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Gender Violence Against Married Women: Empirical Evidence from Chandragiri Municipality in Bagmati Province, Nepal

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Abstract

The entitled paper 'domestic violence against married women' was done among the women of Chandragiri-3, Kathmandu, Nepal focusing on the violence faced by them. This study explores the types of violence in the study area which occurs because of the value of patriarchy in Hindu dominant culture which have been practicing since long among the respondents, gender inequality and some reasons are habit of alcohol consumption of the male. Majority of the participant's response to occur this kind of violence was because of patriarchal norms and inequality. Among the respondents slapping, punching, straggling were the major experiences faced during the violence. The result of psychological trauma and mental health instabilities were also taken as common effects. Emotional abuse was more prevalent than physical violence and had a significant impact on women's well-being. This paper also underscores the need for a multifaceted approach to reduce domestic violence, including media campaigns that share survivors' stories, the establishment of safe shelter and strong enforcement of legal protection.

Keywords

Domestic violence, Women, Married women, Gender inequality, Women empowerment.

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1. Background of the Study

In worldwide context, millions of married and unmarried women are suffered by the widespread and gravely alarming social issues of domestic abuse/violence against them which are mostly counted in a physical form. Married women are disproportionately affected by domestic abuse, a worldwide problem that affects millions of people and families (WHO, 2023). It includes a variety of controlling, sexual, emotional, and physical actions taken by an intimate partner in an attempt to maintain dominance and control (CDCP, 2023). Domestic violence against married women continues to be a serious public issue with substantial personal and societal consequences, notwithstanding advances in law and society. Married women who experience domestic violence confront a variety of complex repercussions in their life, including psychological trauma, financial difficulty, social isolation, and long-term health issues (Campbell, 2002).

To address in an effective way, domestic violence against married women, a thorough understanding of its causes, effects, and solutions is necessary. By investigating the frequency, contributing factors, and effects of domestic violence in the context of married couples, this paper aims to further understanding of these phenomena which attempted to find out the number of women who are suffering from domestic violence.

2. Literature Review

While doing this research varieties of literature reviews are done to understand the types, causes, effects, and possible interventions of domestic violence against married women. Similarly, different theoretical reviews are also done to explore key perspective.

According to the social learning hypothesis, using violence is a taught/learned behaviour. It is more likely for perpetrators to use violence in their personal relationships if they witness it in the larger

social environment or in their family of origin. Furthermore, abusive cycles can be sustained via reinforcing processes, such as social norms that support or legitimize violence. This theory clarifies the learnt behaviours that contribute to violence in intimate relationships by distinguishing the types of domestic violence that are common among married women (Bandura, 1977).

Understanding the power relationships, gender disparities, and societal institutions that support violence against women is made easier with the help of feminist theory. This viewpoint highlights the need for societal change to address gender inequality and demolish patriarchal institutions that contribute to violence against women by examining the causes and effects of domestic violence on women. Healthy relationships and women's empowerment are the two main goals of feminist perspectives (Dobash & Dobash, 1979).

Patriarchy theory views patriarchal norms as the underlying factor in wife abuse. The fundamental principle of this perspective is that male dominance within the conventional family structure is reflected in acts of violence. This theory places a strong emphasis on the social institutions that elevate men and devalue women. Men may feel entitled to use violence to dominate their spouses in patriarchal society (Connell, 1987).

Several forms of domestic abuse that married women encounter have been recognized by earlier study. Physical, psychological, sexual, and financial abuse are among the prevalent forms of domestic violence that were recorded in a meta-analysis conducted by (Smith *et al.* 2017).

Many studies have explored the complex interplay of factors contributing to domestic violence against married women and its effects on their physical, psychological, and socio-economic well-being.

In the context of Nepal numerous forms of domestic abuse suffered by married women have been discovered. For instance, Puri and Tamang's (2005) study discovered that the most common types of domestic violence in Nepalese households were emotional abuse, physical abuse, and economic exploitation. Joshi *et al.* (2014) also found that coercive control and sexual violence are common forms of abuse that married women in Nepal experience.

