
Experience of Relationship and Livelihood of Widow Women in Nepali Society

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Abstract

This study aims to identify the social relations and livelihood experiences of widowed women in Nepali society. A narrative research design has been adopted for this study, and participants have been selected through the purposive selection method. The area of this study is Phakphokthum Rural Municipality Ward No. 1 of Ilam District. Feminist theory has been used as the theoretical framework of this study, based on which the results have been analyzed. In-depth interviews, observation forms, and memo-writing tools have been used for data collection. After transcribing the procedurally collected data, three levels of coding were developed to construct themes. Based on the themes thus constructed, the data is analyzed. Finding in two sentences the widowed women of Nepal are living a discriminatory life with economic, social, and psychological crises.

Keywords: widow woman, discriminatory life, disenfranchised, social exclusion, economic hardship, lack of support

Introduction

A widow woman is defined as a woman who has lost her husband and is not married, divorced from, or has an unmarried middle-aged husband. But as easily as our society pounces on a single word, a single woman is forced to live in Nepali society by suffering hundreds of times more. The situation of a single woman who has lost her husband is even more painful. The Hindu society has lost her husband as an inauspicious sign, which is bad for the society.

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From this, anyone can easily guess what the condition of a single woman who has lost her husband in Hindu Nepali society would be.

Women who lost their husbands shortly after marriage are still accused of being witches who eat husbands in rural society. It causes them mental and physical pain. Instead of managing the many women who have lost their husbands, society continues to abuse and torture them throughout their lives. The stories of many sisters who have suffered such pain have come out in the media. When such stories come out, the people who slander them cry crocodile tears on social media as a sad incident. It is a public truth that such problems are a thorn in Nepali society. The lives lived by these women are no less interesting and difficult.

On the other hand, the society has been naming women who have passed away as loose women. When such women wear good clothes, walk, eat, go out somewhere, meet with someone, they are viewed with suspicion and insulted. They are not given the environment to work independently and mingle with the society. Perhaps this is the reason why our society is backward. It is no secret that single women are shunned by society. Women and sisters from faraway places have to face such problems every day. The condition of the city is also not good. Even the well-known and distinguished people of the society are doing such things as considering single women as weak and making sexual proposals, sending obscene messages, harassing them, treating them as if there is no one to protect them, spreading unnecessary rumors and character assassination. No matter how much noise is raised about it, it is little.

In the case of single women, in addition to domestic violence, mental stress is also being given to them, forcing them to become psychotic. They are being subjected to sexual and mental abuse by family members. If she resists in such incidents, the society will blame the woman. It is not that women have not raised their voice for this, but the attitude of our society

has not changed. It is very sad that even in the second half of the twenty-first century, Nepali women have to fight class struggle for women's rights.

Poor women are not the only ones who face this problem. But women from rich families are more affected by this problem. Sexual violence and mental violence are also being done against women who are seen in the forefront of the society. Moreover, they have not been able to bring out such things for fear of losing the reputation and honor they have earned in such a situation. Its social challenges and practical aspects are still turbulent. Women are not able to raise their voices against it because they are afraid that the father's honor and reputation will be tarnished when such incidents are brought out. We are not able to take care of this kind of practical part. We feel that it is necessary to take new steps to overcome this situation.

It is from our society that we give opportunities to men by telling them what they can do to single women on various occasions. The fact that women are being sidelined in the fields of politics, finance, business, art, literature and social responsibility is not hidden from anyone. In those occasions, even if single women are capable, they are pushed aside as unable. In fact, it is not checked whether they are really able to face the challenge.

It is no less challenging for single women to carefully nurture their children. Creating an identity in the society is as difficult as creating a hill of sesame seeds. He has to face a lot of difficulties to maintain his social status in order to take care of the house and family. The masculine sinful gaze cannot be pleased with that. Even if they have a small success, there are many kinds of forces to push them up, down and overturn them. In the society, he traveled through the mountains of many struggles and created the identity of a good person, but they are accused of many kinds of adultery and sexual misconduct.

