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A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY OF MARITAL WOMEN'S VIOLENCE IN RURAL NEPAL

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to explore the situation of domestic violence among married women in Arghakhanchi, Nepal. A quantitative cross-sectional study design was used. It is found that females from Brahmin families had a higher percentage of corporal punishment than females of other ethnic groups (30.9% vs. 26.4%, $p=0.001$). Married women of age 25 and less were victimized by corporal punishment (58.3 %, $p=0.001$). Corporal punishment was 1.66 times higher in married women of the reproductive age group victimized by message mistreatment. It is linked to women's bullying through messages [AOR: 1.43; 95 %]. It means with a 95% confidence interval, that women who encounter bullying via SMS are 1.43 times more likely to become victims of domestic violence than women who do not. This implies that the two variables have a moderately positive connection. It is recommended that Brahmin younger married women (age 25 and under) should be the focus of interventions, as they seem to be more susceptible to physical punishment. Additionally, as message mistreatment and women's bullying through messages are strongly associated with a higher likelihood of domestic violence, addressing these issues should be a top concern.

Keywords: domestic violence, health risk, married women, mistreatment

INTRODUCTION

More than fifty percent population of Nepal comprises females (Chalise, 2023). About a half million of females are more than males in Nepal. Among them, nearly 31% of them are women of reproductive age (15-49 years). Women in Nepal have the problem of mistreatment by family

members, particularly husbands. In the context of Nepal, domestic violence against married women is unknowable common. The increasing amount of media attention to this issue highlights how crucial it is to put into practice, and a practical measures to stop domestic abuse and defend married women's rights in Nepal. Raising awareness and coordinating actions from non-governmental and governmental entities are crucial to bringing about long-lasting change and advancing an egalitarian and respectful culture. According to the Nepal Demographic and Health Survey, married women in Nepal are about 26% of the entire population (Niraula *et al.*, 2021). Married women have more risky issues like pressure, domestic fierceness, and corporal punishment which have a negative effect on their health (Kansakar, 2022). Bullying and forceful behavior are unwanted manner which laid to hierarchies that can be recurrent time and again (Rajbhandari & Rana, 2022). In the form of forceful behavior that hampers the physical and mental aspect of women caused by the punishment, cyber harassment/ message bullying (Bharati *et al.*, 2021). One out of four women is bullied at home (Dangal & Singh, 2020) and the case is more severe among married women (Nepal *et al.*, 2021).

Nowadays, married women in Nepal particularly in towns and cities are more affected by cyber-crime (Rajbhandari & Rana, 2022). In 2015, about 21% of women aged 15-49 years were exposed to pretend mistreatment. Domestic violence is a serious public health problem. Harassment leads to a thoughtful influence on the bodily and psychological well-being of conjugal females in Nepal (Rishal *et al.*, 2018). Violence increases the hazard of physical and mental well-being and causes associated health complications that may raise the dangers of morbidity, and venereal diseases (Dahal & Kumar, 2021). In the case of Nepal, married women have problems of forcefulness for sexual activities and other misbehaving like scolding and blaming. These cases if known by the community people, it is extremely defamed (Jahng, 2020). In general, violence is an extensively under-reported case, thus accessible figures and records are inclined to misjudge the reality. Moreover, domestic ferocity is also an abandoned extent of investigation in Nepal (Niraula *et al.*, 2021). Thus, a deeper knowledge of the problem is domineering in order to stimulate a synchronized programme besides the case.

The Living Standard Survey defines domestic violence as mostly related to unsocial erotic activities that are forcefully indulged by someone without obtaining consent. The degree of such misbehavior is not limited

to only respectful kisses, touching, and hugs (Wagle *et al.*, 2022). Bullying of married women in Nepal is most common during kissing. According to the National Institute of Drug Abuse, the abuse of medications or chemicals is further probable to initiate in adulthood (Wagle *et al.*, 2022). Such chemicals comprise, the leaves and smoke of tobacco (*Surti in the Nepali language*), banned drugs and capsules, and prohibited medications. Harassment, domestic fierceness, and corporal punishment are substantial community vigor concerns among Nepali married women.