3. Policy Review

Nepal has put in place a strong legislative framework to address the issue of violence against women (VAW). This response will examine these policies while recognizing that their implementation continues to provide difficulties.

The 2015 Constitutional Guarantee

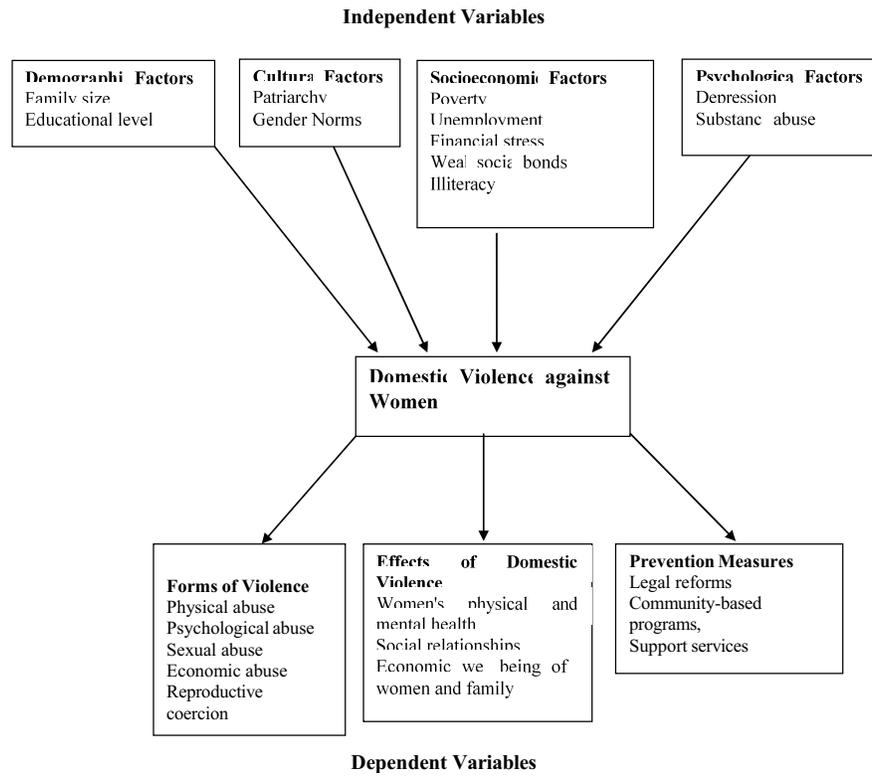
Right to live in a violence-free environment is guaranteed as a fundamental right by the 2015 Nepalese Constitution. All types of violence against women, including physical, mental, sexual, and psychological abuse, are expressly forbidden under Article 38(3). This provision assures offenders of punishment and gives women the power to pursue legal action. Besides the Constitutional guarantee, several legislative acts also support the constitutional provision:

- » **Domestic Violence (Crime and Control) Act (2009 A.D.):** This Act defines domestic abuse and provides guidelines for reporting, looking into, and punishing offenders. It provides women who are living with a male partner or in domestic relationships with legal protection.
- » **Human Trafficking and Transportation (Control) Act (2007 A.D):** This Act recognizes human trafficking as a violent crime and lays out guidelines for victim rescue, prevention, and rehabilitation. Given that women and girls are disproportionately impacted by human trafficking, this act is vital.
- » **Sexual Harassment at Work Place (Prevention) Act (2014 A.D):** This Act protects women against a common type of gender-based violence by establishing a legislative framework to combat sexual harassment at work.
- » **Witchcraft-related Accusation (Crime and Punishment) Act (2015 A.D):** This Act protects women against the destructive practice of witchcraft accusations, which are based in superstition and social shame.

4. Conceptual Framework

The research study was guided by two several sociological theories but some major ones include social learning theory, feminist theory and patriarchal theory. These theories offered a framework for understanding the potential causes and effects of domestic violence against married women.

