

SPECTRUM OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST MADHESHI WOMEN: A CASE OF PARSA, NEPAL

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Abstract

The main objective of this paper is to explore status of domestic violence in the Madheshi society. For this study 350 currently married women aged 15-49 years were selected from Parsa district by using systematic random sampling. The findings show that domestic violence against women is a widespread problem in Parsa district of Nepal as it is prevailing in other developing countries. Madheshi women face domestic violence from various sources. Violence against women is practiced in Nepali society on the basis of discriminatory social, cultural, economic, religious and political traditions and beliefs. The violence and inhuman treatment such as sexual assault, rape and naked parading serve as a social mechanism to maintain women's subordinate position in society. They are targeted as a way of humiliating entire Madheshi communities in Nepal. Social exclusion of Madheshi women, poor education, unemployment, low exposure, less autonomy in decision making, weak implementation of legal system etc, largely influence women's status.

Key words

Domestic violence; violence against women; social exclusion; discrimination; Madheshi women

Introduction

Violence against women is universal problem, differing only in scope, nature and degree of violence from one country to another country. Among various forms of violence against women, domestic violence against women is a widespread problem in Nepal. Domestic violence has been found to be a

serious problem in every country where the problem has been studied. Domestic violence is manifested as wife battering, neglect and physical abuse of the girl child, female infanticide, early marriage, dowry related violence, sexual abuse in the household, polygamy and the marital rape. The risk of violence in the home is common to women regardless of their social position, creed,

color or culture. Violence in public arena is manifested in rape, sexual abuse and sexual harassment in the workplace, trafficking in women and girls, forced prostitution and traditional harmful practices such as Dewki, Badi, Jhuma and the witchcraft (FWLD, 2009). In Nepal, women's status inside and outside of the family, decision-making and political power has largely affected on the degree of gender based violence.

Nepal has undertaken a number of international commitments in relation to non-discrimination, gender equality and social justice, free from violence etc. In 1993, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. This Declaration outlines the international legal instruments that protect a woman's right to be free from violence and sets forth the responsibilities of individual governments to ensure that these protections are enforced. In 1994, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights appointed a Special Reporter on Violence against Women to collect comprehensive data and to recommend measures at the national, regional and international levels to eliminate violence against women. Both the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and the Beijing Platform for Action encourages government and nongovernmental organizations to eliminate violence and to promote research and study on the nature and causes of violence against women. Agenda on violence mainly was discussed in the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted and recognizes that violence against women is a violation of human rights and suggests strategies for eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence. Elimination of violence against women is one of the primary unifying themes among women from countries all over the world. Violence against women is now clearly recognized as a priority for international attention (UNCSDHA, 1993). In 1994 conference on Population and

Development in Cairo also kept the issue of violence against women in the world and especially in third world countries, where women and girls could make free and informed decisions about their lives, reproductive healths and family formation with self respect (ICPD, 1994). Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) also demonstrated its commitment to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women from Nepal and made strong normative and legal commitments to ending gender-based violence and inequality and ending of gender discrimination (CEDAW, 1991).

Spectrum of domestic violence

Domestic Violence shall mean any form of physical, mental, sexual and economic abuse perpetrated by any person with whom he has a family relationship. The definition also implies to the acts of reprimand or emotional abuse (GoN, 2008). Gender Based Violence (GBV) towards women is a severe issue in Nepal where its women often find themselves easily affected to both public and domestic violence which constitutes rape, sexual abuse in the workplace and at home, and human trafficking. The proportions of Nepali women who have been subjected to domestic violence are estimated at 60 to 70 percent. Many studies in South Asian countries such as India has focused on the importance of socioeconomic factors, with higher socioeconomic status and/or caste generally found to be inversely related to the risk of domestic violence (Jejeebhoy & Cook, 1997).

In Terai region, much of the violence reported by the legal authorities is related to dowry, where in a predominantly patriarchal society, societal values and norms hugely influence attitudes and responsibilities, sometimes leading to domestic violence. Deeply rooted societal customs, like where women are obligated to greet their husbands and in-laws after waking up and eating from husbands plates after they are done eating, are part of

the factors that indirectly contributes to male dominated psychology. This mentality of male domination through such customs often leads to domestic violence (INSEC, 2013; SATHI, 1997 & SIRF, 2010).

According to Nepal Demographic and Health Survey (2011) one out of every two ever-married women aged 15 - 49 are victims of domestic violence in Nepal. Ever married women aged 15-49 years had experienced emotional, physical, or sexual violence from their spouse. Among them rural women and illiterate women and currently married women were more victims of domestic violence. Women in the Terai who had ever experienced emotional violence were more likely than women in the other ecological zones to have experienced the violence often in the past 12 months of survey. It was also find that almost all Madheshi women marry within 25 years of age. Most of the Madheshi women entered into their sexual life in very early ages and this might be resulted high fertility, poor educational status and poor economic status (Tiwari, 2014).

The Three-Year Plan of Nepal (2010/2011–2012/2013) also includes as an objective elimination of various types of gender-based violence and discrimination against women and promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment (NPC, 2011).

The Domestic Violence and Punishment Act, 2009, has a provision of slapping up to four months of imprisonment and Rs 6,000 fine on perpetrators of domestic violence, and half the punishment to accomplices. In case of physical or psychological injuries to the victim, the perpetrator will have to bear all treatment costs. The law says victim will have to file complaint at a police office, local body or women's commission within 90 days of facing an act of domestic violence. There are also facilities for these women of hearings. Hearings on such cases are held in

closed sessions and if a person found guilty of perpetrating domestic violence, will face double penalties for each new act of domestic violence (SIRF, 2010). Although domestic violence Act is passed, the regulation has not been implemented effectively. Many women are still unaware of this Act (UNFPA, 2007). Thus statistics cannot give of agony, shame and depression that Madheshi women face in Nepal. However this study gives quick view to know the status of domestic violence within this community.