Literature suggests that 11.8% of married women reported message bullying. Pretend from mass media vary its degree in terms of mental health effect from tolerance to morbidity. Messaging through mass media and mobile phones to someone without any sense of affection is also a major bullying for married women. Research showed that mistreatment, domestic fierceness, and corporal punishment concurrently exist. Research reported message bullying exploits 300 genealogically varied married women. Corporal punishment became the major form of bullying that has a bad impact on the physical and mental health conditions in domestic settings. The study showed that corporal punishment started through women dating and it ultimately led to tension, quarrel, and tolerance which is a type of violence among women (Engeler & Raghubir, 2018). Corporal punishment has become worse these days starting from messaging and dating. Furthermore, a meta-analysis informed particular facets of well-being and mental difficulties like psychological well-being, and corporal punishment. These outcomes are related to ill-treatment but futile to investigate the consequence of online harassment on corporal punishment (Niraula *et al.*, 2021). To minimize this effect, education plays a vital role in controlling such pathetic conditions (Acharya *et al.*, 2020).

The paucity of research in this area in Nepal motivated the author of this study. Additionally, huge statistics exclusively amassing figures on pregnant women deliver a less varied representation of the marked group of women. This study intended to explore the situation of harassment in the home of married women in Nepal. The main reason for doing this study was the dearth of significant studies on domestic abuse against married women in Nepal. Furthermore, current statistical data that largely focus on adult women may fail to account for the experiences of a larger segment of the nation's female population. Thus, the purpose of this study was to offer a more thorough understanding of the type and frequency of harassment that married women in Nepali households face.

Though married women are increasingly the targets of domestic abuse, little research has been done on particular ethnic differences in the setting of isolated Nepali villages. Although previous research has provided insight into the frequency and trends of domestic violence, there is a huge knowledge vacuum on the complex experiences of many ethnic groups, particularly in areas where socioeconomic and cultural norms may have a substantial impact on marital dynamics. In an effort to close this gap, this study looks at the frequency and contributing factors of domestic violence among married women in a remote Nepali village between the ages of 15 and 49, with a focus on the Brahmin ethnic group. Gaining insight into the particular causes of Brahmin women's higher rates of domestic violence in comparison to other ethnic groups could be extremely helpful in developing focused interventions and policy initiatives that aim to lower domestic violence and advance gender equality in Nepali communities.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

A quantitative cross-sectional study design is used in this study that uses a survey questionnaire for collecting data. This survey was conducted during the months of September and October 2018. This study applies cluster sampling in 3 phases to ensure a representative sample. These 3 phases contain, (i) phase one contains primary sampling units (PSU) that include small samples; (ii) phase second includes women home selection from PSU; and (iii) the third phase comprises one respondent from each family that were selected in phase two. Women completed the self-administered questionnaire. A three-phase cluster sampling procedure served as the basis for the sample, with the selection of primary sampling units (PSUs) coming first, then the selection of women from these PSUs, and lastly, one respondent from each family that was chosen. The respondents were chosen according to a set of demographic standards, such as being married women between the ages of 15 and 45, members of particular ethnic groups, and cohabiting spouses. The demographic variables used in this research were the women with their husband between the age group of fifteen to forty-five years of age, gender (only female), marital status (married), and ethnicity (Brahmin, Newar, Magar, and Gurung). Domestic violence was the dependent variable in this research. It was carried out in 2018, the question was asked whether they use alcohol, tobacco, or *gaaja* (the Nepali name for tobacco) or not. Physical abuse (hitting, slapping, or punching), psychological or emotional abuse (verbal threats, intimidation, or control), sexual abuse (coercion), and financial abuse (controlling finances) are the main components of domestic

violence have been students. A composite variable was made by summing up the variables recorded and made during the study.

Domestic violence along with mental and physical punishment were made variables in the study. Participants were provided one or zero if they used alcohol or tobacco or gaaja or not. In the study, bullying was considered an independent variable. Two principal questions were asked of the respondents. Question one was related to whether they had experienced being forced into sexual intercourse and if she wanted to or not. And the second question was related to the frequency of forcing sexual intercourse although she does not want to do so. These two questions are linked to slapping, hitting, threats and controlling financial resources. The sample of the study was the forty married women for whom 42 survey forms were asked in 2018. 40 sampled homes participated in the survey, and 40 sampled women submitted questionnaires. The total response rate (RR) during the data collection was sixty percent. It shows that forty percent of Nepali married women did not want to answer related to their sexual life, bullying, and other mental and physical punishment.

