

VIOLENCE AGAINST EDUCATED WOMEN DURING PREGNANCY: A
FEMINIST NARRATIVE INQUIRY

Latika Maskey Pradhan

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December, 2020 and approved by

..... 13 December, 2020

Assoc. Prof. Prakash Chandra Bhattarai, PhD
Dissertation Supervisor, and Head of Department

..... 13 December, 2020

Prof. Dr Amina Singh
External Examiner

..... 13 December, 2020

Prof. Mahesh Nath Parajuli, PhD
Dean/Chair of Research Committee

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..... 13 December, 2020

Latika Maskey Pradhan,
Degree Candidate

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DEDICATION

To my Grand-mom Late. Ms. Shanti Maskey, my *Mamu* whom I idealize as a strong independent woman, a fighter who defied all odds in life, to survive the world of

Patriarchy

And

All the women out there who are fighters and survivors of violence

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work and it has not been submitted for the candidature for any other degree at any other university.

.....

13 December, 2020

Latika Maskey Pradhan,

Degree Candidate

AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

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Abstract Approved

.....

Assoc. Prof. Prakash C. Bhattarai, PhD

Dissertation Supervisor

The prevalence of violence against women is widespread, one in three women worldwide and two in ten women in Nepal experience violence in their lifetime. While violence can be in a different form, the international declarations recognize violence against women to be a result of historically situated unequal position of women in the society that are discriminatory for women. However, available studies on violence against women mostly focuses on exploring prevalence, forms of violence and its health consequences, that are often binary, and adopts a problem solving approach. There are limited researches that focuses on violence during pregnancy in Nepal that attempts to understand the underlying gendered narrative to the women's individual experiences and normalization of violence. Thus, this research aims to explore how educated women explain and interpret their experience of violence, and its resistance or acceptance, with special reference to the period of their pregnancy.

Drawing on the Foucauldian theory of power and normalization, the study has employed feminist narrative inquiry as a method of research in reference to the

framework introduced by Cladinin (2016) and Woodiwiss (2017). The feminist narrative inquiry is adopted to provide a critical lens in identifying the complexity and layers within the stories told. Further, the analysis adopts the standpoint epistemology, in acknowledging women's account of the incidences of violence, not only as a mere narration, but as a unique knowledge in the given context. To enrich the discussion, a journey mapping exercise was employed to understand the temporality and context, of how the participants understood violence over their pregnancy period. Furthermore, the normalization of violence within the context of self, family and community is explained using the socio-ecological model in reference to, the dominant narrative.

The study reveals some important accounts of women's experiences of violence during pregnancy that ranges from anger, to workload and even work-place violence. Further, the analysis brings some critical discussion points, such as the role of educational values vis- a -vis violence; the condition of pregnancy in reference to women's vulnerability; the pressure in the workplace to prove equal, and also the normalization of violence. Acknowledging the individual uniqueness, this research also reflects on the similarities in the experiences, and influence of the underlying social norms in reinforcing women's subordination, even amongst the educated women. This study has implications at the policy, individual and behavioral level, and also raises questions for future researches.

This study tells the stories of educated women's experiences of violence during pregnancy, and reveals that the underlying gendered social norms and values continue to reinforce the women's unequal positioning in society, thus, normalizing violence regardless of the educational status and agency of a woman.

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Latika Maskey Pradhan, Degree Candidate

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCING RESEARCH JOURNEY

While thinking about different possible topics for my research, the subject of violence kept me intrigued, hence, this chapter explains about my journey in the process of this research, starting with the incidences that generated curiosity in me for re-visiting the experience of violence, and what it means for women who are educated. Having come from an educated background myself, I often hear the myth, that violence is often associated with illiteracy and is not a practice amongst people who have educated and liberal values. Moreover, violence against women were often studied in reference to domestic violence or intimate partner violence, focused on stories of women being hit, battered and killed. This kept me thinking about the violence as a ‘problem’, and its different forms that are often overshadowed, that could be an emotion, which is inherently personal but still could be a feeling of violation. Thus, I formulated my research question around understanding experience of violence and women’s own interpretation, focusing on a specific period in their lives that is pregnancy.

Prologue

On a normal Friday evening of March 2018, I was scrolling down my facebook page and came across a story of a young girl in one of the villages in western Nepal, who was beaten nearly to death by villagers, accusing her of practicing witchcraft. The video showed a man dragging the woman on the floor, and mercilessly beating her up. A group of villagers was also seen in the video witnessing the scene as mere onlookers. The insensitivity and acceptability was visible in the video where the villagers did not attempt to intervene or stop the act of violence.

Again, after a few months of that incident, I witnessed another video in the social media, where a woman was beaten up by two other women, they were accusing the woman of fraud in relation to some land issue. The battered woman was forcefully dragged down on the floor that led to her clothes being torn apart. The incident was taking place in a road-side, and someone was taking the video. I felt sad to notice that how such behaviors of violence are increasingly becoming a part of the social media posts- and it made me question whether the act of violence is becoming a new 'normal' in our lives where people are witnessing such violence and incidences without any intervention to stop. The culture of acceptance and normalization of violence against women is discussed by Garcia-Moreno, Heise, Jansen, Ellsberg, and Watts (2005) and also Pun, Infanti, Koju, Schei, and Darj (2016) as prevalent social norm in many society and culture.

I reached to the point of frustration and despair when I read another news-post about an incident from eastern part of Nepal where a man killed his wife in rage. The news read, that a man hit and killed his wife, who had delivered a baby just a couple of days before. These atrocities are increasing each day, and it makes me think whether it is an increase in violence or increase in reporting, nonetheless, acts of violence in social media is becoming a new 'normal'.

The incidences of violence against women continue to exist throughout the history of humankind, only becoming more visible in current digitalized age. Having heard and seen reports of increasing violence, made me recall about an incident that I had witnessed in my childhood. I was just over 7 years old, it was a weekend and I was at home that day. With no siblings to play with, I was feeling bored and was trying to entertain myself by looking out of my window that overlooked my neighbor's courtyard, where I could see two children running around, one was about 3

years old and the other maybe 5 years of age. We had a shared compound with my neighbor, and I could directly see their front door from my window. Suddenly I heard sounds of shouting and crying inside the neighbor's house, my grandmother and my mother also ran to the window from where I was looking out. In few minutes of hearing the sounds of quarrels and crying inside, I saw the mother of those children whom I used to fondly call *Bhauju* (Sister –in-Law), was being mercilessly battered by her mother-in-law, and was pushed out of the main door by her husband. I remember seeing her big belly and feeling scared, I can still visualize the scene today, the way she was struggling to get hold of the wooden door but lost control and fell on the floor. I was horrified to see that she was pregnant and helpless. What I witnessed was painful to watch, I saw her kneel down on the floor while she was being pulled by her hair by her mother-in-law while her husband pushed her out of the main door. I saw her literally being tumbled out. As I saw this, I remember asking my mum, if she could go and ask *Aunty* (*her mother-in-law*), not to beat *Bhauju* that way. I was feeling more scared for her, as I was unable to understand and relate to what was happening in front of my eyes that day. I was told by my mother that it was their domestic issue and we are not supposed to speak about it. Once before my grandmother had attempted to stop, but she got scolded by the son that it was none of our business, so I understood why she was reluctant to interfere that day. Those incidences continued in their household frequently, and started becoming normal for the neighborhood, no one complained or fought about it. I could see that she was an illiterate woman, married young, and that was her third pregnancy. As I grew older, I began to understand how vulnerable she was at that time.

More than 38 years have passed since, the world has evolved to digitalization, social media, Facebook, and the very famous #metoo movement that brought forward

many forgotten and lost incidences of violence against women. One thing I see continue to exist, that is the occurrence of “Violence Against Women”. It makes me wonder whether women’s experiences of violence have ever changed, whether there is more resistance and retaliation from women now than before? Does education and knowledge give women power to resist or revolt? and whether situation of pregnancy plays a role in particular. As the incidence that I witnessed 3 decades back remains fresh in my memory, I continue to read and see increasing incidences of violence in Nepal today, and also globally.

When violence is commonly seen in a community, it starts becoming a part of everyday life and is often accounted as normal in a domestic and family setting. Often the domestic and/or intimate partner related violence whether sexual, physical or emotional are considered to be private, and associated to family prestige and often kept hidden. In addition, there is a myth that violence occurs in a family where people are not educated, and do not have exposure to modern way of living that is considered liberal for women, however, the increasing incidences of violence reported in various media national and international have created a rhetoric to the myth. The prevalence of violence against women is well evident from the National Demographic Health Survey [NDHS] (2016) from Nepal that reports violence during pregnancy in urban residence is 6.1% compared to 5.3% in rural residence, and 8% in women with no education compared to 3% women who are SLC and above. Thus, with this narrative inquiry I attempt to understand the experiences of violence during pregnancy amongst the educated women. The reference to ‘educated’ women, for the purpose of this study, I have considered the formal school education and at least the completion of a bachelor’s degree.

My Position as Feminist Researcher

My position as a feminist researcher is very much grounded in the feminist standpoint epistemology that regards women's personal and individual experiences as a legitimate knowledge in itself, and can be a key to designing a research subject (Harding, 1991). As a feminist researcher, while the experiences are being considered as a knowledge, I also critically consider the subjectivity in construction of the knowledge that are influenced by the external factors such as the social conditioning, value and belief of an individual. The experiences are also explained by Teresa de Lauretis as the process, where subjectivity is constructed within the social system in relation to its material, economic or interpersonal relations (Scott, 1991). Hence, I am critically looking at the narratives told in the context of women's positioning in our society. This enabled me to bring in my own experience and understanding of women's unequal position in a patriarchal society, and thus, in my research I attempt to analyze the individual narrative to understand the experiences of violence, and reason behind 'normalization' or resistance, amongst the educated women. The patriarchal ideology behind oppression and injustice to women is well reflected in the situation where violence is normalized. However, when the women are the educated, it negates the myth of education bringing awareness and emancipation.

Talking about my own upbringing, I was born and brought up in an urban center of Nepal in a Newar family, married at an age of 21 years, and have two children. I have witnessed and experienced how oppression, discrimination and violence perpetuates in our belief and value system. I was raised by my grandmother, who was a very religious woman, and her stories and her teaching always were about the Hindu mythologies, and she used to be very specific about women's role in our society. Despite being a single woman, independent and working a job herself, she

was a mix of a liberal and conservative thinker. She was raised in Calcutta back in 1940s. She used to tell me her childhood stories including her association with liberation movements in those days where a small group of Nepali people were creating alliances in India, for democracy. In my view, she was a modern liberal person who believed in educating and empowering woman, at the same time, her teaching was about being tolerant like mother-earth. I used to idealize her, but my thoughts were equally confused at that very early age.

When I got married, the first advice my mother-in-law gave was ‘women are supposed to be obedient, tolerant and sub-servient, which eventually pays off in life’. These teachings guided me throughout my young and adult age, therefore, despite my education and liberal upbringing, I started to be tolerant to injustice at home, thinking I will be an outcast if I fight back. However, at the subconscious level, I always questioned the social norms that are discriminatory towards women. From my own experience of how ingrained the values are within me and how I constantly tend to build tolerance in me. Despite understanding the discriminatory norms and values to be a social construct, which are often reinforcing the patriarchal ideology, it was hardly challenged and spoken about. Although I never had to fight real violence incidences, I have faced discrimination and how my so called values and belief system have stopped me to question such discrimination in life. Hence, I would like to understand such tolerance towards violence and prevailing social norms that are oppressive for women, that too amongst the educated women. I believe that regardless of the educational background, the unequal power relation is critical to understand the normalization of violence against women.

Violence against Women during Pregnancy

The definition of violence in accordance to the 1993 United Nations Declaration on elimination of violence against women states-

Violence against women means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

This definition encompasses the experience of women that are legit and not necessarily have to be physical but also emotional and a reflection of inequality and women subordination in our society. The declaration further recognizes that violence against women to be a,

manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women, and that violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men (United Nations, 1993).

Violence and pregnancy are closely associated with power and politics of women's subordination and an entirely a patriarchal phenomenon. Violence is often regarded as a private affair especially if it occurs in a domestic setting, and between a husband and a wife in particular. When looking at violence during pregnancy, 'pregnancy' in a Nepali society is largely a public affair, and motherhood is associated with improving women's status specially when she bears a son, yet violence continues to remain 'private'. In this regard, Krishnaraj (2007) also argues that 'violence is a function of complex patriarchal structure and an expression of masculinity' (Krishnaraj, 2007, p. 90). She further explains that violence against

women within a marriage and pregnancy is associated with the 'socially sanctioned norms and practices' that provides male with the privilege of access to and control over woman's body. I cannot agree more with the writer, the social norms and practices for women in Nepal is also a reflection of a disciplinary action, and are often expected from women to behave in a certain way, or onus on women to get pregnant after marriage.

Violence is often reported to increase during pregnancy. Maiti (2017) reports that pregnant women are 61 percent more likely to get beaten, compared to non-pregnant women (PAHO, 2000, as cited in Maiti, 2017). Similarly, a multi country study shows 64 percent cases of partner violence during pregnancy in Canada, 49 percent in Africa, 42 percent in Iran and, 28 percent in India (Maiti, 2014). In Nepal, according to the 2015 national demographic health survey, 6% married women 15-49 years reported experiencing violence during pregnancy compared to 10% single women (Ministry of Health, 2016). These data show that violence against pregnant women is prevalent, and a global phenomenon.

One out of three women in the world encounter violence in their lifetime, either have been beaten, coerced into sex, or abused, usually by a family member or someone she knows (Fried, 2003). It is evident that violence against women is prevalent anywhere and everywhere across the globe regardless of urban, rural, educated or modern society, which negates the assumption that violence and abuse occurs in an uneducated or so-called under-advanced family only. The notion of being an educated person in our society is understood as a person who not only knows how to read and write but is knowledgeable, well respected in a family and society at large. Education is supposed to make people rational and respectful towards other people. However, the above mentioned data from various studies also show that

violence against women is not confined to boundaries of illiteracy, empowerment or modernism but more about reinforcing patriarchy and women's subordination at large.

