Sustainable Peacebuilding Through a Dignity Lens: A Case Study of Caste-Based Discrimination in Nepal

Ravi Shankar Rajaratnam and Mokbul Morshed Ahmad

Abstract The 2030 Agenda of the United Nations for Sustainable Development is undoubtedly a rights-based programme linked to conflict prevention and resolution. Dignity is strongly associated with human rights and a human rights-based approach to development. Further, dignity becomes a core issue in the peacebuilding discourse. Social cohesion is vital to peacebuilding by addressing social tensions, power imbalances, and structural inequalities. The caste system determines many people's identity and social status in Nepal, where caste-based discrimination is still prevalent. This paper aims to surface the issue of caste-based discrimination as a barrier to promoting social cohesion that would hinder peacebuilding at a societal level. This study looked at how adolescent girls perceive dignity. Hence, in-depth interviews were conducted with sixty Dalit adolescent girls in Nepal. The data and information were collected and analysed using grounded theory methodology. The findings confirm that caste-based discrimination is a violation of dignity. Adolescent girls tried to avoid upper caste people and expressed anger against them, which hampers social cohesion. Issues related to caste-based inequality, as a source of conflict, should be prioritised in the development agenda to promote social cohesion. When dignity is violated, it can cause conflict, disrupt peace, and hamper sustainable development. Hence, peace at a societal level cannot be guaranteed unless dignity is considered a core issue in peacebuilding initiatives to achieve the desired results. The authors believe that the preliminary findings will assist development practitioners in focusing their peacebuilding initiatives through a dignity lens to maximise the expected results.

Keywords Human dignity · Caste-based discrimination · Dalit · Peacebuilding

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1 Introduction

The sustainability-peace nexus is crucial to advancing humanity globally and is a vital component of the global agenda for sustainable development (Amadei 2021). The United Nations 2030 agenda clearly articulates, "There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development" (United Nations 2015, p. 2). Hence, with SDG 16, peace is completely incorporated into the sustainable development agenda and is a cross-cutting issue regarding gender equality, governance, health, inequalities, security, assistance for vulnerable nations, and sustainable cities (Amadei 2021). However, the Sustainable Development Goals are unlikely to be achieved since conflict is a severe development obstacle (Yarnall et al. 2021).

The primary goal of the 2030 Agenda is to "leave no one behind," a promise anchored in the human rights principle of equality and non-discrimination, which is also at the heart of conflict prevention and peacebuilding (UNHCHR 2020). Inequalities are a significant source of conflict; therefore, reducing them and increasing social capital are two ways to improve horizontal and vertical cohesion, which is now recognised as essential to promoting peace and sustainable development (Löhr et al. 2022). Thus, conflict prevention and resolution are inextricably linked to sustainable development (Löhr et al. 2022).

The United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is undoubtedly a rights-based programme (Choondassery 2017). Although many NGOs practise rights-based approaches to development, there is no universally agreed definition, though there is some consensus on some elements of it (O'Leary 2017; Nelson and Dorsey 2018). A human rights-based approach emphasises inclusive and meaningful participation in which different groups and communities, including ethnic and minority groups, are represented and encouraged to actively participate in processes and decision-making without discrimination (UNHCHR 2020). The United Nations acknowledges that development, peace, security, and human rights are inextricably intertwined and mutually reinforcing (Löhr et al. 2022). Hence, peacebuilding requires a rights-based development approach.

According to Choondassery (2017), the argument for the foundation of the "human rights-based approach comes from our moral nature that values the inherent dignity of the person and the moral demand of promoting and protecting it" (p. 20). This confirms how dignity is strongly associated with human rights and a human rights-based approach to development. Song (2015) interprets that the major organisations implementing programmes in line with the rights-based approach complement a human dignity approach. Similarly, scholars have claimed that many social problems, particularly those influencing health, such as violent conflict, human rights violations, and social unfairness, can be addressed through a dialectic of dignity (Perry 2013). Thus, dignity becomes a core issue in the rights-based approach to development and the peacebuilding discourse.