This study used a descriptive analysis in which the bivariate analysis that shows the association amid the fluctuating factors. The relationship between the variables was used at a 5% level of significance. Statistical analysis was used to measure multivariate analysis related to the physical and mental punishment and the harassment of married women in Nepal. In the multivariate analysis, Odds Ratio (OR) and 95% confidence interval testified for unadjusted and adjusted models. All female participants who fit the requirements of being married and living with their husbands between the ages of fifteen and forty-five were asked to provide written and verbal agreement for the research process. By signing a form expressing their willingness to take part, participants gave their written consent, indicating that they agreed to engage in the study. Conversely, oral consent certifies that participants understood the objective of the study before they agreed to participate. Through the emphasis of ethical considerations and the preservation of participants' autonomy and rights throughout the study, these consent mechanisms guarantee that participants fully understand the goals of the research and willingly consent to participate.

RESULTS

The socio-demographic characteristics of married women (N=40) are explored in this survey. With regards to ethnicity, 83% of the married

women identified themselves as Brahmin, 11% were Newar, 5% were Gurung and 1% were Magar. The result of this study is grouped under home bullying, corporal punishment, and domestic violence. Harassment of women at home was practiced by 18.2% of married women and 14.5% of all married women were facing message mistreatment. In terms of corporal punishment, cigarette smoking was the intense form of use i.e., 29% of married women using tobacco. The use of *Gaaja* was also the major chemical used by the respondent i.e., 19.9%.

To show the relation between the variables, a bivariate analysis was used in this study. Domestic viciousness and harassment amid married women's corporal punishment status. These substances include alcohol, cigarettes, and *gaaja*. Males compelled to do this by pulling hair, slapping and grabbing to their wives. Females from Brahmin families had a higher percentage of corporal punishment than females of other ethnic groups (39.9% vs. 36.3%, $p=0.001$). Married women of age below twenty-five years said that they are victims of harassment and corporal punishment (69.6%, $p=0.001$). Also, married females i.e., housewives with high degree of prevalence of corporal punishment.

This study's bivariate analysis shows strong correlations between a number of variables and married women use of physical punishment. It suggests that drug and alcohol abuse, as well as *gaaja* use, are closely associated with domestic violence. Men who use these substances frequently engage in physically abusive actions against their spouses, including grasping, slapping, and hair pulling. Furthermore, the study discovers that women under the age of twenty-five and those from Brahmin households are especially susceptible to harassment and physical abuse in marriage. Furthermore, it is shown that married women who are mostly housewives are more likely to utilize corporal punishment. These results illustrate the intricate interactions between social elements and personal traits that lead to domestic violence, emphasizing the critical need for focused interventions and assistance.

The statistical result showed that females of Brahmin ethnicity had 1.16 times more victims than other females [OR: 1.16; 95% CI: 1.09-1.24]. Married women of age twenty-three and less than this time were found 2.26 times more [OR: 2.26; 95%CI: 1.39-3.68]. Also, Magar women were less probable. Another tool was used to analyze the data through multivariate logistic regression. It was shown that age of women, ethnicity, domestic violence, and bullying on corporal punishment among married women.

Results presented that only odds of corporal punishment were higher with mobile compared to those without using mobiles [AOR: 2.00; 95%CI: 1.26-3.22]. According to the findings, people who admitted to using cell phones were much more likely to get physical punishment than people who did not. After adjusting for other pertinent variables, the Adjusted Odds Ratio (AOR) of 2.00 indicates that people who use mobile phones are twice as likely to get physical punishment as people who do not. The 95% Confidence Interval (CI) of 1.26-3.22 denotes the range that the 95% confidence interval for the true population odds ratio falls within. The interval in this instance indicates that the true odds ratio may fall between 1.26 and 3.22, underscoring the direction and strength of the correlation between using a cell phone and physically abusing someone.

