

Dowry and social suffering in Nepal

*A qualitative study of marriage customs
in relation to violence, abuse and
disrespect against women in Bhodaha
village of Nepal*

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Abstract

Domestic violence is a grave concern that has affected women worldwide, particularly in South Asia. In Nepal, violence against women in the form of dowry-related abuse is prevalent. Dowry involves the bride's family giving money or property to the groom, often leading to violence. However, gaps persist in understanding Nepalese women's experiences and perceptions regarding this problem.

This qualitative research aims to unravel the complex dynamics between dowry and violence against women. It utilizes in-depth interviews with 20 women of varying ages, including young girls, daughters-in-law, and mothers-in-law, alongside a focus group discussion involving 6 male participants to explore dowry's role in Bhodaha village, located in the Terai region of Nepal.

The study highlights the complex nature of violence against women, influenced by cultural norms, poverty, gender inequality, and caste-based marriage customs. Participants in the study aspire to eradicate dowry but face conflicts with personal values. Incidents of dowry-related violence, including inter-caste marriages, exemplify this issue. The study also reveals a shift in the perception of dowry's role in violence against women, with older generations considering it less significant than current views due to reduced poverty and increased financial independence for daughters-in-law. Girls who marry outside their caste or against parental wishes risk being disowned, further complicating the issue.

In conclusion, this study emphasizes the need to challenge traditional gender roles and patriarchal norms for gender equality, women's autonomy, and community-based empowerment. It provides vital insights into how the dowry system impacts violence against women in Nepal, suggesting potential solutions. These findings underscore the importance of prioritizing women's empowerment, dismantling patriarchal structures, and promoting gender equality in policies and interventions addressing this pressing issue.

Keywords: Domestic Violence, Dowry-Related Abuse, Nepalese Women, Gender Inequality, Cultural Norms, Women's Empowerment.

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Abbreviation

| | |
|--------|------------------------------------|
| DIL: | Daughter-in-law |
| FGD: | Focus Group Discussion |
| GBV: | Gender Based Violence |
| IDI: | In-depth Interview |
| INSEC: | Informal Sector Service Centre |
| IPV: | Intimate Partner Violence |
| MDGP: | MD in General Practice |
| MIL: | Mother-in-law |
| NHRC: | Nepal Health Research Council |
| NSD: | Norwegian Centre for Research Data |
| QDA: | Qualitative Data Analysis |
| SSI: | Semi-structured interview |
| TSD: | Service for Sensitive Data |
| UDMF: | United Democratic Madhesi Front |
| UiO: | University of Oslo |
| UN: | United Nation |
| VAW: | Violence Against Women |
| WHO: | World Health Organisation |
| WOREC: | Women's Rehabilitation Centre |

Definitation of Terms

Dowry system: Across various cultures and regions, the bride's family would traditionally provide monetary, or material presents to the groom and his family as part of the marriage ritual, as a means of providing back up the newlyweds as they settle into marital life. The practice, however, has been linked to harmful outcomes including economic exploitation, inequality, and violence against women (Adhikary, 2021). It is common in many countries of South Asia, such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal.

Caste in Nepal: People in Nepal are classified into several "castes," according to their birth order and family history. The caste system is hierarchical, with each caste having a different status and privileges, and people are born into a caste and remain in it for life. The Nepali caste system is based on endogamous kin groups known as "*jatis*" that are hierarchically arranged. While there are similarities between the Nepali caste system and the traditional Hindu caste system based on varnas, they are not the same. The traditional Hindu caste system was based on four varnas (Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras) and each varna was associated with a particular occupation and hereditary status. In contrast, "*jatis*" are more fluid in terms of occupational roles and can have contested or fluid rankings. Members of lower castes have less access to resources and more difficulty breaking the cycle of poverty in Nepal (Subedi, 2010). The Nepalese cast structure is shown in Figure 1.

Inter-caste marriage: Marriage between members of different social classes (or "castes") is referred to as "inter-caste marriage." In caste-based cultures, the idea of such a union can pose a threat to established social norms, which has led to opposition from various quarters, including families, communities, and religious organizations. The hierarchical structure of caste-based societies assigns different social status and power to different groups (Dhar, 2013).

Love-marriage: A love marriage is a union between two individuals who resolve to wed based on their emotions of affection, concern, and attraction for one another. It is a marriage that is not influenced by external factors such as familial or communal pressure but is instead founded on the free will of the two individuals involved. Especially in cultures where arranged marriages are the norm, this form of marriage is often regarded as a depar-

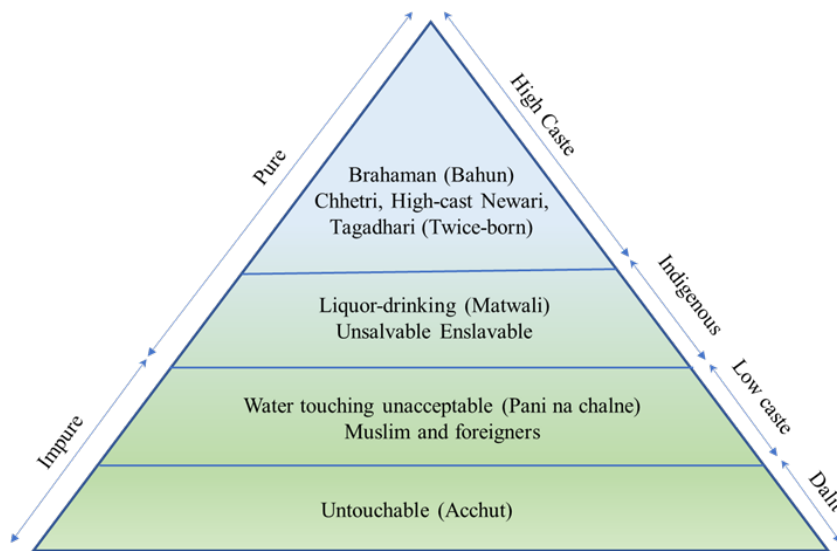


Figure 1: The Nepalese Caste Pyramid, based on data from Jamil and Baniamin (2020). Dalits (the lowest of the low) are the 'out-caste' members of the fifth category of the Nepali Caste Pyramid and are thought to be impure and physically "untouchable" (Enepalese, 2020).

ture from traditional practices (De Neve, 2016).

Marriage-based caste system: Marriage-based caste system refers to the practice of individuals belonging to a particular caste or social group being expected to marry only within their caste or endogamous social group. In this system, marriage outside one's caste or social group is often discouraged or even forbidden, with social ostracism or other penalties imposed on those who violate the norm. This practice is prevalent in many parts of the world, including South Asia, where it is often associated with the traditional Hindu caste system.

Kinship: The term "kinship" refers to the study of familial ties, such as those between parents and children, siblings, grandparents and grandchildren, and aunts, uncles, cousins, and in-laws. It is foundational to the establishment of social structures and cultural norms in a variety of settings. Social standing, inheritance, and other important cultural tenets are frequently established via ties of kinship (Sinha et al., 2012; L. P. Uprety et al., 2017).

Patriarchy: Patriarchy is a societal system that unfairly benefits males. In a patriarchal society, males have positions of authority in the family, the workplace, and the government, among other places. This often includes stereotypical views of males as dominant, competitive, and aggressive and women as expected to be submissive (Hunnicut, 2009; Uberoi, 1995).

Patrilocality: Patrilocality is the cultural phenomenon in which newly-

weds move in with or near the husband's family or patriarchal clan. In patrilocality, the husband's family is seen as the main unit of social organization (Goli et al., 2022).

Patrilineality: In patrilineal societies, children are believed to be part of their father's family or patriarchal lineage, and male ancestors are thought to be the sole source of family lineage and inheritance. In patrilineal societies, the father or male head of the family has the most power, and inheritance and leadership typically go from father to son (Radcliffe-Brown, 1952).

Virilocal residence: Virilocal residence refers to the customary social arrangement in which a married couple makes their home with or near the husband's relatives. In this system, the wife moves to the husband's community or residence after marriage, rather than the husband moving to the wife's community. The practice of virilocality is common in many cultures around the world, especially in patrilineal societies where inheritance and property rights are passed down through the male line (Uberoi, 1995).

Gender-based violence: When someone is harmed because of their gender or how they identify as a gender, we call that "gender-based violence," or GBV for short. Traditional practices including female genital mutilation/cutting and forced marriage are included in this category, along with more overt forms of violence, such as physical, sexual, psychological, and economic abuse. Nonetheless, because of the imbalance of power between men and women in many countries, women and girls are disproportionately affected by GBV.

Honor Threats: Honor threats are acts of violence or other harm threatened by an individual or group to protect their honor or reputation. This is often done by using violence, coercion, or intimidation against people who are thought to be breaking cultural or social norms, especially those about gender and sexuality. Women who are the targets of honor threats often suffer from physical, emotional, and psychological repercussions.

Kinship Terms Used by Participants

This segment describes the kinship terms commonly employed by the participants. These terms serve as linguistic markers of familial ties and societal roles, offering valuable insights into the dynamics of family structures and interpersonal connections within the study area.

Maitighar: Maternal Home. Girl's parent's house. Married females use this term to represent their natal parents' home.

Devrani: Wife of husband's younger brother/ sister-in-law. The elder brother's wife would use the term "Devrani" to refer to the wife of her husband's younger brother.

Jethani: Wife of husband's elder brother/ sister-in-law. The word "Jethani" is used by a married woman to refer to another woman who is the wife of her husband's elder brother.

Bhinaju: Husband of elder sister. In Nepal, it is common for younger siblings, including both brothers and sisters, to address their elder sister's husband as "Bhinaju. Referring to one's brother-in-law as "Bhinaju" is a courteous way for younger siblings to acknowledge and honor their familial connection.

Other Terms Used by Participants

Jhupadi: It typically refers to a small, simple, and often temporary dwelling made of natural materials such as wood, bamboo, or mud, commonly found in rural areas of Nepal. hut or shack.

Tanga: "Carriage" or "cart". It typically refers to a two-wheeled cart pulled by a horse.

Ghar: House or home

Chapter 1

Introduction and Rationale

1.1 Introduction

Domestic violence is a major public health problem that affects women from all walks of life and causes severe physical and emotional suffering (H. Johnson et al., 2007; Krantz and Garcia-Moreno, 2005). The World Health Organization has found that South Asia has one of the highest rates of violence in the world, including 43% prevalence of violence against women (WHO, 2013). Despite the growing awareness of this problem and attempts to address it, there are still neglected areas, such as the link between dowry and violence against women. The practice of dowry, in which the bride's family gives gifts and money to the groom's family as a part of the marriage agreement, is common in many South Asian cultures, with dowry-related violence being one of the leading causes of death among young women (Lamichhane et al., 2011; Oldenburg, 2002; Prasad, 1994; Singh, 2013).

In countries like Nepal and India, the dowry system has led to the severe injury or murder of wives and daughters-in-law, with shocking findings from India indicating that statistically speaking, a bride is burned every 90 minutes due to dowry demands from the groom's family (Jeyaseelan et al., 2015). Similarly, in Nepal, the practice of dowry has persisted and has resulted in mistreatment and violence against women. The dowry system was outlawed in Nepal in 1976 under the Dowry Prohibition Act, which states that 'No person shall demand or give, either directly or indirectly, any dowry in consideration of marriage.' Any person who contravenes this law by compelling or accepting a dowry may be liable to a fine of up to ten thousand rupees or imprisonment not exceeding fifteen days, or both (ILO, 1976). Despite being outlawed in Nepal in 1976, the dowry system remains deeply ingrained in tradition, and the lack of a sufficient dowry is often used as an excuse for perpetrating violence against women (WOREC, 2021). This urgent issue needs to be addressed promptly (Banerjee, 2014; Fuller, 2020; Gunasekera, 2003; Karki, 2014; Patoari, 2020; P. Srinivasan and Lee, 2004). Although dowry-related violence has devastating consequences for women's lives, there is still a significant lack of research on women's

perspectives on the issue. This study seeks to address this gap by examining how Nepalese women perceive and express the link between dowry and violence against women. It is important to note that the severity of dowry-related abuse in Nepal may be underestimated due to the inadequate statistical data available.

Dowry-related violence in Nepal is a persistent and troubling issue, with particular severity in the Terai region of Nepal (Giri et al., 2016; Yadav, 2023), and is rooted in the subordination of women and girls, perpetuated by gender inequality that undermines their autonomy and rights (Yadav, 2023; Banerjee, 2014). While Lamichhane et al. (2011) and Rastogi and Therly (2006) asserts that dowry perpetuates violence against women, as it heightens their vulnerability to abuse, Batool (2022) argues that dowry can secure women's financial stability, reducing their susceptibility to violence. Furthermore, the article by Batool implies that dowry payments may be associated with the uneven distribution of inheritance, where women receive a smaller share of family property compared to their male brothers. In addition to the conflicting perspectives on the association between dowry and violence against women, it is crucial to note that dowry-related violence takes many forms, including physical, emotional, and economic abuse (Karki, 2014; Patoari, 2020). The effects of this violence are far-reaching, often resulting in long-term physical and psychological trauma, economic hardship, and social exclusion (Fuller, 2020; P. Srinivasan and Lee, 2004). Moreover, despite the efforts of the Nepalese government to criminalize dowry, the practice remains deeply entrenched in societal norms and customs, perpetuated by factors such as patriarchal beliefs (Diamond-Smith et al., 2020). Given the complexity and severity of this issue, it is essential to conduct further research to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics of dowry-related violence and its impact on women's lives in Nepal.

As a student researching dowry and violence against women in Nepal, my passion for social justice fuels my desire to contribute to the ongoing discourse on women's rights in Nepal. What particularly motivates me is the urgency of uncovering the perspectives of Nepalese women from the Terai region on the link between dowry and violence, which have often been silenced or disregarded in discussions of this important issue. I feel compelled to explore the nuances and complexities of this problem and make a meaningful contribution to the broader conversation around gender-based violence in South Asia.

Growing up, I frequently heard the Nepali proverb, "*dhaarni ko taauko hal-launu, kutuniko jibro nafatkaarnu*" which roughly translates as "Nod your heavy head rather than use a tiny tongue." This deeply rooted cultural saying has perpetuated the marginalization of women's voices and perspectives in Nepalese society, reinforcing the expectation for women to remain silent and deferential. This norm has made it exceedingly challenging for Nepalese women to have their voices heard, acknowledged, and taken seriously. However, through my research, I aim to challenge and subvert these

cultural norms by highlighting women's experiences and perspectives.

Given the limited existing research on women's views on the dowry system, it is crucial to explore their experiences to gain insight into their position in everyday life. By examining how women understand, discuss, and explain their relationship with the dowry system, this study aims to fill the gaps in the literature and provide a comprehensive understanding of their experiences. The research questions have been formulated to encompass various stages of a woman's life, including unmarried girls, recently married women, and mothers-in-law, with the aim of capturing the nuances in their roles and responsibilities as their positions evolve. The purpose of this study extends beyond exploring women's perceptions of the dowry system and its association with violence. It also seeks to understand men's perspectives within the same society, providing a comprehensive view of the community's attitudes and perceptions. Through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, this research seeks to illuminate the social and cultural context surrounding the dowry system in the Terai region of Nepal.

In the next chapters, I discuss the alarming topic of violence against women in Nepal related to dowry in further detail. In the second chapter, I go into the background and available research on the topic, focusing on the incidence of dowry-related violence and its deleterious repercussions on women. In the third chapter, I provide a comprehensive overview of the study's aims and objectives, and research methodology, including sampling, data collecting approaches, and data management. In the fourth chapter, I discuss the findings of my study, providing light on the experiences and viewpoints of domestic violence survivors and women from Bhodaha VDC and how they relate to the dowry system and violence. In chapter five, I analyze the findings, discuss the study's results, and propose suggestions for combating dowry-related violence in Nepal, followed by chapter six, which is the conclusion.

1.2 Rationale

Violence against women is a severe public health issue and a violation of human rights on a global scale. According to the WHO, around 30% of women worldwide have suffered intimate partner violence at least once in their lives (WHO, 2021). Almost 50% of women in South Asia are abused at some time in their lives, making it one of the world's most violent areas and a substantial source of social and health problems (Gunasekera, 2003). In Nepal, more than one-third of women endure abuse, even though it is seldom recorded in the institutional sector (Paudel, 2007). The 2020 United Nations report on Nepal identifies dowry as a harmful practice connected to domestic violence (UN, 2020).

In many areas of Nepal, the practice of dowry is common. There are significant social and economic repercussions for women who are unable to

pay the required dowry, including assault, abuse, and disrespect from their husbands and in-laws. The extent to which dowry customs and dowry-related violence persist in Nepal is unclear. Although police records of particular occurrences are accessible, they significantly undercount the actual number of incidents (UN, 2020). The number of dowry victims recorded by the Informal Sector Service Centre (INSEC) increased from 12 in 2012 to 26 in 2013. In both 2012 and 2013, they documented five deaths that were directly linked to dowry. In 2012, all five dowry-related deaths were in southern Nepal, which is the Terai region, but in 2013, dowry deaths made headlines throughout the country, including in the east and the mid-west, although all documented deaths still happened in the Terai (Karki, 2014; UN, 2020).

While there is a growing corpus of research on dowry practices in Nepal, much of it has focused on the legal and financial components of the practice, with little attention paid to women's experiences and perceptions. Furthermore, existing research on women's perceptions of dowry has not considered how women's positions and experiences change over their lifetimes and how women's vulnerability to abuse changes over time. The depth and complexity of women's experiences are often difficult to capture through quantitative surveys, which are frequently used in studies on dowry-related violence and abuse. By undertaking qualitative research on women's interactions with the dowry system in the Terai region of Nepal, which is the 'hotspot' for dowry tradition (Yadav, 2023), this study aims to comprehend how women see, understand, and experience the dowry system, and how it affects the lives of women.

Lastly, I want to get a deeper understanding of the social and cultural aspects in which the dowry system in the Terai is located by conducting FGD with men and knowing their perspectives of dowry and violence. To create solutions and policies that are efficient and culturally acceptable, it is essential to have this knowledge.

Overall, this research is important because it illuminates how gender, culture, and violence interact when it comes to dowry customs in Nepal. This study could help improve awareness of the impact of dowry on women's lives and to influence policies and actions targeted at alleviating the detrimental effects of dowry practices by examining men's and women's perspectives and experiences. The research also emphasizes the need for wider social and cultural reform to address the underlying factors that contribute to violence against women and prejudice related to dowries.

1.3 The Terai of Nepal: Historical Context, Marginalization, and Struggle for Equality

The word Terai, also called the Tarai, is derived from the Persian language meaning 'land with damp soft soil' (Kafle, 2022). The term 'Madhes' is also used interchangeably with 'Terai' to describe this region (Tandon, 2021). The majority of Hindus, and the Madhes people also include Muslims, Buddhists, and Christians (RAOnline, n.d.). The Terai region of Nepal has boundaries with India on three sides: to the east, west, and south. Situated in the southern section of Nepal, this area encompasses around 17% of the country's overall geographical extent and includes largely flat or slightly sloped terrain.

Renowned as the nation's agricultural area, it is commonly referred to as the granary and green zone of the country (Kafle, 2022). Terai farmers contribute significantly to the region's economy by growing staple foods such as rice, wheat, sugarcane, and jute. Despite their economic importance, the Madhes people feel ignored by the Nepalese government in terms of education, healthcare, economic opportunities, and development projects. Moreover, during the medieval era (between the 13th and 18th centuries), the administrators seized the land of the Terai people, who were the rightful owners and gifted it to members of the royal family, their relatives, armies, officers, and other employees. Meanwhile, the real owners were compelled to work as land harvesters (Goait, 2007).

Sociologically, the Terai is home to a diverse population consisting of various ethnic groups, including the Tharu, Maithili, Bhojpuri, Awadhi, and others. Throughout history, the region has experienced significant influences from neighboring India due to its proximity to the Indian plains. Border towns in the Terai have flourished as a result of the region's closeness to major Indian cities, becoming important nodes in the region's trade network (Kafle, 2023). It is within this context that the prominence of dowry-related practices, instances of violence against women, and intricate caste dynamics become all the more apparent in the Terai. Because of this, economic and cultural contacts across borders have flourished, ultimately molding the Terai's social fabric.

One notable consequence of cross-border migration, particularly from neighboring Indian regions, is the introduction and intensification of dowry customs in the Terai. This has significantly altered the region's cultural landscape (N. Sah, 2008). Consequently, the Terai has become a focal point for research due to its high prevalence of dowry-related practices, incidents of violence against women, and complex caste relations.

Furthermore, the hierarchical caste system in India has had a significant impact on the social structure of the Terai. While Nepal also has a caste system, its influence is most pronounced along the India-Nepal border in the

Terai region. The caste system in India, which designates lower castes as 'Untouchables,' deeply impacts the Terai's social structure (Mayell, 2021). As a result, the effects of caste-related issues in India, including violence and discrimination, are likely to be keenly felt by the population in the Terai. Cultural fusion and economic ties with major Indian cities have ingrained dowry customs, exacerbating the vulnerability of women and perpetuating violence. Compounding these challenges are the complex caste dynamics within the Terai, which intertwine with the dowry system and further marginalizing certain communities.

The Terai people have long endured discrimination and marginalization in Nepal. Communities in Terai are in extreme poverty and often have to get by on less than USD 1 a day (RAOnline, n.d.). The Terai region of Nepal has seen active political and social movements advocating for regional autonomy and increased political representation. However, attempts to assimilate the various ethnic groups into a unified Nepali identity have often marginalized and underrepresented them. As a consequence, there have been suggestions for the formation of a distinct Madhes state in the Terai, with activists wanting more rights and a more equitable allocation of resources for the area (Tandon, 2021). The Madhesi leaders claim that the Nepalese government does not recognize them as citizens of Nepal because of their Indian ancestry (RAOnline, n.d.). They face cultural stigmatization, low representation in government institutions, and restricted access to resources due to systematic discrimination at all levels of society. Three independent movements within Nepal's Terai region have sought to further their goals of equality, dignity, and identity. The first movement started in 2007 after the interim constitution failed to answer the calls for federalism and fair representation from disadvantaged areas. The second movement, launched in 2008, advocated for federalism, proportional representation, and population-based electoral constituencies, all of which were subsequently included in the interim constitution. The inability of the constitution of 2015 to meet Madhesi's concerns sparked the third movement, which in turn led to demonstrations against the unjust creation of federal provinces. Even though certain modifications were made, the Madhesi continue to fight back since their rights are not clearly defined (Wikipedia, 2023). Movements such as these are indicative of the continuous initiatives to address the specific social, economic, and political dynamics of Nepal's Terai area (Goait, 2007). To combat prejudice and press for full regional independence, the United Democratic Madhesi Front (UDMF) was established. Despite the UDMF's efforts to redefine ethnic identity and negotiate with the government, implementing these changes has been difficult (Miklian, 2009).

Chapter 2

Background

2.1 Overview of violence against women and gender inequality

Violence against women is a pervasive issue of human rights abuse on the international stage, but it often fails to receive the same level of public attention as other forms of injustice (H. Johnson et al., 2007). However, this form of gender-based violence can occur in both public and private settings and can manifest in various forms, including physical, sexual, and psychological harm (Krantz and Garcia-Moreno, 2005; Lamichhane et al., 2011). The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, Article 1 defines it as any act that results in or is likely to result in harm or suffering to women, including threats, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty (UN, 2009). This definition highlights the connection between violence against women, disrespect, and gender inequality, resulting in significant social injustices against women. Disrespectful conduct, such as insulting language, belittling, and objectification of women, contributes to the normalization of violence against women and creates an environment of fear (Hill, 2020). Such behavior can also fuel gender inequality and legitimize negative attitudes towards women, which are major violations of human rights with disastrous effects on women's physical, emotional, and social well-being.

Research suggests that violence against women often begins at home and is linked to cultural practices, such as early marriage, that create power imbalances within households (Davids, 2007). Studies have shown that gender stereotypes prevalent in Nepalese society make young girls vulnerable to abuse, as these stereotypes dictate how girls should behave from a young age and often require them to compromise and adjust their behavior to fit societal norms (Priyanka et al., 2022). Patriarchal structures, kinship systems, and cultural norms further reinforce these gender roles and expectations, making education a liability in marriage negotiations and contributing to the belief that female children are a financial and emotional drain on their family (Ullrich, 2021). Such factors restrict opportunities for advancement in education, employment, and political participation, per-

petuating violence against women and girls.

M. P. Johnson (2005) argues that domestic violence is not solely about gender but acknowledges that gender does play a significant role in understanding this issue. The author discusses the complexities of domestic violence and emphasizes the need to move beyond simplistic gender-based explanations. M. P. Johnson suggests that understanding the power and control dynamics in relationships is crucial to addressing domestic violence, regardless of the gender of the perpetrator or victim. The article highlights the importance of taking a nuanced approach to domestic violence that considers individual differences and contextual factors.

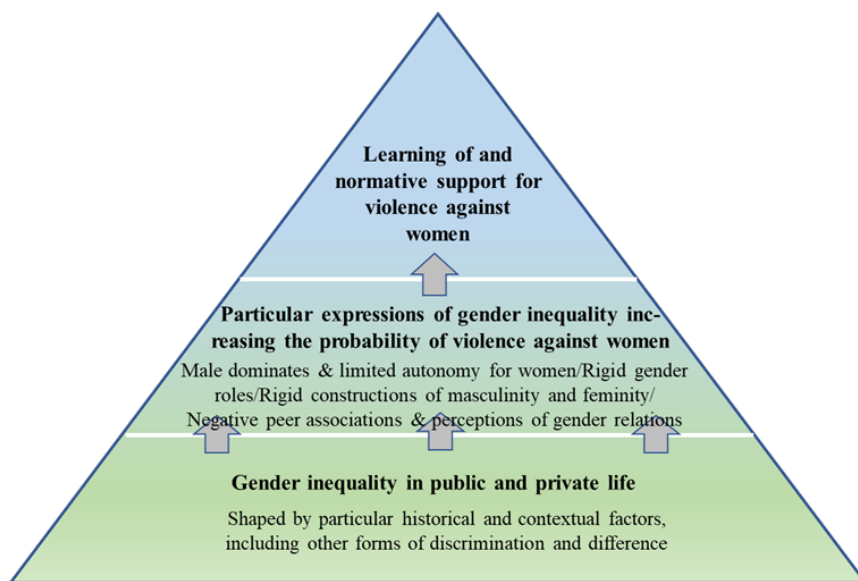


Figure 2.1: Graph based on data from Flood and Webster (2015). The relationship between gender inequality and violence against women.

Intimate Partner Violence is the most widespread form of violence against women, accounting for up to 38% of all female homicides committed by male partners, according to WHO's 2021 report (WHO, 2021). However, simply focusing on individual-level factors such as the perpetrator and victim is not enough. Krohn-Hansen (1994) emphasized the importance of involving all members of the community in breaking the cycle of violence against women, including the perpetrator, victim, and witness, as outlined in the 'dynamic triangle of violence'. Mahapatra and Rai (2019), along with Tonsing and Tonsing (2019), conducted studies that showed cultural and structural factors significantly influence the experiences of South Asian women with IPV. Therefore, addressing both individual and structural factors contributing to IPV requires culturally sensitive and community-based approaches. Furthermore, Gautam & Jeong's (2019) research in Nepal reveals the prevalence and risk factors of IPV, indicating the impact of gender-based violence on women's health and the underreporting of violence due

to societal norms. These studies discuss the correlation between gender inequality and IPV in developing countries, emphasizing the need to combat patriarchal beliefs and social norms in IPV prevention initiatives.

The study by Raj et al. (2006) makes a significant contribution to the field of domestic violence by examining the association between intimate partner violence and abuse from in-laws. The study used data from a larger community-based study on domestic violence. Logistic regression analysis was used to examine the association between experiencing intimate partner violence and abuse from in-laws. The study found that women who reported experiencing intimate partner violence were also more likely to report abuse from their in-laws. Although the study provided important insights into the association between intimate partner violence and abuse from in-laws, there are still gaps in research that need to be addressed to improve our understanding of this important issue. While many domestic violence programs exist, few are specifically designed to address abuse from in-laws. Further research is needed to determine how to best support women who experience abuse from in-laws and to develop interventions that are culturally appropriate and effective. Future studies should also examine how patriarchal beliefs increase women's vulnerability to IPV.

Whiting et al. (2012) examines the role of appraisal distortions¹ in intimate partner violence (IPV) and how gender and power dynamics influence these distortions. The study found that appraisal distortions were more likely to occur in male perpetrators of IPV, while female victims of IPV were more likely to experience negative emotional reactions. However, there are still gaps in research, including the need for more studies on how appraisal distortions develop and are maintained over time and research that explores the effectiveness of interventions aimed at reducing appraisal distortions and preventing IPV. Overall, the study provides valuable insights into the complex factors that contribute to IPV perpetration.

The tactics often used by violence perpetrators are gaslighting and victim blaming. Abusers use gaslighting techniques to manipulate and control their victims by making them doubt their own reality. By distorting the victim's thoughts and memories, abusers maintain power and control over them, making it difficult for victims to recognize and escape the abuse (V. E. Johnson et al., 2021). V. E. Johnson et al. (2021) include many case studies of victim blaming in their study, including discussions of racism and sexism. One of the examples given in the article is gender-based violence. The writers talk about the belief that women are to blame for being sexually assaulted if they have been drinking, regardless of what the abuser did or chose to do. This story puts the blame on the victim instead of holding the

¹Appraisal distortions are cognitive biases or inaccuracies in the way individuals perceive and interpret information or events. In the context of intimate partner violence (IPV), appraisal distortions involve a perpetrator's tendency to justify or minimize their abusive behavior or a victim's tendency to rationalize or excuse their partner's abusive behavior.

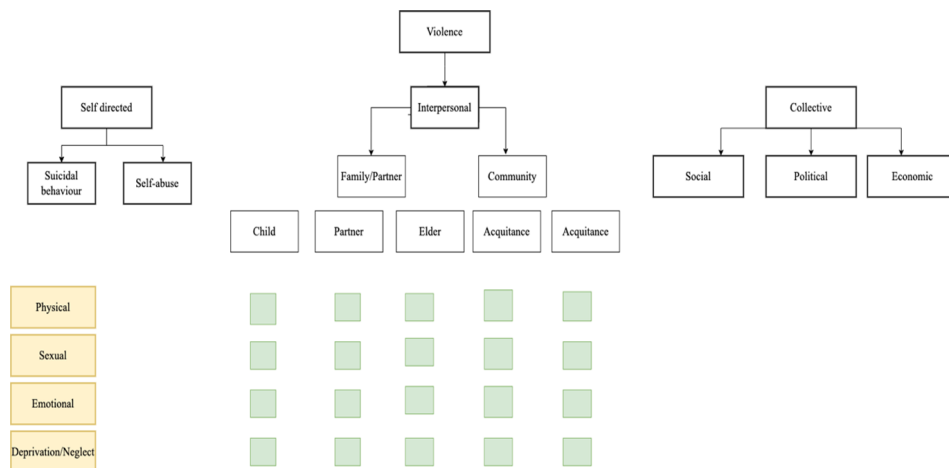


Figure 2.2: Graph by Anusubha, based on data from WHO, the Violence Prevention Alliance (VPA) Approach. The relationship between gender inequality and violence against women (Krug et al., 2002).

offender responsible.

The example depicts that victim blaming functions in many circumstances, leading to marginalization and weakening a person's credibility. The authors illustrate the detrimental impact of victim blaming on racial inequalities and gender-based violence, and the necessity for a change in cultural views and a concentration on tackling systemic problems instead. Figure 2.2 illustrates the WHO typology of violence and highlights the different forms of violence against women.

Chapter 3

Literature Review

Dowry is a longstanding tradition in South Asian societies, including Nepal, serving multiple purposes. It can be seen as a display of wealth and generosity by the bride's family, showcasing their ability to provide for their daughters. However, it also perpetuates gender inequality, reinforcing the notion that daughters are less valuable than sons (J. Kaur, 2017). Unfortunately, the practice of dowry is associated with numerous negative consequences in the Terai region of Nepal, including violence, abuse, and discrimination against women. Despite growing awareness of these harmful effects, there is still a need for further research to fully understand how dowry impacts individuals and communities in Nepal.

To shed light on this topic, I conducted a literature review of existing research on dowry and social suffering in Nepal. The goal was to explore the role of dowry in perpetuating violence, abuse, and disrespect towards women in the context of marriage. To gather data for this literature review, various databases were searched, including Google Scholar, JSTOR, and Oria. Going through many articles and reviewing them critically provided me with a synopsis of several papers already written on the topic. In addition to common themes such as dowry negotiation, the marriage process, caste discrimination, domestic violence, and power dynamics in households, this review also considers the potential role of family dynamics in dowry negotiation and dowry-related violence, as well as the connection between honor and dowry in the cultural context of South Asia. While emphasizing the strengths and limits of the issue, this assessment of the literature also pays attention to the trends in findings and areas where information is weak (Taylor, 2007).

