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Intimate Partner Violence and its Associated Factors Against Currently Married Women in Nepal

Renuka Kumari Karki

Abstract

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a major public health and human rights issue in Nepal. This paper aims to assess factors associated with intimate partner violence against currently married women in Nepal. Data for this study is derived from the Nepal Demographic Health Surveys (NDHS) of 2022. A sample of 3,839 currently married women of reproductive age (15–49 years) who participated in the domestic violence module of the survey are included. Physical, emotional, and sexual violence against women by husbands is considered as dependent variables. Any type of violence is derived from these three types of violence. The chi-square test is used to test the significant association between two variables. Logistic regression was used to assess the net effect of several independent variables, the result revealed that more than one-fourth (27%) of currently married women experienced any form of IPV with more than one-fifth (23.1%) physical, approximately one-eighth (12.8%) sexual, and less than one-tenth (7.1%) emotional violence. In multivariate logistic regression analysis, age at first marriage, women's education, ethnicity, ecological zone, wealth index, husband education, and husband's alcohol consumption are highly significant associations with intimate partner violence, as indicated by the very low p-values (<0.001). The findings of this study suggest that to make meaningful strides in reducing intimate partner violence in Nepal, emphasis should be given to promote the education level of husband and wife, gender equality, economic empowerment, reducing ethnic and regional disparity, and ensuring an inclusive society.

Keywords: Domestic violence, gender, prevalence, power dynamics & status of women.

Introduction

Intimate partner violence (IPV) occurs in all settings and among all socioeconomic, religious, and cultural groups. It is one of the most common forms of violence against women. It includes various forms of abuse, including physical violence such as slapping, hitting, kicking, or beating, sexual violence (including forced sexual acts), emotional abuse

* Mrs. Karki is a Lecturer at the Department of Population Studies, Patan Multiple Campus, T. U., Lalitpur, Nepal.
Gmail: bogatirenu7@gmail.com

such as insults, belittling, constant humiliation, and threats, and controlling behaviors such as isolation and restricting resources (World Health Organization,2012). Globally, 1 in 3 women, around 736 million, experience physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner during their lifetimes, and intimate partner violence (IPV) is the most prevalent form of violence against women globally. The regions of Oceania, Southern Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa have the highest prevalence rates of intimate partner violence among women aged 15-49, ranging from (33 - 51%) followed by Northern Africa (30%) and Western Asia (29%). In Latin America and the Caribbean, (25%) of women aged 15–49 have experienced intimate partner violence at least once in their lifetime (WHO, 2021).

In a patriarchal society like Nepal, women's lives may be significantly influenced by male family members. The power dynamic is reflected in husbands' attempts to closely monitor their wives' activities can manifest the underlying power dynamics within the family structure. Furthermore, controlling behaviors within a marriage may indicate early warning signs and correlate with violence in the relationship (Ministry of Health [MoH] Nepal, New ERA, & ICF, 2017). In Nepal, the persistent problem of violence against women remains a significant concern. Nepal Demographic Health Survey, 2016 revealed that nearly one-quarter (26%) of ever-married women aged 15-49 have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence from their husbands with physical violence being the most common (23%) followed by emotional violence (12%) and sexual violence (7%). Twenty-seven percent of women have reported experiencing physical, sexual, or emotional violence from their current or most recent husband/intimate partner (Ministry of Health and Population [MoHP] Nepal, New ERA, & ICF, 2022).

Intimate Partner Violence as a subset of gender-based violence against women is often treated as domestic violence under the law. Nepal passed the 2008 Domestic Violence (Offence and Punishment) Act in 2009 (Ministry of Law and Justice, 2009). Afterwards implementing the National Action Plan 2010 against gender-based violence (Government of Nepal, 2010). Further, the new constitution of Nepal is a significant milestone in gender equity and social inclusion and protests for equal rights for women, the poor, gender-violence survivors, and other vulnerable and marginalized groups. Article 38 (3) of the constitution of Nepal prohibits women from any form of violence or exploitation due to factors such as religion, social status, culture, tradition, or any other ground (Nepal Law Commission, 2015). Sustainable Development Goal Five achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls" includes the end of discrimination and eliminating all forms of violence against all women and girls (United Nations, 2015). Despite these efforts made in gender equality in recent years, intimate partner violence is prevalent in Nepal.

In Nepal, family culture and structure play a significant role in shaping the dynamics of IPV against women. Gender roles and expectations are deeply ingrained within the cultural norms in that women are typically expected to be submissive and compliant, always prioritizing the needs and desires of their husbands and in-laws first. Although IPV has been experienced regularly among Nepalese women, most of the literature has focused on domestic violence (Dhakal, 2008; Sapkota et al., 2016 & Lamichhane et al., 2011). Only a few empirical studies have been conducted to understand the factors associated with IPV against women. Thus, this study aims to fill the evidence gap by examining the factors associated with intimate partner violence against currently married women in Nepal.