Statement of the Problem

The violence against women within a feminist discourse is often discussed in a context of men's violence against women and, is gendered and binary (Mc Carry & Lombard, 2016). Similar analysis can be seen in the writings of Dobash, Martin and Roy from 1970s and 1980s that is also focused on the issue of 'battered women' or 'wife beating' (Johnson, 1995, p.284). The victimization and sexualization of violence has been a focus of many studies including Kersten (1996) that discusses 'hegemonic masculinity' in a patriarchal society in reference to sexual abuse and assault. While the reference to intimate partner violence often is seen central to the researches done in the West/North where nuclear or single family structure is common, it does not stand the same for Nepal. Pun et al. (2016) in her research from Kavre district reports violence against pregnant women are often perpetuated by their mother-in-laws that includes, heavy workload, denial of food, psychological stress, and barrier to access the hospital delivery.

While there exists a variance on women's experience of violence in a different context, nature of the occurrence, and acceptance of violence in general, violence is often associated with the behavior of an uneducated or *Ganwar* (rural background), and a myth that it is prevalent in the household where women are not educated and unaware. In this regard, feminist discourse also considers education and awareness as instrumental force in creating an agency to challenge men's violence against women and patriarchal ideology (McCarry & Lombard, 2016). Hence, in this study I am attempting to explore the myth of education and awareness, and to understand

whether education brings women's emancipation and their ability to fight against violence. Further, McCarry and Lombard (2016) argue that education can bring awareness amongst women to understand that the act of violence is unacceptable and to be resisted and challenged. Similarly, Mitra (2011) claims that lack of resources, low educational attainment and high dependency on family are often associated with dowry related domestic violence in India. While such papers have attempted to make connections between education, awareness and women's ability to fight against injustice, through this study, I will interpret and analyze the narratives to understand educational values vis-a vis violence and capacity to fight, and what contributes to the 'normalization' or acceptance.

Further, I believe that the 'normalization' is not associated with any particular family or person, but rather associated with women's positioning in a society, and violence against women in a domestic setting is problematic, because it is considered private. I agree with Langley (2017), who states that 'young motherhood and relationship abuse are both issues that are publicly defined and privately lived' (Langley, 2017, p. 99). The writer further explores voices and stories of young women in a feminist framework to understand relationship abuse in the wider realm of 'gender inequity' influenced by a 'dominant narrative framework' where women start considering the violence as a symbol of love and protection rather than something to resist and challenge (Langley, 2017). I see this perspective as true, however, limited to the relationship between men and women, and comes from the fairytale romance narrative as how Langley (2017) quotes. Hence, I believe that acceptance and normalization of violence beyond the romantic relationship is ultimately associated with how women's position in a family and society are defined and how the power functions within the micro system.

Importantly, abuse in a relationship or in particular during pregnancy has been a topic of research for many, however, mostly are quantitative that focuses on prevalence, or highlights violence against women to be a public health issue and, largely understands violence as an issue of human rights denial, that are evident in the papers by Langley (2017), and Maiti (2014). While recognition of women's human rights, prevalence of violence against women, women's victimization, and inequity is important, it is not sufficient to understand the 'normalization' of violence for women who are educated and, believed to have the capacity to challenge the dominant ideology otherwise.

Therefore, I see a gap in the knowledge that attempts to understand women's individual experiences, to unpack the complexity of violence against women. Further, to also deconstruct the understanding of 'violence' vis-a-vis women's educational status, and the understanding of dominant narrative that influences the resistance or normalization of violence, is important piece of research.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of the study was to understand the experience of violence amongst an educated woman with special focus on their period of pregnancy. The study helped to explore an individual experience of violence, and understand individual unique experiences to generate knowledge with regards to how individual experiences are interpreted and whether educational background helped or hindered fight against or acceptance of violence.

Research Question

How do educated women explain and interpret their experiences of violence, and resistance, especially in reference to the period of their pregnancy?

Rationale of the Study

The studies of violence against women in Nepal are either a quantitative survey report such as National Demographic Health Survey (NDHS) that is done every five years, or policy reviews directed by development agenda and problem solving approach, such as the studies by the United Nations Population fund (UNFPA, 2013), and public health related studies that looks into the prevalence of violence, harmful practices and its implication on women's health, like the studies by Pun et al. (2016).

While narrative stories especially on violence against women accounting for women's experiences as a subject of scientific knowledge are very few even in countries in the North, and in Nepal, are mostly captured by media and social forums as a sensualized and sexualized subjects. This is a sensitive subject and has hardly been explored to understand and interpret an educated women's personal experience of violence and how they see themselves revolting or accepting the dominant narrative of the power and patriarchy. Thus, this study based on Foucault's framework of power attempts to understand how power is operating in a complex social structure, at a micro level of a household or a workplace, and beyond a conscious decision.

Hence, the rationale for undertaking this study is to contribute to the knowledge gap in the researches on violence against women in Nepal, that have limited focus on understanding the experiences of violence amongst educated women that are based on personal accounts, and analysis of power operating within the social context. And unpacking the norms and narratives fostering or normalizing the violence, and influencing women's resistance or acceptance of the violence.

Significance of the Study

Considering majority of the studies on violence against women in Nepal are focused on prevalence, health consequences and women's rights at large, this study provides a new perspective to understand violence beyond intimate partner, and battery. Understanding violence through women's individual narration and experiences during their pregnancy whether at home or at workplace, contributes to policy formulation in the area of education, gender equality, and women empowerment. While Nepal has progressive policies when it comes to violence against women issues, the implementation and monitoring is weak. This study provides examples of how women have experienced violence on both the home and workplace settings. Therefore, these stories are an evidence that also raises question on whether the structural barriers continue to persists and how women's positioning in our society largely contributes to violence, inequity and injustice. Thus, this study will have significance to education policies in making gender-inclusive curriculum and text books, so to inculcate equity aspects to both girls and boys since the very early age to respect equality and care. In addition, understanding the nuances of the structural barriers is important to policy makers to enable addressing the issues in service sector policies, whether it is about inclusion, psychosocial or counselling support, legal support or workplace policies, and also in developing mechanism to monitor implementation.

Moreover, this study has personal and professional significance for me. The opportunity to explore and engage in the research process, use of research methods, and analysis of information to generate knowledge using the theoretical framework, enhanced my personal and professional skills. Moreover, sharing space with participants and listening to the narratives and stories provided me a first-hand

perspective in the subject matter. This study contributed to enhance my engagement in the area of prevention and response to Gender Based Violence that is one core area of the work that I am passionate about. By engaging in the research process, the knowledge I have gained from various literature reviews from across the globe, and the analytical skills in application of these theories, have developed my expertise in the subject area. This is not only helpful in my day to day work but I believe also will help in building my career growth prospects.

Conclusion of the Chapter

Violence against women is a global phenomenon, also widely experienced, encountered and reported in news and as a research subject, however, is mostly quantitative prevalence studies, and exploring health consequences. Violence against women has been defined by United Nations in 1993, to be a result of women's subordination and unequal power position. Historically, violence in domestic settings have been considered 'private', therefore, not a subject publically discussed, neither women's experience of violence explored as knowledge. Within a feminist discourse, many researches have looked into men's violence against women. Moreover, many feminist studies suggest education to supposedly bring an awareness and agency in women to challenge the dominant ideology of patriarchy, however, in reality the experiences of women can differ. Moreover, the normalization and inability to fight an injustice may also have different narration for individual women. Thus, this research has attempted to understand individual women's experiences of violence during their pregnancy especially amongst those who are educated.

CHAPTER II

UNDERSTANDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

In this chapter, I have drawn information on violence against women from various global literatures and studies including from Nepal. Moreover, I have attempted to categorize those literatures in selected relevant topics to conceptualize and understand violence against women, in relation to the prevalence of violence in Nepal policy context, normalization, violence during pregnancy, and its significance to women's rights and patriarchy, and how it relates to the theoretical framework adopted for this study.

Violence against Women and Prevalence

Violence is a common but yet a complex and sensitive topic of discussion. The incidences and reporting of violence against women is not a recent topic, and have been in existence ever since there was a human existence and evolution, and we can find it quoted in many Hindu religious texts whether it is *Ramayana*, *Mahabarat* or *Gita*. Be that an incidence of abduction of *Sita* by *Ravana*, or *Ram's* decision to leave his wife due to the rumors spread by a washer-man, is a form of violence. More so, I find the demonstration of strength by *Kauravs* in front of the huge assembly of people by bringing *Draupadi* to shame is a sheer sexual harassment, commodification of women, and a highly sexist act. Moreover, these mythological scripts also discuss rape as a common occurrence, be that *Kunti* being raped by *Surya* in the story of *Mahabharat*; *Tara*, the wife of *Bhrahspati* raped by *Chandera* in the verses of *Gita*; and *Ahilya* raped by *Indra* in the story of *Ramayana Balkanda* (Bala, 2015). The act of violence embedded within the Hindu literature and mythical stories are a clear reflection of women's positioning in our society. Moreover, the document like

Manusmirit, which is considered the word of *Brahma* (divine creator of all human beings according to Hindu mythology), is the first ever human code of conduct, that has a whole section that describes woman's duty towards her husband, that is to please and obey men (Bala, 2015). These teachings have shaped the mindset of people over many generations in our society, and have reinforced oppression, inequity and violence against women.

The gendered nature of violence against women for the first time was recognized in the United Nations general assembly in 1993, as part of the Declaration on the elimination of violence against women. The declaration noted the definition of violence to include not only physical or sexual harm but also psychological harm and deprivation of liberty, both in the public and private space (UN, 1993). Further, the declaration also recognized the act of violence against women, is a human rights issue and manifestation of women's subordinate position in our society compared to men.

Nepal has ratified many international conventions, treaties, and has made commitments to ensure rights and protection of the citizens, including protection against gender based violence. The Constitution of Nepal (2015) guarantees women's rights, and condemns any form of violence whether physical, mental, sexual, psychological or exploitation on the grounds of religion or social or cultural tradition or practice as outlined in the article 38(3) (GoN, 2015). The Domestic Violence Act was passed in May 2009 that defines domestic violence as "any form of physical, mental, sexual, and economic abuse perpetrated by any person to the other person with whom he has a family relationship." (UNFPA, UN Women, & UK aid, 2013). Moreover, the National Action Plan against gender-based violence was developed in 2010 and efforts to establish hospital-based one-stop crisis management centers (OCMC) initiated in 2012 (MoHP, 2020). The report also suggests that the government

has scaled up 55 OCMCs in 54 districts as of the year 2019, aiming to provide women survivor of violence the required care and services. In addition, the care during pregnancy is also guaranteed through the recently endorsed Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Act (2018) that outlines women's rights to access services and care during pregnancy, including the right to pregnancy related leave and counselling (GoN, 2018).

While Nepal has progressive laws and policies to protect women's equal rights and any forms of discrimination and violence, the mechanisms for its implementation is non-functional and ineffective, owing to the lack of political commitment, and resources (National Alliance of Women Human Rights Defenders [NAWHRD], 2018). Further, the 2018 Nepal shadow report on the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) by the national alliance of women human rights defenders and NGOs claim that Nepal continues to witness violence and harmful practices, including domestic violence and violence during pregnancy, and recommends strong law enforcement, proactive implementation of policies and enhanced awareness, including education program to students (NAHWRD, 2018). On the other hand, MoHP (2020) report acknowledges social norms and gender inequality in addition to other systemic issues, to be the critical element that limits women's ability to access the services, and also highlights lack of community awareness on the OCMC services to be one of the causes for the low care seeking behavior (MoHP, 2020).

The ineffective implementation and enforcement of policies and laws is well demonstrated in the rising figures for violence against women in recent times. In Nepal, 2 in every 10 women between the age of 15-49 years, have experienced physical violence since age 15 (Ministry of Health, 2016). The report further

elaborates that the most common perpetrator of physical violence among women is a current husband (80%), and 6 percent of those women have expressed experiencing violence during pregnancy. Moreover, 28.5 percent believe that wife beating is justified, and physical violence among employed women, for cash (28%) or not for cash (21%), is more common compared to women who are not employed (17%). The report also shows that violence declines with women's education level, 34 percent women with no education compared to 11 percent with School Leaving Certificate (SLC) and above. And in case of husband's education level, is seen experienced by 44percent women whose husband have no education compared to 14 percent with SLC and above (Ministry of Health, 2016). While increasing education level reportedly seen to have declined incidences of violence, it is not the same for women who are employed. Moreover, the report also shows than almost 7 in 10 women do not report, seek any kind of service or attempt to stop violence. These figure shows that violence is prevalent despite a strong national laws and policies. The data also reiterates that violence continues to be underreported, and I believe this to be because it is considered private, and even the National Demographic Health Survey, still writes the chapter as 'domestic violence', which can be interpreted as the violence that has occurred within a household, therefore, the perception of domestic and private continues to prevail.

In addition, United Nations (2020) survey from three provinces in Nepal, on the community perception of harmful practice reports, the girls married off at young age are more at risks of violence. While violence in Nepal is mostly reported in association with marriage, there are numerous harmful practices in the country that can be regarded as violence against women, such as child marriage, *Chaupaadi* (the practice of girls being banished to huts outside their home during menstruation); the seclusion and untouchability is also practiced after delivery of the baby, including the

community violence against women in the name of witchcraft accusation. Thus, the report claims that the deep rooted socio, cultural, religious values and beliefs has resulted in perception of violence against women as a tradition or normal (UN, 2020).

Normalization of Violence in a Domestic Setting

Not reporting the incidences of violence also indicates acceptance and how the act is being normalized in women's lives. The 'normalization' as a concept has been discussed in many feminist writings, and the discussion around 'gender' as a social construct and a result of social indoctrination has been discussed by Judith Butler (1990), as 'repeated stylization of body', and Beauvoir (2011) as 'one is not born, but rather, becomes a woman' (Butler, 1990, as cited in Spade & Willse, 2015, p 1). The writing of Michel Foucault has been influential in the discussion of 'normalization' in many feminist writings and activism, he defines normalization in the context of power, that operates in a social system as a mechanism to correct any deviation, in a form of norms and regulations, and enforced through a regular monitoring and control.