Method

The research article is based on both quantitative and qualitative information on violence against women. Qualitative information was gathered from journals, books, news and from government and non-government reports whereas quantitative data were collected from primary source. The sample of study the study was 350 currently married Madheshi women aged 15-49 from Parsa district. The information presented here are the part of research which has been analyzed using descriptive method of research (Tiwari, 2014).

Results and discussion

The results have been presented and discussed under the headings sexual violence within married, domestic violence by their husbands/ other family members and causes of domestic violence.

Sexual violence within married

As in many societies, sexual violence within married is also common in Nepal. Very recently the government of Nepal has recognized it as violence and made a law that acknowledges forced sex by a husband to his wife is a marital rape and made provision of jail sentences from three to six months depending on the type of sexual violence (Tiwari, 2014).

Table 1: Percentage of women suffering from sexual violence within married

Sexual violence within Married	Number of women	Percent
Yes	138	39.4
No	212	60.0
Total	350	100.0

Table 1 shows that nearly 39 percent of the respondents reported that they were suffering from sexual violence within married. Women were forced by their husband to have sex against their desire during illness and exhaustion, menstruation, post partum period and pregnancy. However due to highly private matters only very few women were accepted marital rape.

Table 2 reveals that nearly 44 percent illiterate women and 29 percent literate women had faced torture for refusing sex. The data shows that sexual violence is common for both literate and illiterate women.

Table 2: Sexual violence by literacy status of women

Literacy status	Faced torture for refusing sex					
	Yes	Percent	No	Percent	Total	Percent
Literate	29	28.7	72	71.4	101	28.9
Illiterate	109	43.8	52	20.9	249	71.1
Total	138	39.4	212	60.0	350	100.0

Domestic Violence by their husbands or other family members

Table 3 presents the proportion of women who ever had faced hit, slapped and kicked or any types of torture or violence by their families. About 39 percent of women again reported that they had faced such types of torture in their married life either by their husbands or by other in-laws family members. The study shows that women are victims in the name of ugliness, giving birth of female baby, not obeying according to their demands, in the name of witch-craft, dowry etc. They are victims of domestic violence, violent

customary practices, insults, rape, harassment and trafficking.

Table 3: Women faced any type of torture by their Husband or Family Members

Torture faced	Number of women	Percent
Yes	137	39.1
No	213	60.9
Total	350	100.0

Causes of Domestic Violence

Many studies have identified a consistent list of event that are said to “trigger” violence, see (NDHS, 2011). Many donor agencies including Nepal government have been affording both money and man power to eliminate violence against women but still discrimination against women exists across the country. In this study there were asked various reasons such as who had ever faced any type of violence in their marital life.

Table 4: Causes of torture faced by women

Causes	Number of women	Percent
Going outside without telling husband	203	58.0
Neglecting the care of children	40	11.4
Arguing with husband	60	17.1
Burning of food	22	6.3
Not bringing dowry	87	24.9
Above all conditions	14	4.0
No torture	11	3.1
Total	350	100.0

Table 4 indicates that majority of women (58 percent) faced torture mainly because of going outside of the house without telling their husbands. Nearly 11 percent of the women stated that she got punishment in the name of not caring their children properly and 17 percent said that they were punished for arguing with their husbands. About 6 percent

faced because of burning food. Madheshi women own a little personal property as a gift by their parents and relatives during their marriage ceremony. But most of the time Bridegroom's family demands cash, ornaments and many things like TV, computer, cow etc. In this demand if bride's family does not fulfill their demands during and immediately after marriage, bride has to face so many tortures by her in-laws-family. Data shows that about 25 percent of the women had experienced verbal and physical abuse in their husband's home for not bringing enough dowries. There were many cases in Nepal and India, many women were burnt, beaten, threats, and given psychological and social pressure for dowry. Many women have committed suicide and many times killed by their own husbands and by their family members. These data shows that almost all women had faced violence in the name of child, food, mobility and so on. Qualitative study (case study) during survey also showed that, almost 50 percent of the husbands had more or less supported to their wives at the time of violence given by other family members.

Conclusion

The study concludes that, despite several distinguished programs for women empowerment in Terai districts, in the policy and programs of the Government of Nepal, women of this community are still languishing in all important aspects of life because of the weak national laws, their weaker implementation, and traditional values and beliefs. They are still subjected to different sorts of discrimination and violence because of deeply rooted patriarchy and evil social customs. However, reliable data of it is, still lacking. So, awareness against it needs to be spread widely in the society through several different government and nongovernment organizations. The police and administration should take action into the cases of violence against women on the basis of their seriousness and priority. The Ministry of Women should include the eradication

of domestic violence as part of its mission. This is only possible with the establishment of inclusive democracy and gender friendly activities in all levels of government and national level programs. Ending violence against women and girls deserves high political prioritization and sufficient public spending, political representation, Citizenship identity, reproductive rights, prevention and protection from violence against women, so that a woman can live with self-respect and fully safe in their own family and society.

In practice policy makers at national and district level, the health education, justice and social welfare sectors, women's organizations, NGOs, INGOs, UN agencies, media, communities all have a key role in tackling and removing violence against women, especially at domestic level.

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