Objectives

The main objective of this paper is to analyze factors associated with intimate partner violence against currently married women in Nepal.

The specific objective is as follows:

- To examine the effect of demographic socio-economic variables on any type of violence (Physical emotional or sexual).

Methodology

The data for this paper is based on the 2022 Nepal Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS), which is a nationally representative survey conducted from January 5 to June 22, 2022. This is the sixth survey carried out in Nepal. The domestic violence was implemented in a subsample of households selected for the men's survey. Only one eligible woman per household was randomly selected. The study population comprised women aged 15-49 years. In total, 5,177 women were interviewed and completed the module. In this way, a sample of 3,839 currently married women is included in the analysis of this study. There is no single factor that accounts for the individuals behave violently toward others. Intimate partner violence includes physical, emotional, and sexual violence. At first, each type of violence was measured, then after the IPV was constructed as being victimization of any type of violence (WHO,2002). Chi square test is used to test the significant association between two variables. The relation between the experience of intimate partner violence and its associated factors is examined by using cross-tabulation with chi-square tests. Logistic regression was used to assess the net effect of several independent variables i.e. age at first marriage, women's education, ethnicity, ecological zone, wealth index,

husband education, and husband's alcohol consumption on three dependent variables (physical, emotional or sexual) and any type of violence. All the dependent variables were measured on binary scale(yes/no).

Results

The result revealed that more than one-fourth (27%) of currently married women experienced any form of IPV with more than one-fifth (23.1%) physical, approximately one-eighth (12.8%) sexual, and less than one-tenth (7.1%) emotional violence. Table 1 shows the relationship between demographic, socio- economic variables, and intimate partner violence against currently married women. physical violence is the most prevalent form of intimate partner violence (IPV) against women in this study. Physical violence is highest among women aged 35 or above (24.5%), followed by (23.8%) among women 25-34 and (19%) among women aged 15-19. Any type of violence is also highest among women aged 35 or above, compared with (27.7%) among women 25-34 and (24.9%) among aged 15-49. Female-headed households indicated a higher percentage in all types of violence compared to male-headed households i.e. physical (25%) women to (21.9%) men, emotional (15.3% to 11.6%), and sexual violence (77% to 25.5%).

Early age at marriage (less than 16 years) is associated with higher rates of all types of violence. The chi-square test shows a statistically significant ($p < .001$) association between age at first marriage and all types of violences. (Table 1). Women with secondary and higher education had experienced less physical violence (12.7%), followed by emotional (8%), sexual (3%), and any type of violence (16%). Highly significant ($P < 0.001$) association between women's education and all types of violence. A higher percentage of violence to Muslim women (55.7%), followed by other (44.2%), Dalit (36%), Janajati (20%), and Brahmin/Chhetri (16.8%). Similarly, a higher percentage of women who lived in Terai had experienced physical violence around (30%) followed by emotional (15.7%), sexual (8%), and any type (34%). The chi square test reveals a highly significant ($p < .0001$) association between wealth index and all type of violence. Likewise, higher level of education is associated with lower incidence of violence. The chi square test show highly significant ($p < .0001$) association between wealth index and all type of violence. Likewise, (41.3%) women whose husband had no education in contrast less than one-fifth of women (18%) whose husbands had secondary and higher education have experienced any violence.

Table 1: Percent distribution of currently married women by experience of violence according to background characteristics, Nepal 2022

| Variables | Physical violence | Emotional violence | Sexual violence | Any violence | Number of women |
|------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Age groups | | | | | |
| 15-19 | 19 | 12.9 | 7.3 | 24.9 | 811 |
| 25-34 | 23.8 | 12.6 | 6.3 | 27.7 | 1448 |
| 35or above | 24.5 | 12.8 | 7.7 | 27.6 | 1580 |
| χ^2 -Value | 9.920** | .078 | 2.406 | 2.427 | |
| Sex of household head | | | | | |
| Male | 21.9 | 11.6 | 6.8 | 25.5 | 2643 |
| Female | 25.5 | 15.3 | 7.7 | 30.4 | 1196 |
| χ^2 -Value | 5.873* | 10.044** | .973 | 9.997** | |
| Age at first marriage | | | | | |
| Less than 16 years | 30.5 | 17.9 | 9.7 | 35.4 | 1315 |
| 16-20 years | 22 | 11.4 | 6.5 | 26 | 1742 |
| 20 and more | 12.8 | 7.4 | 3.8 | 15.3 | 782 |
| χ^2 -Value | 88.728*** | 53.949*** | 27.589*** | 101.317*** | |
| Women's education | | | | | |
| Secondary and higher | 12.7 | 8.2 | 3.4 | 16 | 1326 |
| Primary | 24 | 12.1 | 8.1 | 27.8 | 1289 |
| No education | 33.2 | 18.3 | 9.9 | 38.3 | 1224 |
| χ^2 -Value | 152.117*** | 58.936*** | 44.379*** | 171.134*** | |
| Ethnicity | | | | | |
| Brahmin/Chhetri | 14 | 8.2 | 4.4 | 16.8 | 1066 |
| Janajati | 17.2 | 8.4 | 5.5 | 20.3 | 1412 |
| Dalit | 32.1 | 16.1 | 9.3 | 35.9 | 579 |
| Muslim | 49.4 | 27.6 | 16.1 | 55.7 | 174 |
| Other | 36.4 | 23.7 | 10.5 | 44.2 | 608 |
| χ^2 -Value | 232.754*** | 149.089*** | 53.879*** | 276.018*** | |

