Indeed, students talk about discipline as a virtue.

The data also shows that punishment is legitimised by hailing punishment as an action performed for the 'well-being' of students. Moreover, it is legitimised through the discursive construction of self-discipline as a virtue. All the interview participants believe that punishment (which mainly involves controlling actions) is a good thing. It is for students' well-being. For instance, Prakash explains that students should conform to the school's rules. Being disciplined is a good thing. Prakash explains:

> "I like rules (school order). I have seen many schools where students can keep their shirts out like rogues. And long hair. Without a tie. Folding sleeves of the shirts. But in our school, all these things are prohibited. The rule (discipline) is good. I like it...Like in many schools, girls come with a single hair braid. But in this school, you need to have two braids. That is good (thing)".

Some students said the current level of discipline is acceptable. Students who possess more submissive attributes consider that discipline is needed in school. For instance, Kashish shows more conforming attributes in other aspects of life and feels that more discipline is needed. I asked Kashish what she felt about the level of discipline and control in the school. She thinks more discipline and control are required. I posed the question, which might cause fear among the students. She said more discipline is necessary, even if students get scared of teachers. She feels that with punishment, students become more serious about studying.

> "Dinesh- Is discipline fine in the school?
>
> Kashish - Needs more discipline. More punishment.
>
> Dinesh- Then student will be scared.
>
> Kashish- so what? (*to kya hua)*...If one does not get punishment, then one will not study. Then they (students) will think, let us memorise otherwise if go to school, then again they will get punishment (if not memorised lessons)".

Himanshu considers himself a ‘good’ boy and feels that discipline is needed. He says:

> “If children are disciplined and inside the class, then it is fine, no need to scold them. But if children are going out of the classroom or school, then discipline/order need to be maintained. Children should be disciplined in school”.

Students internalise the dominant discourse that discipline is for ‘good’ and justify the need for discipline in school. Nitish thinks that discipline is needed to keep students on the right path. If discipline is not maintained, then students will be spoiled. Nitish says, ‘Discipline should be in the school; otherwise, children will be spoiled’.

Enacting punishment as practice and legitimising it as good leads to the internalisation of conformity as an unconscious thing. They lead to the evolution of self-discipline, where teachers no longer need to control the behaviour. Students not only talk about disciplining from external agents but also think of self-discipline as a virtue (becoming/ and being obedient in the absence of external agents like teachers). Himanshu believes that one should be self-disciplined and refrain from breaking the rules once they have been punished. He describes:

> “… the first thing is, we should be disciplined by ourselves. One should not go out of control. More under control better for one. Sometimes we are scolded, sometimes beaten. But there are some people who remain as they are, whether you admonish them or beat them. Those who are disciplined remain in control. Once things are told, they do not break the rule”**.**

Becoming self-disciplined becomes a moral obligation for the senior students. For example, Prakash wants to be obedient and disciplined because he is not a kid, but an adolescent (to him, an adult). Prakash justifies self-discipline as:

> “…I follow (teachers), because I am older; if they (teachers) scold me, then this is not good. That is why, I control myself. Control habits. I feel worse than teachers if they

scold. That means I have done something wrong. I feel ashamed, which is why I remained seated in the class during lunch. Sometimes take out a book and read".

The above case of Prakash is an individual case and cannot be generalised to all students. However, it provides a window to consider how self-discipline relates to morality, fostering conformity in the absence of any external agency. The inherent message within the discussion of discipline or punishment aligns with the school's broader expectations. That is not questioning, disrupting, acting alternatively or showing independence by acting differently. As I have shown in the other examples, breaking norms, orders, or actions that disrupt the norms and expectations is considered undisciplined. Students' emphasis on the need for discipline or self-discipline underlines the implicit message of conformity, characterised by non-questioning, dependence, and passive agency, where authorities' expectations are fulfilled intuitively.

5.2.2 Mechanisms of institutional control and moulding of conforming dispositions

The data analysis also reveals that teachers use control as a mechanism to inculcate obedience among students. Inspections and surveillance are two key modes of control teachers employ to inculcate conformity among students. Inspections of uniform and hair are mechanisms through which the school controls behaviour and enforces obedience to the rules and norms set by the school authorities. In the interview, when discussing their daily routine at school, students report that before classes begin, they gather in the open field in front of the school building for morning assembly. After the prayer to God and the national anthem, school uniforms, hair, and nails are inspected almost every day. Boys are required to keep their hair short, while girls are encouraged to style it in two braids. They cannot have a single braid of hair or have their hair open. Boys cannot have long hair. If someone does not wear a proper school uniform, they are either scolded, beaten with sticks, or sent back home. Nitish explained one incident when he was sent back home for not wearing the school uniform in class eight.

"I was in class 8, my pants were torn, so I gave the cloth to the tailor for stitching. It requires time (waiting time) to be ready. Because it was wedding season, the tailor was

> busy. I went to school in different pants. First, I was reminded of the pants but I was sent back home after two days. I told them the reason, but [teachers] didn't listen. Then, my father informed the class teacher, giving time for the pants to be stitched and allowed to come to school".

Nitish further said that when he was in class 10, all the students those having long hair were beaten with sticks by the manager of the school.

> "Once, I remember the manager sir beating all the boys across the school from class 6 onwards who had long hair. Some students didn't trim their hair despite saying it many times, so he punished everyone. ……If a complaint goes home, both father and mother scold severely for many days".

Punishment instils fear in students and makes them follow the teacher's commands. In fact, they imbibe the order as an essential feature and do not think of breaking it. I inquired further with Nitish whether he had considered keeping his hair long or short, if he had the freedom to do so. Nitish says, 'I will keep medium size'. Thus, the practice of punishment intended to bring order or uniformity reinforces conformity among students.

Surveillance through CCTV cameras in classrooms is another means of controlling students' behaviour and contributes to enforcing conformity among students. Participants informed me in the interview that CCTV cameras have been installed in the classrooms in the last few years. As participants are senior students, they have experience with the presence of CCTV cameras and their absence a few years back. All participants have said that the installation of CCTV resulted in a change in their behaviour compared to when no camera was in the classroom. They self-regulate their actions within the classroom. Nitish said that with CCTV, there is more control over students' activities in classrooms. He says, '…Now things have changed, there is a camera (CCTV) in the classroom when MK sir (the manager) watches immediate calls. So, whoever does mischief will be caught'.

They are always aware that someone is monitoring their actions, which has established fear through remote surveillance. Hemlata says students remain under pressure because they feel someone is watching them.

> "… sir, now students remain under pressure. I, too, feel scared. In the office, teachers sometimes see the students in camera, and sometimes the guardian also comes. They will see that children are either studying in the class or engaging in mischief in the classroom".

It made little difference for the students who were not talking or interacting much in the classroom. However, those who were active in the school in the absence of a teacher were under control and feared that someone was watching them. When I asked Seema if CCTV camera has some effect on the behaviour of students in the classroom, she said:

> "No, sir, it does not have much effect because I was not doing anything (a reference to 'mischievous' behaviour) earlier, so nothing affected. But some students are under control because earlier they (especially boys) used to break benches and desks, but now they do not break. I do not engage in mischief in class; I mostly do my work, so I am not worried. But others (who used to) do whatever they want, they have to think. Anyway, there is some fear".

A camera is used to monitor students' behaviour and punish them for breaking school norms. In the first section, I discussed one example: Hemlata sat on the teacher's chair, was caught on camera, and was scolded for doing so. It is a powerful tool for reinforcing conforming dispositions by reducing students' agency as they are monitored for their actions in the classroom. They do not act independently, and monitoring promotes passivity towards action. Based on the above evidence, I can argue that the practice of inspection and surveillance acts as an important means of reinforcing conforming dispositions among students. Practices of obedience also shape students' affective dispositions, as expressed in terms of fear.

5.2.3 Practices of obedience and its role in the incorporation of fear as an affective disposition

The interpretation of the data suggests that practices of obedience include punishment/ disciplining, as well as control, which instils fear among students. The significance of incorporating fear signifies that it embodies a hierarchical relationship between teachers and students. The legitimised superior position of teachers is practically enacted through practices of punishment, inspections and surveillance. Thus, practices of obedience impose a hierarchical position of teachers as a form of fear. The application of punishment signifies that teachers are superior and have the legitimate right to punish, and students should bear the pains of punishment as they are subordinate or lower. Gradually, students become fearful of teachers, and hierarchy is internalised as an emotive scheme of fear.

Students revealed that improving academic performance is the most cited reason for inflicting punishment. For instance, Kashish highlights that students get punished when they perform poorly in school subjects. She believes that if students are fearful of punishment, they become serious and prepare their lessons. Kashish narrates one incident in which she was punished in English class.

> “It was in class 10, in the English subject. Sir gave a translation (from Hindi to English), and no one could do it in class. The whole class was punished with a stick. I wept because…if one does not get punishment, then one will not study. If students are fearful of punishment, then they will think, "Let’s memorise; otherwise, if they go to school, then they will get the punishment”.

Similarly, Prakash explains that students receive punishment when they fail to complete their homework. He describes, “I get punished sometimes when my work is not complete. I was beaten once with sticks. Sometimes, in school, all the students get some punishment here and there”.

The punishment serves as a clear signal that anyone attempting to break the order will face consequences, and everyone is expected to adhere to the norms of maintaining silence in the

corridor. Mahesh narrates one incident when he was beaten with sticks for the mistake of someone else. Mahesh describes:

> "…once, I went to play volleyball, and while coming back in the corridor, someone made a noise (an annoying noise). Then a teacher came and asked us to stand and beat the whole class. I felt bad because I received the punishment for something I didn't do. I want to say, you need to find who is the culprit, then punish them, then I like (but did not say that)".

Mahesh was fearful of speaking against teachers' authority, and he internalised the hierarchy as fear. Mahesh's above narration explains that though punishments are inflicted to achieve order, they result in an implicit outcome that crushes the voice of the subordinate (student). Mahesh does not gather the courage to speak out about what he finds wrong. Thus, punishment achieved one of its implicit goals: developing non-questioning attitudes by internalising fear among students.

The practice of inspections and surveillance also embodies fear among students. They are fearful of inspections and punishment from those who are in authority. Thus, institutional hierarchy is embodied as fear among students. Girija sometimes feels insulted when a teacher shouts in front of other students. She justifies to herself the punishment she gets for maintaining discipline. Two things come to her mind when she is scolded for breaking rules. One, she has made some mistakes which is why she is scolded. It is not the teacher's fault but rather her own mistake. Two, she thinks that it is fine to be fearful of teachers. Thus, the hierarchically superior position of teachers is incorporated into students' fear, shaping their actions. For example, Girija describes:

> "… uniform and braid (two braids), nails are checked at the school. I never come without uniforms. I have never been beaten, but I am scolded when I come late to school. Sir, madam scolds me for the uniform, sometimes speaks negatively, then I feel weird or insulted.
>
> Sometimes I feel angry, but later think that this is my fault. Since it is my mistake that is why madam is saying (scolding). If I had worn the uniform, I would not have been

> shouted. When my uniform is not dried, I do not come to school. I feel scared/fearful of teachers.
>
> … I feel like he (teacher) will shout at me for the uniform. So that is why [I am] scared. Not much scared. But they are teachers. If we are not scared of teachers with whom then will we be fearful? But sir, I am scared of if I will make some mistakes. If I am innocent, [I am] not scared of teachers".

Girija's narration indicates that students internalise hierarchy between them and teachers which is expressed through fear. Thus, practices of obedience play an important role in incorporating hierarchical position between teachers and students within students as affective dispositions of fear.

To summarise this section, school practices of obedience encompass punishment, both corporal and psychological, as well as the discursive practices of discipline and self-discipline and practices of control and surveillance. Teachers not only used their authority to implement these practices but also derived their authority from them. These practices shape the cognitive dispositions as conforming and affective dispositions, such as fear. The disposition of fear is a reflection of the embodied hierarchy between teachers and students. Finally, these practices reinforce teachers' authority, which is an amalgam of institutional authority and cultural, religious, and familial recognition. It strengthens their positions in legitimising and enforcing social hierarchies. The following section explores how teachers engage with, enforce, or transform the social hierarchies prevalent in society.

5.3 Practices of Hierarchy

In the previous two sections, I discussed how school practices shape the relationship between students and teachers and how these practices shape the conforming dispositions of students. Practices that reinforce the social hierarchies that prevail in society are referred to as practices of hierarchy. In this section, I discuss the role of the school in legitimising and reinforcing the social hierarchy prevailing in society. The present study finds that the school reinforces the social hierarchy of age, gender, and caste. Moral lessons in favour of prevailing age-related hierarchies, gender-based practices, and caste-based practices appear as an important means of reinforcing social hierarchy.

The findings of this study suggest that practices of hierarchy play a role in shaping conforming dispositions as well as incorporating social hierarchies as emotive dispositions of honour, respect, and fear. This section elaborates on practices that reinforce age, gender and caste hierarchies and their role in shaping conforming dispositions. I deal in more detail with how dispositions of conformity and feelings of honour present potential to reproduce caste relations.

5.3.1 Moral lessons in favour of the superiority of elders and their influence in shaping dispositions

The interpretation of the interview data suggests that 'respecting' elders is a cultural morality propagated through moral lessons in school's everyday social life. interview data suggests that the cultural morality of 'respecting' elders is a mechanism to reinforce social hierarchies based on age. Students informed in the interview that occasionally, some teachers give informal moral lessons about respecting elders and following parents. For instance, Nitish narrates an incident in the class where Neelam Madam offered a moral lesson on respecting elders and teachers. Nitish says, '… (Madam informally told us) to respect elders and not to do mischief in class and other things'.

Some teachers go beyond offering moral lessons on respecting elders and ask students to fear their parents. For example, Kashish describes an instance when Manoj sir told the students that they should be fearful of their parents. Here is an excerpt from the interview with Kashish, where she explains how she receives a lesson on respecting elders.

> "Dinesh- Are you generally scolded at home?
>
> Kashish- No, not now. When my father just stares, I just go away from there. (There is) no need (for) rebuke/ scolding. I am scared of father and brother because he is elder to me.
>
> Dinesh- So, you mean, one should be fearful of elders.
>
> Kashish- Yes, (one) should be fearful of the elder.
>
> Dinesh- Who told you that you should be fearful of the elders?

Kashish- I know myself. Even teachers tell. Manoj sir tells us to be fearful of elders. Even other teachers also tell.

Dinesh- What did he say?

Kashish- (One) should be fearful of elders and should listen (follow) the elders".

In the above examples, teachers ask students to 'respect' elders and follow them. The underlying message is to accept the superiority of elders and not to question them. Teachers' authority legitimises the hierarchical social relations based on age and conveys the message of not questioning those who are superior by emphasising the followership towards them. These moral lessons enforce conformity towards those who are senior in age.

It is not just about telling people to respect the elders, but also about how to show respect to them. One way to respect elders is to refrain from using their names when addressing them and to use language that reflects the superior position of elders. Prakash informed me in the interview about an informal lesson offered by a teacher regarding respectful interaction with elders. Prakash says:

"… Once, I used the language of the village or home (like *re be te*) in school. Sir, scolded and said "this is a school, not your home". Scold others also…They tell us to call elders brother and sister (*bhaiya or didi*) and you as *ap (*addressing in a respectful way, normally used for elders or superiors in Hindi)...For example, in the village, when someone is asking for a young person, as you come here, then says *tum yaha aao* [you come here, this represents lower or subordinate positions in hierarchy, especially in terms of age]. [When addressing someone who is older or higher in hierarchy, then use the phrase] *ap yaha aaeiye* (you come here, address to a superior) … "The educated person should know how to speak to whom".

In Hindi, the word 'you' is used in two ways: *tum* (you) is used for younger people or those in lower positions in the hierarchy, while *ap* (you) is used for elders or those in higher positions. Prakash explains that teachers want students to use the term 'ap' for older people to show respect and acknowledge their superiority. Thus, teachers used their authority to convey a message that internalised the hierarchy of age in everyday interactions with elders.

Prakash's reflection shows that being ‘educated’ means having internalised the social hierarchy based on age.