3.1 Historical and Cultural Significance of Dowry

Since the beginning of time, the family of the bride has traditionally provided monetary and material goods to the family of the groom as part of the marriage contract. It acts as a means of maintaining social and economic ties between the two families and has deep cultural roots in Nepal (Karki, 2014; Mahato, 2016; Niraula and Morgan, 1996; Paudel, 2007). The

practice of dowry has undergone a transformation over time, shifting from a voluntary gift to a substantial set of demands. This transformation has had severe consequences for females, especially in patriarchal societies that prioritize male heirs and social status over the well-being of women. Such consequences include acts of violence, including murder (Oldenburg, 2002), physical mistreatment, emotional torment, and even instances of suicide (Prasad, 1994). Dowries, according to Batool (2022), play a vital part in defining the social position of the bride's family throughout the marriage.

The dowry is often negotiated between the groom's family and the bride's father or brothers, and it frequently includes talks of monetary payments as well as presents such as jewellery, furniture, land, and household equipment (Fattah and Camellia, 2022). The length of the bargaining process and the nature of the dowry might vary profoundly. The dowry procedure often starts with the families of the bride and groom discussing a financial settlement. Traditionally, the negotiations took place between the groom's and bride's fathers. However, in the present day, other members of the family may also be included in the bargaining. Throughout the negotiations, the bride's family is often vulnerable to intimidation. Both the bride's and groom's families engage the assistance of relatives and matchmakers to facilitate the dowry negotiations. However, as each party strives to protect its own interests, tension, and conflicts can arise (Calvi and Keskar, 2021). Bloch and Rao (2002) argue that the groom's family may resort to fear tactics to secure a larger dowry payment. Furthermore, it is worth noting that dowry payments often persist even after the wedding, as the groom's family continues to demand additional gifts and money from the bride's family. However, not just the groom's family, but the practice of dowry negotiations is also influenced by community perceptions of a "good match." Factors such as social status, education, and family reputation play a role in the bargaining process (Fattah and Camellia, 2022). The dowry negotiation process, influenced by social, cultural, and familial dynamics, often puts the bride's family at a disadvantage. Understanding the complexities and ramifications of dowry practices is crucial in order to address the associated issues of violence and gender inequality.

Although some families may seek to abolish dowries, many rural households still regard them as an important part of the marriage process. As a result, dowry disputes frequently lead to physical, emotional, and financial abuse inside marriages (Singh, 2013). Contrary to popular belief, offering a dowry does not provide women with protection against physical, sexual, or psychological abuse, as revealed by Ali et al.'s (2021) research. In fact, their study indicates that women who pay larger dowries are more likely to be subjected to physical abuse by their husbands. In contrast, Naved and Persson (2010) found that women who paid higher dowries are at an increased risk of physical violence from their husbands, suggesting that the absence of dowry demands from the groom's side may reduce the likelihood of physical abuse towards wives. While dowry may lead to violence against women, it is worth emphasizing that not offering dowry in mar-

riage to the groom may provide a protective advantage to women. Understanding the complexities of the dowry system within its historical, social, and cultural contexts is crucial for addressing dowry-related abuse, promoting gender equality, and safeguarding the rights and well-being of women in marital relationships.

3.2 Dowry in South Asia: Insights and Pathways for Change

Numerous studies have explored the complex dynamics of dowry and its implications in South Asia, shedding light on various aspects of the practice. Banerjee (2014) conducted research on the social and cultural factors perpetuating dowry in modern-day India, revealing its harmful effects on gender inequality and women's oppression. The issue is further complicated by its intersection with other factors, such as caste. In a similar vein, Rastogi and Therly (2006) analyzed dowry through a feminist psychological lens, linking it to violence against women in India. They argued that dowry exacerbates gender inequality and increases the likelihood of abuse. In contrast, a study conducted in a Pakistani village explored the multifaceted role of dowry, emphasizing its connection to social status, honor, and financial security for women. The study also acknowledged the challenges women face in obtaining their fair share of the inheritance (Batool, 2022).

While these studies present different perspectives on dowry, they collectively contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the issue. They underscore the need for further research to examine the complex intersections between dowry, cultural norms, and social hierarchies. Moreover, they emphasize the importance of considering the broader context in which dowry and gender inequality occur. Marotz-Baden and Cowan (1987) argued for a holistic examination of gender inequality, recognizing the influence of broader societal dynamics on family relationships. Similarly, Fuller's (2020) study in a Nepalese village highlighted the transformative potential of education and generational change in challenging dowry practices, further emphasizing the significance of addressing underlying cultural and societal norms.

While some studies highlight the negative consequences of dowry, others offer a more optimistic perspective, suggesting that change is possible through education and empowerment. However, these findings underscore the need for a comprehensive approach that addresses cultural and societal norms and considers the intersecting factors that contribute to dowry's perpetuation. Sah's (2012) study revealed the correlation between higher dowry payments and early marriage, highlighting the influence of social and economic factors on marriage patterns and gender inequality. Furthermore, it is imperative to consider historical and regional variations in the practice of dowry to appreciate the full scope of its impact. In this context, Oldenburg's (2002) study in India emphasized the importance of

promoting gender equality and challenging the unequal power dynamics between men and women in society, which the dowry system reinforces. The limited decision-making autonomy of women in Nepali households, as noted by Acharya et al. (2010), further reflects the impact of cultural and societal attitudes towards gender roles. Overall, these studies call for further research to deepen our understanding of dowry practices and their intersections with cultural, social, and economic factors. By examining both the negative consequences and the potential for change, these studies inform strategies aimed at addressing gender inequality, violence against women, and the perpetuation of dowry practices.

3.3 Dowry in Nepal

Despite the efforts made by the Social Practices Reform Act of 1976 to outlaw dowry in Nepal, the practice has persisted and continues to pose a significant problem (WOREC, 2021). Recognizing the need for further measures, the Evil Social Customs and Practices Abolition Act was introduced in 2009. However, the prevalence of dowry remains widespread in Nepali society, cutting across barriers of caste, class, geography, culture, and religion. This deeply ingrained tradition has become an integral and expected part of Nepali weddings, contributing to domestic violence within many Nepalese households (Karki, 2014).

The persistence of dowry poses significant challenges, particularly in the Terai region of Nepal. Dowry is culturally embedded in wedding rites across various socioeconomic and religious lines in the Terai area, making it a problematic issue. Women's lives in this region are significantly affected by the practice, as highlighted by research (Pandey, 2014). When a bride's family is expected to provide an excessive dowry, it can result in severe financial hardships and even physical harm for the bride if they are unable to meet these demands (Bourdieu, Richardson et al., 1986). In Terai of Nepal, daughters are often disowned and seen as a financial burden, perpetuating a system that lacks proper legislation and documentation (S. K. Sah, 2021). The dowry system persists due to societal expectations, such as the belief that girls should finance their husbands' education and the desire for social elevation. The bride's family would give the groom's family money or precious items as a dowry to make up for their daughter's inferior social standing. It is widely held that the bride's family may rest easy knowing that their daughter would be well-liked and cared for by the groom's family if they pay a dowry. This reflects societal and cultural beliefs that women in Terai should be viewed as less valuable individuals that their worth is reliant on what they can afford (S. K. Sah, 2021).

3.4 Gender Inequality in Nepal: Cultural Impact on Women's Autonomy

In Nepal, women often experience a variety of sociocultural constraints that force them into inferior positions. The expectations of society have always been that a woman should put her husband and his family before her own, leaving little space for her own ambitions or autonomy. Many women adhere to these expectations even at the expense of their personal well-being since it is unthinkable to challenge or defy one's husband (Mukherjee, 1983).

Women have traditionally and culturally been given the position of subordinate creatures, used as means to protect a husband's inheritance, gather his possessions, and carry on his lineage. Women's agency and self-determination have been constrained as a result of this reduction of women to insignificant tools for attaining these goals, which has perpetuated gender inequality (Mukherjee, 1983).

According to Kaspar (2006), patriarchal structures, virilocal residency, and patrilineality heavily influence the status of women in Nepal. A society is considered patriarchal if descent is patrilineal (children belong to the father's family; women take the husband's last name), marriage is patrilocal (the bride moves to live with the groom's family), and property inheritance and succession are in the male line (Radcliffe-Brown, 1952; Uberoi, 1995). Radcliffe-Brown (1952) suggested that a patrilineal system emphasizes the importance of rights and duties derived from the father over those from the mother. Similarly, the institution of virilocality mandates that after marriage, the wife moves out of her family home (*maitighar*) and lives with her husband's family (*ghar*) (Premchander and Müller, 2006). Women's separation from their natal family due to virilocality could potentially make them more vulnerable to abuse because of their dependency on the new family. These cultural norms and practices have contributed to a society where women have limited access to education, economic opportunities, and decision-making power. S. Uprety (2016) examines the link between patriarchal norms, masculinities, and violence against women in Nepal. The author argues that violence against women in Nepal is rooted in deeply ingrained patriarchal attitudes and masculine behaviors, which are reinforced by cultural and social norms. Son preference is highly linked to patrilineal and patrilocal kinship systems (Brunson, 2010). A comparable family structure in many cultures maintains son preference, according to Das Gupta et al. (2003). Stone and King (2018) provides a broader perspective on the impact of kinship structures on gender roles and power dynamics across diverse cultures and contexts particularly in regard to the expectations and limitations imposed on women. The current study aims to explore the influence of these structures on individual autonomy and decision-making within the context of marital rituals.

When looking at the issue of dowry, it's important to think about how culture affects the position of women and how people think and act in relation to this practice. In societies like Nepal, it is firmly established that sons are more important than daughters. This makes women's social status lower and encourage violence against them, like dowry-related violence, more common (Lamichhane et al., 2011). Traditional cultural practices, gender norms, economic marginalization, and political exclusion all contribute to their subordinate position (Luitel, 2001).

To advance gender equality and empower women, it is essential to comprehend women's decision-making autonomy inside the family. Acharya et al. (2010) shed light on this issue in their study, emphasizing how various factors such as age, socioeconomic status, education, and work influence women's ability to make independent choices. It's crucial to admit that there's still a lot we don't know about how cultural practices, patriarchal institutions, and societal norms work together to keep women in a subordinate position and limit their freedom. However, it can be argued that a deeper understanding of women's lived experiences and daily household struggles could be more helpful in creating effective strategies to prevent disrespect, abuse, and violence against women. This could lead to challenging traditional gender norms that perpetuate dowry and ultimately contribute to reducing violence against women in Nepal.

3.5 Violence Against Women in Nepal: Gender Equality and Social Hierarchies

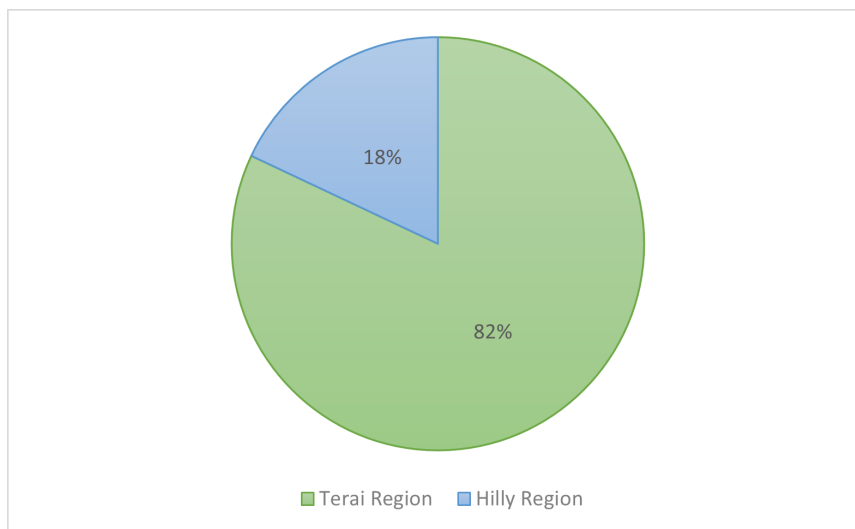


Figure 3.1: Pie Chart on Prevalence of VAW and Girls according to Geographical Location (SATHI, 1997).

A study conducted by SATHI (1997) revealed that 86% of Nepali women reported being unaware of any laws protecting them against violence against

women and girls . Additionally, 75% of NGOs in Nepal acknowledged the pervasive nature of VAW & Girls. Surprisingly, despite the widespread hostility against the victims, community-based NGOs noted that VAW & Girls are still widely accepted in Nepali culture. This acceptance often leads to victims of domestic abuse being encouraged to endure abusive relationships (SATHI, 1997). Furthermore, the issue of dowry adds another layer of complexity to the challenges faced by women in Nepal, perpetuating gender inequality and contributing to the prevalence of violence against women.

Atteraya et al. (2017) conducted a significant study examining intimate partner violence among married women in the Terai region of Nepal. Their research uncovered a distressing reality, indicating that low-caste and underprivileged Nepali women face a higher susceptibility to intimate partner violence in comparison to their high-caste counterparts. Their findings revealed that low-caste and underprivileged Nepali women are more vulnerable to intimate partner violence compared to high-caste women. This highlights the intersectionality of social hierarchies, gender roles, and violence within the context of marriage. The study's narrow geographic focus on the Terai region allows for more insight into the dynamics and consequences of intimate partner violence there. It stresses the need of taking into account regional variances and context while addressing and promoting gender equality in Nepal.

3.6 The Evolving Dynamics of Marriage

Marriage is a sacrament and a close social institution that allows for the continuation of family life between two individuals. The shifting dynamics of gender roles and the maintenance of traditional standards can only be comprehended by gaining an appreciation for the impact of industrialization and globalization on marriage customs. Allendorf and Ghimire (2013) conducted a study in India that highlighted the growing prevalence of love marriages and the emergence of individualism in mate selection, challenging traditional norms. Their findings shed light on the evolving nature of marriage practices in response to societal changes.

In Nepal, marriage is considered a norm that is both social and ritualistic, and it is almost universally practiced by both genders. Arranged marriages are prevalent in traditional Nepali society, where families typically seek partners with similar social and economic backgrounds and compatible family histories and reputations. It is a means of linking families and conveying cultural, social, and economic wealth (Bourdieu, Richardson et al., 1986). The role of family ties in marriage practices and partner selection is crucial, as they serve as the primary foundation for family and kinship relationships (Khatri, 2021, L. P. Uprety et al., 2017). These strong family networks have a substantial impact on people's partner choices, emphasizing the significance of marriage in building and sustaining kinship bonds.

The effects of globalization and industrialization on Nepal's traditional marriage rituals have been the subject of recent research. In the context of arranged marriages, Koirala (2016) offers a comprehensive examination of the evolving marriage practices in Nepal. The study puts insight into younger generations' evolving attitudes, who are increasingly adopting love marriages as an alternative to conventional arranged weddings. Additionally, Thapa and Kattel (2019) have contributed significantly to our understanding of this subject. Their research reveals a fascinating trend in which arranged marriages continue to predominate in rural areas while love marriages become more prevalent in urban areas. This remarkable contrast demonstrates the impact of urbanization and exposure to a variety of cultural influences on the perceptions and decisions of individuals with regard to marriage. In addition to casting light on the prevalence of various marriage practices, the authors also highlighted the obstacles faced by individuals who deviate from traditional marital norms. Those who opt for love marriages may encounter social pressure and ostracization. This finding emphasizes the importance of social expectations and cultural values in Nepali societies, as well as the potential challenges faced by those who choose to deviate from these norms.

Another critical aspect of comprehending marriage patterns in Nepal involves the evaluation of the myriad factors that shape the quality of relationships. The research conducted by Allendorf and Ghimire (2013) on arranged marriages in Nepal underscores the intricate interplay of individual characteristics, familial dynamics, socioeconomic elements, and individual agency, all of which collectively wield substantial influence over the quality and success of these unions. Their study illuminates the pivotal significance of vital factors, such as mutual respect, effective channels of communication, and shared principles, as essential indicators of the success of arranged marriages.

Agey et al. (2023) and Ji (2013) have explored the complexities of arranged marriages. According to Agey et al. (2023), arranged marriages in Nepal often result in an increase in social and economic status, as well as financial security for couples, highlighting the significance of arranged marriages in this cultural context. The researchers utilized semi-structured interviews to collect data from 50 couples who had undergone arranged marriages. The study found that arranged marriages in Nepal often lead to an increase in social and economic status and financial security for couples. However, further research is needed to examine the experiences of those who did not benefit from such marriages, for example, love marriages.

There is a compelling correlation between educational achievement, marriage, and individual decision, as evidenced by Allendorf and Ghimire (2013). This study sheds light on the substantial ways in which social and cultural norms shape the lives of young Nepalese women in the setting of arranged marriages. It highlights the challenges these women face and un-

derscores the intricate web of connections between academic achievement, marriage type, and personal growth. The findings show that education has a different influence on post-marriage schooling depending on the type of marriage. Women in love marriages are more likely to pursue further education, while those in arranged marriages face greater barriers to continuing their education after marriage. Overall, Ji's (2013) study deepens our knowledge of the complexities inherent in arranged marriages and sheds light on the difficulties young Nepalese women confront in navigating their roles within such unions.

By examining these studies collectively, it becomes evident that modernization and globalization have influenced marriage practices in South Asia, leading to a shift from arranged marriages to love marriages in some regions.

3.6.1 Understanding Marital Dynamics within the Caste Structure

The caste structure, as explored by Corwin (1977) influences marital dynamics, thereby rendering inter-caste love marriages particularly challenging due to the social shame associated with crossing caste boundaries. Furthermore, this idea is supported by Dhar (2013) in his study, which focused on rural India and highlighted the ban on inter-caste marriage as well as the serious repercussions imposed on individuals who dared to defy this long-standing custom.

One study that sheds light on the changing landscape of marriage in Asia is examination of marriage practices in various Asian countries by Jones (2017). According to this research on South Asian marriage patterns, arranged unions are more common and successful in South Asia. As social norms evolve and place less emphasis on the importance of marriage, divorce rates tend to decrease in South Asian countries that practice arranged marriages. This indicates that the traditional marriage system provides a lower likelihood of seeking divorce as an "escape route". However, the impact of changing societal values on gender roles and power dynamics within marriages, particularly for women's decision-making remains unclear. While these studies provide valuable insights, further research is necessary to understand how traditional norms are reinforced in different regions and communities regarding inter-caste marriage, as they may vary between different caste-based traditions. This understanding can inform strategies to mitigate the negative impacts on women's social, economic, and cultural lives.

3.7 Mother-in-law and Daughter-in-law Relationship

The relationship between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law in South Asian societies is complex and has been the subject of study for many years

(Allendorf, 2017; Gallin, 1994; Munshi, 1998). These studies revealed that cultural beliefs, power dynamics, and gender roles play significant roles in shaping this intricate dynamic. Research has demonstrated that older women, particularly mothers-in-law, hold more decision-making power than younger women, such as daughters-in-law, in Nepalese households Link, 2010). Gram et al. (2018) conducted an insightful study that delved into the intricate power dynamics between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law, with a specific focus on the influence of economic factors on women's decision-making authority within the Nepali household. The study provides a comprehensive understanding of the concept of the patriarchal bargain, which entails women receiving a measure of control over family affairs in exchange for upholding patriarchal norms and traditions. By examining the interplay between economic considerations and the patriarchal bargain, the research sheds light on the complex nature of the mother-daughter-in-law relationship and the dynamics of power at play.

Research has revealed specific challenges faced by women in mother-daughter-in-law relationships across various cultural settings. In a study done in rural Nepal, Lamichhane et al. (2011) found that young married women, especially those living in rural regions, are disproportionately affected by in-law violence, with mothers-in-law being the main abusers in 40.1% of instances. These results demonstrate how, despite changes in attitudes and behaviors, patriarchy and conventional gender roles continue to keep women in subservient positions in Nepal. The long-term effects of violence, abuse, and contempt on women's well-being are understudied. Understanding the mental, emotional, and social tolls that women face in these circumstances is critical for designing effective support systems and remedies.

Similar to this, Wasim (2014) investigated the relationships between South Asian American daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law and found that cultural issues may promote domestic violence and obstruct help-seeking behaviors. These findings emphasize the need to address cultural dynamics and foster mutual understanding to prevent conflicts and violence within these relationships.

3.7.1 Intergenerational Dynamics and Cultural Influences in Family Relationships

Within the realm of intergenerational relationships, Gallin (1986) conducted a study within Chinese families, concentrating on the dynamics between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. The study emphasized the complexity of this connection and how cultural influences affect it. The author discovered that changes in power dynamics brought about by economic advancement might cause conflicts between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship. This research advances our knowledge of the complexities of this family relationship and the influences that form in

the unique cultural setting. In addition to Gallin's (1986) research, Merrill (2007) looked into the dynamics between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law, giving insight into the issues that may cause their relationship to become strained. According to Merrill, conflict between these two people might result from disparities in goals, values, and communication abilities. This research adds even another level of comprehension to the difficulties of the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship by recognizing these variances. It also underlines how crucial it is to take interpersonal dynamics and individual characteristics into account while analyzing this family tie.

3.7.2 The Impact of Physical Proximity on Mother-in-law and Daughter-in-law Relationships

The influence of physical proximity on the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship has been the subject of extensive research. Marotz-Baden and Cowan (1987) as well as Jean Turner et al. (2006) discovered that maintaining close familial ties can result in heightened stress for both generations involved. In contrast, Niraula and Morgan (1996) focused on the impact of post-marital contact with natal kin and the formation of marriage, revealing its effects on women's autonomy in Nepal. While maintaining connections with one's family of origin after marriage can be beneficial for women's autonomy, mothers-in-law still hold significant sway over their daughters-in-law in certain situations. This underscores the need to evaluate how patriarchy and conventional gender roles sustain the subjugation of women in Nepal, despite shifting societal norms and behaviors.

3.7.3 The Influence of Inter-caste Marriages on Mother-in-law and Daughter-in-law Relationships

Additionally, it is essential to examine the impact of inter-caste marriage on mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relations, as well as on women's social, economic, and cultural lives in Nepal. In this regard, research on the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship in the context of inter-caste marriages in India offers insightful results, showing that the differences in caste backgrounds between the two parties can create a significant rift in their relationship, leading to strained dynamics (Narzary and Ladusingh, 2019). This is particularly influenced by traditional gender roles and patriarchal norms, with the mother-in-law often exerting her authority over the daughter-in-law. Nonetheless, the study also highlights instances where the relationship between the two parties has improved over time as a result of increased interaction and mutual understanding. These findings underscore the need for further exploration of the intricate dynamics of inter-caste marriages and their impact on familial relationships, specifically the relationship between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law.

While previous research gives essential insights into mother-daughter-in-law relationships, considerable gaps in our knowledge of this complicated dynamic persist. To successfully address these disparities, it is critical to investigate the complex interaction between patriarchal principles, traditional gender roles, and power dynamics within these relationships. Additionally, the existing body of literature often concentrates on discrete cultural settings, which hinders our capacity to see the bigger picture. There is a need for comparative study that examines similarities and contrasts across many cultural contexts in order to acquire a thorough knowledge of the complex relationship between culture, social norms, and the dynamics of violence and disrespect towards women.

In summary, this literature review has shed light on the intricate and varied nature of gender, marriage, and family dynamics in South Asian communities, particularly in relation to dowry-related violence and social suffering. The studies examined have revealed that a range of cultural, economic, and societal factors contribute to the perpetuation of this issue. While some research indicates that post-marriage connections with natal relatives may enhance women's autonomy, the influence of mothers-in-law and other powerful figures in dowry and marriage formation cannot be overlooked. Additionally, the consequences of inter-caste marriage and dowry-related issues are particularly severe for disadvantaged and lower-caste women. Moving forward, it is important to continue exploring these complex issues and developing interventions that address the root causes of dowry-related violence and social suffering. This review highlights the need for a nuanced understanding of gender and family dynamics in South Asian societies, and the development of interventions that take into account the intersectional factors impacting women's lives beyond just dowry-related violence and social suffering.

Chapter 4

Methodology

This research was done using a qualitative approach to investigate women's experiences with the dowry system in the Terai region of Nepal. This approach was chosen to address the "how" and "why" of participant interpretation, understanding, and construction of their social world as it provides a more nuanced and detailed understanding of complex social phenomena, such as cultural practices, gender differences, marriage customs, and women's status, compared to the more numerical approach of quantitative data (Cleland, 2017). A detailed account of complicated events, experiences, and interpretations of events was uncovered from the study participants with varying perspectives (Sofaer, 1999).

The main aim of this approach was to uncover the subjective experiences of participants and to identify the underlying social and cultural factors that influenced their perceptions and behaviors related to the dowry. To achieve this goal, 20 in-depth interviews with women from various backgrounds and one focus group discussion with 6 men was conducted to obtain a comprehensive perspective of the issue. All interviews and discussions were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using a thematic analysis approach to extract and identify recurring themes and patterns in the data (Alhojailan, 2012).

This study employed triangulation, a data collection technique that uses multiple methods to ensure accuracy and validity (Noble and Heale, 2019). Qualitative approaches, including semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, were used to obtain comprehensive and informative data. Field notes, observations, and informal conversations were also utilized to gain a deeper understanding of the context and culture. Triangulation helped overcome the limitations of a single method and provided valuable insights to enrich the overall comprehension of the research topic.

4.1 Study Site

The study was undertaken in Bhodaha VDC (Village Development Committee) in Kalaiya district in Nepal. Located in the Terai area, which is the southern part of Nepal, Bhodaha is a small town in the Bara District. The headquarter of Bhodaha is Kalaiya. Kalaiya is a sub-metropolitan city in Nepal's Madhesh Province that acts as the administrative center for the Bara District. The total population of Kalaiya at the time of the 2021 census was 141,179 individuals living in 28,645 households. Terai residents have their own distinct culture, language, and customs that set them apart from those living in Nepal's hilly areas. The majority of the ethnic groups are Tharu, while a few are Tamang and Hindu. Terai, the lowland southern region of Nepal that borders India, is home to the largest concentration of Madhesi, an ethnic group or community.

After researching potential locations with dowry issues, Bhodaha VDC in Kalaiya district in Nepal was selected due to the prevalence of dowry-related conflicts reported in Terai region (Giri et al., 2016; UN, 2020). Additionally, the location was chosen because there were limited studies that explored the perspectives of women regarding dowry in the Kalaiya district. The selection of Bhodaha VDC allowed for the collection of rich and diverse data from a population that has been underrepresented in previous research.

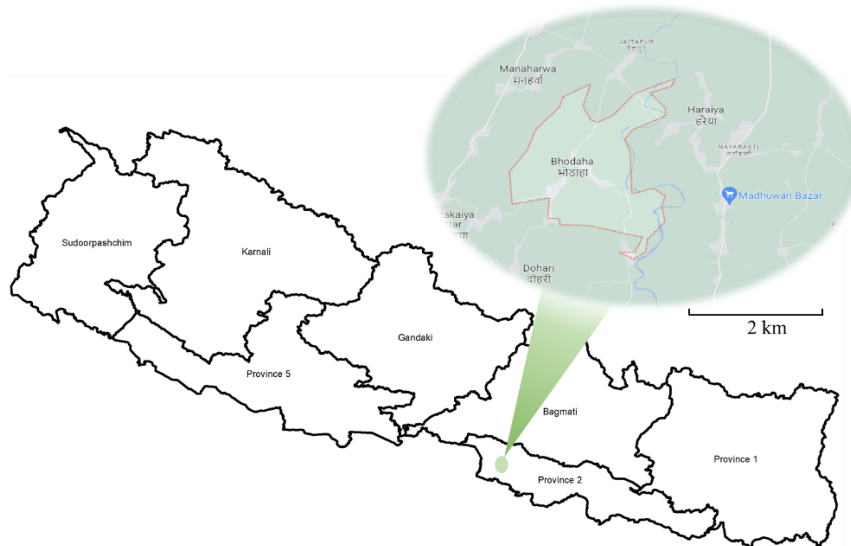


Figure 4.1: Area Map of Bhodaha Village.

I had a special interest in studying at Bhodaha village, Nepal, since I was born and raised in the Terai region. When I first arrived in Bhodaha VDC, I was amazed by how different everything was from what I had imagined. It was a whole new world to me, with its mud huts and unusual water system. As a local, I was shocked to see such a dramatic contrast between my

privileged upbringing and the hardships of Bhodaha. Watching the people go about their day-to-day lives, working hard and caring for their goats and other livestock, brought their life into clear perspective.

The distance between the research location and my house was just two hours, yet I still felt like a total stranger in this alien environment. There was just one bus that ran once a day, adding to the community's sense of isolation. After spending a couple of days in Bhodaha VDC, I recognized that the lack of adequate sanitation was a major hindrance to my stay. It was physically uncomfortable and disrupted my ability to focus. So, I adjusted my plan and often travelled back and forth between Bhodaha and my house, rather than being continually on-site. On some days I had to arrange for an auto rickshaw to carry me to and from the village, while my brother accompanied me on his bike on others. This allowed me to keep a balance between immersing myself in the community and ensuring my personal comfort. I had a transforming experience in Bhodaha VDC, which helped me understand the inequalities that exist within the Terai area itself.

4.2 Study Design

4.2.1 Population and Sampling Process

A total of 18 women were recruited for in-depth interviews and 6 males were recruited for focus group discussion.

Sample 1: Young unmarried girls 15-20 years

| S. N Participant | Age (Years) | Education (Grade) | No. of Siblings |
|------------------|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | 18 | 11 th | 3 |
| 2 | 15 | 6 th | 6 |
| 3 | 16 | 8 th | 2 |
| 4 | 20 | 5 th | 3 |
| 5 | 16 | 5 th | 2 |

Table 4.1: Young unmarried girls 15-20 years.

The five young, unmarried study participants' demographic details are shown in Table 4.1. The participants were between the ages of 15 and 20 and had diverse levels of education. The number of siblings each participant has is also varied, with the majority having 2-3 siblings and one participant having 6 siblings.

During the sample selection process, I followed specific criteria to ensure a focused and representative group of participants. The inclusion criteria were as follows: I recruited women who were between 15 and 20 years of age. To maintain the integrity of the study, certain exclusion criteria were applied: I did not include women below the age of 15 or those with physical

and mental disabilities. Additionally, women who were not Nepali citizens were excluded from the sample.

The participants were selected by snowball sampling to differentiate the roles and obligations among married and unmarried women/girls in my field area, as well as how the different categories of women with different roles and responsibilities link the dowry to violence. The selection of young unmarried girls in the sample was based on the research objective of differentiating the roles and obligations among married and unmarried women/girls in the field area, specifically in relation to how different categories of women with different roles and responsibilities connect dowry to violence. The inclusion of young unmarried girls allows for a comparative analysis between the experiences and perspectives of married and unmarried women/girls in the context of dowry-related violence. This comparison helps to explore the unique dynamics and potential vulnerabilities faced by young unmarried girls in relation to dowry practices.

Snowball sampling was used because it enabled participants who fit the requirement of being young, unmarried females in the field region to be identified. The first participant was found via village connection, who was the niece of the translator. Then through the first participant's social network, I was able to connect with and identify additional potential candidates for the study. This contributed to the expansion of the participants, enhancing the diversity and representation within the research sample.

During the recruitment process of young girls, I made a notable observation when one of the young college-going participants referred her best friend to participate in the interview along with her. It became apparent that their viewpoints and experiences were quite similar. In fact, the second interviewee jokingly asked for the help of her friend when asked about expectations after marriage, saying, "Why don't you answer for me? You know all there is to know about me, even the kind of man I'd want to marry." The first participant responded, "Then take me with you when you marry, and I will know." Both participants shared a laugh, indicating their close bond and familiarity with each other's thoughts and preferences. Although this instance shed insight into the participants' close connection, it also brought to light a possible limitation of snowball sampling: the tendency for participants to refer individuals who share similar characteristics and perspectives. As people naturally gravitate towards others who are like them, it can restrict the diversity and range of perspectives within the sample (Naderifar et al., 2017). Consequently, snowball sampling may not have fully captured the complete variety of the target group or adequately represented the extent of experiences and viewpoints.

However, the technique of snowball sampling yielded useful insights into the experiences and views of young unmarried females in regard to dowry-related violence. It enabled a better knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of married and unmarried women/girls in the field area's cultural

setting.

Sample 2: Daughters-in-law/Recently married women 16-35 years

| Pseudo Name | Age (Years) | Occupation | No. of Child | Age at marriage (Years) |
|---------------|-------------|------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| Pooja | 19 | Housewife | 1 | 17 |
| Devi | 23 | Housewife | 2 | 20 |
| Mamata | 19 | Housewife | 1 | 17 |
| Maya (WOREC) | 20 | Housewife | 0 (Pregnant) | 18 |
| Jyoti (WOREC) | 34 | Housewife | 3 | 15 |

Table 4.2: Daughters-in-law/Recently married women 16-35 years.

