ORIGINAL ARTICLE

PREVALENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ASSOCIATED FACTORS AMONG WOMEN DURING ANTE-NATAL CHECK-UP AT MEDICAL COLLEGE: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Domestic abuse, also known as domestic violence or intimate partner violence, is a pattern of behavior used to gain or maintain control over an intimate partner. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), one in three women may experience domestic abuse in their lifetime. The study examined the existing prevalence of all forms of domestic violence and its associated factors.

Materials and methods: This analytical cross-sectional study was conducted at the antenatal clinic of the National Medical College Teaching Hospital. Participants were selected using a random sampling method where lottery method was further used. With pregnant women assigned to interview days based on their outpatient department serial numbers.

Results: More than half (55.4%) of the respondents experienced domestic violence during their lifetime. Psychological violence (52.1%) was the most common form, followed by physical (41.9%) and sexual violence (28.4%). Socio-demographic factors such as lack of education, absence of property ownership, unemployment, early marriage (10-15 years), and arranged marriage were significantly associated with domestic violence (p<0.05). The primary perpetrators were husbands (68.5%), followed by mothers-in-law (29.8%).

Conclusion: The prevalence of domestic violence has increased enormously. The findings emphasize the need for targeted interventions, including education, economic empowerment, and legal measures, to prevent domestic violence and protect vulnerable women.

Keywords: Domestic Violence, Pregnant Women, Perpetrator Associated Factors

INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence, also known as intimate partner violence, is a pattern used to gain control over a partner, affecting individuals regardless of age, gender, or social background[1].While the WHO estimates that one in three women globally experiences domestic violence, with some countries still considering it socially or legally acceptable, and reports that at least one in five women experience violence in their lifetime.[2] Domestic violence is higher in countries with lower gender equality and often goes unreported.[3] Annually, 10 million Americans face domestic violence, with 1 in 4 women and 1 in 9 men affected.[4] In South Asia, intimate partner violence (IPV) prevalence ranges from 8% to 50%, with 31% of Indian women reporting abuse.[5]

The WHO endorsed a global action plan in 2016 to combat violence against women and children.[6] Risk factors include young age, short-term relationships, substance abuse, and witnessing parental violence.[7] IPV during pregnancy is linked to Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), alcohol abuse, and adverse maternal and fetal outcomes.[8] It increases risks of preterm birth (PTB) and low birth weight (LBW), major causes of neonatal mortality.[9] In Nepal, domestic violence remains a major issue, accounting for over 75% of crimes against women, children, and the elderly.[10] Abusers often seek control over their partners due to entitlement and power dynamics.[11] Domestic violence has severe physical and psychological consequences, including fractures, bruises, anxiety, depression, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).[12] It can escalate from verbal threats to physical

violence and occurs across all relationship types.[13,14]

This study examines the link between domestic violence and factors like demographics, partner status, and socio-economic conditions, recognizing that domestic violence significantly impacts women's empowerment, education, and health.
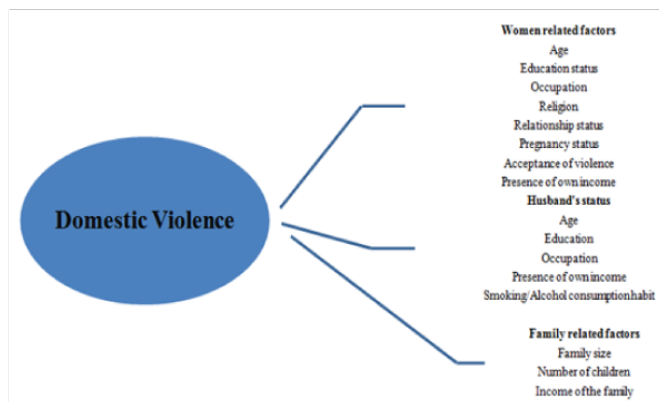

Figure 1: Factors affecting domestic violence

Therefore, it aims to illuminate the causes and effects of domestic violence and identify necessary interventions to support women's well-being. Therefore, it aims to highlight the causes, effects, and necessary interventions to combat domestic violence and support women's well-being.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sample Size: Prevalence rate of domestic violence was found to be 27.2 % in a study done at Kathmandu.[15] Thus, taking the prevalence of 27.2 % and allowable error of 5 % the total sample size calculated was 304.