Various experts and social workers have not been able to determine since when the tradition of single women started and on what basis it is classified within women the tradition of single is also used to identify. The women in Nepali Hindu society. It was customary to go to sati after the death of the husband. When the practice of *Sati* came to an end, the idea of how to keep unmarried women in the bus was believed to be the beginning of many dos and don'ts for single women. The single world is found to have originated from the Vedic language later it is believed to be Indo-European language, it is found as homogeneity *Parword* in Latin language in European languages *Vuda*. In French *Wand*, in Russian *Vidola*, in German *Vitua*, in Persian *Vambu* is found. Even Nepal it is customary to call such women single, while different ethnic group of Nepal have given, different names to them according to their own language Thapa, (2062 VS).

It has been a tradition since ancient times for single women to give up their vermilion, bangles, grandchildren and even the red color symbol of good fortune. So that in our society, women who don't use red cloth and makeup can be identified from a distance single woman on the other hand, the feeling of orphans and orphans to single women, on the other hand. It is seen that they remain mute spectators even when there is injustices, oppression and oppression. In addition to this even among single women, considering themselves as orphans and sad drowning in feelings of self-pity more energy is provided by them to push back their important position in the society (Rizal, 2060VS).

A single woman is prohibited from wearing, speaking, sitting, and working For fear of leaving the child and remarrying or taking the property, they don't give a share, even if they give it, they give it so that it cannot be sold, they divorce the child without the mother's presence, they also face the trap of giving the property that is in the husband's name. Some families try to get them out of the house so that they don't have to give away their property. Law has accepted remarriage but society looks at it wrongly (Devkota, 2061VS).

Even among single women, the status of a single woman who has lost her husband is found to be at its lowest level. They are facing various social, economic, and psychological problems. However, various efforts are being made to empower women, but these efforts are not able to create a healthy environment for single women. For this reason, single women face various challenges. Therefore, this study focuses on the social situation of single women who have lost their husbands and their livelihood problems. Due to the death of her husband, a woman has to be rejected not only by society but also by her own relatives and family. He has to kill his will to live his life. It is because of this single custom that a woman's human rights are being violated.

Research on the intersection of social interactions and experiences of widowed women in Nepali society is crucial due to their unique socio-cultural and economic challenges. In Nepal, widowed women frequently face severe social shame, financial reliance, and resource scarcity, all of which have a negative influence on their social status and quality of life. Finding the underlying causes that decrease or increase their difficulties can be made easier by comprehending the complex dynamics of their social connections. First of all, widowed women in Nepal are often stigmatized and exposed to social isolation due to the patriarchal nature of Nepali culture. Losing social capital can result from marginalization, and social capital is essential for gaining access to support systems and employment prospects. Second, studying the social networks of widowed women might reveal coping mechanisms that they use to get through difficult times. Social relationships may either support economic empowerment or act as a barrier to it. Relationships with supportive family and community members, for example, might offer chances for income-generating activities, financial help, and emotional support. On the other hand, unfavorable social interactions can worsen financial hardship and isolation.

Moreover, it is important to investigate this connection in order to formulate intervention and policy strategies aimed at improving the well-being of widows. Policies that foster positive connections and community integration can enhance the social participation and economic autonomy of widowed women. Understanding how their social ties impact their experiences with their livelihoods could guide the development of targeted projects that address their unique needs and challenges.

Finally, in order to fully address the socio-economic problems widowed women in Nepali society confront, it is imperative to investigate the link between social interactions and the livelihood experiences of these women. It gives light on the intricate interactions between social elements that mold their lives and lays the groundwork for establishing nurturing surroundings that encourage social integration and personal growth.

Are there social and economic changes among single women over time? Have they reached a leadership role or not? How to engage women in leadership roles by making them independent in the future, and the present research work has been done to show that *bad manners* should be given up for a better life. Therefore, in this study, an attempt has been made to find answers to the following questions:

1. What is the social and family relationship of a single woman?
2. What is the impact on the livelihood of single women?

In this research paper an attempt has been made to explain the subject matter in a descriptive manner. Focusing on the topic, the respondent's educational status, age, emotional and psychological aspects, type of family, and religious historical background of our society, trying to expose the current society's shortcomings as much as possible, the topics related to their social condition are described in relation to the perspective of the society and the family towards a single woman. Overall, this study is based on a descriptive research structure

according to which the social and economic conditions of single women are explained. In this study, an attempt has been made to identify the problems of single women and highlight the social problems they are facing. The main source of material required for this study is the researcher's own visit to the study area.

Theoretical Framework

I have chosen feminist theory as the theoretical framework for this study. This theory examines gender inequality and women's experiences in society. This framework helps to analyze the social, economic, and cultural challenges faced by widowed women in Nepali society and how these challenges are influenced by patriarchal norms and structures.