It can also be interpreted from the data that obeying elders or acceptance of social norms are enforced through constructing ‘good’ students. Although the ‘goodness’ of a student encompasses multiple aspects that I will elaborate on at relevant points, adhering to social norms of age hierarchy is an important constituent of it. for instance, Girija says, “…a ‘good’ girl listens to parents and does not reverse (talk back) order (of elders)”.

In this context, Girija has internalised the message of conformity propagated through discourses regarding ‘respecting’ elders as a virtue. Largely, it conveys an inherent message of not questioning the hierarchical relationship between elders and younger people, which is often characterised by missing equality or independence. Moreover, Hemlata considers respecting elders and teachers an essential educational aim. She says, ‘Mother, father, and ‘Guru’ (which means teachers) are important. If we do not respect these three, then our education is meaningless’.

Going beyond narratives about following and respecting elders, Himanshu questions adults who have degrees (education) and have acquired economic (social) mobility yet do not follow elders in the traditional sense (respect elders or follow elders). Himanshu is of the opinion that even though one achieves economic mobility through education, this does not mean one should not ‘respect’ their elders. Himanshu says:

> “Education does not mean you don’t have to respect your elders, in-laws, and parents…One should not become high profile (or show off in terms of being modern and not respecting or conceding to hierarchy) … Things should be within limits (behaviour)”.

The above narrative re-emphasises the inherent (expected) role of education in enforcing the hierarchy. Students understand what it means to be an ‘educated’ person. It essentially means someone with an embodied hierarchy of age, reflected in interactions with elders by not questioning hierarchy and by showing obedience and acceptance of the subordinate position of young persons.

I asked a participant a reflective question to explore the embodied dispositions of conformity shaped through hierarchical age relations. I asked Hemlata to reflect on imaginary conditions where the older person is offering wrong information. How would she respond to that? Hemlata says that first she would take the right side of the discussion, but if an elder person insists, she would accept the wrong side because it is morally wrong to speak against an elder person, or the elder might be annoyed.

> "Dinesh- Suppose there is an older person, and you realise that he/she is saying that is wrong. How will you respond to that?
>
> Hemlata- Then what can we say? They are elders! If we say something, it is not good to speak against them. They will say that when we (elders) are speaking, she (Hemlata) does not like (that). I can say a few words. But when (he or she is) repeating the same thing, then what can we do? When elders are saying something, then softly tell them that what they are saying is not right. But if they insist, then accept it (we should accept it)".

The above example signals embodied conformity towards prevailing social relations defined in terms of age.

Practices of hierarchy originating from age differential not only shape the dispositions of conformity but also embody hierarchies as affect, which is reflected through feelings of 'respect'. The feeling of respect is also substantiated by propagating it as a moral value and characteristic of an 'educated' person. In the following subsection, a discussion is presented on how gender-based hierarchies are enacted and their role in shaping cognitive and affective dispositions.

5.3.2 Practices of gender hierarchy and its role in shaping students' dispositions

The study's findings show the prevalence of the narrative of equality of boys and girls. Popular school narratives suggest that boys and girls are equal and that there is no

discrimination. However, upon closer examination of school life, gender hierarchy becomes apparent. Practices of gender hierarchy include practices that reinforce the idea that girls are physically weaker than boys, restrictions on the freedom of girls, moral lessons in favour of prevailing gender roles in the family and feminine qualities (expectations). These practices legitimise gender hierarchy. Moreover, gendered practices signal potential to shape the cognitive dispositions of students towards conformity. Moreover, gender hierarchy is inculcated within individuals and realised as affective dispositions of 'respect' and 'honour' of the family.

The findings evidence that teachers' gendered practices consolidate the prevailing hierarchical gender relations. One way of realising gender hierarchy is through the differential punishment of boys and girls by some teachers. These practices convey a hidden meaning that boys are physically stronger and girls are weaker. Descriptions of classroom activities by students in the interview show that boys get more severe physical punishment compared to girls. Participants highlighted that boys receive more severe punishment than girls for similar mistakes. Himanshu says sometimes boys and girls get equal punishment, while other times boys get more than girls. He does not know why boys get more punishment. Himanshu says:

> "…sometimes boys get more punishment than girls…I don't know, sir, why? That is their matter (teachers' matter). But when there is a madam, [she] gives equal punishment, in fact, more to girls, while male teachers do less to girls".

It signifies that males (male teachers) have implicit bias towards girls, that girls are physically weaker, which is further substantiated by other students. Mahesh highlights the probable assumptions that male teachers may make when dealing with girls and boys. He says:

> "Girls get less [punishment] because girls start crying when [they] get punishment (corporal or beating). And there are some girls who are ready from the start. When they get one stick, they start crying. Even sir also leaves them. Boys get more punishment than girls".

Mahesh's narration highlights possible teacher biases regarding girls' physical strength. The above example also underlines teachers' as well as students' possible assumption that girls cannot endure physical pain and start crying if they get physical punishment. In fact, on occasions, teachers explicitly justify more punishment to boys, highlighting that boys are stronger than girls. Suman remembers one of the incidents where the teacher explicitly justified the differential physical punishment of boys and girls. Suman narrates:

> "When teachers use a stick, they tend to punish boys more severely than girls. Boys say (laughingly), Sir, you are discriminating (on the basis of gender). But sir, replies, what discrimination! You are strong (for boys), and these people (for girls) are weak. That is why they are beaten less strongly".

All the girls in the interviews accepted, directly or hesitantly, the differential punishment for boys and girls. While most girls do not know precisely why girls get differential punishment, some try to defend the practice. For example, Seema accepts that boys get more punishment than girls. However, she attributed more punishment to boys for their poor academic performance, punctuality, and attention to their schoolwork. Seema explains:

> "Because they (boys) are poor in their studies and do not complete their work on time, their notebooks are also not complete, while the girls' work is completed on time. That is why they get more punishment… Boys do not work properly, which is why they are punished. Boys don't work and say, "Let's accept punishment for now, then it is over, and you do not have to work".

The justification offered by Seema in the above statement may be valid; however, it can also be interpreted as implying that differential punishment is implicitly guided by the understanding that girls are weaker and boys are stronger. Moreover, it is possible that girls are more conforming and readily accept whatever is asked of them, thereby deviating less from set norms, and therefore requiring less punishment to bring them into line.

Even though students (especially girls) deny the physical weakness of girls and teachers' rhetoric around equal treatment to boys and girls, the messages imposed through everyday practices shape the dispositions that, in turn, influence practices. In this case, the physical weakness of girls (an imposed message) affects their participation in sports. When discussing sports, girls mentioned that most of them do not go to the playground during the sports period, preferring to stay in their classrooms. Female participants from the social science stream typically do not participate in sports. Suman explains:

> "…the problem is that girls from the arts side (social science stream) do not play. Then, with whom are we going to play? And badminton rackets are also limited, so how many of us can play? I want to play, but I have no chance to play".

Suman does not believe in the narrative of girls being weaker than boys, but shows her helplessness in participating in sports, as other girls do not participate. Even though she wishes to be physically stronger, it would lead to her not participating in sports. Thus, the message about the weakness of girls is accepted by all or some, but it shapes other practices of the school that influence the physical strength or psyche of girls. Thus, practices of teachers on differential corporal punishment enforce the masculine domination through recognising physical endurance as a criterion in schools.

The interview data seem to suggest that the school is engaged in the imposition of gendered cultural values of femininity. Some students discuss the role of school in fostering *Sanskar* (traditional socio-cultural values). The idea of *Sansakar* is loaded with gender-specific expectations and norms. One of the implicit aims of education is to prepare girls for the feminine role, especially by modifying the language of interaction, such as speaking slowly and submissively. Girls who imbibe traditional cultural values, being submissive, speak politely (low voice), are considered 'educated' girls in the family. Hemlata describes the aim of education and the characteristics of an 'educated' girl in the interview. She explains:

> "…it is not always necessary that when you study, you get the job. But learn to sit and stand in society (means a way of interaction). Language to speak and interact. When we sit in society (community), they should realise that we are educated…we learn how

> to speak in different places and conditions. Behave according to conditions. We even learn the same things from the elders of the family and community".

Moreover, Himanshu connects cultural values with respect and honour for the family. He further emphasises the importance of cultural values (hierarchically gendered) that need to be protected, despite getting higher education.

> "…with education, things are changing, but people should take care of the honour and respect of the family in society. This does not mean you complete higher education and do not respect elders. *Sanskar* (cultural values) is important… everything is needed in life, education (academic), and *Sanskar* (cultural values)".

From Himanshu's narration, it can be interpreted that gender hierarchy is a cultural value that should be taught in school. He expects that schools should teach girls how to conform to the gender hierarchy and gendered roles.

The discursive construction of 'good' girl is another means through which gender relations are legitimised and enforced. Schools define and impose certain characteristics of a 'good' girl. Girls clearly understand the characteristics of a 'good' girl. All the girls generally talked on similar lines about the attributes of a 'good' girl. These characteristics are the result of the expectations, discourses, and practices of both the family and the school. Soft, submissive language is the most important characteristic of a 'good' girl. Along with that, an unquestioning follower of teachers (elders at home) and good in studies are additional characteristics of a 'good' girl. Some girls added proper behaviour (not questioning) and proper clothing (adhering to accepted norms) as symbols of 'good' girls. For instance, Girija explains the characteristics of 'good' girls as follows:

> "…those who get good marks or first in the study (are good girls) and the language of interaction (*boli bhasha)* is good …if one is beautiful but the language is foul (*kadavi*) then what meaning does it have (beauty is meaningless) …Those who listen to teachers. It should not be like- good in the study but come to school without (a proper) uniform, then the teacher will say (scold or rebuke)".

Additionally, Hemalata highlights some more attributes of a ‘good’ girl.

> “… (One who) walks on the right path. Listen to them (parents and teachers). Interacting (according to) to the level of the person – use proper language. Respect elders. (Proper) way of walking... In school, listen to teachers, be good in studies and (wear) proper clothes”.

From the above two excerpts, it is clear that the formation of a ‘good’ girl involves an implicit understanding of bodily control in terms of speaking and interactions, which is missing in terms of the formation of a ‘good’ boy. Gendered expectations and practices shape dispositions of conformity. These dispositions provide unthought guidance towards not analysing the gendered hierarchy but rather following the suggestions of authorities, especially teachers in this context.

Gendered roles are constructed discursively and enforced by the teachers through inspections in morning assembly, and breaking norms leads to punishment. There are different school uniforms for the boys and girls. It is ensured that girls and boys wear their own uniforms. The boys' uniform is pants and a shirt, while the girls’ uniform is a *salwar kameez.* All the participants (except Mahesh) found that an obligatory separate school uniform for boys and girls is a good thing and should continue. Mahesh thinks pants and shirts will ease girls' participation in physical activities compared to *salwar kameez.* Mahesh says, “*What* is there is fine. But I think pants and a shirt for both will be good, because girls can run more easily and practice physical activities properly when wearing pants”.

School uniforms are inspected during the morning assembly, and teachers and school principals ensure that all students meet the clothing standards. Once, Suman came to school in casual jeans, pants and a T-shirt. The school principal raised moral questions about the family. Suman narrates:

> “… Our Ketan sir (school principal) does too much. Once my school clothes were not dry. So, (I) wore jeans pants (even though) that were not too much tight. He said in

> the morning assembly, “are you a boy? You should wear *a salwar kameez (a* common Indian dress for girls)”. Then, I said, if one does not have a *salwar kameez,* then? He said, “Do you wear similar clothes at home? (negatively commenting), ok, then how do your family members allow you to wear such kinds of clothes (surprisingly)?”. So, he is too much...Then, I said I would not wear it again. So, he said, “you all (girls) should wear *salwar kameez* at home and at school”.

The message was clear and loud: girls should adhere to school norms regarding clothing. The principal also expects gender norms to extend to the family in relation to clothing. If a girl does not wear the expected clothes, it is a ‘moral’ question mark on the family. Therefore, teachers impose a gender hierarchy as a means of upholding family honour, which is affectively realised.

Discourse around the ‘educated’ and ‘good’ girl imposes a set of values of submissiveness in terms of language, interaction, and expression, as well as stricter control of clothing. Teachers' pedagogical authority plays a crucial role in defining these characteristics or in setting expectations and imposing them through schooling in two ways: one, explicitly talking about or implementing them; and two, tacitly remaining silent about unequal gender roles or treatment.

Except for cursory statements like boys and girls are equal and there should be no discrimination, there is no explicit, critical engagement with the gendered role and gender-related issues. Some of the common issues girls raised based on their experiences include restricted mobility of girls outside the home environment, gendered roles in families, dowry, more religious orientation of girls, and others. Schools completely ignore these issues that are crucial to gender equality. None of the participants (except Suman) could tell specific instances when the teacher was engaged critically with gender issues in the classroom. For instance, I asked Seema if she remembered any incident when the teacher talked about the equality of boys and girls. She doesn’t remember a specific instance when teachers discussed gender equality.

However, Kusum says that sometimes teachers say that one should not discriminate between boys and girls. Kusum finds no discrimination at school, but she experiences discrimination in the village. Kusum says:

> "Yes, there is a discussion in school that boys and girls should not be treated differently. No one is treated differently in school. But in the village, the story is different. Whatever works in the village, there is always a question: He is a boy; he can do it; you are a girl; you will not be able to do that. But in school, there is no such difference".

This is an expression of rhetoric that boys and girls are equal in school, while I discussed above how discrimination is practised in school.

To sum up the discussion on practices of gender hierarchy, it can be underscored that the school imposes/legitimises the physical superiority of boys. The discursive construction of 'good' and 'educated' girls plays a role in shaping and informing the conforming dispositions of students, particularly girls. Teachers use their authority in legitimising gender roles and expectations and embody gender hierarchy as a moral affective value of family honour and respect. In the next subsection, I discuss how schools reinforce the caste hierarchy.

5.3.3 Practices of caste and shaping of students' dispositions

Caste is another social hierarchy which is reinforced through schooling. The data suggest that moral lessons in favour of endogamy play a role in legitimising caste-based practices. These lessons play a role in reinforcing the caste hierarchy by instilling a sense of 'family honour' and shaping dispositions of conformity towards caste relations. This section elaborates on how a school contributes to the production of 'affect' related to family honour and conformity through its practices. Moreover, I also present a case, through a critical interpretation of data, that the interaction of the disposition of conformity and the disposition of honour shows potential to contribute to the production of caste relations. Finally, this section examines the probable connection between dispositions of conformity and students'

engagement with the practice of untouchability, as well as its potential role in perpetuating caste relations.

The interpretation of the data suggests that students recognise explicit caste-based practices or relations prevailing in society, including untouchability, caste conflict at the local level, and caste-based discrimination in recruitment in government services or other public places, as well as the implicit caste-based practice of endogamy. However, in terms of caste-based relations, all the students talked about untouchability. In terms of school, all participants clearly stated that they never felt caste discrimination in school, and at the same time, discussions about caste-based discrimination are rare in the school. This context provided a foundation for examining whether a school plays a role in perpetuating caste inequality in contexts where discussions and explicit realisations of caste are largely absent.

Endogamy is a dominant caste-based practice in Indian society. The practice of marrying within the caste/ sub-caste group. Almost all sections of Indian society predominantly practise it. Though the country's law provides freedom, support, and protection, marrying outside the caste and inter-caste marriage are socially heinous acts. Those who marry outside the caste are met with social outcasts and sometimes physical violence. In some cases, couples are killed by their families, which is known as 'honour killing'. Most participants favour the same caste or subcaste marriage to protect the family's honour within the community.

The study's findings underscore that teachers adopted two approaches to addressing caste-based issues, particularly endogamy: supporting endogamy through moral lessons and maintaining tactical silence on the issue. Some participants say they do not remember if there was a discussion about endogamy in the class, while some students talk about moral lessons offered by some teachers in support of same-caste marriages. Teachers used their moral authority to convey a message through informal lessons. Honour of the family is a standard plank used by teachers and families to support endogamous practices. Girija recounts an incident in which a female teacher provided a moral lesson supporting endogamy, justifying the practice as a tradition and a means of protecting the family's honour. Girija says:

> "…not much discussion in school. Sometimes, Madam says from her side that one should go with Mummy and Papa (mother and father) and listen to Mummy and Papa, never do (anything) of your own will (inter-caste marriage)".