| Variables | Physical violence | Emotional violence | Sexual violence | Any violence | Number of women |
|------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Ecological zone | | | | | |
| Mountain | 13.7 | 9.8 | 6.4 | 18.4 | 234 |
| Hill | 15.2. | 8.9 | 5.7 | 18.4 | 1467 |
| Terai | 29.5 | 15.7 | 8.1 | 34 | 2138 |
| χ^2 -Value | 112.170*** | 37.362*** | 8.305* | 116.133*** | |
| Wealth index | | | | | |
| Poor | 27.1 | 14.4 | 10.0 | 31.4 | 1482 |
| Middle | 24.5 | 14.2 | 6.4 | 29.9 | 795 |
| Rich | 18.4 | 10.4 | 4.6 | 21.4 | 1562 |
| χ^2 -Value | 34.247*** | 12.846*** | 34.147*** | 42.840*** | |
| Husband education | | | | | |
| Secondary and higher | 14.7 | 8.6 | 3.5 | 18 | |
| Basic | 27.2 | 13.3 | 8.8 | 30.9 | |
| No education | 34.5 | 21.4 | 11.8 | 41.3 | |
| χ^2 -Value | 123.240*** | 65.272*** | 60.634*** | 140.214*** | |
| Husband's alcohol use | | | | | |
| No | 16.5 | 8.7 | 4.1 | 19.9 | 1868 |
| Yes | 29.3 | 16.6 | 9.9 | 33.8 | 1971 |
| χ^2 -Value | 88.392*** | 54.698*** | 48.526*** | 93.600*** | |
| Total | 23.1 | 12.8 | 7.1 | 27.1 | 3839 |

Source: NDHS 2022 Data File. ***Significant at 1 percent level, ** significant at 5 percent level and * Significant at 10 percent level

The chi-square tests show a significant ($P < 0.01$) association between the husband's alcohol use and physical, emotional, and sexual violence. Table 1 revealed that all the variables i.e. age, household head, age at first marriage, education, ecological region, ethnicity, wealth index, husband education, and husband's alcohol use were significant in the chi-square test. Thus, these factors were selected for regression analysis.

Table 2 presents the result of the logistic regression analysis and explores the demographic, and socio-economic factors that impact any violence. Women from (25-34) age group

have 1.452 times and those 35 or above are 1.29 times more likely to experience IPV as compared to women (15-19). In female-headed households, intimate partner violence is 1.262 times more likely compared to male-headed households. Age at first marriage was negatively associated with IPV. Marriage after 20 years was less likely ((OR = 0.668) to experience IPV compared with those who married before age 16. Women with no education women were 1.31 times more likely compared to women with secondary and above. Similarly, women from Dalit and Muslim were 1.62 times and 4.2 times respectively experiencing IPV compared to Brahmin/Chhetri. Women living in Terai were more likely to experience any IPV than women living in Mountain. Women from middle and poor classes were more likely (middle, OR=1.11 and poor, OR 1.49) to experience any violence than rich women. Women whose husbands consume alcohol were more likely 2.35 times to experience any violence compared with those whose husbands do not drink.