In this section, I have reviewed previous research related to the topic of my study. This prior literature review has helped me be clear about the conceptualization of my study and the trends in the study of single women. In addition, this work has also helped me identify the gaps between my study and previous studies on this single woman study.

Widows in Nepal have experienced various acts of violence, including psychological, physical, and sexual abuse, by their own family members and neighbors. A study on violence against widowed women in Nepal revealed this fact (Sabri et al. 2016). I support the findings of this study because the results of my study on widowed women were similar to those of this study. The results of the study emphasize the need for intervention at the individual, family, community, and policy levels. Among the means of intervention are raising awareness of the plight of widows and dealing with cultural attitudes that affect their lives. In this study, researchers have raised issues such as raising awareness and empowering widowed women to face their difficulties. In this study, the researchers have found that instead of measures that can empower widowed women at the local level, they have presented suggestions that should

be intervened at the policy level. There is another study that is similar to this study, where researcher pointed out the lack of formal education and early marriage as the main reasons why widow women do not participate in the decision-making process (Poudel, 2015 AD). Even in the twenty-first century, violence against widows is a very sad thing. In Nepali society, the white sari worn by widows is a visible symbol of widowhood, concealing the numerous pains, difficulties, sorrows, and insecurities that these women experience. A study by Yadav (2016VS). Indicates that widows in Nepal have faced restrictive customs for centuries, but their lives are gradually transitioning toward more ease. This study mentions that widows endure psychological and cultural insecurities, particularly while adhering to the tradition of wearing the white sari. However, Yadav emphasizes the ongoing transformation in Nepali society, noting that it has become more flexible, considerate, and understanding toward widows, particularly since the civil war. Although widows' living standards remain challenging, the author highlights the positive shift in society's attitude, focusing more on the changes happening for widows rather than solely on their suffering.

Nepali society is gradually transitioning from rigid norms to more liberal attitudes toward widowhood. The social conditions of widows are improving, and attitudes toward remarriage are becoming more accepting. Many widows express a desire to remarry due to concerns over their personal safety, the future of their children, and to reduce financial burdens (Tiwari & Bhattarai, 2017VS). This progressive shift in the social status of widows is further supported by Yadav's (2016VS). study, confirming that while discrimination and injustice have not been completely eradicated, society is becoming friendlier and accommodating toward widows. The non-disclosure of widowhood in Nepal is a complex and deeply ingrained issue that has significant implications for women and their children (Surkan et al., 2015). To critically understand and analyze this phenomenon, it's essential to consider the cultural, social, economic, and legal aspects surrounding widowhood in Nepal. The non-disclosure of widowhood in Nepal has profound implications for women and their children, affecting their

legal rights, economic well-being, mental health, and overall empowerment. Efforts to address this issue should focus on both legal reforms and changing societal attitudes to ensure that widows and their children can live with dignity and access the support they need.

People react differently to the loss of a spouse; some are more likely to experience poor physical and mental health outcomes, while others are more resilient (Hendrickson et al., 2018). One of the strengths of the study is its focus on resilience, shedding light on how widows in Nepal navigate the aftermath of their spouse's death. The study recognizes the diversity of experiences among widows and highlights their agency in coping with adversity. In conclusion, the study on resilience among Nepali widows offers valuable insights into the lives of these women and their ability to adapt to challenging circumstances. While the study's qualitative approach and focus on resilience are commendable, it is essential to consider its limitations and the need for a more nuanced understanding of the factors that contribute to resilience among widows in Nepal.

The mental health status of widows who lost their spouses during the civil war in Nepal is alarming. They have high levels of frustration and anxiety (Basnet, Kandel, and Lamichhane, 2018VS). In light of some limitations, the study highlighted significant mental health concerns among war widows. To assist women in developing resilience, autonomy, and control over their lives, formal and informal education for women should also be given priority. The likelihood of employment, as well as decision-making and autonomy, may all increase with education. This study identifies an important problem but does not provide specific recommendations for treatment. Based on the review of the literature analyzed above, I came to the conclusion that, overall, the lives of single women are complex and conflicting. Especially in economic, social, and psychological aspects, such a situation has been

This study is limited to the widow women of Phakphokthum Rural Municipality, ward number 1 of Ilam district. According to the nature of the study, data has been collected only from one widow woman of that place. The data collected in this way cannot be generalized to other places.