Figure-1: Conceptual Framework for the Study (based on literature Review)



Source: Shanti Gurung, 2025

5. Methodology

This study primarily employed a descriptive and exploratory research design, drawing on micro-level data to examine why domestic violence against women are taking place in the study area. Similarly, it employed both primary and secondary data. Research is conducted using both quantitative and qualitative data. A mixed methods approach was used for the fieldwork, comprising questionnaires for the quantitative portion of the study, interviews and focus group discussions for the qualitative study.

Descriptive study was adopted to describe socio-economic status, family structure, gender status, religious status of women. Similarly, under the exploratory study, it intended to explore the causes and effects of violence against women. Total population of ward no. 3 of the study area was 5563; out of which 2888 were males and 2675 were females. Out of these females, only 1257 were married. Out of them also, some had left for overseas or were absent at the time of field survey.

The criteria for sample selection included the length of marriage (which is at least 3 years), above 24 years of age and those living with their husband and having at least one child. Over these population, a sample of 70 women were selected through simple random sampling method. This study also adopted the fieldwork method that included combination of survey/questionnaire, interview, FGDS, and Observation. The study selected only the married women because identifying and reaching a representative sample of unmarried cohabitating couples can be difficult and married couples may be seen as a higher-risk group due to factors like cohabitation, financial entanglement, and potential power imbalances.

6. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The entitled article ‘domestic violence against married women: Empirical Evidence from Chandragiri Municipality in Bagmati Province, Nepal’ is for the understanding about the married women. Data collected for this study are presented under the following sub-heads:

6.1 Socio-demographic Profile of the Respondents Caste and Ethnicity

Ethnicity refers to a group of people who share common cultural, linguistic, ancestral, or national traits, often distinguishing them from other groups. In the early 1990s, Nepalese society was characterized by ethnic diversity and complexity, with phenotypes and cultural practices spanning from Indian to Tibetan (Giri, 2020). The caste and ethnicity of the spouse is presented in table below;

Table-1: Distribution of Respondents by Caste and Ethnicity

Caste and Ethnicity	Number	Percentage
Brahmin	18	25.71
Chhetri/Thakuri	28	40.00
Gurung, Magar, Tamang and Newars	17	24.28
Dalits	7	10.00
Total	70	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

The above table shows diverse caste and ethnic group inhabit in the study area. However, among various caste and ethnicity, Chhetri and Thakuri represents the highest percentage (40%) of respondents,

followed by Brahmin comprising more than 1/4th of respondents and ethnic groups near to another 1/4th of the total respondents while the Dalits represented only 10 percent.

6.2 Educational Attainment of Respondents

Education is one of the crucial demographic factors. Education has a significant role in person's behaviour. Violence rarely arises from a well-socialized home, and a solid education is crucial for good manners. The foundation of social growth is education. There is a proverb 'a woman's education benefits everyone, whereas a man's education is just beneficial to himself.' Consequently, providing education to women is necessary for constructive social transformation. Following table depicts educational level of respondents:

Table-2: Distribution of Respondents by Educational Attainment

Educational Level	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Primary (1-5)	9	12.85
Lower Sec & Secondary (6-10)	28	40.00
Intermediate (+2/IA)	15	21.42
Bachelor & above	11	15.71
Never gone school	7	10.00
Total	70	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

The distribution of married women in table 2 by educational attainment in the study on domestic violence reveals a varied educational background among the respondents. The largest group, 40%, has completed lower secondary and secondary education (grade 6-10), suggesting that a significant portion of the participants has some level of formal education. Following this, 21.42% have attained intermediate education (+2/IA), while 15.71% hold a bachelor's or higher degree. Conversely, 12.85% have only primary education (grade 1-5), and 10% are never gone school. This distribution highlights a range of educational levels among the participants, which may influence their experiences and responses to domestic violence. Women with lower educational attainment might face additional challenges in accessing resources and support, while those with higher education might have different opportunities and barriers. Understanding these educational backgrounds can help

tailor interventions and support services to address the specific needs of women at various educational levels.

