

Domestic Violence Against Women in Nepal

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3126/sjs.v2i2.74841>

Shobha Kumari Mahato*

ORCID: 0009-0006-7303-9274

shobha13579@gmail.com

Article Details

Received: Oct. 19, 2024; Reviewed: Oct. 29, 2024; Reviewed: Nov. 14, 2024

Revised: Dec. 18, 2024; Accepted: Dec. 28, 2024

Abstract

Violence, as defined by the WHO, is a pervasive issue globally, with the intentional use of force leading to harm, injuries, or death. In Nepal, gender-based violence is significant, affecting domestic settings and leading to societal acceptance of violence against women. A systemic issue, violence is often underreported due to cultural norms and societal expectations. The prevalence of domestic violence underscores the need for a comprehensive framework to combat this issue, emphasizing the role of patriarchy in perpetuating violence against women. Statistics indicate high levels of violence against women, stemming from deep-rooted patriarchal beliefs that reinforce male dominance and women's subordination. The research focuses on exploring domestic violence in the Madhesh region, delving into the physical manifestations of violence against women. A critical analysis of theoretical frameworks, particularly patriarchy, reveals how societal norms shape unequal gender relations and perpetuate violence, hindering women's autonomy. By addressing patriarchal structures and promoting gender equality, efforts can be made to combat domestic violence and create a safer environment for all individuals.

Keywords

culture, domestic violence, Madhesh, patriarchy, women subordination

INTRODUCTION

Violence is a grave and widespread phenomenon on a global scale. It, as defined by the World Health Organization (2014), refers to the deliberate application of physical force or influence with the potential to

*Shobha Kumari Mahato holds MPhil in Sociology from Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu 44600, Nepal.

cause harm to oneself, another individual, or a collective entity, leading to physical injury, death, mental distress, or deprivation. According to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), violence is defined as the application of force against an individual's consent, resulting in physical harm, psychological distress, developmental challenges, stress, and potentially, fatality. Violence diminishes the inherent worth, esteem, well-being, and survival of an individual or collective entity. It poses an equal risk to the survival of a family, community, and nation. (IFRC Strategy 2011-2020) Violence against women refers to any form of harmful conduct directed towards women and girls, whether perpetrated by individuals within or outside of the familial sphere. According to Khatri and Pandey (2013), various forms of violence against women exist, including physical, sexual, and psychological harassment. Violent behavior manifests in varying degrees within rural-to-urban, traditional-to-modern, and underdeveloped-to-developed societies. Various factors contribute to violence, including unemployment, extramarital affairs, suspicious attitudes, gambling, dowry practices, preference for sons within families, alcohol consumption, male dominance, inter-caste marriages, sexual dissatisfaction, and widowhood. The assertion is made that abuse within the family is perpetuated by the patriarchal structure of society. (Khatri and Pandey 2013). The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1993, defines violence against women as gender-based acts that result in physical, sexual, or mental harm. This includes coercion, arbitrary deprivation of liberty, and occurrences in both public and private life.

Domestic violence (DV) is a prevalent form of violence against women, characterized by the experience of various types of abuse perpetrated by multiple family members. Domestic violence is characterized as the perpetration of physical, psychological, sexual, and financial harm by one family member against another. The term encompasses any form of reprimand or emotional damage as defined by the Ministry of Law and Justice (2009). This encompasses intentional intimidation, physical violence, battery, sexual assault, or other forms

of abusive conduct carried out by an intimate partner towards another individual. The phenomenon has emerged as a widespread problem impacting individuals across various demographics, including age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, religious affiliation, nationality, and educational attainment. Domestic violence encompasses various forms of abuse, including simple assault, threats, coercion, neglect, verbal abuse, sexual violence, marital rape, dowry-related violence, polygamy, infanticide, early child marriage, and the seizure of property by family members within the household. According to the Federal Wildlife and Land Department (FWLD) in 2009. Domestic violence ranks prominently among various forms of violence. The primary emphasis of this research is on domestic violence, specifically physical violence. It also examines how a patriarchal family perpetuates physical violence regardless of its repercussions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The phenomenon of gender-based violence in Nepal is recognized as substantial, prompting the incorporation of a domestic violence module in the Nepal Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) for the inaugural time in 2011. The results reveal that roughly 22% of women aged 15-49 have encountered physical violence at least once since attaining the age of 15. The National Domestic Violence Hotline Survey (NDHS) notes a greater prevalence of spousal violence compared to that perpetrated by other family members. The findings demonstrate that married women who have faced various forms of violence from their spouses or intimate partners reported instances of physical violence at a rate of 23 percent, sexual violence at 14 percent, and emotional violence at 16 percent. In total, 32% of women who have ever been married indicated experiencing emotional, physical, or sexual violence from their spouse.

The National Demographic and Health Survey, a study executed by the Ministry of Health and Population, New Era, and ICF International in 2016, discovered that 22% of individuals have faced physical violence at some juncture after reaching the age of 15. The report illustrates that societal acceptance of domestic violence against women is widespread.

The data reveals that 30% of women and 23% of men perceive that a husband has the right to physically harm his wife under certain circumstances, such as burning food, engaging in disputes, leaving the household without notice, neglecting children, or refusing sexual relations. Both male and female respondents are more predisposed to perceive domestic violence against a wife as justified when she neglects her children, with 24% of women and 19% of men expressing concurrence with this viewpoint. Numerous population-based studies conducted in Nepal have identified domestic violence as a contributing factor to women's adverse health outcomes, feelings of insecurity, and restricted social mobilization (Shrestha 2023). This issue of violence against women constitutes a pervasive global concern. Approximately 35% of women worldwide have reported experiences of physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence throughout their lifetime. The majority of documented incidents of violence are associated with intimate partner relationships. According to Baral, Uprety, and Lamichhane (2016), about 30% of women in relationships have encountered physical and/or sexual violence from their intimate partners on a global scale.