Human rights have long been seen as powerful moral principles that can determine the quality of peace by dealing with social tensions, power inequalities, and structural

inequality (Georgi 2022). In societies dominated by systemic inequalities, incompatible values lead to conflicts of interest (Matijević and Erić 2015). Hence, social cohesion is essential in addressing social tensions, power, and structural inequalities (Georgi 2022). Over the last two decades, governments and international donor organisations have increasingly recognised the importance of social cohesion in peacebuilding, recognising the importance of social fragmentation and establishing trust between social groups and the state as critical for ensuring peacebuilding (Löhr et al. 2022). This paper aims to surface the issue of caste-based discrimination as a barrier to promoting social cohesion that would hinder peacebuilding at a societal level.

Inherited caste identity determines one-fifth of the world's population's life opportunities, but it is not prioritised in global policy debates (Mosse 2018). For many people in Nepal, the caste system determines "their identity, social status, and life changes" (Bennett et al. 2008, p. 1). Dalits in Nepal are subjected to discrimination and exclusion due to a hierarchical caste system where Dalits are the lowest in the system (Doss et al. 2022). The socio-economic conditions of the Dalits are lower as compared to other ethnic and caste groups in Nepal (Bhattachan et al. 2009). Although Nepal is trying to move away from the caste system, caste-based discrimination against Dalits is still prevalent. Human dignity is linked to social inclusion and freedom and the "absence of discrimination, shame, and humiliation" (Hojman and Miranda 2018, p. 2). Accordingly, this paper focuses on determining how Dalit adolescent girls view caste-based discrimination and their dignity, which are affecting social cohesion and, eventually, peacebuilding at the community level.

2 Literature Review

The word dignity derives from the Latin '*Dignitas'*, meaning honour and respect (Staffen and Arshakyan 2017). It became a focal point of discussion in philosophy when the German philosopher Immanuel Kant defined dignity as intrinsic to human beings (Loughlin 2016). Later, it became a central concept in the development and legal sectors when the United Nations recognised dignity in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) preamble.

Comprehending the multifaceted concept of dignity remains a challenge, with scholars, politicians, and philosophers all defining it differently. From the Kantian perspective, dignity is intrinsic and inalienable. However, human dignity is culturally relative, dependent on time and place, and dependent on the circumstances of a given scenario (Kleindienst 2017). In some situations, dignity is considered a quality of interaction between individuals and how they are treated; in other situations, it is a psychological or cognitive outcome that allows people to achieve a 'sense of dignity' (Keisu 2017). Thus, dignity can be said to be composed of at least two dimensions; one is acquired at birth by virtue of being born as a human being, and the other is acquired as the result of certain behaviours and the social environment (Staffen and Arshakyan 2017). Similarly, Jacobson et al. (2009) suggest that human dignity

has two distinguishable features: intrinsic and social dignity, where the latter results from interactions between individuals, collectives, and societies. Hence, according to Jacobson et al. (2009), social dignity may be promoted or violated through encounters between and among actors.

Caste is a social classification based on birth within a group (Dhanda 2020). According to Patra and Velassery (2013), "casteism is human alienation" (51). Dalits in Nepal are subjected to discrimination and exclusion due to a hierarchical caste system where Dalits are the lowest in the system (Doss et al. 2022). Dalits are still among Nepal's most economically disadvantaged, politically marginalised, and socio-culturally oppressed groups (Pariyar and Lovett 2016). Participants in a study conducted by Pariyar and Lovett (2016) expressed high anxiety about the term "Dalit" as it has long-term implications for their identity. Thus, casteism should be considered a human rights issue that is discussed from a global perspective and graded on the same scale as other human rights issues (Dhanda 2020).

Researchers on peace and conflict frequently use Johan Galtung's work on violence and peace as a starting point. He believed peace was not merely the absence of war but also structural and more invisible forms of violence (Sharifi et al. 2021). Hence, a comprehensive definition of peace includes freedom from less obvious kinds of violence, such as social discrimination, political repression, and other structural injustices that impede the growth of individual agency and opportunity (Fisher et al. 2021). Therefore, for establishing and maintaining peace, academics emphasise the importance of minimising power disparities (Sharifi et al. 2021).

A peaceful, democratic, and wealthy society is said to be strongly influenced by social cohesion (Löhr et al. 2022). Lack of social cohesion elevates inequality and discrimination in a given context. Horizontal cohesion, such as relationships among individuals of the same group and relationships among individuals across groups, and vertical cohesion, such as relationships between individuals, groups, and the state, are crucial to ensuring sustainable development and peace (Löhr et al. 2022). Muller and Neuhäuser (2011) argue that poor people see themselves as 'second-class citizens', which undermines their self-respect and, accordingly, their dignity. Similarly, Dalits in Nepal too consider themselves second-class citizens as they are rated as outcasts outside of the caste system, and therefore they became untouchables (Patra and Velassery 2013).