6-3 Experience of Physical Violence by the Selected Respondents

Physical violence is one of the most visible forms of domestic violence and includes acts like hitting, slapping, punching, kicking, or using weapons. It is intended to cause bodily harm, instill fear, and exert control over the victim. This form of abuse often escalates over time and can result in serious injuries or even death. Victims may suffer both short-term trauma and long-term physical and psychological consequences. Data on physical violence (slapped, punched, kicked, choke or strangled etc.) are depicted in the following table:

Table-3: Distribution of Respondents by their Experience of Physical Violence

Physical Violence	Number	Percentage
Yes	39	55.71
No	31	44.28
Total	70	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The data presented in the above table on the experience of physical abuse among married women in the study on domestic violence revealed that 55.71% of participants have experienced physical violence from their husbands, including actions such as being slapped, punched, kicked, or strangled. This indicates that more than half of the respondents have encountered severe forms of abuse, highlighting a significant issue within the sample population. Conversely, 44.28% of the participants reported not experiencing physical violence, suggesting that a substantial portion of women may not face such direct forms of abuse. The higher prevalence of physical violence underscores the critical need for targeted interventions and support systems to address and mitigate the impact of physical abuse, aiding with those who are most affected. This data highlights the urgent need for comprehensive strategies to combat domestic violence and their experiences.

6-4 Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse as a form of domestic violence against married women involves any non-consensual sexual activity, including

coercion or force, which violates the woman's autonomy and bodily integrity. This abuse undermines her sense of safety and control within the marriage, often causing significant emotional and psychological harm. The presence of sexual abuse and its frequency among married women in the study area has been presented in the table below;

Table-4: Distribution of Respondents by their Frequency of Experiencing Sexual Abuse

Frequency of Sexual Abuse	Number	Percentage
Rarely	3	18.75
Sometimes	8	50.00
Often	3	18.75
Very Often	2	12.50
Total	16	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The distribution of the frequency of sexual abuse experienced by married women in the above table reveals varying patterns among the 16 participants who reported such abuse. Among these women, 50% experience sexual abuse sometimes, indicating that it is a recurrent issue but not constant. This is followed by 18.75% who report sexual abuse rarely and another 18.75% who face it often, reflecting a more frequent but not always severe pattern of abuse. Additionally, 12.50% experience sexual abuse very often, suggesting a more persistent and severe occurrence. The data highlights that while a portion of women experience sexual abuse frequently, the intensity and regularity vary significantly. This variability underscores the need for targeted support services that address different levels of sexual abuse and provide appropriate interventions based on the frequency and severity of the abuse reported.

6.5 Causes and Effects of Domestic Violence on Women Causes of Domestic Violence

The causes of domestic violence against married women are multifaceted, rooted in societal norms, gender inequalities, and power imbalances within the marital relationship. Cultural expectations and traditional views often perpetuate gender-based violence, while individual factors such as psychological issues and past trauma can aggravate abusive behaviours. Economic dependence and financial

stress further compound the vulnerability of married women, making them more susceptible to violence and control by their male partners. Understanding these causes is crucial for developing effective prevention and intervention strategies to protect the well-being of married women. The causes of violence against married women from the study area have been portrayed in the table below:

Table-5: Frequency Distribution of Respondents by Causes of Domestic Violence

Causes of Domestic Violence	Number	Percentage
Patriarchal norms and gender inequalities	36	51.42
I feel financially dependent on my husband	19	27.14
Substance abuse (e.g., alcohol, drugs)	3	4.28
Cultural acceptance of violence	1	1.42
Husband grew up in a family where violence was present	2	2.85
Husband loses his temper easily	9	12.85
Total	70	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2024

In the above table, the data on the causes of domestic violence among married women reveal that the most significant factor, cited by 51.42% of participants, is patriarchal norms and gender inequalities, indicating that entrenched societal norms and unequal gender roles are major contributors to domestic violence. Financial dependence on husbands is the second most reported cause, affecting 27.14% of respondents, suggesting that economic vulnerability plays a critical role in the perpetuation of abuse. Substance abuse, including alcohol and drugs, is noted by 4.28% of participants as a contributing factor, while cultural acceptance of violence is cited by only 1.42%, reflecting its lesser impact compared to other causes. Additionally, 2.85% attribute the violence to the husband's upbringing in a violent environment, and 12.85% mention the husband's propensity to lose his temper easily. This distribution highlights that while various factors contribute to domestic violence, patriarchal norms and financial dependence are the most prevalent issues, necessitating targeted interventions that address these root causes to effectively combat domestic violence.