Foucault in his writing such as the *Discipline and Punish*, defines normalization as a systemic process, and unlike the laws, it may not have basis of judgement, but are continuously measured, justified and corrected in the forms of social norms (Foucault, n.d., as cited in Rabinow, 1984, p. 20). Likewise, the normalization process theory is explained by May and Finch (2009) as a regular practice, that over a course of time forms a natural part of a social context, introduced through mechanism of social structures and norms, executed at both the individual or collective levels. Thus, I understand normalization in the context of violence and its acceptance as a deeply rooted practice, that are reinforced through social norms that recognizes domestic violence as 'common' and a 'private affair', therefore, talking about it in public will bring a shame to the family.

Acceptance of the violence is reported in many studies from countries across the globe. Garcia-Moreno, Heise, Jansen, Ellsberg, and Watts (2005) based on the WHO multi-country data on domestic violence claims that 50-90 percent women accept that wife beating is justified in case of situation where wife disobeys husband, denies sex, does not perform housework, 'asks about other women and, is unfaithful' largely as a result of prevailing social-norms (Gracia-Moreno et al., 2005, p. 1283). Similar findings reported in a study from rural India, that shows 51 percent men and 54 percent women considers that wife beating is justified under the condition that women argues, goes out without telling, does not obey their in-laws and, denies sex with husband (Bourey, Stephenson, & Hindin, 2013). The normalization of violence, oppression and discrimination is also reported by Pun, Infanti, Koju, Schei, and Darj (2016) in their paper on community perception of violence against pregnant women in Nepal. The writers explain that women's silence and acceptance of violence is often to maintain family harmony and peace, socio-economic insecurity and in fear of bearing even brutal consequences since they have to continue to live with the husband and family (Pun et al., 2016).

These justifications and acceptance of violence shows the perception of normalization of violence in our society and as Foucault argued is a disciplinary mechanism that enforces control and dominance over women. This position of subordination and control is also explained by Langley (2017) to be influenced by the fairy-tale romantic narrative that sees men as a protector for women, therefore, fostering acceptance of the behavior of control and violence (Wood, 2001, as cited in Langley, 2017).

Nepal context is no different to the fairy-tale dominant narrative of men's violence against women, the 2018 CEDAW shadow report claims that legal authorities

are often seen denying registration of domestic violence cases, rather women are advised to seek mediation service and reconciliation (NAHWRD, 2018). Hence, the narrative of happy family prevails, thus, normalizing violence in domestic settings, fostering pressure on women to make their relationship work. Therefore, violence is a manifestation of the discriminatory social norms that is widely prevalent in many countries including Nepal that reinforces violence against women as 'private' and 'common' phenomenon within a domestic setting.

Violence during Pregnancy

Looking at the global data on violence and pregnancy, a multi country study done by World Health Organization shows that 1 to 28 percent women have reported being beaten during pregnancy and 90 percent of these women were beaten by the father of their unborn child (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2015). The intimate partner violence seems to be a common finding, such as a 19 country survey of low and middle income countries reports the prevalence of intimate partner violence during pregnancy ranged from 10.7% in the Philippines to 64.4% in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (Davries et al., 2010). The report further shows that violence is higher in African and Latin American countries, compared to the European and Asian countries.

Further, some studies have also established connections between illiteracy and low socio-economic status to be one of the reasons for violence, a study done in five village panchayats in Uttar Pradesh of India reveals a large number of women facing physical, sexual, and emotional abuse by their intimate partners and in-laws during their pregnancy, often prevalent among younger, illiterate/less-educated women of low socio economic status (Maiti, 2014). Similarly, Naved and Åke Persson (2008) in a study of spousal violence during pregnancy in Bangladesh identified 10percent

women in the urban sites and 12 percent women in rural sites to have reported physical abuse. This reflects a widespread prevalence of violence during pregnancy irrespective of urban rural, or western eastern or education level.

While many studies have shown the prevalence, whether there is an increase in violence during pregnancy has not been well discussed or investigated in these reports. Amongst the urban women, 41percent women said the abuse decreased during pregnancy, whereas for 46percent said it stayed the same and, 13percent said to have increased (Naved & Åke Persson, 2008). The writers also discuss that the behavior of violence was seen to have started before the pregnancy, and dowry is reported to be the main cause in most of the cases, including low economic status, and also religion, considering the Muslim women in the study were seen to be more at risk of violence compared to Hindu women.

In the context of Nepal, there are limited studies done that specifically looks at the existence of violence in the period of pregnancy, however, Pun et al. (2016) in the study conducted in Dhulikhel municipality in Kavre district of Nepal identified various forms of violence against pregnant women that includes, heavy workload, denial of food, psychological stress, impeded access to hospital delivery and son preference. The study found violence during pregnancy is often psychological and perpetuated by the mother-in laws. Further, Pun (2018) in her study of domestic violence and pregnancy in Nepal, looking at birth preparedness and perception, discusses how daughter-in-laws in a Nepali community are commonly perceived to assist with domestic chores, that largely foster mother-in-law's imposing heavy work load to women regardless of their pregnancy status. In addition, the study also highlights cultural norms that influence women's lack of autonomy despite the education level, leading to women not being able to decide for their own health, and

access to care, including influence to endure violence and resort to reconciliation in the cases of domestic violence (Pun, 2018).

Similarly, Risal (2018) in her study on domestic violence and pregnancy in Nepal, focused on antenatal care to improve safety, reports that violence during pregnancy ranges from beating to sexual, neglect, and also economic. Further, the study shows that the perpetrators of violence are husbands in a nuclear family, but also mother-in-laws, father-in-laws and also brother and sister-in-laws in an extended family structure. Moreover, the writer also claims that women's low socio-economic position due to lack of education, income, and also belonging to an ethnic minority group are likely to report violence compared to women from a better socio-economic background (Risal, 2018). Both these papers demonstrate prevalence of domestic violence during pregnancy and also touches upon the influence of cultural values in resorting to reconciliation and normalization of violence. However, these studies do not sufficiently explore and analyze the structural causes and social norms from equity perspective, and limited to analyze access to care and services. Further, these studies are quantitative surveys and do not account for women's experiences and narratives.

It is evident from various literatures mentioned above that violence during pregnancy is prevalent across the globe, and the forms of violence vary from beating to denial of food and work-load. Compared to the findings from western countries, violence in Asian countries like Bangladesh, India or Nepal has discussed illiteracy, low socio-economic condition, practices like dowry associated with violence, and most importantly, the perpetrators unlike in the western countries are not limited to intimate partners but also the mother-in-laws, and mostly psychological, work-load

and limited decision making for their own health. Therefore, it is important to note the form of violence during pregnancy can vary across different culture and context.

Violence, Rights and Patriarchy

Violence against women is a human rights issue, and writers like Garcia-Moreno et al. (2005); Naved and Ake persson (2008); Krantz and Garcia-Moreno (2005) have highlighted gender inequality and social norms as the cause of discrimination and violence. Similarly, Fried (2003) has discussed the consequences of violence on women ability to reach their full potential and exercise their social, political or cultural rights. I strongly believe that women's rights and the health consequences of violence on women are undeniably important, however, these papers do not discuss the underlying structural causes of violence, therefore, miss a significant analytical component. The study on violence and patriarchy is found to be limited, considering majority of the studies draw on the theoretical framework of human rights, women's rights, and victimization and, the health consequences of violence against women. Langley (2017) states that the researches on young people's experience of abuse were often quantitative and, majority of the qualitative research that existed focused on psychological explanations, therefore, lacked feminist inquiry and consideration of structural factors.

Few feminist studies such as Langley (2017), have analyzed young mother's stories of relationship abuse and the dominant western understanding of fairy tale romantic narrative. The research is focused on exploring how young mothers understand and makes sense of the relationship abuse and, how they negotiate their role as a mother within that abusive relationship. The writer argues that the equality narrative at times are equally problematic when women are blamed for staying in an abusive relationship without understanding the constraint and social barriers

(Nettleton, 2011, as cited in Langley, 2017). Similarly, Berns (2001) uses the patriarchal-resistance perspective to analyze stories of violence published in media articles and argues that both the women and men can be equally violent, and notes that there is a dominant tendency to make victim responsible for abuse specially in a media reporting, including the suggestions to ‘leave the relationship’ and ‘it happened to me stories’. The writer claims the ‘competing victimization’ is a strategy that often diverts the focus from the real stories and the underlying causes of gender, power and ‘patriarchy’ (Berns, 2001).

Review of feminist literatures reveal that violence against women is widely studied globally and also in Nepal, and understood as a gendered phenomenon and a human rights issues that requires correctional approach. Therefore, the focus on victimization and prevalence, is limiting to understand the underlying structural causes and normalization of violence against women.

Theoretical Referent

My analysis on violence against women are grounded in Michel Foucault’s theory of ‘power’ and ‘normalization’. Foucault explains how power generates knowledge about the world that shapes the world (Foucault, 1990, as cited in Spade & Willse, 2015). Foucault (1990) argues that ‘discourses always function in relation to power’, and his theory of power is not only about the duality as understood in conventional socio-political concept, but about the forces that exists in manifolds of entire social body whether in a family unit, group or institution (Foucault, 1990, as cited in Butler, 1990). Butler (1990) further states that according to Foucault, the social structure, as required, reproduces specific norms to ‘regulate political life’ through control, prohibition, limitation or protection, therefore, needs to be examined outside of conscious and intentional decision to understand how the power operates

and governs the function as a whole (McHoul & Grace, 1993). The disciplinary power in the form of social 'norms' are being enforced not only at an individual level but in a population and society at large, that Foucault terms as 'bio-politics' to understand the norms and normalization (Spade & Willse, 2015). On the other hand, the critique of Foucault's theory of disciplinary power and productive knowledge, questions the premises of hierarchies. It asks if the norms were set to control deviation, then why the change in laws do not reduce discrimination, violence and racism in the world (Spade & Willse, 2015). However, Foucault explains in his writings that the social norms are not based on laws or judgement of what is wrong and right. I thus see this issue as more embedded in how one behaves conscious or unconscious, therefore more a behavioral issue that is deeply patriarchal.

In this context, I have attempted to understand 'power' in the context of violence against women and how it operates within the context of a family unit or society as a whole. In doing so, I have also attempted to understand the narrative that influences normalization or acceptance of violence amongst participants at the individual, inter-personal (family) and at the community (Society) level. In addition, critically looking at the aspects of women's social positioning and exclusion, whereas at the same time also attempting to understand the existing differences more from the perspective of 'power' than a binary opposition (Scott, 1988).

Considering the wider understanding of violence as an entirely private affair within a domestic setting, using the theory of power and normalization allowed me to analyze the existence of a dominant narrative, in the lives and stories of the educated women, and how and in what forms the social gendered norm reinforces women's unequal position in a family and society that fosters acceptance or normalization of violence.

Conclusion of the Chapter

Violence against women related researches are mostly quantitative and focuses on prevalence, denial of human rights, and violence is considered a public health issue. More so, violence during pregnancy is also a widely researched area, however, is limited to understanding the consequences to women's and children's health, with minimal consideration to women's understanding and perception of violence and its acceptance. Within a feminist discourse, violence against women is a structural issue and normalization of violence are associated with unequal gender relation. More importantly, there is an undeniable understanding that education empowers women and their capacity to challenge the violence, however, there is no sufficient knowledge around understanding the experiences of resistance or acceptance by women who are educated and from an urban setting. Thus, in this study I have attempted to understand the narratives employing the Foucauldian theory of power and normalization, to understand educated women's interpretation of violence during pregnancy, and whether these women's social positioning fosters resistance or acceptance against the violence, and how social norms are limited educated woman in their resistance vis-a vis violence.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I elaborate on the philosophical consideration I have adopted for the purpose of this study, and the method of feminist narrative inquiry that I have applied to gather the stories of women's experiences of violence during pregnancy. The chapter also explains how the information and stories have been analyzed and interpreted.

Philosophical Consideration

The following philosophical consideration have guided me in my research process to draw and compose the stories and narratives of women's individual experiences and interpretation of violence during pregnancy.

My ontological assumptions in this research are related with critical feminism drawn from Foucauldian ontology which believes realities are plural, historically situated and, conditioned by politics of power and patriarchy (McHoul & Grace, 1993). I concur to the definition that violence against women, is an outcome of an unequal power relationship, therefore, the act of violence is often a reinforcement of women subordination in a society. Violence continues to prevail, in different forms, even in an educated and so called 'civilized' culture. Thus the myth of non-violence and cultured behavior amongst the educated is questionable when it comes to violence. An educational value can equally reinforce the gendered social norms and public private divide, at times can be even stricter for women in the so called civilized setting, to protect prestige and reputation. This 'dominant narrative framework' of patriarchy associates women to be a sole flag bearer of family prestige and the need to act 'cultured' is even more mandatory if one is educated (Woodiwiss, 2017). And role

of the male is understood more as a protector or controller in a family. Thus, my ontological assumption is, the individual experiences of educated women and their interpretation of violence, however, these experiences are not isolated from the historically situated unequal power relation between men and women that are rooted in the patriarchal structure of our society and culture, and often normalized and not resisted. More so, pregnancy is a state where a woman's experience can be entirely personal as well as public, women in this condition are emotionally and physically vulnerable, but also socially regarded and respected for stepping into motherhood. Thus, I have substantiated my ontological assumption by analyzing women's social positioning and experiences of violence during pregnancy, not for the type of violence, but for the experiences and knowledge of 'personal is political' (Zyle, 1991).

