

# Prevalence of Domestic Violence Among the Pregnant Women Attending BPKIHS

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**Aims:** To find out the prevalence of domestic violence in pregnant women attending Antenatal clinics (ANC) of B. P. Koirala Institute of Health Sciences, a tertiary centre in eastern Nepal.

**Methods:** It was a hospital based cross-sectional study done at antenatal clinics of BPKIHS from 14th March 2015 to 30th August 2015. The total number of recruited antenatal patients was 470. Data were collected by face to face interview via pre-tested semi-structured questionnaire. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analysis.

**Results:** The prevalence of domestic violence among pregnant women was 53.2% of which prevalence of physical domestic violence was 9.6%. The most common person inflicting the domestic violence was husband (23.6%). Emotional abuse was the most common form of domestic violence experienced by the pregnant women (26.8%) and threatening for remarriage was most common emotional violence faced (43.2%). As the age of the pregnant women increases, they tend to have more domestic violence.

**Conclusions:** The prevalence of domestic violence among pregnant women seemed alarmingly high in our society. Awareness to the family members and strengthening the women empowerment at community level might play a major role for reducing such violence. Pregnancy-related violence is a serious public health issue.

**Keywords:** ANC clinics, domestic violence, physical threats, psychological abuse.

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## INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence (DV) extends beyond physical acts of violence towards one's partner to include sexual coercion, physical threats, psychological abuse and controlling actions such as physical isolation or restricting access to health care or financial resources.<sup>1</sup> In recent years, domestic violence during pregnancy is given much attention due to its prevalence, adverse health consequences and intervention potential.

Domestic violence during pregnancy endangers both the pregnant woman and her unborn child. In pregnancy domestic violence can have a number of adverse outcomes on maternal and neonatal health, including, poor nutrition, miscarriage, antepartum hemorrhage, premature labor, trauma, placental abruption, low birth weight, maternal deaths and still births.<sup>2</sup>

Domestic violence is a form of violence against women and when it involves pregnant women, it calls for a closer attention because of the greater danger

it entails.<sup>3</sup> Besides health effects, domestic violence impedes women's economic and social development and capacity for self-determination and the adverse health consequences affecting women and their children.<sup>4</sup> The prevalence of violence against women ranged between 17-37% with considerable regional variation.<sup>5-8</sup> The impact of domestic violence on pregnant women is increasingly recognized as an important public health issue that has serious consequences for their physical and mental health. This study attempts to document the prevalence, knowledge and perception of domestic violence among pregnant women attending BPKIHS.

This study was conducted to find out the prevalence of domestic violence in pregnant women attending Antenatal clinics (ANC) of B. P. Koirala Institute of Health Sciences, a tertiary centre in Eastern Nepal.

## METHODS

It was a hospital based cross-sectional study done among 470 pregnant women in antenatal clinics of BPKIHS between March to August 2015. The women were selected by purposive sampling among those attending ANC clinics of BPKIHS. Data were collected by face to face interview via pre-tested semi-structured questionnaire. Data were entered in MS

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Excel Sheet and converted into SPSS 17.1 version for further analysis. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analysis.

## RESULTS

Among 470 pregnant women recruited in the study, 273 women had experienced the domestic violence resulting the prevalence of domestic violence to be 58.1% out of which 53.2% women had experienced domestic violence for the first time in this pregnancy. Majority of the women (n=126,

26.8%) had experienced emotional abuse which was the most common form of domestic violence among pregnant women. A total of 45 women had experienced physical domestic violence resulting in the prevalence of physical domestic violence as 9.6%. Majority of the women (n=111, 23.6%) inflicting the domestic violence was the husband. Threatening for remarriage (n=118, 43.2%) was the most common emotional violence faced (Table 1).

**Table 1: Problems faced due to Domestic Violence during pregnancy (n=470).**

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Type of DV experienced	Physical	45	9.6
	Emotional	126	26.8
	Word Abuse	102	21.7
How often faced DV	Almost daily	41	8.7
	Sometimes	173	36.8
	Rarely	59	12.6
Who do DV on you	Husband only	111	23.6
	All family member	88	18.7
	In-laws	74	15.7
Pregnancy related complication	Unintended pregnancy	5	1.8
	Induced abortion	21	7.7
	Psychological	162	59.3
	Vaginal bleeding	33	12.1
	Chronic pelvic pain	52	12.1
Emotional violence faced	Back Biting	16	5.9
	Verbal abuse	85	31.1
	Threatened to remarriage/ sending to parents home	118	43.2
	Blamed of induced abortion	24	8.8
	Accused of witchcraft	1	0.4
	Not allowed to seek health care	6	2.2
	Not allowed to enter in kitchen for household chores	23	8.4
Total		470	100

**Table 2: Reproductive Health problems and its association with Domestic Violence (n=273).**

Characteristics	Categories	If experienced DV at home during pregnancy		P-value	Remarks
		Yes	No		
Have you ever aborted	Yes	125 (74.9%)	42 (25.1%)	<0.001	Sig
	No	148 (48.8%)	155 (51.2%)		
Total		273 (58.1%)	197 (41.9%)		
Cause of abortion	Spontaneous	31 (59.6%)	21 (40.4%)	<0.001	Sig
	Forceful	65 (95.6%)	3 (4.4%)		
	Medical	29 (61.7%)	18 (38.3%)		
Total		125 (74.9%)	42 (25.1%)		
Reason of abortion	Sex selection	19 (95%)	1 (5%)	0.374	Not sig
	Financially poor	8 (88.9%)	1 (11.1%)		
	Unwanted by family	38 (97.4%)	1 (2.6%)		
Total		65 (95.6%)	3 (4.4%)	-	-

A total of 125 women (74.9%) who had aborted had experienced domestic violence during the pregnancy ( $p < 0.001$ ). In majority of the women ( $n=65$ , 95.6%), the cause of abortion was forceful ( $p < 0.001$ ) (Table 2). Majority of the patients ( $n=98$ , 69%) facing the

domestic violence was of age group 30-40 years and above ( $p < 0.001$ ). As the age of the patient increases, they tend to have more domestic violence as shown in this study (Table 3).