Collection of Data: A random sampling technique was used, selecting two random days per week via the lottery method. Pregnant women with even serial numbers were interviewed on Day 1, while those with odd serial numbers were interviewed on Day 2. The study was conducted at the outpatient department (OPD) of Gynaecology and Obstetrics of National Medical College Teaching Hospital (NMCTH).

Several variables were considered in the study, including the prevalence of domestic violence and its various forms (Physical, Psychological and Sexual). The independent variables were categorized as socio-demographic factors, including religion, education, family type, property ownership, employment status, source of income, age at marriage, duration of marriage, and type of marriage. These factors were analysed and presented using frequencies and percentages. Furthermore, the same parameters were examined to identify associations between them. Associations were also explored among the different forms of violence. The perpetrators' characteristics, such as type, age, reasons for domestic violence, education, employment status, and source of income, were analysed using the chi-square test.

Ethical Approval: Procedures and questionnaire for this study has been reviewed and approved by IRC Institutional Review Committee (IRC) of National Medical College on 22 March, 2024 (Ref. F-NMC/686/080-081). All participants were informed of the purpose and procedure of the study prior to the survey. All participants completed the informed consent form before the survey.

Statistical Analysis: Data were coded and analyzed using SPSS. Frequency distributions, cross-tabulations, and Chi-square tests were used to assess associations between variables, with a significance threshold of $p < 0.05$.

RESULTS:

Prevalence of domestic violence Out of the total respondent studied, more than 55.4% of them suffered from domestic violence during their lifetime (Figure 1).
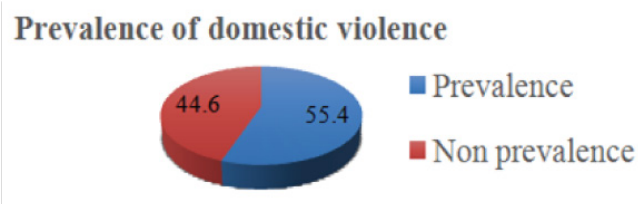
Figure 2: Prevalence of domestic violence

Prevalence of forms of violence

Among women who have experienced violence, the majority (52.1%) suffered from psychological violence, followed by physical violence (41.9%) and sexual violence (28.4%) (Table 1).

Table 1: Prevalence of forms of violence

Forms of violence	Present	Absent
Physical	41.90%	58.10%
Psychological	52.10%	47.90%
Sexual	28.40%	71.60%

Characteristics of respondents

The mean age of respondents participating in the study was 23.02 ± 2.61 years old. The majority of participants were Hindu (59.4%), followed by Islam (32.3%) and

Buddhist (8.3%). Most had no education (80.2%), while a smaller proportion had basic (6.3%), secondary (8.6%), and more than secondary education (5.0%). The predominant family structure was joint/extended (97%), with only 3% living in nuclear families. Property ownership was low (1.3%), as most did not own property (98.7%). Regarding employment, 5.0% were working, while 95.0% were not as shown in table 2.

The primary source of income was non-agriculture (89.8%), with 10.2% relying on agriculture.

The majority married at 16-20 years (75.9%), while 22.4% married at 21-25 years and 1.7% at 10-15 years. Most had been married for less than five years (82.8%), whereas 17.2% had a marriage duration of more than five years. In terms of marriage type, 52.8% had love marriages, while 47.2% had arranged marriages as shown in Table 2.

Association of domestic Violence with different socio-demographic variables characteristics of respondent

The study found a significant association between domestic violence and several socio-demographic variables. Women with no formal education experienced the highest rates of domestic violence (P<0.0001). Ownership of property and present working status were also significantly linked, with women lacking property and those not working facing higher instances of violence (P<0.0001). Age at marriage was another critical factor, with early marriage (10-15 years) showing a strong association with domestic violence (P<0.0001). Additionally, arranged marriages had a higher prevalence of domestic violence compared to love marriages (P<0.0001).