I believe in feminist epistemology which means I critically question the knowledge that have systematically disadvantaged women and has placed women in a subordinate position. While studying violence during pregnancy, I have questioned the dominant knowledge practice that has reinforced gendered norms that represented women as inferior, weak and, vulnerable. Within this, I draw in the standpoint epistemic consideration and, I take into account women's individual experience of violence as unique and "essential knowledge" as coined by Harding (1991), and generate meaning of how normalization of violence against women is historically and culturally located and, influenced by the 'dominant narrative framework' as described by Woodiwiss (2017). Therefore, the realities of men violence against women has been constructed not merely by the relationship of male and female in the society but also the historically situated inequalities and injustices that are constantly lived by women. The educational status, is supposed to have enabled independence and

liberation for females, where women's agency and emancipation could be realized, however, prevalence of violence against women regardless of their educational background reflects a different meaning to how we commonly understand liberation and empowerment. In such epistemological position, I believe that women's interests and experiences in the educated society became more vulnerable.

As a feminist researcher, I bring the critical feminist values to the research. My values are guided by the critical feminist perspective that sees violence against women as a manifestation of the subordination, oppression and, unequal power position, and intrinsically gendered. More specifically, I critique the educated space that instead of empowering women to rebel the injustice are nonetheless suppressed because of the dominant patriarchal ideology of considering the violence as 'normal'. In this regard, I have constructed the stories of the women, who have experienced violence during their pregnancy to focus on the performativity. By telling their individual stories of experience and knowledge, I also value the situations of those educated women and their heterogeneity to examine how such social categories made the women more marginal.

Research Methodology: Feminist Narrative Inquiry

Violence is a sensitive topic, and discussing experience of violence during the period of pregnancy is complex. Hence, for the purpose of this study, I have applied the feminist narrative inquiry to understand women's individual experiences of violence during pregnancy, and how they make sense of those incidences. I have therefore, adopted the broader methodological framework of Narrative Inquiry proposed by Clandinin (2016) and integration of feminist perspective as stated by Woodiwiss, Smith and Lockwood (2017), the Feminist Narrative Inquiry that I employed, have added a layer of gender analysis to my research.

The framework of narrative inquiry as proposed by Connelly and Clandinin (2016) is founded on Dewey's ontological perspective that sees experience not only as a representation but in relation to context of temporality, place and sociality (Clandinin, 2016). The writer suggests that narrative inquiry is understanding of an experience in relation to the past, present, future, including the space, context and the environment it is being told. Adopting this framework, I have attempted to explore and understand within the narrative story that was told, in the context of what is the story about, when it is told and in what context. In addition, I have brought in the feminist narrative thinking, that adds a multi-layered analysis of understanding the gendered nature of the story and why and how 'normalization' functions in the context of violence through reinforcement of social norms.

Drawing from the Woodiwiss (2017) feminist narrative framework grounded on the post-structural approach that critically looks beyond the fixed ontological understanding of identity, this study has explored women's experiences of violence outside the binary context of women versus men. The study has attempted to investigate the complex layers within the narratives, be that at an individual, family or community level. Also to understand why the women feel the way they do, and what they consider violence, and what they think the incident to be an injustice, and their perception on fighting against those experiences of violence.

In the analysis and interpretation of the narratives, unlike the approach that are founded in the conception of giving women voices or underpinned by dominant understanding of 'heterosexual' values and norms (Mauthner, 2017), I have attempted to employ framework of how 'power' functions in a household or workplace setting to understand violence and its normalization, beyond taking the narratives as merely the account of experiences expressed by women. I have presented the narratives of

educated women, in a form of their individual 'stories' and interpretation of 'experiences'. In doing so, the individual stories are crafted more in a sequential manner to demonstrate my participant's pregnancy journey, carefully picking the context and incidences that tell a story of their experiences of violence, and why and how the understanding is generated?

I have also taken into consideration, several advantages and also challenges to the narrative inquiry approach. While narrative inquiry provides opportunity to understand how women (or men) experience or makes sense of a particular event or situation that other methodologies may not provide. However, it also is challenging because interpretation of such stories can be complex given in what situation and time the story is being narrated or re-told. Woodiwiss (2017) claims that the narratives are also often influenced or constrained by the 'hegemonic' and 'dominant' narrative framework and, understanding these framework is also challenging for feminist narrative inquirer since the participant can have contradictory stories at different times. Thus, employing the feminist narrative approach, I do not claim my analysis to be value free, however, have attempted to retain non-judgmental perspective to what has been told in the specific context.

Selecting the Participants and Engaging with them in the Field

The prevalence of violence against women is widespread and not necessarily associated with any location such as western or eastern countries, and urban or rural community. Therefore, for the purpose of the study having a fixed location for the study was not necessary. However, with regards to the selection of participants, I have taken into consideration the participants who are educated; have received formal school education with at least bachelor's degree, married, and have recently given birth, or have one or more children who are less than 11 years of age. The focus on

educated women in particular is aimed to understand the claim and the myth of education bringing awareness and agency for women to challenge violence, that writers like McCarry and Lombard (2016) argue about. In doing so, I explored within my network possible participants who would be willing to discuss the subject, and ensured maintaining confidentiality at the same time. I started by inquiring with one participant first and slowly moved to the next and the total of four. Since, I adopted the Feminist Narrative Inquiry, the narratives from four women could draw sufficient information and analysis required for my research. The selected women were from the age group 20-40 years, educated and working, but not an identified survivor of violence.

While engaging in the inquiry process with my participants, I embraced the relational methodology to generate ‘stories’, the process that Clandinin (2016) explains as inquirer becoming part of the participant’s lives and vice versa. I gradually created a common space of listening and telling of stories with the participants. I organized for a one-to-one meeting with individual participants, and initiated an informal conversation at first to create a sense of ease, considering the topic to be sensitive. I applied the ‘journey mapping’ method that was adopted from the popular business model called ‘design thinking’, the concept is a combination of ‘visualization’ and ‘story-telling’ into one, popularly used in researches for commercial purpose to plot-out customer’s experiences. I used that tool to draw down a pregnancy journey in a piece of paper, some participants voluntarily drew themselves, some asked me to do that for them while they narrated their stories. This approach was meaningful as it helped participants recall their pregnancy journey, highs and lows- happiness and sadness. It enabled participants draw their pregnancy story in a visual form that gave a sequence to the story that they told.

The first meeting with all the participants was brief, and was aimed to help facilitate and create a space of comfort and trust, and understand their pregnancy journey map. Thereafter, the second and third meetings were much longer where we discussed their experiences in depth and in detail. I also had a third round of meetings with some of my participants, especially with those requiring further conversation to gather sufficient information for the research. The third meeting, I reflected back to the stories they shared, to clarify confusions, to better understand their experiences, and also to search for answers to the questions the narrations had brought in my mind. In this process, I developed a sense of relation to all these participants, some even expressed that they felt as if they were attending a therapy session. In the process of inquiry, I was co-composing the stories, also sharing to them my own experiences that were similar to theirs, and was also trying to validate their feelings and understandings to make sure that I do not misinterpret what they were feeling.

My first meeting was with Priyanka on the 4th July 2019. I came to know her through a friend and we instantly connected. So I asked her if she would be willing to be a part of my research and she instantly agreed to do so. Priyanka selected a place for our first meeting, it was a private place and we were not disturbed; we had a long meeting the first day itself. We started with a very informal talk at first and gradually opened up on the subject of pregnancy and how she understood violence. I assured her that the information will remain confidential; she also gave consent to record. The first day, we drew her pregnancy journey in a flip chart; she was quick to pick up the marker herself and joined me in making her own journey map. She herself came forth for the second and third meeting and expressed that the meeting is like a therapy session for her. We continued the discussion on the second and third meeting; each

meeting was very insightful for me, as Priyanka was a very open woman, full of ideas, energy, and had a full of stories to tell about herself.

My second participant was Arushi, whom I first met through a friend at work. She came to know about my research and volunteered to participate. Our first meeting was on 8th July 2019 in a restaurant, it was her preference. We had chosen to sit in a far off corner where we could get some privacy, and our conversation started with very informal sharing at first. As we started the inquiry process, she asked me to note down the pregnancy journey for her, and I happily did so and scribbled down on the piece of paper lying in front of us, as she started narrating her story. Amidst the noise behind us, it felt like we were in our own world sharing experiences, she was talking non-stop, and I was listening to her patiently, in-between, I was also trying to confirm if my understanding of the matter was correct. She was a girl who sounded very knowledgeable, spoke her mind, and was not hesitant to talk about personal matters. Our second meeting was also similar, full of new information, stories and experiences she willing shared. Since she went out of town, our third meeting was over a phone, clarifying some confusion and questions from previous narratives.

My third participant was Karishma, she was also an acquaintance through a family friend. As I was casually talking about my research topic at one occasion, she came to me privately, because it was also an interest to her, and she agreed to be my participant. Our first meeting was on 9th July 2019, she asked me to come to her office where she felt would be more private. We had a very open conversation from the very beginning, starting with the visualization of her pregnancy journey. Karishma had a great sense of humor, she was cracking jokes even when she was discussing serious issues, I remember one incident she narrated that still brings smile to my face today, she said, *'I was lying in the hospital bed with severe labor pain, but the nurses were*

eating momos and laughing, I felt so hungry and angry at the same time, my mother-in-law also went back home to have tea, leaving me alone in that condition', she laughed so hard that I laughed along with her. She was a person who spoke her mind, fun loving and carefree.

My fourth participant, I knew through a college friend, we had met her in an occasion very briefly, as we were causally talking about research topics, she expressed her willingness to be my participant. My first meeting with her was on 1 August 2019, again the venue was a restaurant, but this time the place was more private and not a very crowded place. We carefully chose a far off place in a corner, where we could not be disturbed. With her as well, I started with causal conversation and mapping of pregnancy journey. First meeting was very brief, but the second meeting was longer one, more private place where I listened to her narrative in detail. Her stories were going back and forth several incidences, and I would bring to her attention my curiosity, if I found certain incidences important to understand further. Occasionally, we shared similar feelings and frustrations in between the narration, the stories told were beyond violence, it was about the childhood, growing up, education and more. She was a woman with great ambition, independent and always spoke her mind, fearless and also open to discuss issues.

For me, each of my participants were unique, insightful, and provided me with a great perspective to the subject of my study, similar to what Harding (1991) claimed women's narratives and stories to be a scientific knowledge, it gave me a different understanding of violence from where each of my participants were coming from. I developed a sense of connection with them towards the end of my enquiry, while we had developed a great relation during the process, we stayed detached from the relation formed during the inquiry after the research was over.

Considering the sensitivity of the topic, during the narrative inquiry process, I did not attempt to explore in-depth, any forms of violence unless the participants were willing to share the details themselves. Thus, the study primarily focuses on women's individual experience of pregnancy journey and, how they interpret the experience of violence in the process. The individual inquiry varied from one participant to the other; some were more open to talk about violence that were physical or sexual, some were discussing violence in a different perspective, however, all four participants were open and non-hesitant to discuss personal issues. However, I would like to note that the interpretation and analysis are limited to what information could be generated from several rounds of sitting and, my own analysis of what I observed during the inquiry process. Abiding by the principle of narrative inquiry, I went for the inquiry process without any prejudice and did not judge their actions as right or wrong, but rather attempted to understand why they felt that way, and where the feeling was coming from. I also would like to note that all participants had children between 2 and half years to 11 years of age, and no currently pregnant women was part of the research.

Meaning Making Process

With regards to generating stories and experiences, I adopted critical feminist perspective to my analysis and interpretation of the narratives, to understand women's reality, and in what context the stories were told. In the process of the inquiry, I also co-composed the stories together with the participants as described by Clandinin (2016), a process of collaboration between the inquirer and the participants over time and, the stories told in the relationship inquiry is 'co-composition' or 'intentional co-composition' (Taylor, 2007, as cited in Clandinin, 2016). Further, I adopted an

iterative process where I listened, re-told and co-composed the stories together with the participants.

With the consent from the participants, I recorded the conversation. I listened to these records and noted in writing the key messages, sentences, and important sections of our conversation. I even went back to the participants with questions in my second and third round meeting, if I had some confusion that was noted from the first round of meeting. I used the journey mapping that was drawn on the first meeting by all the participants, the written notes from the inquiry, and from my personal journal that I had kept to note my observation from the meetings, to interpret and analyze the stories told. I have also taken note of some specific sentences from the recordings of the participants, and used as the direct quotes in the individual stories as relevant. In case of the participants who have spoken in Nepali, I have used the same language in direct quotes with translation in English followed by the quotes in the individual narrative stories. In case of use of mixed language (both Nepali and English) spoken by the participants, I have used both languages as used, with translation in the parenthesis.

While in the process of writing, I took reference of the feminist narrative framework that discusses the ‘dialectic’ space in the narrative inquiry that is the ‘situated subjectivity’ and interaction that helps both the participants and the researcher to construct a story (Lai 2010; Hardy et al., 2009, as cited in Jones & Breo, 2017). This is dependent on the stories told and the information shared, that the meaning is co-constructed. In this regard, the use of word narratives and stories is defined by Lockwood (2017), as narratives providing a framework in creating the stories from the women’s accounts of experiences (Harrington, 2008, as cited in Lockwood, 2017).

Thus, while making the consideration of each individual experience of women as unique knowledge in the given social context and time-period as Harding (1991) explains as 'socially situated knowledge', I have also attempted to understand the 'power' of structural factors that helped shape the stories that were told. Therefore, adding my own analysis and interpretation of accounts of experiences to critically look at external factors and values in sharing of those personal accounts. Similarly, Woodiwiss (2017) also acknowledges in her writing on feminist narrative inquiry, that women's stories and storytelling could be layered and complex, therefore, it is important to recognize the 'context' of storytelling and exploring how and why they might 're-construct' the stories they tell (Woodiwiss, 2017, p.19). Thus, my analysis of the narrative takes into account the stories told in the given context and situation, as the 'knowledge', without any judgement for being good or bad, but analysis of the experience in the context of prevailing social values, norms and practices.