Methodology

For this study, a narrative research design has been chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of a person's long-term experiences throughout their life. This design is well-suited for examining the experiences of a widow. It also has different approaches to design. Among those different approaches, I have completed this study based on the biographical study approach, in which the researcher writes and records the life experiences of another person. I have done the same in this study. For this study, I have used the purposive sampling method. I chose this method because the sample or participant will be selected according to the needs of the study. Also, because my study population is relatively small and unique compared to others, I chose this method. I have chosen a widowed woman as a sample for this study. She is Maya Devi Basnet, 50 years old. She was married at the age of 19, and her husband died of an illness when she was 27. She has passed SLC in school education, and before marriage, she also taught in school. She now relies on basic farming for her livelihood.

The study area of this research is Phakphokthum rural Municipality, ward number one of Ilam district. The sample or participant of this study, Maya Devi, has been living as a widow for a long time, and I myself believe that the researcher should have a lot of trust to discuss such a sensitive topic. Because I am a trusted acquaintance of Maya Devi Basnet, I have chosen this area as the study area. I conducted face-to-face interviews with the participants of this study and recorded the interview with my mobile phone. I arranged the interview at her convenience so as not to affect her household work while conducting the interview. Thus, the

interview questions given to the participants were open-ended. I also used the observation method for data triangulation in this study. As I interacted with the participant, I subtly observed his facial expressions and other physical gestures as he spoke. I created a list of observation guidelines to refer to in this work. Also, since she was my neighbor, I was also indirectly observing what she said and did in the past. I also used the memo-writing tool in this study because memo-writing is one of the most useful and powerful emotion-building tools. This is an important way to record the analysis. I wrote a memo based on some guiding questions, such as: what was going on around her during the interview, how she was behaving, whether she felt comfortable while giving the interview as in other normal situations, what other neighbors and village people were saying about her, etc.

With the participant's consent, I recorded the interview using a mobile phone and subsequently transcribed it in detail on the same day. I also made detailed notes following the interviews and observations. Furthermore, I offered the participant the opportunity to clarify any points after the interview. Following these interviews, observations, and note-taking, I proceeded with the coding process. During the initial open coding phase, I carefully analyzed the primary information categories found in the various sources, such as transcripts, observational documents, and memos. Once the open coding was completed for a set of data, I transitioned to axial coding. In this phase, I established connections and correlations between categories and codes across different datasets, including interviews and observations.

Upon finishing both the open and axial coding phases, I identified core categories, highlighting a single category or a few key categories that represented central phenomena. After extensive coding work, I presented the collected data as the outcome of my research and discussed it in the following sections.

Results and Discussion

In this part, I have analyzed the themes generated from the coding process in detail.

A Critical Life

The poor economic situation of single women makes life miserable in our society. It is a subject that can be easily guessed. In our society, the life of a widowed woman has become a nightmare, but now it is because of family problems. As long as the husband lives, they depend on the shelter of the husband, and whenever there is an obstacle, after that, the responsibility of taking care of the entire child is added to the woman, and family life begins. In this context, a single woman's experience after losing her husband is as follows: "It's been 24 years since my husband passed away; that's when the crisis started in my life, says a small child in arms. Another baby in the stomach has no source of income. I don't know how to face that day. After all the nights, the day has become a nightmare. Life is looking for happiness after happiness. It is still suffering. I don't know, a small job before marriage I have reared a cow, and Amma's income is 4000 or 500 per month, so the crisis of having to feed and educate my children is the anchor. What I mean by this statement is that when all the problems suddenly occur for single women after the death of their husbands, life becomes a cutthroat and chaotic situation.

After losing a husband, single women start to worry about what to do and how to take care of their children. Their future is uncertain, which is also confirmed based on various studies, research, and conversations with single women in our society. Even in this area of the twenty-first century, because I am a widowed woman in our Nepali society, it seems that even today, the disdain, disdain, and gender discrimination by one's own family and society continue. Her experience in this context is as follows: There are: Relatives of my family forced me to earn and eat by myself and insulted me.

When I asked for help from society, I did not get help. Me from family they showed me to live on a small farm near the forest and started living in a small house made of mud. There was nothing to eat, and I had to spend the day doing other people's work. When she needed help with her husband's family, she blamed me as if her husband died because of me.