Table 2: Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Religion		
Hindu	180	59.4%
Buddhist	25	8.3%
Islam	98	32.3%
Education		
No education	243	80.2%
Basic education	19	6.3%
Secondary education	26	8.6%
More than secondary education	15	5.0%

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Family type		
Nuclear family	9	3%
Joint/Extended family	294	97%
Ownership of property		
Have own property	4	1.3%
Haven't own property	299	98.7%
Work status		
Working	15	5.0%
Not working	288	95.0%
Source of income		
Agriculture	31	10.2%
Non-agriculture	272	89.8%
Age at marriage		
10-15 years	5	1.7%
16-20 years	230	75.9%
21-25 years	68	22.4%
Duration of marriage		
Less than 5 years	251	82.8%
More than 5 years	52	17.2%
Types of marriage		
Arrange marriage	143	47.2%
Love marriage	160	52.8%

The gestation period also influenced domestic violence rates, with the highest occurrence in the first trimester (P<0.0001). However, no significant association was observed between domestic violence and family type (P=0.58), source of income (P=0.160), or duration of marriage (P=0.090) as shown in table 3.

Table 3: Association of domestic Violence with different socio-demographic variables characteristics of respondent

Variable	Domestic violence		P-Value
	Yes	No	**0.0001***
Education of respondent			
No education	140	16	
Basic Education	10	8	
Secondary Education	12	11	
More than Secondary education	6	8	

Types of family			0.58
Nuclear family	5	2	
Joint family	163	41	
Ownership of property			**0.0001***
Have own property	0	4	
Haven't own property	168	39	
Present working status			**0.0001***
Working	6	8	
Not working	162	35	
Sources of income			0.160
Agriculture	18	8	
Non-agriculture	150	35	
Age at marriage			**0.0001***
10-15 years	4	0	
16-20 years	128	17	
21-25 years	36	26	
Duration of marriage			0.090
Less than 5 years	137	30	
More than 5 years	31	13	
Types of marriage			**0.0001***
Arrange marriage	73	41	
Love marriage	95	2	
Gestation period			**0.0001***
First trimester (1-3 months)	106	0	
Second trimester (4-6 months)	32	24	
Third trimester (7-9 months)	30	19	

Association of different socio demographic variables with each form of Violence

Analysis of the data revealed that education was significantly associated with the prevalence of all forms of violence (P < 0.0001). Additionally, the prevalence of sexual violence was more strongly associated with the type of family structure than with other forms of violence (P < 0.0001). Moreover, ownership of property showed a close association with both physical and psychological forms of violence (P < 0.0001), as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Association of different socio demographic variables with each form of Violence

Variable	Forms of violence					
	Physical Violence		Psychological Violence		Sexual Violence	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Religion of respondent						
Hindu	73	81	94	40	47	87
Buddhist	2	2	4	0	2	2
Islam	52	21	60	13	37	36
P -value	0.057		0.082		0.086	
Education of respondent						
No education	125	31	131	25	86	70
Basic Education	2	16	9	9	0	18
Sec.Education	0	23	12	11	0	23
More than Secondary education	0	14	6	8	0	14
P- Value	**0.0001***		**0.0001***		**0.0001***	
Types of family						
Nuclear family	5	2	4	3	0	7
Joint family	122	82	154	50	86	118
Chi-square Value	0.537		0.271		**0.026***	
Ownership of property						
Have own property	0	4	0	4	0	4
Haven't own property	127	80	158	49	85	121
P-Value	**0.013***		**0.0001***		0.094	

Different socio demographic variables with each form of Violence

Present working status, sources of income, age at marriage types of marriage and gestation period was found to be significantly associated with all forms of violence (P < 0.000). Additionally, the duration of marriage was significantly associated with physical and sexual violence (P < 0.000), but not with psychological violence as shown in table 4.1

Table 4.1: Association of different socio demographic variables with each form of Violence