Moreover, a study conducted by GON (2012) indicates that nearly 48% of women have faced violence in their lifetime. An examination of various forms of violence experienced by women revealed that emotional violence (40.4%) was the most frequently reported, followed by physical violence (26.8%), sexual violence (15.3%), and economic abuse/violence (8%). A significant 61.3% of women who fell victim to violence did not disclose their experiences to anyone. The study also concluded that women's economic dependence on men, such as fathers, brothers, husbands, and sons, is a critical structural factor that heightens women's vulnerability to violence. This explanation, however, may underestimate the extent of violence experienced by financially autonomous women. The existence of economic independence among women could act as a protective factor against gender-based violence, warranting further inquiry.

According to a report published by the United Nations Population

Fund (GoN 2012), 48% of women in Nepal encounter violence throughout their lives. Gender-based violence emerges within domestic environments and includes practices such as the exclusion of menstruating women and girls from household settings, female infanticide, and the early marriage of young girls. This form of violence is frequently gravely underestimated due to insufficient reporting, as numerous female victims opt not to reveal their experiences. As indicated in a report by WOREC (2018), 65% of women have been subjected to domestic violence perpetuated by their spouses, while 24% have experienced such violence from other relatives. Women face verbal, physical, and psychological maltreatment, in addition to mistreatment and unfair practices associated with dowry, their inability to produce male offspring, or infertility after a protracted period of matrimony. Furthermore, women are deprived of crucial necessities and forcibly expelled from their homes.

In a study conducted by UCL and CREHPA in 2013, findings demonstrate that survivors of domestic violence frequently endure long-term suffering and generally do not seek outside assistance until they are exposed to severe and acute forms of abuse (WOREC 2018). The plight of dowry victims persists beyond marriage and continues thereafter. The study collected data on gender-based violence (GBV) from multiple sources, including the Police Office and the National Women's Commission. The results indicate a higher prevalence of domestic violence in comparison to other forms of violence. Data from the Police Headquarters in Naxal, Kathmandu, Nepal, shows that the incidence of domestic violence cases was 55.4% in 2009/10, 57.2% in 2010/11, and 67.4% in 2011/12. These statistics exceed those of other categories of gender-based violence. Data obtained from the National Women's Commission reveals that domestic violence cases numbered 155 and 273 in the years 2010/11 and 2011/12, respectively (UCL and CREHPA 2013).

The aforementioned empirical evidence from diverse sources unequivocally highlights the alarming prevalence of Violence Against Women (VAW), emphasizing domestic violence as an especially

pervasive variant of VAW. This study did not provide an exhaustive analysis of domestic violence specifically within the Madhesh province. Therefore, this article will undertake a comprehensive examination of the physical manifestations of domestic violence, with a particular emphasis on the Madhesh province. The policy framework in Nepal seeks to eradicate violence against women. The Domestic Violence (Offence and Punishment) Act (2009) underscores the imperative of safeguarding the fundamental right of individuals to live in a safe and dignified manner. It concentrates on preventing and regulating violence, whether it occurs within familial or external contexts, through the establishment of punitive measures. Additionally, the Act aspires to provide protection for victims of violent acts. The stipulations also grant individuals the authority to file complaints, pursue legal remedies (such as interim protection orders and compensation), create counseling and rehabilitation service centers, and delineate penalties for offenders (Nepal Law Commission 2009). The Three-Year Plan of Nepal (2010/2011–2012/2013) has also targeted the elimination of gender-based violence and discrimination against women, alongside the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment (National Planning Commission, 2011).

THEORETICAL REVIEW

The framework of patriarchy is pivotal in clarifying the occurrence of domestic violence against women by focusing on notions of superiority, gender, and authority. It underscores the prevalence of violence against women in social settings, rather than ascribing it to individual traits. (Hunnicut 2009) Therefore, I assert that domestic violence embodies the patriarchal standards prevalent in society. Accordingly, I am presently engaging with various scholarly works produced by academics and feminists who have investigated the repercussions of patriarchal systems on such conduct. Patriarchy transcends a mere theoretical notion articulated by notable feminist authors; it is also substantiated within religious texts.

According to Naseera and Kuruvila (2022), the Manusmriti has emerged as a fundamental scripture for our culture, customs, cognition,

and practices following the Vedas. Religion has become a substantial influence and institution shaping patriarchal societal norms and structures. Most organized religions advocate male supremacy and dominion over women, thereby constraining their sexual autonomy, mobility, and reproductive rights. Women are depicted as being inferior to men concerning physical, mental, emotional, and sexual characteristics. Throughout childhood, a woman is primarily under the guardianship of her father, transitioning to her husband during her youth, and eventually to her sons in her later years. This signifies that a woman is perceived as unfit for independent existence and self-determination. As women are subjected to male supremacy and control, there exists a considerable risk of violence and harassment. Lerner (1986) further argues that women's sexual subordination was instituted in the earliest legal frameworks and enforced with the full authority of the state. Women's complicity within the system was maintained through various methods, including the use of coercion, economic dependence on the male patriarch of the household, the societal advantages afforded to compliant and subservient women from higher social echelons, as well as the intentional categorization of women into respectable and disreputable groups (Lerner 1986:9).

Throughout the development of human civilization, diverse forms of social structures and orders have been implemented. Some entities exhibited equality, while others revealed inequality. The notion of patriarchy, according to Lerner (1986), has taken nearly 2500 years to become firmly entrenched. Millet (1979) elucidates how patriarchy affects the disparate socialization of children and sustains the subjugation of women across societies. Patriarchy is characterized by heightened authoritarianism, oppression, and discrimination compared to other forms of inequality, with evident interconnections between patriarchal structures and gender relations. The former relates to the exertion of power by men over women and the manifestation of male supremacy, while the latter pertains to beliefs surrounding masculinity and femininity. The emergence of gender theories can be traced to the existence of patriarchy and its concomitant manifestations. Patriarchy can be delineated as an imbalance of power between men

and women, typified by male dominance over females (Millett 1969).