The new constitution of Nepal highlights "the right against untouchability and caste-based discrimination and 'the rights of Dalits' as fundamental rights" (Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination 2017, p. 4). However, caste-based discrimination still prevails in Nepal even after the Nepalese government has introduced different acts and actions. According to Galtung, if injustice and repression are embedded in the foundations of a society, it will eventually evolve into structural violence (Matijević and Erić 2015). Hence, Galtung believes that peace-building, rather than traditional peacekeeping and peacemaking, is the only method to address these structural roots of violence and resolve the conflict (Matijević and Erić 2015).

3 Methods

Our study examines young people's understanding of dignity as revealed by how it is violated among adolescent Dalit girls in Nepal. This article is mostly based on qualitative research. The data was collected and analysed using grounded theory methodology. Sixty adolescent girls were questioned using a semi-structured interview guide. This study focused on Dalit teenagers aged 15–19 to collect rich qualitative data. The data collection started in February 2020, after getting approval from AIT's Research Ethics Review Committee, and ended in February 2021.

This study was undertaken in the Kabilvastu district, where a local NGO implemented an adolescent empowerment programme in line with the principles of a rights-based approach to development. Adolescent girls who met our criteria were purposefully selected. For the study, a female Dalit research assistant was hired who had local and English communication skills, was experienced with data collection, and did not have affiliations with any NGOs in Nepal. She assisted the adolescent girls in recalling various elements of their lives and questioned them on how such experiences honoured or violated their human dignity. The interviews took place without the presence of NGO staff. In accordance with research ethics, all participants provided prior written consent. The qualitative analysis was supported by the use of MAXQDA software.

4 Results

Most of the girls reported being humiliated in common places, mainly when they went to collect water at the collection points. Some of the responses from the girls follow a similar pattern. Adolescent girl 1 (18 years old) said that:

> Whenever we went near the handpump to fill water, the upper-caste woman used to ask us to stay away from this place. They say they want to fill the pots first, and then we can take the water. Once she said, "Get out of this place, I had to fill the water tank first". Mistakenly, if we touched their pots, they started rubbing them with detergent powder and scolding us too. (Adolescent Girl 1, 18 years old)

The Adolescent Girl 12 (15 years old) reiterated that:

> When I went to the tap, they (upper-caste women) said to stay away. Once, when I kept my pot and started filling it first, they pounced on it and started filling theirs. I felt terrible and could not eat anything, so I went to bed without eating. (Adolescent girl 12, 15 years old)

Almost all girls expressed similar experiences about fetching water at the handpump. Adolescent girls reported feeling humiliated and avoiding going to fetch water when upper-class women were present at the water collection places. Adolescents reported issues affecting their day-to-day lives, mainly with upper-caste older women, and half of the adolescents interviewed reported humiliation at the water collection points. In addition, adolescents also reported being ill-treated by their

friends. Adolescent girl 25 (16 years old), expressed her feelings when her friend attempted to discriminate against her because of her caste.

> When we were in Pyuthan (a neighbouring district), I was going to my friend's house one day. We went there with five other friends. Then we became thirsty after hiking. One of my friends asked for water from an unknown house. They gave us some, but one of my friends told me, "I will drink first, then you," and I asked why. She said, "You are of a lower caste, so we should not eat or drink anything if you touch it.". At that time, I felt bad for myself for being born into a lower-caste family. (Adolescent girl 25, 16 years old)

In this manner, all adolescents reported facing challenging situations with upper-caste people, mainly older women and their upper-caste friends. They mostly encountered such situations when visiting upper-caste families and friends, which resulted in negative feelings. They were hurt by incidents in the relationship between the upper and lower castes and others' recognition of their status. Adolescent girl 8 (16 years old) shared her feelings when an upper-caste shop owner maltreated her.