**Table 3: Relation of Domestic Violence during pregnancy with Socio-demographic characteristics (n=470).**

Characteristics	Categories	if experienced DV at home during pregnancy		p-value	Remarks
		Yes	No		
Age (in years)	15-20	23 (39.0%)	36 (61.0%)	<0.001	sig
	21-30	152 (56.5%)	117 (43.5%)		
	30-40 and above	98 (69%)	44 (31%)		
Occupation	Housewife	168 (57.3%)	125 (42.7%)	0.956	Not sig
	Job	57 (60.6%)	37 (39.4%)		
	Business	29 (58%)	21 (42%)		
	Student	19 (57.6%)	14 (42.4%)		
Educational status	Uneducated	33 (66%)	17 (34%)	0.590	Not sig
	Primary	30 (61.2%)	19 (38.8%)		
	Secondary	48 (55.2%)	39 (44.8%)		
If husband working	SLC and above	162 (57%)	122 (43%)	0.294	Not sig
	Yes	261 (58.7%)	184 (41.3%)		
	No	12 (48%)	13 (52%)		
Duration of marriage	<1 year	25 (41%)	36 (59%)	0.23	Not sig
	2-5 years	128 (60.7%)	83 (39.3%)		
	>5 years	120 (60.6%)	78 (39.4%)		
Educational level of husband	Uneducated	15 (65.2%)	8 (34.8%)	0.425	Not sig
	Non formal education	26 (65%)	14 (35%)		
	Primary	29 (67.4%)	14 (32.6%)		
	Secondary	83 (54.2%)	70 (45.8%)		
Family size	Higher education	120 (56.9%)	91 (43.1%)	0.084	Not sig
	Nuclear	130 (62.5%)	78 (37.5%)		
	Joint	143 (54.6%)	119 (45.4%)		
Total		273	197	-	-

## DISCUSSION

In this study, the prevalence of domestic violence among pregnant women was 58.1% ( $n=273$ ) which is similar to the study conducted by Jahanfar et al<sup>9</sup> (60.6%). In this study, age was highly significant to domestic violence during pregnancy where as in a similar study done in Parsa by Pradhan<sup>10</sup>, the age variable had no association with the experience of gender based violence. The most common person inflicting the domestic violence was the husband ( $n=111$ , 23.6%) in this study. Similarly, a systematic review of 13 studies from several African countries (including Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe) done by Shamu et al<sup>11</sup> showed that 23-40% of pregnant women experienced physical violence by an intimate partner. Having patriarchal nature in the culture might be the probable reasons for the high prevalence by partner in this study.

The most common form of domestic violence experienced by the pregnant women was emotional abuse ( $n=126$ , 26.8%) in this study. Similarly, the prevalence of physical domestic violence in this study was 9.6% ( $n=45$ ) which is consistent with the study done by Babu et al<sup>12</sup> in which the prevalence of physical domestic violence during pregnancy was 8.3%. Perhaps because of potential links between pregnant women's physical injury during pregnancy and injury to the developing fetus, much research has focused on the prevalence of physical violence during pregnancy. Less is known about the prevalence of other types of violence during pregnancy, such as emotional or sexual violence. Although estimates concerning emotional and sexual violence during pregnancy vary, there does appear to be a common pattern: the prevalence of emotional violence is generally greater than the prevalence of physical violence.<sup>13</sup>

In this study, 36.8% (n=173) pregnant women reported that they sometimes experienced domestic violence during their pregnancy which is consistent with the study done among 1215 women presenting to abortion clinics in China by Wu et al<sup>14</sup> which showed that majority of the women regularly experienced domestic violence, including during their current pregnancies. In this study, 43.2% (n=118) pregnant women were threatened of remarriage or sending back to parents' home and it was the most common emotional violence experienced. This is in contrast to the study done by Gurung et al<sup>15</sup> in which 79.2% women experienced psychological violence out of which 2.2% of women were threatened to or ever send to their parents' house.

In this study, 74.9% (n=125) of the pregnant women who had aborted had experienced domestic violence during the pregnancy and the most common cause of abortion was forceful (n=65, 95.6%) while unwanted child by family was the most common reason for abortion (n=38, 97.4%). Similarly, the study done in India by Stephenson et al<sup>16</sup> showed that women who experienced physical violence have significantly higher odds of reporting a subsequent induced abortion, whereas women who had an induced

abortion have significantly higher odds of reporting subsequent sexual and verbal violence.

As the age of the patient increased, they tend to have experienced more domestic violence as shown in this study. But in contrast, the studies done by Cokkinides et al<sup>17</sup> and Saltzman et al<sup>18</sup> found that women younger than 20 years old were three to four times more likely than women aged 30 or older to experience violence during pregnancy. Due to low level of education, low income and being dependent on their male partner there might be the higher prevalence of domestic violence with increase in age. In this study, illiterate victims experienced more domestic violence (n=33, 66%) than literate victims which is much similar to the study done by Pradhan<sup>10</sup> in which illiterate victims (72.9%) experienced more violence than literate victims.

## CONCLUSIONS

Pregnancy-related violence is a serious public health issue. The prevalence of domestic violence among pregnant women was found to be higher. Although there is a growing body of research on this subject, there are still many unanswered questions regarding the prevalence of this type of victimization, the risk factors, and the consequences.

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