This table illustrates five daughters-in-law from both the local village and the Women’s Rehabilitation Center, including their ages, occupations, family sizes, and marital ages. The two daughters-in-law from WOREC are 20 and 34 years old. The 20-year-old daughter-in-law from WOREC is pregnant with her first child, while the 34-year-old daughter-in-law from WOREC has three children. The three daughters-in-law from the village have 1-2 children each, with ages ranging from 19 to 23. Their ages at the time of their marriage ranged from 17 to 20.

The information presented in Table 4.2 is valuable for understanding the social and economic status of women in the area as well as the effects of early marriage and motherhood on their lives. In selecting married women for the study, I employed specific criteria to ensure the inclusion of a diverse and relevant group of participants. The inclusion criteria were as follows: I recruited women who were above 15 years of age and below 35 years of age, including both currently married women and those who were widowed or divorced. This broader age range and inclusion of widowed and divorced women allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the experiences of married women in the study context.

To maintain the integrity of the study, certain exclusion criteria were applied: I did not include women below the age of 15 or those above the age of 35. Women with physical and mental disabilities were also excluded from the sample, as their specific circumstances might require additional considerations and accommodations that were beyond the scope of this study. Furthermore, women who were not Nepali citizens or those who were unwilling to give consent were not included in the sample.

In-depth interviews were conducted for 5 women. Out of the 5, three from the village and two victims of domestic abuse from Terai sheltered by WOREC were recruited. Women from the village were chosen by snow-ball sampling, while sheltered women were selected purposively.

My initial contact with WOREC was through the mail. After doing background research on the WOREC team members, I found Miss Elisha Shrestha, a former student of UiO who is now working for WOREC as a team coordinator in Nepal. I then added her to my social media and started the conversation, and all the further processes got easier with professional and personal contacts. The WOREC personnel from Kathmandu gave me the contact details and phone numbers of the district team members who were working in the Terai region. The district team members assisted me in recruiting research participants and gave helpful insights into the local background and culture. The district team members told me explicitly that I may need a translator as most of their survivors won't speak Nepali. But when I talked to the participants, one of them could speak Hindi, which I understand and can communicate in, and it was easy to conduct the interview. The other participant, whose interview was conducted via phone, spoke proper Nepali. Initially, I had asked for five participants from WOREC. However, despite their efforts, some participants expressed unwillingness to participate in the study. As a result, the final sample size was smaller than initially anticipated. I got two participants who were willing to take part in the study and whose cases matched my study requirements. Among the total of 2, I conducted one interview by telephone. For the first WOREC interview, I went to a place called Malangawa, where there is a district office of WOREC. I met the team members there, and they provided me with a place where I could conduct an interview. The interview lasted for 40 minutes. For the second interview, WOREC directed me to conduct a phone interview since the participant was not residing nearby but could be safely reached through phone communication. This phone interview lasted approximately 2 hours in total, divided into two sessions. I anticipated that the interview would be lengthy and emotionally challenging, so dividing it into two sessions allowed for sufficient time to address the topics thoroughly while also considering the potential emotional impact on the participant. Therefore, it was best to split it into two sessions to reduce interview fatigue and keep the participant interested and involved.

WOREC, a non-governmental organization since its founding in 1991, has been an outspoken advocate for women's rights and independence in Nepal. Providing services to survivors of sexual and domestic abuse, as well as promoting gender equality and female self-determination, demonstrates the organization's commitment to issues affecting women. Through the provision of services like counseling, legal aid, and vocational training, the shelters established by WOREC in various parts of the nation have played a crucial role in assisting numerous women and girls in need of essential assistance. It's in line with WOREC's mission to encourage more women to take part in economic and political decision-making. I reached out to WOREC for this research because of their track record of supporting domestic abuse victims and their extensive local network. WOREC helped me through the hurdles of recruiting volunteers who had suffered domestic abuse, which was crucial in ensuring that this study was handled ethically and sensitively.

Sample 3- Married women who are mothers-in-law; 35-50 years

5 mothers-in-law were involved in the interview. These categories of women were selected from the village.

| Pseudo Name | Age (Years) | Age at marriage (Years) | Occupation | No. of daughters -in-law | No. of Sons | No. of daughters |
|-------------|-------------|-------------------------|------------|--------------------------|-------------|------------------|
| Anju | 38 | 17 | Shopkeeper | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| Sunita | 55 | 14 | Housewife | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Mahadevi | 49 | 16 | Farmer | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Priya | 46 | 15 | Labor | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| Soni | 53 | 16 | Housewife | 2 | 2 | 3 |

Table 4.3: Mothers-in-law, 35–50 years.

Table 4.3 presents information about mothers-in-law in the study who fall within the age range of 35 to 50 years. To guarantee that a representative sample of mothers-in-law was included in the research, I used a predetermined set of criteria to choose them. The inclusion criteria for mothers-in-law were as follows: I recruited women who were between the ages of 35 and 50, including both currently married mothers-in-law and those who were widowed or divorced. This age range allowed for an exploration of the experiences of mothers-in-law within a specific life stage.

In order to keep the research manageable and focused, I did not include women who were either under the age of 35 or above the age of 50. Because their individual situations may need considerations and adjustments outside the scope of this research, women with physical and mental impairments were also omitted from the sample. Furthermore, the sample did not contain any women who were not citizens of Nepal.

In recruiting mothers-in-law, I used snowball sampling method. The process involved building a network of participants through referrals. Initially, I identified and recruited an initial participant, who was a mother-in-law. Through establishing rapport and explaining the study's purpose, I emphasized the importance of their participation and requested their assistance in referring other eligible mothers-in-law. The initial participant played a crucial role in connecting me with other potential participants from their social network, such as friends, relatives, and acquaintances. I contacted these referred individuals, explaining that they had been referred by the initial participant and inviting them to take part in the study. As the snowball effect continued, each newly recruited participant was then asked for further referrals, allowing the participant pool to expand and encompass a diverse range of mothers-in-law. Throughout the process, informed

consent was obtained from all participants, and their privacy and confidentiality were prioritized.

Sample 4: Married men aged 20-30 years 6 participants were selected from the village via a network of female interviewees as well as convenience sampling, and the participants were selected from inside the village.

| S.N. | Age (Years) | Education (Grade) | Occupation | Age at marriage (Years) |
|------|-------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| 1 | 24 | 10 th | Tailor Master | 22 |
| 2 | 27 | 10 th | Tailor Master | 23 |
| 3 | 26 | 10 th | Tailor Master | 21 |
| 4 | 27 | 8 th | Tailor Master | 25 |
| 5 | 28 | 9 th | Tailor Master | 24 |

Table 4.4: Married men aged 20-30 years.

This table summarizes key information about young married men in the specified age range, including their current age, education (8th to 10th grade), occupation (Tailor Master), and age at marriage (21 to 25 years). When selecting participants for focus group discussions (FGDs) with men, specific inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to ensure diverse perspectives. Inclusion criteria involved choosing Bhodaha VDC residents aged 20 to 30, focusing on this life stage for deeper insights. Exclusions encompassed unmarried men under 20, those over 30, individuals with disabilities, and non-Nepali citizens, maintaining discussion relevance and accessibility for all.

During the data collection phase, I observed that the majority of the male participants were working abroad. And also, the other males were working outside the village in the city as tailor masters. Due to their work commitments and geographical distance, it was not feasible to conduct face-to-face FGD with them in the village. However, the participants shared a common workplace in the city, which presented an opportunity for convenient data collection.

Given their shared occupation and work location, conducting a focus group discussion (FGD) online was a practical and efficient approach. It allowed for the simultaneous participation of all the male participants, facilitating group dynamics and interactions. This online FGD format enabled the collection of valuable insights and perspectives from the participants, despite their absence from the village during data collection. This criterion ensured a level of homogeneity among the participants and allowed for a focused examination of specific experiences and perspectives related to their work as tailor masters. While the convenience sampling method may limit the generalizability of the findings to a broader population, it provides an opportunity to explore a specific subgroup of interest.

4.3 Data Collection Tools

4.3.1 Focus Group Discussion

In my research, I chose to employ focus group discussions (FGDs) as a data collection method for several reasons aligned with my study objectives. Firstly, FGDs offered a platform to gather in-depth insights and perspectives on dowry perceptions. They are recognized for fostering rich and nuanced discussions among participants (Wibeck et al., 2007). By convening a diverse group, I aimed to tap into a range of viewpoints and encourage dynamic interactions that could uncover valuable information.

Because most young married men were working overseas, it was hard to reach out to them for the study. To overcome this, I employed convenience sampling and relied on the village network to identify potential participants. Through this network, I received information about a subgroup of 6 young men who were working together as tailor masters in another city. By selecting these particular young men, I was able to explore the experiences and perspectives of this group. This made it easy to find a suitable time for all participants involved in the FGD to have the discussion simultaneously. The discussion was held on a group video call on Messenger, which was screen-recorded and lasted for nearly an hour.

Furthermore, the choice of FGDs was driven by the need for validity, convenience, and speed, as stated by scholars such as Boateng (2012) and Wibeck et al. (2007). Validity is crucial to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information obtained. Through FGDs, I was able to collect the knowledge and experiences of the participants, which further enhanced the credibility of the findings. Additionally, FGDs offered convenience in terms of logistics and scheduling. For example, the FGD allowed me to organize a single session with several participants, as opposed to other data-gathering approaches that could need individual interviews or questionnaires. Considering the practical constraints of the study, such as the limited availability of participants and the need to ensure a manageable group size for meaningful discussions, focusing exclusively on young married men allowed for a more feasible and focused investigation. It seemed to me that gender may have a big role in molding experiences and views, so I set out to investigate how men's ideas and experiences on this matter would differ from those of women. My research aims to shed light on potential differences between young married men and women and those who have been married for longer.

The FGD felt more like a one-on-one conversation because half of the participants actively discussed with me in the group, while the other half simply agreed with what others had to say. For example, when discussing their views on improving the dowry system, the dominant member said it could never be improved in their village. Others then made comments such as 'yes,' 'I also think so,' and 'I agree.' When I probed further about their

reasons for thinking so, the dominant member replied, 'Illiterate people don't know anything,' and the others added comments like 'Yes, illiterate people' and 'Stupid people live in our village.' One of the limitations of FGD I encountered was that the dominant individuals overshadowing others, impacting the diversity of perspectives and potentially, reducing the range of opinions. Despite my efforts, I encountered limitations in fully engaging them. Although the presence of dominant individuals in an FGD potentially limits the participation of others, it highlights the importance of understanding and managing power dynamics within such settings. I realized that there were instances where I struggled to encourage full participation and manage group dynamics effectively. Recognizing these limitations has motivated me to work on improving my facilitation techniques.

It could also be true that my subject status as a young woman in this study setting may have altered the dynamics of the FGD. Participants may have held certain expectations or stereotypes based on gender, potentially impacting the level of engagement or influence I had in the discussions.

In light of these limitations, future research students can enhance their facilitation skills during focus group discussions (FGDs) by recognizing and addressing potential dominance and power imbalances within the groups. Developing active moderation techniques, such as implementing strategies that promote equitable participation, creating a safe and inclusive environment, and ensuring that all voices are heard, can enable students to effectively manage group dynamics and mitigate the limitations associated with dominance and power imbalances. Anticipating and preparing for these challenges will empower students to facilitate more meaningful and balanced discussions in FGDs.

Although there were some challenges at the beginning, the FGD served its purpose well. It can be difficult to maintain order in a group that is either too large or too small. If the group is very small, as Escalada and Heong (2014) note, a single member can easily dominate the FGD. However, I discovered important concepts from male perspectives in real-time with the "co-construction of meaning in action" (Wibeck et al., 2007), which served as a complementary tool to IDI for the thesis.

4.3.2 In-depth Interview

The qualitative research technique of in-depth interviewing entails conducting "intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents" to explore their perspectives on a specific concept or situation (Boyce and Neale, 2006). During the research process, I created and utilized a semi-structured interview guide in accordance with the study's aims. However, I found it necessary to incorporate numerous probe questions and open-ended questions to look deeper into the topics of interest. Such additional questions helped facilitate a more comprehensive exploration of subjects

such as marriage customs, gender roles, triggering moments, tradition and culture, dowry negotiation, and even instances of violence.

The interviews began with a series of basic demographic questions designed to "warm up" the informants and put them at ease (Hay, 2000). Several of the mothers-in-law did not know their own ages, while others did not know even the basic questions such as their hobbies, making it difficult to carry on the interview in the beginning. Questions modification and the use of simple words helped me with the conduction of IDI. I used a lot of probe questions to elicit more detailed and specific responses. Using probe questions helped participants' ability to open up about their experiences and uncover new insights that were not apparent from the initial responses (Patton, 1990).

The interviews with young unmarried girls and recently married girls were conducted in an abandoned small hut located close to their homes in their small village. Given the small size of the village, the hut was in close proximity to their homes. These interviews typically lasted between 25 and 40 minutes. In contrast, interviews with mothers-in-law from the village were conducted in the home of a participant who was staying alone. She kindly allowed me to conduct interviews with other mothers-in-law and would leave the house while I was conducting the interviews. One interesting observation I made was that during the day, there were no adult or older men in the village as they were at work, and most married young men were working in another city and would only visit occasionally. This meant that the village was predominantly composed of girls, women, and children, creating a comfortable and safe environment for open and honest conversations about sensitive topics such as gender roles, marriage, and family dynamics. As a result, I was able to gain valuable insights into the participants' experiences and perspectives, which enriched my research.

During the interviews with the younger girls, one participant stood out as noticeably more reserved than the others. Further analysis revealed that the girls who were continuing their education demonstrated a greater capacity for self-expression during the interview compared to those who had dropped out.

I conducted two interviews with domestic violence survivors. To ensure their comfort and privacy, I arranged one of the interviews at locations of WOREC where I built a good rapport. As one participant lived near the India border and was difficult to reach, I conducted this interview over the phone. To protect her privacy, I was provided with the phone numbers by WOREC, and it was confirmed that she was in a safe location to speak with me. Each interview was scheduled for 45-50 minutes, but one participant had a lot to share, and the interview was extended to two sessions, totaling approximately 120 minutes. It was important to give each participant ample time to share their experiences, and I made sure to provide a supportive and empathetic environment for them to do so.

I used a semi-structured questionnaire to conduct in-depth interviews with all the female participants. This involved using a comprehensive interview guide and is typically utilized in cases where there is ample factual knowledge about a particular event or situation but a scarcity of subjective knowledge (McIntosh and Morse, 2015). Because of the attention it pays to the interviewee while still focusing on the issue at hand, it stands out from other techniques (Bartholomew et al., 2000). So, to collect detailed data, a questionnaire of this kind was utilized. During the interview, Nepali was utilized as the medium of communication, and as such, the presence of a translator was not deemed necessary. Nevertheless, there were a couple of mothers-in-law within the village who had a basic grasp of the Nepali language but were unable to articulate their responses fluently. To address this issue, a female translator was sought and subsequently hired with the help of one of the school teachers from my network, thus facilitating the data collection process and streamlining its overall efficiency. The interviews were scheduled around the availability of the participants. After obtaining participants' verbal and written assent, all interviews were audio-taped, and their privacy was protected at all times.

4.4 Navigating Personal Perspectives and Biases in Research

I, as the student researcher, actively engaged in navigating my personal perspectives and biases throughout the research process. By constantly reflecting on my own biases, experiences, and views, I aimed to critically analyze their potential influence on the study process and conclusions. This self-reflection was essential in ensuring that I remained self-aware and sensitive to both the participants and the subject of the study, ultimately leading to more accurate research findings (Berger, 2015).

During my research, I experienced a complex dynamic between my own identity and the perceptions of the individuals I interviewed. Although I share the same nationality as the participants, I realized that my modern and progressive views made me an outsider in their eyes. However, my pre-conceived knowledge about the topic of my research and my cultural background made me feel like an insider. Balancing these perspectives required constant reflexivity to acknowledge and overcome my biases, while also respecting the unique perspectives of my participants. This process taught me the value of 'cultural humility' and the importance of approaching research with openness and sensitivity towards diverse experiences (Yeager and Bauer-Wu, 2013). The practice of cultural humility necessitates accepting cultural differences with an open mind and without prejudice while also acknowledging the limits of one's own knowledge and comprehension of other cultures. Continuous self-reflection, learning new things, and a dedication to fostering polite and cooperative interactions across cultural boundaries are all part of the practice of cultural humility. In a variety

of contexts, including healthcare, education, and social services, cultural humility is crucial for delivering fair treatment that is sensitive to cultural differences (Fisher-Borne et al., 2015). This contrast presented me with a challenge in terms of reflexivity, as I was required to continually evaluate my own biases and assumptions to ensure that my research remained objective and impartial.

As discussions about social structures and violence are taboo in most societies, most women avoid bringing them up in conversation (Ellsberg and Heise, 2002). Being a female researcher could have played a role in creating a comfortable environment for female participants to share their experiences, which is essential to generate more reliable research data. However, I also reflected on how my cultural background and personal experiences may have made participants uncomfortable discussing their sexual relationships, leading to limited disclosure in this area. I became aware that the participants may have perceived me as more liberal in my views and attitudes. This contrasted with the more traditional or conservative backgrounds of some of the participants. This realization prompted me to reflect on how my positionality may impact the research process and output, and I took steps to ensure that I was sensitive to the participants' cultural backgrounds and experiences during the research. I made a conscious effort to build rapport and trust with participants. Through regular self-reflection and monitoring of my biases and personal experiences, I aimed to ensure that they did not unduly impact the research. I sought out support from my supervisor and peers to help mitigate any emotional burden and maintain a balance between the personal and universal in the research findings.

During my research, I was frequently moved by the stories shared by some of my participants. As I listened to their interviews in a quiet room, I often felt emotional exhaustion and sometimes became tearful or frustrated. However, it was crucial for me to manage these emotions in a way that did not compromise the trust I had built with my participants or the objectivity and neutrality required in my research. To do so, I employed mindfulness and emotional regulation techniques, allowing me to balance my personal responses with the demands of the study (Bauer-Wu, 2011; Yeager and Bauer-Wu, 2013).

4.5 Data management and analysis

While I was still in the field, I recorded each session and transcribed the verbatim in their original language. When I could no longer elicit any new information during follow-up interviews or focus group discussions, I knew I had achieved data saturation. I made the decision to conclude data collection after carefully analysing and considering the information I had gathered throughout the research process.

I translated all of the focus groups and interviews into English for my ex-

ploratory study. I did this during the data collection phase, immediately after conducting each interview. Specifically, I would listen to the audio recordings of each session and transcribe the verbatim in the original language. However, some interviews were left to be transcribed in the field. Upon returning to Norway, I promptly completed the translation of the last interviews that hadn't been translated yet, using a combination of online translation tools, such as Google Translate, and my own language skills. This process allowed me to thoroughly analyze and interpret the data, as well as maintain the accuracy and integrity of the participants' responses.

After reaching a certain mass, I decided to end my data collection. The 91-page English-translated Microsoft Word file was then loaded into NVivo. NVivo, a qualitative data analysis (QDA) software programme, does free up the researcher's time to focus on finding patterns, identifying themes, and drawing conclusions. Users may import Microsoft Word documents into NVivo and arrange them using tags and codes (Welsh et al., 2002). First, I created a project where I saved my transcribed document. Then I started coding. When asked how and with whom the participants would share their pain and problems, one respondent said that she would keep her pain to herself because she believed there would be a good day after a bad day. Another respondent stated that she shares with her mother. Another individual stated that disclosing her predicament would simply cause her to feel ashamed due to possible scrutiny and judgement from the neighbors. I coded all the responses related to dealing with pain as: Coping Mechanisms for Dealing with Pain and Problems. These categories were created based on my own knowledge.

The present thesis was originally written and prepared using Microsoft Word. Upon nearing the conclusion of the study, it came to my attention that my academic institution has access to 'Overleaf' through its official website. Overleaf is an online creative platform for drafting, revising, and publishing academic and research documents. I was able to simply follow UiO's criteria for thesis formatting because of Overleaf's remarkable features, which include its large library of templates, customizable layouts, and preset forms and procedures for organizing and writing academic work. Through the use of the many features provided by Overleaf, I successfully organized my thesis, leading to a visually appealing presentation characterized by a coherent and professional layout.

After the data collection phase, the data was carefully categorized. The data was sorted based on four groups:

- In-depth-interview (IDI) of young married girls
- IDI of recently married women/ IDI of domestic-violence survivors
- IDI with mothers-in-law
- FGD with men

I utilized the following codes/categories for my in-depth interviews with young girls: Gender inequality, domestic violence, poverty, societal influence on education and marriage, preferred age to marry, awareness on dowry demands and domestic violence, expectations from future husband and family and anticipation of marital roles.

Information from married women (daughters-in-law and violence-survivors) was coded using the following categories: marriage process, dowry negotiation, men's job as women's security and dowry as men's security, new-family, domestic violence, inter-generational differences, dealing pain, role of caste in marriage, restrictions by mother-in-law, inequality within the home, chain of tragedies, in-laws treatment, lack of parental support, threats, caste-based discrimination, limited interaction with in laws, negligent husband roles, intimate-partner violence, seeking help from WOREC.

For the IDI with MILs: initiation of marriage proposal, consequence of marriage without dowry, comparing in roles being daughter-in-law vs. mother-in-law, household-story, start of family separation, perfect daughter-in-law, poverty and dowry, gender-based roles.

For FGD with men, the following codes were used: about village, compulsion and acceptance of dowry, greed and deception, lack of initiation to stop dowry, women's rights, Panchayat system, love as sin, dowry issues, dignity of sons-in-law, women's suppression, and women's freedom.

The codes were created based on specific themes that emerged while looking at the data carefully; the main codes had sub-codes or subcategories. Subcategories allowed me to better arrange my data inside the main categories in NVivo. After finding significant units in the text, I labelled a new category to which the identified text belongs. Data were analyzed and coded at a higher specification by creating subcategories, which then revealed themes and patterns that were hidden at a higher level of abstraction.

The data was analyzed by inductive analysis. The term "inductive analysis" is commonly used to describe methods that rely heavily on close readings of raw data in order to infer concepts, themes, or a model (Thomas, 2003). By rereading the transcripts and thinking about different interpretations and how they fit into larger patterns, I was able to identify emerging themes, or categories. For example, in the analysis of a participant's response to the question about experience living with their husband and his family, the participants' response was the following:

Even if I tell this to my husband that I and my children were not getting enough food, what he would say is, "You might be getting everything to eat that has been prepared at home." He never listened to me or trusted me. (...) Whatever others say at home, they are right, and I am wrong. He would say, "The

mistakes is yours, that is why the family is not behaving well with you. (Woman aged 34, 23/06/2022)

By carefully considering different interpretations of the text and how they fit into larger patterns, two distinct meanings were identified within the participant's response. These meanings were then assigned two different code numbers that related to two different categories. The first text segment, "Even if I tell this to my husband that I and my children were not getting enough food", was determined to fit into the category "Food restriction". The second text segment, "Whatever others say at home, they are right, and you are wrong". He would say, "The mistake is yours; that is why the family is not behaving well with you", was assigned to the category "Blame and gaslighting". These two text-units were counted as two units of the total number of text-units that emerged from the analysis. This inductive approach allowed for a thorough and nuanced understanding of the participant's experience and contributed to the development of a broader model of the phenomenon under investigation (Thomas, 2003).

4.6 Ethical Consideration

NSD, Norway's ethical approval was granted initially. Similarly, ethical approval from the NHRC, Nepal Health Research Council was obtained. Authorization from the Nepal Health Research Council was required by Nepalese law to conduct health research in Nepal. Approval was also received from the WOREC to conduct interviews with domestic violence survivors.

For in-depth interview, written consent and information sheet was read to the participants, the permission form was signed by the participants. For under 18 participants, parental consent was taken.

Verbal consent was granted by all participants in FGD. The information sheet and consent form were sent to them, and the permission form was completed and returned by each individual who participated in the FGD. The FGD was conducted via Messenger group video call, and screen recorded with verbal agreement. To protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants, the interviews were immediately forwarded to the University of Oslo's TSD- Service for sensitive data. Appendices A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and H provide detailed information on each permission.

Because of the intimate nature of the connection between the researcher and the participant, qualitative research involves moral and ethical difficulties that other methods of research do not normally meet (Klopper, 2008). There is a clear need for the development of concrete ethical principles in this area. Respect for privacy, ethical difficulties, and conflicts between participants, researchers, and society are a few of the ethical issues that qualitative

research may present. Anonymity, confidentiality, and informed consent are important ethical problems to address (Sanjari et al., 2014). In order to conduct credible research, it is essential for scientists to adhere to a number of ethical guidelines. Researchers must make efforts to ensure that participants are fully informed, have the choice to withdraw at any time, and that their privacy and confidentiality are safeguarded. In conducting my study, I kept the following ethical considerations in mind, apart from getting ethical approval.

4.6.1 Informed Consent, Confidentiality and Anonymity

The need to obtain informed consent as a matter of research ethics has been widely acknowledged. While doing qualitative research, it is crucial to define what data will be gathered and how it will be utilized in advance. According to the concept of informed consent, it is the researcher's duty to explain all relevant components of the study to the participant in clear and understandable terms (Sanjari et al., 2014). Ethical rules and regulations for research involving human subjects outline the process of obtaining informed consent (Nijhawan et al., 2013).

Some of the participants who took part in this research couldn't read or write at all. The informed consent document was translated and read to two of the mothers-in-law by the interpreter in Bhojpuri language. Participants were informed of confidentiality standards as part of the informed consent process. All participants were made aware that their participation would be recorded, and that their identities would remain confidential. Participants were informed that they may ask me anything and may even withdraw if they change their minds. This was important so that no one would be forced to participate. Over the course of the research, no one showed any hesitation to take part in it.

Since I have several groups of participants, for some groups I assigned pseudonyms while for some, I assigned numbers. The identifying information from the subjects, including their names and personal details was removed. I was also prepared for the legal obligations that may arise during the interview. In some instances, the law may require researchers to send over individuals' private information, therefore violating confidentiality and anonymity. For example, participants should be made aware that their information will not be kept anonymous or secret if required by law to be reported, such as in situations of child or elder abuse (Orb et al., 2001). Furthermore, WHO recommends only interviewing one woman per household to prevent other women from learning about the study and disclosing it to their abusers, which I followed during my fieldwork (WHO, 2005). During two of my interviews, the women became visibly upset when we talked about a sensitive issue that triggered them. I stopped the interview to give them a chance to calm down. I then asked them if they wanted to keep going or take a break. If they needed to, I told them it was fine to stop the interview. After a few minutes, they decided to keep going, and

the interview went on without any more problems. I made sure to check in with both of them later to see how they were doing and to thank them for taking part. As another recommendation from WHO while conducting research on VAW was minimizing the distress of participants, one of the participants needed counselling support, which was provided by the counsellor who was present during the study. Asking women about their experiences with violence and showing interest in what they have to say could be seen as an intervention. Also, asking about violence sends the message that this is an important issue that needs to be thought about and studied, not that it is embarrassing or not important (WHO, 2005).

Prior to conducting FGD, participants were informed that they had the right to interrupt at any time. They gave verbal consent. No one interrupted or desired to leave, rather, they joined in wholeheartedly and, whenever I asked, they shared relevant information, and even added more information than asked. In addition, I sensed that the participants enjoyed their roles in the research. They were asked if they had any questions or concerns about my study or if anything wasn't clear. When data saturation was maintained and no further questions would provide new answers, I sensed that the participants got bored, and they asked me, "Do you have anything more to ask?" During both the interview and the FGD, some participants asked for more information, which I gave them. Also, the email addresses and phone numbers of the researcher, supervisor, and NSD were given to the participants in case they had any questions or concerns about the study.

After reviewing ethical guidelines for social science research, I became aware that confidentiality is a fundamental aspect of the research process and that participants need to be fully informed about how their data will be handled and protected. I also learned from the concept of "Letting Something Slip", as outlined by Wiles et al. (2008), that researchers may unintentionally break confidentiality by discussing their research with individuals outside of their team. Such breaches were avoided, and it was ensured all members had a clear understanding of confidentiality.

Following each interview, the audio was transcribed into a password-protected computer. At the end of each interview, the transcript backup was made, and the original was uploaded to UiO's secure server. The audio recorder's contents were erased after transcribing. In addition, I have carefully stored all the data in the sensitive data services TDS of the University of Oslo, to which only I have access, and it will be deleted after the completion of this study.

Chapter 5

Findings

The insights and the outcomes of the research are shaped by combining the data gathered through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The quotations are used to convey the participants' opinions in their own words, unaltered, and are allotted to each respondent.

Firstly, the research findings shed light on the attitudes and experiences of unmarried girls towards dowry. It revealed the expectations and pressures they faced concerning dowry and the potential consequences of non-compliance. This section provides valuable insights into the pre-marital phase and the societal influences that contribute to the perpetuation of dowry practices.

Secondly, the study delved into the experiences of recently married women (daughters-in-law) and their encounters with dowry-related violence. It uncovered the challenges faced by these women within their marital households and the various forms of abuse they endured. This section highlights the intimate dynamics and power structures that influence the occurrence of violence within marriages.

Thirdly, the research examined the perspectives of mothers-in-law, a significant figure in shaping the dowry dynamics within families. It explored their role, expectations, and influence in the perpetuation of dowry practices. Understanding the viewpoints and attitudes of mothers-in-law contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding the dowry system.

In addition to these findings, the research provided an in-depth exploration of the struggles and difficulties faced by victims of domestic violence. Through personal narratives, the study uncovered the psychological, physical, and emotional consequences experienced by individuals who have suffered abuse within the context of caste-based marriage and dowry-related violence.

The study encompassed multiple participant groups, including unmar-

ried girls, recently married women (daughters-in-law), mothers-in-law, and male members from focus group discussions. By analyzing the data gathered through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, several key themes have emerged that provide insights into the complex dynamics of dowry and violence.

5.1 Societal influence on young girls' education, gender equality and marital roles

The provided excerpts illuminate the societal constraints and influences young females confront in relation to their education, gender roles, and marriage expectations. These influences have a significant impact on the girls' aspirations, decisions, and self-perception. The following sections provide an overview of the key themes identified in the excerpts.

5.1.1 Societal pressure

The participants were aware of how society has a big influence on the way they were being treated by their family members. Most participants explained how their neighbors are stopping them from going to schools/colleges.

"Why are you investing so much in her education? She will just get married and leave anyway" This is how these people think and tell others. Because girls will get married and go anyhow. (Participant 3)

You know my father and mother do not differentiate, but this society tells she is a daughter, don't spoil her, they talk like this a lot.... these negative things. Neighbors tell wrong things to my parents. The people here inflict such thoughts to change the mind of others. And parents start talking about getting me married and say, "Now you have studied enough, you have nothing more to do..." So, I feel bad when such things happen. (Participant 1)

The neighbors say, "Don't feed her a lot; don't spoil her with phones." Instead, give to your sons, feed your sons, and do for your sons. "It will be useful for you in the future", they say to my parents. This is a common thing for everyone. In today's world, if you are trying to achieve something, people will pull your leg from behind. Never let go; that is what these people have been doing. (Participant 3)

The pressure and criticism lead the young girls to suppress their desires and consider giving up on education. Participants described how the villagers think of education as a luxurious freedom:

Everyone has told me and my parents not to let me go to school or college..not just me but every other girl who wants to study. Those

whose family members are completely illiterate say more. It does not matter who says what; it's just that life will be easy if there are people to realize and understand. But if there is nobody to understand, anyone can commit suicide and hang themselves. (Participant 1)

The girls also claimed that societal pressure and criticism for wanting to continue their education has led them to think that they will have to kill their desires. One out of 5 participants have completed primary education till 10th and was willing to continue the education further. But she mentioned how her neighbours are negatively affecting her to achieve her goals.

If I tell my parents that I want to study more, the neighbors come and tell my parents, "Your daughter should not study; if she studies more, she will love a boy and run with him." Like these types of things, lots of things come by. People will say, "Don't teach her; girls should be married early." Such tortures come along the way, which is why I must forcefully think, "Yes, it is enough already; I should kill my desires." (Participant 1)

5.1.2 Strive for education

The participants, despite getting negative pressure from others in the village, desired to study and be capable to show the villagers that girls can also study and be an example. Also, some of the girls who were continuing their studies, despite the criticisms were determined to study more because they believe that education could help them from violence after marriage due to the achievement of financial independence.

Getting married is not what I want now, but after my studies, I hope... it takes 4 years to complete my study in X (study-subject anonymized) ... So, what I think is that I will study and become a great person one day so that these people realize and think, "Oh, we said so many things to his or her daughter... and now she has become a capable person... So, I want to be someone and do something to show them and become an example. (Participant 1)

The same participant added,

I know the importance of education, First I will study, and then only I will marry, If I don't study, you know what will happen after marriage? We will have to face abuse, but if I am financially stable, they cannot discriminate against me. If the girl is illiterate, they say, 'You are a waste because you have not even studied...' and at last, she has to leave the house with frustration and go to her parents' house. (Participant 1)

Participant 1 acknowledges that education can serve as a protective factor against abusive situations. It shows how she belief on transformative

power of education. Education is emphasized as a means of prevention against abuse, reduction of prejudice, and access to chances for individual development and empowerment. She also highlights the importance of girls' education and the necessity for society to appreciate and support it for the benefits it provides to individuals, families, and communities. By prioritizing education before marriage, the participant emphasizes the potential for greater agency and control over one's future. She also highlights the societal prejudice faced by women who are not educated, and describes the negative perception of illiteracy, which can lead to marginalization, disrespect, and ultimately, being forced to leave the marital home due to frustration.