> Their (higher caste people's) words have the power to break someone's heart. When I was young and went to buy chocolate in a small boutique nearby, I mistakenly touched the chocolate box. The shop owner then slapped me so hard. I could not understand why she slapped me. Later, I asked my mother, and only I knew it was because of our caste. (Adolescent girl 8, 16 years old)

The caste-based discrimination contributed to mixed feelings among adolescent girls. First, the frustration of being born in the Dalit community was highlighted as Adolescent girl 7 (15 years old, school dropout) said, "I feel bad; if I were born in another caste, they would have treated me equally, but now because of my caste, they treated me differently." The difference in status pushes adolescent girls to articulate equality. Her desire to be born into an upper-caste family grows, and she believes her social standing will improve. On the other hand, since status becomes an attribute of dignity, she indirectly touched upon her dignity. Secondly, adolescent girls expressed their anger towards upper-caste women and their friends. Adolescent girl 11 (17 years old) expressed her multiple feelings due to her experience with upper-caste women.

> When she (upper caste woman) said, You are Dalit, and we are upper class, do not come inside our house. Then I felt terrible and became enraged. I wish I could have beaten her. Then I started to unfollow my friendship with her daughters, and now their daughters are not my friends. I felt angry when they started scolding me for things I was helpless or not responsible for. I once went 4-5 days without eating due to stress and a headache. (Adolescent girl 11, 17 years old).

Money and resultant power, traditions, rules and regulations, beliefs about curses, and the caste system itself contribute to the superior behaviour reported by adolescent girls, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Reasons for the superior behaviour of upper-caste women

Reason	Sample quote
Money and power	"Their supremacy over everything, including money, power, and strength. So, they always think that Dalits should always be below them." (Adolescent girl 42, 15 years old)
Tradition, rules, and regulations	"I think their tradition or rules and regulations contribute to their thinking of themselves as superior to others." (Adolescent girl 45, 19 years old)
Beliefs of the curse	"They teach their children that by touching a Dalit they will get a curse from their forefathers and ancestors." (Adolescent girl 57, 19 years old)
Caste system itself	"Their supremacy over other castes, according to Dharma is like that of the Bharhmin, followed by the Khsyatriya, Vaisya, and Sudra. As a result, they are always convinced that they are superior to others." (Adolescent girl 49, 18 years old)

5 Discussion

The negative feelings of adolescent girls helped unpack the concept of dignity in their context. These feelings did not hurt them physically but hurt the adolescent girls mentally, especially in their subconscious minds. Kant believes that "human beings have an inner transcendental kernel", which is the basis for their dignity (Kant, as cited in Loughlin 2016, p. 328). Hence, these feelings could be attributed to Kant's inner transcendental kernel. In other words, it could be argued that the feelings are the result of treating them with indignity. Human dignity, intrinsic dignity, and social dignity, which result from interactions between and among individuals, collectives, and societies, are considered distinct phenomena by scholars (Jacobson et al. 2009). Adolescent girls also experienced a lack of social dignity due to their interactions with the so-called upper caste people in their community. Hence, caste-based discrimination becomes one of the issues contributing to the violation of the dignity of adolescent girls.

Although most of the girls mentioned that the elderly women in their society mainly practise caste-based discrimination, as they are referred to as 'aunties and grandmothers', they also experienced it through their friends. Adolescent girls also shared incidents in which their friends humiliated them, resulting in anger and withdrawal from such incidents. Almost two-thirds of the girls said they started avoiding situations, such as not going to fetch water when upper-caste women are present at the tube-water collection place, and girls also said they stopped having relationships with and visiting their upper-caste friends. These practices mainly avoid potential conflicts between the Dalits and the upper caste.

The main reason for breaking the relationship with the upper-caste people is to avoid situations that could trigger violence or humiliate the adolescent girls and preserve their dignity; as Kant says, the inner transcendental kernel is the basis of their dignity. Adolescent girls also expressed the reason why upper-caste people treat

them differently. The common factor that surfaced during the interviews is that upper-caste people's superior mentality largely influences their behaviour. Adolescent girl 30 (16 years old), expressed this clearly.

