

Women's Empowerment and its Relationship to Intimate Partner Violence in Palpa District, Lumbini, Nepal

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ABSTRACT

Background

Intimate partner violence (IPV) violates women's human rights and is a major public health concern. Intimate relationship violence or non-partner sexual assault affects about one in three (30%) women worldwide at some point in their lives. These types of violence harm women's sexual, emotional, physical, and reproductive health. This kind of abuse against women is preventable. Women's empowerment encompasses six common qualities: psychological, political, legal, economic, physical, and social empowerment, encompassing various aspects of life.

Objectives

To assess the relationship between women's empowerment and intimate partner violence.

To identify the prevalence and contributing factors of intimate partner violence among married women.

Materials and method

A descriptive cross-sectional study design was adopted for the study. The sample size was 352 and a purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample. Data was collected by face-to-face interviews using pre-tested questionnaire during April, May, June, and July 2023. Questionnaire related to Socio-demographic information, Standard valid tool Conflict Tactics Scale tools (CTS) were used as instruments. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with SPSS version 22.

Results

Out of 352 respondents, nearly half (43.2%) were between the ages of 30 and 39. Half of the respondents (50.3%) had low decision-making levels. Likewise, the lowest proportion of the respondents (16.2%) had a moderate level. More than half of the respondents (58.5%) had a low level of empowerment, whereas only 3.4% of the respondents had a high level of empowerment. Regarding violence, physical was 20.2%, sexual was 24.1%, emotional was 33.2%, controlling behavior was 53.7%, and overall intimate partner violence was 68.5%. There is a statistically significant relationship between intimate partner violence and women's

age ($p = <0.010^*$), duration of marriage ($p = <0.009^*$), socioeconomic class ($p = <0.01^*$), member of the organization ($p = 0.005^*$), bank account ($p = 0.006^*$), empowerment ($p = 0.020^*$), husband's alcohol habit ($p = <0.01^*$), and husband's smoking habit ($p = <0.01^*$).

Conclusion Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that more empowered women had less experience with intimate partner violence, whereas less empowered women had more experience with emotional, sexual, and physical abuse, as well as dominating actions from their close relationships. Having children, household decision-making, and property ownership had no noticeable effect on the prevalence of intimate relationship violence. The likelihood of intimate relationship violence was not significantly impacted by having children, making decisions, or possessing property.

KEYWORDS

Intimate partner violence, women empowerment

INTRODUCTION

Approximately one in three (30%) women globally have experienced non-partner sexual assault or intimate relationship violence at some point in their lives. Globally, over a third (27%) of women between the ages of 15 and 49 who had been in a relationship said their intimate partner had abused them physically or sexually. Sexual assault can raise a woman's risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and have a detrimental impact on her physical, emotional, sexual, and reproductive health. The medical field may play a significant role in connecting women who have experienced abuse to relevant support services and in offering them comprehensive health care (WHO, 2021). Intimate partner violence (IPV) is the term used to describe any actions in a close relationship that cause physical, emotional, or sexual harm to another person. It includes a range of coercive measures, including forced sexual relations, physical violence (slapping, hitting, kicking, and beating), emotional violence (humiliation), and various controlling behaviors (keeping a person away from friends and family, keeping an eye on their whereabouts, and limiting their access to resources or help). Because they are emotionally or financially dependent on the violent people, husbands and other close male partners are typically the ones who commit intimate partner violence (IPV). Consequently, IPV affects people everywhere, regardless of their social, economic, religious, or cultural background (Garcia-Moreno *et al.*, 2006).

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive, cross-sectional study design was adopted for the study. The sample size was 352, and a purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample. Data was collected by face-to-face interviews using a pre-tested questionnaire during April, May, June, and July 2023. Participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. No names or personal identification numbers were returned on the questionnaire. Informed consent was obtained from each respondent. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Nepal Health Research Council (NHRC). The research questionnaire consisted of two parts: Part A: Socio-demographic variables of respondents, Part B: Standard valid tool Conflict Tactics Scale tools (CTS) were used as instruments. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics and multivariate regression with SPSS version 22.