Moreover, I have considered the subject of inquiry that is 'violence' not in an absolute term and definition, but to understand how women themselves explain what violence is for them. Moreover, I also do not attempt to analyze victimization or empowerment in two absolute spectrums, and do not critically judge the women's fight against violence. Thus, my key focus remains on analyzing and understanding the narrative that influences and normalizes experience of violence amongst the educated women. In my analysis, in addition to presenting the individual unique stories, I also draw similarities in the interpretation of experiences by each participant, to analyze why such feelings were similar, when and why these feelings were observed by the participants in their pregnancy journey, and what dominant values are these feelings influenced by. I generated individual stories from the narrative they shared, and used the journey map to interpret their pregnancy journey in a sequential

order to understand the temporality of the context of violence, when they experienced violence, and how they understood and reacted to the situation at that time.

More importantly, the layers of social structure, functions, role of family members including mother-in-laws are also inspected within the stories to understand violence during pregnancy. And whether the educational background is an enabler to bring the agency in women, in challenging the injustice and discrimination as being claimed by McCarry and Lombard (2016). Thus, I generate the meaning of ‘violence’ for educated women, and attempt to understand how gendered norms and ‘normalization’ are being reinforced.

Quality Standards

Quality standards for narrative inquiry as explained by Dodge, Ospina, and Foldy (2005) unlike the quantitative studies are not assessed for its validity and reliability. The writer also contests the idea of ‘rigor’ and ‘relevance’ in narrative inquiry as being traditional and problematic for being positivist, and argues that the narrative inquiry approach is more of an interpretation of intentions and drawing meaning of the context, rather than presenting prediction. Thus, taking reference to the three quality approaches 1) narrative as language, to communicate meaning and understand a phenomenon, 2) narrative as knowledge, that are experiences and stories to draw practical knowledge and lessons of life, and 3) narrative as a metaphor that unfolds hidden meanings and offers alternative interpretation (Dodge, Ospina, & Foldy, 2005), I adopted the reference of ‘narrative as a knowledge’, which I believe is more relevant for the purpose and scope of my research. In doing so, I have applied the quality standard of ‘rigor’ by accurately presenting the details as it is being told, so the lessons can be drawn from the experiences as relevant. Further, applying the interpretative approach to draw discussion points from the individual ‘experiences’

and stories, I took careful consideration not to bring pre-conceived assumption in designing or execution of narrative inquiry process.

My interpretation of the narratives collected was based on the context of the stories told; I also took consideration of the temporality and space of pregnancy journey of individual participants. Importantly, this study looked at the pregnancy journey of each women and how they described violence, therefore, special consideration was made to understand ‘why some stories are told’ and is it based on special circumstances, context and time (Woodiwiss, 2017, p. 16). Moreover, when I felt the danger of confusing my understanding, I went back to the participant for clarification so that I have credible understanding of the stories told. As a feminist narrative inquirer, and adopting the standpoint epistemology, I have written the experience of women as the ‘knowledge’ in itself, without trying to judge the the wrong or right doing of the participations. Here, I am not making an argument that being an educated woman, there has to be rebellion and resistance, rather, I have attempted to understand what the violence and resistance means for these women and the value system that has influence over their understanding.

Ethical Consideration

The relational approach to the methodology is an intensely ethical approach, and above all, violence is an entirely personal and sensitive subject. Thus, I have taken a relational approach to this narrative inquiry process, which is explained by Clandinin (2016) as ‘living alongside’, which in definition the writer explains the relation that the inquirer creates with the participants with a purpose, and shares the space and stories. And the stories told are in relation to the context with the world, time period, events and feelings, with that of the inquirer and the participants (Clandinin, 2016, p23-24). Thus, as a feminist narrative researcher, I took

consideration in building the relational approach in the process and with the participants in understanding their stories and accounts of life events.

In addition, I took adequate ethical consideration, and also sought required approval by the ethical committee at the School of Education, Kathmandu University. In the process of selection, I particularly took into consideration the sensitivity of the topic and only selected participants who were not currently pregnant, and was also willing to contribute to the research topic. All participants provided their verbal consent and were willing to share their stories as and when they were comfortable (Bhattarai, 2010). The research was not preconceived with guiding questions or themes, therefore, the inquiry process was initiated by creating the space, relation and the trust with due consideration to the 'ethics of care' (Noddings, 1984, as cited in Clandinin, 2016).

In addition, while I adopted the relational approach to the inquiry, I was not passing any judgement in the process of listening and narrating; I did not question their actions as wrong or right, I only tried to understand the context in which those actions and reactions were taking place. Similar to what Shaw (2017) explained about adopting the relational methodology of the narrative inquiry, where she developed a very deeply caring and respectful relation with her participant, I also felt the sense of relation. However, I tried not to be a therapist or a confidant, so my engagement with the participant was purely for the intellectual purpose of generating knowledge and not to be connected with the participants and acting as a supporter or rescuer.

Thus, as a feminist narrative inquirer, while I applied the relational approach, I carefully considered the entry and exit approach as outlined above and took into account the ethical consideration during the design, inquiry and analytical period of the study. Moreover, the real name of the participants is kept confidential, and

pseudonyms are used in all documentations of the narration and its interpretation. The recordings of the narrative inquiry are also only in my possession with required password to open the file. A special consideration has been made in noting down the personal information of the participants, to avoid any information that could directly identify them, for example, I have avoided using their real working location, home location, and organizations. More importantly, while in the inquiry process, particular attention was given for any possible harm that the conversation could cause to the participants due to the sensitivity of the subject. While analyzing the information collected, I have tried to remain objective to the stories told, and have analyzed the narratives without pre judgement. Nonetheless, I do not claim the analysis to be value free, as I have drawn my interpretation of the narratives within the larger paradigm of the underlying social norms and educational values that could possibly have influenced the thought process.

Conclusion of the Chapter

My philosophical consideration for this study is based on Foucauldian ontology, and feminist epistemology where I question the women's unequal position in society to understand violence against women during pregnancy and how the experience of violence is normalized in the context of the educated women. I have employed feminist narrative inquiry method, that I have adopted from Cladinin (2016) and Woodowiss (2017), to add a layer of gender analysis to my research. I carefully chose my participants for the purpose of the study, and provided due consideration to women who are educated, and have been pregnant in their life. Conducting narrative inquiry with four participants generated sufficient information for my research, and considering violence during pregnancy to be a sensitive topic, I applied relational approach to gather information. During interpretation of the information collected, I

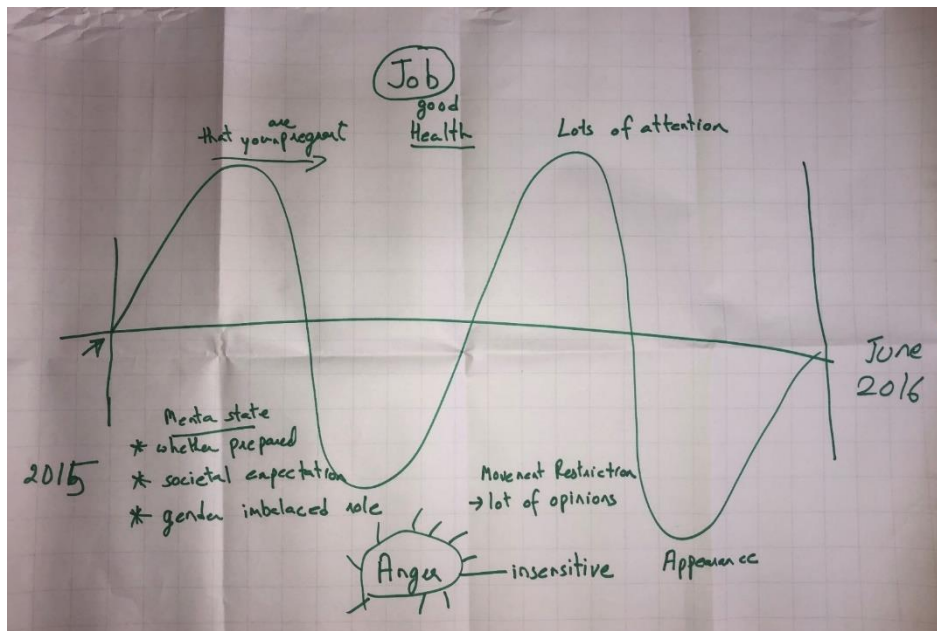
applied Dodge, Espina, and Foldy (2005), narrative as knowledge approach, to ensure the rigor and quality of standards that look at presenting the interpretation as it is, and as knowledge and lessons. I also ensured ethical consideration while undertaking the research, and due process was completed and special attention was provided that no harm was done to the participants and also myself during the process of inquiry.

CHAPTER IV
PERSONAL NARRATIVES: RETHINKING WOMENS' EXPERIENCE OF
VIOLENCE

This chapter captures the individual stories of the participants that are based on their own narrations. Their experiences of violence are unique for each of them and, each has their individual interpretation of how they endured or fought against the situation. Violence in their own narratives are not only limited to physical beating, but also feeling of increased vulnerability due to pregnancy, increased anger and frustration because of being educated and more aware, imposed restrictions, increased work-load, imposed decisions for their own health, or even a forced non-consensual sexual encounter. The stories are presented as individual stories in summary.

Priyanka (Story 1): Ignorance is Bliss

Figure 1. Priyanka's Pregnancy Journey



The figure above is a sketch done by Priyanka to express her pregnancy journey, and her feelings during the ten months of her pregnancy period. In the figure, she has noted when and how she felt over time, she expressed in her own written words her feeling, and her interpretation of violence.

To start with Priyanka, she is a bubbly woman in her mid-thirty, who looked very enthusiastic when she first entered the room for our first conversation. My first impression of her was a confident young woman who was vocal and ready to express her feelings without hesitation. I started with a very informal talk and asked if she is willing to participate in the inquiry for which she confirmed. As we began our inquiry process, she was quick to take a marker and a flip chart herself that was lying on the table before us, and started scribbling down her pregnancy journey, she was reflecting on her good moments and low moments as she started to mark it in the flip chart paper on the table. As she reflected on her pregnancy days, at times she was excited and loud in sharing her stories, and sounded earnest in sharing with me how she felt. In between conversation, she would validate my opinion of how I understood her feeling. I continued to reconfirm whether my understanding was correct throughout the inquiry process. First meeting with Priyanka was casual and the conversation was mostly to build relation and comfort for discussing sensitive topic of violence. In the next two meetings, she was already opened up and was discussing details about her feelings and expressions to get the full understanding of her experience of violence during pregnancy. At times we would go back to the earlier narration, sometimes she would repeat, and at times there would be a new incident or scenario.

Priyanka comes from Kathmandu valley; her family members are predominantly females with her father the only male. She recalls that she was never raised as a girl, and little did she know about the gender difference when growing up.

She says that she never had a brother to be compared to. She went to a private all-girls school in India to study, but was later sent to a co-education school for her college years. She remembers, she never imagined that there is anything a girl cannot do. While in college, her friends were boys too, and they did not even know how to drive or swim, whereas she could do all that, she says: *“I always was equal to things that guys did. No differentiation”*. She looked very proud of herself and I could sense the twinkle in her eyes as she was sharing this to me.

Priyanka's says her first reflection of gender difference was when she got married. Her husband was the only son, and her mother-in-law had five brothers, so her belief in traditional role of woman was predominant. She recalls how she experienced a reality check, right after she got married, she says:

“My first night I was crying. Usko ghar herda pani, nothing suits me. Jata tyatai bhagawan ko photo, in stairs, rooms etc. (When I saw his home nothing suits me, photos of god everywhere in stairs and in rooms). Realisation was- I was wearing saree for a month. Before marriage I was in Costa Rica, thereafter, I was working in Bombay- living on my own, coming back home at 10:00 pm, there was enough girls working. I was outgoing, I was independent like a boy. My husband's home was a rewind and back to reality”.

As she shares her experience, her story jumps from one incident to the other, but the gist of what she was trying to say was very clear. She never experienced the inequality or gender difference at her home while growing up. However, her mention of growing up like a 'boy', shows her value system that are deeply rooted in the gendered norms, that considers boy to be superior to girls. Regardless, she says that she always looked up to her mother who inspired her for her independence and activism for women's rights. While she sounded proud, she also expressed her

annoyance for being compared to her mom all the time by family and friends, that made her feel that she needed to live up to that expectation. Nonetheless, she sounded confident young lady, with good education, good home environment where girls were treated equally and, married to the man of her own choice.

Priyanka also acknowledges that marriage for men is equally difficult to adjust with, because of the new relationship and responsibilities, but not as difficult compared to women. A girl, she says, has to leave the comfort of her house for her husband, whereas her husband did not have to do so. Staying in another person's house means you are expected to obey their rules, their way of living, she further says: *"I would rather be in a paid guest house than a free guest house with rules"*. Priyanka's expression of the early days of her marriage reflected her difficulty in adjusting to the newly married life and she clearly did not like it.

After a few years of marriage, she got pregnant at the age 32. More so, her pregnancy was not a planned one, she had visited a doctor one day for a general checkup as she was feeling a strange stomach pain and, later found out that she was pregnant. She shared that she was not expecting it, but she was happy. Her expression changed to all smiles when she shared that she liked the special care and attention from people around her as they knew she was pregnant, however, she also shared that she never felt an instant connection to the baby emotionally while pregnant.

Her pregnancy experiences as she recalls are full of anger for her husband, because she had to deal with the physical and emotional changes happening to her body, whereas her husband did not have to face such changes. When she was scribbling down the flex sheet in front of her, trying to draw her pregnancy journey, she was circling the word 'anger' to make the image prominent, it was her way to express that she was in real sense, very angry. She said

“I was made to do so much, including change my body shape and size, mental, physical, everything and, [my husband] he had the same life. This only got worse and worse, I am the one putting on weight, I am the one looking ugly”.