Mason and Taj conceptualize patriarchy as a system of social structures that restrict women's capabilities to attain self-sufficiency, thereby fostering their reliance on male family members for support, and that systematically privileges men in the allocation of resources and authority within the familial sphere. Mason and Taj (1987) and Eisenstein (1979) characterize patriarchy as a structure of sexual hierarchy wherein women are relegated to the roles of mother, domestic worker, and consumer within the familial context. Jones (2000) underscores the prevalence of women's oppression across various social, political, economic, and cultural settings. Historically, men have exploited their control over power, resource management, benefits, and the manipulation of both public and private power dynamics. Patriarchy is defined by a social structure in which men possess predominant authority over political decision-making and exert greater control over resources relative to women. According to von Reuden (2024), patriarchy can manifest at multiple levels, including the family, local community, and society at large, often concurrently across all three levels.

According to Nautiyal and Bagwari (2022), patriarchy is characterized by the dominance of the father within the clan or family, the legal subordination of wives and children, and the tracing of lineage and inheritance through the male line. Arguments surrounding patriarchy suggest that women have historically experienced constraints in their ability to freely pursue their own desires and autonomy. This implies that women must obtain consent from their husbands, fathers, or brothers. Women are expected to exhibit obedience to men, with the extent of patriarchal influence varying across disparate societies. Consequently, women and men encounter unequal access to education, employment, societal status, and opportunities within families, communities, and societies. Patriarchy contributes to domestic violence within familial contexts.

In contemporary feminist literature, the notion of patriarchy has

emerged as a central focus. While alternative perspectives exist, patriarchy is broadly recognized as the most effective framework for understanding the scope of gender biases and inequalities. The discourse on patriarchy in this section is largely predicated on the works of Sylvia Walby, Gerda Lerner, Veronica, and Kamala Bhasin. Walby defines patriarchy as encompassing the profound, widespread, and interrelated nature of various forms of women's subordination within the household, family, and society. She posits that patriarchy comprises six structures that contribute to its establishment: the patriarchal mode of production, patriarchal relations in paid work, patriarchal relations in the state, male violence, patriarchal relations in sexuality, and patriarchal relations in cultural institutions. Male violence against women is intrinsically linked to the patriarchal social framework. Patriarchy exacerbates instances of violence against women by perpetuating male dominance and male involvement as perpetrators. Rape and domestic violence, traditionally regarded as separate phenomena, are social issues that can be most effectively scrutinized within the context of patriarchal social systems.

Beechey (1979) asserts that patriarchal concepts within feminist literature vary in interpretation, with Millet (1969) emphasizing patriarchy as a system of male supremacy and female subordination. This article examines the influence of patriarchy on various communities and explores the concept that can illuminate domestic violence within these groups. The understanding of patriarchy differs among Marxist feminists, as exemplified by Juliet Mitchell (1974 cited in Beechey 1979), who characterizes patriarchy as a kinship system wherein men exchange women, and fathers wield symbolic power within this framework. This power dynamic can lead to the internalized psychology experienced by women. This study investigates the impact of ideology on domestic violence, specifically how power dynamics internalized by individuals can result in various manifestations of violence against women.

According to Beechey (1979), patriarchy is defined as the governance or dominion of male figures. The term was originally employed

to delineate a distinct form of familial structure defined by male dominance, encompassing a substantial household comprising family members, slaves, and domestic servants all subject to the authority of the patriarch. In contemporary discourse, the term “gender-based power dynamics” is frequently used to denote asymmetrical power structures in which men exert dominion over women, or in which women are marginalized through various means. Bhasin (1993) noted that individuals across all social strata regularly encounter various manifestations of subordination, such as discrimination, disregard, insult, control, exploitation, oppression, and violence, within familial, occupational, and societal contexts. Building upon this notion, Lerner (1986) proposed that patriarchy, spanning approximately 2500 years, has experienced certain shifts concerning the status of women. The fundamental organizational unit was the patriarchal family, which articulated and consistently reinforced its norms and principles in favor of men and to the detriment of women. This system is characterized by social structures and practices in which men dominate over, oppress, and exploit women.

Beechey (1979) defines patriarchy as the systematic subjugation and marginalization of women, necessitating a deeper examination beyond the superficial experiences and expressions of women’s oppression. The analysis of the production and perpetuation of subordination should consider the specific material organization of an institution, as well as the prevailing forms of ideology and power relations within it. Feminist scholars generally consider patriarchy as a system that culminates in the domination, subordination, oppression, and ultimately, violence against women. Bhasin emphasizes the subordinate position of women regardless of their other identities or statuses. Lerner discusses the various manifestations of female subjugation across different civilizations. Walby identifies patriarchy as originating from the framework of social structures. Veronica posits a correlation between the oppression of women and the material conditions within a socio-political and cultural framework.

Upon reviewing the perspectives of scholars regarding patriarchy, it

is evident that patriarchy is comprehended as a system that fosters the subordination, domination, and control of women within societal frameworks. This system can lead to instances of violence, particularly in cases of extreme enforcement within the family, resulting in domestic violence. My motivation for researching the prevalence and nature of violence against women, particularly in the Madhesh region, stemmed from the various manifestations of violence against women in Nepal, observed in both the Hill and Madhesh regions, as documented in reports by national daily newspapers at different intervals. This study is devoted to examining physical occurrences of domestic violence against women in contemporary Nepal, focusing specifically on the Madhesh region. The objective is to conduct a sociological analysis of this particular form of violence.