If I get a job after completing my studies, I won't have to depend on others for money, and I will have a good future. But these people will never understand. They are idiots (Participant 3)

The statement reflects the frustration and dissatisfaction of the participant who believes that obtaining a job after completing their studies will provide financial independence and a promising future. However, the person expresses frustration with others who fail to understand their perspective, labelling them as "idiots."

5.1.3 Gender-based violence, poverty, and discrimination

The participants, because of poverty and gender discrimination hate being daughters, and desire to be son in the next life. One of the participants shared that the villagers see her with sympathy as she has crossed her ideal age of marriage, and her father cannot afford for dowry. She narrated that she often gets beatings from her father if she is not seen working.

I am 20 years old now, but I am not yet married. I have been told many times, "Poor thing!" because I am already late to get married. My father doesn't have enough property to provide a dowry for my marriage. My aunt had told me she would collect money from all the villagers and conduct a small wedding. (Participant 4)

Participants when asked how they feel being a daughter in the house, a part of them said,

I wish they had not given me birth. We have less land but more siblings in my family. Small-small children... My parents wanted a son—at least one. But they gave birth to five daughters who were waiting to give birth to a son, and at last, they have two sons. Now my siblings do not get enough care. It hurt me to see such. (Participant 2)

I do not like it. (Participant 4)

A few participants also shared on their restrictions and freedom as daughters. One of the participants shared that her father restricts her and her sister's freedom to go out and socialize with friends, using her gender as a justification for his actions (beating her).

When I go to my friend's house, if I go out of the house, he says, 'You are not a son to go out and roam around'. If we speak, he will beat us more. (Participant 4)

My father when his mood is good, treats us nicely, but when he is in angry mood, he tortures us, and beats us with a stick. (Participant 5)

The men from FGD also had similar opinions on the status of girls/women in their village.

In our village, women cannot even speak in a high tone or volume. You know, here, like in big cities, women are given rights, which is why they can do whatever they want; they can even beat their husbands. (FGD, P2)

The vast differences in women's rights and duties in various contexts are highlighted by this insight. It elucidates the power dynamics and gender norms of the studied village, where women's speech and conduct are regulated.

5.1.4 Awareness on dowry demands and domestic abuse

The young girls were aware of how dowry demand is rooted in their culture after seeing other women's' experiences and seeing their married friends in the village. They anticipate what could happen to their married life in the near future. Some of the young girls normalize morally unacceptable actions such as domestic violence because they somehow know they might face such situations.

They beat her...(.)... everyone, her mother-in-law, her husband, even her father-in-law; you know, they said, "I will leave you if you don't add a bike to the dowry; your parents have not given me any useful thing... and sometimes they beat her... many times, actually. If a girl is rich, she might fulfill a boy's demand, but how will a poor girl tell her parents that she is getting beaten because they want a bike now?... A daughter can never give pressure to parents. My friend later committed suicide. Such cases are common in this village. (Participant 1)

While giving dowry, the girl's family has problems and does not have enough property to give items like beds and bedsheets. Not everyone can give everything. The groom and his family, when they see other grooms getting so many items at marriage, start to compare and tell the bride, "Look at what he has got from his bride. You should also

go and bring such things. "Your father could not manage to give me anything". If the bride tells him, "You should have told me this before I came into this home... "Before marriage... why are you saying this now?" If a woman says this, she will definitely get beaten. (Participant 2)

When the participant was asked who would beat her, the boy's parents or the boy, she replied by saying,

The husband beats his wife, and there is a father and mother-in-law who blow the son's ears... (manipulate or teach the bridegroom to do things against the bride) ... they will make stories to tell their son that she has not done this, not done that, and make her bad in her husband's eyes... that's how it is. (Participant 2)

5.1.5 Young girls' anticipation on after-marriage roles: "let my son be the master"

While some of the participants know how it feels to be a married woman, they have understood that those who are poor are somehow less worthy or deserving of acceptance or respect from new families. One of the participants' expectations from a new family after marriage explains that she is even ready to deal with physical violence if it is in a small amount.

Even if I do something wrong, I want my future husband to forgive me and tell me not to do it again. I do not want him to get involved in a fight and beat me. It's ok if he beats me sometimes, but I do not want him to be angry with me for many days. Otherwise, how will I spend my life without him? That's all I want. (Participant 3)

Participants expressed a willingness to make sacrifices, such as taking care of the husband's parents in exchange for a partner who can understand their feelings, listen to them, and forgive them when they make mistakes.

I am even ready to stay in a little 'jhupadi', do you understand what a 'jhupadi' means...? Yeah, I can stay in such house also, if my husband treats me right, listens to me. as a daughter-in law I should take care of my in-laws. And the only thing I want from my partner is that he should be able to understand my feelings. If he loves me, then I will love his parents a lot. (Participant 1)

Similarly, another participant had similar views on the married life and reported that,

You know the in-laws can never be parents. That's why they are called in-laws, not parents. I don't know how my future in-laws will be. But I know my in-laws will never treat their daughter-in-law with the same kindness and understanding as my parents treat me. It would be nice if my future husband would support and understand me. (Participant 4)

All the participants gave similar points on what they expect their future family to be like. The participants' expectations from a husband and his family are that they are a loving and supportive unit, where the participants feel included and valued as family members. They expressed a desire for a harmonious and problem-free relationship, without any pain or difficulties.

Participants explained in their terms how being a daughter-in-law always comes with the price of set boundaries and, it was understood from how some participants compare their life now to how they think will be after getting married:

I was born by my parents, so even if I make some mistakes, they just forgive me, because I am their daughter. Even if they slap once or twice or scold, they always love their children. Whatever I like to eat, whatever I like to wear, they provide me. But after marriage, at others home, nobody can speak with open heart. If we speak, they will say "she speaks back, she is bad girl... her parents have not taught her manner". (Participant 1)

But if they treat daughters-in-law like daughters, why do we call them in-laws? Everyone would call them parents. There is always some difference in the way they treat. After marriage, a girl has to stay under the pressure of in-laws and husband., 'Do this, don't do this!' (Participant 3)

Some of the participants were concerned about getting support from new family members as they may focus more on finding mistakes rather than giving respect, providing support, and care.

I have seen others who were frequently criticized by their family members. The in-laws will rather try to find mistakes and do things so that I won't get enough respect and care, "let my son be the master" ... It's like a daughter-in-law should always be less than a son. I want to be treated with kindness and understanding. (Participant 5)

It will make me happy if they allow me to let go out with friends, and if they happily eat the food I cook, and do not get angry with me. (Participant 4)

The participants overall were apprehensive about potential conflicts or disagreements with future family. Some of them were worried about losing some of their autonomy and freedom to please their in-laws.

5.2 Marriage Customs

5.2.1 Bride/groom Selection

Almost all of the participants went through a similar process when they got married, except for two who had a more complicated process. The

marriage was arranged marriage, which means the bride and groom are picked for each other by someone else, usually their parents, relatives, or a matchmaker. The goal of this type of marriage is said to create a stable and long-lasting relationship. Parents, family members, or in some cases even neighbors helped choose the bride and the groom.

My parents went and talked to his father. Then, they both agreed on the talk. (IDI, Mamata)

My father and my uncles talked with the groom's father and finalized. (DIL, IDI, Devi)

During the interviews, the participants highlighted power dynamics within the marriage system, specifically regarding the role of fathers. It was observed that in most cases, the girl's father initiates the marriage proposal and visits the boy's home. However, the final decision-making authority rests with the groom's father, rather than the bride's father. In contrast, at the girl's home, the father holds the ultimate decision-making power regarding the marriage. Nevertheless, when it comes to the marriage process and negotiations, the groom's father holds a prominent position.

No, my husband must go to boy's home. In our tradition, basically girl's father goes to boy's home. (MIL, IDI, Sunita)

My husband went to the groom's home with a marriage proposal. The boy's father and my husband talked about how much money would fix the marriage. Afterward, they called in phone and then we asked what he wanted for dowry, and he said 6 lakhs. (MIL, IDI, Anju)

For my youngest son, my husband was informed by the relatives about the girl and then marriage was fixed with the girl with the help of his relatives. They both agreed at once. (MIL, IDI, Sunita)

There was one participant whose son married by his own interest and the girl was from another ethnicity. She stated that her son married by his will and he stated,

One of my sons married by himself, he met a girl in the city while he was working there... There was no dowry given. (MIL, IDI, Priya)

5.2.2 Son-in-law as Jawai-raja

The male participants in FGD expressed happily that they are treated nicely and with respect by their in-laws. One participant mentioned that in their culture, the son-in-law is considered a "Jawai-raja" or king and is expected to be treated accordingly. On how their in-laws treat them, they responded:

They treat us nice. (FGD, P2)

It is alright. (FGD, P6)

Son in law is called 'Jawai-raja' (raja: king, son-in-law: Jawai in local language) so they must treat us like kings. It's normal. (FGD, P1)

Yes, we are well respected. Not bad. Maybe 2 in 100 are not well-behaved with son-in-laws but the rest of them get good respect. (FGD, P4)

5.2.3 Exclusion of Girls from decision-making in marriage

In other instances, the bride was not informed or given her consent before the marriage was arranged and finalized. One of the participants said that she only found out about it a few days before the wedding. She did not know much about her husband.

I had an arranged marriage. Had a lot of fights with my husband initially... after marriage. Before marriage, only my parents and his parents talked, so I did not know. After marriage, had so many fights, that I could not stay there, and always used to run to my parents' home without them knowing. (DIL, IDI, Devi)

The participants' experience highlights the power dynamics present in arranged marriages, where the bride often has little say in the decision-making process and can feel like she is being "sold off". Neither son nor daughter were involved in the decision-making process, indicating how families rely on their social networks to find suitable partners for their children.

When further asked Devi how she felt and reacted when she knew she was getting married, her response was,

No, I did not tell anything to anyone. I knew nothing. Nothing came across my mind, I felt nothing. I do not know. Just parents talked and finalized it and gave me to them. It's like selling me, nobody asks what girls want. (DIL, IDI, Devi)

All the participants emphasized that the decision to get married is primarily the parent's choice and not the girl's decision. Regardless of the future husband's financial status, the girl cannot speak or decide on anything.

A girl... wherever girls parents agree to get their daughters marriage, a girl agrees. It is not about her decision. Whose ever house will parents decide to tie daughter, she must stay there. Either her future husband is rich or poor, a girl cannot speak, she cannot decide on anything. (MIL, IDI, Mahadevi)

However, from the male perspectives, it was understood that not only girls, but even boys have no say in their marriage. They stated that they must follow what their parents say.

Wherever parents let us marry, with that person only, we get married. (FGD, P2)

That is what we have been doing. That is our culture. (FGD, P1)

5.2.4 Dowry and Marriage: Destiny and Luck

It was found that majority of the participants, mainly the MILs view marriage as destiny. One of the participants commented on her daughter-in-law's wealth and status, stating that she comes from a wealthy family and that it was her luck that brought her to their family's small hut.

She is very rich, has big house. Own-own luck, otherwise who would come from big house to small hut as this? It is the destiny written from above. (MIL, IDI, Sony)

Another participant also said that she thought luck and fate were important parts of her son's marriage. She said that even though dowry was a long-standing custom, they didn't ask for a dowry because they thought their luck and future were already set. She stated that they did not ask for anything in the marriage, as they could get arrested by God for doing so. However, the daughter-in-law's family gave dowry which the participant accepted as she told it attributes to boys' own interest and not because of any pressure or request from their side.

We did not ask for anything in my son's marriage. We will get arrested if we ask money or property. (Probe: But there has been tradition of exchanging money and gifts during marriages, what made you and your family choose not to ask for a dowry?) No, we did not take. If we receive dowry, God will arrest us above after we die (pointing to roof/ceiling/sky). They gave gold and bike by their own interest. Motorcycle and 4 pounds gold. But they gave it to the daughter by their wish. (MIL, IDI, Sony)

Similarly, another participant expressed a belief that if parents have only daughters, they will have to rely on God's grace to ensure their daughters' marriages are conducted properly. The participant suggested that marriage is ultimately guided by fate, and it is important to accept whatever happens with grace.

If parents have only daughters, they will stay by God's grace! God will make everything better and will help to conduct every daughter's marriage properly. You and I cannot do anything. (MIL, IDI, Sunita)

5.2.5 Role of Dowry in Marriage

Since the marriage was arranged marriage, it was centered around the cultural practice of arranged marriages and dowry. Participants reflected on the financial burden and pressure placed on their family to fulfil the demands of the groom's family and the power dynamics and bargaining process involved in such arrangements. Participants explained that they all had given dowry to their husbands. They expressed that it has become a norm to demand dowry and that it is expected from the bride's family to provide it.

Participants also talked about bargaining and negotiations in dowry, as one of the participants expressed that when her parents were asked to give 5 lakhs, they had only given 4 lakhs before marriage, to pay remaining amount after marriage, but the boys side did not agree on that.

Then my father asked how much of dowry would they want. Then they said 5 lakhs. They said if they don't get 5 lakhs, they won't accept to marry me. We had kept one lakh rupee balance to pay later. But later they scolded my parents asking for us to give that remaining. And you know they had to give. (DIL, IDI, Mamata)

His parents had asked 5 lakhs and the boy had asked for a bike. My parents could not afford bike, but they gave me jewelleryes of 2 lakhs and other things to them. (DIL, IDI, Pooja)

The mothers-in-law had differing and unique opinions on the dowry. A part of them stated that they accepted small amounts of dowry, highlighting the significance of gift-giving during weddings and the expectations of both the giver and the receiver.

Some of the participants also reflected upon the practicality of dowry.

For my son, my husband's brother Pola Mousa, (changed name), arranged and asked gold and money. Asking money and gold, and with the same money, we covered the wedding expense of our son. We got 12,000 Rs in dowry. (MIL, IDI, Sunita)

Another participant shared that her family asked for the dowry from the daughter-in-law while marrying their son.

During one of my sons' marriages, they gave 30,000 Rs, and one sewing machine. But they did not give bed and beddings... we did not ask for the sewing machine; her parents gave it to their daughter saying that she will earn something by sewing clothes later when needed. We are total 10 members in family, so we asked for clothes to all 10 members, but they gave money instead of clothes, and money for sewing machine, and told us to buy clothes from the money and sew those. (MIL, IDI, Priya)

5.2.6 Dowry perception and Dowry practice

The issue of dowry was discussed by participants, with some expressing a belief in giving money to support siblings' marriages, and others advocating for neither giving nor taking dowry. Some said it's a tradition, while others said dowry should not be taken and given.

Giving money, we must help our elder sister or younger sister to get married. (FGD P1)

Concerns were also raised about the negative effects of dowry-related debt and stress. Some participants stated that there is no other alternative apart from following dowry practice.

Now what can we do? What can a person do when he has no other options? (FGD, P5)

Give whatever you like by your will, give whatever you want to give if you have, but it is not like this. Dowry is a must. (DIL, IDI, Anju)

Neither take nor give dowry, that would be great. (MIL, IDI, Mahadevi)

It is okay. If they have money, and if they give some, it is good, but if they give dowry sinking in debt, and with sorrows, then I don't like. That will give me tension. (MIL, IDI, Priya)

A part of the participants added that removing the dowry system in their village is just a myth and will never be possible.

That is just a thing to say. I do not think that dowry system will be gone. (FGD P1)

It will increase more. (FGD P3)

A few participants highlighted the role of dowry as social and traditional norm, stating that no girls will be married without dowry.

Everyone in the village does that. It is now a rule to take dowry. Who will marry without getting dahej (dowry)? Nobody does. (IDI, DIL, Devi)

5.2.7 Women's Security through the Lens of Men's Employment and Dowry

A part of the participants shared their experiences and opinions on the role of 'job' as one of the factors that affect dowry negotiations.

One of the participants expressed that her father did not conduct proper background checks on the groom before agreeing to the marriage. Instead, he solely relied on the groom's job as a measure of his suitability. This approach led the father to overlook important factors such as the groom's financial status and living conditions. Having a job added extra security on her father's view as the participant said:

When there is marriage with all rituals, people always see and ask and find out about the boy and his family. But my father did not do much investigation of them, he did not see if my husband had a good house or property; he just saw his job. If he has a job, there is no problem. You know what my father said- "If he has nothing, what bad will happen? He has a public job and is independent. He will earn money, and will have a secure future", That is what my father thought. A total of 24,000 rupees was finalized to give to them. Later after finalized, my father's friends, whom I call uncles, came to my father and said "You are so rich, you can give 10,000 more" Then my father smiled, said nothing, and gave 10,000 more, including a table, chair, and bed. also, gold jewelry. (DIL, IDI, WOREC, Jyoti)

Another participant stated that a groom with a more prestigious job may be able to demand a higher dowry price than someone with a less prestigious or lower-paying job.

How much is the education of a person... if I was a doctor, I would take 10 lakhs rupee. The higher the study, the higher is the dowry price. We, who don't have studied enough, we took 2-4 lakhs in general. (P1, FGD)

Another participant shared a similar view.

You know, those who study more also ask for more dowry. (P2, FGD)

5.3 Dowry Trends: Then and Now

The elder participants explained how the dowry trend has increased from their generation to this generation. They shared similar opinions on the changing trends of dowry.

At my wedding, there was no dowry. My parents did not even give me 5 rupees. (MIL, IDI, Sunita)

In our time, there used to be less money for dowry. Now it's a lot. (MIL, IDI, Priya)

It was also found that one of the reasons for not following the dowry trend during previous times was due to poverty.

My parents, during my marriage gave only 3 or 4 thousand as dowry, we did not have a lot of money. (MIL, IDI, Mahadevi)

While in the past dowry was not significant, compared to today where there is a fixed rate for dowry payment, as a participant stated,

Those who have property will be asked for 10 lakhs, those who don't have more, are asked for 5 lakhs. We have a 5 lakhs average rate of dowry these days. (FGD, P4)

5.3.1 Patriarchy and Dowry Pressure

The participants expressed the belief that having daughters can be difficult, as they may face challenges in finding suitable partners without having to pay high dowries. The participants stated that sons are more important than daughters and the bride's family is often expected to pay a dowry.

Those who give birth to 3 or 4 sons, walk with pride. Parents with only daughters will stay crying. We must let the girl marry a poor family... as poor families take less dowry. (MIL, IDI, Priya)

The cultural and social norms in the village seemed to have perpetuated discrimination against women who are deemed "too old" for marriage, as one of the participants stated,

In our village and culture, women who cross 20 years are too much grown up. It is late for her to marry. I told you... three young girls are staying at home without getting married because they do not have money. But their father doesn't do anything... Once they pass their youthfulness, nobody wants to marry them. (MIL, IDI, Anju)

There is dowry, it is as tradition. If someone cannot give dowry, their daughter will remain 'Kuwari' (unmarried girl). If that kuwari girl finds someone through love, the guy may take her with him. Otherwise, nobody marries her. (MIL, IDI, Sunita)

The participants explained the ways in which the dowry system affects women's lives, especially those who come from poor or disadvantaged backgrounds.

Them who has no money, his daughter marries through elope or gets old without getting married. (budhikanya). (DIL, IDI, Anju)

For those who are rich, they can give dowry, but from where will poor people bring money? (MIL, IDI, Sony)

You have to anyhow give dowry, either by taking a loan, or selling land or property... even if you have to steal. (DIL, IDI, Anju)

5.3.2 Negative Consequences of Dowry

5.3.2.1 Dowry Conflicts, Greed, and Deception

Participants discussed instances of dowry-related conflicts and how families resort to illegal means to obtain money, such as conducting transactions in private. They touched upon the financial pressure that reacted to dowry as well as the deception and greed that comes with dowry practice.

For one, this had happened: you know the 'Pandit' (holy person who conducts marriage rituals, has knowledge on some mantras and religious ceremonies), while Pandit was conducting marriage, that time what happened was, the boys' team said that they haven't got dowry yet, but the girls' team said that they already gave the money to boys' team, 2 lakhs rupees. There was such chaos and later that girl's marriage got cancelled. The boys said they had not got it while the girl's team said that's not true. The boys' team did not accept that girl. Later, the girl's father arranged her marriage to someone other by giving them money. (FGD, P1)

It is the boy's father who took the money and told them that they haven't got it. (FGD, P2)

In private they take money, but they say that they haven't got anything in public, during the ceremony. You know the same applies while going abroad. The manpower, For example, while taking people to Malaysia, the manpower made an agreement of around 30/40k but, personally they took 2 lakhs rupees They made a video as proof making people say that the manpower took only 30-40k. They won't be sent abroad if someone speaks the truth about them. (FGD, P3)

That's a deception. That is how it is. (FGD, P4)

Do you understand? Many things in the world are black. Black work, black money. (FGD, P2)

Majority of the participants shared how dowry has played a role in creating conflicts. A participant mentioned an incident where her husband stopped/paused the marriage when he did not receive the full amount of dowry he had asked for.

On the day of marriage, he said he wouldn't marry unless he got a dowry. And they will stop the barat. (Participant indicating 'he' to groom's father) (DIL, IDI, Pooja)

The Barat system: The wedding procession, also known as the "Barat", typically consists of the groom's close relatives and companions who make their way to the bride's home or wedding venue. They often travel in beautifully adorned vehicles to take part in the wedding rituals and festivities. The participant explained the concept of the barat system, which involves the groom's family and relatives going to the bride's home for the wedding ceremony and later taking the bride to their home.

When there is a marriage function, the boys' family including all the relatives go to the girls' house and they do the rituals, later the bride has to go with the boys to the boys' home. All the barat, or neighbors or relatives of the boy's side dance and eat, and all have fun. Do you know what my husband's father did when he got less money from my parents during my marriage? He did not send Barat to my home, so everyone feared that they would not come and take me. I was so worried. It's a shame to not run marriage smoothly after fixing the date and all. It is a shameful thing for a girl.

The participant added,

Only when my uncle brought money to him, he counted and then only he sent barat to home. He had asked total 5 lakhs, but my parents gave 4 lakhs 80 thousand (4,80,000). For 20,000 Rs less money, he stopped barat. (DIL, IDI, Pooja)

5.3.2.2 Mistreatment of the Bride

Some of the participants expressed how the groom's family makes derogatory and cruel comments about the physical appearance of a girl when their demands are not met.

.... they were never satisfied, and I got tortured by them... they said, "Your father did not give us this". "Go! Stay there, why should we keep you here now? "If your parents give us this thing and that, then only we will keep you" and then they kept beating me; my husband told me "What kind of beauty do you hold? You are ugly" Do you think you are beautiful enough to be married?" Then my mother-in-law and father-in-law said, "We only married you with our son because your father was begging with us, he was crying in front of us to get you married." (DIL, IDI, Mamata)

Participants also claim that giving or getting dowry might lead to a lack of genuine attraction or love in a relationship since some partners use dowry as a measure of their worth or value. According to the experience of one participant, offering a dowry to a bride could result in better treatment by the groom's family. Yet, the participant also described cases in which the groom's discontent with the bride's physical appearance manifested itself after the wedding, maybe due to the dowry. The participant believed that dowry can be a reason for divorce.

Now what happens is, when given dahej to a girl, her in-laws treat her nice. After marriage, after the girl goes to the boy's home, the boy says "No, this girl is not beautiful". After staying together for a while, he says that he does not like her now. That is due to dahej. The main reason is dahej. That is how divorce happens. (FGD, P2)

That is true. The groom's family agrees to the marriage primarily because of the dowry offered by the bride's family. However, after the marriage, the groom starts finding faults with the bride. (FGD, P1)

5.3.3 Suggestions from the Participants

A part of the participants suggested that dowry needs to be stopped with collective action for progress, while a majority of the participants shared that it is not possible in their village due to illiteracy.

First, people need to move forward. To end the dowry system, if all people do some rally or strike, then it might help a bit. (FGD, P1)

Illiterate people do not learn anything. The greatest issue is dahej. Nobody is taking any action. People need to move forward, and there should be a legal case for such matters. (FGD, P2)

I will also be in support. (FGD, P6)

5.4 Love-marriage Restrictions

The participants discussed on love and marriage. They mentioned that love is banned in their village. They noted that that the rich ones in the village have less restrictions when it comes to following village norms and rules.

No, loving someone is not acceptable. It is considered sin. (FGD, P2)

It is not allowed. You know, some rich people, they have love stories and love marriages, but for us, its rear, may be 5%. (FGD, P1)

That is not allowed for us. (FGD, P5)

That's a bad thing, wrong thing. Wherever parents let us marry, with that person only, we get married. (FGD, P2)

Participants shared that there are incidents where love marriage is banned, and people face punishment or fines for going against the norms, for loving someone. When participants were asked probe questions about who would be fined or punished, they shared that their village has a Panchayat system, and members of the Panchayat decide on important matters for the villagers.

Yes, they will get punished or fined. (FGD, P1)

That is... Oh my god, that will lose their honor, people say. Respect will be gone, and it is a shame. If someone finds out that a girl and boy are in a love affair, they have to pay a fine to the village leader after the village meeting. (MIL, IDI, Anju)

The Panchayat: The participants from the FGD were further asked about how the Panchayat system is functioning in their village. They stated that if something goes wrong in the village, there is a Panchayat to resolve the issue. The participants illustrated example on how Panchayat helps to resolve issues in their village.

Panchayat, for example, if I marry someone who is not from my caste, or if a girl is found to have a love affair with someone, both the girl and boy including the family members will be taken to Panchayat. The village owner 'Mukhiya', is the one to judge and solve issues. He is the head of the ward. All the villagers sit together, and Mukhiya discusses with the other 10 important people, The Mayor will also be present. The majority of their opinion on that matter wins the case. That is Panchayat. They will separate the girl and the boy, and both have to pay a fine to the leader (FGD, P1).

5.4.1 Attitudes Toward Autonomy in Partner Selection Among Unmarried Girls

The young unmarried girls had slightly different opinions on love marriage and finding a partner by themselves. Some of them expressed their desire for autonomy in choosing their partners and their willingness to negotiate with their parents.

If my parents ask my opinions before I marry, then I will search and find myself a partner who can be on my level. Otherwise, if they search by themselves, I must accept the proposal. (YUG, Participant 1)

So, I am thinking of love marriage, will fall in true love, making my parents accept us. If my parents refuse, I will tell them to first look and get to know him, because if I tell my parents about my love affair, it will be because there is something in him. And I must leave him if my parents do not like him. But if they accept, there will be heaven on earth. (YUG, Participant 3)

One of the participants described the reason for liking love marriage, she gave a brief comparison between arranged and love marriage.

In an arranged marriage, if a girl makes a mistake, the boy can say to his parents "She was your choice, so handle by yourself". But if it is a marriage and the boy's parents complain to the boy about a girl, the boy will say "Ok, I will talk to her. There will be fewer problems in the love marriage, I think. (YUG, Participant 5)

5.4.2 Caste-based Discrimination in Love-Marriage

Two of the participants were affected by loving a boy from a different caste. The participants shared their experiences and challenges from being in love with someone from a different caste to the process of getting married and even after marriage.

My caste was superior. I knew that my family would never allow me to be with someone seen as lower caste. That guy, whom I ran away with..... (silene) ... My family, mainly my uncles and father got furious when they found out. They searched for us, they even took help from the police and found us. Then they separated us, they warned him not to come near me and my family's shadow again, suddenly my parents got me married to another boy.... you know my uncle and father had hired someone to kill both of us. He said "If they were found, don't bring them home, cut them into pieces, and throw them in the jungle", I heard this later from my younger sister. (DIL, IDI, Pooja)

Mamata, on the other hand, shared a different experience where she was cut off by her natal family because she ran away with a lover who belonged to a lower caste. The participant explained:

Even though I married by running away with the person I love, I was constantly living in fear because my family was threatening me. My father was not even worried about where his daughter was or what she was doing. He said, "Let her do what she likes, she is already dead for me, I do not care. "This is what he said there. You know my family told me they will bring me home and cut me and bury me into the ground if this...., (pause) ... if my husband leaves me. My brothers called me and said this. (DIL, IDI, Maya)

Caste-love restrictions can face a lot of resistance and conflict, particularly from families who may not approve of the union due to cultural or traditional reasons. In the case of Maya, she had to elope with her husband due to both of her family's disapproval, which caused a lot of stress and uncertainty. Furthermore, the participant stated her mother-in-law was unsupportive and even pressured her to have an abortion, which was very difficult for the participant.

So, after eloping with my lover, we went to another place called Hariya (name changed), rented a room there, and stayed together for 1.5 months. There I got pregnant. His mother was telling me to go for an abortion when she called me in phone, but his father told him not to do that. I had no hope for his mother because she was so rude to me, but I had hopes from his father. One day my husband's father came to take my husband home, he promised to contact me in a few days and said, 'I will again come in a few days to take you home.' But whenever I called him, he always said 'few more days.' I was left alone there.....When I kept ringing him, he said, 'Don't call me, do whatever you like, go wherever you want, I don't care.' That's all he said." My husband used to call me hiding from his parents. He used to say, "Stay there, I will come back", that is what he used to say. (DIL, IDI, Maya)

The participant shared that her father-in-law lied to her about taking her to his home, and that's when she started to fear that they wouldn't let her husband come to her.

When he still did not come after 26 days, I started having the biggest fears; That my family is not on my side, how can I raise my baby alone? What will happen if my husband does not accept me if he does not come back to me? Not even my own family would help me with anything... that was my fear. (DIL, IDI, Maya)

5.5 Domestic Violence in Arranged Marriages: A Caste-based Perspective

It is a rare occurrence for inter-caste marriage to happen with the agreement of both the parents and the groom. However, one participant shared that her parents paid a large dowry to the groom because her father was rich. Despite being an inter-caste marriage, it was performed with all the traditional rituals of an arranged marriage.

My marriage happened with social rituals. Mother and father married me very well, at great expense, thinking that their son-in-law is a government employee. So, their girl will not face any troubles.

The participant recalled how she was treated in the first few years of her marriage and how she was treated in the latter years. She shared that they treated her well in the beginning, but later started making her feel unwelcome and isolated. She felt neglected and unhappy during the latter years of her marriage as the family members started treating her as untouchable.

After our marriage, when I came to my husband's home, everyone showed me love for a few days, including my mother and father-in-law, and my husband. My devar (brother-in-law) laughed and said, "She is from a big house. Now she will get dirt from the mud of our hut." The house was very small, even the laborers' home who used to work in my father's land was larger than his. When I arrived, the toilet had no door. My devar went to the shop and brought the newspaper to cover the toilet on all four sides. My Jethani (sister-in-law) told me this a few days after my marriage, saying that this had been done for me because "your skin gets dirty if you sleep in this house." As you know, it is said that a woman's husband's home is always dear to her, regardless of the house's condition. I had no problem with that; it was important to me.

The participant described how caste played a major role in her and her small children's deprivation of food, as her devrani and jethani would only rather give food to the cattle and not them.

I experienced days when my small kids used to cry a lot due to hunger. At home, they had rice, lentils, and everything else we needed to eat. You know, a baby should eat three to four times a day, but they deprived me and my kids of food. My devrani and jethani gave all the food to the buffalos, not us. If we touched the food pots, they would give all the food to the cattle and ask my children, "Why did you touch my food?" You know, people of high caste don't eat food touched by low caste... so they treated us the same way. They did not let us touch or eat any food. Even when I told my husband that we were not getting enough food, he would say, "You might be getting everything to eat that has been prepared at home." He never listened or trusted me... he would always say, "Whatever others say at home, they are right, and you are wrong. The mistake is yours, that is why the family is not behaving well with you." When my kids grew a little bigger, they started to understand the feeling of hunger, and they longed for food... (the voice breaks)... Many issues arose when it came to giving food to my children. In desperation, I would only tell the neighboring grandmother or aunt that my son was very hungry, and if there was any remaining food, I would ask them to bring it... Oh my god, my child used to cry due to excessive hunger...

The participant also talked about the impact of hunger on their sleep, and how she had spent days and nights just drinking water.

No, when they ask for food my devrani and jethani said that it's their wish whether to give me food or not. they said "do whatever you like" ... (Even to children ...?) Yes yes, said bad even to children. You know, I could sleep just by drinking water at night, sometimes you know? they used to leave rice for us, only rice, not soup, not curry... for how long we could stay like that... I could not sleep well because of hunger, I used to get up 4 times, 5 times from sleep and drank water and slept hard to overcome hunger... got up, drank water, again slept, again got up, drank water. . . .