> The main factor causing them to behave like that is probably their traditional way of thinking, what they have learned from their parents, and what they teach their children. Their psychology means that they think they are superior to others. (Adolescent girl 30, 16 years old)

Some people believed they were superior to others because of their perceived caste status. Hence, the caste system and the resultant community practises demarcating the 'upper' and the 'lower', which influences the girls' perception that they are inferior in their community. Adolescent girls' understanding of superior behaviour is governed by status. Adolescent girls stated different reasons for the superior behaviour of upper-caste people (Table 1). According to adolescent girls 42 and 49, upper-caste people's superiority made them believe they were lower than them. Mosse (2018) articulates that caste as a social system was established when "the superiority of Brahman purity over Kshatriya power established the ideological separation of status and power" (425). Adolescent 45 reflected this by saying that the traditional rules and practises contributed to the feeling of superiority. As a result, because it is a privilege for Brahmans, the upper caste people are given advantages; they are entitled to honour, respect, and precedence in all social matters (Patra and Velassery 2013).

The superior thinking of upper caste people discriminates against Dalit adolescent girls. This has created a clear demarcation between the lower and upper castes, as expressed by the adolescent girls. The quotes by them, such as "I am afraid of them. Because they are from a higher caste." (Adolescent girl 17, 15 years old) and "I see myself lower than the other caste when they (upper caste) treat me differently." (Adolescent girl 27, 15 years old) confirms a clear demarcation in status due to the caste system. Caste has an ideological dimension associated with ritual ranking and ideas of purity and impurity (Mosse 2018). Hence, the upper caste people think the lower caste people are impure. Further, the Dalits are rated as outcasts outside of the caste system, and therefore they became untouchables (Patra and Velassery 2013). Such demarcation, dominated by systemic inequalities, impedes community peace.

Dalits in Nepal are subjected to discrimination and exclusion due to a hierarchical caste system where Dalits are the lowest in the system (Doss et al. 2022). Similarly, Dalit adolescent girls also reported being lower than others. The feeling of thinking 'low' is associated with dignity. Adolescent girl 52 (15 years old), said, "Obviously, we are Dalits, and we have a lower position in the community." Adolescent girl 46 (19 years old), assured that they are always lower than others by saying, "We were, we are, and we will always be lower than them no matter what we do." Thoughts of "being lower' are deeply inculcated in adolescent girls' minds, which makes it difficult for them to think that their status can be improved in the community and that they can also lead a life with dignity. According to adolescent girls, upper-caste people's superior thinking impacts interpersonal interactions. According to Chadwick (2012), personal values, behaviours, and attitudes can largely influence interpersonal skills, and dignity also plays a vital role in interpersonal interaction.

Hence, adolescent girls tend to discontinue their relationships, even with friends from the upper caste. Such problem-avoidance behaviour may not contribute to long-term peace and development.

Adolescent girls try to avoid circumstances where they could feel unequal, as they end up with negative feelings such as humiliation and distress. The rejected claim to equality by Dalits is "devastating, hurtful, even traumatic", and such "dignity humiliation" is a source of distress (Mosse 2018, p. 433). As a result, feelings of distress and humiliation result from a dignity violation. The interpersonal relationships, even with their friends, confirm caste-based discrimination, which contributes to multiple negative feelings confirming their lower social status. Hence, adolescent girls reported avoiding such circumstances as described, as shown in Table 2.

Adolescent girls try to avoid such circumstances, mainly to avoid being hurt and humiliated. The underlying reason for this withdrawal mechanism is twofold, one is to avoid being discriminated against due to caste, and the other is their expectation of being treated equally as human beings. In other words, they wanted to be in a zone where they felt dignified, as scholars interpret that even if a person lacks his or her "realised dignity," they will retain their "inherent dignity," which is also called "initial dignity" as it is inherent to the human being (Kleindienst 2017). Because of human beings' nature of free will, they have basic dignity, and according to Kant, human beings can realise their dignity by themselves (Giesinger 2012). In this manner, adolescent girls attempt to realise their dignity while avoiding circumstances that violate it. Adolescents isolate themselves from mainstream society in order to protect their dignity, in addition to being excluded by the upper caste. As per UN terminology, "fundamentally, caste determines social exclusion" (Mosse 2018). Hence, it was evident that adolescent girls' problem-avoidance behaviours affect social cohesion, which is crucial for peacebuilding at the community level.