When I was sitting in front of her and listening to her experience, I could sense her face go tense, and her expression angry, she said that the pregnancy was not ‘her’ alone, *“it was ‘we’ who were pregnant”* she said, the anger was because the changes only affected her, and not her husband. Her concern for the physical appearance also was the reflection of the same gendered values that prescribed women to look a certain way. Moreover, it was clear the way she was expressing violence during pregnancy was a manifestation of her frustration and anger, due to the ‘gender imbalance’ role as she wants to put it. I came back to her expression of ‘gender imbalance’, and asked what she meant, in our second sitting. She explained that there was a tremendous societal expectation that restricted her mobility, her way of living and eating, that was different to what her husband had to endure. Her understanding of violence relates to restriction that was imposed on her due to the state of pregnancy, she explained:

“You feel mentally restricted, lot of opinions, suddenly your life seems to be guided by lot of people who seems to know everything. You don’t have a choice but listen to people. Every Tom, Dick, and Harry had opinion”.

All these expectations made her feel angry because it was expected of her and not her husband. She remembers an incident that went on to be really violent, a fight with her husband on a night they were returning back from a social gathering. She remembers that they had fights that were uglier because she was rude. She was so angry and she felt that she would not even care for the baby, she said: *“I even*

thought, why on earth am I having this baby?" I could feel her anger as she was reciting the incident to me, she was thinking of that night and finding it hard to resist the restrictions and societal discrimination, as if it was happening at the very moment. Her expression was a reflection of who she was, a revolution and resistance against the societal pressure of how she should behave, she was not ready to give that up.

Further, Priyanka remembers another incident when her mother-in-law got really angry that she said 'no' to her request. It was during *Tihar* (national festival) time when her mother-in-law asked her to make "*Laxmi ko paila*" (make belief feet of God Laxmi). This meant she had to bent down and work step by step all the way up the three stories of her house making the *Paila* (Feet) all the way. She was smiling as she told me that she just straight away said 'no' to her mother-in-law. Her expression was telling me that she was brave enough to do so, she said, those things could have been easily done by the domestic helps, who were available in the house, but her mother-in-law despite knowing she was pregnant wanted her to do. She told me, that her mother-in-law had been really angry that day. She says:

"My sasu (mother in law) is so much a son's person and her expectation from daughter-in-law is conventional. When I went to the gym, my mother in law expected me to wear Chura (traditional bangles), which I broke many times because I wore them during work-outs. She would also teach me special ways of wearing Pote (traditional necklace). My mother-in-law would always come with emotional stories to make me do things and I would think lagaidium na ta (let me wear it)".

These traditional rules and regulations were making her suffocate, being an educated woman, she had a different understanding of social and cultural norms, so Priyanka used to complain to her husband, but he used to respond by saying that he is sorry for what she had to endure but, after all, she is a girl. This practice I relate to as

Foucault's expression of how these 'norms' functions as a disciplinary action, and was gendered because it was an imposition on her. I could see in her face the confidence of a woman, who does not give up easily on the societal pressure, she was adamant about her feeling of inequality and she was not happy for being treated differently. She remembers her husband saying- *yo mero haat ma haina society ko* (it is not in my hand but society). When she complained to her mom, she would also hear back –*yestai ho, bistarai time lagcha* (this is normal and it takes time). Hearing this from an independent out-going mom, she believed that changing the social norms is not easy. She further went on to say: "*I was supposed to perform below my level, below my husband. I am supposed to be dumber than I am*", I could see the pain in her eyes that were trying to say that she was not happy, and she felt violated for what she would rather chose to be. For her 'this situation and pressure' was a violence.

Her story reflects how at times she attempted to express resistance against the feeling of violence, she was loud and clear in saying that she should be able to make the choice and decision in her life by herself. Unlike what the literatures and writings of Mc Carry and Lombard (2016) that talks about education bringing awareness and ability to resistance, with her, it was not so in reality. She said, she was unable to do so despite being an educated, working, and confident woman. She with a complacent expression on her face accepted by saying:

"Unless everybody is educated and aware like me, the society still remains at point 'A'. I have moved to B, the people in B are 20 people, the people in A are 2000 people. And I have to come back to the society of A, bhayo k hamilai (happened to us). *So ahile ko lagi chai* (for now), *if I look back, it is difficult for the B- 20 people, and I fall under that. So malai ta* (for me) *Ignorance is bliss."*

I see her eyes glued down to the piece of paper as she was scribbling the point 'A' and point 'B' on the piece of paper in front of her, as she was talking, and she was also explaining to me with that picture, that she was amongst the minorities of '20' who want the change, but has to live with the majority '2000' who have not changed at all. Her explanation of an educated woman, and her attempt to adjust to married life and restrictions during pregnancy was very well explained in that simple dots and bold lines she had just sketched on a piece of paper. She expressed that being an educated woman and working, has not helped her feel liberated but instead made her feel more troubled and angry. She feels that she has to live amongst the community who has not evolved over time, and therefore is even more difficult for the ones who are educated and aware. Priyanka feels that she was angry and violent because she is more aware of her situation because she is educated, and feels vulnerable because she could not resist the discrimination. Further, she says that her job also is to blame for it.

“Imagine, if I was counting money and working and going home, I would not have reacted the same. Here, we are discussing yo bhayena (this does not work), digging in and questioning gender imbalance. Mero ta title nai (My work title is). harmful practice officer. That disturbs you more. You don't know your integrity where you are.

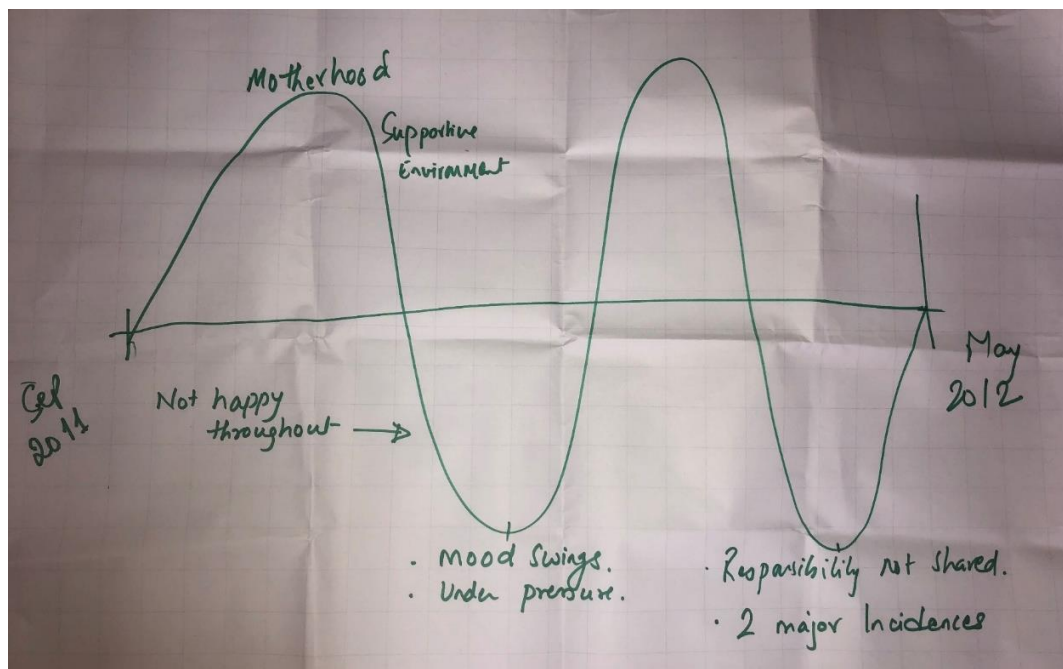
She was claiming in loud voices that her everyday work was to deal with social discrimination and harmful practices, therefore, the guilt is more visible in her eyes that she who works for women empowerment, in reality is a victim herself, she feels helpless and angry for not being able to change her situation. She said if it was a different job where she did not have to talk about women empowerment, discrimination etc., it would be a lot different to go back to the home where she has to

bear the discriminatory social norms. Her being an educated woman, and earning for herself, she expected a considerable level of freedom and choices, but on the contrary she was imposed of many restrictions and rules during pregnancy that she was obliged to obey.

Her story of pregnancy reflects the violence that are emotional and a fight within her own sub-consciousness and societal expectation because of her situation. She expressed that situation of pregnancy is a state of vulnerability in itself and you are bound to live with it. However, her story is also of the resistance and agency that she demonstrated during the period. In my interpretation and generating meaning from her story, I see her 'anger' to be a significant reflection of her awareness of her position vis-a vis her husband, and not been able to fight or resist those discrimination was deeply situated in her conscience. And the 'normalization' of violence was reinforced with rules that was imposed to her during pregnancy, whether it was about restriction to mobility or eating, but also norms that reinforced patriarchy such as wearing traditional bangles and necklace that signifies marriage as sacred and requiring preservation.

Arushi (Story 2): Demystifying the Myth of Resistance to Violence

Figure 2. Arushi's Pregnancy Journey



The above figure is Arushi's pregnancy journey of 10 month's period, where she has noted her feeling and incidences of violence. In her words, her childhood was a privileged one, because she was the only child, and her primary years were spent abroad, outside Nepal. She went to an international school at the primary level, and was admitted to a renowned school in Kathmandu valley after their family moved back to Nepal. She moved to Europe for her college years and started her first job with an international organization. When I was hearing her story, I felt she was a privileged girl and she sounded very bold and vocal too. In our first meeting, we started with some informal conversations, about her childhood, and also about her daughter. She was very open from the beginning of our meeting and had many live accounts to share.

The first time, we mutually agreed to meet in a restaurant. I reached first and was waiting for her, she was apologetic for being late, and we chose a quiet corner where we could talk privately. She was a very open and frank woman, in the midst of noises behind us in the restaurant, we managed to laugh and talk about her childhood and mine too. Our first meeting was very light; we discussed childhood, marriage and pregnancy. When I took out the flex chart and marker pen, she happily asked me to note down the journey of her pregnancy myself.

When talking about childhood, she looked very happy, her expression was peaceful and her eyes lit-up when she talked about her parents. Her parents always agreed to her demands, and provided for everything she wished for. She told me over a sip of coffee, that with the kind of freedom given to her, she could have easily misused it considering her teenage years, with the money and freedom she had at that time. She grew up as the only child, a little pampered and also started working early in her age.

She met a man of her choice when she was 29 and married him. After 4 years of marriage, she got pregnant, the pregnancy was a surprise and not a planned one for her. She says: “*my husband wanted a baby, but I did not. Initially he was very happy, khusi nai thiyo tara kasto bhayo bhane* (he was happy but what happened is), *I went through lot of biological and psychological changes as my pregnancy proceeded. I realized that my husband was not evolving psychologically.*”

She admitted that she did not have a happy marriage, nevertheless, she was happy to find out that she was pregnant. The feeling of motherhood, specially getting a supportive environment from friends and family, for her was a good feeling. As she was very vocal and open in her expressions, she frankly admitted that her pregnancy was not a very happy one, but brought much more pain and suffering for her.

As she began to tell me her experience of pregnancy, she said that it brings her so much pain; her face suddenly was transformed from a happy smile into a dark frown. Her pregnancy situation changed her physical and psychological well-being, as the pregnancy advanced; she was physically getting bigger and also started having mood swings. She felt that her husband was not evolving with the changes that were coming in their lives. As she remembered those days, her hands were trying to get tighter hold of the cup she was drinking from, and her face was all sad, I could sense her troubled voice and eyes when she was expressing much deeper pain she felt, the pain was of loneliness and the pressure of having to deal with the pregnancy by herself. She told me that she felt a triple burden with the work at home, having to perform in office and, also to deal with pregnancy. She said: “*There were so many layers in my life that was piling up*” as she had to take each responsibility herself including seeking doctor’s appointment and visiting the clinic. She always felt that her husband was least bothered and felt irritated with the situation.

She remembers an incident when she was around 7-8 months pregnant, her husband was not hiding the fact that his life style was not going to change. She felt that he never prioritized her or the baby. One incident she recites of a morning; it was a very hot day, and she was feeling lazy to walk to the office. Her office was 45 minutes' walk from her rented place. She expressed feeling hurt for the fact that her husband did not offer to drop her to the office that morning. She remembers walking all the way; she was tired and literally dragging her each steps- she even recalls texting her boss that she is going to be late by half an hour that day. She was very hurt that day; she felt neglected and also violated, because all responsibility was piling up for her and nothing changed for her husband.

As her pregnancy advanced, she remembers that her husband continued to act his old-self, he used to go out, get drunk and expected her to act the same old self, which she was not. With the changes happening to her, he started getting irritated and also got physically violent at times, because he could not co-op with the changing situation and responsibilities coming their way. She said: "*If I questioned, he used to react very violently. 2-3 incidences when he has been violent and had pushed me as well*". She feels that her husband could not empathize her situation as he did not have to deal with it. At this time, she frowns and tells me that it is all about how men are being brought up in our culture; she says that she has found most of the men lacking empathy in South Asian culture. She thinks her own dad and cousins are the same. Men are never taught to empathize as compared to the girls, she retorts angrily. This expression of hers, in my interpretation relates to the deep seated patriarchy in our society that is translated into behaviors that are normalized over time.

She further says: "*our upbringing is very different; he is the youngest of the six siblings, whereas, I am the only child*". She got really emotional and said that now

she understood why people investigate family background before having their daughters married; she feels that it tells you an important aspect of who you are as a person. Her expression of why family background matters also reflect how one's behavior is entirely a result of our socialization, not necessarily about whether you are educated or a modern family.

Her experience of violence includes anger, neglect and also hitting. One incidence she recalls is of the time when she was 7 months into the pregnancy; it was late at night and she was waiting for her husband to be back home. She suddenly woke up around 2-3am in the morning and looked around; she knew that her husband was still not home. She checked her phone for any possible messages, but found none. She felt her adrenaline rush with worries for her husband, and started calling him. With no response from him, she even called his friends, but they too did not pick up. Later in the morning, he came back home and when asked, got really angry. He accused her of shaming him in front of his friends by calling and inquiring on him. She remembers justifying the call by saying, that it was only because she was worried, and not to shame him in anyways; she demanded that only if he had informed her in advance about where he was, should have been fine. That day, she recalls no physical encounter, but her husband was very angry, and she remembers: *"I feel that the anger came from the fact that he knew that I was right, he should have told me, and I have the right to ask him"*.