6.6 Effects of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence against married women can have devastating effects on both physical and mental health. Victims may experience physical injuries, chronic pain, and long-term health problems. Additionally, the psychological trauma associated with domestic violence can lead to depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These effects can significantly impact a woman's quality of life and her ability to function in various aspects of her life. The data on effects of domestic violence from the field has been presented in table below;

Table-6: Frequency Distribution of Respondents by Effects of Domestic Violence

Effects of Domestic Violence	Number	Percentage
Physical injuries and health problems	16	22.85
Psychological trauma and mental health issues like depression and anxiety	37	52.85
Feel isolated and have difficulty trusting others due to the violence	4	5.71
Economic dependence and financial constraints	3	4.28
Negative impacts on children and family dynamics	10	14.28
Total	70	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

The data on the effects of domestic violence experienced by married women in table 6 reveal a range of significant impacts, with psychological trauma and mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety, being the most prevalent, affecting 52.85% of participants. This indicates that domestic violence predominantly contributes to severe mental health challenges among women. Physical injuries and health problems are reported by 22.85% of respondents, highlighting the serious physical repercussions of domestic violence. Additionally, 14.28% report negative impacts on children and family dynamics, underscoring the broader consequences of abuse on family relationships. A smaller percentage, 5.71%, feel isolated and have difficulty trusting others, while 4.28% face economic dependence and financial constraints due to the violence. These findings illustrate that domestic violence profoundly

affects various aspects of women's lives, with mental health issues being the most widespread consequence. Addressing these diverse effects requires comprehensive support systems that tackle both psychological and physical impacts, while also considering the broader family and economic implications.

6.7 Measures to Reduce Domestic Violence against Women

From the focus group discussions and interviews, participants emphasized the importance of a multifaceted approach to reducing violence against married women. Many shared that media campaigns featuring personal stories have had a profound impact, bringing attention to domestic violence and fostering a sense of empathy within the community. Women voiced that these stories, when shared publicly, not only increase awareness but also encourage others to come forward and seek help.

Participants highlighted the necessity of safe houses and emergency shelters, explaining how these facilities serve as lifelines for women escaping abusive relationships. The safety and immediate protection offered were described as essential for both physical security and emotional stability. Women also stressed the need for local authorities to be more proactive in enforcing protective orders, as many had experienced difficulties in receiving legal protection from their abusers.

Preventive measures were a key topic in discussions, with many advocating for premarital counseling and education on healthy relationships. Women believed that such initiatives could prevent violence by fostering mutual respect and understanding between partners before marriage. Healthcare providers, too, were seen as critical in addressing domestic violence, with several participants recounting instances where trained staffs were able to recognize signs of abuse and offer timely intervention and referrals.

Ensuring confidentiality and privacy was repeatedly mentioned as a fundamental concern. Participants noted that fear of exposure often prevented them from seeking help, and they expressed a strong need for systems that protect their personal information. Similarly, the community was viewed as a valuable resource in preventing domestic violence. Women suggested that local awareness campaigns could educate neighborhoods on the issue, thus creating an environment that is both supportive of victims and discourages abuse.

Long-term emotional support through counseling and therapy was recognized as crucial for recovery. Many participants shared their experiences of overcoming trauma with the help of ongoing psychological support. In terms of empowerment, educational programs that focus on legal rights and available resources were seen as vital. Women emphasized the importance of understanding their rights, which gave them the confidence to take action against domestic violence. So far the participants mentioned that the non-violent family members in the neighborhood

6.8 Case Studies

Following two case studies are worth mentioning in this regard:

Case-1: Trapped in a Cycle of Abuse: Kumari's Struggle for Freedom and Peace

Kumari (a fictive name) age of 35 mentioned "It's a constant struggle. Every day is a battle between hope and fear. She is trying to hold onto the good memories, the moments of love and affection, but the violence overshadows everything. She often find herself making excuses for her husband's behaviour, blaming herself, or minimizing the severity of the abuse.