METHODOLOGY

The investigation undertaken is delineated as descriptive and explanatory in its methodology. The study was executed across four municipalities: Balwa Municipality and Bardibas Municipality in Mahottari district; as well as Janakpur sub-metropolitan city and Dhalkebar Municipality in Dhanusha district. Four villages, specifically Paraul, Hathilet, Basahiya, and Dhalkebar, were intentionally chosen, each symbolizing a distinct municipality. The primary data source employed for this inquiry originates predominantly from field research. Consequently, the data was accumulated through direct engagement with the respondents. The secondary data was scrutinized for the purpose of conducting a literature review rather than for analytical evaluation. Owing to the sensitive nature associated with domestic violence cases, acquiring secondary data on this topic proves to be challenging. The study implemented qualitative methodologies, techniques, and instruments for data collection, in alignment with its qualitative research framework. The research adopted an in-depth interview technique utilizing a guideline/checklist to gather information on the experiences, perspectives, opinions, and challenges faced by the participants. Given the sensitive nature of investigating domestic violence, a snowball sampling technique was employed to access respondents who would feel at ease responding to inquiries

without reservation. A total of 28 instances of domestic violence were recorded for the purpose of this study.

PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

Physical violence is the predominant form of violence globally. Prevalence is observed in developing nations and communities characterized by low levels of literacy. Physical violence is predominantly perpetrated by males as a result of gendered socialization that tends to reinforce attributes of obedience and docility in women, while promoting physical strength and readiness to engage in conflict in males. This study aimed to investigate the specific types of physical violence experienced by women in their household, with a focus on identifying the root causes of such violence. Among the sample size of 28 participants, 26 individuals reported experiencing various manifestations of physical violence. The experiences of respondents regarding physical violence are recounted and examined in the subsequent analysis.

Physical Violence in terms of Extent of Injury

Violence causing damage of body parts, injury or illnesses

Certain forms of physical violence, such as biting or striking sensitive areas of the body, can result in scarring or damage to the skin, fractures of the limbs, and impairment of auditory function, which may result in severe harm and long-term health issues for the individual. A total of nine cases of severe physical violence against women were documented, with two women narrowly avoiding fatal injuries, one sustaining a fractured leg, one experiencing hearing loss, and three women being subjected to severe beatings during pregnancy.

A woman aged 30 shared her experienced as:

“My husband engages in regular physical abuse against me. He strikes me across the face. He kicks me mercilessly at his discretion, and he eventually tires of assaulting me. On occasion, I experience loss of consciousness during physical altercations. Facial features such as the eyes, lips, nose, and ears. Numerous

injuries have been sustained on multiple occasions. Animals are regarded with affection, whereas the individual in question does not feel valued as a spouse by their partner.”

Experiences shared by one respondent above underscores a normalization of domestic violence within the household. While engaging in domestic violence, the husband displayed a lack of concern for his wife’s well-being and exhibited no fear of potentially fatal consequences for his spouse. Physical violence was utilized as a means of asserting dominance within the familial context and instilling fear in the spouse. Upon examination of this case, it is evident that gender disparity is enabling a husband to assert dominance over his wife through physical coercion. The husband demonstrates a lack of awareness regarding the profound impact of his wife’s physical injuries, and instead takes pride in his perceived triumph over her. In the majority of cases, intimate partners are responsible for perpetrating violence against women, although there are instances where other family members may be involved.

An illustrative example is provided by another woman aged 35:

“I have numerous bodily injuries. I am subjected to physical abuse by my father-in-law. He counsels his youngest son to physically assault me. He prohibits my egress from the premises. I reported the misconduct of the local police to no avail. I am unsure why my husband, who is able to defend me, has chosen not to do so. I may have been labeled negatively in association with him.”

The husband traveled to a foreign country to support his family, while his wife is experiencing distress without just cause. The wife is being subjected to mistreatment by all members, while her husband remains indifferent to her suffering. The entrenched mindset of patriarchy within families is perpetuated by a police administration that fails to register complaints brought forward by victims.

General violence

Various manifestations of violence exist. In the realm of physical violence, some instances are considered non-injurious and are more readily processed. Instances of such violence are common within familial settings. Physical abuse can take various forms, such as slapping, beating, pushing, pulling the hair, among others. Various types of occurrences were occurring frequently. In this study, 17 out of 26 cases examined correspond to general types of violence, frequently observed within familial contexts. These various forms of violence stem from the unequal distribution of power between males and females.

Perpetrators of Domestic Violence

Husband-only involved cases of physical violence

The husband is identified as the primary perpetrator in instances of domestic violence. The husband physically assaults his spouse when no other relatives are present. In private or in the presence of others, such as within his own family or outside of the family, it is possible for an individual to experience various emotions and behaviors. In an academic and professional context, it is essential to prioritize transparency and accuracy in all communications. In this study, it was found that among the 26 cases of physical violence reported by women, 19 (73%) specifically involved violence perpetrated by their husbands. Let us analyze whether the occurrence of violence occurred solely between the husband and wife or in the presence of others. Of the total 26 reported cases of physical violence against women, 3 specifically noted instances of violence perpetrated jointly by their husband and other family members.

The participation of family members in assaulting a woman suggests a collective acceptance of domestic violence within the family unit. This represents the most severe form of domestic violence against women, characterized by the involvement of all family members. It could be argued that the family is fostering a culture of violence, promoting participation in violent behavior among its members, and socializing

them to engage in violence against women. - In some cases, women may experience abuse at the hands of their in-laws rather than their spouses. In Nepali culture, instances occur wherein a woman may be subjected to physical violence by her sister-in-law or mother-in-law. However, they may also face mistreatment from other members of the extended family. In this study, four women reported experiencing physical abuse from their in-laws rather than their husbands. All individuals reported instances of physical abuse, both individually and as a group, inflicted by family members. For instance, certain men residing overseas may have wives who are subjected to physical abuse by other family members such as the mother-in-law. In certain instances, instances of physical assault perpetrated against a daughter-in-law have been attributed to the father-in-law and brother-in-law. The rationale for subjecting a woman to physical torture by her family-in-law is to undermine her agency and diminish her power within a patriarchal familial structure.