As the days gone by and she was about 8 months pregnant, she experienced physical violence from her husband for the first time. She remembers an incident where her husband pushed her and hit her hard, but she cannot exactly recall the reason why that happened. Remembering that night, her hands were shaking and her

eyes were troubled; she recounted that incident and was acting out how she protected her belly as she narrated:

“It was again late at night, Ekai choti risayera (Suddenly angry), he started hitting me, pushed me and continued shoving and hitting. I remember that I had my hands protecting my head and I was bending down to protect my belly”.

After that incident, she had called a friend and went away to stay with her for that night. However, she returned back and continued to stay with her husband the next day, she recalls many other small incidences when she felt frustrated, neglected, and hurt.

Why acceptance and why not resistance was in my mind that I indirectly attempted to get answers to in our third meeting. She looks a bold, modern and educated woman in the outset, however, her stories were a reflection of the values that she carries, the values of what a family should be and the belief in woman's role in keeping the family. The next time, when we met at a coffee shop, we were the only two sitting in a table at the corner, by that time we were like good friends who would confide on each other. From the very beginning she was being very open and frank to me and I knew that she trusted me well. When I asked her, what was she thinking during those times when she was enduring violence? She took a deep breath, and told me that when it came to the relationship, it was her weakness and she was easily forgiving. Her tolerance for the behavior was because he was the person she loved, she expressed that she would never have tolerated the same behavior from others. She said: *“Work colleague sanga afno boundry huncha, tara afno partner sanga boundary hudaina.* (There is a certain boundary with work colleagues but not the same with your partner) *I would never have tolerated the same behavior from my boss or*

friends” From what she was saying, I understood that she tolerated for what her relationship was with him. This in my understanding also comes from the ‘norms’ of patriarchy, that teaches us to work on relationship, and reinforces women’s role in family, and to keep peace, as also reflected in the writing of Pun et al. (2016).

Arushi feels that her vulnerability was also due to the lack of her family support, their marriage was not approved by her parents, and she was always reluctant to go back to them with the complaints and pain. With heavy heart and teary eyes, she said that she was missing her parents in her life, at that time. She recollected memories from childhood and said that she never talked to them openly about her feelings and relationships, despite them being progressive and supportive parents, all she used to talk was about her studies. She recalls: *“I could have gone to my parents that night and I am sure they would have happily accepted and supported me, but because –pause- I was never told that I can always come back”*. This feeling of regret was clear in her face, and she made a point that she wants her relation with her daughter to be different to what she had with her parents, from early on, she has started to express her feelings with her daughter and share everything with her. She says, *“Inter-generational dialogue is so important”*.

She was surprised with her own self that she made the mistake of continuing to stay in that relationship, she felt that pregnancy made her feel vulnerable. With recollection of sorrows and frown in her face she explained:

“I started having second doubt, Etro bhudi liyera kaha jane, malai kasle accept garcha jasto lagthyo. Maile ta tyasto soche bhane, gaun ghar ko mahila le k garla, uniharulai ta k option cha bhanne ni thaha chaina. (Where would I go with this big stomach, who will accept me? If I think this way, I don’t know what would be

the condition of women in rural villages where these women don't even know what options are there for them in life). *I saw a therapist for a long time.*"

She went on with that relationship even after she gave birth, but now when she reflects back she feels that she never realized or prioritized her need at that point of time. She says that pregnancy towards its third trimester is considered a nesting period, when every woman feels vulnerable and requires protection. She thinks that it must be the same feeling for her that made her stay and not walk out of that relationship. She went on to say: *"Not to blame myself, but I did not realise. Ma kay bhayeko hola, kina agadi nai react nagareko jasto lagcha.* (What happened to me, why I didn't react early?). She feels that she would have been the first person to come to her friend's rescue if they were in similar situation, she further says: *"But in my own case, there is a lot you tend to overlook, certain things in the person you love, your partner... I would not impose the same standards to him that I impose to others"*.

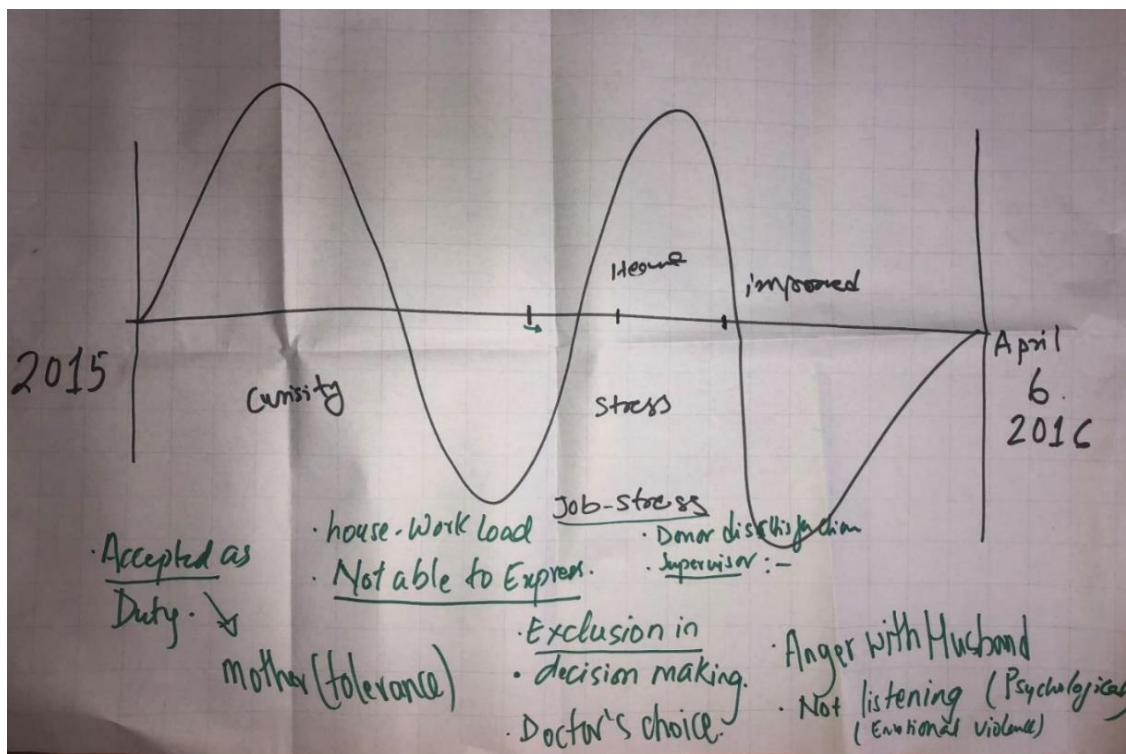
Recalling that moment of truth for her, she feels that her vulnerability and insecurity was more to do with what she would lose, a family to lose, her child to lose her father, and not about what she wanted in life. She gathers her thoughts and tells me that it took her a long time to realize what she needs, prioritizing her own self above others. She was not happy the entire period, when she looks back to that situation now, she does not blame pregnancy to be the sole cause of violence but, she believes that it created a situation in her life that made her vulnerable, and her partner lacked the acknowledgement of his new responsibility, and possibly led to showing more anger and violence.

These experiences of violence narrated by Arushi, gave me a new perspective to violence and normalization. In her story, the acceptance and tolerance reflected the insecurity she was feeling despite being educated, and earning her living. The myth

that education brings the emancipation, and capacity to retaliate and fight violence is dispelled in this story. Agreeing with Langley (2017) argument of equality narrative as problematic, I do not argue here for why Arushi continued to stay in the abusive relationship. However, with her story, I am drawing meaning from the narrative to understand whether state of pregnancy brings in vulnerability, and what is the narrative of ‘normalization’ of violence for her? I tend to agree here again with Langley (2017)’s fairy tale romance narrative that guides women to strive for a so called perfect family. The insecurity of shame, fear of losing a partner, having to keep the ‘normal’ family life is inherently reinforcing the gendered norms that is forcing even an educated woman to tolerate violence, and seems to be common narrative for women educated or uneducated.

Karishma (Story 3): Violence in Its Multiple Forms

Figure 3. Karishma’s Pregnancy Journey



The figure above depicts the ten months' pregnancy journey for Karishma, the note here is scribbled by her and some part she asked me to note. This figure gives the picture of how she felt during her time of pregnancy and what us interprets as violence.

I first met Karishma in her office, she asked me to visit her in her free schedule. I sensed that she chose the venue for privacy, and we could discuss things openly as there were not many people in office that day, and she was alone in her room. We started with very light conversation at first, I found that she had a very good sense of humor; she would laugh off in-between conversation and made every serious incident sound like fun or normal. Her childhood in a big family was not an easy one, but she felt that she got good opportunity to continue her education and also started job as youth leader, she sounded not hesitant to talk about private matters. We had more than 2 meetings within a months' time.

Karishma was born in a big family of five siblings and parents in an urban town nearby Kathmandu Valley. She has three sisters who are older to her, and two brothers, one is elder to her and another one is younger. Being the youngest girl child in her family, she was able to convince her parents to do many extracurricular activities in school days, that she feels her sisters were not allowed to do. She says that she was able to participate in dance, dramas, and was also part of the school scout team. She studied in a local public school till her 10th grade, and moved to an all girl's college in the valley. By the time she was completing her bachelors, she was already teaching in a local school and was actively engaged as youth volunteer in her community. Her active work engagement got her the first job when she was 27yrs old.

Her marriage was an arranged one by her parents, and at the age of 32 years. She expressed that marrying at 32 is considered quite late in our society, and she

blames that delay to her medical problem. She recalled getting pregnant within a year of her marriage, and the pregnancy was a very difficult one for her, medically, and physically too. When she was sharing her experience of pregnancy, she was willing to sketch her pregnancy journey herself, and at times she would ask me to note down when she preferred to talk. I could see that she loves to talk, and she willingly was doing so. She categorically said that she used to feel very angry towards her husband during pregnancy, she felt very misunderstood and not cared for. She says:

“Mero husband ko case ma, kati uha sanga rish uththyo malai. Yeti ta timi garna sakihalcha ni bhannu hunthyo, uhalai help garnu parcha bhanera thaha thiyo tara environment namile ko pani hola. Badi hamro expectation husband bata huncha, kati uha sanga rish uthyo- sabai bhanda badi uha sanga rish uthyo”. (In my husband’s case, I used to be very angry. He told me that I can do things myself, though he knew that I needed help during that period, it may be the environment was not right. We have more expectation from our husband, so I used to be very angry with him than others).

Though Karishma looked like a jolly person, who loved to laugh and joke about her own experience, she looked sad when she was recalling incidences where she could not voice out her need in her family during pregnancy. She was recommended bed rest by her doctor because her fetus had slow growth and she was physically unwell, however, at home she was unable to demand to recruit a house help. She remembered that she had a breathing problem when 3-4 months into pregnancy, thinking about it, her eyes were sad and she attempted to look at the ceiling to avoid my glare. She continued speaking and said, that no matter how vocal she is at public spaces, despite her education, and a working status, she could never speak up for herself at home. She jokingly laughed and bluntly said that she lacks that

skill. When she said that, my thoughts immediately wondered whether it is about skills or is it about the gendered teachings that subjects women to submission and subordination.

She continued with her experience of how she endured the work-load at home, considering it to be her job therefore has to be her responsibility. She recounts:

“harmo growing up nai tyasto, yo kaam buhari le nai garnu parch bhanne thiyo, so I thought that was my job. Nasakera ni afai garna parne, sakdina bhanna nai sakina. Hamilai tyahi sikayera hola (We were brought up in the way that daughter-in-laws have to do the household chores, so even when I physically could not, I could not say no, we were taught that)”.

As per the UN definition, violence can also be physical as well as psychological, and here the work-load she was subjected to endure was one form of violence that she could not fight against. Moreover, her stories also show her realization of how the values she has been raised with has become an integral part of who she is as a person. Karishma believes that the values come from how one is raised in their childhood; she was raised in a big family and her sisters believed in ‘tolerance’, so for her it was a ‘normal’ situation for a woman to be doing their household chores. When she was talking to me about it, her tone was casual; she looked up at the ceiling of her office room, and started recalling a particular day. She was slowly speaking and telling me that, it was a winter time, very cold, and she was not feeling well, but she still continued to do her chores, cooking, cleaning and washing dishes. As she was talking, she looked passed me towards the window; I was right in front of her across a round table, and with long inhale of breath, she said she had a gastritis problem during pregnancy and was in a terrible pain. She painfully remembers the moment when she had to be rushed to the hospital, even at that state,

she could not tell anyone in the family, but waited for her husband to be back from office to tell her problem. In her eyes, I could see the sense of helplessness that she had felt during that moment, and could sense her state of inability to voice her need, which she now feels is a form of violence.

Moreover, she also expressed, not being able to make decision for herself and her health. She says that she wanted to go to a doctor whom her sisters had visited during their pregnancy; she initially visited the same doctor, but her mother-in-law insisted that she change the doctor. The reason for the change of doctor was the convenience for her in-laws; they felt that a doctor near by the house is easier for them to take her to, in case of emergency. Karishma says:

“maile mero issyha bhanda uhaharu ko kura mannu paryo. Jun history dekhi hererko doctor chodnu paryo, uhalai bhannu pani sakena, aba ahile pani kehi gyno problem paryo bhane uha ko ma jana sakdina. Uha ta harmo family doctor jastai, sabai mero didi haru le ni dekhayeko ani mero history pani thaha bhayeko. Last ma aayera family ko kura sunnu parne, hami kaam garne women le afai pani cost bear garnu sakchou, tara paisa bhanda pani arkai pressure. Afno choice garna nasakne”. (I had to agree to their decision over my need. I had to leave the doctor who knew my medical history; now I can't even go to her for any other gynecological problem. She was like my family doctor; my sisters also used to go there; she knew my medical history too. I had to listen to the family suggestion at last, working women can bear their own cost but it is more than only money; this is about the pressure and not being able to make your own decision)

Karishma's story is a reflection of how despite being educated, independent and earning, women are still under pressure of their family and cannot make decision

for themselves. The inability to make her own choices due to family or social pressure, is a reinforcement of power and patriarchy, that Foucault (1990) explains to be operational in society in many folds, whether at an individual level, family unit or social structure, and in a form of disciplinary actions and 'norms'.