She said that she is trapped in a cycle of abuse, and it's hard to break free. Fear of the unknown, financial dependence, and societal pressures keep her bounded. She wants long for a peaceful life, a life free from fear and pain. But it's a long and arduous journey, and she is taking one step at a time, seeking help and support from wherever she can."

Case-2: Hope and Fear in an Abusive Relationship: Ful Maya's Struggle for Change and Support

Ful Maya (fictive name) said, "I often hold onto the hope that my husband can change. There are moments when he shows remorse and promises to do better. I cling to these moments, believing that our relationship can heal if he seeks help and we work together. Leaving is not as simple as it sounds. I fear the unknown-what will happen to me and our children? The thought of being alone or facing societal stigma weighs heavily on me. This fear often keeps me in the relationship, even when I know it's not healthy. I've started reaching out to trusted friends and family who don't condone violence. They provide me with emotional support and help me see that I'm not alone in this. Their encouragement gives me strength, even when I feel trapped."

6-9 Supports to Women Facing Violence

The interview with the women facing violence, revealed that they received emotional, and psychological support by their family members. They mentioned that their families offered a safe space for women to share their struggles and provide reassurance, encouragement, and a listening ear to rebuild their confidence and emotional well-being. Many non-violent families even provided temporary or permanent shelter to women fleeing abusive households, ensuring their safety from immediate harm. Some victims also reported that their parents, siblings and peers often helped them seek legal remedies, such as filing for domestic violence cases or divorce, and may offer financial aid to support their basic needs and independence.

According to key informants, the local level government also had launched awareness raising or intervention programs on behalf of the victim, leveraging social pressure to discourage further violence.

Finally, anonymous and confidential reporting options were identified as an effective strategy for encouraging more victims to come forward. Participants expressed that without such systems, many women might continue to suffer in silence due to fear of retaliation. In conclusion, to effectively address domestic violence, it is essential to challenge societal attitudes and cultural norms that perpetuate abuse. Community leaders and influencers must advocate for gender equality, protective policies, and a culture that does not tolerate violence against women.

7. Findings

The most common age difference between spouses was between 1-3 years, with 54.28% of participant falling into this category, indicating that most couples have relatively small age gaps. This suggests that domestic violence dynamics may be more prevalent or distinct in these couples with minimal age differences. This educational distribution suggests that most husbands have moderate to higher level of education i.e. 44.28% having completed grades 6-10, which could influence their attitudes towards domestic violence.

Majority (61.42%) of the victims of domestic violence were homemakers/housewives. From the focus group discussion and

interview, it was revealed that households with low level of income had twice more experiences of domestic violence. The study reveals the 55.71% of participants have experienced physical violence from their husbands, including actions such as being slapped, punched, kicked or strangled.

8. Conclusion

The primary objective of the research study was to explore the causes and effects of domestic violence against married women in Chandragiri Municipality, ward no. 3. Grounded in different theories like Social Learning Theory, Feminist Theory, and Patriarchal Theory, the research applied both quantitative and qualitative approaches. A sample of 70 married women was selected through a simple random sampling method. Data were collected through structured questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions, and field observations.

The study revealed domestic violence as a deeply rooted social issue, often normalized under the influence of patriarchal values, economic dependency, and lack of awareness. The study illuminated women's coping mechanisms, their support systems, and strategies they considered most effective in combatting domestic violence.

Domestic violence against married women in Chandragiri Municipality, Ward No. 3, is a complex, multidimensional problem deeply rooted in patriarchal values, economic vulnerability, and cultural silence. The study revealed that emotional and psychological violence is more widespread than physical abuse, although all forms are harmful and often co-occur. Majority of women suffer in silence due to economic and emotional dependency, fear of social rejection, and lack of institutional trust.

A holistic, gender-sensitive, and community-driven approach is essential to break the cycle of violence. The findings of this study highlight the urgent need for stronger legal protections, economic empowerment of women, and widespread education and awareness. Only through multi-level interventions can Nepalese society move towards a future where marriage no longer becomes a site of fear and subjugation, but instead based on mutual respect, trust, and equality.

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