In another case, Seema recounts how a female teacher offered a lesson in support of same-caste marriages. Seema narrates:

> "…in class 8, one madam was saying that marriage should be done with permission from the family. For the happiness of the family. The life partner parents choose should go with it. Stay in the discipline. There are some people who run away from home to marry in another caste, but you all do not do that. Our Hindi teacher (Manoj sir) also says a similar thing".

Conformity is often instilled through primary pedagogical work in families and is reinforced through moral lessons in school. Thus, through schools, it gets further consolidated. Hemlata says, "It is fine, sir. It is good to marry within one's own caste. Why is it not good? It is fine. Some people have a different opinion, but for me it is good. It is very good to marry in your own caste".

The above examples suggest that caste is emotionally tied to family honour, which is produced within the family and consolidated in the school. As it is 'morally wrong' to breach the practice, it also conveys the message not to question it and to assert that one is not an independent person, choosing a partner outside the caste system. Thus, moral lessons in school in favour of endogamy play a role in reinforcing dispositions of conformity towards social relations. The implicit message is not to break the caste boundaries. Breaking the caste boundary for marrying outside the caste is 'dishonour' to the family; therefore, caste positionality is internalised as honour of the family. Thus, the feeling of honour is rooted in maintaining caste hierarchy. In other words, caste hierarchy is incorporated within individuals as affect of family 'honour'.

The reflection of students on the practice of endogamy represents their embodied dispositions. Students not only support the endogamy but also give justifications for it. Students also use the same justification to support the practice cited by teachers, which is

the honour of the family. Moreover, students cite difficulties faced by the families when someone goes for inter-caste marriages. Himanshu supports the practice because not following it would result in an insult to the family. Himanshu says, "… it is generally fine. Some people marry in other caste, it causes insult (to family) in the society. They are ostracised from social functions and many times family functions". Similarly, Nitish wants to continue the practice of endogamy because it is tradition. He says, "One should do (marry) in the same caste. These are coming from the old days and are based on tradition. So, [practice should] continue".

Except for three participants who claim that there should be freedom to marry according to one's wish (Suman, Vaibhav, and Mahesh), all other students are of the opinion that one should marry within the caste. Data also suggests that the disposition towards family honour and conformity provides unthought guidance for the perpetuation of endogamy, which, in turn, would reproduce caste relations. Dispositions of conformity formed through schooling develop a propensity to accept relations rather than reflect on and challenge existing relations and practices. This comes down to school practices that develop a propensity towards non-questioning and dependent agency. They do not imagine an alternative order. This is visible in Hemalata's narration. She finds the practice of endogamy fine (quote cited above) despite the country's legislation giving freedom and protection to the choice of marriage. Thus, the above discussion suggests that the interaction between conformity and the affective dimension of honour fosters a positive propensity to engage in endogamy. This interaction can contribute towards the reproduction of caste inequality through favouring and engaging in endogamy.

Students' reflection on the practice of untouchability

Untouchability is a social practice where a person of the privileged caste/ subcaste does not inter-dine with a member of the lower castes (a person belonging to the Scheduled Castes). In fact, a person from the upper caste/ subcaste takes steps to save their kitchen utensils that lower caste people may touch. It represents a form of caste-based discrimination cited by the participants. Though participants recognised that it has reduced compared to past generations or times, it is still in practice in one form or another. Although the law bans untouchability, all participants unanimously stated that it is still practised. In her narrations, Girija explains how it is practised. Girija says:

> "…many people do discriminate based on caste. But they should not do that. For the lower caste, they are told not to touch their items (cooking utensils). They (people from the upper or privileged caste) also use insulting words while talking (*re te kah ke bulate hai)*. However, it has decreased significantly compared to earlier times… People from the upper caste keep separate utensils (for the people of the lower castes). If they (people from the lower caste) come, then those separate utensils are used to serve water and tea. There are some people like that, but there is a lot of improvement now… Earlier, those who were from lower castes were not allowed to come into the house or touch anything from their home. Grandfather and others told (us)… Now, only those from the *Thakur* and *Brahmin* (who belong to the upper caste) do, and others do not. Some of them are also not doing that (which means they are not practising untouchability)".

Untouchability, on the one hand, means social discrimination; on the other, it is an expression of social hierarchy. Untouchability is inflicted by those social groups (castes) that are privileged castes on people belonging to lower castes. Thus, the practice of untouchability is also an expression of hierarchy between castes. While discussing untouchability, participants frequently use the terms' upper caste' and 'lower caste', indicating that they understand hierarchical social relations and their impact.

Findings suggest that, except for a few cases, where teachers casually speak about untouchability in class while dealing with the Civics subject in secondary classes, there is hardly any discussion on caste-based discrimination in the school. Students say sometimes, a few teachers casually say we are equal, and no one should be discriminated against based on caste. I asked Kusum if she remembered any discussion on caste-based discrimination from her social science classes in lower grades. Kusum says she does not remember much at this stage.

> "…very little (I remember about the caste-related discussion). There is mostly little discussion when there is something in the syllabus, which is also not much openly. That is why we have less understanding of it. Whatever taught us that much, we know. If it had been openly discussed, then I might have learned something more".

Based on the findings on the caste-based practices, I argue that dispositions of conformity influence students' engagement with practices of untouchability. When students develop habitual patterns of non-questioning towards social relations, they tend not to reflect on or challenge the relations or practices of self and others. The same pattern is evident in the practice of untouchability. For instance, students say that students (or their families) do not practice untouchability and do not believe in it. However, it comes out in the conversation that many students are hesitant to share their utensils for food and drink with people from lower castes. To illustrate this point, I will use the specific case of Kashish. Kashish in her initial response, says her family does not practice untouchability; however, while talking about a specific case, she revealed that her family engages in the practice of untouchability. Kashish says:

> "Dinesh- Do you think there is discrimination based on caste?
>
> Kashish- It is stopped now (untouchability), but it was earlier.
>
> Dinesh- Do you (your family) allow migrating labour (nomadic groups) to touch your cooking utensils?
>
> Kashish- No sir, forget about touch. We do not drink water if they touch it because they do not have cleanliness in their houses. That is why [we] do not [allow] them to touch it".

Kashish's example not only highlighted the deep-rooted aspect of untouchability. As Kashish is predisposed to not reflect on or challenge the practice of untouchability, despite her expression that it is reduced and she does not practice it, she and her family engage in it, which in turn reproduces caste relations. Thus, the school's role in developing conforming dispositions, characterised by a propensity for non-reflective or non-challenging attitudes, provides unthought or pre-thought guidance not to critique caste-based practices. Therefore, dispositions of conformity provide a foundation for the perpetuation of caste relations.

Caste-based practices of untouchability and endogamy are founded on unequal caste relations, which are formed in families and reinforced/ unchallenged in schools. Schools, as important institutions with the potential to transform dispositions rooted in caste hierarchy, often end up reinforcing them by shaping students' dispositions. Moral lessons in favour of endogamy reinforce caste hierarchy as emotive dispositions of 'honour', as well as reinforce

conforming dispositions. Embodied caste hierarchy through practices of endogamy and untouchability generates caste-based practices, thus reproducing caste-relations.

In this section, I elaborated on the role of a school in enforcing social hierarchies of age, gender, and caste through its hierarchical practices. The focus was on explaining how teachers employed their authority to shape the dispositions constitutive of students' habitus. The role of teachers in enforcing social hierarchies mostly remained unchallenged by the students. School practices of hierarchy shape the conforming dispositions and embody social hierarchies as feelings of respect and family honour. This section presents two kinds of information: a discussion of how practices of hierarchy shape dispositions, and two students' reflections on practices and relations reveal their dispositions. Moreover, I illustrated how embodied dispositions show a propensity towards prevailing social relations or their unthought responses in favour of prevailing hierarchical practices.

5.4 Conclusion

The present chapter provides evidence that school practices of authority, obedience, and hierarchy shape students' dispositions towards conformity. Moreover, it underlines that these practices also reinforce social hierarchies, which are realised as feelings of respect, fear, and honour. These practices largely consist of a set of unofficial school practices. These practices are predominantly present in the data generated using the BNIM method, with a focus on students' schooling experiences. Practices of authority legitimise the superior position of teachers and their role as pedagogic authority in instilling messages among students. At the same time, they shape the students' dispositions towards conformity and inculcate teachers' hierarchically superior positions as a feeling of 'respect'. The practices of obedience enforce subordinate positions for students, making them comply with the norms, rules, and expectations of their teachers through practices of disciplining/ punishment, control, inspection, and surveillance. These practices also embody conformity as a disposition among students and the hierarchical relation between teachers and students as an affective disposition, as 'fear'. Practices of hierarchy represent a set of school practices that legitimise and reinforce the prevailing social hierarchies of age (senior-junior/adult-young), gender, and caste. Hierarchical practices reinforce conforming dispositions and inculcate social hierarchies as feelings of 'respect' and 'honour'. In terms of caste-based

practices, the practice of endogamy plays an important role in reinforcing conformity and caste hierarchy as an affective disposition of family honour. Embodied virtues of non-critique, which present important characteristics of conforming dispositions, show potential for the perpetuation of caste relations by providing unthought guidance to engage with caste relations.

The findings of this study suggest that the school predominantly engages in the production of conforming dispositions. Thus, the school is involved in shaping cognition in a way which signifies the acceptability of prevailing relations and practices. Moreover, the school also acts as a site of reinforcing social hierarchy. In other words, the school is engaged in legitimising and enforcing hierarchy as dispositions. Dispositions that provide unthought and pre-thought guidance for engaging with social relations and practices. It may intuitively direct thoughts and perceptions that consider hierarchy as ‘normal’ and justified. Thus, through practices of authority, obedience, and hierarchy, the school engages in shaping cognition towards conformity, while also enforcing and legitimising social hierarchies. These circumstances raise questions about the role of schools as a site of social transformation and their role in inculcating democratic values, such as criticality and equality. In the next chapter, I will discuss the current study's findings in relation to the broader community of practice, particularly Bourdieusian literature that focuses on school practices, habitus, and the perpetuation of social inequality, as well as the role of the school as a site of transformation.

Chapter 6: Discussion

The current chapter examines the findings from the previous chapter in relation to relevant literature and offers a Bourdieusian analysis of unofficial school practices involving authority, obedience, and hierarchy, and their role in shaping conforming dispositions. Moreover, the chapter discusses the role of school practices in perpetuating caste inequality and inculcating undemocratic virtues. Drawing on evidence from the previous chapter, I discuss the role of a school as a reproductive site, while highlighting specific points whose alteration could enable schools to act as a transformative site. Theoretically, thesis employs Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, practice (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu, 1990; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) and the idea of conformity (viewed as the opposite of criticality) drawn from critical social science (Agger, 2013, Fay, 1987,1996; Meyer-Emerick, 2005; Sayer, 2009; Watts and Hodgson, 2019) to explain perpetuation of social inequality through schooling. The chapter also explains how taken-for-granted, unofficial, school practices contribute to shaping students' cognitive dispositions towards conformity and affective dispositions as respect, fear, and honour.

The chapter begins by examining how unofficial school practices shape students' dispositions. In the current study, practices of authority, obedience, and hierarchy shape students' habitus, which is constituted of cognitive and affective dispositions. This research engages with debates in practice theory, which explore the role of school practices in shaping students' habitus and their potential to reproduce social inequalities. The following section discusses embodied aspects of habitus, particularly how hierarchy within schools and society is embodied as affect. It also engages in discussions around cognitive dispositions and their potential role in maintaining social inequalities. Based on the findings, I contend that dispositions of conformity constitute a habitual, non-questioning approach to social hierarchies, providing un- or pre-thought guidance for engaging with them. By examining the embodied affectivity of caste and conforming dispositions, I explain how caste hierarchies are perpetuated through schooling. The study's findings also support the view that emotive and cognitive dispositions act in tandem and play a crucial role in reproducing social inequalities (Juros, 2022; Turner, 2010). This can be observed in the current study, in terms of students' engagement with endogamous practices, where conforming dispositions and incorporated feelings of honour interact to reproduce caste relations. The final section problematises the role of school as a site of social transformation. Based on the findings, I

argue that conforming dispositions characterised by non-questioning and subdued agency limit the possibilities for social change and, in fact, serve as sites for social reproduction. Moreover, the school falls short of its expected role in inculcating democratic values such as equality, liberty, and critical thinking.

6.1 Unofficial School Practices and Their Role in Shaping the Students' Habitus

This study's findings suggest that school practices of authority, obedience, and hierarchy shape or reinforce cognitive dispositions of non-analytical, non-challenging, and subdued agency and affective dispositions of fear, respect, and honour, which constitute the students' habitus. Although Bourdieusian scholars discuss the affective, cognitive, and bodily aspects of habitus (Wacquant, 2011, 2014; Dalal, 2016), the current study captures only the affective and cognitive aspects of dispositions reinforced through school practices. The study theoretically advances Bourdieusian scholarship by adding a distinct set of practices (authority, obedience, and hierarchy) to the existing curricular and non-curricular practices that contribute to the reproduction of social inequalities. Moreover, it extends the discussion of teachers' authority, the violence perpetrated against students in Indian schools, and the theoretical and empirical implications for shaping habitus. One significant point of discussion is that unofficial pedagogic practices similar to official pedagogic practices of school (Cui, 2017; Evans, 2020; Francis and Mills, 2012; Gale et al., 2019; Handelsman, 2011; Loh & Sun, 2020; Monteiro Nascimento & Markic, 2025; Reay, 2001) play a crucial role in the reproduction of social inequalities.

The study's findings empirically support Bourdieu's explanation of the role of practices in shaping/ reinforcing dispositions that shape habitus (Bourdieu, 1990). An important aspect of practices is their ability to embody implicit meanings unconsciously through everyday activities without explicitly discussing them (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Teachers at this school do not explicitly convey the message that authorities should not be questioned, but students derive this message from school practices that emphasise authority, obedience, and hierarchy. Similarly, messages about respect, honour, and fear of authorities are conveyed through these practices. Incorporation of affective dispositions as habitus in this study is similar to what Bourdieu himself demonstrated through his Algerian study

(Bourdieu, 1990). He explained that the fear of supernatural power is realised through practice; it is not merely by warning about supernatural powers that fear develops, but through engaging in multiple activities—utterances and ritual practices with hidden meanings of danger and supernatural power—to embody the fear of supernatural beings as habitus (Bourdieu, 1990). The entire group participates in establishing relations between the child and the wider world. It is clear from the discussion that implicit, coherent meanings are embodied through practices, which constitute an individual's dispositions.

This research contributes to Bourdieusian studies that examine school practices in relation to participants' habitus, which play a role in reproducing social inequalities (Gale et al., 2019; Cui, 2017; Hiss and Peck, 2020; Ingram, 2009; Leaney, 2019; Mills and Gale, 2010; Stahl, 2015; Watkins and Noble, 2013). This study explores different sets of school practices and different sets of dispositions in a different context, thereby widening the applicability of Bourdieu's conceptual framework in the rural Indian schooling system. Some scholars analyse school practices to reveal teachers' habitus, which plays a role in reproducing social inequalities (Cui, 2017; Gale et al., 2019). The other group of studies focuses on school practices where the dominant group's culture is imposed on the students of disadvantaged groups, resulting in exclusion from active participation in schooling or *othering* of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, reproducing social inequalities (Ingram 2009; Hiss and Peck 2020; Horvat and Antonio 1999; Mills and Gale 2010; Stahl 2015). Another set of studies focuses on the role of school/teachers' practices in shaping the habitus of students, which plays a role in the reproduction of social inequalities (Leaney, 2018; McLeod, 2000; Watkins and Noble, 2013). This research aligns with the final group of studies, as it focuses on the role of school practices in shaping students' habitus; however, it differs in some respects.

