



## ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

### EXPERIENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AMONG PREGNANT WOMEN

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#### ABSTRACT

Pregnancy is seen as a time of joy and anticipation but sadly for some women it is a time when they suffer violence and abuse. Pregnancy can cause to stress in any type of relationship, and it's a common cause of domestic violence. The emotional abuse and violence may begin or get worse during pregnancy. One third participants had experienced emotional and physical violence in present pregnancy. Participants experienced emotional violence such as: verbally abused, threatened to leave spousal house, threatened for remarriage, and restricted to enter the kitchen and their belongings were thrown out etc. Participants experienced punched, pushed on the floor/walls, slapped, kicked, beaten everywhere in the body, hit by fire wood and hair pulled. The causes were inter caste marriage, sub fertility, not working properly at home, dowry related and personal habits of alcoholism/ gambling of the husband etc. The consequences of domestic violence exhibited by the pregnant women felt pain and agony, feeling helpless, wanted to terminate pregnancy, wanted to break the marital relationship, feeling to suicide, backache, and high blood pressure. Experience of emotional violence is more prevalent than physical violence. Main causes of domestic violence are inter caste marriage, sub fertility, demanding of money and valuable things (dowry), drinking and gambling habit of husband and not working properly at home. Husbands and mother in-laws are the main perpetrators. Participants responded to domestic violence differently, by keeping silence, crying, and keeping busy in household chores and sharing/reporting to women groups.

**Key Words:** Abuse, victim, domestic violence, physical, and emotional violence

#### INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence 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>8</sup>

Domestic violence is common in all caste, class, religion, society and country. One study on domestic violence reveals, it is very common in all over the world. Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women. Domestic violence is repetitive in nature: about 1 in 5 women victimized by their spouse or ex-spous.<sup>2</sup>

Domestic violence entails physical, sexual, and psychological abuse perpetrated by a person with whom the victim has an intimate relationship. Hence, shouting, physically hitting and engaging in nonconsensual sex in the context of an intimate relationship constitutes as domestic violence. It is also an important cause of intentional injuries in women seeking medical care in the emergency departments, and pregnant women are especially at risk of domestic violence.<sup>4</sup>

#### MATERIALS AND METHODS

Phenomenological method was used to explore the experience of pregnant women on domestic violence. Eighteen pregnant

women (attending/ non attending antenatal clinic of WOREC Nepal) of Triyuga Municipality, Udayapur distric were selected as the study population by using purposive and snowball sampling technique. Data was collected by an in-depth interview and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was done with members of Community Based Organization (CBO) by using FGD guidelines for the triangulation.

#### RESULTS

Among 18 participants, 11 were 20-30 years old, 8 were Adivasi/ Janjati, and all were from Hindu religious. Sixteen participants were literate. The participants' main occupation were farming; business and student beside this all were housewives. Nine participants were living in a single family (Table 1).

**Table 1: Socio-demographic Characteristics of Participants**

| Code No. | Age | Ethnicity   | Education   | Occupation | Family structure |
|----------|-----|-------------|-------------|------------|------------------|
| 1        | 30  | Chhetri     | Illiterate  | Farmer     | Single           |
| 2        | 20  | Janajati    | Grade 10    | Student    | Joint            |
| 3        | 25  | Janjati     | Grade 9     | Farmer     | Joint            |
| 4        | 19  | Janjati     | Test passed | Farmer     | Single           |
| 5        | 24  | Brahmin     | IA          | Housewife  | Joint            |
| 6        | 17  | Janjati     | Grade 7     | Farmer     | Single           |
| 7        | 22  | Chhetri     | Grade 8     | Farmer     | Joint            |
| 8        | 20  | janjati     | A.N.M.      | Business   | Single           |
| 9        | 18  | Newar       | Grade 10    | Student    | Joint            |
| 10       | 23  | Chhetri     | Test passed | Housewife  | Joint            |
| 11       | 19  | Janjati     | Illiterate  | Housewife  | Single           |
| 12       | 24  | Chhetri     | IA          | Housewife  | Single           |
| 13       | 32  | Newar       | Test passed | Business   | Single           |
| 14       | 24  | Chhetri     | Grade 7     | Housewife  | Joint            |
| 15       | 30  | Terai Dalit | Illiterate  | Labour     | Single           |
| 16       | 30  | Janjati     | Literate    | Labour     | Single           |
| 17       | 15  | Janjati     | Grade 7     | Student    | Joint            |
| 18       | 19  | Chhetri     | IA 1st Year | Farmer     | Joint            |

Ten participant's husbands were 20-30 years old; some were above 30 and some were below 20 and also younger than their wives. Four participants husband were from different ethnic group or inter caste marriage. All participants' husbands were from Hindu religious. Seventeen participants' husbands were literate and involving in different occupation like foreign employment, labour, service farmer, student for earning except one (Table 2).