Table 2: Logistic regression analysis to measure the effect of factors associated with intimate partner violence against women.

| Variables | Odds ratio | 95% CI | | P Value |
|------------------------------|------------|--------|-------|---------|
| | | Lower | Upper | |
| Age groups | | | | |
| 15-19(Ref) | 1.00 | | | |
| 25-34 | 1.452 | 1.164 | 1.812 | .001 |
| 35or above | 1.289 | 1.1014 | 1.638 | .038 |
| Sex of household head | | | | |
| Male (Ref.) | 1.00 | | | |
| Female | 1.262 | 1.067 | 1.492 | .007 |
| Age at first marriage | | | | |
| Less than 16 years(Ref.) | 1.00 | | | |
| 16-20 years | .911 | .765 | 1.085 | .296 |
| 20 and more | .668 | .516 | .866 | .002 |
| Women’s education | | | | |
| Secondary and higher (Ref.) | 1.00 | | | |
| Primary | 1.183 | .940 | 1.489 | .152 |
| No education | 1.311 | .999 | 1.720 | .051 |
| Ethnicity | | | | |
| Brahmin/Chhetri(Ref.) | 1.00 | | | |

| Variables | Odds ratio | 95% CI | | P Value |
|------------------------------|------------|--------|-------|---------|
| | | Lower | Upper | |
| Janajati | .904 | .723 | 1.130 | .375 |
| Dalit | 1.622 | 1.243 | 2.116 | .000 |
| Muslim | 4.202 | 2.783 | 6.343 | .000 |
| Other | 2.878 | 2.187 | 3.786 | .000 |
| Ecological zone | | | | |
| Mountain(Ref.) | 1.00 | | | |
| Hill | 1.109 | .761 | 1.615 | .590 |
| Terai | 1.784 | 1.218 | 2.613 | .003 |
| Wealth index | | | | |
| Rich(Ref.) | 1.00 | | | |
| Middle | 1.111 | .892 | 1.384 | .345 |
| Poor | 1.498 | 1.218 | 1.843 | .000 |
| Husband education | | | | |
| Secondary and higher (Ref.) | 1.00 | | | |
| Basic | 1.361 | 1.118 | 1.656 | .002 |
| No education | 1.395 | 1.067 | 1.824 | .015 |
| Husband's alcohol use | | | | |
| No(Ref.) | | | | |
| Yes | 2.350 | 1.986 | 2.780 | .000 |
| | | | | |

Source: NDHS 2022 Data File; OR = odd ratio; CI= confidence interval; Ref.= reference category.

Discussion

This study examined the factors associated with intimate partner violence against Nepali women using data from the NDHS, 2022. Results show that the most common type of IPV was physical (23%), followed by emotional (12.8%), and sexual (7%). The result shows that women aged 24-34 and 35 or above were more likely to report experiencing IPV. Other studies in Ethiopia revealed that the most prevalent form was physical IPV (23.3%) and the least prevalent form of IPV was sexual IPV (11.5%). Women's age was significantly associated with IPV. Women in higher age groups were more likely to

report experiencing IPV compared to women aged 15–19 years (Tiruye et. Al.,2020). The general belief is that women experience less violence in matriarchal households.

Factors such as women empowerment, and economic power dynamics may decrease violence within the household. Despite this, individual experiences can still differ widely and many factors influence domestic violence. Female-headed households indicated a higher percentage of all types of violence compared to male-headed households in this study which is consistent with the study done in India (Dalal,2011), which revealed that female-headed households have more IPV exposure than male-headed families. On the contrary, studies from (Kabade, Weldesenbet, & Tusa,2022), Confirm that IPV occurrence was decreased among female-headed households as compared to male-headed households.

Women with no education were more likely compared to women with secondary and above. Women whose husbands had secondary and higher education were less likely to experience IPV compared to women whose husbands had no education. This finding is consistent with the study (Kabade et.al., 2022). Nepal is a diverse country with a variety of ethnicities, cultures, and religions. This study revealed that Nepalese women residing in the Terai region, particularly those from Dalit, Muslim, and women from other ethnicities face significantly higher odds of any violence. These findings suggest that low social status makes Nepalese women more vulnerable to violence from their husbands. Women whose husbands consume alcohol were more likely 2.35 times to experience any violence compared with those whose husbands do not drink. A study done in Siberia showed that women whose husbands drink alcohol almost every day were 4.25 times higher at risk of IPV compared to women whose husbands never consume alcohol (Djikanovic, Jansen & Otasevic, 2010).

Conclusion

The study reveals that more than one-fourth of currently married women are exposed to any form of intimate partner violence in Nepal. Factors that had a significant association with women experiencing intimate partner violence included age group, sex of household head, age at first marriage, ethnicity, ecological zone, wealth index, husband education, and husband's alcohol use. Initiatives are needed to implement the gender awareness program to reduce power imbalance and mitigate the risk of intimate partner violence. Intervention should be directed toward addressing the specific risk factors identified in the study. To effectively address the diverse factors of intimate partner violence identified in the study, priority interventions directed towards older age groups, female-headed households, early age at marriage, educational initiatives for both husband-and-

wife education, economic empowerment, and husband's alcohol use, with a particular focus on addressing and preventing intimate partner violence. Additionally, intervention should prioritize ethnicity and ecological region based on the significance of associations with violence rates as observed in the study. The findings of this study provide valuable information to policymakers working towards developing effective strategies for prevention and intervention.

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