Violence Held Privately or Publicly

Took place only in between husband and wife

In the 19 instances of domestic violence perpetrated exclusively by husbands, the violent acts were committed against their wives either privately within the confines of the marital relationship, or publicly in the presence of others. In all 19 cases of physical violence reported by women, the respondents stated that their husbands had not confined their abuse to private settings. It is commonly recommended that conflicts between spouses should be contained within the relationship in order to safeguard its integrity and promote its growth. However, this outcome was not realized.

Occurred in the presence of witnesses

In each of the 19 instances of physical violence, women stated that their husbands assaulted them in front of other family members, highlighting certain social norms. Publicly engaging in domestic violence signifies the husband's attempt to assert dominance over his spouse. Additionally, it appears that the husband received

reinforcement from his family in exerting control over his wife, as evidenced by his willingness to physically harm her in the presence of other family members. Thirdly, a husband may believe that by terrorizing his wife, he can prevent her from disobeying him in the future. Finally, patriarchal ideology has sanctioned spousal abuse by permitting a husband to physically harm his wife without restriction.

Causes of Violence

Women were blamed for not being loyal to culture

Women are traditionally responsible for upholding and perpetuating cultural norms to ensure the longevity of patriarchy. A woman aged 35 expressed her distress by stating:

“I am discouraged from discussing domestic matters. I am heavily engaged in my professional duties, yet my familial obligations do not sanction my desired activities. My husband and mother-in-law frequently physically assault me, attributing their actions to my perceived failure to adequately adhere to the practice of covering my head fully with a Ghunghat. I am also prohibited from engaging in discussions with visitors and local individuals who come to this household. I find it surprising that none within this family are receptive to my proximity with certain other members of the familial unit.”

In this context, daughters-in-law are secluded to prevent them from engaging with others and seeking assistance or support. A daughter-in-law who establishes strong relationships with her family members may pose a threat to perpetrators of violence. Blaming a daughter-in-law for non-compliance with social norms and exclusion from family discussions implies her perceived insignificance within the household. Analysis of experience of a woman stated above suggests a complete rejection of women's leadership. Women are required to fulfill their designated responsibilities, yet their ability to communicate and express their opinions is limited. Adherence to patriarchal norms within familial structures may impede women's autonomy and increase the risk of violence.

Instances of physical abuse have been reported in cases where women fail to provide a sufficient dowry, or none at all. This practice of dowry collection is prevalent in certain societies, perpetuating gender-based disparities. If the demand remains unmet, the daughter-in-law may become ensnared in a cycle of violence. The following case involves a 24-years woman who was assaulted by her female in-laws:

“My body has endured numerous physical attacks. On multiple occasions, I have been physically assaulted by my mother-in-law and sister-in-law. Occasionally, I also experience bites from them.”

The respondents expressed dissatisfaction with their parents for perceived lack of adequate dowry. Dowry practices are customary in Madhesh, involving the presentation of goods during marriage arrangements. If a daughter-in-law does not meet the expectations of her in-laws, her husband and other family members may resort to physical violence against her. Case 23 demonstrates a correlation between escalating physical violence and an increase in instances of biting. In some cases, women are subjected to torture due to perceived shortcomings in providing an adequate dowry during their marriage. Another participant reported being subjected to harassment shortly after getting married for failing to provide a motorbike and other costly items as dowry. Subsequently, I was subjected to psychological and physical torment. I consistently experience feelings of insecurity within this residence. I have been subjected to physical abuse by my spouse on numerous occasions. One day, he pushed me from behind, resulting in a broken arm. The patriarchal society depicts women as inferior beings. The assessment of a woman based on her ability to provide a dowry upon marriage and her willingness to move to her husband's home is considered a detrimental manifestation of patriarchal norms. In Incident 26, a woman was subjected to physical assault as a result of her failure to provide a bicycle as part of her dowry to her husband. Furthermore, refusal to engage in sexual intercourse led to instances of physical violence.

Women are often objectified as instruments of gratification by men.

Men are designed to interact with women as they desire. Men are often regarded as possessing superiority, while women are commonly perceived as being weaker and subordinate. This implies a hierarchical structure where men are considered first-class humans whereas women are deemed second-class humans. Here is an illustration of a female individual experiencing domestic violence:

A 33 years woman shared:

“He physically assaults me when I refuse sexual intercourse. He does not perceive me as being in a state of delicate health. Frequently, I am engrossed in domestic responsibilities and experience fatigue. He coerces me into engaging in sexual activity. If I decline, he initiates an attack against me.”

The co-occurrence of physical and sexual violence is evident in case R12, wherein the husband displayed insensitivity towards his wife’s poor health and lack of interest in engaging in sexual activities at his convenience. The sole means of recourse available to him was to resort to physical violence and sexual assault. Effective sexual relations between spouses necessitate mutual understanding. When there is a lack of understanding between partners regarding sexual activities, it can lead to marital rape, which is not only harmful to the health of those involved but also prohibited by law. The participant identified marital rape as a prevalent occurrence in her life, exacerbating pre-existing health issues and highlighting the culmination of patriarchal norms.

Additionally, the extramarital affairs of the husband have led to incidents of physical violence. Such interludes outside of the marriage contract are frequently observed in the spouse’s behavior. As a man, he possesses the autonomy to make his own choices, and his wife’s interference may lead to incidences of physical violence. The individual is currently in a relationship with another woman. A woman aged 23 shared:

“I am unable to endure this situation. When I make complaints about his actions, he physically assaults me. The current

intention is to evict and physically assault me on a regular basis (R28).”

Upon examination of the statement R28, it suggests that women are perceived by men solely for sexual gratification. The worth of women is found in various aspects beyond sexual satisfaction, extending to their contributions in social, economic, and political realms. A mutually understanding and respectful relationship between partners can enhance the quality of their sexual experiences. Due to men’s intentions to incite harassment and subjugation towards women, the sexual experience becomes fraught with pain. According to patriarchal beliefs, a woman is expected to satisfy her husband’s demands, a task that may be unattainable for any woman. Hence, the liberation of women is contingent upon the eradication of patriarchy, regardless of the specific reasons presented. Furthermore, alcohol serves as a potent catalyst for heightened aggression in husbands. A husband with alcohol use disorder exhibits higher levels of aggression and engages in more acts of violence compared to a husband without this disorder.