Although this study focuses on students' habitus and its role in perpetuating social inequality, it differs from Watkins and Noble's (2013) study in its use of distinct practices, its focus on different types of dispositions, and its exploration of distinct forms of inequality. Watkins and Noble (2013) demonstrate that the practice of disciplining, both within and beyond the school (in curricular and co-curricular tasks), is a mechanism through which the body is capacitated for learning in schools. Thus, they employ practices to explain how 'human capacities are acquired', specifically capacities to engage in academic tasks (Watkins and Noble, 2013, p. 140). Against the popular notion of discipline as a mechanism for control,

this study considers 'discipline as potentially enabling' (Watkins and Noble, 2013, p.8; see also Watkins, 2005). Students from diverse ethnic backgrounds develop distinct capacities for learning, which are reflected in different practices that perpetuate ethnic inequality in the Australian context. The present study highlights the role of unofficial practices in schools (practices of authority, obedience, and hierarchy) in shaping students' dispositions towards conformity and internalising social hierarchy as an affective disposition. Disposition of conformity predisposes students not to reflect on or challenge existing caste relations and dependent agency. This shows potential for engaging with caste relations in a non-critical manner. At the same time, affective dispositions of respect and honour provide un- or pre-thought guidance for continuation of hierarchical practices. Thus, dispositions of conformity and affective dispositions contribute towards the perpetuation of caste inequality.

Similarly, Leaney's study demonstrates that the processes of 'distinction', 'disagreement', and 'resistance' form the 'classed habitus' of working-class students, which contributes to the reproduction of social inequalities (Leaney, 2018, p. 207). My study is closer to Leaney's study in terms of capturing school practices (mainly unofficial) to explore the shaping of students' habitus (Leaney, 2018). However, it differs from Leaney's study on two grounds: one, I focus on practices of authority, obedience and hierarchy that are distinct from the practices Leaney deployed, namely *distinction, disagreement,* and *resistance*. Two, she discusses the formation and reinforcement of 'classed habitus as affect': a feeling of self-discipline, embarrassment, lower status, and a lack of abilities that directs students' actions in the form of inaction or resistance to modelled classroom activities (Leaney, 2018, p. 207). The current study presents the affective dispositions of fear, respect, and honour, as well as the cognitive disposition of conformity, reinforced through the school's secondary pedagogical work.

Authority of teachers, school practices, and violence (corporal and psychological punishment)

I presented in the findings chapter that in the Indian school, there is a prevalence of corporal and psychological violence, along with symbolic violence. The emphasis of schooling in inculcating *Sanskar* (cultural values) leads to legitimising the domination of teachers over the students, elders over the younger, and gender hierarchy. Inculcation of 'respect' and 'honour' as moral cultural values and construction of a 'good' student through schooling

causes symbolic violence. Symbolic violence is caused when the domination of a privileged group is enforced on the dominated, and the source of power that causes domination is hidden. In the above example, age and gender-based hierarchy is enforced as 'respect', honour, or *Sanskar.* A large number of Bourdieusian studies underline the aspects of symbolic violence in relation to school practices and their role in forming/reforming the habitus (Cui, 2017; Ingram, 2009; Hiss and Peck, 2020; Horvat and Antonio, 1999; Mills and Gale, 2010; Stahl, 2015). However, there is less focus on direct violence applied to students and its role in shaping habitus. It is not only this study, but also other Indian studies emphasise the widespread use of violence (both physical and psychological) as a disciplinary measure in schools (Anand and Dalal, 2022; Deka, 2014; Disha, 2013; Gogoi, 2014; Iyer, 2013; Thapan, 2014). This study, like other Indian studies (Sarangapani, 2003; Sriprakash, 2011), demonstrates that teachers possess strong pedagogic authority. Teachers employ this authority in the Indian context, not only inculcating conformity using practices that convey implicit messages, but also by using violent means of punishment and control, explicitly reinforcing conformity among students. Thus, Indian schooling shows potential to structure cognition towards conformity at a deeper level.

Teachers' authority in Indian schools is a contested domain. Many Indian studies identified teachers as *gurus* with authority (Deka, 2014; Gogoi, 2014; Saragpani, 2003). Some other studies discuss about teachers' complex power/positionality: who is powerless in overall administrative structure or hierarchy of the profession, but, in the classroom, they maintain 'aura of power' and 'command' which comes from traditional consideration of their role as *guru* (Kumar 2005, p. 88; see also Kale, 1970, Sriprakash, 2011). In the current study, the authority of teachers is similar to what Kumar cites as 'meek dictator'; that is, teachers are considered mainly as gurus with the authority to convey socio-cultural values, but in private schools, real power stays with the school owner or administrators (Kumar, 2005, p.73). Although appearing powerless within the school administration's hierarchy, they possess social legitimacy and agency to inculcate cultural norms and values in students. Moreover, they have possessed the authority to perpetrate symbolic, corporal and psychological violence.

The use of violence and the stronger authority of the teacher are important features of Indian schooling. Based on the study's findings, I contend that the current Indian school practices reduce students' agency to a greater extent. Thapar-Björkert et al. assert that hidden violence

removes the ‘agency and voice’ of the dominated (Thapar-Björkert et al., 2016**,** p**.**144), but the additional explicit violence subdued it further. Both kinds of violence contribute to inculcating the cultural messages deeply and uniformly within the individual. Habitus, which is more uniformly formed, possesses the potential to generate practices in settings outside the school (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). Therefore, the dispositions of non-questioning and subdued agency are entrenched more deeply in Indian schools, shaping the perceptions, inclinations, and actions towards accepting social relations, and conscious or unconscious thoughts about alternative orders are greatly diminished.

Institutional arrangements, such as the school in this study, shape students' behaviour, as Yoneyama (1999) describes in relation to Japanese High School students. She explains that the autocratic nature of education and ‘paternalistic’ teacher-student relations render students mere listeners, who are discouraged from contradicting or asking questions (Yoneyama, 1999, p. 86). The internalisation of these kinds of virtues leads to communication breakdown or closes the way of thinking, rather than just receiving information. According to her study, students tend to provide brief responses or use fixed sentences when answering questions and often fail to respond to open-ended questions (Yoneyama, 1999). Theoretically, in the current Indian school, authority of teachers pushes social relations to the level which is similar to what Mahar et al. describe as ‘archaic societies’, that is, ‘the objective structures are very stable, and the mental structures are reproduced almost completely’ that align with align with existing social structures (Mahar et al., 1990, p.16). Thus, the theoretical discussion and empirical findings of this study present a strong case for how schools can act as a site of social reproduction for the disadvantaged students and engage in inculcating undemocratic values. I am specifying the case of disadvantaged students because this is a low-fee private school meant for working-class students, located in a rural and deprived region, and students belong to socially and educationally deprived backgrounds. The following section discusses how the habitus of students plays a role in reproducing caste inequalities.

6.2 Cognitive and Affective Disposition, and Reproduction of Caste Inequality

The current study's findings suggest that school practices of authority, obedience, and hierarchy have an impact on the students’ habitus, which is partly constituted of cognitive

and affective dispositions. Cognitive dispositions present embodied conformity while affective dispositions refer to incorporated feelings of respect, fear and honour. The disposition of conformity provides unthought guidance to perceptions, thoughts and actions towards caste-based practices of untouchability and endogamy. The affective dispositions that present embodied social hierarchies offer unthought guidance in generating caste-based practices, which in turn contribute to the reproduction of caste relations. In this section, I discuss the mechanisms through which dispositions of conformity and affective dispositions contribute to the perpetuation of caste relations.

6.2.1 Conformity as cognitive disposition and perpetuation of caste hierarchy

The findings of this study indicate that practices of authority, obedience, and hierarchy generate conformity, characterised by non-questioning attributes and subdued agency. Conforming disposition presents a set of embodied cognitive attributes and skills, as well as their social formation (Lizardo, 2004; Nash, 2005a). The use of conformity as a cognitive disposition provides a framework for exploring the patterns of unconscious thought structured through school practices. Moreover, it offers unthought guidance for engagement with existing social relations. The distinction between cognitive and non-cognitive dimensions does not draw separate lines among different aspects of habitus, but rather the employment of cognitive aspects of disposition is to analyse 'thought processes' (Nash, 2005a, p. 603).

In the present research, conforming disposition refers to a habitual inclination or propensity towards not questioning existing relationships or practices. I consider the skills of cognition in terms of not asking questions from the perspectives of perceiving and acting in the context of social relations. Consideration of conformity as cognitive dispositions not only talks about habits of mind that are generative, but also their social formations through taken-for-granted social practices. This is similar to the conceptualisation of Bourdieusian scholars who employed cognitive dimensions of habitus as embodied skills of cognition to perform academic tasks or schoolwork (Watkins and Noble, 2013; Nash, 2003; see also Ignatow, 2009). The primary focus of these studies is to explain how the differential cognitive skills of students from various social groups contribute to varied academic performance and the perpetuation of social inequalities. However, the current study focuses on cognitive skills in relation to thought patterns in engagement with social practices. Moreover, with a focus on

not asking questions, cognition is less trained in terms of framing and asking questions that are revealing and challenging. I use the framework to understand whether students unconsciously or preconsciously perceive prevailing social relations as justified or as something that requires change, and whether they are inclined to ask/ not ask questions that explore and challenge these relations.

More specifically, Watkins and Noble (2013) employed scholastic habitus as a cognitive disposition, along with other dispositions, to explain the reproduction of ethnic inequalities in Australia. Similarly, Nash emphasises that the 'durable embodied cognitive schemes' acquired by students from various social classes differ, influencing their academic performance and reproducing social inequalities in the New Zealand educational context (Nash, 2003, p. 171). Unlike the aforementioned studies on the cognitive dimensions of habitus, the current study explains conforming dispositions as cognitive dispositions with the potential to engage with social inequalities in ways that contribute to the reproduction of social relations.

Based on the study's findings, I argue that an individual predisposed to conforming attributes does not interfere with existing social relations, either by avoiding analysis, questioning, or challenging caste relations. More specifically, students with conforming dispositions do not critically engage with the practice of untouchability that provides an opportunity for caste relations to remain unchallenged. Theoretically, conformity as a cognitive disposition shows a propensity of cognition not to think about social relations critically but rather to consider them as given (Agger, 2013; Fay, 1987). Lizardo underlined two characteristics of habitus as 'a perceptual and classifying structure' and 'a generative structure of practical action (Lizardo, 2004, p. 379). Cognitive dimensions of habitus consist of 'categories of perceptions' which assist in recognising and enacting 'pattern and meaning' without consciously thinking about the objects or processes (Wacquant, 2014, p.8). Habitus possess the characteristics of transferability, that is, rough coherence across different domains of practice within the group or class (Wacquant, 2016). Thus, the conforming disposition shaped/ reinforced through schooling develops patterns of non-questioning and offers frameworks for engaging with social relations within and outside the school.

The findings of this study show that, through embodied conformity, students are less likely to reflect analytically on the practice of untouchability. Despite claiming not to believe in or

participate in the practice of untouchability, students or their families often engage in it to some extent. The students' narration indicates that they consider the practice of untouchability as given, which signifies a key characteristic of conformity. That is, the conforming pattern of cognition that shapes perceptions and appreciation by taking things as given or not feeling the need to change (Sayer, 2009). With a subdued agency, they do not realise the power of independent thinking or action; instead, they follow whatever their family does. In the conversation, students say the practices of untouchability are wrong, but they lack the vocabulary or courage to challenge them, instead practising alongside their families. Thus, subdued agency plays a significant role by reducing individuals' capacity for independent thinking and action and by pushing them to conform to family and community norms. Based on the above discussion, I contend that students are less likely to engage critically with caste-based practices, which are essential to social transformation. Thus, conformity as a disposition shows potential for caste reproduction by embodying non-critique as a foundation that directs one's understanding and engagement with caste hierarchy.

6.2.2 Honour, respect, fear as affective dispositions and the role of 'honour' in the reproduction of caste hierarchy

Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of habitus, I emphasise that through the practices of authority, obedience, and hierarchy, social hierarchies of age, caste, and gender are inscribed on the body as affective dispositions of fear, respect, and honour (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990). Practices of school, in the form of moral lessons, reward and punishment, and inclusion and exclusion based on alignment with social ethos, embody social hierarchies as moral virtues that are emotionally realised. Through school practices, it is not only the hierarchy between student and teacher but also social hierarchies based on age, caste, and gender that are inscribed on the body, felt as affect.

The current study also aligns with Bourdieusian studies, which have employed the affective dimensions of habitus to explore the reproduction of social inequalities (Juros, 2022; Leaney, 2018; Reay, 2015). However, the current study contributes to expanding the discussion around the affective dimensions of habitus by empirically substantiating the theoretical and conceptual ideas developed by Threadgold (2020) and Ignatow (2009), namely, the embodiment of social norms and values as affect within individuals. Specifically, Reay

highlights emotive dispositions as tendencies and inclinations towards feelings of ‘fatalism, ambivalence, resilience, resentment, certainty, entitlement or even rage’ (Reay, 2015, p.10), while Juros' research emphasises the emotive schemas of ‘pride, shame and fear’ (Juros, 2022, p.71). Similarly, Leaney identified the emotive aspects of working-class children as being of lower status, accompanied by increased embarrassment and a stronger drive for self-discipline (Leaney, 2018). The current study partially supports the above studies (Juros, 2022; Leaney, 2018; Reay, 2015) in terms of discussing the fear that is embodied among students from working-class backgrounds towards teachers. However, it differs in terms of employing respect and honour as affective dimensions which incorporate social morality as affect, which is fundamentally hierarchical (Ignatow, 2009; Threadgold, 2022;). I further argue that with the internalisation of moral values of hierarchy, feelings of superiority and inferiority are embodied as affective schemes; individuals see hierarchy as necessarily good and desirable. This has an impact when students encounter caste-related hierarchies.

Drawing on Bourdieusian scholars' theoretical explication of the mechanisms that form affective dispositions, this research suggests that the affective dispositions of fear, respect, and honour are shaped through experiences in school (Threadgold, 2022; Turner, 2010). However, I capture how these affective dispositions are embodied in everyday school life. Institutional hierarchies of student-teacher relationships are embodied affectively as fear. Prevalent practices of punishment, both physical and psychological, as well as practices of surveillance and control, effectively embody fear among students. Moreover, students' reflections regarding student-teacher relations suggest that ‘respect’ is a recurring theme in their narratives. In the current study, the term ‘respect’ is used to denote hierarchical relations among participants. The participants commonly use the term 'respect' to denote the idea that teachers, parents, and elders are superior in the hierarchy and therefore warrant respect. Finally, the honour of the family, understood as an emotional/moral attribute, is reinforced through schooling. Students consider protecting family honour an important aspect for upholding family and community traditions. Teachers use their authority to exemplify honour as a virtue in daily school life, through direct moral lessons, reprimanding, or taking action against those who engage in acts deemed socio-culturally undesirable, while supporting students or actions that are considered ‘socio-culturally good’.

Not only are inequalities embodied in the body through practices, but also social interactions summon ‘emotions and feelings’, and structural inequalities come into existence and are *felt*

(Threadgold, 2020, p. 27). In the current research, the social hierarchy of relations is felt through emotions of fear, respect, and honour in interactions between teachers. In daily interactions, salutations, and academic and non-academic activities, students are required to follow norms and accept the superior positions of authority (here, teachers), which are affectively guided through respect, fear, and honour. These findings are consistent with those reported by Reay (2015). She argues that social inequalities are 'integrated into the psyche' while in some cases they cannot be internalised (Reay, 2015, p.22). Psychic economy of social relations is expressed in the form of feelings of 'ambivalence, inferiority and superiority, visceral aversions, recognitions and abjection' that are internalised in everyday interactions or practices (Reay, 2015, p.21; see also Reay, 2005). It offers affective dimensions to understanding 'privileges and disadvantages' (Reay, 2015, p.21).

Affect as embodied cultural value/ morality

The present study's findings show that hierarchy, as a cultural value, is propagated in the family and reinforced by schools. Social hierarchy is expressed through the acceptance of the superiority of elders, males, and upper castes/subcastes, and is practised through various discourses and practices that are considered moral values or norms. Alongside these hierarchies, the superiority of teachers or school authorities constitutes an additional layer. The key is that hierarchy becomes patterns of emotion (feelings of superiority and inferiority) inscribed on the body that are continuously repeated across contexts (Ignatow, 2009; Probyn, 2005; Threadgold, 2020). This empirical exploration helps substantiate Bourdieu's concept of habitus as an unconscious affect that guides action. The body acts as a 'repository' of values, forming the 'symbolic thought' (Bourdieu, 1990, p.68). Values and beliefs are instilled from childhood on and through the physical body (Bourdieu, 1990). A physical body carries thoughts and feelings on itself and defers conscious recall.