RESULTS

The mean age of the respondents was 33.9 year and standard deviation 7.77. More than half of the respondents (58.5 %) had a low level of empowerment whereas the least of the respondents (3.4%) had a high level of empowerment. Regarding violence, physical violence was 20.2%, sexual violence was 24.1%, emotional violence was 33.2% controlling behavior was 53.7% and intimate partner violence was 68.5%. There was statistically significant between intimate partner violence with women’s age ($p= <0.010^*$), socioeconomic class ($p=<0.01^*$), member of organization ($p=0.005^*$), women’s empowerment ($p= 0.020^*$), husband alcohol habit ($p=<0.01^*$). Respondents who belong to age more than 30 years have 1.865 times higher odds of having intimate partner violence. More than half of the respondents (58.5 %) had low level of empowerment, followed by 38.1% had moderate whereas least of the respondents (3.4%) had high level of empowerment. More than half of the respondents whose spouses were alcoholics (54.5%) reported experiencing physical violence; 45.5% reported sexual violence, followed by emotional violence (33.8%), controlling behaviors (592%) and overall intimate partner violence (81.8%).

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents based on Sociodemographic Characteristics
n=352

Characteristic	Categories	Frequencies	Percentage
Age	<20yrs	7	2.0
	20-29	96	27.3
	30-39	152	43.2
	40-49	97	27.6
Mean age =33.90, min=18, max =49, SD \pm 7.70			
Ethnicity	Dalit	87	24.7
	Janajati	152	43.2
	Brahmin/Chhetri	111	31.5
	Others	2	0.6
Type of family	Nuclear	182	51.7
	Joint	170	48.3
Level of education	Primary level	166	47.1
	Secondary/higher secondary	160	45.5
	Bachelor and above	26	7.4
Occupation	Homemaker	152	42.8
	Farmer	106	29.9
	Daily labor	11	3.1
	Business	37	10.4
	Service	46	13.0
Socioeconomic class	Upper middle	113	32.1
	Lower middle	131	37.2
	Lower upper lower	108	30.7
Empowerment	Yes	146	41.5

	No	206	58.5
Household decision-making	Yes	242	68.8
	No	110	31.3
Property ownership	Yes	100	28.4
	No	252	71.6
Member of community organization	Yes	216	61.4
	No	136	38.6
Children	Yes	327	92.9
	No	25	7.1

Above Table 1 illustrate that respondents reported nearly half of the respondents were belong to 30-39 years, majority (43.2) of respondents were janajati, half of respondents belong to nuclear family, 47.1% were primary level education, 42.8% were homemakers, 37.2% were lower middle class, more than half (58.5%) respondents had no empowered. Majority (68.8%) of respondents participated in household decision-making. Likewise, only 28.4% of respondents had property ownership, majority (61.4%) of respondents involved in community organization and almost all (92.9%) of respondents have children.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents based on Types of Violence (n=352)

Variables	Violence f (%)	No violence f (%)
Physical violence	71 (20.2)	281 (79.8)
Sexual Violence	85 (24.1)	267 (75.9)
Emotional Violence	117 (33.2)	235 (66.8)
Controlling behavior	189 (53.7)	163 (46.3)
Intimate partner violence	241 (68.5)	111 (31.5)

The above Table 2 illustrates that women reported experiencing physical violence at a rate of 20.2%, followed by emotional violence at 33.2%, sexual violence at 24.1%, controlling behavior at a rate of 53.7%, and intimate partner violence at 68.5%.