The participant kept speaking, she described how she worked to make food available for her small kids,

Oh god, if a goat, an animal also needs food to survive, it will also ask for water and food, I am a human being, how can I survive being hungry? It is my compulsion. And not only me has a stomach. . . yeah even if I eat food by washing other peoples' dishes... is it enough to survive with the dish washing? How will I manage children's studies... poor child! Every small the child should get the same facilities as a rich child

The participant further stated the severity of the discrimination, as she was kicked from the house and forced to live in an unsanitary and dangerous environment with no support from her husband or in-laws and was only allowed back into their house after a tragic incident.

My jethani and devrani forced me to leave their house and was relocated to a small, thatched hut with children. The hut had only one room, where we cooked, ate, slept, stored grass and wood, kept a goat, and the children played. The room was always messy and dirty, very congested, with the bed and sewing machine taking up most of the space, and I feared that we might catch some infection due to the unsanitary conditions. One day, we had a close call when a snake emerged from the firewood area and could have bitten me or my children. I saw the snake and we immediately ran out of the house, and it entered a sack. We cooked our food in the same room, and rats would come in search of food, followed by snakes. On another occasion, my daughter saw a snake near the stove. I my sons when he was just four years old.... (voice breaks). . . . The evening before he was playing and seemed perfectly fine. However, in the middle of the night, around 2 a.m., he wanted me to breastfeed him, but I did not allow it because I was weaning him. Later that morning, around 6 a.m., I saw him sleeping and I went about doing my household chores. However, when my daughter saw him, she came running and told me 'Brother is not moving, mother!' Upon checking him, I saw that his fists were closed, and he could neither sit nor stand. He was breathing slowly like he

was in a coma. I rushed him to the hospital, but his condition did not improve over the next two days. He could not speak, nor could he move. Sadly, my son passed away after two days. My husband only came home after our baby had died. No one helped me take him to the hospital when he fell ill. My husband had already stopped talking to me at that time. I had to take my son to the government hospital all by myself. Nobody supported me during this difficult time. My father-in-law did come to the hospital after I had taken my son there, but if only he had informed my husband earlier, my husband could have come and spoken to the doctors or taken my son to a better place where he could have survived. . . .(the participant takes a moment to compose herself). . . Sister, my son was so cute, nice, healthy, and chubby. He was everything to me, and even now, thinking about him melts my heart and causes me immense pain. Only after I lost my child. . . only after that incident did they allow me to enter their house.

5.6 Power Dynamics in Mother-in-Law and Daughter-in-Law Relationships

5.6.1 Daughters-in-Law's Perception Towards Mothers-in-Law

The majority of the participants shared that their mothers-in-law are restrictive and controlling, and they have no freedom at all.

You know, they did not allow me to talk to anyone from outside of the house. If I spoke to someone by mistake, then my sisters-in-law would complain to my mother-in-law, saying "She has talked to this person", and then my mother-in-law would scold me a lot, asking "What were you suggesting to him? What were you telling them?" I did not go anywhere because I was still a newlywed, so even if I spoke to anyone, it would lead to complaints and scolding." (DIL, IDI, Jyoti)

The participants explained the inequalities that exist within the family. One of the participants shared that she is getting unfair treatment compared to sisters-in-law who receives more recognition and appreciation despite not contributing as much to the household.

My elder sister-in-law has been living in the city with her husband and children. She has kept a small shop, and our brother-in-law is also working. When they come here for festivals, they give something to our mother-in-law, and she gets happy. She compares me with her. Is it not me who is taking care of all the house chores? Who sees that? (DIL, IDI, Devi)

Pooja shared that she had experienced torture not only from her own parents before marriage but also from her in-laws after getting married. She sadly expressed how her husband's family treats her with disdain and mistreats.

There is no good schedule for eating and sleeping here. I have to keep working and working. I have a small baby, so I should be working less than my elder sister-in-law. One day, during a festival, our whole family was invited and later at night I was sleeping after a tiring day of working all day serving guests. My mother-in-law's daughter told me to get up. She said "Oi pooja, get up. Oi Pooja, get up". I heard my mother tell her "Why are you waking her up, let her sleep". But she said, "We need to tie goats". I woke up and went to tie the goat. My elder sister-in-law was sitting there. She could also do that instead of waking me up at midnight. My mother got angry with them. (DIL, IDI, Pooja)

The participant describes how her mother-in-law discriminates against her based on her husband's lack of employment, favoring her elder daughter-in-law over her.

My mother-in-law has been neglecting and separating me while eating good food. She is secretly eating good food with her elder daughter-in-law, not giving it to me. You know my husband is not earning money, that is why she does that. (DIL, IDI, Pooja)

5.6.2 Navigating the Role of Daughter-in-Law

Based on the participants' view, it was noted that being a daughter-in-law and wife has been a challenging experience for them. They express a strong desire to stay at their mother's house and feel sad when they are away from their parents. For example, one participant mentioned that disputes with her husband and other family members cause her distress, which sometimes makes her want to go to her parent's house. She appears to have had conflicts with her sister-in-law and describes her as having a "big mouth" which according to her means speaking negatively about others. Additionally, she mentions that when there are no fights at home, she enjoys staying there, but when there is a dispute, she feels unhappy and does not want to eat or work.

Overall, their experiences proved that the participants' experiences as daughters-in-law and wives have been marked by conflict and tension. They struggle with adjusting to a new family and dealing with disputes that arise within it.

I do not like to stay here. I always wanted to stay at my mother's house. Because I used to cry, and my parents used to get worried. Sometimes, when I tell my husband to do something, and if he does not like to do it, then a dispute occurs. Sometimes, if I do not do what he tells me to do, then also there would be a dispute. I have one younger sister-in-law. And yes, sometimes it is normal to have disputes between devrani and jethani. My devrani has 'big mouth' There is one with a big mouth, who speaks bad, badmouthing. When there is no fight at home,

I like to stay, like to eat, drink, and sit. When there is a fight, I do not feel good, I do not like to eat, do not like to work. Hmm. . . . (DIL, IDI, Mamata)

However, there was another opinion that conflicted with all other participants. This participant believed that it is always difficult for a girl after marriage, but slowly the relationship will eventually become better after giving birth to a child.

Have you ever heard a mother-in-law treating her daughter-in-law nicely? Because it is how it is. We should try to work all and everything then only we get love. Also, my husband, for a few months it is always good to have a husband, but slowly there will be fights, again later, after you give birth, after a few years, and they also support us. (DIL, IDI, Devi)

The participants discussed the challenges of building positive relationships between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law, emphasizing the need for effort and working together. The participant also reflects on the challenges of marriage, acknowledging that conflicts may arise over time but suggesting that these challenges can be overcome with support from one's partner. Overall, the participants highlight the difficulties of navigating cultural and societal norms in the pursuit of building strong relationships, due to the inherent tensions among these relations.

A part of the participants commented on the lack of freedom in traditional households.

And the last time my parents came to visit me, they wanted to take me home with them for a few days. However, my mother-in-law did not allow me to go with them. She is a very clever person, you know. Do you know how she treats her own daughter? Her daughter is currently staying with her, and my mother-in-law has been keeping her for many days. And as for me, I am not even allowed to go with my parents. My mother told me that she was going to fight with them during the festival. (DIL, IDI, Pooja)

5.6.3 Mother-in-law's Traditional Gender Roles and Expectations for Daughters-in-Law

The participants gave vivid examples of the intricacies and difficulties of intergenerational family interactions and cultural expectations. The participants expressed their frustration with the changing dynamics between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law in contemporary times. In the past, daughters-in-law had to work hard to earn the approval and respect of their mothers-in-law, but today, the participants feel that the value of the mother-in-law has decreased, and daughters-in-law may even mistreat them.

Nowadays, it is easy for daughters and daughters-in-law. The value of mother-in-law has decreased now... this is a true thing. The

daughters-in-law of today, have even beaten their mother-in-law, used bad words, and scolded. My daughter-in-law does the same. always in pain, my life, happiness never came to me. (MIL, IDI, Sunita)

Sunita's observations and experience suggest that the traditional values of respect for in-laws and taking care of them have been lost today, leaving many mothers-in-law longing for more respect, appreciation, and support from her sons and daughters-in-law.

When my daughter-in-law does not serve me food and does not talk nicely, then it hurts a little. If I talk to her, there will be a fight, so I stay quiet. when I feel sick, when I tell this to my daughter-in-law, she just nods her head, She does not even tell me "Let's go to a hospital, or I will give you money, go and buy medicines", She does not say all these... No, she does not. I myself go to a doctor, I borrow medicines from a doctor, and tell him to pay later... and when I have money, I go and pay the doctor. Sometimes, I take a neighbor with me to pay, and later I pay him when I can afford it. Son does not stay always at home. And the daughter-in-law tells my son that she has done everything for me. (MIL, IDI, Priya)

Another participant also shared a similar view that reflected the traditional gender roles and expectations for daughters-in-law to provide financial and material support to their mother-in-law in the absence of their sons.

Reema (the elder daughter-in-law), gives me money, clothes, and food while Simran (the other daughter-in-law), doesn't give. One day, I asked Simran for money to travel to my brother's house. She said she had no money. I was about to go to meet my sick brother. Later in the evening, my son came and asked me why I had not gone yet. I replied that I did not have any money, so I could not go. Later that night, my son secretly took 200 rupees and gave it to me. If Reema were here, she would have given me money anyhow. Even if she did not have any money, she would have borrowed from neighbors.

Another participant shared an incident about her daughter-in-law not serving and caring for her husband's parents or relatives.

My elder daughter-in-law does not listen to me and does not agree with what I ask her to do. If she does not agree with me, why should I stay with her? I live alone in front of her house. She makes the food at her place, and then I go to her house to serve myself. After that, I bring the food to my own house to eat. She does not call me to eat food, nor does she serve me food or water. It is her duty to serve me food and water, but she does not even serve water to me. When my brother visited me during the election time, I asked my daughter-in-law to make 'roti' for him. But, she refused, saying it was too hot to cook. So, I cooked the roti and fed him myself. What would my brother

think?.....that I have to do everything even though I have a daughter-in-law. I also bought and boiled milk and fed him two rotis before he left. (MIL, IDI, Mahadevi)

She gives me a lot of tension. My only stress is that my daughter in law, she won't agree to clean... she works by her own interest, if she wants, she cleans, otherwise no. I tell her to do, but she does not agree. (MIL, IDI, Sony)

5.6.4 Family Cohesion and Separation

According to the majority of the participants, it was found that they value a big family where all members stay together.

I should not tell you a lie. My elder daughter-in-law's husband earns a lot of money. He used to look after his brothers' children as well. Then she told me that if they stayed separate, her husband wouldn't have to feed everyone in the family. They could save money and use it only for themselves. When she was not separated from us, a fight would usually start over work-related issues, such as not cooking food on time or not feeding her husband's brothers and all the children. Sometimes she would create a fight with me and say, 'I won't work. My husband is working and providing for you, why should I work? Everyone can work and feed their children at home. I won't stay here to feed their children and others. I will stay separate (chuttiyera basne¹), so I will leave you.' I have no grudge against him. He is doing his own work, earning, and feeding his family, and it is good for him. The other two sons, if they eat, I also eat. If they stay hungry, I also stay hungry, but I will never beg anyone. I won't even step into my elder son's house. (MIL, IDI, Priya)

Another participant also had a similar view.

She (daughter-in-law) however made my son agree with her to leave the house... She had never mentioned to me about going, she just sat in the vehicle and left already. She did not say anything to me that she was going. My son said "Mother, my wife is not going to come back, he also said, I will come back from abroad, and when I come, I will also not stay there, My son said, I will stay in another city He said, "mother, I will make a house for you there, but I will stay in Kathmandu (changed name of city)". My son should have tried to resolve any misunderstandings instead of asking his wife to leave. (MIL, IDI, Sunita)

A part of the participants stated that if they tell anyone about the situation with their son and daughters-in-law, people will start laughing at them. So, they believe it's better to keep their matters and problems with them.

¹Participant used the Nepali term "chuttiyera basne" to refer to the situation where a daughter-in-law and son decide to live separately from the son's parents following a disagreement or other reasons.

If I tell this to anyone, people will start laughing at me. so, I don't tell anyone... people will say "Her own son and daughter-in-law is not treating her properly... "You know, people will say "ghar fute toh gawar lute" ...because if I tell others, then they can come and tell me that it's because of my fault that my son and daughter-in-law left me. Even if I tell this to others, then others will tell my daughter-in-law, and again she will backfire me.

"Ghar fute toh gawar lute" is a proverb that roughly translates to "when a house breaks, fools plunder".

5.6.5 Changing Dynamics of the Role of Mother-in-Law in Contemporary Times: From being daughter-in-law till being a mother-in-law

All the participants (mothers-in-law) agreed that in the past when they were daughters-in-law, they held a significant role in the household and were expected to take an active part in the family's relationships and responsibilities.

During the conversation, participants shared the daily activities they used to perform when they were daughters-in-law, highlighting how gender roles have shifted from generation to generation.

I used to get up early in the morning and fill the water pots. Then, I would take the cattle out of the shed and feed them grass and water. After that, I would sweep the floor, make food, and feed everyone. Once they finished eating, I would clean the dishes and then go to the farm for other work. This was my normal daily routine. Nowadays, I stay at home and look after my grandchildren. Sometimes during harvesting season, I work in rice cultivation. My daughter-in-law looks after the household work, which includes cooking food, cleaning dishes, taking care of guests during festivals, and cleaning the house." (MIL, IDI, Priya)

All the participants shared their household stories, during which a majority of them stated that they had intense sorrow back then due to extreme workload, poverty, and abuse from their fathers-in-law.

We suffered a lot when we were daughters-in-law, when we were staying together with our father and mother-in-law. Worked a lot at home and at the field... I came to my husband's home after marriage and used to go to the field, and plant paddy. I cut wheat and planted wheat, cut grass, raised castles, ox... . . . Everything we did. . . For 15 years we worked there, and then we separated and stayed alone. Now our brother-in-law stay with them. (MIL, IDI, Anju)

Back then, we had intense sorrow. Now is better than past. Much better. Then I had to follow what others ordered me to do. . . (MIL, IDI, Sony)

Some of the participants remembered their mothers-in-law as kind and innocent figure who never caused any harm to them.

My mother-in-law never gave me any problems. never ever scolded me. ... we cooked and ate together. My mother-in-law never scolded me, never wronged us. My mother-in-law has never beaten me. (MIL, IDI, Mahadevi)

She was like 'a piece of bottle'.... Very innocent. She never said anything to me. I never got any problems, any pain from her. (MIL, IDI, Priya)

5.6.5.1 Women's resilience and hardship in patriarchal societies: Stories of abuse and escape

Although the mothers-in-law used to be nice, the participant stated that they got tortured by father-in-law and shared incidents of their father-in-law abusing them.

I had a toothache, and my teeth were decayed and painful... (few seconds of silence) I was sleeping when my father-in-law asked me to go cut grass for the cattle. I told him I couldn't go because I wasn't feeling well, and my teeth were swollen and painful. However, he insisted that my sisters-in-law had gone to cut grass and that I was the only one staying at home and sleeping. When I refused to go, he got angry and beat me up. I tried to stop him with my hand, and I still can feel pain from where he hit me. This, my foot (showing left leg) was all swollen... (eyes with tears) it still hurts from that pain. He would only not beat us if he saw us working. We couldn't even sleep for a while during the whole day. Sometimes, if we stayed free after lunch, he would start shouting and scolding. If my mother-in-law stopped him from hitting us, he would beat her too. Even today, two daughters-in-law stay with them, and he beats them too. (MIL, IDI, Sunita)

The participant was asked if her neighbors knew about the abuse, to which she replied,

The neighbors, they all saw it. But if they said anything, my father-in-law would scold them too. He frequently said, 'This is the matter inside my house. It's none of your business.' So, the neighbours didn't say anything." He called us 'pig's child' and asked when the food would be ready even if we were still sleeping in the morning. this habit is not unique to my father-in-law, but it is the same for all in-laws.....fathers-in-law in the village. (MIL, IDI, Mahadevi)

The participants shared their stories of escaping from their in-laws' houses to avoid their frustration with the lack of food and mistreatment by their father-in-law. The interviewee described how they planned to leave the

house and seek refuge at their parent's house, where they stayed for a few days until their father-in-law came to take them back. This explained the hardships faced by women in patriarchal societies and their resilience in coping with difficult situations.

Our father-in-laws used to beat us if we sat ideally, or if we did not do as he wanted. I have run away from that house when I was newlywed. I ran away to my parents' house three times after being beaten up. Later, my husband brought me back home. I stayed at my parent's house for a year. Once my husband had gone to another city, and I was beaten up. So, I ran away from home and stayed with my parents. I walked a lot, from Piluwa to Birgunj, and I didn't even have one rupee in my pocket to travel by bus.(MIL, IDI, Anju)

One day, my two sisters-in-law and I ran away from the house. (Laughs...) What happened was that we were having problems with food at our house. We had less food, and we had never faced a food crisis at my parents' house before. My husband worked in people's farms and agriculture, while one of my sisters-in-law's husband worked in the city. The other sister-in-law stayed home and did the housework. My husband ploughed the field with an ox and worked in other people's fields. He would receive rice instead of money from the field owner. We would thresh the rice in a rice mill and use it for food. One day, all of us except for one sister-in-law had gone to work in someone's field. The field owner gave us lunch - beaten rice and dalmoth (a spicy snack). We brought it home and shared it among all of us. We felt so bad that we had to share even the little food we had. On top of that, our father-in-law always tortured us with food issues. He would tell us what to do and comment on our work. Not only that, he would beat us brutally. That day, we felt so tortured and didn't get enough food, and all three daughters-in-law decided to do something because we had never faced such difficulty at our parents' house. So, we lost interest in working at that house. First, one sister-in-law ran away, then the other took a grass basket and a sickle and went outside. Everyone thought she was going to cut grass, but she kept the basket in a sugarcane field and ran to her parents' house. Now, I was left alone. I thought, "If I stay here, I have to do all the work alone without getting enough food. How can I finish all the work alone?" My husband was plowing the field in our backyard. I put on my sari, got ready, and when I was going out, my husband saw me and asked, "Where are you going?" I said I was going to the public hospital to buy medicine. Then I went to my parents' house, and we stayed there for a few days.

After a few days, our father-in-law came to each of our houses to get us. First, he went to my middle sister-in-law's house. Her parents had a "tanga" (a horse-drawn vehicle). Our father-in-law came on the tanga with my middle sister-in-law, and they both came to my house. Then we both sat on the tanga (participant laughed), and we went to

the younger devrani 's house. He picked all three of us one by one, and we all went back to that house. (MIL, IDI, Priya)

5.7 Domestic Violence: The voice of survivors

Several participants expressed that their lives have been filled with indescribable pain. One participant, who had arranged an inter-caste marriage, explained that dowry was the reason for the success of her marriage, as being from a lower caste would have made it difficult to marry someone from a comparable high caste. She shared her chain of tragedies after entering her new family with a heavy dowry.

I am from a backward class, but we are a nice family, having property, and land, I was an honorable daughter at my parents' home. I did not have to do any work at home... I was always pampered as being youngest sister of the four siblings. I was grown up with love and care at my father's home. But after marriage... my father. Thinking good for me... yeah... giving daan – dahej (donated dowry) my father gave a lot of money, fed food to the neighbors and relatives. (Incomplete sentence) Yeah, there are days when a person faces hard times, but later happiness will come. Sadness and happiness will continue, but my time was getting worse. I am spending my life in pain. the pain is too much to describe.... Sister, if you were to hear about my pain, your eyes would fill with tears...(voice cracks)... What shall I tell? Ever since I married, I have only faced pain everywhere. The pain is so much that I don't know what to say. If you hear about my pain, your eyes will be filled with tears.

The participant shared that the first few months of relation with husband and her family was good, which later started to be complicated, and again after giving birth of a son, the family members and her husband started showing love and affection, which lasted only for few months.

They also became happy when I gave birth to son... they showed me affection, love, care... but after 6 or 7 months later, slowly, all the love started to diminish.

One of the participants shared that the abuse against her started with verbal threats, which then escalated to physical abuse.

At first, he did not use to beat me up, he only used to tell me "I won't slap or beat you, I will torture you a lot, I will make your condition so worse that later you will pray to god to not born as a human being in next birth... if you speak more, I will apply electric shock on you, & you won't be able to speak anything.." I do not even know what happens when electric shock is applied.

Sometimes, to show sisters-in-law, he used to beat me two or three times, but not a lot.

The participant stated that when her husband started beating her, her in-laws also started mistreating her.

My devrani and jethani, they both also started to insult me when they saw my husband not supporting me. Then my mother-in-law, along with my devrani and jethani, would beat me and torture me. If I ever spoke up when they scolded me, my mother-in-law would tell me, "Then get out of my home".

5.7.1 Blame, Restriction, and Isolation: A Struggle for Communication and Freedom

The participant expressed feeling blamed for the family's poor behaviour towards her and experiencing a lack of communication with her husband who dismissed her concerns.

He would reply, "The mistake is yours, that is why the family is not behaving well with you". Even if I share something- he would say, 'I come home to take rest, and why are you complaining me this and that'. I used to feel I might have some weakness or some bad points, that's why he is behaving me such. When he came home, whom shall I talk to if I can't talk to my husband? At first, I thought maybe he is having some problems. He might have some compulsions. But he had no such compulsions... then the problem is he never even listened to me. if he would only listen to me, talk to me, it would make me very happy.

The participant recalled her husband throwing away her phone, and her in-laws restricting her freedom.

And he would not allow me to use my phone. My brother had given me a phone, but he seized that. He said, "You can neither keep a phone, nor can talk to me, or anyone." You know, they did not allow me to talk to anyone outside of the house. If I spoke to someone by mistake, then there would be trouble. I didn't go anywhere, since I was a newlywed, so if I spoke to anyone, my devrani and jethani would complain to my mother-in-law like "She talked to this person," and then my mother-in-law would scold me a lot and ask, "What were you telling them?"

5.7.2 Financial Neglect and Emotional Trauma

The participant noted that he would make her feel as if he would divert the blame towards her in response to her concerns:

Even when he beats me, his family members give him full support. Sometimes when I tell him that he does not listen and understand me, he will say, You have to be nice; you have to understand first; you have to be better.

The participant expressed feeling neglected by her husband who never provided her with financial support, causing her to suffer and cry frequently while struggling to provide for her children's needs.

He never gave me any money, and I used to wonder how to communicate my financial needs to him, thinking that as a husband and a father, he should have some idea about his family's necessities; however, this was not the case, and I would wait and cry for his attention while he disregarded my feelings and only gave me like 20 or 50 rupees, leaving me to worry about how to provide for my small children's basic needs like clothes and education, which should also be his responsibility to understand and fulfill; he earns money, yet the child lacks basic clothing like pants and shirts and he has no sense to realize it's time for the baby to start school. It should also be his responsibility to be aware of these things.

Even today he tells me he doesn't care. He still tells me that he has nothing to do with us. . . "Those kids, those children, they don't belong to me anymore. Nobody is mine", he says.

The participant expressed the emotional impact of her financial struggles, sharing an incident and how even thinking about that day makes her "soul cry".

There was one time when my child was sick, and my children were very small. We needed to cross the bridge to get to the hospital, and we had no slippers on our feet, not even my children. We had to walk on a tin material that got extremely hot due to the sun. The little one, I had carried him but the elder daughter, she was 7 years old... she still remembers that day. When I think of that day, my soul still cries... we did not have slippers. You know by luck; we had taken a water bottle with us, and we poured the water on our feet to cool them down, but it didn't help much. In front of me, there was a person with a cycle, he had slippers on his feet. His feet were not boiling like ours. He was right in front of me, he was riding a bicycle very slowly... relaxing... my girl's feet were burning, even mine was burning... I asked him to increase his speed so we could run, but he was riding very slowly. It was Baisakh/Jestha month (May-June) and walking barefoot was unbearable. My daughter's feet were burning, and I felt like I was walking on a hot pan. We finally reached the hospital, and I got medicine for my child. Public hospitals open at 10, and there's always a huge crowd, but we had no choice.

5.7.3 Physical Abuse and Psychological Manipulation by Spouse and In-Laws

The participant explained the incidents and how her sisters-in-law used to turn her husband against her, and her husband abused her. The physical abuse was so severe that the participant felt like she was "exploding" and

compares the beatings to how blacksmiths beat iron. Additionally, her mother was present during one of the beatings but was unable to intervene as her daughter was brutally attacked.

During that period, my jethani accused me of beating his mother. It was a very stressful situation for me. My jethani went to my mother's house and brought her to our house. When they arrived, my jethani entered the gate but locked my mother outside, so she was standing there watching as my husband beat me severely in front of her. Then he directly caught my ponytail from the back and pulled me backward with the ponytail till he reached the ground. I could not understand what was happening. He started beating me so hard, a lot, a lot, let's not talk about it... broken voice... (crying) he beat me up the whole day, I got so many bruises, I felt like I was exploding. Do you know how he beat me? Like how blacksmiths beat iron to make sickle! He kept accusing me of hitting his mother. I did not understand why he was beating me so brutally. He threatened to bury me alive in the earth. When I asked him who had told him that I had hit his mother, he said nobody, but he kept repeating the accusation and continued to beat me. Eventually, my sisters-in-law and other family members also joined in the assault. Then everyone beat me, the whole day.

The participant shared that in the past, she had even thought that marrying someone who had a simple profession, like a rickshaw or auto driver, would make her happy as long as he could provide for her children.

I used to pray to God and tell him that if I married a poor man, even if he only earned 10 Rs and could provide for my children's meals, I would be happy. "At the time, I even thought that if a man with a simple job like a rickshaw or auto driver asked me to go with him, I would have gone. If he had promised to take care of my children's expenses, I would have gone with him without any hesitation. But this man, I don't want to be with someone like my current husband. I never want this person.

The participant also said that her husband speaks poorly about her to the whole village and presents himself as truthful and intelligent.

He tells bad about me to the entire village, if someone talks to him, he will speak as if he is 100% true speaking. He is very intelligent in giving reasons... only a few people know what kind of person he is... very fake.

5.7.4 Coping Strategies of Violence Survivors: Solitude and Religion

The majority of the participants mentioned that they would sit and cry alone with nobody to share their stress. A part of the participants expressed that they wouldn't want to burden their father or anyone in their parent's house with their problems.

To nobody. I would sit alone, and just sit and cry. (DIL, IDI, Maya)

Also, I would not give any tension to my father, not even to anyone in my parent 's house. If children face problems and suffer, they should not tell their parents, if it can be tolerated, then it should be tolerated. But I was thinking of telling my father once, by the time he was dead already. (DIL, IDI, Jyoti)

In response to how they would deal with or face their stressful situation, some of the participants stated that they would remember God. However, many participants were seen negotiating with God when they faced distress.

.....When my sisters-in-law isolated me and did not give me anything to eat, I used to ask God, "Oh god, you have not provided me enough food to eat" I mean, when God sent us on earth, Then he will also have to provide enough food. Oh God, you have not sent enough food to my children. What mistake have I made that you did not send me food...? (participant paused) (DIL, IDI, Jyoti)

The research has unveiled the intricate web of dynamics enveloping dowry practices, gender-based violence, and the lived experiences of women in Bhodaha VDC. In summation, the findings illuminate the multi-layered and intricate nature of dowry and violence issues within Bhodaha VDC. These highlighted themes resonate as shared experiences among a diverse array of participants. By organizing the presentation around these overarching themes, this study not only provides a comprehensive overview of the findings but also acknowledges the profound interconnectedness of the matters under scrutiny. For example, the central topic under investigation is the relationship between dowry and various forms of violence, abuse, and disrespect experienced by women.

Chapter 6

Discussion

In this part, the implications of the current study have been critically explored. The findings of this study have been compared to those of prior studies, and any limitations and prospects have been discussed. By doing so, I intend to add to the participant's comprehension and provide insights for future research. To this end, I employed qualitative research methods to gather data from a diverse sample of participants.

6.1 Dowry, Domestic Violence, and Education: Young Girls' Perspectives

The following findings highlight the challenges faced by young unmarried girls in Bhodaha, including societal pressure, criticism, and discrimination. The participants in this study share their personal experiences of how society shapes their treatment by family members and their desire to pursue education despite societal beliefs that it will lead to negative consequences.

It was found that young unmarried girls in the village were aware of the prevalent dowry demands during marriage. They were exposed to the experiences of other women and their married friends, which made them anticipate the possible scenarios that could unfold in their own married lives. Unfortunately, these young girls normalized morally unacceptable behavior, believing they might face similar situations in their marriages and feeling helpless to resist it.

The participants shared their views on married life and expressed concerns about their relationships with their future in-laws. One participant stated, *In-laws can never be parents*, highlighting the potential challenge of maintaining the same level of autonomy and freedom as they have with their parents. Another participant expressed hope that her future in-laws would treat her like a daughter, saying, *I want to be treated with kindness and understanding*. However, the participants also acknowledged the possibility of conflict or disagreement with their future family members, with one participant stating, *I do not want them to be angry with me*. This fear of conflict may stem from negative experiences in the past; as another participant

noted, *I have seen others who were frequently criticized by their family members.* Ultimately, the participants expressed a desire for peaceful and harmonious relationships with their future families, with one participant stating, *It would be nice if my future husband would support and understand me.*

Through the narratives shared by the participants, this study sheds light on how the intersection of poverty and gender inequality shapes the lives of young girls in Bhodaha and contributes to the belief that daughters are burdens on families, leading to a common desire for male offspring. For instance, one participant explicitly referred to poverty as a contributing factor to their family's preference for sons, stating, *We have less land but more siblings in my family. My parents gave birth to five daughters waiting to give birth to a son.* In addition, some participants stated a wish to be sons in the next life, revealing the deeply embedded nature of gender bias in their culture. One participant shared her experience of being frequently subjected to comments such as "Poor girl!" merely because she is not yet married, despite being the age at which most females in her society are. She lamented her parents' inability to pay for a dowry, a tradition that promotes the stereotype that girls are a financial burden on families. The participant's experience highlights how the practice of dowry and the social stigma faced by unmarried women perpetuate the belief that 'daughters are a liability rather than an asset' and contribute to the devaluation of young girls in Bhodaha (Ullrich, 2021).

The young girls expressed a desire to pursue further education as a means to achieve financial independence and establish a positive reputation in their new families, thus challenging the traditional expectations of marital roles and potentially preventing domestic violence after marriage. The experiences shared by the participants in the study reveal the significant challenges and barriers that prevent young girls from attaining the education they aspire to, particularly in a community where societal pressure and gender disparities prevail. Some of the participants expressed frustration and helplessness regarding the villagers' attitudes towards girls' education. They described how education is viewed as a "luxurious freedom" and how girls are discouraged from pursuing it due to the fear that it may lead them to fall in love and run away. This highlights the urgent need for understanding and support for girls' education, as the negative attitudes towards it among neighbors further impede their aspirations and goals. The participants' desire to study for a better future, aligns with Fuller's (2020) research on education, gender, and generational change in a Nepalese village, which emphasizes the transformative potential of education in challenging cultural and societal norms that perpetuate gender inequality and violence against women. Additionally, the finding that educated women may be viewed as less desirable due to their potential non-conformity to traditional gender roles is consistent with Ullrich's (2021) study and resonates with the experiences shared by the participants.

A critical analysis of gender stereotypes and the practice of dowry, as dis-

cussed in the articles by Priyanka et al. (2022) in Nepal and by K. Kaur (2016) in India, respectively, reveals the pervasive influence of patriarchal attitudes on the lives of girls and women in South Asia. The practice of dowry reinforces the idea that women are a financial burden on their families and not worth investing in, a belief that is mirrored in Nepalese society. In both India and Nepal, the impact of patriarchal beliefs on women's education is a major concern. The assumption that women are not worth investing in and that their primary job in life is to marry and satisfy the expectations of their husbands' families perpetuates gender inequity in both nations. In Bhodaha, for instance, the desire for male offspring and the practice of dowry combine to discourage investment in the education of girls.

This study further underscores the need to address harmful cultural beliefs and promote education as a sustainable and empowering solution, in contrast to dowry, which perpetuates gender inequality. By challenging the gendered expectations and traditional roles imposed on young girls, we can promote gender equality and empower girls to reach their full potential. This requires a cultural shift in attitudes toward girls' education and a comprehensive approach that addresses poverty, gender inequality, and harmful societal beliefs. These findings also suggest the need for further research to explore the cultural and social factors that contribute to these attitudes and how they shape gender roles and expectations in communities.

6.2 Marriage Process: complexities and challenges

This study reveals the intricate and challenging nature of arranged marriages prevalent among the study participants, which heavily relies on the cultural practice of dowry. The study uncovers the deep-rooted complexities associated with the selection process, financial burdens, and power dynamics involved in arranged marriages. Despite the active involvement of parents, family members, and neighbours in the selection process, the ultimate decision-making power is held by the fathers of the groom and bride. Shockingly, the study highlights the lack of agency granted to the bride, with participants reporting minimal input and a sense of commodification. The participants' perception of marriage as an outcome of destiny, as expressed by some of the study participants, reflects a deeply ingrained cultural belief. While such a perception may hold significant value within certain cultural contexts, it also raises questions about the agency and autonomy of women in such arrangements.