Threadgold argues that feelings are shaped by 'norms and expectations' of a specific social setting (Threadgold, 2020, p. 7). For Threadgold, 'social norms (symbols, values, morals, aesthetics, tastes, genres and so on) coalesce to become an affective order' (Threadgold, 2020, p. 11; see also Sayer, 2004). The values that enforce the hierarchy or favour the dominant group are considered valuable and acceptable: 'everyday encounters, moments and situations are filled with the heavy immanence of social hierarchies misrecognized as natural everyday social relations' (Threadgold, 2020, p. 106). The aforementioned conceptualisation

is consistent with the current study's findings, as virtues of hierarchy are embodied affectively in fear, respect, and honour among students. Most participants in the study were found to have a moral responsibility to follow the norms and values of family/neighbourhood, and school, which enforce a hierarchy of values.

The current study underscores that the fear of violence in the event of disobedience to authorities internalises the school's commanded or established rules, laws, and order. Moreover, it is morally disrespectful, defying the order of teachers and elders and a dishonour to family, in case the caste-based norms of endogamy and gender roles are not followed. In everyday interaction, recognition and reward for some morals, values, or actions, and 'social sanctions and stigma' on others, produce affective inclinations towards specific values, which are an important aspect of the dispositional aspect of habitus (Threadgold, 2020, p. 106). The inability of individuals to adhere to or to reach those values are affectively felt. The emotions motivate individuals to 'behave in a culturally acceptable fashion' (Rozin et al., 1999, p. 574). My findings are similar to Rozin et al.'s assertion that most participants emphasise social norms and values without considering alternatives, which is inherently hierarchical. The study's findings also suggest that most participants found it morally wrong to challenge or break the existing social relations.

Caste inequalities embodied as family honour: an affective aspect of habitus

The current study's findings are consistent with Lee's conceptualisation of caste as embodied affect, where he discusses disgust as an affect that perpetuates untouchability (Lee, 2021). In line with the above, the current study demonstrates that family honour, as an affect and expression of caste relations, influences the matrimonial practice. Family honour as an affect provides pre- or unthought guidance to matrimonial relations. In the name of protecting family honour, marriages are prohibited not only between castes but also among subcastes (Ashok and Rupavath, 2022). This supports the idea that each caste group has some form of feeling of superiority and inferiority towards other groups. However, the intensity of feelings of superiority and inferiority differ among caste groups, which is regulated by their specific positions in the caste hierarchy (Bhoi and Gorringe, 2023). Thus, the practice of endogamy, which is protected through the feeling of family honour, plays a crucial role in the perpetuation of the caste hierarchy.

This discussion provides opportunities to contribute towards expanding the affective theory of caste (Lee, 2021). Scholars employed Bourdieusian concept of habitus to discuss the embodied structure of caste. Caste operates as a durable structure that 'simultaneously constitutes both social and personal identity and macro-structural phenomena' (Gorringe and Rafanell, 2007, p. 102). Moreover, they discuss the cognitive features of embodied caste, 'which develop a specific manner of perceiving and symbolically evaluating the world' (Gorringe and Rafanell, 2007, p. 100). Pal asserts that 'Caste exists in the Indian psyche' (Pal, 2024, p. 122) while Guru and Surokkai talked about feelings of humiliation, indignity, and shame experienced by lower caste groups through the practice of untouchability, thus caste is emotively realised (Guru and Surokkai, 2019). The findings of the present study align with Guru and Surokkai's explication of the realisation of caste as affect (Guru and Surokkai, 2019). However, I present the feeling of honour and practice of endogamy as a means to explain the perpetuation of caste relations. Drawing on the present study, I argue that embodied family honour is a constituent of students' habitus that influences the caste-based practice of endogamy, thus reproducing caste relations.

This study aligns with Ombedt's assertions that caste possesses moral and ethical foundations (Ombedt, 2001, as cited in Guru and Surukkai, 2019). Endogamy is a caste-based practice, and affective dimensions of caste were more prominent in the current study. Family honour is an affective dimension through which endogamy is reinforced. The study's findings show that, in terms of endogamy, most of the students interviewed explicitly favour it. Participants offered justifications for endogamy as a tradition and argued that it should not be broken, as it would cause dishonour or insult to the family in society. Though the family and community forcefully protect the practice by imposing huge costs on actions in the form of physical violence, social and economic boycott of families and couples (Bidner and Eswaran, 2015). Participants imagine that breaking the practice of endogamy would be 'morally wrong' and a dishonour to the family.

One of the key aspects of habitus is its capacity to account for how social conditions/ structures are embodied subjectively. This generates practices that are in tune with social structures and produce dispositions. In the process, social structures are reproduced or transformed over time (Lizardo, 2004). Thus, the embodied affect of honour plays a role in guiding practices of endogamy, which continue to perpetuate existing caste relations (Abraham, 2014; Bidner and Eswaran, 2015; Chakraborty, 2018). At the same time, non-

questioning patterns of cognition mean not questioning existing relations. This pattern is also applied to caste relations. Alongside the affective realisation of caste relations, the cognitive dispositions of conformity implicitly support the practice by not critiquing endogamy. The aforementioned assertion is consistent with Juros's (2022) and Turner (2010) findings, who argue for the compounding impact of affect and cognitive aspects of dispositions in reproducing inequalities.

To sum up the section, conforming disposition, characterised as non-questioning attributes and subdued agency, provides unthought guidance for uncritical engagement with the caste-based practices of untouchability and endogamy. Drawing on the critical social sciences, critique is a foundational element of social transformation, and the embodied virtues of non-critique provide a theoretical basis for the perpetuation of caste relations (Agger, 2013; Browne, 2017; Sayer, 2009). Moreover, the hierarchy between teacher and student, as well as social hierarchies based on age, gender, and caste, are enforced through school practices, which are emotively realised as feelings of respect, fear, and honour. As affective dispositions provide unthought guidance for the generation of practices, family honour as affect offers unthought guidance to the constitution of the practice of endogamy. Thus, family honour as an emotive disposition plays a crucial role in the reproduction of caste relations.

As the school reinforces conforming and emotive dispositions, findings of this study raise questions about the transformative role of the school. Moreover, schools are also expected to inculcate democratic values, such as critical thinking and equality (NEP, 2020). However, the findings indicate the opposite direction in terms of the development of democratic values. The following problematises the role of school in social transformation and the production of democratic values.

6.3 Problematising the Role of School in Social Transformation and the Inculcation of Democratic Virtues

The preceding sections discussed how school practices of authority, obedience, and hierarchy structure students' habitus that possess the potential to reproduce caste inequality. This section begins by critically examining the role of schools in reproducing social

hierarchy, contrasting with their purported role as agents of social change. Education is both a means of social reproduction and an agent with potential to transform social inequality and hierarchy (Gerrard, 2013; Majumbdar and Mooij, 2011). This thesis argues that the school shapes students' dispositions towards conformity and embodies social hierarchy as affective dispositions. These dispositions play a role in reproducing caste inequality. Another expected role of schooling is to inculcate democratic values of critical thinking, equality, and autonomy that inform social and political democracy (NEP, 2020). The findings provide an opportunity to critically examine the role of schools in developing democratic values.

The significance of Bourdieu's work in exploring educational issues is in explaining how current education arrangements fail to bring about equity, rather perpetuate existing inequalities (English and Bolton, 2016; Mills and Gale, 2010). Mills and Gale (2010) argue that Bourdieu's work does not reflect pessimism towards education but rather serves as a point of reference for reforming the educational system towards a just society. Aligning with the aforementioned statement, this thesis's findings can serve as a starting point for discussing how schools can be transformative. The purpose of the research is not to blame teachers or the school, but rather to present a nuanced understanding of how social inequalities are reproduced and how transforming those situations or practices may, in turn, transform social relations.

Gerrard (2013) argues that theorisation of education for social change includes theories of emancipatory education and theories of social and educational reproduction (Gerrard, 2013). Building on this line of argument, this research employed Bourdieu's theory to explain the reproduction of inequalities, highlighting specific practices that contribute to the perpetuation of social relations. Emancipatory theories of education can be further utilised to discuss how education can be transformative, situating the above findings within a broader discussion (Apple, 2013; Freire, 1970; Gerrard, 2014). Gerrard (2014) proposes a transformative education model through her examination of past educational initiatives in Britain. She analysed Social Sunday School (SSS, around 1880-1920) and Black Saturday School (BSS, around the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s) in Britain. Moreover, this model shows promise of transforming oppressive social relations (Gerrard, 2014). Both BSS and SSS have three everyday purposes to achieve through educational initiatives: challenging 'wider social inequalities and injustices'; asserting their own histories, present and future capabilities through authority over knowledge; and shared identity of blackness and/or working class

and everyday experience of suffering and aspirations (Gerrard, 2014, p.186). A reflection on the above framework offers an insight into evaluating the role of the present school in bringing about social change. Drawing on the findings of this research, I highlight how a higher secondary school in rural Uttar Pradesh actively perpetuates social inequities and how it can be transformative.

This section begins by examining the cultural values of hierarchy propagated through the present school, placing them in relation to the values of equality it is supposed to enforce, and acting as a site for social change. Following this, I discuss how non-critical attributes are incorporated, in contrast to the critique of social relations, which has the potential to mitigate social inequities. The ways in which school practices undermine student agency, in contrast to the school's intended role of empowering agency, are discussed in more detail. The section concludes with a critical analysis of schools' role in educating students from disadvantaged groups, in relation to social change and the instillation of democratic values.

The findings of this study underscore that the school is involved in perpetuating social hierarchy and justifying it as a moral and cultural value. This finding aligns with other Bourdieusian scholars who emphasise that hierarchies are embodied as moral virtues and as affect (Threadgold, 2020). Considering hierarchy as embodied moral affect has two significant implications for everyday practices. First, embodied 'intuitions, emotions, deeply held ideas' come before someone deliberately thinks about individual actions and relationships (Ignatow, 2009, p.109). Lee (2021) shows that the embodied feeling of 'disgust' towards lower castes (those who work as toilet cleaners in houses) guides their actions and remains separated from them, which is recognised as the practice of untouchability. Similarly, as presented in this research, a naturalised feeling of 'respect' (submissiveness to those in power) directs students' actions towards followership of those in authority and undermines courage or an inclination to act otherwise than as officially directed.

Indian Education policy envisions the development of democratic values of equality, liberty, and fraternity among students through schooling (National Education Policy, 2020). Dewey argues that education should contribute to forming 'social habits' that recognise the interests of groups and direct them towards achieving a democratic society (Dewey, 1916, p. 100). In other words, Freire says education for social transformation requires preparing 'students to

engage in critical thinking and the quest for mutual humanisation.' (Freire, 1970, p. 75). Such egalitarian habits are significant because they bring about change in society 'without introducing disorder' (Dewey, 1916, p. 115). The findings of this research indicate that the school is enforcing undemocratic social habits, including non-questioning and social hierarchy. Thus, school practices that shape conforming dispositions contribute to the inculcation of undemocratic values in opposition to the proposal of the National Education Policy of Government of India (NEP, 2020).

For Freire, 'In this process [educational process], arguments based on "authority" are no longer valid; in order to function, authority must be on the *side* of freedom, not *against* it ' (Freire, 1970, p. 80, emphasis original). While Freire argues that schools be a transformative site, they need to alter their direction to provide freedom. In the present research, it is argued that the school legitimises teachers' authority, which, in turn, reinforces hierarchical relations between teachers and students. Thus, school practices that legitimise teachers' authority need to be altered to promote equality and freedom. Based on the discussion above, I argue that if school is to be a transformative space, it should inculcate democratic values over hierarchical ones.

The findings of this study predominantly present that the school is engaged in inculcating conformity as a disposition. An important characteristic of conformity is the virtue of non-critique, that is, the attribute of not questioning. These attributes are embodied as conforming dispositions, characterised by the capacity of cognition not to critically examine or challenge existing social relations. To be more specific, conforming dispositions signify that structured cognitions (cognitive skills) exhibit a reduced capacity and skill in framing and raising questions that reveal and challenge prevailing social relations of hierarchy. The findings of this study are in consonance with the contentions of Indian scholars who argue that students learn obedience through schooling, they do not learn 'questioning, investigation, curiosity, or independent decision-making'; instead, they tend to accept the 'rationality of a larger scheme of things' (Sarangapani, 2003, p. 415; see also Kumar, 2005; Majumdar and Mooij, 2011). Moreover, it is similar to what Freire called *banking education,* where students are made as receptors of information deposited from outside (Freire, 1970).

However, schools are supposed to inculcate the virtues of critique towards social relations to bring about social transformation (Fay, 1987; Freire, 1970; Gerrard, 2014). Gerrard

argues that education needs to develop the capacities of students from disadvantaged backgrounds to understand the historical formation of social inequalities and injustices, and to challenge them (Gerrard, 2014). For a democratic egalitarian society, education needs to embody a political commitment ‘to challenge the social, economic, and cultural policies and practices that generate inequalities’ (Apple, 2013, p. 151; See also, Fay, 1987). In Freire’s terms, education must develop the virtues of inquiry about self and its relations with the world: ‘They must abandon the educational goal of deposit-making and replace it with the posing of the problems of human beings in their relations with the world.’ (Freire, 1970, p. 79).

Freire argues that consciousness should be developed to understand and challenge unjust social relations. However, employing Bourdieu’s practice theory, I argue that the virtues of critique should be embodied as a disposition through everyday school practices. Thus, critical dispositions would provide unthought or pre-thought guidance for engaging in relations and practices without conscious thought. Present research, as well as that of other scholars (Gale et al., 2019), has demonstrated a discrepancy between what people say and what they actually do. Therefore, the ability to critique social relations should not be limited to the conscious level but should be embodied as a disposition. Virtues of critique become the unconscious or subconscious part of an individual’s habitus to direct perception, thought, and action (Bourdieu, 1990). Moreover, criticality is a vital virtue for a democratic citizenry. The school, by enforcing a conforming disposition, contributes to weakening students' democratic orientation.

This research suggests that the school is engaged in undermining the agency of its students. The findings of this study reveal that school practices of authority, obedience, and hierarchy consistently undermine agency and foster virtues of dependency and passivity. These findings are supported by other Indian studies that underline the role of schools in reducing students' agency (Alam, 2013; Manjrekar, 2013). Similarly, other non-Indian studies highlight that schools, to some extent, limit students' agency through the everyday life of the school (Akyeampong and Adzahlie-Mensah, 2018; Lamboy and Lu, 2017; Mingo, 2024).

However, conceptualising school as a transformative space requires empowering students' agency. Some scholars argue that schools are engaged in reducing agency to a great extent, which is inconsistent with their ‘expected’ role in social transformation. There is a need to

empower students' agency to achieve social equity (Mills and Gale, 2010; Watkins and Noble, 2013). Dewey argues that in a democratic society, members must be educated to take 'personal initiative' and develop 'adaptability' to changing circumstances (Dewey, 1916, p. 102). Similarly, for Freire, transformative education must develop the power of people to critically perceive the world and their position in society (Freire, 1970). In light of that discussion, I examine the role of the present school as a reproductive site that can be transformed by empowering students' agency, which can be done by transforming school practices that reduce students' agency. Moreover, the National Education Policy of India envisions the inculcation of values of liberty through schooling for a democratic citizenry. Without empowering agency, the ideal of developing liberty cannot bear fruit. Thus, school practices suppress students' agency, which is counterproductive to the development of democratic values.

To summarise the section, drawing on the above discussion, I propose that the school to act as an agent for social change requires instilling the virtues of critical thinking. The characteristics of criticality constitute a set of embodied virtues of critique that include reflecting on elements of oppression and their historical formation, challenging prevailing social relations, and critiquing prevailing relations from the standpoint of disadvantaged groups. Schools should empower students' agency to think independently and take action as active individuals who take the initiative. Moreover, it incorporates the belief in the inculcation of democratic values of equality, liberty, fraternity, and human rights. These values should not be taught but rather be incorporated as dispositions (constitutive of habitus) through school practices, so that they imbue the potential to generate practices that transform inequitable social relations. In his book *Can Education Change Societ*y, Apple argues that educational institutions are a constituent of society, and that students spend a significant amount of time in school; if their structures and functions are transformed, they can act to transform society (Apple, 2013). Thus, a critical reflection on school practices of authority, obedience, and hierarchy, and on their alteration, has the potential to make the school a site of transformation and the inculcation of democratic values.