Variable	Forms of violence					
	Physical Violence		Psychological Violence		Sexual Violence	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Present working status						
Working	0	14	6	8	0	14
Not working	127	70	152	45	86	111
P-value	**0.0001***		**0.004***		**0.001***	
Sources of income						
Agriculture	9	17	15	11	2	24
Non-agriculture	118	67	143	42	84	101
P-Value	**0.004***		**0.031***		**0.0001***	
Age at marriage						
10-15 years	4	0	3	1	0	4
16-20 years	109	36	122	23	74	71
21-25 years	14	48	33	29	12	50
P -Value	**0.0001***		**0.0001***		**0.0001***	
Duration of marriage						
< than 5 years	116	51	130	37	84	83
> than 5 years	11	33	28	16	2	42
P-Value	**0.0001***		0.053		**0.0001***	
Types of marriage						
Arrange marriage	36	78	69	45	25	89
Love marriage	91	6	89	8	61	36
P -Value	**0.0001***		**0.0001***		**0.0001***	
Gestation period						
First trimester (1-3 months)	106	0	102	4	76	30
Second trimester (4-6 months)	11	45	29	27	4	52
Third trimester (7-9 months)	10	39	27	22	6	49
P -Value	**0.0001***		**0.0001***		**0.0001***	

Characteristics of perpetrators

Analyzing the variable about the characteristics of perpetrators, it was evident that husband accounted for 68.5 % of the violence followed by mother-in law which was 29.8 % and only 1 % violence was due to Father-in-law. Above 67% of the perpetrators belong to middle aged adult (25-44 years) followed by older adults (45+ years) which was only 31 %.More than half of the respondent (i.e., 53%) suffered from violence due to Dowry followed

by the substance abuse by their husband which was in 35% cases. Above half of the perpetrators had no formal education followed by 41.7 % which has any kind of basic education. Perpetrator having secondary and more than secondary level education was very minimal i.e., 1.2 % respectively. More than 72.5% of them were working and most of them had their source of income derived from non-agriculture sources as shown in table 5.

Table 5: Characteristics of Perpetrator

Types of perpetrators	Frequency	Percentage
Husband	115	68.5%
Mother-in law	50	29.8%
Father-In law	30	1.0%
Age of perpetrators		
Young adult (18-24 years)	3	1.8%
Middle aged adult (25-44 years)	113	67.3%
Older adult (45+ years)	52	31.0%
Reason for domestic Violence		
Substance abuse	60	35.7%
Son preference	19	11.3%
Dowry	89	53.0%
Other		
Education		
No education	94	56.0%
Basic education	70	41.7%
Secondary	2	1.2%
More than secondary	2	1.2%
Work status		
Working	121	72.5%
Not working	46	27.5%
Source of income		
Agriculture	43	28.1%
Non-agriculture	110	71.8%

Association of domestic violence with perpetrator's characteristics

The husband was found to be the primary perpetrator of physical violence, followed by the mother-in-law and father-in-law. The occurrence of physical and sexual violence was significantly associated with the type of perpetrator (P < 0.0001). Furthermore, the perpetrator's age, reasons for domestic violence, level of education, and current employment status were all significantly linked to both physical and sexual violence (P < 0.0001) as shown in table 6.

Table 6: Association of domestic violence with perpetrator's characteristics

Variable	Forms of violence					
	Physical Violence		Psycho-logical Violence		Sexual Vio-lence	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Types of perpetrators						
Husband	97	18	105	10	86	29
Mother-in-law	30	20	50	0	0	50
Father-in-law	0	3	0	0	0	3
P-Value	**0.0001***		0.086		**0.0001***	
Age of perpetrator						
Young adult (18-24 years)	0	3	3	0	0	3
Middle aged adult (25-44 years)	97	16	103	10	86	27
Older adult (45+ years)	30	22	52	0	0	52
P-Value	**0.0001***		0.075		**0.0001***	
Reason behind domestic violence						
Substance abuse	38	22	56	4	27	33
Son preference	0	19	19	0	0	19
Dowry	89	0	83	6	59	30
Others	0	0			0	0
P-Value	**0.0001***		0.508		**0.0001***	
Education of perpetrator						
No education	66	28	86	8	61	33
Basic education	61	9	68	2	25	45
Secondary	0	2	2	0	0	2
More than secondary	0	2	2	0	0	2
P-Value	**0.0001***		0.466		**0.0001***	
Present work status						
Working	97	24	111	10	86	35
Not working	30	16	46	0	0	46
P-Value	**0.043***		**0.044***		**0.0001***	