The study highlights how cultural practices are shaped by the social context in which they occur, and how they reflect the power dynamics and gender inequalities that exist within the studied community. The Barat system, where the groom's family goes to the bride's home for the wedding ceremony and later takes the bride to their home, is an

integral part of the wedding festivities in this community. Although such tradition is all around most parts of South Asia, as seen in the participants' example, the Barat system has also exerted pressure on the bride's family to provide the demanded amount of dowry. The discussion of the Barat system and dowry practices within the context of arranged marriages sheds light on the patrilineal, patrilocal, and virilocal nature of the studied community. The demand for dowry and the control over the selection process of the bride reflects the patrilineal nature of the community, where descent and inheritance are traced through the male line. Similarly, the fact that the bride is expected to leave her natal home and move into her husband's home after marriage reflects the virilocal nature of the community, where the groom's family holds more authority and power. The Barat system further highlights the patrilocal nature of the community, where the groom's family plays a dominant role in the marriage ceremony and festivities. These practices are intricately linked with gender roles and power dynamics, in line with Stone and King (2018), who analyzed how kinship structures shape and reinforce gender roles. Stone and King's framework offers a valuable lens through which to view the complexities of arranged marriages and dowry practices in this context. Thus, the study reveals that these cultural practices are intertwined with gender roles and power dynamics, reflecting the broader social, economic, and political context of the community.

6.3 Dowry perceptions

Several opinions were expressed by the participants regarding their views on dowry. The men in the FGD provided valuable insights into the practice of dowry in their community. Their perception of dowry as a necessary evil to help their sisters get married highlights the social pressure and expectations surrounding marriage and family relationships. While the participants proposed that they are against the dowry norm, their belief that the dowry system is deeply ingrained in their society and cannot be eradicated raises important questions about the role of culture and tradition in shaping social norms and practices. In light of this, their concern that the dowry system may continue to grow in the future underscores the need for ongoing dialogue and action to address the underlying causes of gender inequality and discrimination.

Furthermore, the participants' views on the impact of dowry in marriage raise concerns about the impact of such a practice on the quality of relationships. Based on the participants' discussion, when the groom receives a dowry, it is not uncommon for him and his family to continue to demand more, leading to a situation where the bride's family is constantly pressured to meet their demands. In some cases, if the demands are not met, the groom may even leave the bride by claiming that she is not beautiful. The participants observed that in some cases, after the marriage has taken place and the couple has been living together for a while, the groom may

claim that he does not find the bride attractive, potentially as a pretext for seeking a divorce. This is a deeply troubling aspect of the dowry system, as it implies that a woman's value is being judged solely based on her appearance or material worth, instead of focusing on developing an emotional tie based on mutual admiration and affection. Oldenburg's research in 2002 sheds light on the historical and cultural origins of dowry, and how it has evolved over time. Her analysis highlights how dowry has evolved from a voluntary gift into a coercive practice, where the bride's family is forced to pay exorbitant amounts of money to the groom's family, and how this has led to the exploitation of women in the context of marriage (Oldenburg, 2002). These findings support our own finding that dowry is being used to manipulate and control women.

The mother-in-law's perception of dowry shows they had conflicting attitudes regarding dowry. While some mothers-in-law claimed they asked for minor and inexpensive things for the family, on one side, they criticize dowry, while on the other side, they accept dowry. The participants also referred to the afterlife punishment for accepting dowry and also explained they have to give reasons for everything when they go to God's home if the dowry is taken, which implies the existence of a moral and ethical dilemma associated with the practice. The complex and nuanced perspective provided by the mothers-in-law sheds light on the practical considerations that may conflict with cultural and religious beliefs regarding the dowry system. Similar conflicting attitudes and the moral and ethical dilemma associated with the practice of dowry were mentioned by Lindberg (2010). Likewise, a small fraction of participants expressed a belief in the power of prayer and faith to overcome challenges related to marriage. One participant shared the view that 'God will make everything better and will help to conduct every daughter's marriage properly.' This perspective underscores the faith and hope of participants to cope with tough situations in their own marriage, especially those related to dowry, as it helps them deal with cultural norms. This underscores the importance of understanding the multifaceted nature of the dowry system and its impact on individuals and communities, also focusing on the socio-cultural dynamics of dowry.

6.4 Dowry Conflicts and Pressures

The issue of dowry and the pressures and conflicts associated with it is a widespread problem in South Asia, including Nepal. The participants reflected on the financial burden and pressure placed on their families to fulfil the demands of the groom's family, as well as the power dynamics and bargaining process involved in such arrangements.

This study sheds light on the experiences of participants who have faced the financial burden and power dynamics of dowry negotiations. One key aspect of this is the 'barat system' - the tradition of the groom's team vis-

iting the bride's home on the day of marriage to complete the marriage rituals and bring the bride to the groom's home. This practice is deeply ingrained in the social fabric of the region and carries a significant amount of prestige for both families. In Bhodaha, incomplete dowry negotiations have led to the postponement or cancellation of the wedding, and in many cases, the groom's family has even refused to send the barat, causing fear and humiliation for the bride's family. One participant's account of her marriage being delayed due to incomplete dowry negotiations serves as a poignant example of the entrenched nature of dowry practices and the impact it has on individuals and families. The pressure to provide a large dowry certainly creates a power imbalance in favor of the groom's family, which can be seen as an exercise of power over the bride's family.

The participants also highlight the prevalence of fraudulent practices surrounding dowry, with participants revealing that some of the grooms' families accept money privately but deny receiving any dowry in public during the marriage ceremony. The use of deceptive tactics, such as lying and demanding additional payments in public, despite having already received them in private, points to a culture of deceit that perpetuates dowry practices and exacerbates the challenges faced by those who are already financially vulnerable. Banerjee's article on dowry provides a valuable lens for understanding the experiences of the study participants, who faced the financial burden and power dynamics of dowry negotiations (Banerjee, 2014). Incomplete negotiations have led to postponed or cancelled weddings, causing fear and humiliation for the bride's family. The pressure to provide a large dowry creates a power imbalance in favor of the groom's family, reflecting the sociocultural face of exploitation. The use of unlawful measures to gain money in dowry negotiations is a cause for concern and underscores the need for greater awareness and action to address the issue. Furthermore, the study by Ahmad et al. (2016) sheds light on the broader social and cultural factors that contribute to the practice of dowry. The study found that women in a rural district in Pakistan had limited access to inheritance rights, which may force them to provide a dowry to secure their marriage and financial security. This highlights the pervasive influence of patriarchal norms and gender inequality in the region, and how these factors contribute to the exploitation and subjugation of women in the context of marriage. Our own findings of dowry being used to manipulate and control women are consistent with the study by Ahmad et al. (2016), which highlights the importance of addressing broader social and cultural factors in order to effectively combat the practice of dowry and promote women's empowerment. The persistence of dowry-related conflicts and pressures reflects the continued influence of cultural and social norms and the need for sustained efforts to challenge these practices and promote gender equality and justice.

The participants' accounts provide insight into the detrimental effects of the dowry system on women's lives, especially those from impoverished backgrounds. The costs associated with dowry often pose a significant fin-

ancial burden for families, leading to discrimination against women who cannot afford it. These women may remain unmarried, as referred to by participants “*budhikanya*” or “spinister” in English, and face mistreatment from their families. The exorbitant cost of dowry also makes it challenging for poor families to marry off their daughters, leaving the daughters with no options except eloping if they find someone or remain *budhikanya*. However, participants also claimed that a ‘*budhikanya*’ is not treated well by the family and community, thus living a marginalized life within their community. In the context of the study, the mothers-in-law group in the village seemed to consider a woman’s age as a crucial factor in her marriage prospects. Their comments highlight deeply ingrained cultural and social norms that discriminate against women who are considered “too old” for marriage. Participants conveyed the belief that a woman’s worth and desirability decrease once she surpasses her youthful years (beyond 20 as they stated), reflecting deeply ingrained gender stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes that sustain the practice of dowry. These findings are consistent with the evidence presented in an article by N. Sah (2012) which found that women from households that pay dowries tend to get married at a younger age compared to those from households that pay lower dowries or do not give dowries at all. Kumari (n.d.) provides a sociological analysis of the dowry system, shedding light on the negative impact it has on women’s lives, particularly those from impoverished backgrounds. Her findings echo those of the current study, highlighting the dowry pressure and financial burden for families, leading to discrimination against women. In order to effectively address the issue of dowry, it is essential to recognize the broader cultural factors that contribute to its perpetuation. This requires a shift in cultural norms towards valuing and empowering women and ensuring their acceptance into their husbands’ families (Kabeer, 2001).

6.5 Changing Dowry Trends

During the study, a range of perspectives on dowry from participants across three generations was heard. The elder women (mothers-in-law) shared that in their generation, dowry was virtually non-existent. As one participant noted, *My parents did not even give me 5 rupees as dowry*. However, in the current generation, dowry has become increasingly expected, and in many cases, mandatory. For example, young married women shared that their husbands’ family demanded a dowry of 4-5 lakhs rupees, causing significant financial strain on the family. They mentioned there is a rate of dowry in their village, the average rate is 5 lakhs. Furthermore, this study found that the expectations around dowry are not always straightforward or consistent. For some participants, dowry was seen as a way to provide a secure future for their daughter, as one participant noted, *I want my daughter to have everything she needs to start her new life*. However, for others, dowry was seen as a burden or obligation that placed undue financial stress on the family. One participant shared that her son’s in-laws demanded a dowry

of 6 lakhs rupees, which the family struggled to pay, leading to significant debt.

Overall, the study highlights the complex and evolving nature of dowry trends. By providing specific examples from participants across different generations, we can gain a deeper understanding of the factors driving these trends and their impact on families. These findings can inform policy and community-based interventions to promote gender equality and eradicate the practice of dowry in Nepal.

6.6 Caste-based discrimination in love-marriage

The impact of caste-based discrimination on women who marry outside their caste or religion has been well documented (Narzary and Ladusingh, 2019; Samad and Eades, 2002). In this study, it is found that men from the focus group identified love marriage as a sin, revealing that love and relationships in the village continue to be strictly governed by deeply ingrained caste rules. This strict enforcement of caste rules has created a stark gender disparity in inter-caste marriages, with girls facing strict societal norms prohibiting them from inter-caste marriage, while boys enjoy relatively more freedom to bring women from different castes into the family. Despite the taboo against love and inter-caste relationships in the village, two recently married women shared their personal experiences of the consequences they faced for choosing to pursue a relationship outside their caste, including the challenges and backlash that came with having an affair. One woman was forced by her family to marry someone else against her will, while the other faced neglect and threats from her family but chose to stay with her lover despite the threat of being cut and buried by family members for going against family norms. These examples highlight the double-sided threats and pressure that participants in inter-caste love marriage face, including cut-offs from their natal families and threats from the mother-in-law, such as pressuring the couple to consider abortion, as stated by one of the participants. Corwin (1977) notes that the vast majority of love marriages violate the customary laws of caste endogamy, which is why one participant's relationship with a boy from a lower caste resulted in multiple tragedies for her and her lover. Thapa and Kattel's (2019) study is consistent with this study's findings in highlighting the challenges faced by individuals who choose to pursue love marriages, particularly in rural areas where arranged marriages are still dominant. The current study adds to this by specifically examining the impact of caste-based discrimination on women in inter-caste relationships and the double-sided threats and pressure they face.

Although Koirala (2016) highlights the growing trend of love marriages among Nepal's younger generations, the present research sheds light on the difficulties and discrimination faced by girls in inter-caste love mar-

riages in Bhodaha village, providing a more nuanced understanding of the social pressures and obstacles that individuals and couples may face when pursuing love marriages. While Yadav (2023) discovered that parents in the Terai region are becoming more tolerant of love marriages as a result of their children's education, the current study revealed the profoundly ingrained nature of caste-based discrimination that leads to the violation of women's human rights in the examined village. These contrasting findings suggest that attitudes towards love marriages may vary across different regions and cultural contexts within the Terai region.

The challenges faced by inter-caste love marriages due to social stigma are further supported by Dhar's (2013) study on the prohibition of inter-caste marriage in rural India. These previous studies align with our findings, highlighting the deeply ingrained influence of the caste system on the dynamics of marriage in Nepal. While this study found that dowry was not a significant factor in inter-caste marriages based on personal choice, the significant prevalence of threats and disownment by natal families highlights the urgent need for societal change to address the deeply ingrained influence of the caste system on marriage dynamics in Nepal.

6.7 Caste-based discrimination on arranged marriage

While the present research provides insight into the endurance of caste-based prejudice in love marriages among recently married women, it's worth noting that some participants, particularly survivors from WOREC, have underscored the significance of caste in arranged marriages.

This study found that despite the existence of caste-based discrimination, one participant got married to a high-caste boy by providing a significant amount of money and gold as dowry. This example highlights how some boys are willing to marry lower-caste women if they receive enough dowry, despite traditional cultural norms and beliefs that emphasize caste and family background in selecting marriage partners. This finding emphasizes the role of economic considerations in shaping marriage practices, particularly for boys and their families. However, it is important to note that among inter-caste arranged marriages, the girl's family viewed the boy's stable job as a source of security for their daughter, while the boy viewed the dowry as financial security for himself. Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that this practice has led to harmful consequences, as exemplified by one of our participants. The participant was discriminated against based on caste in her husband's family, being treated as untouchable and forbidden from touching the food pots. Her husband's family even gave food to cattle rather than her and her small children. The participant was also kicked out of her home and subjected to various forms of mistreatment and abuse by her husband and in-laws. This is a new insight into the persistence of caste-based discrimination and gender-based

violence in arranged marriages. This study found that economic considerations may override traditional cultural norms and beliefs in selecting marriage partners. Atteraya et al. (2017) sheds light on the intersection of caste, poverty, and intimate partner violence among married women in Nepal. Building upon this research, my study provides new insights into the complex and multifaceted dynamics of arranged marriages in Nepal, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to address the interrelated issues of caste-based discrimination, gender-based violence, and economic factors in marriage practices. While the availability of dowry may override traditional cultural norms and beliefs in selecting marriage partners, this practice perpetuates domestic violence and caste-based discrimination after marriage. It is crucial for policymakers and society at large to recognize and address the harmful consequences of such practices.

6.8 Power Dynamics in Mother-in-Law and Daughter-in-Law Relationships

The relationship between a daughter-in-law and mother-in-law is often portrayed as contentious in popular culture and has been the subject of research in social science. In this study, some participants shared experiences of mistreatment and neglect from their mothers-in-law. For instance, one participant shared that her mother-in-law did not allow her to visit her parents' house, while another mentioned being excluded from good mealtimes and secretly eating good food with her elder sister-in-law. Additionally, it was heard that some daughters-in-law face challenges in navigating their roles within the family and negotiating their relationships with not only their mother-in-law but also their sisters-in-law. For example, one participant reported being woken up at midnight to tie goats, despite being in bed with her small baby, after a tiring day of serving guests, while her elder sister-in-law sat by and did nothing. These experiences demonstrate the power dynamics between daughters-in-law and their in-laws, particularly the mother-in-law, who often holds a more senior position in the family hierarchy. The study by Jean Turner et al. (2006) provides further insight into the differing viewpoints and challenges faced by daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law seeking their place within the family. Furthermore, this study adds to the existing literature by showcasing how some daughters-in-law also face mistreatment and neglect from their sisters-in-law, which can contribute to their decision to separate themselves from the in-laws' household, a phenomenon referred to as *chuttiyera basne*. It is commonly used to describe situations where a daughter-in-law chooses to stay with her husband separately from her in-laws after a conflict or disagreement or due to some other reason. These findings emphasize the need for further research and community-based interventions to promote healthy family dynamics and mutual respect between all members.

The experiences of the participants as young daughters-in-law and wives

have been fraught with challenges and conflicts. The participants expressed a strong desire to stay at their parents' house rather than struggle to adjust to a new family dynamic. They face disputes with their husbands and other family members that cause them distress and unhappiness. The participants expressed the incidence of conflicts within households and provided insights into the reasons behind them. Interestingly, the study revealed that the majority of conflicts were between sisters-in-law rather than mothers-in-law, which challenges the widely held belief that conflicts between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law are more common. The primary reason behind these conflicts was an unwillingness to contribute to household work, which went against deeply ingrained cultural norms. Additionally, daughters-in-law whose husbands earned more than other family members often chose to separate from the family, as they did not want to put a burden on them by sharing their income with everyone in the household. This created further conflict and contributed to the decision to live separately. It indicates that such separation may be a result of the daughter-in-law's desire to have more control over financial matters and important household decisions, which they may lack in a household where dowry practices are prevalent (Calvi and Keskar, 2021; S. Srinivasan and Bedi, 2007). However, this information is based on a single study and may not necessarily apply to all households and cultures.

These findings highlight the importance of understanding the cultural norms and expectations within a household and the potential conflicts that can arise when these norms are not met. By recognizing these challenges, we can develop strategies to promote positive relationships between family members and reduce conflict within the household. This study offers valuable insights into the complexities of family dynamics and emphasizes the need for open communication and mutual understanding among family members. Ultimately, these insights can help us create more harmonious and supportive family environments.

The study highlights the need for effort and understanding to build positive relationships between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. The participants' reflections on the challenges of marriage suggest that conflicts may arise over time but can be overcome with the support of one's partner. These insights add to the existing knowledge on the difficulties of navigating cultural and societal norms and tensions within familial relationships.

6.8.1 Mother-in-law and daughter-in-law

6.8.1.1 Traditional Gender Roles and Expectations for Daughters-in-Law

According to the participants, traditional gender roles and expectations in Nepali society heavily emphasize women's responsibilities in the household, particularly for daughters-in-law. The participants categorize household chores as an indication of a good and stress-free relationship

with their daughters-in-law, as they view such tasks as the primary responsibility of women, and daughters-in-law are expected to take an active role in managing and performing them.

When comparing their own experiences as daughters-in-law to those of present-day daughters-in-law, some mothers-in-law share a common perspective that their daughters-in-law are often perceived as stubborn and unwilling to comply with basic household tasks such as cleaning or serving food and water. So, the participants expressed their frustration and disappointment towards their daughters-in-law's lack of enthusiasm for performing household chores, viewing it as a sign of disrespect. The participants' perception of the link between a woman's worth and her ability to perform domestic duties highlights their vulnerability, as this expectation creates tension in relationships between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. The participants believe that their stress is genuine, which underscores the societal norms and expectations that place a high value on women's domestic roles and contribute to strained relationships.

Another significant source of stress for many mothers-in-law is the failure to maintain a close-knit family. A majority of the mothers-in-law who participated in the study placed great importance on the idea of a supportive and united family and expressed feelings of disappointment and hurt when this ideal was not fulfilled. For instance, participants held deep values of familial support and unity and were heartbroken when one of their sons and daughters-in-law decided to live separately with their own family. The participants in the study mentioned the common phrase "*ghar fute toh gawar lute*," which roughly translates to "when the home breaks, fools steal." This phrase reflects a common belief that when family members separate, outsiders may take advantage of the situation for their own benefit. This can be seen as a source of stress for mothers-in-law who value a close-knit family, as they may fear that the separation of their family members may lead to vulnerability and exploitation by outsiders. In cases where their traditional expectations and values about family cohesion and support are not met, mothers-in-law may refuse to talk to their own sons and daughters-in-law. The decision to separate from the family has caused a rift in their relationship with their son and daughter-in-law, as they mentioned they had felt 'profound loss and disconnection' in the beginning. As a result, they set clear boundaries for themselves and prioritize their emotional well-being by choosing not to engage in a relationship that may cause them pain or discomfort. They expressed that they do not even want to step foot in their daughter-in-law's house due to the deep hurt they feel. Despite their strong desire to maintain a close relationship with their family members, their decision to live separately has made it challenging to uphold this value.

Overall, the mother-in-law's story highlights some of the challenges that women may face in traditional patriarchal households, where gendered expectations and norms can create significant stress and tension.

6.8.1.2 Changes in the mother-in-law's role in the household

The participants in the study shared their experiences as daughters-in-law, which were filled with intense sorrow and hardships. They recalled how they had to manage a significant amount of hard work and responsibilities, including caring for animals, cooking, cleaning, and assisting with farm work. The participants worked extensively, both at home and in the field, after getting married and moving into their husband's home. These tasks required a significant amount of physical labor and were often demanding, which made life difficult for them. However, the participants also noted that life is much easier for them now compared to back then due to more freedom and less burdensome work.

The participants shared their experiences of domestic violence and social suffering as daughters-in-law, revealing a harrowing pattern of abuse that most of them endured. Fathers-in-law subjected them to both physical and verbal abuse, often beating them with sticks for not meeting their work expectations, even when they were unwell. Participants shared that their mothers-in-law often turned a blind eye, afraid of becoming targets of their husbands' anger. This created an oppressive atmosphere of constant work and pressure to meet the expectations of their father-in-law. They were verbally abused and beaten if they didn't work hard enough. They left their husbands' homes and returned to their parents, and when the situation did not improve, they left again, walking for many hours without any money. Their experience as daughters-in-law is unfortunately not unique in their village, and many other daughters-in-law have faced similar mistreatment, according to the participants. The story of escaping as shared by the participants depicts the account of three daughters-in-law, including the participant, who experienced torment and starvation due to the constant food crisis prevailing in their husband's household. Despite their continuous toil, they received scanty food quantities that had to be shared among each of the family members. Additionally, the father-in-law subjected them to verbal and physical abuse, beat them with a wooden stick, frequently criticized their work, and used degrading language such as 'pig's child' that undermined their self-esteem.

The interviewee's account underscores the arduous living conditions and lack of agency for women in patriarchal societies. In this regard, Homan (2017) offers a broader view of the gender roles and power dynamics that could have influenced the daughters-in-law's experiences in this study. The research proposes that the daughters-in-law may have felt confined within a system that prioritizes the honor and expectations of their in-laws over their own well-being and independence. It also showcases their resilience and fortitude in dealing with difficult situations, such as their escape from the oppressive household.

The narrative highlights the grave consequences of gender inequality and power imbalances within families, which could manifest as domestic viol-

ence and abuse against women. Thus, addressing the fundamental causes of such issues, such as advocating for gender equality and challenging patriarchal beliefs, is essential to guaranteeing the well-being and rights of women. It is vital to recognize the influence of cultural and social factors on women's lives and strive towards establishing a more equitable and fair society.

The participants shared that, as daughters-in-law, they had limited autonomy and were dependent on their in-laws and husbands for financial and material support. The autonomy they did have was primarily related to their work, which involved a significant amount of physical labor. They said they had an enormous role in the household. Their reliance on their husbands and in-laws for support in the past significantly influenced their position. However, today, their position has shifted due to changes in family dynamics and economic realities. With sons leaving their villages to work in cities and sending money back to their wives, daughters-in-law have become more financially independent and less reliant on their mother-in-law for support. This shift in power dynamics within the household has led to the daughter-in-law taking on a more dominant role and the mother-in-law becoming more dependent. While the mother-in-law's role has always been important in the family, the expectations and nature of that role have evolved over time based on cultural, economic, and social changes. It is crucial to recognize that mothers-in-law still face vulnerability in their current role as they remain reliant on their sons and daughters-in-law for financial and material support. In this study, the findings are consistent with previous research by Luitel (2001) and Gram et al. (2018) on the changing dynamics of family relationships in Nepal. An increasing trend towards financial independence among daughters-in-law has also been observed, which indicates changing economic realities and gender roles within families. As noted by Gram et al. (2018), younger women in particular are challenging traditional gender roles and negotiating for greater decision-making power, especially when they contribute financially to the household. This research highlights the importance of understanding the complex interplay of power dynamics and gender roles within family relationships in Nepal and the need for further research to promote more equitable and respectful family relationships.

Today, the division of labor between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law seems to follow traditional gender roles, with the daughter-in-law managing only household work while the mother-in-law takes care of the grandchildren and occasionally assists with farm work. It is interesting to note how these roles and responsibilities have shifted over time within the family. While there is still a division of labor based on gender, there are also changes that reflect the changing dynamics of the family.

A few participants also made statements about the decreasing value of mothers-in-law's roles due to the mistreatment they have experienced from daughters-in-law. A participant's daughters-in-law have used violence and

abusive language towards her, which made her repeatedly say, *Daughters-in law, nowadays they have even beaten their mothers-in-law..., used bad words, and scolded... My daughter-in-law does the same. I was always in pain; in my life, happiness never came to me.* The participant's sorrow and the absence of happiness in her life are alarming and signal a pressing need for a shift towards more equitable and respectful relationships within families.

During a conversation about their family histories, the mothers-in-law shared memories of their own mothers-in-law from when they were daughters-in-law. They fondly recalled them as kind and nurturing. However, they also noted that their fathers-in-law were often harsh and abusive towards their daughters-in-law, with some even resorting to physical violence. All of the participants agreed that this was a typical occurrence in their village, echoing this sentiment. One participant described her own mother-in-law using the Nepali phrase "*bottal ko tukra*," which translates to "a piece of glass," according to the participant. When asked to explain, she clarified that it was a term of endearment meant to convey her mother-in-law's gentle and innocent nature. Overall, the conversation highlighted the stark contrast between the treatment of daughters-in-law by their mothers-in-law versus their fathers-in-law and how these dynamics were deeply ingrained in the culture of the village.

Gram et al. (2018) and Link (2010) have also suggested that there are changing dynamics in family relationships in Nepal, with shifts in power relations between different family members and changes in traditional gender roles and norms. Complex dynamics of family relationships, particularly within the context of the role of mothers-in-law in the family. While some mothers-in-law may be treated with kindness and respect, others may experience mistreatment and abuse. These conversations call for a deeper examination of family dynamics and a shift towards more respectful and compassionate relationships within families.

6.9 Dowry associated domestic violence

A part of the participants' accounts highlights the pervasive nature of dowry-related violence and its devastating effects on their lives. The in-laws' constant demands for more dowry payments and their dissatisfaction with what had already been given created a sense of entitlement and power imbalance, which they used to control and manipulate the participants.

In addition to physical beatings, the participants reported being made to feel like they owed a debt of gratitude to their in-laws and husbands for agreeing to marry them. This is a disturbing indication of the entrenched patriarchal attitudes that underlie the practice of dowry and the culture of entitlement it engenders among men.

The sense of entitlement is further reinforced by cruel comments made by husbands about the participants' physical appearance, which reflect deep-seated beliefs about women's worth being tied to their beauty and dowry. The study has uncovered a new aspect of the dowry system, revealing that a woman's value is often judged solely based on her appearance or material worth rather than the development of an emotional bond based on mutual admiration and affection. This troubling finding is exemplified by the fact that, in some cases, if the dowry demands are not met, the groom may even leave the bride by claiming that she is not beautiful. Additionally, the study participants noted that after marriage and living together for some time, the groom may use the excuse of not finding the bride attractive as a pretext for seeking a divorce. Such attitudes treat women as commodities to be traded and valued only for their monetary worth, further perpetuating gender inequality and violence. The experiences reported by the participants in this study are consistent with the findings of other studies on dowry violence in South Asia. Bloch and Rao (2002), in their case study on dowry violence in rural India, discovered that husbands and in-laws frequently employ the threat of violence as a means of coercing additional dowry payments from the bride's family. This creates a sense of entitlement and power imbalance, which is then used to control and manipulate the bride (Lamichhane et al., 2011; Prasad, 1994).

The in-laws' use of violence to exert control and dominance over the participant, as one daughter-in-law said, "and they beat me and beat me..." is deeply troubling and highlights the damaging effects of dowry-related violence on women's lives. The comments and behavior of the in-laws also exemplify the gendered power dynamics involved in dowry-related violence, reinforcing patriarchal norms that sustain gender inequality. This study sheds light on the specific issue of dowry-related violence and the experiences of brides who have been victimized through this practice, which complements the study by Tiwari in 2015 that focuses on the spectrum of domestic violence against Madheshi women in Nepal (Tiwari, 2015).

6.10 Voices of Survivors

6.10.1 Understanding Domestic Violence and Dowry - A Case Study

This case study sheds light on the tragic realities of domestic abuse experiences suffered by women due to dowry. These women have had terrible marriages, during which they were neglected and abused by their husbands and extended families.

Personal and background details of the survivors have been concealed to protect their privacy. It's important to remember, though, that these women come from a wide range of educational and economic backgrounds.

Regardless of their differences, they have all gone through the negative consequences of domestic abuse. The purpose of the case study is to bring attention to the plight of dowry-induced domestic abuse on women who have survived domestic violence in order to emphasize the critical need for increased protection for these individuals.

In this research, a participant described her terrible experiences of psychological abuse and verbal and physical attacks by her spouse. According to the participant, her husband initially used verbal threats, which eventually escalated to physical and emotional abuse in addition to verbal abuse. The participant's spouse employed isolation methods to exert power and control over her, such as cutting off all communication, throwing away her phone, and making it impossible to get aid. The use of seclusion and limited access to communication to retain control over the survivor is consistent with the results of a prior study by Kropp (2018) and the conceptualization of coercion in intimate partner violence by Dutton and Goodman (2005). These strategies may leave survivors feeling powerless and terrified, making it difficult for them to seek help or support. Additionally, the participant recounted the threat of physical torture, such as electric shock, which the abuser used to instill fear and further maintain control. The experiences of the participant align with the notion presented by M. P. Johnson (2005) that domestic violence is not solely based on gender but also involves power and control dynamics within relationships.

The participant's account of domestic violence was both upsetting and moving, as she described how her husband had violently pulled her hair and beat her for a full day. The extent of the physical abuse left her covered in bruises that she described as feeling like she was "exploding." The tearful description of her husband beating her "like how blacksmiths beat iron to make sickles", underscores the brutal and violent nature of domestic violence and its traumatic impact on victims. These experiences highlight the pressing need for increased support and protection for survivors of domestic violence. This aligns with previous research demonstrating the pervasive nature of domestic violence in many societies (Maycock, 2014; Sapkota, 2011). Notably, the experiences of the survivors in this study reflect the ways in which domestic violence can lead to restricted freedoms and emotional and physical harm, with long-lasting effects on survivors' lives (Jeyaseelan et al., 2015). It is alarming that the participant's experiences are not unique, as domestic violence is a widespread issue that affects individuals worldwide. Studies conducted in Nepal (Clark et al., 2019) and countries like Norway (Alsaker et al., 2011) have also emphasized the urgent need for effective intervention and support for survivors.

The participant experienced not only abuse from her husband but also emotional neglect and isolation from her husband's family. The participant's mother-in-law and sisters-in-law began to mimic her husband's abusive behavior towards her as the emotional neglect and isolation from him continued, further exacerbating her feelings of helplessness and en-

trapment. The inability to confide in anyone made her situation even more unbearable. Even the smallest interactions with neighbors were met with severe punishment from her devrani, jethani, and mother-in-law, leaving her with no one to turn to for help. These findings align with research conducted by Raj et al. (2006), which suggests that family members' behavior can also be a significant factor in abusive situations.

The participant recounted how her husband failed to provide her with emotional, psychological, and financial support, leaving her alone and overwhelmed with two small children who would often cry from hunger. To make matters worse, her in-laws subjected her to torture while her husband was away for work. When she tried to share her experiences of abuse with her husband, he responded by blaming her and telling her she needed to be better and nicer, shifting the blame onto her instead of acknowledging her pain and listening to her. This type of victim-blaming is discussed by Meyer (2016) and is consistent with the cycle of violence often seen in abusive relationships. The participant initially thought it was wrong to share her feelings of neglect with her husband because he would judge her for every word she said. Furthermore, she represents a woman's plight in abusive relationships who is financially dependent on their husband, despite their lack of care and support. The participant shared that her husband has failed to fulfil his role as a primary caregiver, leaving her to shoulder the burden of caring for their children alone. Worse still, her feelings of frustration and helplessness were intensified by her reluctance to ask for money from her husband, and even when she did muster the courage to ask, the small amounts she received were not enough to meet their basic needs. This exacerbates her sense of powerlessness, leaving her trapped in a cycle of dependence. The seriousness of the situation is underscored by the fact that she had no other option but to rely on her husband. However, the participant mentioned that she had tried to rationalize her husband's behaviour by assuming that he had some compulsions but eventually realized that he was simply ignoring her needs. Her attempts to communicate with him were met with dismissive responses, leaving her feeling confused and inadequate. This response is also explored in Veldhuis (2021), which highlights how coercive tactics such as blame-shifting cultivate 'dependence,' 'denial,' and 'self-blame' in victims of intimate partner violence. This study supports the findings of the study by Whiting et al. (2012). The participant also shared that her husband would physically abuse her in front of her sisters-in-law to assert his dominance and control over her. This violent behaviour was a clear indication of his desire to show his power and control over her, suggesting a pattern of abuse and aggression in their relationship. According to the participant, her husband engaged in a pattern of behavior where he spoke negatively about her to the entire village and manipulated others into believing his lies. Despite his ability to provide justifications for his actions, the participant views his true nature as disingenuous, with only a select few aware of this.