6.4 Concluding the Discussion

This chapter discussed the research findings, along with the theoretical framework and other empirical studies within the community of practice that focus on the role of schools in

reproducing social inequalities, drawing on Bourdieu's concepts. First, I discuss, along with other scholars, the role of school practices in shaping students' habitus, underlining the importance of practice theory. School practices of authority, obedience, and hierarchy shape cognitive dispositions towards conformity and affective dispositions, such as respect, fear, and honour. In terms of cognitive dispositions, some scholars have highlighted the cognitive abilities or skills required to perform academic tasks as a means of reproducing social inequalities. However, I consider conformity a cognitive attribute with the potential to uncritically engage with social relations and practices, suggesting its probable role in reproducing caste inequalities. In terms of affective dispositions, scholars employ various emotive dispositions, such as shame, anger, and ambivalence, to explain how social inequalities are embodied and experienced. I presented a specific kind of affective disposition, such as respect, fear, and honour, that presents an embodied hierarchy between teacher and students, as well as age, gender, and caste. Moreover, this chapter discusses specific kinds of school practices that differ in terms of their unofficial status; however, they are equally influential in shaping students' dispositions, as are official/formal pedagogic practices. A significant aspect of this study is the school's employment of both violence and symbolic violence that enforces conformity on a deeper level.

Moreover, this chapter also discusses how cognitive dispositions and affective dispositions engage with practices of caste. As conforming disposition provides unthought guidance to engage with the practice of untouchability and endogamy, it shows potential for the perpetuation of caste relations. Caste inequality is embodied as a feeling of family honour. Affective dispositions play an important role in guiding matrimonial relations, thus contributing to the reproduction of caste relations. Finally, I critically examine the role of the school in social transformation/reproduction and in inculcating democratic values, such as equality, liberty, and criticality. Drawing on critical social sciences, I argued that, as the school shapes students' disposition toward uncritical thinking, reduces agency, and inculcates hierarchies, it plays a crucial role in social reproduction and the development of undemocratic values. This chapter not only presents how schools act as a reproductive site but also offers insight into how altering school practices may bring about social transformation.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The primary objective of this thesis is to elucidate the role of schools in social reproduction. More specifically, this research aimed to understand how conforming dispositions are shaped and the role of the school in perpetuating social relations. To explicate this empirically, the present research explains the mechanism through which a school in North India generates conforming dispositions and perpetuates social inequalities. Drawing on research on school practices that promote obedience among students across global and Indian contexts, I build on this inquiry to explore how these practices shape students' dispositions. Extending this further, this study investigates whether students' dispositions shaped through school practices play a role in reproducing social inequalities. Drawing on Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, disposition, practice (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990), and the concept of conformity from the critical social sciences (Agger, 2013; Fay, 1987, 1996; Meyer-Emerick, 2005; Sayer, 2009; Watts and Hodgson, 2019), this research explains how school practices of authority, obedience, and hierarchy reproduce caste inequality by moulding students' dispositions. This research employed the Biographical Narrative Interview Method (BNIM) to gather and analyse the data.

This research identified a set of unofficial pedagogic practices within schools, as practices of authority, obedience, and hierarchy, that play a significant role in reproducing social relations. These practices are mundane, everyday activities that operate in formal and informal interactions but are not officially recognised. For example, practices of obedience that operate through punishment and control are officially not recommended, but they shape formal and informal interactions. These practices shape students' cognitive and affective dispositions. This study contributes to the theoretical discussion of cognitive disposition. Additionally, this study identified a different set of affective dispositions, such as respect, fear and honour, that offer a theoretical framework to explain the reproduction of social inequality in the Indian context. Moreover, in theorising caste, it complements and extends the discussion of caste inequalities as embodied affect. This research contributes to a critical examination of schools as sites for reproducing social inequality and fostering undemocratic values. At the same time, it highlights the spaces whose alternation can transform the school's current role.

The chapter is divided into five sections. The first section discusses how specific kinds of school practices—authority, obedience, and hierarchy—shape cognitive dispositions towards conformity, characterised by non-questioning and subdued agency. The following section explains how caste inequality is emotionally embodied as family honour, which guides actions related to caste. The empirical findings of this research provide a foundation for debate around the incorporation of social inequalities within individuals as affect. Moreover, I discuss how cognitive and affective dispositions interact to reproduce caste. The third section problematises the process of schooling, especially in terms of its role in engaging in practices of authority, obedience, and hierarchy, in promoting conformity, and in contributing to the reproduction of social inequalities. Following this, I discuss the theoretical contribution of the study in the Indian context, particularly the concepts of cognitive and affective dispositions that can contribute to the reproduction of social inequalities. Additionally, I engage in discussions about caste as an embodied affect. The final section discusses the limitations of the research and provides recommendations for further research, policy, and practice.

7.1 Shaping of Conformity as Disposition through Schooling

The most significant aspect of this research is that all three unofficial pedagogic practices reinforce students' dispositions toward conformity. The practice of authority legitimises the superiority of teachers, enforces conformity, and incorporates the hierarchy between teachers and students as a feeling of ‘respect’. The school's routine practices that implicitly convey teachers' superiority also convey a coherent message of conformity. The important aspect is that the teacher's authority is realised through both formal and informal interactions. Similarly, practices of obedience, which are enacted through disciplining, particularly physical and psychological violence, in schools, generate conformity among students. Practices of obedience broadly refer to practices intended to enforce compliance among students. This is also done through processes of monitoring and control, such as direct teacher observation or CCTV monitoring. Students are made to follow the school's or teachers' commands in academic and non-academic activities. Breaking norms, rules, or expectations results in punishment. The practices of obedience leave little or no space for the development of analytical abilities to challenge the school's practices. Slowly, these patterns are repeated over a long period of schooling and families, and non-questioning becomes a pattern of thought.

Hierarchical practices refer to school practices that legitimise or reinforce prevailing social relations outside the school. Through these practices, social hierarchies based on age, gender and caste are either practised or promoted. Social hierarchies, especially caste, are legitimised through informal moral lessons in schools. By enforcing social hierarchies as morally justified, teachers preclude analysis or challenge of existing relations and practices. By constructing good students who are submissive, obedient, and followers, schools embed non-questioning as a scheme of cognition and agency, characterised by dependence and passivity.

A significant aspect of this study is presenting the case for embodying conformity at a deeper level. The cultural recognition of teachers as gurus and their institutionally higher position in relation to students together strengthen teachers' authority in the Indian context (Deka, 2014; Kale, 1970; Kumar, 1989; Sarangapani, 2003; Sriprakash, 2011). Teachers employ both violence and symbolic violence in enforcing conformity among students. As teachers are entitled to greater pedagogical authority, they curb critical voices more forcefully. In comparison to schools that mainly rely on symbolic violence to enforce conformity, the studied school context embodies conforming dispositions to a deeper level as it uses both violence and symbolic violence.

7.2 Social Hierarchies of Caste are Embodied and Emotionally Felt

One significant outcome of this research is the presentation of mechanisms of how social hierarchy is embodied and realised as an affective disposition. Affective disposition was not part of the initial conceptualisation of this research. However, while analysing the data on conforming disposition, I found that school practices also actively reinforce institutional and social hierarchies among students, which is realised as affect. I demonstrated that school practices shape the affective dispositions towards respect, fear, and honour. Practices of authority generate and consolidate affective schemes of ‘respect’. Moreover, practices of obedience embody affective dispositions of ‘fear’. Affective dispositions of ‘family honour’, and ‘respect’ are consolidated through the practices of hierarchy. The significant aspect of affective dispositions is that they incorporate the social hierarchies within the individual, which are emotionally felt.

Drawing on Bourdieu's explication of practice theory, I argue that affective dispositions generate the practices that reproduce social relations from which these dispositions are formed. In terms of the perpetuation of caste relations, the affective disposition of 'family honour' provides pre-thought guidance for engaging in matrimonial practices, thus reproducing the caste hierarchy. That feeling of family honour develops a propensity for endogamy, which contributes to the perpetuation of the caste hierarchy. Moreover, the findings suggest that the interaction between affective and cognitive dispositions reproduces caste. For instance, it is morally wrong or shameful for someone to marry out of caste, which is intuitively emotionally known; at the same time, conforming dispositions intuitively guide one not to engage in the issue of endogamy critically. Thus, the interaction between conforming and affective dispositions has the potential to reproduce caste relations more efficiently.

7.3 A Critical Examination of Schooling in Relation to the Reinforcement of Undemocratic Virtues

The findings of this study suggest that the school embodies a hierarchical structure, inculcating the virtues of non-critique and subduing students' agency. This serves as a reference point for examining the school's role in developing democratic virtues. The non-critical attributes are attributes reinforced through schooling. This signifies a non-questioning attitude towards prevailing social relations practices. That is, students tend not to analyse and challenge existing relations, practices, and discourses. The ability to critique social relations is essential for social and political democracy. In contrast, the school is enforcing non-critique as an undemocratic virtue among the students. Moreover, students with reduced agency tend to rely more heavily on authorities within their school, family, or society. Students tend not to show an inclination for independent thinking or an awareness of their capacity to think and act independently. Thus, reduced agency is an obstacle to the realisation of liberty and autonomy, an important democratic virtue.

As the school reinforces the social hierarchy of teachers over students, elders over younger individuals, males over females, and privileged castes over disadvantaged castes, it has the potential to normalise hierarchy as a desirable trait. Therefore, the school acts counter to its

expected role of challenging hierarchy and inculcating democratic virtues of equality. Moreover, it embodies conformity at a deeper level and instils fear of authorities through schooling. For democratic citizenship, there is a need to develop a scientific temperament that cultivates analytical skills to understand and challenge existing relations of deprivation, as well as the courage to challenge unjust relations and practices (NEP, 2020). However, school plays a negative role by fostering conformity and fear among students. It appears that schools such as the one studied are more inclined to weaken democracy rather than strengthen it.

To summarise the discussion of this section, the Indian Government's New Education Policy recommends developing critical thinking, equality, and autonomy as democratic values through schooling (NEP, 2020). However, findings indicate that the school is working against the policy's recommendations, as it enforces uncritical virtues, hierarchy, and reduced agency through unofficial pedagogical practices of authority, obedience, and hierarchy. This not only raises questions about schools serving as sites for inculcating democratic virtues but also signals a gap between policy and practice. There is a need for a critical analysis of what is officially recommended and what is practised. Thus, practitioners need to reflect on their official pedagogic practices, as well as their unofficial practices and the messages they convey.

7.4 Contributions of the Study

Significance of unofficial pedagogic practices

This study identifies a distinct set of school practices beyond official pedagogic practices such as curriculum planning, teaching, and assessment. These are practices of authority, obedience, and hierarchy, which I recognise as unofficial school practices and present here as 'school practices' in general. These practices act as secondary pedagogic work in Bourdieu's terms and shape students' dispositions (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). This research not only identifies these practices but also provides a detailed discussion of their role in perpetuating social inequality. The literature shows that formal pedagogical practices, such as curricular transaction (Cui, 2017; Gale et al., 2019) and assessment (Evans, 2020; Francis and Mills, 2012; ; Reay, 2001), contribute to reproducing social

inequalities. The unofficial school practices complement the prevailing official pedagogy in explaining how schools reproduce social inequalities. Therefore, the findings offer researchers insight into the potential of schools' unofficial practices to reproduce social hierarchy; they should be taken as seriously as official pedagogic practices.

Some important characteristics of the concept of disposition are its formation through routine, rudimentary practices in everyday social life (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). Dispositions of conformity reinforced through school practices as secondary pedagogical work remain embedded in the individual body until there is a concerted, long-term effort to change. Thus, reactionary criticality (arising from experiences or reflections on subjugation) may sometimes solve problems, but it does not embody criticality as a disposition. One possible way to embody criticality is to change informal practices that enforce conformity. As dispositions of conformity are shaped through ordinary, unofficial practices in the everyday life of school, these practices must be taken seriously to inculcate critical dispositions.

The study has the potential to contribute to knowledge about how schools shape students' dispositions/ habitus towards conformity, which, in turn, informs socially unjust relations and practices. Moreover, students' dispositions/habitus are shaped through mundane, everyday practices that provide insight into the mechanisms by which social inequality is perpetuated. Understanding the role of practices in structuring/restructuring the habitus that contributes to reproducing social relations helps alter these practices and bring about social change. Bourdieu's theoretical explication further supports this conclusion that habitus is *generative* and *dynamic* in nature. This study's empirical understanding of how conformity is influenced, combined with its theoretical understanding that habitus can be transformed, paves the way for altering practices to transform students' habitus.

Theoretical and conceptual

This study contributes to Bourdieusian scholarship by exploring the role of education in reproducing social inequalities. The conceptualisation of conformity as a disposition extends the discussion of the cognitive dimensions of habitus and introduces new aspects. In research on cognitive disposition and its role in the perpetuation of social inequalities, scholars have

focused on individuals' mental abilities to perform abstract academic work (Nash, 2003; Watkins and Noble, 2013). I consider cognitive disposition as embodied schemes of thought that provide pre-/ un-thought guidance for being uncritical of prevailing relations and practices that play a role in reproducing inequalities. In this way, the present research contributes to Bourdieusian scholarship by offering a new perspective on cognitive disposition and its role in reproducing inequalities.

The study also advances the idea of affect as an embodied hierarchy by introducing a separate set of affective dispositions—respect, fear, and honour. In terms of affective dispositions, scholars identified different aspects of emotions that demonstrate embodied inequalities. Reay identified some emotive dispositions as feelings of 'ambivalence, inferiority and superiority, visceral aversions, recognitions and abjection' (Reay, 2015, p.21; see also Reay, 2005). This research adds a different set of emotive dispositions, such as 'respect' and 'honour', that represent embodied hierarchies between teachers and students and caste hierarchies, respectively. These dispositions, on the one hand, represent positive feelings; on the other, they are enforced as cultural morality (Threadgold, 2020). Therefore, the present research provides empirical evidence in support of Bourdieusian scholarship, which argues that affective disposition incorporates social hierarchy and is presented as cultural morality.

The caste hierarchy is internalised and realised as a feeling of family honour. Particularly in the Indian context, the study helps expand the discussion on theorising caste as an affect. Some scholars have discussed *hate* as an affect that plays a role in the continuation of the practice of untouchability, which reinforces inequalities of caste (Guru and Sarukkai, 2019; Lee, 2020). However, I argue that caste hierarchy is embodied as a feeling of 'family honour' that provides unthought guidance to individuals in their matrimonial relations, thus reproducing caste relations. Therefore, this research contributes to extending the discussion on caste inequality as embodied affect.

7.5 Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

One challenge in this research is the inability to capture the heterogeneity of castes within OBCs. Though I attempted to include the various castes, given the school's limited diversity

of caste groups, the research could capture only a few. Despite examining larger themes within OBCs and the school's role in shaping dispositions, the research could not capture variations among OBC castes. This indicates a methodological challenge: selecting a single school case study and focusing on OBC students within it. The basic proposal was to investigate an equal number of male and female students from all available OBC castes. However, due to the unavailability of equal representation across all castes, the opinions of all castes are not equally represented. Moreover, given the limited number of caste groups, it would not be possible to capture and compare their dynamics. In some Indian states, there is an explicit official division of OBCs into OBCs (or dominant OBCs) and Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs), and a similar informal understanding of that division in the State of Uttar Pradesh. This research does not present a difference in caste variation in the aforementioned two broader sections of OBCs. In light of the above challenges, I would recommend conducting case studies focusing on students from different sections within OBCs, who may be from different schools in the same or different regions, rather than a single-school case study. This would help capture caste variation and more diverse schooling experiences.