Table 3: Association between Sociodemographic characters and Intimate partner (n=352)

Variables	Experience of violence		COR	95% CI	p value
	Yes n(%)	No n(%)			
Age in range					
<below 30yrs	61 (58.7)	43(41.3)	1		
Above 30 years	180 (72.6)	68 (27.4)	1.86	3.01,1.15	0.010*
Ethnicity					
Janajati	96(62.3)	58 (37.7)	1		
Others	145 (73.2)	53 (26.8)	1.65	2.59,1.05	0.029*
Education level					
Secondary and above	117 (62.9)	69 (37.1)	1		
Primary	124(74.7)	42 (25.3)	1.74	1.10, 2.75	0.017*
Occupation					
Paid job	44 (53.0)	72(26.8)	1		
Homemaker	197 (73.2)	39 (47.0)	2.42	1.45, 4.03	0.001*
Socioeconomic class					
Middle	151(61.9)	93 (38.1)	1		
Lower	90(83.3)	18 (16.7)	3.07	0.18, 0.57	<0.01*
Member of organization					
Yes	136 (63.0)	80 (37.0)	1		
No	105 (77.2)	31 (22.8)	1.99	0.30, 0.81	0.005*
Household decision making					
Yes	119 (67.2)	58 (32.8)	1		
No	122(69.7)	53(30.3)	1.37	0.85, 2.21	0.819

(p value significant at 0.05 level)

The above Table 3 illustrates that respondents who were more than 30 years old were more likely (COR = 1.86, CI: 3.01, 1.15) than respondents who were less than 30 years old. Likewise, primary-educated women were more likely (COR = 1.74, 95% CI: 1.10, 2.75) to experience violence than women in secondary education. Homemakers were more likely (COR = 2.42, CI: 1.45, 4.03) to experience violence than paid jobs, and the low socioeconomic class was more likely (COR = 3.07, 0.18, 0.57) to experience violence than the middle class. Likewise, respondents who had no involvement in any community organization (COR = 1.99, 0.30, 0.81) and had no participation in household decision-making were (COR = 1.37, 0.85, 2.21) more likely to experience intimate partner violence.

DISCUSSION

This study was designed to find out about women's empowerment and its relationship to intimate partner violence among married women in Tansen Ward no 7 and Ward no 8, Palpa, Lumbini, Nepal. The study population consisted of 352 married women. Demographic findings revealed that nearly half of respondents (43.2%) were belong to 30-39 years and only 2 % were <20 years. The mean age of respondents was 33.90 years, Mean \pm SD =33.9 \pm 7.70, the minimum age was 18 years and the maximum age was 49 years. Regarding caste/ethnicity, 36.1 % belonged to Magar, and 2.0 % belonged to another caste. Almost all of the respondents belong to the Hindu religion. More than half (51.7 %) of respondents were living in a nuclear family and had arranged marriage (51.8%). The majority (92.9%) of respondents have children. The proportion of respondents (47.1%) were primary level and the least proportion of respondents (7.4%) had up to a bachelor's and above the level of education. Regarding occupation nearly half the proportion of the respondents (42.8%) were homemakers. Nearly half of the respondent's husbands (49.7%) have up to a higher secondary level of education while the least proportion of respondent's husbands have up to a bachelor's and above level of education. It also shows that the highest proportion of respondents' husbands (31.8%) depended on an abroad job whereas the least proportion (4.5%) was unemployed. the highest proportion of respondents (37.2%) belonged to the lower middle socioeconomic class. The majority of respondents (80.7%) had their bank account and more than two-thirds of the respondents (71.6 %) had no property ownership. Likewise, almost all of the respondents (95.2%) had use of media. The majority of respondents (61.4%) of respondents had been involved in community organizations. Almost all of the respondents (97.2%) of respondents had no smoking habits followed by no alcohol habits (93.8%). Similarly, more than half of the respondents' husbands (55.7%) had alcohol habit. About half of the respondents (50.3%) had low decision-making levels, followed by the lowest proportion of the respondents (16.2%) had a moderate level. More than half of the respondents (58.5 %) had a low level of empowerment whereas the least of the respondents (3.4%) had a high level of empowerment. The present study's findings revealed that 26.5% of primary and general educated women experienced physical violence, and 31.9% of primary and general educated women experienced sexual violence. The present study's findings contradicted a study conducted in Bangladesh, which revealed that among 3933 married women aged 15–49 years, 52.8% experienced physical violence and 18.3% sexual violence (Saanawar *et al.*, 2018). Current study findings revealed that more than half of the respondents' husbands (55.7%) had an alcohol habit and more than one-fourth (26.5%) of women were involved in cash earning services. These findings are similar to another study that was done in Nepal among 3562 women. Out of the respondents, two-thirds (67.4%) did not have any monetary earnings, and 65.7% said that their spouses did not drink alcohol (Gautam & Jeong, 2019). In terms of the various forms of violence, this study showed that 20.2% of women had been victims of physical violence, which was followed by sexual violence (24.1%), emotional violence (33.2%), controlling conduct (53.7%), and overall intimate partner violence (68.5%). A study of 4210 married women in Nepal who were of reproductive age (15–49) provided evidence in support of these conclusions. According to the survey, there was an overall prevalence of intimate partner violence of 32.4%, with 23.4% of respondents reporting physical abuse, 17.5% reporting mental violence, and 14.7% reporting sexual violence (Dalal *et al.*, 2014). The findings of the study is somehow similar to a cross-