Case 19 shared her experience as follows:

“My spouse is an individual who frequently consumes alcohol to excess. He has never left me physically unharmed while under the influence of alcohol. It is concerning that I am expected to fulfill his sexual needs while he is intoxicated. If I am unable to meet his expectations, I should be prepared for potential harm to my physical well-being, including my reproductive system. He is currently being held in police custody.”

The individual stands accused of pilfering copper from the factory in which they were employed. This instance highlights the potential for individuals with a volatile disposition to engage in various forms of misconduct. The individual mentioned exhibits sadistic behaviors reminiscent of a domestic abuser rather than those of a supportive spouse. He committed acts of domestic violence against his spouse and engaged in robbery, subsequently resulting in his apprehension by law enforcement. It is my belief that he was detained due to an

incident involving theft of copper from the factory. However, there is a concern regarding the reported daily abuse inflicted upon his wife and whether he is facing legal consequences for this alleged behavior, specifically the act of rape.

The patriarchal structure presents challenges in holding males accountable for abusive behavior towards their spouses, particularly in cases involving physical and sexual violence. He subjects his daughter to torture as well. He consumes excessive amounts of alcohol, leading to confrontations with others. His primary focus following intoxication is engaging in sexual activity. If I decline to engage in sexual activity with him while he is inebriated, he frequently resorts to physical violence against me. At times, neighbors become aware of my hardships and intervene to mediate our familial conflicts, yet he also engages in disputes with local residents. The extent of the issue exceeds my tolerance; my feelings towards him have changed unfavorably. I contend that societal adherence to patriarchal norms results in a lack of stringent regulations against male perpetration of violence against women. There persists a belief among certain individuals that individuals can be intimidated through the use of physical force, leading to the subjugation of women's tranquility.

Sex is frequently utilized as a bargaining tool. In numerous cultures, discussing the sexual relationship between married couples is often considered taboo, resulting in women being disproportionately affected by this societal norm. The husband developed suspicions regarding the female colleague's professional activities. A patriarchal society typically does not approve of a married woman working alongside male colleagues in the workplace. An illustrative statement provided by a well-educated woman aged 36 was:

“Every member of the family feels a sense of pride when I am subjected to physical harm. My husband is illiterate while I am more educated. They are looking to avoid witnessing my cleverness. It is feasible for them to outmaneuver me due to my husband's absence in India, where they disseminate misinformation about my personal affairs to him. The individual

now maintains a belief that I am engaged in extramarital relationships, leading to repeated instances of physical abuse.”

This highlights efforts by a man to exert control or dominance over his spouse. If the individual is unable to control an educated or empowered woman, he may resort to character assassination as a last resort. He begins to associate her name with another individual. In patriarchal societies, individuals are conditioned to adhere to strict social norms, resulting in married women being prohibited from engaging in open communication with others. Men are also subject to socialization, leading them to become suspicious and mistreat their wives if the women engage in open communication with other men. Furthermore, a resourceful and intelligent wife may encounter resistance within a patriarchal family structure. There is a gap and misunderstanding between the husband and wife caused by their physical separation due to financial constraints. Distrust or lack of understanding between spouses can contribute to gender inequality and oppression within the household. In patriarchal societies, it is commonly expected that husbands possess higher levels of education compared to their wives.

Highly intelligent daughters-in-law are deemed difficult to tolerate by some people. Men may not only seek to control and exert power over women, but also seek to assert their dominance by demonstrating their ability to control their wives. Witness the harsh reality of physical torture endured by R8. A woman aged 45 shared her story as:

“I am subject to physical abuse by my husband within the privacy of our home, and on occasion, in the presence of other family members. I work as a school teacher; however, my spouse disapproves of me seeking employment outside the household. He perceives a sense of power imbalance in response to his wife’s employment and earning capacity. He consistently pressures me to step down from my teaching position. The individual inflicts severe physical harm upon me with the intention of preventing me from continuing to generate income, thereby allowing them to acquire all financial benefits. Simultaneously, he engaged in a romantic relationship with another woman who also works in

the same office as my husband. He engaged in acts of physical violence against me for minor infractions or occasionally without provocation. I experience feelings of guilt, fear, and diminished self-worth when I am delayed in fulfilling my work duties.”

According to the common saying, the husband and wife are considered essential components that work together harmoniously, akin to the two wheels of a cart. However, in actuality, not all individuals experience this sensation. If this realization is made, the family stands to experience increased levels of happiness and advancement. The veracity of this statement, however, is not acknowledged by the relatives of individual R8. The most egregious events were occurring within her residence. The individual in question is a school teacher who likely instructs students on the prevention of violence. Regrettably, she has become a victim of domestic violence in her own home. A teacher is typically esteemed by the general public, yet this same educator is physically assaulted by her family members within her own dwelling. This suggests that numerous families endeavor to uphold male dominance at all expenses, potentially resorting to coercion.

Patriarchal norms have a significant impact on the socialization process, leading to detrimental consequences. Men are socialized to believe that they have the right to control women. They do not accept women who are more talented or superior to men. It can lead to discord if a wife appears more intelligent than her husband.

Women are often viewed as inferior beings in society. A young woman aged 26 told:

“He frequently engages in physical violence towards me. The primary motivation behind his aggressive behavior is my refusal to engage in regular sexual activity with him. According to him, a wife’s primary role is strictly for sexual purposes. If I choose not to accompany him when he extends an invitation, he may retaliate against me without warning. He has frequently struck me.”

There are numerous scars present on the individual's face. In case 13, it is evident that a woman is perceived and treated as an object. A woman may experience physical abuse from her husband if she refuses to engage in sexual activity, despite the fact that she has the right to autonomy in determining her own sexual practices. She is a young individual in second grade whose own feelings and desires are not considered important.