Another limitation of the present research is that it focuses only on schooling in the formation of students' dispositions. As habitus is shaped by primary and secondary pedagogic work, focusing on schooling cannot capture how family background contributes to the structuring of conforming dispositions. Are there any variations in the level of conformity among students and in their relationships with their families? I attempted to include parents' educational backgrounds to examine the families' role in shaping conformity, but, given its limited focus on family, this study does not show significant variation in conformity levels across students with differing parental educational backgrounds. Present research does not capture how other social variables, like economic status and gender, influence conformity. Moreover, with the spread of the internet and mobile services, students no longer have to rely entirely on teachers for all kinds of information. Thus, along with school, the socio-economic and technological environments outside the classroom merit consideration for exploring students' dispositions. Thus, for a comprehensive study of the formation of students' conforming disposition, I would recommend considering both family and school. As space outside of school may provide agency that interferes with the impositions within school, and variation in conformity could be captured.

An additional limitation of the present research is the empirical exploration of conformity as a cognitive disposition. Bourdieuian scholars suggest that cognitive dispositions reflect cognitive abilities or a habitual way of thinking, shaped through practice (Nash, 2003). One aspect of my conceptualisation of the conforming disposition is a reduced capacity to frame and ask questions. As students are discouraged from asking questions and challenging practices and relations, they do not develop the capabilities to frame and ask questions. This research does not present any specific data that could confirm or deny whether students ' capability to frame and present questions is reduced. Extending from there, I would recommend investigating different school contexts that enforce conformity more deeply to determine whether conformity reduces the capacity to ask questions and its relation to problem-solving and academic performance that require a high level of cognitive and abstract thinking. Moreover, how does it affect students from disadvantaged groups?

An important assumption/anticipation that appears in the study is that dispositions toward conformity have the potential to shape students' democratic engagement after/ outside the school. However, this study could not provide evidence of whether it influences engagement. To mitigate this challenge, I would recommend using the BNIM method to interview adults or post-secondary students who are also voters in electoral politics. Their reflections on their schooling experiences and outside the school in relation to social and political engagement as adults would provide an opportunity to reflect on schooling experiences and produce evidence in relation to their impact on individuals in later social and political life.

7.6 Concluding the Thesis

There are numerous practices, including curricular practices, assessment practices, and school governance, that contribute to the reproduction of inequalities. The present research highlights three distinct sets of school practices — authority, obedience, and hierarchy — and their role in perpetuating caste inequalities. These practices form the conforming dispositions that shape the nature of engagement with caste-based practices. Conforming dispositions provide unthought guidance for engagement with caste-based practices of untouchability and endogamy, in an uncritical manner, signifying potential for the perpetuation of caste inequality. Moreover, the practices of hierarchy embody caste hierarchy as affective dispositions of family honour. Aligning with other Bourdieusian scholars, such as Juros (2022), I argue that these practices form the conforming dispositions

and family honour as affective dispositions interact to contribute to the reproduction of caste inequality.

The unofficial practices of authority, obedience and hierarchy identified in the present study are equally important to formal pedagogic practices and help explain the role of the school in reproducing social inequalities. I critically examined the school's role in perpetuating social inequalities and inculcating undemocratic values, in contrast to its expected role of transforming social relations and developing democratic virtues, such as equality, critical thinking, and liberty. The purpose of the research is not to demonise teachers or schools, but to explore the nuanced mechanisms by which schools reproduce social inequalities. This research paves the way for reflection on unofficial practices within the school, alongside official pedagogic practices, with the intention of transforming them to promote social change and the development of democratic virtues. The significance of the research lies in presenting a mechanism for incorporating conformity within individuals through school practices. In terms of policy and practice, schoolteachers need to reflect on their own practices that foster conformity. There is a genuine need to reform school practices to foster critical dispositions capable of driving change.

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Appendix 1

Survey form

1. **Full Name** ……

2. Father/Mother's Name ……

2. **Age** ……

3. **Gender** ……

4. **Social Category**

a. ST ☐ b. SC ☐ c. OBC ☐

d. EWS/ Unreserved ☐

5. **Caste (Optional)** ……

6. **Education of Father**

a. Graduate or Higher ☐ b. High School or Higher Secondary ☐

c. Not completed High School ☐

7. Education of Mother

a. Graduate or Higher ☐ b. High School or Higher Secondary ☐

c. Not completed High School ☐

Appendix 2

List of Participants: Interview

Sr. No	**Pseudonyms**	**Category**	**Gender**	**Caste**	**Education of parents** (class 10 or less; Class 12; or Graduate)
1.	Himanshu	OBC	M	Yadav	Father -Graduate; Mother- 12
2.	Vaibhav	OBC	M	Yadav	Father< 10; Mother <10
3.	Seema	OBC	F	Maurya	Father -12; Mother <10
4.	Shyam	OBC	M	Sahu	Father <10; Mother <10
5.	Nitish	OBC	M	Yadav	Father- 12; Mother <10
6.	Suman	OBC	F	Yadav	Father <10; Mother- Graduate
7.	Mahesh	OBC	M	Sahu	Father-10; Mother <10
8.	Prakash	OBC	M	Maurya	Father <10; Mother <10
9.	Hemlata	OBC	F	Pal	Father <10; Mother <10
10.	Kusum	OBC	F	Prajapati	Father -12; Mother <10
11.	Girija	OBC	F	Sahu	Father <10; Mother < 10
12.	Kashish	OBC	F	Yadav	Father 12; Mother < 10

Appendix 3

List of Participants: Survey

Sr No.	Pseudonym	Gender	Age 16-17 and 17-18	Category	Caste	Mother's Education	Father's Education
1.	Lalita	F	17	SC	Kori	<10	<10
2.	Hemlata	F	16	OBC	Pal	<10	<10
3.	Nilesh	M	>17	OBC	Yadav	<10	<10
4.	Nikhil	M	>17	OBC	Yadav	<10	<10
5.	Arun	M	>17	OBC	Yadav	<10	<10
6.	Seema	F	17	OBC	Maurya	<10	12
7.	Neeraj	M	19	Gener-al	Mishra	<10	12
8.	Suresh	M	17	OBC	Yadav	<10	<10
9.	Pramod	M	17	OBC	Yadav	<10	<10
10.	Vaibhav	M	17	OBC	Yadav	<10	<10
11.	Himanhu	M	17	OBC	Yadav	12	Graduate
12.	Kusum	F	16	OBC	Prajapati	<10	12
13.	Rekha	F	16	OBC	Yadav	Graduate	Graduate
14.	Prakash	M	16	OBC	Maurya	<10	<10
15.	Madri	F	17	SC		<10	<10
16.	Girija	F	16	OBC	Shahu	<10	<10
17.	Sonam	F	17	Gener-al	Mishra	<10	<10
18.	Suman	F	16	OBC	Yadav	Graduate	<10
19.	Babita	F	17	SC	Kannaujia	<10	<10
20.	Sejal	F	16	Gener-al	Shukla	Graduate	Graduate
21.	Nitish	M	16	OBC	Yadav	<10	12
22.	Reena	F	16	OBC	Pal	<10	<10
23.	Shikha	F	15	OBC	Yadav	<10	<10
24.	Mayuri	F	15	GEN	Brah	<10	<10
25.	Mahesh	M	16	OBC	Sahu	10	<10
26.	Kashish	F	16	OBC	Yadav	<10	12
27.	Shyam	M	16	OBC	Sahu	<10	<10

Appendix 4

List of Teachers commonly referred to by students in the Interview

Pseudonyms of Teachers	Identity and Institutional Position
1. Manoj Sir	Hindi subject teacher, a senior male, is considered morally superior and a disciplinarian.
2. Ketan Sir	Principal of the School
3. Sunil Sir	Manager and Owner of the School
4. Ravi Sir	English subject teacher, junior in age, but strict in preparing for the subject
5. Neelam Madam	Senior, female, and considered morally superior and disciplinarian.

Appendix 5

List of Codes and Themes Drawn from Transcripts

Codes	Categories (subthemes)	Themes
1. • Touching feet • Saying namaste • Standing in class • Morning prayer and instructions • Using the term 'sir/madam' for teachers or visiting officials	• Daily actions/rituals showing superiority of teachers or sites where superiority is enforced routinely.	• Actions and Reflections that shows reinforcement and legitimisation of hierarchy and authority of teachers in school. • **Practices of authority and their role in shaping conformity as disposition and emotive dispositions as respect.**
• Elder • *Guru* • Well-wisher and guardian • Knowledge • Above the parents • Teacher as protector of moral and cultural values of the society • Teacher as an 'ideal' entity	• Reasons cited by students why they should respect the teachers. (narratives/ discursive practices legitimising superiority of teachers).	
• Religious activities and the school • Teacher's chair	• Some specific events or occasions where superiority and authority are reinforced	
• Teachers' day • Celebration of the national day • Children's Day	• Special days or cultural celebration in school	
• Following teachers, not questioning. • Not obeying is disrespectful • Obeying teachers is characteristics of good students.	• Reflections of students showing internalised characteristics of non-questioning to teachers.	

• Obeying teachers is characteristics of an educated person.		
2. • Scolding or standing in the class or out of the classroom. • Slapping or beating by the stick. • Complaint to the guardian • Rustication • Farewell Function of Outgoing Students and moral lessons on being an obedient good student	• Modes of disciplining and punishment.	• Mechanisms of enforcing compliance or obedience among students • **Practices of obedience and their role in shaping students' dispositions towards conformity and enforcing fear of authorities/ teachers among students.**
• Inspection in morning assembly • Uniform, nails and hair • Inspection and surveillance during lunch • Monitor • Teachers • CCTV • Moving in queues in the morning assembly to the classroom and coming out at the end of the school day.	• Actions of inspection and surveillance. It is legitimised and practiced for sake of maintaining *order* in the school.	
• Punishment is for students' 'wellbeing' • Should not fail to comply with instructions • Self-disciplining and shame to break discipline • DO not think of breaking the order when you have a chance	• Students' reflections that show compliance, acceptance or non-questioning is internalised and appear in their reflections.	
• Fearful of teachers and school administrators	• Students' reflections show internalised fear of teachers or authorities	

• Students are fearful of their actions- scrutinise their actions out of fear		
3. • not taking name of parents • good/ bad boy or girl • following elders	• Actions/ reflections showing- **Age-based hierarchy of society**	• Mechanisms of reinforcing/ legitimising social hierarchy through schools.
• challenging signifies a bad child • do not get favour • fear and moral issue or disrespectful for not accepting hierarchy or questioning	• Consequences of challenging superiority of elders in family or community. • Emotive and moral issues in questioning elders	• Legitimising social hierarchy based on age.
• moral lessons in favour of gender roles and positions and breaking gender norms dishonour to family • discursive construction of the good girl • gendered attributes • not challenging elder males • strategic ignorance towards critical gender issues – working girls outside the home. • Differential treatment of boys and girls on different occasions. • Lacking discussion on the fundamental rights of the citizens in the general discussion of the school	• Actions/ events enforcing/legitimising **gender hierarchy.**	• Reinforcing and legitimising gender-based hierarchy.
• Expressed in participation in sports	• Students' reflection and actions showing their internalised gendered norms, roles, and hierarchies.	

• in the cultural activities of the school • honour and respect as important aspect of gender roles/ positions	• Honour and respect as moral-emotional pattern embedded in gender roles/ hierarchies.	• Legitimisation of caste-based hierarchy • Students' reflections showing their non-critical engagement with caste-based practices of untouchability and endogamy. • **Practices of hierarchy and their role in shaping dispositions of conformity and enforcing social hierarchy as emotive dispositions of respect and family honour.**
• School is silent on the caste-based discrimination, and students do not feel it in school.	• Teachers avoid explicit discussion on caste.	
• Reduced now • We do not practice, but others do • It is bad, but tradition.	• Students' reflection about **untouchability** as a caste-based practice.	
• Moral lessons in favour of endogamy	• Mechanisms through which school legitimise caste-based practice of **endogamy.**	
• Students feel it should continue or be in favour of practice • Breaking is a dishonour to the family • Fearful of outcomes • Family honour	• Students' reflection on endogamy and consequences of breaking the practice. • **Family honours** an important means that is emotionally and morally felt in favour of endogamy.	
• Local administration and caste-based discrimination • Discrimination in the job market, especially in government jobs.	• Other sites or forms of caste-based discriminations.	
• Students' reflection on caste-based practices of untouchability and endogamy	• Uncritical engagement with untouchability and endogamy, indeed favouring endogamy.	

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Appendix 6

Consent Form for Survey for Both the Student and the Parents

Title of Project: The cultural formation of criticality and conformity in educationally and economically disadvantaged higher secondary school students in rural Uttar Pradesh, India.

Name of Researcher: Dinesh Yadav

Name of Supervisors: Dr Stephen Parker; Dr Mark Murphy

Please tick as appropriate.

Yes ☐ No ☐ I confirm that I have read and understood the Plain Language Statement related to participation in the survey and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

Yes ☐ No ☐ I understand that my participation is voluntary, and I can refuse to answer all or some questions without giving any reason.

Yes ☐ No ☐ I consent to record personal information in a survey form for the identification purposes of participants.

Yes ☐ No ☐ I acknowledge that participants will be referred to by pseudonym.

Yes ☐ No ☐ I acknowledge that my personal information will be destroyed, and researcher will not hold any information about me, if I am not participating in the interview, propose to take place after survey.

I agree that:

Yes ☐ No ☐ All names and other material likely to identify individuals will be anonymised.

Yes ☐ No ☐ The material will be treated as confidential and always kept in secure storage.

Yes ☐ No ☐ The material (personal data) will be destroyed once the project is complete, whose data was retained from survey and participating in the interview.

Yes ☐ No ☐ I waive my copyright to any data collected as part of this project.

Yes ☐ No ☐ I acknowledge the provision of a Privacy Notice in relation to this research project.

I agree to take part in this research study. ☐

I do not agree to take part in this research study. ☐

Name of Participant …….....

Signature …… Date …….....

Name of Parent/guardian ..…….....

Signature …… Date ..…….....

Name of Researcher: Dinesh Yadav

Signature …… Date ……

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College of Social Sciences

Consent Form for Interview for Both the Student and the Parents

Title of Project: The cultural formation of criticality and conformity in educationally and economically disadvantaged higher secondary school students in rural Uttar Pradesh, India.

Name of Researcher: Dinesh Yadav

Name of Supervisors: Dr Stephen Parker; Dr Mark Murphy

Please tick as appropriate.

Yes ☐ No ☐ I confirm that I have read and understood the Plain Language Statement related to participation in interview sessions and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

Yes ☐ No ☐ I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

Yes ☐ No ☐ I consent to interviews being audio-recorded.

Yes ☐ No ☐ I acknowledge that participants will be referred to by pseudonym.

Yes ☐ No ☐ I acknowledge that de-identified transcripts and consent forms will be safely stored separately in the university's archives for ten years.

Yes ☐ No ☐ I acknowledge that de-identified transcripts will be safely stored by the researcher for the period of five years for the dissemination of research findings through thesis, journal articles, and book chapters.

I agree that:

Yes ☐ No ☐ All names and other material likely to identify individuals will be anonymised.

Yes ☐ No ☐ I acknowledge that complete anonymity of the participant may not be possible, on revelation of harm to the participant or others, in spite of, all the efforts to maintain the anonymity of the participants.

Yes ☐ No ☐ The material will be treated as confidential and always kept in secure storage.

Yes ☐ No ☐ The material (personal data) will be destroyed once the project is complete.

Yes ☐ No ☐ The material may be used in future publications, both print and online.

Yes ☐ No ☐ I waive my copyright to any data collected as part of this project.

Yes ☐ No ☐ I acknowledge that research data will be shared within the research team that is among the researcher and supervisors.

Yes ☐ No ☐ I acknowledge the provision of a Privacy Notice in relation to this research project.

I agree to take part in this research study ☐

I do not agree to take part in this research study ☐

Name of Participant ……..….....

Signature …… Date …….....

Name of Parent/guardian ..…….....

Signature …… Date ..…….....

Name of Researcher: Dinesh Yadav

Signature …… Date ……

University of Glasgow
College of Social Sciences

Appendix 7

Plain Language Statement for the Students and Parents for the Survey

Title of Project: The cultural formation of criticality and conformity in educationally and economically disadvantaged higher secondary school students in rural Uttar Pradesh, India.

You are invited to take part in the project, in which I want to find out how students respond to injustice. What students say or do when they see or face something unjust. Whether a student questions when he/she sees something unjust in the family/school, or accepts it as a fate? Does a student feel that something needs to be changed or should remain as it is because they are routinely practised? How are thoughts and feelings towards inequality formed? Further, I would like to ask about your daily interactions and your responses with family members, friends, neighbours, and teachers in school.