Accusations and insults started as if my husband had died because of me. Others have been supported by their families, but ours is an educated family. They don't care. "Corporate pays social superstition pathological Violence against women is continuing due to the corruption of values and Purana thinking. They have had to 'suffer social humiliation and humiliation. (Mahaila Aayog 2078VS).

Anger is not limited to uneducated families; even educated families can see the despair of widowed women. Many studies have pointed out that these women often feel exploited by their relatives and family members, with Maya Devi's story emerging as an example. In today's society, family support is low, and sources of income are limited. For people like Maya Devi, who endure such hardships, the lack of regular employment is making life challenging.

Single Life Single Struggle

A single woman's own story and heart-wrenching pain; their foundation is the upbringing and education of their son and daughter after a sudden brick. You have to struggle with the problems of other families and society. All this experience from Maya Devi is as follows: After losing my husband, struggle became a part of my life. On the anniversary of my husband's death, I stayed in a cold mud house with a small child, and today I am dealing with the problem alone. I had to be humiliated even by my family; no matter how much I tried, my husband's remains have not been given to me. I have no real estate in my name now. Now it is time for son and daughter to go to campus; there is no basic for teaching. A woman, who

lost her husband, even though he had rights in our society, is still deprived of her rights in our society. The real estate in the name of the husband and go somewhere else.

So far, no single woman has acquired land. On the one hand, it is hard to guess what life will be like after being shunned by the poor, a collard family. The local government should also provide for extremely poor and helpless single women. She says that there is no support, even from the state. As much as Belem was unable to even take breakfast in the morning, after getting the support of the state, she got the single woman's allowance. How did she live? She wanted to buy medicine for her husband. I have to pay the loans I have taken; I am not earning enough to educate my children. I have two dependents. I don't know how many services I will get from the state. I hear that the rural municipality has free health insurance and higher education is also free, but I have not received anything."There are laws and regulations to make women psychologically strong, but the helpless and underprivileged women in rural areas are far from having access to service facilities, and justice is not expected. Widowed women are also facing extreme difficulties. Maya Devi experienced all the hardships that a single woman has to face in society. Maya Devi, who lost her husband at a young age, says, "Being a single woman in the society, I am left behind, but I have to bear the burden of having to bear it, even if I look at the men of the community, I learn to survive, struggle 10, I have learned to survive, as much as I suffered yesterday. Now, don't I have to suffer the burden of earning children? If you struggle to look alone, it is difficult to live a single life.

On the one hand, the pain of separation from the husband is there, and on top of that, comfort from the family and society-wise comfort support and love in exchange for abuse make the life of a widowed woman difficult. A widowed woman is punished mentally by society, her family, and her relatives. (Khatiwada, 2080).And to end the existing prejudices against widow women, discriminatory treatment should be completely removed from its roots. Uneducated, etc., weak women are becoming single victims from religious, cultural, economic,

and socio-political points of view. The practice of single women wearing their vermilion bangles and the 'red' symbol of society has been going on since ancient times. The story of Maya Devi in this syndrome is as follows: I wear white clothes all year round; I don't use red; I don't like to wear it when others walk at night; I don't like to wear it; I'm afraid that society and family will say something; I don't wear it; it's my husband's good fortune to remove these old traditions. In order to show respect for women, many sisters like me want to wear it ".

Widow women should not be restricted in all these things, such as bringing food, giving, and living. They should be respected and supported. It is clear from the experience of Maya Devi that the traditional culture has not recognized the independence of widowed women even today. Since Nepali society is influenced by Hinduism, the position of widowed women is weak. Maya Devi's life experience after losing her husband and her relationship with family and society so far Life Experience Single life seems to be difficult. Although it is difficult, tomorrow is happiness. His statement that he will always struggle to survive and think progressively in the hope of getting and expecting fair treatment from the state is understandable.

Conclusion

The life of a widowed single woman in Nepal is precarious. According to feminist theory, the patriarchal norms and structures of society have created discrimination in the social and economic aspects of widowed women in our society. After the death of the husband, it was found that the widowed women were looked down upon, insulted, and despised by society. Not only that, they were also deprived of their land rights. They also have a lot of psychological crises. I conclude that blindly following social conventions and their fatalistic thinking has led to this situation. On the whole, they live life in a hopeless way, expecting a fair life.

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