The study shows the urgent need for comprehensive support and protec-

tion for survivors of domestic violence, revealing the traumatic impact on victims both emotionally and financially. It also highlights the contribution of family members' behavior to abusive situations, perpetuating the cycle of violence in relationships. The participant's experiences of emotional and financial neglect from her husband reflect the underlying issues of power and control that drive dowry-related violence. Thus, the study emphasizes the importance of increased protection and intervention for survivors and the need to address the root causes of violence, including patriarchal values and dowry practices. Moreover, the study underscores the need for greater awareness and action to promote gender equality and protect the rights and well-being of women. By listening to the voices of women like the participants, we can gain a deeper understanding of the devastating impact of dowry-related violence on their lives and work towards creating a more just and equitable society that values and empowers all individuals, regardless of gender. It is crucial to examine the interplay between dowry and women's experiences of violence in order to develop effective interventions to address these issues.

Chapter 7

Strength & Limitations

7.1 Strength

The study of the dowry system and marriage customs in relation to violence, abuse and disrespect against women, is significant because dowry is a pervasive tradition in many societies around South Asia. This research includes the perspectives of both young girls and married women from different generations, providing a comprehensive understanding of the social and cultural factors that contribute to the practice of dowry and violence. The inclusion of young girls offers unique insights into how gendered norms are perpetuated across generations. By addressing a previously unexplored area of inquiry, this study fills a gap in the literature and has the potential to inform the development of more effective interventions and policies aimed at addressing the issue of dowry and violence. In addition, engaging men in the study helped to highlight important social or cultural issues and drew attention to areas that may require intervention or advocacy. By centering the voices of those who have experienced suffering due to dowry, this study can contribute to a more inclusive and equitable approach to research and social justice. To reduce potential bias and enhance the validity of the study, the researcher also took steps to ensure that the participants felt comfortable sharing their experiences and opinions. In addition to developing rapport and providing assurances of confidentiality, the researcher employed a range of data collection techniques, such as in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, to triangulate and validate the findings. By taking these measures, the researcher was able to increase the reliability and trustworthiness of the data, and ultimately strengthen the rigor of the study. Another strength of this study is the researcher's involvement in all phases of the research process. From the formation of the project to the submission of the thesis, the researcher was involved in every step of the way. This level of involvement allowed for a high level of coherence and consistency throughout the study. The researcher was able to maintain a clear and consistent vision for the study, ensuring that the research questions and objectives remained focused and aligned with the study's overall goals. This study has the potential for transferability. While the

findings of this study are specific to the context in which it was conducted, the themes and patterns identified may have relevance and applicability to other settings with similar social, cultural, and economic contexts. As such, the study's findings have the potential to inform the development of interventions and policies aimed at addressing the issue of dowry and violence in other contexts.

7.2 Limitations

The nature of the topic of dowry and violence requires sensitivity and careful consideration of the potential impact on the participants. Researchers who lack experience in this area may find it challenging to navigate these complexities, which could compromise the quality of the data collected or potentially harm the well-being of the participants.

Another limitation of the study was that two of the participants required the assistance of a translator to communicate their experiences and perspectives. While the use of a translator allowed these participants to fully participate in the study, it may have introduced an additional layer of complexity and potential for interpretation bias. Similarly, a larger sample size, with more participants in each group, could have increased the generalizability of our findings.

Unfortunately, due to constraints such as time, it was not feasible to increase the sample size beyond the five participants in each group. Additionally, the researcher's visa expiry and the need to travel back to Norway from Nepal further compounded the time.

7.3 Areas of Further Research

- Areas of further research could include investigating the effectiveness of educational programs and policies in challenging harmful gender stereotypes and promoting girls' education. Additionally, research could explore the perspectives and experiences of boys and men in relation to gender inequality and their role in promoting gender equity.
- The effectiveness of legal and policy measures to address dowry: Since the study highlights the prevalence of fraudulent practices surrounding dowry, such as accepting money privately but denying receiving dowry in public. Further research could examine the effectiveness of legal and policy measures to address dowry, such as anti-dowry laws, awareness campaigns, and support for women who face dowry-related pressures and conflicts.
- One potential research area for caste-based discrimination in love marriages could be to examine the role of education in changing

attitudes towards love marriages in various regions and cultural contexts in the Terai region. It would be valuable to investigate how education influences attitudes towards love marriages and how this varies across regions and social groups.

- Exploring the effectiveness of different types of interventions or support services for survivors could be studied. This could involve examining the outcomes of various types of therapy, support groups, legal aid, or community-based programs for domestic violence survivors in terms of reducing trauma, promoting healing and recovery, and improving overall well-being. Additionally, research could investigate the barriers and challenges that survivors face in accessing and utilizing these resources and identify strategies to improve access and effectiveness of support services for those affected by domestic violence.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

This research investigates the lived realities of Nepali women to better understand the complex relationship between dowry and violence against women. It highlights the need to break down patriarchal conventions and promote gender equality as a means of challenging established gender roles. This study sheds light on the complex root causes of the problem, which may then be used to guide future policy and intervention initiatives.

The present study aimed to bridge the research gap on women's perspectives on the dowry system by analyzing qualitative data collected from women in various roles within their families. The findings shed light on how marriage customs and traditions contribute to violence against women in Nepal, emphasizing the complex interplay of cultural norms, social expectations, and gender disparities. Central to this issue is the deeply entrenched practice of dowry, wherein the bride's family is obligated to provide it as compensation for securing a suitable partner. This practice upholds the false idea that women are commodities and objects of service within the framework of marriage.

The study brings to light the pervasive prejudice and societal pressure faced by unmarried females, who are often perceived as financial and emotional burdens on their families. In conjunction with the presence of poverty and gender imbalance, these variables contribute to an increased susceptibility to experiencing violence. Young, unmarried girls showed a willingness to challenge gender stereotypes in society by pursuing education and raising their earning potential, highlighting the significance of expanding educational and economic options for women's empowerment.

Additionally, the study unveils the complexities of the arranged marriage and dowry system prevalent in the Bhodaha VDC, marked by power imbalances and gender disparities. While inter-caste arranged marriages are accepted due to the allure of substantial dowries, they often lead to a troubling dynamic. In some cases, when women from lower castes offer significant dowries, they are married into higher-caste families. However, this acceptance is marred by discrimination and abuse based on caste identity,

which becomes apparent after the dowry is received. Love marriages, on the other hand, are met with threats and coercion, further exacerbating the situation. The study underscores the pressing need to challenge these entrenched norms and empower women within these cultural contexts.

The research emphasizes the difficulties women encounter as a result of conventional gender roles and expectations, especially in their interactions with their mothers-in-law, within the framework of Nepalese patriarchal culture. To promote gender equality and preserve women's autonomy and dignity, there's a pressing need to break free from conventional gender roles and patriarchal norms. The study also highlights the patriarchal aspect of dowry, with the responsibility put primarily on the bride's family, perpetuating gender inequality, especially among economically disadvantaged households. The study also discussed the adverse consequences of dowry, including disputes and deceit.

Young married men provided nuanced perspectives on the prevailing dowry system. While acknowledging its challenges and negative consequences, some men exhibited varying degrees of acceptance towards this tradition, often tied to their education and job status. This complexity highlights the need for an in-depth examination of factors influencing acceptance within the community.

The study raises concerns about the toll dowry-related practices may be taking on couples' relationships, along with the moral and ethical dilemmas associated with dowry's complex character and far-reaching effects. Poverty emerges as a driver for accepting dowry, underscoring the importance of economic empowerment for both women and men in addressing gender-based violence and ensuring autonomy.

Furthermore, the study sheds light on the complex interactions between mothers-in-law and their daughters-in-law in traditional Nepali households. While a subset of individuals expressed good encounters with their respective mothers-in-law, the prevailing motif underscores the persistent influence of power differentials that shape these interconnections. Daughters-in-law often face the challenges associated with adhering to established gender norms as they navigate social expectations and instances of abuse, especially in their interactions with in-laws. However, economic shifts and growing financial independence are causing changes in family dynamics and responsibilities inside these homes. The fact that the mothers-in-law relied on prayer and religion to solve dowry-related problems shows how extensively the dowry and marriage systems are ingrained. The study additionally looks into the perspectives of in-law mothers, both as former daughters-in-law and in their current roles. A call for social reforms to achieve gender equality is made in light of the hardships these women endure, such as heavy workloads, experiencing destitution, and experiencing abuse. When it comes to navigating the complexities of in-law relationships, mothers-in-law often emphasize the need for honest

dialogue and shared goals. Disagreements and tensions are found in the study to be a result of disparities in expectations, roles, and responsibilities between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. It is essential for the development and maintenance of family harmony that these tensions between the generations be resolved.

This study reveals the traumatic events that may occur in arranged marriages when caste prejudice and dowry abuse are present. These domestic violence survivors come from diverse backgrounds and have experienced abuse, neglect, and suffering in their families and marriages. The study emphasizes the importance of comprehensive support and protection for these women while addressing the underlying causes of dowry-related violence, such as patriarchal values and dowry customs, and emphasizes the importance of targeted interventions and education to mitigate the destructive effects of caste prejudice and dowry-related practices.

In conclusion, this research journey into the dowry system in Nepal has been both enlightening and disconcerting. Raised in a society riddled with gender disparities, this study has deepened my understanding of the impact on women's lives. Reflecting on my upbringing, I vividly recall my nursery school book that posed the question, 'Who is the head of your family?' The standard response was always, 'My father is the head of my family.' I found myself compelled to inquire as to why the mother could not be considered. This early experience heightened my awareness of societal standards that attribute significance to certain behaviors while marginalizing others. Such tendencies, deeply ingrained in our social fabric, enable practices like the dowry system to persist, causing significant harm, from misunderstandings to tragic outcomes. The dowry system doesn't just inflict physical pain; it leaves individuals with hidden emotional scars, often leading to profound shame. It is imperative to recognize that cultural norms alone may not be enough to bring about the necessary change.

In light of these outcomes, we must ask ourselves: How can we proactively work towards changing cultural norms and traditional behaviors in a manner that empowers women and enables them to exercise their own autonomy and choices within the complex dynamics of marriages and the dowry system? By contemplating this question, we open ourselves up to a wide range of potential avenues for advancement, including but not limited to the promotion of educational initiatives, support for legislative changes, establishing robust community support networks, and the creation of an atmosphere that encourages open and constructive dialogue. The primary objective of these initiatives is to confront and disrupt existing power differentials while simultaneously fostering a setting that is favorable to the realization of gender equality.

This research makes a substantial contribution to our comprehension of the diverse effects of dowry in the context of marriage while also providing insights into the underlying factors that perpetuate gender-based discrim-

ination. It underscores the urgent need for further research and collective action, demanding a unified effort from all members of society.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethical Clearance from HELSAM

UiO • Faculty of Medicine
University of Oslo

Anusubha Sharma

Date: 20th January, 2022

Statement from the Program Ethical Committee

The Program Ethical Committee have processed your application, number **14747307** about your project "*Dowry and social suffering in Nepal*"

The committee believe your project does not fall under the Norwegian Health Research Law (helseforskningsloven and forskningsetikkloven) and you do not need to apply to the Regional Committees for Medical and Health Research Ethic (REC). However, person sensitive information might be collected and therefore you need to apply to Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) for approval.

If your project is to be conducted outside of Norway, you also need to submit the project to local authorities for approval.

Supervisors for **Anusubha Sharma**'s master project is:

- **Daniel Münster**, Institute of Health and Society at UIO

Sincerely yours



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Appendix B: Ethical clearance from NSD

10/09/2023, 18:25

Notification form for the processing of personal data



[Notification form](#) / [Dowry and social suffering in Nepal: A qualitative study of cast...](#) / Assessment

Assessment of processing of personal data

| Reference number | Assessment type | Date |
|------------------|-----------------|------------|
| 402847 | Standard | 09/04/2023 |

Title

Dowry and social suffering in Nepal: A qualitative study of caste-based marriage customs in relation to violence, abuse and disrespect against women

Institution responsible for the project

University of Oslo / Faculty of Medicine / Department of Health and Society

Project leader

Daniel Muenster

Student

Anusubha Sharma

Project period

02/05/2022 - 15/09/2023

Categories of personal data

General
Special
Criminal convictions and offences

Legal basis

Consent (General Data Protection Regulation art. 6 no. 1 a)
Explicit consent (General Data Protection Regulation art. 9 no. 2 a)

The processing of personal data is lawful, as long as it is carried out as stated in the notification form. The legal basis is valid until 15.09.2023.

[Notification Form](#)

Comment

Data Protection Services has assessed the change registered on 01 September 2023.

The period for processing personal data has been extended until 15 September 2023.

If it later becomes necessary to process personal data for a longer period, then it may be necessary to inform your participants.

We will follow up the progress of the project at the new planned end date to determine whether the processing of personal data has been concluded.

Good luck with the rest of the project!

Appendix C: Ethical Clearance from NHRC



Government of Nepal
Nepal Health Research Council (NHRC)



Ref. No.: 3086

17 May 2022

Dr. Daniel Munster
Ms. Anusubha Sharma
Principal Investigators
University of Oslo
Norway

Ref: Approval of thesis proposal

Dear Dr. Munster and Ms. Sharma,

This is to certify that the following protocol and related documents have been granted approval by the Ethical Review Board, NHRC for implementation.

If the researcher requires transfer of the bio-samples to other countries, the investigator should apply to the NHRC for the permission. The researchers will not be allowed to ship any raw/crude human biomaterial outside the country, only extracted and amplified samples can be taken to laboratories outside of Nepal for specific study, as per the protocol submitted and approved by the NHRC. The remaining samples of the lab should be destroyed as per standard operating procedure and the process should be documented and informed to the NHRC timely.

| | | | |
|---|---|--------------------------------|----|
| ERB Protocol No/ Submitted Date | 33/2022 MT 6 February 2022 | Sponsor Protocol No | NA |
| Principal Investigator's | Dr. Daniel Munster Ms. Anusubha Sharma | Sponsor Institution | NA |
| Title | Dowry and social suffering in Nepal: A qualitative study of marriage customs in relation to violence, abuse and disrespect against women in Bhodaha VDC | | |
| Protocol Version No | NA | Version Date | NA |
| ICF Version No. (V.N.) | NA | Version Date | NA |
| Other Documents 1. Data collection tools 2. Assent form 3. Support letter (WOREC) 4. Work plan | | | |
| Co-Investigator's | NA | | |
| Study Site | Bhodaha VDC, Bara | | |

P:



Government of Nepal
Nepal Health Research Council (NHRC)
Estd. 1991



Ref. No.: 3086

| | | | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| Type of Review | <input type="checkbox"/> | Expedited | Timeline of Study 17 May 2022 to July 2022 Duration of Approval 17 May 2022 to 17 May 2023 This approval will be valid only one year | Frequency of continuing review NA |
| | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Full Board | | |
| | Meeting Date: 11 May 2022 | | | |
| Total budget of research | NRs 1,04,000.00 | | | |
| Ethical review processing fee | NRs 10,000.00 | | | |
| Investigator Responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none">Any amendments shall be approved from the ERB before implementing themSubmit Serious Adverse Events (SAE) and Suspected Unexpected Serious Adverse Reaction (SUSAR) reports to the ERB within 48hoursSubmit progress report every 3 monthsSubmit final report after completion of protocol procedures at the study siteReport protocol deviation / violation within 7 daysComply with all relevant international and NHRC guidelinesAbide by the principles of Good Clinical Practice and ethical conduct of the research | | | | |

If you have any questions, please contact the Ethical Review M & E Section at NHRC.

Thanking you,

Dr. Pradip Gyanwali
Member Secretary

Appendix D: Approval letter from WOREC

Regd. No.: 392/047/048



महिला पुनर्स्थापना केन्द्र (ओरेक)
Women's Rehabilitation Center (WOREC)



Date: 18th April, 2022

Subject: Approval letter for research

This letter acknowledges that we have received and reviewed a request letter submitted by Ms. Anusubha Sharma regarding conducting a research project entitled 'Dowry and social suffering in Nepal': A qualitative study of marriage customs in relation to violence, abuse and disrespect against women

Since Ms. Sharma has received approval for her research project from the University of Oslo's Institutional Review Board, we have approved her request for this research to be conducted at our facility following the organization's rules and regulations.

Lubha Raj Neupane
Executive Director, WOREC

Balkumari, Lalitpur, P.O.Box : 13233, Kathmandu, Nepal Tel: (+977)-01-2123124; (+977)-01-5186073;
(+977)-01-5186374 Fax: (+977)-01-5186271 Email: ics@worecnepal.org URL: www.worecnepal.org

महिला अधिकार तथा सामाजिक न्यायमा आधारित दिगो विकासको प्रवर्द्धनका लागि जुटौं ।

Appendix E: Information Sheet and Informed Consent (English and Nepali)

Are you interested in taking part in the research project?

"Dowry and social suffering in Nepal" A qualitative study of marriage customs in relation to violence, abuse, and disrespect against women.

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to identify and understand the plausible perspectives behind dowry-related violence, abuse, and disrespect against women. This research aims to provide qualitative data on the social sufferings this has created (through dowry-related violence) in the name of marriage in Nepali societies. This study will try to answer how women understand, discuss, and explain the relationship between dowry and violence against women. This study tries to understand the depth of 'domestic cruelty' targeted on the sphere of the Terai region in Nepal.

Purpose of the project

Main research question: How do women understand, discuss, and explain the relationship between dowry and violence against women?

Since there is a lack of research on the women's perspectives on the dowry system, women's conception is vital to understand their position in everyday life. This question will target women's experiences with a hope to get answers that cover how and in what ways they are facing violence since their birth/childhood till they become mothers in law, as well as what changes in the role a woman witnesses as her position grows or declines in the family. (e.g., becoming a mother-in-law versus becoming a widow). This research question will help to navigate how marriage customs and traditions are playing roles in determining women's power as well as their susceptibility to violence and seeks to understand the relation between dowry and violence against women based on their experiences.

Sub-questions:

- What are unmarried girls' opinions towards the relationship of dowry and violence?
- How do recently married women describe their position in relation to dowry and violence?
- Among the married women who have already become mothers-in-law, how do they think about dowry in its relation to violence?

I have divided the main question into these sub-questions to get a more concrete explanation of the main question. Narrowing down women into these subgroups of unmarried girls, young married women, married women with the first child born, and women who are mothers-in-law, will

help me to find differences in their roles and obligations as their positions change, which will give me more insights into their life experiences during certain phases of life. It is necessary to capture explanations of how women's shifts in household relations can make a variation in their perspectives towards their journey. Therefore, these research questions will address how women perceive their vulnerability to violence, with their changes in household positions and differences in roles, which will help to better understand violence and dowry in women's lives. Who is responsible for the research project? The University of Oslo is the institution responsible for the project.

Why are you being asked to participate? Almost 15-20 people participated in the study, and you are one of them. You are selected through key informants and organizations for this research. You are invited to take part in this research because we feel that your experience as a woman can contribute much to our understanding and knowledge of how you share your experiences and give your opinions on marriage and dowry relations. Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. There will be no direct benefit to you, but your participation is likely to help to learn more about young unmarried girls and married and older women's lives. The knowledge that we get from this research will be shared with you in a meeting before it is widely available to the public. Following the meeting, we will publish the results so that other interested people may learn from the research.

What does participation involve for you? By observation, focussed group discussion, and interviews, we are collecting data. We will ask you questions, and it can be personal too, but you are free to answer according to your will. As you are talking to us, we will record the audio. We want to explore the dowry and its impacts on the community by making you part of this study.

Participation is voluntary Participation in the project is voluntary. If you choose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you choose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).

- Including me, my supervisor Mr. Daniel Münster is responsible for the project. He is an associate professor at the University Oslo. We would have access to the personal data.
- All your details that reveal the addresses, and names in audio recordings, and field reports, will be anonymized, and they will be given a pseudonym upon transcriptions. Where recordings are made of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, I will keep the

tapes in a locked cabinet with limited access and erase the recording following transcription. I will seek your permission before taping. I will keep the data from other informal conversations in the form of a memo and write it down in the field record book. Again, no record of the name of the participants interviewed will be kept and you will be informed of who will have access to the tapes and for how long it will be kept. I will tape the interviews and discussions in an audio recorder, and I plan to transcribe it as soon as possible. I will save all the transcribed notes and interviews in UiO- one drive, which is username and password protected. Upon transcribing, I will delete all the non-anonymous data, from the UiO-drive and clear the trash bin.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?

Where we record the in-depth interview, I will keep the tapes in a locked cabinet with limited access and erase the recording following transcription. I will seek the permission of the respondents before taping. I will keep the data from other informal conversations in the form of a memo and write it down in the field record book. I will not record the name of the participants interviewed will inform you of who will have access to the tapes and for how long it will be kept. I will tape the interviews and discussions in an audio recorder, and I plan to transcribe it as soon as possible. I will save all the transcribed notes and interviews in UiO - one drive, which is username and password protected. Upon transcribing, I will delete all the non-anonymous data, from the UiO-drive and clear the trash bin. The data will not be further stored.

Your rights

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

What gives us the right to process your personal data? We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more? If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- Anusubha Sharma (researcher) & Danial Münster (Supervisor), University of Oslo

- NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by email: (personverntjenester@nsd.no) or by telephone: +4755582117

Consent form: I have received and understood information about the project [insert project title] and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

- to participate in observation and an interview
- I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project

If illiterate: I have witnessed the accurate reading of the consent form to the parent of the potential participant, and the individual has had the opportunity to ask questions. I confirm that the individual has given consent freely.

Name of witness _____

Signature of witness _____

Thumb print of participant

के तपाईं अनुसन्धान परियोजनामा भाग लिन इच्छुक हुनुहुन्छ?

नेपालमा दाइजो र सामाजिक यातना मा जातीय विवाह प्रथा को एक गुणात्मक अध्ययन (महिला विरुद्ध हिंसा, दुर्व्यवहार, र अनादर सम्बन्ध)

यो अनुसन्धान परियोजनामा सहभागिताको बारेमा सोधपूछ हो जसको मुख्य उद्देश्य दाइजो सम्बन्धी हिंसा, दुर्व्यवहार र महिला विरुद्धको अनादरका पछाडिको प्रशंसनीय दृष्टिकोणहरू पहिचान गर्न र बुझ्नु हो। यस अनुसन्धानले नेपाली समाजमा विवाहको नाममा (दाइजो सम्बन्धी हिंसाबाट) सिर्जना गरेको सामाजिक पीडाको गुणात्मक तथ्याङ्क उपलब्ध गराउने लक्ष्य राखेको छ। यस अध्ययनले महिलाहरूले दाइजो र महिला विरुद्ध हुने हिंसाबीचको सम्बन्धलाई कसरी बुझे, छलफल गर्ने र व्याख्या गर्ने भन्ने जवाफ दिने प्रयास गर्नेछ। यस अध्ययनले नेपालको तराई क्षेत्रमा लक्षित 'घरेलु क्रूरता' को गहिराइ बुझे प्रयास गर्नेछ।

परियोजनाको उद्देश्य

मुख्य अनुसन्धान प्रश्न: महिलाहरूले दाइजो र दाइजोबीचको सम्बन्धलाई कसरी बुझ्छन्, छलफल र व्याख्या गर्दछन् ?

दाइजो प्रथामा महिलाको दृष्टिकोणमा अनुसन्धानको अभाव भएकोले दैनिक जीवनमा महिलाको स्थिति बुझ्न महिलाको अवधारणा अत्यावश्यक छ। यस प्रश्नले महिलाको अनुभवलाई लक्षित गर्नेछ जसमा उनीहरूले जन्म/बाल्यकालदेखि सासु नहुँदासम्म कसरी र कस्ता तरिकाले हिंसाको सामना गरिरहेका छन्, साथै महिलाको रूपमा साक्षीको भूमिकामा कस्तो परिवर्तन हुन्छ भन्ने कुराको जवाफ पाउने आशाका साथ महिलाहरूको अनुभवलाई लक्षित गर्नेछ। परिवारमा स्थिति बढ्छ वा घट्छ। (जस्तै, सासु बन्दा वा विधवा बन्दा)। यस अनुसन्धान प्रश्नले महिलाको शक्ति र हिंसाप्रति संवेदनशीलता निर्धारण गर्नमा विवाह प्रचलन र परम्पराले कसरी भूमिका खेल्न गएको छ भनेर निर्यात गर्न मद्दत गर्नेछ र उनीहरूको अनुभवको आधारमा दाइजो र महिला विरुद्धको हिंसाबीचको सम्बन्ध बुझ्न खोज्नेछन् ?

उप-प्रश्नहरू:

- दाइजो र हिंसाको सम्बन्धमा अविवाहित केटीहरूको धारणा के छ?
- हालै विवाहित महिलाहरूले दाइजो र हिंसाको सम्बन्धमा आफ्नो अवस्थालाई कसरी बर्णन गर्नेछन् ?
- सासु भइसकेका विवाहित महिलाहरूलाई दाइजो र हिंसाको सम्बन्ध कस्तो लाग्छ ?

मुख्य प्रश्नको थप ठोस व्याख्या प्राप्त गर्न मैले यी उप-प्रश्नहरूमा विभाजन गरेको छु।

महिलाहरूलाई अविवाहित काटीहरूको यी उपसमूहहरूमा सिमित गर्दै युवा विवाहित महिलाहरू, पहिलो बच्चा जन्मेका विवाहित महिलाहरू र सासू भैसकेका महिलाहरूले मलाइ उनीहरूको भूमिका र दायित्वहरूमा भिन्नताहरू फेला पार्न मद्दत गर्नेछन् किनभने तिनीहरूको स्थिति परिवर्तन हुन्छ, जसले मलाई जीवनका निश्चित चरणहरूमा उनीहरूको जीवन अनुभवहरूमा थप अन्तरदृष्टि दिनेछ। घरायसी सम्बन्धमा महिलाको स्थान परिवर्तनले उनीहरूको यात्रा प्रतिको दृष्टिकोणमा कसरी भिन्नता ल्याउन सक्छ भन्ने स्पष्टिकरण लिन आवश्यक छ। तसर्थ, यी अनुसन्धान प्रश्नहरूले सम्बोधन गर्नेछन् कि महिलाहरूले हिंसाप्रतिको उनीहरूको जोखिमलाई कसरी बुझ्छन्, उनीहरूले घरपरिवारको स्थिति र भूमिकाहरूमा हुने भिन्नताहरूलाई कसरी बुझ्छन् भन्ने कुरालाई सम्बोधन गर्नेछन्, जसले हिंसालाई अझ राम्ररी बुझ्न मद्दत गर्नेछ।

अनुसन्धान परियोजनाको लागि जिम्मेवार को हो? ओस्लो विश्वविद्यालय परियोजनाको लागि जिम्मेवार संस्था हो।

तपाईंलाई किन सहभागी हुन भनिएको छ? लगभग १५-२० मानिसहरू अध्ययनमा सहभागी छन्, र तपाईं ती मध्ये एक हुनुहुन्छ। तपाईंलाई यस अनुसन्धानको लागि मुख्य सूचनाकर्ता र संस्थाहरू मार्फत चयन गरिएको छ। तपाईंलाई यस अनुसन्धानमा भाग लिन आमन्त्रित गरिएको छ किनभने हामीलाई लाग्छ कि महिलाको रूपमा तपाईंको अनुभव तपाईंले कसरी साझा गर्नुहुन्छ र विवाह र दाइजो सम्बन्धमा तपाईंको राय दिनुहुन्छ भन्ने हाम्रो बुझाइ र ज्ञानमा धेरै योगदान गर्न सक्छ। यस अनुसन्धानमा तपाईंको सहभागिता पूर्णतया स्वैच्छिक हो। तपाईंलाई कुनै प्रत्यक्ष फाइदा हुने छैन, तर तपाईंको सहभागिताले युवा अविवाहित केटीहरू, विवाहित र वृद्ध महिलाहरूको जीवनको बारेमा थप ज्ञान मद्दत गर्ने सम्भावना छ। यस अनुसन्धानबाट प्राप्त गरेको ज्ञानलाई जनताको लागि व्यापक रूपमा उपलब्ध हुनु अघि एक बैठकमा तपाईंसँग साझा गरिनेछ। बैठक पछि, हामी परिणामहरू प्रकाशित गर्नेछौं ताकि अन्य इच्छुक व्यक्तिहरूले अनुसन्धानबाट सिक्न सकून्।

यस सहभागिता कार्यमा तपाईंलाई किन संलग्न गरिएको हो ? अवलोकन, सामूहिक छलफल र अन्तर्वार्ताबाट हामीले तथ्यांक सङ्कलन गरिरहेका छौं। हामी तपाईंलाई प्रश्नहरू सोध्छौं, र यो व्यक्तिगत पनि हुन सक्छ, तर तपाईं आफ्नो इच्छा अनुसार जवाफ दिन स्वतन्त्र हुनुहुन्छ। तपाईंसँगको कुराकानीको हामि अडियो रेकर्ड गर्नेछौं। हामी तपाईंलाई यस अध्ययनको हिस्सा बनाएर समुदायमा दाइजो र यसको प्रभावहरू अन्वेषण गर्न चाहान्छौं।

सहभागिता स्वेच्छिक छ। यदि तपाईं सहभागी हुन रोजुभयो भने, तपाईं कुनै कारण नदिई कुनै पनि समयमा तपाईंको सहमति फिर्ता लिन सक्नुहुन्छ। त्यसपछि तपाईंको बारेमा सबै जानकारी गोप्य राखिनेछ। तपाईंले भाग नलिने वा पछि फिर्ता लिने निर्णय गर्नुभयो भने तपाईंको लागि कुनै नकारात्मक परिणामहरू हुनेछैनन्।

तपाईंको व्यक्तिगत गोपनीयता - हामी तपाईंको व्यक्तिगत डेटा कसरी भण्डारण र प्रयोग गर्नेछौं। हामी यो सूचना पत्रमा निर्दिष्ट उद्देश्य(हरू) को लागि मात्र तपाईंको व्यक्तिगत डाटा प्रयोग गर्नेछौं। हामी गोप्य रूपमा र डाटा सुरक्षा कानून (सामान्य डाटा सुरक्षा नियमन र व्यक्तिगत डाटा ऐन) अनुसार तपाईंको व्यक्तिगत डाटा प्रक्रिया गर्नेछौं। म सहित, मेरो पर्यवेक्षक श्री डेनियल मुन्स्टर परियोजनाको लागि जिम्मेवार हुनुहुन्छ। उहाँ ओस्लो विश्वविद्यालयमा सहयोगी प्राध्यापक हुनुहुन्छ। हामी व्यक्तिगत डाटा प्राप्त हुनेछ। तपाईंको सबै विवरणहरूबाट ठेगानाहरू, अडियो रेकर्डिङहरूमा नामहरू, फिल्ड रिपोर्टहरू प्रस्तुत हुनेछ र ति सबै गुमनाम गरिनेछ, र तिनीहरूलाई ट्रान्सक्रिप्सनमा छद्म नाम दिइनेछ। जहाँ गहिरो अन्तर्वार्ता र छलफलहरूको रेकर्डिङहरू बनाइन्छ, म टेपहरूलाई सीमित पहुँचको साथ लक क्याबिनेटमा राख्छु, र ट्रान्सक्रिप्शन पछि रेकर्डिङ मेटाउनेछु। म ट्याप गर्नु अघि तपाईंको अनुमति खोज्छु। म अन्य अनौपचारिक वार्तालापहरूको तथ्याङ्क मेमोको रूपमा राख्छु र फिल्ड रेकर्ड बुकमा लेख्छु। फेरि, अन्तर्वार्ता लिइएका सहभागीहरूको नामको कुनै अभिलेख राखिनेछैन र टेपमा कसको पहुँच छ र कति समयसम्म राखिनेछ भनेर तपाईंलाई सूचित गरिनेछ। म अडियो रेकर्डरमा अन्तर्वार्ता र छलफलहरू टेप गर्नेछु, र म यसलाई सकेसम्म चाँडो अभिलेख गर्ने योजना बनाउँछु। म सबै अभिलेखीकरण गरिएका नोटहरू र अन्तर्वार्ताहरू UiO-one ड्राइभमा सुरक्षित गर्नेछु, जुन username र password द्वारा सुरक्षित हुनेछ। अभिलेखीकरण गरेपछि, म UiO-ड्राइभबाट सबै गैर-अज्ञात डाटा मेटाउनेछु।

अनुसन्धान परियोजनाको अन्त्यमा तपाईंको व्यक्तिगत डेटा के हुनेछ? जहाँ हामी गहिरो अन्तर्वार्ता रेकर्ड गर्छौं, म टेपहरूलाई सीमित पहुँचको साथ लक क्याबिनेटमा राख्छु, र अभिलेखीकरण पछि रेकर्डिङ मेटाउनेछु। म टेप गर्नु अघि उत्तरदाताहरूको अनुमति लिनेछु। म अन्य अनौपचारिक वार्तालापहरूबाट प्राप्त डाटालाई मेमोको रूपमा राख्छु र फिल्ड रेकर्ड बुकमा लेख्छु। म अन्तर्वार्ता लिने सहभागीहरूको नाम रेकर्ड गर्ने छैन र तपाईंलाई सूचित टेपमा कसको पहुँच हुनेछ र कति समयसम्म राखिनेछ भनेर सूचित गर्नेछु।

तपाईंको अधिकार

संकलित डाटामा तपाईंलाई पहिचान गर्न सकिन्छ, तपाईंसँग निम्न कुराको अधिकार हुनेछ:

- तपाईंको बारेमा प्रशोधन भइरहेको व्यक्तिगत डाटामा पहुँच हुनेछ ।
- तपाईंको व्यक्तिगत डाटा मेटाउन अनुरोध गर्न सक्नु हुनेछ ।
- तपाईंको बारेमा गलत व्यक्तिगत डेटा सच्याउन वा सुधार गर्न अनुरोध गर्न सक्नुहुनेछ
- तपाईंको व्यक्तिगत डाटा (डेटा पोर्टेबिलिटी) को प्रतिलिपि प्राप्त गर्न सक्नुहुनेछ ।
- डाटा सुरक्षा अधिकारी वा नर्वेजियन डाटा संरक्षण प्राधिकरणमा उजुरी पठाउनुहोस्

तपाईंको व्यक्तिगत डेटा प्रशोधन गर्ने अधिकारले हामीलाई के प्रदान गर्छ ? हामी तपाईंको सहमतिमा आधारित तपाईंको व्यक्तिगत डाटालाई प्रशोधन गर्नेछौं। एनएसडीसँगको सम्झौताको आधारमा - नर्वेजियन सेन्टर फर रिसर्च डाटा एसले यो परियोजनामा व्यक्तिगत डाटाको प्रशोधन डाटा संरक्षण कानून अनुसार भएको मूल्याङ्कन गरेको छ। म थप जानकारी कहोँ पत्ता लगाउन सक्छु? यदि तपाईंसँग परियोजनाको बारेमा प्रश्नहरू छन्, वा तपाईंको अधिकार प्रयोग गर्न चाहनुहुन्छ भने, सम्पर्क गर्नुहोस्:

- ओस्लो विश्वविद्यालय, अनुशुभा शर्मा (अनुसन्धानकर्ता), डेनियल मुन्स्टर (पर्यवेक्षक)
- NSD - नर्वेजियन सेन्टर फर रिसर्च डाटा AS, इमेल द्वारा: personvern@nsd.no वा टेलिफोन द्वारा: +47 55 58 21 17

सहमति फाराम: मैले परियोजनाको बारेमा जानकारी प्राप्त गरेको छु र बुझेको छु र मलाई प्रश्नहरू सोध्ने मौका दिइएको छ। निम्न कुरामा मेरो अनुमति छ:

- अन्तर्वार्तामा सहभागी हुने ।
- म आफ्नो स्वइच्छाले मेरो व्यक्तिगत डाटा प्रक्रिया गर्न शोधपत्रको अवधि सम्म सहमति दिन्छु।

नाम:

मिति:

हस्ताक्षर:

अशिक्षित भए: मैले सम्भावित सहभागीको अभिभावकलाई सहमति फारमको सही पढेको देखेको छु, र व्यक्तिले प्रश्नहरू सोध्ने अवसर पाएको छु। म पुष्टि गर्छु कि व्यक्तिले स्वतन्त्र रूपमा सहमति दिएको छ।

साक्षीको नाम: _____

सहभागीको आँठा छाप

साक्षीको हस्ताक्षर: _____

Appendix F: Parental Consent for Participants under 18 years (English and Nepali)

Informed Consent Form for Parents of young unmarried girls between age group (15-18) years, participating in the research titled “Dowry and social suffering in Nepal”- A qualitative study of marriage customs in relation to violence, abuse and disrespect against women

Anusubha Sharma
University of Oslo

This Informed Consent Form has two parts:

- Information Sheet (to share information about the study with you)
- Certificate of Consent (for signatures if you agree that your child may participate)

You will be given a copy of the full Informed Consent Form

Information letter:

My name is Anusubha Sharma, I am a master level student at the University of Oslo. I am doing research on violence against women and dowry system and its impact on the society. So, this study will be among women and girls about how they perceive, understand, and see the dowry and how it is linked to violence against women. I am going to give you information and invite you to be a part of this research. This sheet may contain words that you do not understand. Please ask me to stop as we go through the information, and I will take time to explain. If you have questions later, you can ask me directly.