**Table 2: Socio-demographic Characteristics of Participants' Husband**

| Code No. | Age | Ethnicity | Education | Occupation       |
|----------|-----|-----------|-----------|------------------|
| 1        | 31  | Chhetri   | Grade 7   | Farmer           |
| 2        | 21  | Janjati   | IA        | Foreign Employee |
| 3        | 28  | Janjati   | SLC       | Service          |
| 4        | 18  | Janjati   | Grade 10  | Student          |
| 5        | 32  | Chhetri   | MA        | Service          |
| 6        | 20  | Janjati   | IA        | Service          |

|    |    |             |            |                  |
|----|----|-------------|------------|------------------|
| 7  | 24 | Chhetri     | SLC        | Foreign Employee |
| 8  | 22 | Brahmin     | CMA        | Business         |
| 9  | 19 | Janjati     | 12 Class   | Student          |
| 10 | 25 | Chhetri     | 11 Class   | Lekhandas        |
| 11 | 27 | Janjati     | Grade 5    | Service          |
| 12 | 28 | Chhetri     | IA         | Foreign Employee |
| 13 | 32 | Chhetri     | IA         | Unemployed       |
| 14 | 25 | Chhetri     | SLC        | Foreign Employee |
| 15 | 35 | Terai Dalit | Illiterate | Labour           |
| 16 | 35 | Janjati     | Grade 5    | Labour           |
| 17 | 21 | Newar       | SLC        | Labour           |
| 18 | 23 | Chhetri     | IA         | Farmer           |

The participants showed the feeling of pain, anger, helplessness as well as, strong and sensitive feelings towards domestic violence. They shared emotional and physical violence openly. Researcher tried to explore the sexual violence during pregnancy but nobody expressed the sexual violence. The participants were reluctant to express it because of Nepalese socio-culture context (Table 3).

**Table 3: Participant's Experience of Domestic Violence**

| Emotional Violence   | Physical Violence   | Outcomes of Violence  |
|--|---|---|
| Back biting<br>Verbal Abuse (using by bad words)<br>Threatened to leave from husbands' house<br>Threatened to remarriage<br>Accused as witch craft<br>Blamed for induced abortion<br>Not allowed to seek health care<br>Not allowed to enter in kitchen for household chores<br>Locked the bed room<br>Thrown belongings outside the house<br>Not allowed to go school | Punched on the body<br>Pushed on the wall/floor<br>Slapped<br>Kicked on the different part of body<br>Beaten<br>Hit by fire wood<br>Hair pulled | Felt pain<br>Feeling of helplessness<br>Wanted to terminate the pregnancy<br>Wanted to break down the marital relationship<br>Suicidal ideation<br>Backache<br>Body ache<br>High blood pressure |

#### Causes of Domestic Violence

The causes of domestic violence during pregnancy were; not working at house, not giving the birth to child after marriage of years (sub fertility), drinking, gambling habit of husband, dowry, inter caste marriage, and blaming for not caring children properly and not having self income.

One participant experienced emotional and physical violence because of sub fertility. Two participants experienced emotional violence because of drinking habit of husband. In total, two participants experienced emotional and physical violence due to inter caste marriage. One participant experienced emotional violence only and another experienced emotional and physical violence because of inter caste marriage and dowry.

#### Response to Domestic Violence

Majority of participants respond domestic violence by keeping silence, not speaking with perpetrators, asking reason, crying, and keeping busy in household chore. Participants who were from rural area and were involved in women group, they shared with women group and seeking help for mediation by local CBOs and NGOs. Seeking community mediation in leadership of women group was high. Few participants had reported to the ilaka police office and seeking legal support was not found in practice.

## DISCUSSION

Researcher has tried to give the main views of the entire description given by the participants during in-depth interview and observation. The findings are discussed based on the available literature.

### Socio Demographic Characteristics

The socio-demographic characteristics of participants, their husband and family are related to the domestic violence. The socio-demographic characteristic of participants like age factor is related to domestic violence. Eight participants were 20-30 years, 6 were below 19 years. The literature supports it. The studies have found the risk of experiencing domestic violence to be significantly higher among younger women. Young women ages 16-24 are the most vulnerable to the domestic violence (YWCA of Glendale). Evidence from developing countries suggests that anywhere from 10 percent to 60 percent of married women of reproductive age report having ever experienced some form of domestic violence.<sup>2</sup>

Education is another factor related to domestic violence. Fifteen participants and 17 spouses were literate. Some studies have showed that, low education level of women and their husband is one of the causes of domestic violence. It is not consistency with literature. Many studies, including in Bangladesh, reveal a negative relationship between education of both partners and domestic violence.<sup>5</sup>