DISCUSSION

Domestic violence is one of the major problems existing within the community. There are many forms of violence among which physical violence, psychological violence, and sexual violence are most common forms[4].These findings highlight the significant burden of domestic violence among women, with 55.4% of respondents reporting experiences of domestic violence in their lifetime. Psychological violence emerged as the most common form (52.1 %), followed by physical (41.9%) and sexual violence (28.4%). These results align with a prevalence study conducted at B.P. Koirala Institute of Health Sciences (BPKIHS),[16] where psychological abuse was also the predominant form of domestic violence among pregnant women (26.8%). The prevalence of domestic violence during pregnancy in that study was 53.2%, with physical violence being notably lower at 9.6%. Similarly, study conducted on IPV in Putalibajar Municipality[17] reported a lower prevalence of sexual violence (10.6%).

A significant association was observed between domestic violence and various socio-demographic factors. Women with no formal education faced the highest rates of domestic violence (P<0.0001). This finding contrasts with a cross-sectional study done in reproductive age women of Zimbabwe[18] where no significant correlation was found between women's educational levels and domestic violence. Furthermore, property ownership and employment status were also crucial determinants, as women without property and those not engaged in formal employment were more vulnerable to violence. Interestingly, this contrasts with a case study of property ownership and domestic violence in Latin America[19] that found no evidence that property ownership alone reduces domestic violence risk.

Early marriage was another significant factor influencing domestic violence, with women married between the ages of 10-15 years facing a higher risk. These findings are consistent with a study focusing on youths from Bihar and Rajasthan, India,[20] where women who married before 18 years were more likely to have experienced intimate partner violence. Arranged marriages were associated with higher domestic violence prevalence compared to love marriages, although a pilot study in Uttar Pradesh[21] found contrasting results, reporting higher violence rates in love marriages. The gestation period also played a role, with the highest prevalence of violence occurring in the first trimester. However, a study entitled "Patterns of domestic violence against women during pregnancy and the postpartum period in Kathmandu, Nepal"[22] reported that domestic violence was most common during the second trimester. No significant associations were found between domestic violence and family type source of income (P=0.160), or duration of marriage (P=0.090).

The primary perpetrator of domestic violence was the husband (68.5%), followed by the mother-in-law (29.8%) and father-in-law (1%). This contradicts with findings from the prevalence study conducted in BPKIHS,[15] where husbands were the predominant perpetrators with only 23.6%. Age distribution of perpetrators revealed that the majority were middle-aged adults (25-44 years, 67.3%), while older adults (45+ years) accounted for 31%.The

educational level of perpetrators further influenced violence rates, with over half lacking formal education and 41.7% possessing only basic education. Secondary and higher education levels among perpetrators were minimal (1.2%). This finding aligns with exploratory study conducted in India,[23] which suggest that having a highly educated husband correlates with better outcomes for women, potentially reducing their risk of experiencing domestic violence. Findings from the specific hospital or region may not be applicable to broader populations due to cultural or regional differences. To comprehensively identify the most prominent risk factors of domestic violence, future research should adopt varied study designs and expand its scope to cover entire countries, subcontinents, and other regions.

CONCLUSION

Violence against women is one of the most widespread, persistent and detrimental violations of human rights in today's world, which has not been reported in most cases due to impunity, silence, stigma and shame, even in the age of social communication. Domestic violence against women harms individuals, families, and society. This study highlights the alarming prevalence of domestic violence among women, with 55.4 % of respondents reporting experiences of violence in their lifetime. Psychological violence was found to be the most prevalent form, followed by physical and sexual violence. Key socio-demographic factors such as lack of education, early marriage, unemployment, and lack of property ownership were strongly associated with higher rates of domestic violence. Additionally, perpetrators were predominantly husbands, with dowry and substance abuse being primary contributing factors. Thus, this study underscores the complex nature of domestic violence, influenced by various socio-demographic and perpetrator-related factors.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

This article possesses no any conflict of interest.

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