Regardless of age, sex, socio-economic level, physical condition, ethnic origin, political ideals, or religion, all human beings have equal and intrinsic worth and

Table 2 Avoidance of circumstances that cause humiliation

Reason	Sample quote
Visiting friends' house	"When I visited my friend's house (upper caste), she openly said not to sit here. I did not feel good, and then I decided that I would never go to their house again." (Adolescent girl 4, 19 years old)
Visiting upper-caste people	"I know which house or which people talk about caste discrimination, but I never go to their house." (Adolescent girl 15, 17 years old)
Fetching water	"One day when I went to my neighbour's tap for water, she (of the upper caste) asked me to stay away, so I stayed away, and because of my caste, I felt humiliated." I felt sad and tense. "I never go there." (Adolescent girl 9, 17 years old)
Attending social events	"At a party or any programme held in society, 2–4 groups of people sit together and have fun, but we have to sit alone. I feel sad, and that's why we do not go to anyone's house for a party." (Adolescent girl 10, 17 years old)

should be treated with the utmost respect and care (Andorno 2014). However, upper-caste people always think they are superior due to the caste system. Due to the "idea that the upper caste people are superior due to their race, look, and colour… most of our upper caste people's approach and attitude towards the Dalits are based on a contemptuous feeling" (Patra and Velassery 2013, p. 50). As a result of their perceived power as a result of the caste system, their behaviour towards Dalits is humiliating. The salient feature of "caste and all its social judgements is a modern form of power over Dalits" (Mosse 2018, p. 433). Due to such power, as adolescent girls reported, Dalits feel humiliated and distressed. According to Patra and Velassery (2013), Dalits were part of the system because their services were critical to the community, but they were treated inhumanely. Jacobson (2009) confirms that the violation of dignity is associated with a social order of inequality. Hence, from the point of view of dignity, caste-based discrimination could be considered a violation of social dignity.

The findings confirm that caste-based discrimination, as a violation of dignity, hampers social cohesion. As adolescent girls explained, they tried to avoid the so-called upper caste people and expressed anger against them. Peacebuilding should begin with oneself and then spread to the family, community, and, ultimately, the societal or national level. However, according to our findings, hatred is being inculcated among young adolescent girls from the Dalit community. Similarly, upper-caste women and girls instilled such hatred in themselves. Thus, caste-based discrimination impacts social cohesion and acts as a ticking time bomb that could detonate at any time, causing conflict between different groups. In other words, violation of dignity as a root cause could trigger conflict and therefore be an obstacle to sustainable development. Between inequality and unsustainability, there is likely to be a vicious cycle whereby increasing one will increase the other, which will then increase the former, and so on (Neumayer 2011). A significant reduction in inequality is required to maintain political, economic, and environmental sustainability (Stewart 2014). Further, unresolved conflicts can obstruct the sustainability goal's advancement (Fisher et al. 2021). Therefore, inequality as a root cause needs to be addressed, which could promote peace and eventually contribute to sustainability.

Many organisations have long aimed to create a more just, secure, and sustainable world where everyone can live in peace and dignity (Amadei 2021). However, this study confirms that even empowerment programmes implemented in line with rights-based programming principles failed to promote dignity. The second-generation conflict theories attempted to incorporate the core causes of conflict sought in society's social, psychological, and structural structures (Matijević and Erić 2015). Further, the objectives of contributions to peace include reducing conflict's root causes, fostering social cohesiveness, and altering relationships between people (Joireman and Haddad 2023). Accordingly, the findings confirm that caste-based discrimination is a significant cause of violations of human dignity, hampers social cohesion, triggers conflict, and affects sustainable development. Hence, peace at a societal level cannot be guaranteed unless dignity is considered a core issue.

6   Conclusions

As per the in-depth interviews conducted with Dalit adolescent girls in Nepal, this research confirmed that caste-based discrimination violates human dignity and should be addressed. Since caste-based discrimination is rooted in culture and tradition, it needs a different approach. Through peacebuilding initiatives, educating young people using dignified language might change their mindset, as formal education and awareness-creation programmes do not touch upon the root causes of prevailing issues related to caste. Violation of dignity as a root cause could trigger conflict and hamper sustainable development. Promoting social cohesion is a prerequisite for sustainable peacebuilding at the community level, which cannot be achieved as per the findings unless caste-based inequalities are prioritised in the development agenda. Therefore, in order to achieve the desired results of peacebuilding initiatives, the root cause of violations of dignity should be addressed. This study focused only on Dalit adolescent girls. Hence, further studies are recommended to explore the interconnectedness of dignity and peacebuilding. However, the authors believe this preliminary finding will assist development practitioners in focusing their peacebuilding initiatives through a dignity lens to maximise the expected results.

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