The wife's personal income may have either a protective or a risk effect with regard to domestic violence, depending upon the social context as well as on the level of income. Violence against women cuts across social and economic situations and is deeply embedded in cultures.<sup>1</sup>

Majority of participant's family occupation was agriculture, foreign employment, informal work (labour), service and business. Two participant's family had low economic status and hard to fulfill basic needs. The finding of study has no consistent with literature. Household income bore no relationship to the occurrence of domestic violence (Naved and Persson, 2005). No association was noted between the prevalence of or type of domestic violence and various income or the educational levels of either women or husband.<sup>5</sup>

Responses regarding domestic violence were different such as; by keeping silence, crying, and keeping busy in household chores and sharing/reporting to women groups. The study reveals; seeking help for community mediation from women groups was common. Reporting police office after failure of community mediation was in practice but seeking legal support was uncommon. The finding of this research is different with literature. Women experienced domestic violence did not respond (51.7%) other respond as try to reason after perpetrator calm down, yell back and use abusive language.

### Gender Inequalities and Male Domination

This study revealed that male domination is high in participant's family. Husband was the head of family in these nuclear families, father in-law and mother in-law were head of family in joint and extended family. Most of the participant's husband, father in-law, mother in-law had control over land, income and money. Majority of participants had free to mobility with permission of husband and in-laws. In participants family there was belief;

women should bear the whole responsibilities of the house. Pregnancy was not taken as risk period and not allowed to take extra rest. There was strong belief women should give the birth and expectation of child was high after marriage of years in family. It clears gender inequalities are present in society. As has been found in India, marital conflicts in Bangladesh often starts with disputes concerning dowry. One participant was emotionally and physical abused because of dowry. A type of marriage is one cause of domestic violence. Five participants had inter caste love marriage and 2 participants had experienced domestic violence. The findings are consistent with literature.

### Family Structure

Family structure is a potential important factor associated with domestic violence. Nine participants were living in single family. One participant experienced emotional and physical violence by husband, mother in-law and sister in-law in her joint family. Two participants were just separated because they were verbally abused by mother in-law and father in-law. The domestic violence was found highly in joint and extended families. In the South Asian context, young married couples commonly live with the husband's family. There is a belief, joint and extended families are the source of conflict of domestic violence against bride. But other studies have found contrary to this belief. Visaria (1999) found that in India, a lower proportion of women in such extended families (53 %) reported abuse compare with the proportion of women in nuclear families who reported it (73%).<sup>5</sup> Domestic violence occurs more often where support networks within and between families is weak. The presence of in-laws in the household may give rise to some conflict, but at the same time may also prevent violence.<sup>3</sup> These study findings are consistency with belief.

### Marital Relationship

Pregnancy can lead to stress in any type of relationship, and it's a common cause of domestic violence. The studies show that emotional abuse and physical violence may be worse during pregnancy. Four percent to 29% of women in developing countries experience domestic violence during pregnancy. According to a study of pregnant women in Utah (2007),<sup>9</sup> one in fourteen women reported that they were victims of abuse during pregnancy. Domestic violence occurs more often where support networks within and between families is weak.<sup>5</sup> It is consistent with literatures; participants of this study had experienced the emotional and physical violence whose marital relationship was not well.

### Personal Habit of Husband

Some participant's husband had habit of drinking sometimes,<sup>3</sup> had habit of drinking daily, had playing cards and gambling. Two participants had experienced emotional violence due to drinking habit of husband. One participant's husband was suffered from liver problem. Other studies showed that alcoholism and gambling habit is one of the factors of domestic violence. The finding is consistency with literatures.

### Social Support System

According to Cazenave and Straus (1979) strong friendship networks are thought to protect violence. Levinson (1989)

found that the participation in female work groups was similarly protective. One study of Bangladesh revealed that in rural areas, where nongovernmental organizations' women's credit groups have common in the past several decades and gained large membership, participation in such groups may no longer promote violence.<sup>5</sup> This study found that, eight participants were involved in social networks such as women group, children groups and youth groups.

The study of Population Council (2005) who was injured by domestic violence sought help. Among those who sought assistance, most women were looking for someone to "mediate on their behalf" or sought help "to prevent wife beating".<sup>7</sup> Mostly participants shared with member of women group. Participants had a faith in community mediation. In their view, community mediation is a win and win approach, it is helpful in develop family harmony and plays a vital role in reducing violence. The finding of this study is consistent with literature.

### CONCLUSION

Experiences of domestic violence are subjective and individual. It perceives differently by different individuals. Experience of emotional violence is more prevalent than physical violence. Main causes of domestic violence are inter caste marriage, sub fertility, demanding of money and valuable things (dowry), drinking and gambling habit of husband and not working properly at home. Husbands and mother in-laws are the main perpetrators. Participants responded to domestic violence differently, by keeping silence, crying, and keeping busy in household chores and sharing/reporting to women groups.

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