sectional survey was conducted among 1,296 married women aged 15–24 years women had experienced of sexual violence was 46% at some point and 31% had experienced sexual violence in the past 12 months (Puri *et al.*,2012). Similarly, another study conducted in Bangladesh among 3933 married women aged 15–49 years revealed that 47.4% of respondents experienced physical violence, while 16.4% experienced sexual violence by their husbands (Saanawar *et al.*,2018). Another similar study was conducted revealed among 3,666 married women aged 15-49 years revealed that prevalence of emotional violence was 36.4% and physical violence was 18.4% in Pakistan (Iqbal & Fatmi, 2018). In contrast of this study conducted among 21,234 married in Afghanistan was carried revealed that more than half (55.54%) of Afghan women were experienced of physical, psychological, or sexual abuse by their intimate partners. accounted for the IPV cases more than half (50.52%) of respondents were experienced of Physical violence (Shinwari *et al.*,2021). In contrast, of this study, cross-sectional study was conducted in Karachi, Pakistan among 759 married women aged 25-60 years revealed that physical violence was 57.6%, sexual violence was 54.5% and psychological abuse were 83.6% (Ali, *et al.*, 2011). Current study revealed that respondents whose husbands were alcoholic experienced of physical violence was 2.604 times (CI: 1.46-4.68) more likely occurs than nonalcoholic husbands do. The findings is consistent to the study conducted in India among 64,607 respondents whose husbands were alcoholic experienced of physical violence COR 3.40 times CI: 3.3-3.5) more likely occurs than nonalcoholic husbands (Garg *et al.*, 2021) do.

CONCLUSION

The present study concluded that Empowered women had less experience of physical violence. Property ownership or household decision-making did not significantly contribute to a decrease in violence against intimate partners. Empowered women had less experience of physical, sexual, and emotional violence and controlling behaviors by their intimate partner in life. Local as well as national level programs should be launched to promote women's empowerment to be suitable for all levels of women such as economic empowerment programs for women, which can provide them with greater independence and reduce their vulnerability to abuse. Community-based interventions and support networks can play a vital role in providing emotional support, counseling, and referrals to specialized services.

RECOMMENDATION

Comparative and comprehensive studies can be done between rural and urban areas of women. A large-scale study can be done in the same area of research for more generalization.

LIMITATION

This study was only focused on assessing the relationship between socio-demographic factors and different types of violence among women. Present study design was cross-sectional, therefore temporal relationship between contributing factors

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

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