DISCUSSION

The harassment at the home was realized by one-fifth and one-seventh of married women reported experiencing message bullying. In addition, a very low percentage i.e. less than one-twelfth of the married women said being materially forced to have erotic contact. Data showed that less percentage of all married women were forced to have physical contact, one-sixth of married women were bullied electronically, and one-fifth were bullied at home. It clearly show that harassment and domestic viciousness are still major problems faced by married women in Nepal. The finding of the study is related to the study that women are bullied in various forms (Maharjan & Shrestha, 2022; Pahari & Adhikari, 2021; Timsina *et al.*, 2020; Wagle *et al.*, 2022). It clearly shows that more women in Nepal are the victims of different kinds of bullying.

The research explored the psychological health problems of married females due to messaging on phones or in chat. Most of the respondents had negative effects on their health due to messaging on chat and online media. Research showed that females who are living with husbands sometimes have negative effects on health as well as disturb conjugal relations due to unwanted text and letters on mobiles. The degree of corporal punishment midst married women is worse. This study also revealed that sufferers of harassment were more than one more likely with the habit of taking tobacco smoking than the use of fermented malt. Furthermore the substantial connotations between harassment and psychological problems of married ladies left to corporal punishment (Chapin, 2016; Pandey *et al.*, 2023; Nepal *et al.*, 2021). However, home bullying and corporal punishment

were not significantly linked but they are related to each other. Further, regarding domestic violence and corporal punishment, it was revealed that corporal punishment among married women (more than fifty percent) causes domestic violence. In line with this study, Jahng (2020) found that married women who had experienced domestic violence. In the same way, it was also found that married women are bullied by the use of tobacco.

Furthermore, domestic viciousness and harassment amid married women corporal punishment status. These substances include alcohol, cigarettes, and *gaaja*. Females from Brahmin families had a higher percentage of corporal punishment than females of other ethnic groups, more than fifty percent of women were victims of sexual harassment. The result is slightly higher than this study which found that one-fifth of women experienced home bullying, and one-third reported experiencing domestic violence. This result is consistent with the assess that found that married women are bullying in different ways (Bradley *et al.*, 2021; Nepal *et al.*, 2021). The statistical analysis carried out in this study provides insight into a number of parameters related to the frequency of physical punishment among Nepali married women.

The results indicate that women from other ethnic groups are less likely than those from Brahmin ethnicity to experience corporal punishment an odds ratio of 1.16 supports this claim. Furthermore, married women who are twenty-three years of age or younger are disproportionately affected; an odds ratio of 2.26 indicates that this cohort is much more vulnerable to physical abuse. It is noteworthy that Magar women seem to be less prone to receiving physical punishment, indicating possible differences in the incidence of domestic violence across various ethnic groups in Nepali society. Moreover, the significance of mobile phone usage as a contributing factor to the incidence of corporal punishment among married women is highlighted by multivariate logistic regression analysis. Even after accounting for other pertinent characteristics, the adjusted odds ratio of 2.00 shows that women with mobile phones are twice as likely to be physically abused as women who do not. In interventions meant to prevent and mitigate abuse within married relationships, this finding underscores the potential role of technology in intensifying cases of domestic violence and stresses the significance of addressing underlying factors like access to mobile devices (Barlett *et al.*, 2021; Tonsing *et al.*, 2021).

CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATION

It is concluded from this study that women in Nepal are prone to online message chatting causing physical and mental tensions leading to corporal punishment. There seems of association between bullying through messages and punishment with mental tension among married women in Nepal. Mental tension due to corporal punishment leads to morbidity in extreme. To control this situation, the home can be a good place to be aware among the people and its adverse effects on the body and psychological well-being of Nepali women. Local bodies need to launch programmes to aware women to control such situations. This study's relatively small sample size just 40 married women from Arghakhanchi district is one of its most obvious limitations. Although the results provide insightful information about the incidence of domestic violence among married women in this particular geographic area, care must be used when extrapolating the findings to all Nepali women. Due to the limited sample size, it may not be possible to fully reflect the variety of experiences and contextual factors that influence domestic violence in the nation's many regions and demographic groupings. As a result, the results might not be generalizable outside the study area which would restrict the study's conclusions' wider relevance to all of Nepal. Expanded and more representative samples from various locations should be the focus of future research endeavors in order to improve the validity and dependability of findings about domestic violence among married women in Nepal.

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