This research will involve your participation in an interview that will take about an hour. You are being invited to take part in this research because we feel that your experience as woman can contribute much to our understanding and knowledge of how you share your experiences and give your opinions on the marriage and dowry relation. Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate or not. We will be asking you to share from your life story, questions that might be hard to answer. If you do not wish to answer any of the questions during the interview, you may say so and the interviewer will move on to the next question. No one else than the interviewer and an interpreter will be present unless you would like someone else to be there. The information recorded is confidential. The entire interview will be tape-recorded, but no one will be identified by name on the tape. The tape

will be stored in a locked room, transferred to a computer, and deleted after 3 weeks. The research takes place over 3 months in total.

There will be no direct benefit to you, but your participation is likely to help to learn more about young unmarried girls, married and older women's lives. The knowledge that we get from this research will be shared with you in a meeting before it is widely available for the public. Following the meeting, we will publish the results so that other interested people may learn from the research.

If you have any questions, you can ask them now or later. If you wish to ask questions later, you may contact the village leader who will later contact me via my mail or my number.

anusubha.sharma18@gmail.com +4793946298

Do you have any questions?

Certificate of Consent

I have been asked to give consent for my daughter/son to participate in this research study which will involve her completing one interview. I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions that I have asked to have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily for my child to participate as a participant in this study.

Name of Parent or Guardian _____

Signature of Parent or Guardian _____

Date _____

Certificate of Assent

I have read this information (or had the information read to me) I have had my questions answered and know that I can ask questions later if I have them.

I agree to take part in the research

Only if child assents:

Print name of child _____

Signature of child: _____

Date: _____
day/month/year

If illiterate: I have witnessed the accurate reading of the consent form to the parent of the potential participant, and the individual has had the opportunity to ask questions. I confirm that the individual has given consent freely.

Print name of witness _____

Thumb print participant

Signature of witness _____

Date _____

Statement by the researcher/person taking consent

- I have accurately read out the information sheet to the parent of the potential participant, and to the best of my ability made sure that the person understands that the following will be done:
- I confirm that the parent was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by him/her have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

A copy of this Informed Consent Form has been provided to the parent or guardian of the participants.

नेपालमा दाइजो र सामाजिक पीडा शीर्षकको अनुसन्धानमा सहभागी १५-१८ वर्ष उमेर समूहका युवा अविवाहित केटीहरूका अभिभावकहरूको लागि सूचित सहमति फारम

(महिला विरुद्धको हिंसा, दुर्व्यवहार र अनादरको सम्बन्धमा जातीय विवाह प्रथाको गुणात्मक अध्ययन)

अनुसुभा शर्मा

ओस्लो विश्वविद्यालय

यो सूचित सहमति फारममा दुई भागहरू छन्।

- सूचना पाना १ तपाईंसँग अध्ययनको बारेमा जानकारी साझा गर्न
- सहमतिको प्रमाणपत्र (तपाईंको बच्चा सहभागी हुन सक्छ भन्ने कुरामा तपाईं सहमत हुनुहुन्छ भनी संकेत गर्न हस्ताक्षरको लागि)

तपाईंलाई पूर्ण सूचित सहमति फारमको प्रतिलिपि दिइनेछ ।

जानकारी पत्र:

मेरो नाम अनुसुभा शर्मा हो, म ओस्लो विश्वविद्यालयमा स्नातकोत्तर तहको विद्यार्थी हुँ। महिला हिंसा र दाइजो प्रथा र यसले समाजमा पार्ने असरका विषयमा अनुसन्धान गरिरहेको छु । तसर्थ, यो अध्ययन महिला र केटीहरूले दाइजोलाई कसरी हेर्छन् र बुझ्छन् र यो कसरी महिला विरुद्धको हिंसासँग जोडिएको छ भन्ने बारेमा हुनेछ। म तपाईंलाई यस अनुसन्धान बारे जानकारी दिनेछु र तपाईंलाई यस अनुसन्धानको हिस्सा बन्न आमन्त्रित गर्दछु। यो पानामा तपाईंले नबुझेका शब्दहरू हुन सक्छन्। कृपया जानकारीका क्रममा नबुझेका कुरा मलाई रोकेर सोध्न सक्नुहुनेछ र व्याख्या गरिदिने छु ।

यदि तपाईंसँग पछि पनि प्रश्नहरू रहन्छन् भने, तपाईं मलाई सिधै सोध्न सक्नुहुन्छ।

यो अनुसन्धानले लगभग एक घण्टा लाग्ने अन्तर्वार्तामा तपाईंको सहभागिता समावेश गर्दछ। तपाईंलाई यस अनुसन्धानमा भाग लिन आमन्त्रित गरिएको छ किनभने हामीलाई लाग्छ कि महिलाको रूपमा तपाईंले तपाईंको अनुभवहरू कसरी साझा गर्नुहुन्छ र विवाह र दाइजो सम्बन्धमा तपाईंको राय दिनुहुन्छ भन्ने हाम्रो बुझाइ र ज्ञानमा धेरै योगदान गर्न सक्छ। यस अनुसन्धानमा तपाईंको सहभागिता पूर्णतया स्वैच्छिक हो। भाग लिने वा नलिने यो तपाईंको छनौट हो।

तपाईंलाई तपाईंको जीवन कथाबाट साझा गर्न सोध्दै, प्रश्नहरू जुन जवाफ दिन गाह्रो हुन सक्छ। यदि तपाईं अन्तर्वार्ताको क्रममा कुनै पनि प्रश्नको जवाफ दिन चाहनुहुन्न भने, तपाईं त्यसो भन्न सक्नुहुन्छ र

अन्तर्वार्ताकर्ता अर्को प्रश्नमा जान्छन्। अन्तर्वार्ताकार र दोभाषे बाहेक अरू कोही पनि उपस्थित हुनेछैनन् जबसम्म तपाईं त्यहाँ अरू कोही भएको चाहनुहुन्न। रेकर्ड गरिएको जानकारी गोप्य छ। पूरै अन्तर्वार्ता टेप-रेकर्ड हुनेछ, तर टेपमा नामबाट कसैको पनि पहिचान हुनेछैन। टेप लक गरिएको कोठामा भण्डार गरिनेछ, कम्प्युटरमा स्थानान्तरण गरिनेछ, र 3 हप्ता पछि मेटाइनेछ। अनुसन्धान कुल 3 महिना भन्दा बढी हुन्छ।

तपाईंलाई कुनै प्रत्यक्ष फाइदा हुने छैन, तर तपाईंको सहभागिताले युवा अविवाहित केटीहरू, विवाहित र वृद्ध महिलाहरूको जीवनको बारेमा थप जान्न मद्दत गर्ने सम्भावना छ। हामीले यस अनुसन्धानबाट प्राप्त गरेको ज्ञानलाई यो व्यापक रूपमा उपलब्ध हुनु अघि बैठकमा तपाईंसँग साझा गरिनेछ।

सार्वजनिक। बैठक पछि, हामी परिणामहरू प्रकाशित गर्नेछौं ताकि अन्य इच्छुक व्यक्तिहरूले अनुसन्धानबाट सिक्न सकून्।

यदि तपाईंसँग कुनै प्रश्नहरू छन् भने, तपाईं तिनीहरूलाई अहिले वा पछि सोध्न सक्नुहुन्छ। यदि तपाईं पछि प्रश्नहरू सोध्न चाहनुहुन्छ भने, तपाईं गाउँको नेतालाई सम्पर्क गर्न सक्नुहुन्छ जसले पछि मलाई मेरो मेल वा मेरो नम्बर मार्फत सम्पर्क गर्नेछ।

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के तपाईंको कुनै प्रश्न छन्?

सहमति फाराम

मलाई मेरो छोरीरछोरालाई यस अनुसन्धान अध्ययनमा भाग लिनको लागि सहमति दिन आग्रह गरिएको छ जसमा उनको एउटा अन्तर्वार्ता पूरा गर्नु पर्नेछ। मैले माथिको जानकारी पढेको छु, वा यो मलाई पढिएको छ। मैले यस बारे प्रश्नहरू सोध्ने अवसर पाएको छु र मैले सोधेका कुनै पनि प्रश्नहरूको जवाफ मेरो सन्तुष्टिमा दिइएको छ। म मेरो बच्चालाई यस अध्ययनमा सहभागीको रूपमा सहभागी हुन स्वेच्छाले सहमति दिन्छु।

अभिभावकको नाम

अभिभावकको हस्ताक्षर

मिति

स्वीकृतिको प्रमाणपत्र

मैले यो जानकारी पढेको छु (वा कसैले मेरो लागि जानकारी पढेको थियो) मैले मेरा प्रश्नहरूको जवाफ पाएको छु र मलाई थाहा छ कि यदि मसँग प्रश्नहरू छन् भने म पछि सोध्न सक्छु।

म अनुसन्धानमा भाग लिन सहमत छु

बच्चाले सहमति जनाएमा मात्र:

बच्चाको नाम : _____

बच्चाको हस्ताक्षर: _____

मिति: _____

दिन/महिना/वर्ष

अशिक्षित भए:

मैले सम्भावित सहभागीको अभिभावकलाई सहमति फारमको सही पढेको देखेको छु, र व्यक्तिले प्रश्नहरू सोध्न अवसर पाएको छु। म पुष्टि गर्छु कि व्यक्तिले स्वतन्त्र रूपमा सहमति दिएको छ।

साक्षीको नाम:

सहभागीको औंठा छाप

साक्षीको हस्ताक्षर:

अनुसन्धानकर्तार अनुमति लिने व्यक्तिको बयान

- मैले सम्भावित सहभागीको अभिभावकलाई जानकारी पाना सहि रूपमा पढेको छु, र मेरो क्षमताले ती व्यक्तिले निम्न कुराहरू गरिनेछ भनी बुझेको कुरा सुनिश्चित गरेको छु।
- म पुष्टि गर्छु कि अभिभावकलाई अध्ययनको बारेमा प्रश्नहरू सोध्न मौका दिइएको थियो, र उहाँ/उनले सोधेका सबै प्रश्नहरूको सही र मेरो क्षमता अनुसार जवाफ दिइयो। म पुष्टि गर्छु कि व्यक्तिलाई सहमति दिन जबरजस्ती गरिएको छैन, र सहमति स्वतन्त्र र स्वैच्छिक रूपमा दिइएको छ।

यस सूचित सहमति फारमको प्रतिलिपि सहभागीको अभिभावक वा अभिभावकलाई प्रदान गरिएको छ।

Appendix G: Interview Guide (English and Nepali)

GROUP 1: YOUNG UNMARRIED GIRLS

- a. Can you tell me about yourself?
(Name, age, hobbies, study, family members, do you go to school?)
- b. On a normal day what are your daily activities?
(Probe: roles and responsibilities, likes and dislikes on them, why?)
- c. How do you feel being a daughter in house?
- d. Do you remember something that you or your friends have faced that is stressful in being a girl child?
- e. Is there any specific incident that is troublesome and that has made you feel discriminated at home, school or in the society? How do you explain this?
- f. As an unmarried daughter, how do you picture yourself in the household after your marriage?
- g. How and at what age do you want to get married?
- h. What are your expectations from the future husband and family?
- i. If you could change something, what could it be in the household?
(Probe: culture, gender roles, societal influence, etc.)

अविवाहित युवतीहरु

१. के तपाईं मलाई आफ्नो बारेमा बताउन सक्नुहुन्छ?
(नाम, उमेर, शौक, अध्ययन, परिवारका सदस्य, के तपाईं स्कुल जानुहुन्छ?)
२. सामान्य दिनमा तपाईंको दैनिक कार्यहरु के के हुन्छ ?
(प्रोब: भूमिका र जिम्मेवारी, त्यो मनपर्छ वा मन पर्दैन , किन?)
३. घरमा छोरी हुँदा कस्तो लाग्छ ?
४. के तपाईं वा तपाईंका साथीहरुले सामना गर्नु भएको कुनै कुरा याद छ जुन केटी(छोरी/बच्चा) हुँदा सानोमा तनावपूर्ण भएको ?
५. के त्यहाँ कुनै खास घटना छ जुन समस्याग्रस्त छ र जसले तपाईंलाई घर, विद्यालय वा समाजमा भेदभाव गरेको छ? तपाईं यसलाई कसरी व्याख्या गर्नुहुन्छ?
६. अविवाहित छोरी भएको नाताले विवाहपछि घरपरिवारमा आफूलाई कसरी चित्रण गर्नुहुन्छ ?
७. कसरी र कुन उमेरमा बिहे गर्न चाहनुहुन्छ ?
८. भावी पति र परिवारबाट तपाईंको अपेक्षा के छ?
९. यदि तपाईंले केहि परिवर्तन गर्न सक्नुहुन्छ भने, यो घरमा के हुन सक्छ?
(प्रोब: संस्कृति, लैङ्गिक भूमिका, सामाजिक प्रभाव, आदि)

GROUP 2: RECENTLY MARRIED WOMEN

- a) Can you tell me a little about yourself? Age, Hobbies? What things do you like to do?
- b) When did you marry?
- c) Tell us about your experiences with your marriage. Did you live with your boyfriend/husband before you got married?
(Probe: How was it arranged? where? How old were you when getting married? Any proposals on demands from groom's side? How was it proposed and what were asked to)?
- d) Did you choose your husband or did your parents choose for you?
(Probe: Did you know him before you married him? How old is your husband? 15-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65-74, 75-84yrs)
- e) Were you given gifts during marriage? How did you feel about this?
(Probe: dowry, issues related to dowry and agreement, any issues concerning dowry in new family after marriage)
- f) Explain how your family picked a husband for you. How was the marriage planned/ can you explain about how you had felt when marriage was proposed? Probe: were you ready to marry? If no, why? Was the caste ever an issue?
(Probe: dowry)
- g) Does your husband have other wives than you?
(Probe: if yes, how do you explain about your position and feelings now)
- h) What were your expectations from the new family, the husband?
- i) What differences in behaviors you have found from both family members – your partner and yours, before and after marriage?
(Probe: how, why do you feel so? Probe for each stage of household positions or how and when the relationship started to change)
- j) What were your daily activities in the new house?
Probe: could you explain more on how you felt on being a daughter in law or wife
- k) What issues used to come for you at home? Husband's relation with you? Any comments on other family members' behavior on you?
- l) Has it had any effect on your well-being? In what ways? Were there more that you would have liked them to do? How long did it continue? Were there times when it got better or worse?
- m) Have you ever been pregnant? Or do you have any children?
(Probe: How was your pregnancy? Were you getting enough support and care during the process? What about after giving birth? Gender issues, family and peer support, etc.)

- n) Has it been difficult to meet your relatives and family? Have you discussed your problems to others?
- o) What is the scariest thing that has ever been done to you? Who is the first person you talked to after the incident, what was your condition at the time?
- p) How would you explain the times you were in your husband's family?
Any specific events that bother you?
- q) If you wish to change something in this relation, what could it be?
(Probe: abuse, violence, and disrespect)

समूह १: भर्खरै विवाहित महिलाहरू

क) आफ्नो बारेमा थोरै बताउन सक्नुहुन्छ ? उमेर, शौक? तपाईंलाई के गर्न मनपर्छ?

ख) तपाईंले कहिले बिहे गर्नुभयो ?

ग) तपाईंको विवाहको बारेमा हामीलाई बताउनुहोस्। के तपाईं विवाह गर्नु अघि आफ्नो प्रेमी/पतिसँग बस्नुभयो?

(प्रोब: कसरी मिलाइएको थियो? कहाँ? विवाह गर्दा कति वर्षको थियो ?

दुलाहाको तर्फबाट कुनै मागको प्रस्ताव छ? यो कसरी प्रस्ताव गरिएको थियो र के के मागिएको थियो ?

घ) के तपाईंले आफ्नो पति आफैले छनोट गर्नुभयो वा तपाईंको आमाबाबुले तपाईंको लागि रोज्नुभयो?

(प्रोब: के तपाईंले उहाँलाई विवाह गर्नु अघि चिन्नुभएको थियो? तपाईंको श्रीमानको उमेर कति छ? १५-

२४, २५-३४, ३५-४४, ४५-५४, ५५-६४, ६५-७४, ७५-८४ वर्ष)

ङ) बिहे गर्दा उपहार दिनुभएको थियो ? तपाईंलाई यो कुरा कस्तो लाग्यो?

(प्रोब: दाइजो, दाइजो सम्बन्धी मुद्दाहरू र सम्झौता, विवाह पछि नयाँ परिवारमा दाइजो सम्बन्धी कुनै समस्याहरू)

च) तपाईंको परिवारले तपाईंको लागि पति कसरी छान्यो भनेर व्याख्या गर्नुहोस्। विवाहको योजना कसरी बनाइएको थियो / विवाहको प्रस्ताव राख्दा तपाईंलाई कस्तो लाग्यो भनेर व्याख्या गर्न सक्नुहुन्छ? प्रश्न: तिमी बिहे गर्न तयार थियो ? थिएनौ भने, किन? के जाति सम्बन्धि मुद्दा उठेको थियो ?

(प्रोब: दाइजो)

छ) के तपाईंको श्रीमानका तपाईं बाहेक अरू पत्नीहरू छन्?

(प्रोब: यदि हो भने, तपाईं आफ्नो स्थिति र भावनाको बारेमा अहिले कसरी व्याख्या गर्नुहुन्छ)

ज) नयाँ परिवार, श्रीमानबाट तपाईंको अपेक्षा के थियो?

झ) विवाह अघि र पछि दुवै परिवारका सदस्यहरू - तपाईंको पार्टनर र तपाईंको व्यवहारमा के भिन्नताहरू पाउनुभयो?

(प्रोब: कसरी, तपाईंलाई किन यस्तो लाग्छ? घरायसी पदको प्रत्येक चरण वा सम्बन्ध कसरी र कहिले परिवर्तन हुन थाल्यो भनेर अनुसन्धान गर्नुहोस्)

~f) नयाँ घरमा तपाईंको दैनिक कार्यहरू के थिए?

प्रोब: बुहारी वा श्रीमती भएकोमा कस्तो महसुस भयो भन्ने बारे थप व्याख्या गर्न सक्नुहुन्छ?

ट) तपाईंलाई घरमा कस्ता समस्याहरू आउँथे? तपाईंसँग श्रीमानको सम्बन्ध नि ? परिवारका अन्य सदस्यहरूले तपाईंलाई गरेको व्यवहारको बारेमा कुनै टिप्पणी छ?

ठ) के यसले तपाईंको सद्भावनामा कुनै प्रभाव पारेको छ? कुन तरिकामा? तपाईंले तिनीहरूलाई मन पराउनुहुने थप कुराहरू थिए? यो कहिलेसम्म जारी रह्यो? के त्यहाँ समय थियो जब यो राम्रो वा खराब भयो?

ड) के तपाईं कहिल्यै गर्भवती हुनुभएको छ? वा तपाईंका कुनै सन्तान छन्?

(प्रोब: तपाईंको गर्भावस्था कस्तो रह्यो? के तपाईंले प्रक्रियाको क्रममा पर्याप्त सहयोग र हेरचाह पाउनुभयो? बच्चा जन्माएपछि के हुन्छ? लैङ्गिक समस्याहरू, परिवार र साथीहरूको समर्थन, आदि)

ढ) आफ्नो आफन्त र परिवारलाई भेट्न गाह्रो भएको छ? के तपाईंले आफ्ना समस्याहरू अरूसँग छलफल गर्नुभएको छ?

ण) तपाईंलाई अहिलेसम्म गरिएको सबैभन्दा डरलाग्दो कुरा के हो? घटनापछि पहिलो पटक कुरा गर्ने व्यक्ति को हुनुहुन्छ, त्यतिबेला तपाईंको अवस्था कस्तो थियो ?

त) तपाईं आफ्नो पतिको परिवारमा भएको समयलाई कसरी व्याख्या गर्नुहुन्छ?

तपाईंलाई सताउने कुनै विशेष घटनाहरू?

थ) यदि तपाईं यस सम्बन्धमा केहि परिवर्तन गर्न चाहनुहुन्छ भने, यो के हुन सक्छ?

(प्रोब: दुर्व्यवहार, हिंसा, र अनादर)

GROUP 3: MARRIED WOMEN WHO ARE MOTHERS IN LAW

- a. How was your son's or daughter's marriage confirmed?
(Probe: how was it first arranged and then what were family's roles, what was decision of son/daughters'; were they ready or needed to convince for marriage? Why do you think so?)
- b. How does the dowry tradition is being carried on in your society/communities?
(Probe into social, cultural, economic, gender, education, and family relations)
- c. You were someone's (may be still someone's) daughter in law. What do you think have changed from being a daughter-in-law till being a mother-in-law?
- d. Can you remember the process how your son's/daughter's marriage was done?
(Probe: is/was there any better ways than that?)
- e. What makes the mother-in law's role greater in the house?
(Probe: What are the major reasons you think behind this?)
- f. What is your opinion on the giving and receiving of dowry?
- g. "Marriage without dowry" How do you feel when this happens?
(Probe: opinions/good and bad points)

समूह ३ : सासू भैसकेका विवाहित महिलाहरु

१. तपाईंको छोरा वा छोरीको विवाह कसरी निश्चित भयो?

(प्रोब: यो पहिले कसरी छिनोफानो गरिएको थियो र त्यसपछि परिवारको भूमिका के थियो? छोरा/छोरीको निर्णय; के तिनीहरू तयार थिए वा विवाहको लागि मनाउन आवश्यक थियो? तपाईंलाई किन यस्तो लाग्छ?)

२. तपाईंको समाज/समुदायमा दाइजो प्रथा कसरी चलिरहेको छ ?

(सामाजिक, सांस्कृतिक, आर्थिक, लैङ्गिक, शिक्षा, र पारिवारिक सम्बन्धको अनुसन्धान)

३. तिमी कसैको (अझै पनि) बुहारी छ्यौ? बुहारी बनेदेखि सासु बन्नेसम्म के परिवर्तन भयो जस्तो लाग्छ ?

४. आफ्नो छोरा/छोरीको विवाह कसरी भयो भन्ने प्रक्रिया सम्झन सक्नुहुन्छ?

(प्रोब: के त्यहाँ त्यो भन्दा राम्रो तरिकाहरू छन्?)

५. घरमा सासुको भूमिका कुन कुराले बढाउँछ?

(प्रोब: यसको पछाडि तपाईंको विचारमा प्रमुख कारणहरू के हुन्?)

दाइजो दिने र लिने सम्बन्धमा तपाईंको धारणा के छ ?

"दाइजोविना विवाह" यस्तो हुँदा तपाईंलाई कस्तो लाग्छ?

(प्रोब: राय/राम्रो र नराम्रो तर्कहरू)

Appendix H: List of Codes

| Name | Description | Files | References |
|---|-------------|-------|------------|
| FGD Men | | 1 | 2 |
| Burden to poor | | 1 | 2 |
| Compulsion & acceptance | | 1 | 1 |
| Dignity of son in laws | | 1 | 1 |
| Dowry-sad reality, divorce | | 1 | 3 |
| Greed & deception | | 1 | 1 |
| Grooms' education & dowry | | 1 | 1 |
| Lack of initiation t stop dowry | | 1 | 2 |
| Lacking legal action | | 1 | 1 |
| Love is sin | | 1 | 3 |
| Women rights | | 1 | 2 |
| Misogyny/suppression of women | | 1 | 1 |
| Panchayat system | | 1 | 1 |
| About village | | 1 | 3 |
| Mothers-in-law | | 1 | 5 |
| Daily activities | | 2 | 5 |
| Initiation of marriage proposal | | 1 | 4 |
| Dowry negotiation in sons/daughters' marriage | | 1 | 5 |
| Poverty and dowry | | 1 | 6 |
| Marriage as destiny and luck | | 1 | 1 |
| Consequence of less or no dowry | | 1 | 4 |
| Confusion over dowry, acceptance and denial | | 1 | 9 |

| Name | Description | Files | References |
|--|-------------|-------|------------|
| Comparing being daughter-in-law vs. mother-in-law vs. daughter in law of today | | 1 | 4 |
| Poverty and food shortage in past | | 1 | 2 |
| Comparison in household roles | | 1 | 1 |
| Household-story; Abusive father-in-law | | 1 | 3 |
| Escaping from in-laws' house | | | |
| Start of family separation, source of stress | | 1 | 2 |
| Dependence on son and daughter-in-law | | 1 | 1 |
| Womens' vulnerability | | 1 | 2 |
| Perfect-daughter-in-law | | 1 | 5 |
| Importance of family cohesion | | 1 | 1 |
| Fear and belief in God in relation to dowry practice and marriage | | 1 | 2 |
| Recently married women | | 0 | 0 |
| Daily activities | | 1 | 5 |
| Autonomy in marriage decision | | 1 | 5 |
| Marriage ritual | | 1 | 4 |
| Barat system | | 1 | 1 |
| Dowry negotiation | | 1 | 3 |
| Living with in-laws | | 1 | 5 |
| Freedom restrictions | | 1 | 3 |
| Perfect-Mother-in-law | | 1 | 2 |
| Domestic violence and dowry | | 1 | 3 |
| Intergenerational differences | | 1 | 1 |
| Dealing pain | | 1 | 3 |

| Name | Description | Files | References |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|-------|------------|
| Dowry role in marriage | | 1 | 4 |
| Derogatory comments | | 1 | 2 |
| In-laws and spouse abuse | | 1 | 1 |
| Mother vs mother-in-law | | 1 | 2 |
| Difficulties in new family | | 1 | 3 |
| Pregnancy | | 1 | 2 |
| Restriction of freedom | | 1 | 4 |
| Violence-survivors | | 2 | 2 |
| Caste in love marriage | | 1 | 1 |
| Natal cut-off in love marriage | | 1 | 2 |
| Longing for acceptance | | 1 | 1 |
| Threats from family members | | 1 | 2 |
| Limited interaction within in-laws | | 1 | 1 |
| Caste-role in arranged marriage | | 1 | 1 |
| A decade of torture | | 1 | 1 |
| Deprivation of basic need, starvation | | 1 | 2 |
| Blaming and Gaslighting | | | |
| Regret | | 1 | 1 |
| Unfair God | | 1 | 1 |
| Limited interaction within in-laws | | 1 | 1 |
| Domestic Hierarchy & violence | | 1 | 3 |
| Chain of tragedies | | 1 | 2 |
| Dealing pain | | 1 | 1 |
| Dowry & job as women's security | | 1 | 3 |
| Expectation after giving birth | | 1 | 1 |

| Name | Description | Files | References |
|--|-------------|-------|------------|
| Husband 's extra-marital affair | | 1 | 3 |
| ` the other woman ` | | 1 | 1 |
| Privacy and intimacy | | 1 | 2 |
| Family rejection, fear of rejection | | 1 | 2 |
| Lies over property | | 1 | 1 |
| Lack of parental support, threats | | 1 | 1 |
| Lies over property | | 1 | 1 |
| Lifestyle comparison before and after marriage | | 1 | 1 |
| Natal affection-apathy | | 1 | 2 |
| Negligent husband roles | | 1 | 1 |
| Domestic violence | | 1 | 1 |
| Double-faced-man/husband | | 1 | 1 |
| Ocean of kindness | | 1 | 1 |
| Pregnancy | | 1 | 1 |
| Emotional blackmail | | 2 | 3 |
| Torture from mother-in-law and sisters-in-law | | 1 | 1 |
| Initial contact with WOREC | | 1 | 1 |
| Young unmarried girls | | 0 | 0 |
| Daily-activities | | 1 | 18 |
| Gender-inequality | | 1 | 14 |
| Male-dependency | | 1 | 4 |
| Restricted women roles | | 1 | 3 |
| Societal-influence-on-rural education | | 1 | 2 |

| Name | Description | Files | References |
|--|-------------|-------|------------|
| Value of education | | 1 | 2 |
| If I was boy.... | | 1 | 2 |
| Love Vs. arranged marriage | | 1 | 3 |
| Societal pressure to achieve goals | | 1 | 2 |
| Mistrust in marriage relations due to bad examples | | 1 | 2 |
| Parental-role-marriage-decision | | 1 | 2 |
| Dowry `the must` | | 1 | 8 |
| Preferred age to marry | | 1 | 3 |
| Poor-understanding | | 1 | 2 |
| Domestic violence at home | | 1 | 4 |
| Son preference | | 1 | 7 |