I will try to understand your questioning/non-questioning behaviour by asking about your experiences in family/neighbourhood, and school. However, it is practically impossible to interview large number of participants. It is important that I select at least one of you from different social and educational backgrounds of parents. For this purpose, I need to know about you and your family. I will use this survey to understand your background, select, and invite some of you for the interviews if you wish to take part.

Before you decide if you want to take part in survey, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve.

Please take time to read the information on this page carefully and discuss it with others, and your parents. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take one week's time to decide whether you wish to take part. Please read the

privacy notice and sign the consent form before you fill out the survey form. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be provided with a copy of this Participant Information Sheet, Privacy Notice, and the signed consent form to keep.

What will happen if you take part?

If you decide to take part in the survey, I will ask you to write your answers in front of the questions provided in the form. You can answer all the questions, some of them. If you do not want to talk about yourself, you can refuse to write all your responses.

Please respond to the questionnaire in one week's time.

Keeping information confidential

I will keep all your survey responses in a locked cabinet and prepare a list from the information obtained from the survey. Once the list is finalised, I will destroy all the filled-out questionnaires. From the list, I will randomly select some of you based on set criteria for selection from different groups and invite some of you for the interview. Personal details will be kept until the project is completed. Then, they will be destroyed.

Thus, the purpose of the survey is to learn about your family and social background, age, and gender so that we can recruit some of you for the interview, which is the main part of the study.

Review of the study

The College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, University of Glasgow, has reviewed and approved this study.

Contact for further Information

If you have any questions about this study, you can ask me, Dinesh Yadav (d.yadav.1@research.glasgow.ac.uk) or my supervisor, Dr Stephen Parker (Stephen.Parker@glasgow.ac.uk). If you want to complain about anything regarding the study, you can write to the College of Social Sciences Acting Lead for Ethical Review, Dr Benjamin Franks: email socsci-ethics-lead@glasgow.ac.uk

Thank you for reading this.

University of Glasgow
College of Social Sciences

Participant Information Sheet for Parents about the Interview

Title of Project: The cultural formation of criticality and conformity in educationally and economically disadvantaged higher secondary school students in rural Uttar Pradesh, India.

I hereby invite your child to take part in a research study. Before you decide to give consent to your son/daughter to take part in the study, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take one week's time to decide whether you wish to give consent to take part in the study. If you decide to consent to your youngster participating in this study, you will be provided with a copy of this Participant Information Sheet, Privacy Notice, and the signed consent form to keep.

Thank you for reading this.

About the project

This project explores how young persons think, feel and respond to the injustice and inequality they see, observe or experience. Do they question the unjust system or want things to change? Or do they think, feel, or accept things as they are? Are questioning or non-questioning attitudes formed in the family, neighbourhood, and schools? The study aims to understand how critical/conforming attitudes are shaped in the everyday life of the family and the school. Findings from the study can contribute to shaping the educational policies

and practices to strengthen critical attributes or weaken conforming attributes to establish more socially just relations and practices.

What will happen if one takes part?

Your child's participation in the project is completely voluntary. If he/she decides to participate, I will ask him/her some questions about his/her family, parents, social identity, school/s attended, and experiences at home/neighbourhood and school/s. She/he does not have to answer any questions that she/he does not want to. The interview will take place in three sessions, each lasting approximately one hour. And each session will be one week apart. I will audio record the answers on a voice recorder, so that afterwards I can listen carefully to what he/she said.

I will finish the interview with participants by the end of May 2023.

She/he does not have to take part in this study, and if you do not give consent or he/she decides not to, his/her withdrawal will not negatively influence his/her marks in school or his/her relationship with me in future interactions. If, after he/she has started to take part, he/she changes his/her mind in the middle, just let me know, and I will not use any information he/she has given me if the participant wants to delete it.

Parents can contact the school counsellor or the head of school to deal with distress and discrimination at the school level (or caused during interviews). One can contact the District Inspector of Schools (DIOS) if the issue is related to the schools. As Part of the educational set-up, non-governmental organisations working to address gender/caste-based discrimination/violence can be helpful. Childline 1098 is a children's helpline number for those who are in distress. In case of legal requirements, legal counsel and the district police officer (SP) can be contacted. I can support in establishing a network with the above-mentioned support system.

Keeping information confidential

I will keep all interview recordings in a locked cabinet or in an encrypted file on my computer and in OneDrive (my student account). I will be the only one who will listen to the recording and translate it into English, and I will change the participant's name and other personal identifiers so that others cannot identify what he/she said. The researcher and his supervisors will only have access to personal data, which is also up to the project's life. And personal data and its identifiers will be destroyed after the end of the project.

When I write about what I have found out in the discussion, his/her name will not be mentioned. However, if during our conversation I hear anything which makes me worried that he/she might be in danger of harm, I might have to tell other people who need to know about this. But I will talk to him/her before telling anything to others that she/ he need support.

The results of this study and the retention of research data

When I have gathered the information from everyone who participated in the interview, I will write what I learnt from talking to participants in a thesis, which is an extended essay. This is a requirement for the course I am studying. My teachers at the university will read and mark it.

I will tell the participants what I found out from talking to them, if they wish to know about it. If they are interested in knowing how everyday life shapes their questioning/ non-questioning behaviour, I will destroy all my notes and recordings when the project is finished. However, transcripts of interviews in which the name and probable identifier are removed will be archived with the university for ten years. Along with this consent form for participation, the data will also be stored separately from the university for ten years, following the data protection procedures. I will save research data for five years to disseminate the findings through journal articles, conference papers, book chapters, and writing a thesis. Upon request, a summary of research findings will be available for parents and students.

Participants can request to no longer participate in the research, and all data will be destroyed. This can happen at any stage during the interviews and up to one month after the

completion of the final interview. Once data is transcribed and anonymised, it will not be possible to identify and delete it from the collected and anonymised data pool.

Funding of the study

The current project is funded by College of Social Sciences (CoSS), University of Glasgow, United Kingdom.

Review of the study

The College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, University of Glasgow, United Kingdom, has reviewed and approved this study.

Thank you for reading this Information Sheet and considering participating in this study.

Contact person for information and complaints

If you have any questions about this study, you can ask me, Dinesh Yadav (d.yadav.1@research.glasgow.ac.uk) or my supervisor, Dr Stephen Parker (Stephen.Parker@glasgow.ac.uk). To pursue any complaint about the conduct of the research: contact the College of Social Sciences Lead for Ethical Review, with **Dr Benjamin Franks**: email socsci-ethics-lead@glasgow.ac.uk

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Researcher: Dinesh Kumar Yadav

Course: PhD in Education

Supervisor: Dr Stephen Parker; Dr Mark Murphy

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

Plain Language Statement for the Students for the Interview

Title of Project: The cultural formation of criticality and conformity in educationally and economically disadvantaged higher secondary school students in rural Uttar Pradesh, India.

You are invited to take part in the project, in which I want to find out how students respond to injustice. What students say or do when they see or face something unjust. Whether a student questions when he/she sees something unjust in the family/school, or accepts it as a fate? Does a student feel that something needs to be changed or should remain as it is because they are routinely practised. How are thoughts and feelings towards inequality formed? Further, I would like to ask about your daily interactions and your responses with family members, friends, neighbours, and teachers in school.

You are being asked to take part because you are a young person and have experience of living in society for around 16/17 years and in school 11/12 years. You mostly behave in the way family/society, and school want. Therefore, this project would provide an opportunity to understand your experience by listening to your life stories. Then, using findings from your stories, I will try to understand why you think or behave in a particular way. What is the role of family/ neighbourhood in shaping your thinking and feelings? I am particularly looking forward to hearing your thoughts on social injustice. Your thoughts or feelings about the unequal treatment of students of different castes. Your response towards unequal treatment towards girls (if any), and the economically rich and poor in the family, the society, and the school.

Before you decide if you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve.

Please take time to read the information on this page carefully and discuss it with others and your parents. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more

information. Take one week's time to decide whether you wish to take part. If you wish to take part, please read the privacy notice and sign the consent form provided along with this information sheet. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be provided with a copy of this Participant Information Sheet, Privacy Notice, and the signed consent form to keep.

What will happen if you take part?

If you decide to participate, I will ask you some questions about your family, parents, social identity, school/s attended, and experiences at home/neighbourhood and school/s. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to. The interview will take place in three sessions, each lasting approximately one hour and one week apart. I will record your answers on a voice recorder so that afterwards, I can listen carefully to what you said.

I will finish talking to you by the end of May 2023.

You do not have to participate in this study; if you decide not to, just let me know. If you change your mind after you have started to take part, I will not use any information you have given me if you want to delete it.

Parents, the school counsellor, and the head of school are important points of contact for dealing with distress.

If the participant does not wish to engage with the above persons, they can contact Childline at 1098. Furthermore, they can contact non-governmental organisations that work against gender—and caste-based discrimination. These organisations can help the participant get legal support through the District Inspector of Schools, Legal Counsel, and district police officers. I can help establish a network with the above-mentioned support system.

Keeping information confidential

I will keep all interview recordings in a locked cabinet or in a locked file on my computer. I will be the only one who listens to and translates the recording into English. I will change your name and caste name so that others cannot identify what you said.

Your name will not be mentioned when I write about what I have learned in the discussion. You can choose another name for me to use when I write about what you said. No one else will know which name you have chosen.

However, if during our conversation I hear anything which makes me worried that you might be in danger of harm, I might have to tell other people who need to know about this. But I will talk to you before telling anything to others that you need help.

The results of this study

When I have gathered the information from everyone who participated in the interview, I will write what I learnt from talking to you in a thesis, a long essay that I have to complete for the course I am studying. My teachers at the university will read and mark this.

If you are curious to know, I will tell you and the other young people who have taken part what I have found out from talking to you. If you want to know how everyday life shapes your questioning/ non-questioning behaviour. I will destroy all my notes and recordings when the project is finished. However, I will save transcripts of interviews in which your name, caste (category) is changed or hidden. I will save research data for five years to disseminate the findings through journal articles, conference papers, book chapters, and writing a thesis. Upon request, a summary of research findings will be available for parents and students.

Participants can request to no longer participate in the research, and all data will be destroyed. This can happen at any stage during the interviews and up to one month after the completion of the final interview. Once data is transcribed and anonymised, it will not be possible to identify and delete it from the pool of collected and anonymised data.

Review of the study

The College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, University of Glasgow, has reviewed and approved this study.

Contact for further Information

If you have any questions about this study, you can ask me, Dinesh Yadav (d.yadav.1@research.glasgow.ac.uk) or my supervisor, Dr Stephen Parker (Stephen.Parker@glasgow.ac.uk). If you want to complain about anything regarding the study, you can write to the College of Social Sciences, Acting Lead for Ethical Review, Dr Benjamin Franks: email socsci-ethics-lead@glasgow.ac.uk

Thank you for reading this

……

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Researcher: Dinesh Yadav

Course: PhD in Education

Supervisors: Dr Stephen Parker; Dr Mark Murphy

Appendix 8

PRIVACY NOTICE

Privacy Notice for Participation in Research Project:

Title: The cultural formation of criticality and conformity in educationally and economically disadvantaged higher secondary school students in rural Uttar Pradesh, India.

Researcher: Dinesh Yadav

Your Personal Data

The University of Glasgow will be the 'Data Controller' of your personal data processed in relation to your participation in the research project (The cultural formation of criticality and conformity in educationally and economically disadvantaged higher secondary school students in rural Uttar Pradesh, India). This privacy notice will explain how the University of Glasgow will process your personal data.

Why do we need it?

We are collecting basic personal data to conduct our research. We need your name, gender, age, social category (SC/ST/OBC/GENERAL), caste, and parents' education through a survey. Further, I will gather information about your education, family, and the social arena in which you grew through biographical narrative interviews.

We collect your data through a survey to identify a few participants from different social groups for the interview. Those who will not be recruited for the interview will have their data destroyed after recruiting participants for the interview.

We only collect data that we need for the research project and will de-identify your personal data through pseudonyms from research data that is gathered from your interview and survey responses. All the personal data will be destroyed at the end of the project. Only anonymised, pseudonymised files of interview transcripts will be archived with the university for ten years

and kept with the researcher for five years to disseminate the findings through research publications.

We will maintain confidentiality of your data, except in case I get information that would harm/ potentially harm you and require sharing with parents, the school head or enforcement agencies. However, at most will be done after your consent, except in extreme cases where you are in a condition of severe damage, in ensuring confidentiality. Please see the accompanying *Participant Information Sheet***.**

Legal basis for processing your data

We must have a legal basis for processing all personal data. As this processing is for Academic Research, we will rely upon Article 6(1)(e) of the General Data Protection Regulation (EU), education/research as a public task, to process the basic personal data you provide. In order to fulfil our ethical obligations, we will ask for your Consent to take part in the study. Please see the accompanying *Consent Form.*

What we do with it and who we share it with

All the personal data you submit is processed by: Dinesh Yadav, researcher (PGR), and two supervisors: Dr Stephen Parker, and Dr Mark Murphy at the University of Glasgow, United Kingdom. In addition, security measures are in place to ensure that your personal data remains safe, such as pseudonymisation, secure storage, and encryption of files and devices. Please consult the *consent form and Plain Language Statement that accompany* this notice. I will provide a summary of research findings on demand for a copy of the findings of the study.

What are your rights?

General Data Protection Regulation (EU) provides that individuals have certain rights, including requesting access to, copies of and rectification or erasure of personal data and object to processing. In addition, data subjects may also have the right to restrict the

processing of their personal data and to data portability. You can request access to the information we process about you at any time.

If you believe that the information we process about you is incorrect at any point, you can request to see it and, in some instances, request to have it restricted, corrected, or erased. You may also have the right to object to the processing of data and the right to data portability.

Please note that, as we are processing your personal data for research purposes, the ability to exercise these rights may vary, as there are potentially applicable research exemptions under the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. For more information on these exemptions, please see UofG Research, which includes personal and special categories of data.

If you wish to exercise any of these rights, please submit your request via the web form or contact dp@gla.ac.uk

Complaints

If you wish to raise a complaint on how we have handled your personal data, you can contact the University Data Protection Officer, who will investigate the matter.

Our Data Protection Officer can be contacted at dataprotectionofficer@glasgow.ac.uk

If you are not satisfied with our response or believe we are not processing your personal data in accordance with the law, you can complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) https://ico.org.uk/

Who has ethically reviewed the project?

This project has been ethically approved via the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee or the School of Education Ethics Committee.

How long do we keep it for?

The university will retain your personal data only for as long as necessary for processing and no longer than the period of ethical approval (30/09/2024). After this time, personal data will be securely deleted.

Your *research* data will be retained for 10 years in line with the University of Glasgow Data Archive and for 5 years with the researcher to disseminate research findings through publications. Specific details in relation to research data storage are provided on the Plain Language Statements and *Consent Form,* which accompany this notice.

University of Glasgow
College of Social Sciences

Appendix 9

27 January 2023

Dear Dinesh,

College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Project Title: The cultural formation of criticality and conformity in educationally and economically disadvantaged higher secondary school students in rural Uttar Pradesh, India

Application No: 400220137

The College Research Ethics Committee has reviewed your application and has agreed that there is no objection on ethical grounds to the proposed study. It is happy therefore to approve the project, subject to the following conditions:

- Start date of ethical approval: 30/01/2023
- Project end date: 30/09/2024
- Any outstanding permissions needed from third parties in order to recruit research participants or to access facilities or venues for research purposes must be obtained in writing and submitted to the CoSS Research Ethics Administrator before research commences: socsci-ethics@glasgow.ac.uk
- The research should be carried out only on the sites, and/or with the groups and using the methods defined in the application.
- The data should be held securely for a period of ten years after the completion of the research project, or for longer if specified by the research funder or sponsor, in accordance with the University's Code of Good Practice in Research: (https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_490311_en.pdf)

- Any proposed changes in the protocol should be submitted for reassessment as an amendment to the original application. The **Request for Amendments to an Approved Application** form should be used:

https://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/socialsciences/students/ethics/forms/staffandpostgraduateresearchstudents/

Yours sincerely,

Dr Susan A. Batchelor

College Ethics Lead