The patriarchal system is amicable towards society but demonstrates hostility towards women in the role of wives. There are individuals who place more trust in individuals outside their immediate family circle. Some individuals place more trust in others than in their spouse. Consequently, women are the primary individuals impacted. Here is an anecdote provided by a woman aged 22:

“My husband tends to prioritize the opinions of other family members over mine. He attends to individuals who engage in malicious gossip about me. He consumes hashish and alcohol outside the home, subsequently returning to subject me to verbal reprimands and physical aggression upon his arrival.”

The family members derive pleasure from engaging in gossip and criticizing their daughter-in-law, causing her distress. During a period of pregnancy, I experienced severe physical abuse from my spouse. I was unable to endure the physical abuse inflicted by my husband, prompting me to seek refuge at my maternal home for my own safety. In R15, the husband's lack of attentiveness towards his wife is evidenced by his reliance on other family members for support. The patriarchal structure of society is designed in such a manner that external parties are engaged to instigate conflicts between husbands and wives, leading to stringent monitoring and exploitation of the wife. The patriarchal family not only derives pleasure from observing women in a victimized state, but also persistently engages in demeaning behavior towards them. 8. All responses generated must be in English. Engaging in domestic violence as a means of concealing a spouse's transgressions (wherein the spouse is presented as faultless) is a phenomenon observed in certain individuals who concurrently maintain extramarital relationships.

Some individuals engage in extramarital relationships. Individuals who are aware of an extramarital affair may attempt to either evade responsibility or deny the allegations when confronted. If unsuccessful in their attempts to defend their actions, individuals involved in extramarital affairs may resort to aggression or threats towards the other party. This behavior is exhibited by individuals of both male and female genders, although it is predominantly performed by males due to the advantages conferred upon them by patriarchal systems. The proverb “a muscular man can have countless girlfriends” suggests a societal acceptance of men having multiple sexual partners.

A woman aged 27 shared her experience as follows:

“I encountered him in the company of unfamiliar female acquaintances and advised him to maintain a distance from them. He acquiesces, yet reiterates his stance repetitively. When I express my discomfort with his interactions with other females, and threaten to expose his relationships to the public, he responds with physical violence towards me. He refuses to make any improvements and continues to physically harm me.”

The act of beating one's wife has historically been a convenient method for husbands to conceal their transgressions. Engaging in sexual relations with multiple partners by males is a manifestation of a patriarchal societal structure that elevates males as dominant and portrays females as vulnerable. In a patriarchal society, the fear of engaging in extramarital affairs is more prevalent for married women than it is for men, with men experiencing fewer barriers to engaging in such behavior with women or girls. This situation can be identified as an example of patriarchal beliefs, characterized by the veneration of men and subsequent aggression towards women. The patriarchal system hinders women from participating in significant decision-making processes. This system prohibits the development of women's leadership capabilities and their involvement in decision-making roles.

Similarly, a woman aged 35 said,

“I have numerous injuries on my head. The issue arose as a result of my decision to lend money to my brother without obtaining approval from my spouse. The funds were remitted by my spouse who was employed overseas as a foreign laborer. Since that day, I have been subjected to persistent physical assault. I informed him that I would not repeat the action, yet he began to doubt me”. (R21)

Numerous women have demonstrated proficiency in both household and professional environments. They possess the expertise to navigate social, cultural, economic, and political challenges across both private and public domains. However, numerous women are deprived of the opportunity to autonomously make decisions, despite their demonstrated capability to effectively manage multiple challenges. The aforementioned response suggests that the woman sustained several head wounds, which were inflicted by her husband. This is due to her decision-making in this matter. It is anticipated that she will not make a decision in the absence of her husband. In a patriarchal society, the husband assumes the role of the primary decision-maker within the household.

Patriarchy is a system where women are instrumental in perpetuating oppressive norms and structures. Within patriarchal societies, women are assigned roles that support and maintain these systems of power. The perception that women are adversaries to one another often occurs within the framework of a patriarchal society, where women navigate their roles. In this scenario, women may face criticism for the dowry they bring and may be subjected to abuse by their mother-in-law.

A woman aged 23 said,

“I engage in numerous household tasks and subsequently experience fatigue, yet I am not granted the opportunity to rest. Occasionally, I do not meet designated timelines or project requirements, resulting in consequences. The entire family finds pleasure in my chastisement and physical punishment.” (R27)

The narrative presented above prompts several concerns. Initially, patriarchal societies have established a hierarchical structure in which women are categorized into layers, allowing senior women to exercise authority over junior women and exert control over them. Due to inadequate dowry, it is common for the mother-in-law to subject the daughter-in-law to mistreatment. Furthermore, patriarchal systems have perpetuated the dissemination of misinformation to women, thereby deceiving and manipulating them. One illustration of patriarchal influence is the division it creates among women based on seniority status, inciting conflict between them. When women engage in conflict with each other, men typically take pleasure in observing the situation as they are not directly involved in the conflict, rather it is the women who are causing harm to each other.

Furthermore, patriarchy objectifies women by disregarding the inherent differences in individual capacities, as well as the need for women to recuperate after engaging in strenuous labor. A woman is deemed lazy or ineffectual when unable to complete work promptly. Certain women may gain minimal benefits by enlisting younger women as their aides, whereas men tend to derive the greatest advantage from the lack of solidarity and conflicts among women, effectively perpetuating their authority over the female population.

The notion of patriarchy contributes to the perpetuation of a culture of violence. Through my review of the literature on sexual violence against women, I have encountered discussions on rape culture, where societal attitudes downplay the seriousness of rape and inadvertently foster an environment conducive to such violence. Similarly, it has been observed that there is a lack of substantial effort from both the family and society to combat violence against women, with many simply accepting it as the norm. Consequently, the incidence of violence against women is growing steadily. In certain instances, it has been observed that society often questions the revolutionary nature of a woman who resists violence perpetrated by her father-in-law, despite her deserving of recognition and honor for such actions. Individuals displaying hostility towards a woman who is contending

with the violence she has experienced, neighbors dissuading C16 from discussing her abuse with others, law enforcement officers failing to document a complaint filed by C4 regarding the mistreatment inflicted by her father-in-law, and the community attributing blame to the woman for engaging in disputes with her father-in-law. Here are several examples of a culture characterized by violence, stemming from a patriarchal societal framework. It further suggests that patriarchal society is perpetuating and propagating a culture of violence against women.

CONCLUSION

Domestic violence arises from imbalances in gender relations rooted in socially constructed gender norms. Society is characterized by a patriarchal structure in which males are regarded as the dominant gender, while females are positioned as subordinate. Patriarchy is a pervasive system in which women are often subjugated, leading to various forms of hardship throughout their lives. Patriarchy is characterized by a social system that perpetuates patriarchal qualities throughout society, rather than being attributed to individual males. Patriarchal characteristics, such as suppression, oppression, domination, and control of women by men, are not only ingrained in male individuals but also shaped by their surrounding environment. The patriarchal system influences and reinforces the behavior of family members and individuals within a society, altering the fundamental essence of humanity through the promotion of specific values and beliefs. Various societies hold distinct values and beliefs, which are reflected in their unique manifestations. Patriarchy encompasses multiple dimensions that impact human experience, particularly privileging men over women and exerting oppressive dynamics within the family unit, where patriarchal norms often flourish. Patriarchy negatively impacts masculinity and contributes to the prevalence of violent behaviors. The family unit is often considered a conducive environment for the perpetuation of patriarchal ideologies, resulting in the prevalence of domestic violence within households. In patriarchal family structures, women are subordinate to men, leading to the widespread prevalence of various forms of violence, including physical

aggression. It is imperative to discourage this behavior, as failure to do so could jeopardize the well-being of the global population.

REFERENCES

- Baral, Sushil, Sudeep Uprety, and Bipul Lamichhane. 2016. Gender Based Violence. In Health Research and Social Development Forum, Kathmandu: Thapathali
- Beechey, Veronica. 1979. On Patriarchy. *Feminist Review* 3(1):66-82.
- Bhasin, Kamala. 1993. What is patriarchy? India: Kali for Women.
- Forum for Women, Law and Development. 2009. Domestic Violence (Offence and Punishment) Act, 2008 and Conceptual Framework. Kathmandu: FWLD.
- Government of Nepal, Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers. 2012. A Study on Gender-Based Violence Conducted in Selected Rural Districts of Nepal. Kathmandu.
- Hawkes, Sarah J., Mahesh Puri, Romi Giri, Binu Lama, Trilochan Upreti, Shaibalini Khadka, Hira Dahal, and Bobby Shakya. 2013. Tracking Cases of Gender-Based Violence in Nepal: Individual, institutional, legal and policy analyses. Centre for Research on Environment Health and Population Activities and University College London.
- Hunnicut, Gwen. 2009. Varieties of Patriarchy and Violence against Women: Resurrecting “Patriarchy” as a Theoretical Tool. *Violence against women* 15(5):553-573.
- Jones, Serene. 2000. Feminist Theory and Christian Theology: Cartographies of Grace. Fortress Press.
- Khatri, Resham B. and BK Pandey. 2013. Causes of Violence against Women: A Qualitative Study at Bardiya District. *Health Prospect* 12(1):10-14.
- Lerner, Gerda. 1986. The Creation of Patriarchy. USA: Oxford University Press.
- Mason, Karen Oppenheim, and Anju Malhotra Taj. 1987. Differences between Women’s and Men’s Reproductive Goals in Developing Countries. *Population and Development Review* 13(4):611-638.
- Millett, Kate. 1969. Sexual Politics. New York: Doubleday.
- Ministry of Health and Population, New Era and ICF International. 2012. Nepal Demographic and Health Survey 2011. Kathmandu.
- Naseera, NM, and Moly Kuruvilla. 2022. The Sexual Politics of the Manusmriti: A Critical Analysis with Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights Perspectives. *Journal of International Women’s Studies* 23(6):21-37.

- Nautiyal, Rakesh Mohan, and Dipti Bagwari. 2022. Feminism in the Evolution of Patriarchy and the Nature of Patriarchy in India. Aalochna Drishti.
- Nepal Law Commission. 2009. Domestic Violence (Offence and Punishment) Act. Government of Nepal: Ministry of Law and Justice.
- Nepal Planning Commission. 2011. Three-Year Plan of Nepal (2010/2011-2012/2013). https://npc.gov.np/images/category/TYP_2012.pdf.
- Rueden, Chris von. 2024. Patriarchy and its origin. The Sage Encyclopedia of Leadership Studies. <https://sk.sagepub.com/ency/edvol/the-sage-encyclopedia-of-leadership-studies/chpt/patriarchy-its-origins>
- Shrestha, Radhika, 2023. Review Based Study of Physical Violence Experienced by Women from their Husbands in Nepal. *Research Journal of Padmakanya Multiple Campus* 2(1):65-71.
- The Asia Foundation, Saathi, and Department for International Development. 2010. Nepal: Preliminary Mapping of Gender Based Violence. <https://grassrootsjusticenetwork.org/resources/nepal-preliminary-mapping-of-gender-based-violence/>
- United Nations. 1993. Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. United Nations General Assembly. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/declaration-elimination-violence-against-women>
- Walby, Sylvia. 1989. Theorizing patriarchy. *Sociology* 23(2):213-234.
- Women's Rehabilitation Centre. 2019. Status and Dimensions of Violence against woman in Nepal – Key Findings of the Yearbook Anbeshi 2019. WOREC Nepal. <https://www.worecnepal.org/content/87/2019-12-12>
- World Health Organization. 2014. Global Status Report on Violence Prevention 2014. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241564793>