Karishma further recounts her delivery time, she made it sound like a joke and was laughing when she recalled the time when she was rushed to the hospital as her water broke. She was admitted in the hospital, but her family members chose to come back home to have tea (since the home was nearby) leaving her on her own at the hospital. Considering no family member was around to make decision for her on the medical emergency, the doctor had no option but to discuss with her the need for immediate surgery. Later, when her mother-in-law arrived at the hospital, she was very angry at her, and instead blamed her for making that decision of operation (c-section). She said: "*mero subidha ko lagi maile c-section garayeko jasto uuaharulai lagecha*" (they assumed that it was my own decision and choice for my convenience).

Her experience of the pregnancy and childbirth is an example of a unique situation, where violence can be interpreted in the form of workload, and also the mental pressure, including her inability to make decision for her own health. As indicated by Pun (2018), the cultural values that expects women to behave submissive, whether it is about taking decisions for their own health and care, also signifies violence and how commonly it is practiced in our society. This also exemplifies the power structure within a family and role of a mother-in-law in imposing restrictions and decisions. Thus, these normalized social norms that prescribes women's duty in a household, therefore, not only renders women's inability to decide for her own health and self, but also reinforces subordination, for a daughter-in-law within a family structure and also fosters violence.

More so, for Karishma, her work environment was even more stressful and non-supportive. She shares that her job related stress was much more than what she experienced at home, she further expresses that she was facing high expectation, no appreciation, and no acknowledgement of her hard work at her office. She recalls an incident when she had applied for a day's leave because she was not feeling well, however, before being granted the leave, she found out that her supervisor went on to ask her colleagues if she was actually sick and, wanted to verify if she had lied about her sickness. I could see her eyes sad and her forehead frown as she told me that she feels angry even today when she recalls about that day:

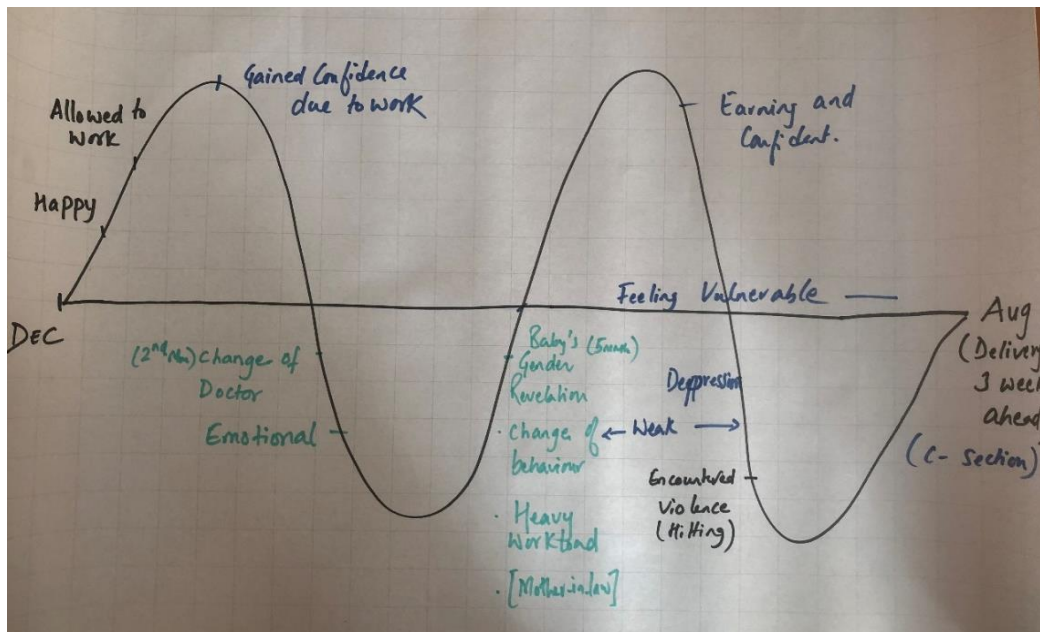
“mero office ma leave approval garnu parcha bhanera ma office aaye, tara mero supervisor bhet bhayena tara office ma leave milayera farke. Tara mero supervisor le doctor le nabhani ma afai le rest garna basna khojeko impression liyecha ra aru saathi haru lai ‘ uoo sachai ko bimari dekhthyo ra’ bhanera sodeko raicha. Malai ekdam naramro lagyo... Ek Pathak donor sanga skype call thiyo, tyo skype call ma join garina bhanera sabai lai sunaunu bhayecha. Tyo project pani GBV related thiyo, female staff lai value dinu parthy, tyo office ma pani policy sabai ramro thiyo tara supervisor ko behavior chai ekdam naramro thiyo.” (I had gone to office to apply for leave, I could not meet my supervisor, so I applied for leave and returned home. My supervisor had an impression that I wanted to take rest myself and was not the doctor who recommended it. I felt bad when I came to know that my supervisor was asking my friends if I really looked sick. Another time, she was angry at me for not being able to join a skype call with donors. It was a GBV project, but they were not valuing the female staff. The office had good policies but the supervisor's behavior was not good).

Karishma also expresses the irony of the work place violence, I could somehow relate to the shock and surprise she was expressing at that time. She shared that a project she was associated with, was about eliminating violence against women, on the other hand, she herself was facing the situation of violence in the work-place due to her pregnancy condition. The lack of empathy and sensitivity towards her pregnancy condition was clearly visible in her story, and her rights to take sick leave, or to receive an appreciation for her contribution was being violated. She further shared that her probation period was extended to one year whereas it was supposed to be for 4 months only. Karishma sensed that it was because her supervisor thought that she had become incompetent due to her pregnancy, and complained about her absence during sickness, and also solely blamed her for the delay in project implementation.

Her story reflects a multiple form of violence that can occur in a woman's lives, specially looking at the special circumstances such as pregnancy, and the lives of a working and independent woman. The narrative in my interpretation brings the multiplicity of violence that is often ignored or 'normalized' as a duty or the societal norm. This again looking as knowledge in itself through the lens of power and normalization, projects a picture of a woman's life that is surrounded by discriminatory norms, that subjects women to subordination, and takes away her agency and ability to decide for herself. These multiple forms of violence projected by Karishma in her story are a bitter reality of educated and working women's life who are aware but lack ability to fight against the discrimination. This story also gives a context to how the 'dominant narrative' of patriarchy has created a value system in our society that fosters violence and its normalization.

Smriti (Story 4): Faking Happiness amidst the Tears

Figure 4. Smriti's Pregnancy Journey



The above figure shows Smriti's pregnancy journey from start to end, with key words depicting what she felt, when she felt it, and embedded within this figure and key words are her expressions of violence in this process.

As I met Smriti, I found her to be an ambitious and hard working woman. I met her through a college friend, and she agreed to become one of my participants. We agreed on a mutually convenient date, but had to cancel the schedule more than once, because she had a very busy schedule. Upon cancelling a couple of times, we finally met in August of 2019, the location was carefully chosen for privacy. She was open, and sounded non-hesitant to share her experience; it did not take very long for us to build the trust. I met her a couple of times before we concluded the inquiry process, some days, we would only talk about light things such as the childhood, growing up, family etc. But some days would be much heavier with emotional stories and struggle, and understanding of what the violence actually means for her and her lived experience of pregnancy. Similar to how I started with the other participants on

our first meeting, I used the flex chart paper to note down her pregnancy journey, in each meeting we would open that chart paper again and go back and forth with those incidences, recalling, recollecting memories whether good and bad.

She defined herself to be a shy and pampered girl, the eldest to her only brother. Considering both her parents were teachers, she used to find them strict when she was young, but once she reached high-school, they started treating her like a friend. She comes from an urban town outside the Kathmandu valley. She was always a very studious person, and was a district topper in her school leaving certificate exam. After which she came to Kathmandu valley to pursue her further studies. She was a happy girl, full of dreams; she was all smiles when she recalls her early days in the valley and experiences of adjusting to the new life, which she thinks was a major change in her lifestyle.

A hardworking, disciplined and an eldest of the siblings, she remembers her childhood as being very considerate towards her parents' wish and, also ambitious for her dreams. She started working when she was young. Her first job was giving math tuition to her juniors when she was in class 8. She also recalls giving 10th grade math exam on behalf of her senior, who at that time had broken his arm, and she had volunteered to help. She started volunteering work from her college days, and also used to help her mother in her NGO work; it started when her mother fell sick and could not attend office for some time. I could see the pride in her eyes when she was telling me about her childhood and the things she had done; it showed her independence and sense of empowerment.

She had an arranged marriage at the age of 25. As she starts narrating me her memories of marriage, I could see a cloud of sadness engulfing her eyes and her entire face, the twinkle in her eyes suddenly disappeared. As she started drawing the lines of

her pregnancy journey on the flex chart in front of her, she said point-blank that her marriage from the very first day, not a happy one. The cause of unhappiness was the love-relationship of her husband with another woman. While sharing her story, she expressed that her husband's affair was not a secret in her household, and she believed, that the arranged marriage was her mother-in-law's way to take control of her son's life, with the hope that he will change for good. Not surprising for her, the mother-in-law played a vital role in taking charge of Smriti's married life, including her day-to-day decision making. In her words, her relationship with her husband was significantly affected due to the constant involvement of her mother-in-law.

Smriti's mother in law was a working woman herself, however, was of a very suspicious nature and constantly watched over Smriti's whereabouts and attempted to control her daily life. She recalls, that she was not even allowed to work in initial stage of her marriage. She remembers having to lie to her mother-in-law about the job she started, the job was for 2 days in a week to start with, so she lied to her mother-in-law saying that she was going to a library to study. To her greatest surprise, when she first knew about her pregnancy, her mother-in-law changed positively, and she even allowed Smriti to work in office, but that positive attitude was only short lived.

Smriti feels that she hardly received any emotional support from her husband because his emotional interest was somewhere else and not on her. She remembers with great pain, that she was almost on a verge of a breakdown, and at that time, her pregnancy came as a surprise, that created a situation of compromise for her. When she was narrating me this situation, it made me re-think how 'pregnancy' can be vulnerable and state of being pregnant makes oneself complacent. Smriti expressed her disbelief, about how the marriage and pregnancy made her helpless and vulnerable despite being an educated and an ambitious working woman.

Taking reference of Cladinin (2016) framework of temporality, space and context, I could see how Smriti was making sense of her pregnancy status that was of 10 years back. But when she was narrating me the situation and her context, she expressed that it felt like yesterday, and she can still recall the feeling when she thinks about it today. With much pain in her face, she acknowledged how depressed and mentally under pressure she felt in her relationship, more for her child when she found out about her pregnancy. She recounts the moment with great pain when she had shared about her pregnancy to her mother. Her mother was aware about the trouble in her relationship and was supportive of her leaving the relationship if need be, however, with the news of the pregnancy, she said: "*pahile ta hami le ni nabasa nai bhaneko manche ho, tara aba tyasto hudaina*" (initially we also said not to stay with him, but now it is not the same). So, in her words she felt under pressure to make the relationship work. As Pun et al. (2016) in her paper has explained about women staying in an abusive relationship to keep family harmony, also applied here, however, I am also not questioning the equality narrative (Nettleton, 2001, as cited in Langley, 2017), but taking note of the women's position in our society and how patriarchy operates to 'normalize' women's violence.

Throughout the conversation with Smriti, I could clearly see the pain in her eyes, and how aware she was of her mental status then, she told me that in addition to depression she was also having mood swings. She feels that her mother-in-law was the main '*culprit*' in her relationship. The mother-in-law continued her interference in their relationship, she remembers how her husband and her mother-in-law used to talk behind closed doors for hours, and she always felt left out, excluded and emotionally violated.

Smriti during the process of inquiry, also recounted incidence of forceful sexual encounter by her husband, that I could relate to the narrative of how ‘marriage’ as an institution has provided men with that false sense of control over women’s sexuality, that is also well argued by Krishnaraj (2007) as an act of ‘complex patriarchal structure and an expression of masculinity’ (p. 90). The writer further explains, how socially prescribed norms provide males the privilege of access and control over woman's body in a marriage. Here, the denial from women is considered as ‘deviation’ which can be seen well reflected in Garcia-Moreno, Heise, Jansen, Ellsberg, and Watts (2005) and Bourey, Stephenson, and Hindin (2013) writings, where men have responded wife beating to be normal in the situations where a wife denies sex to her husband.

Going back to the narration, I sensed Smriti was disturbed and sad when she was recalling the painful moments that had been part of her life once. Seeing her face very disturbed, and her eyes really sad, I did not probe her further. Even in those narrations, she did not entirely blame her husband for the act, but she clearly felt that it was a result of the influence that her mother-in-law had on her husband, he used to feel very disturbed, and somehow she knew that his external marital relationship was also not working well. I was silently listening to her recollection, she was taking a long pause in between, I could sense the feeling of hurt and pain in her voice, and I sensed that re-living those memories were difficult for her. We therefore decided to keep the meeting short that day.

As we continued our second round of conversation, we revisited the flex sheet and recounted her pregnancy journey. As her pregnancy advanced, she remembers having to change her doctor because her mother- in- law wanted so, more so, instead of her husband, mother-in-law used to accompany her to the doctor’s visit regularly.

Her husband at one point also suggested abortion, which she did not agree to. She started working for 4 days a week and later starting the full time job. She says:

“Whole day ma malai khusi hune kura bhaneko chai office ma euta colleague le malai fruits and milk khuwauthyo (in the entire day, the happiest moment for me used to be the time when one of my colleagues used to give me fruits and milk in office), that used to me the happiest moment in my entire day”.

Hearing her out, I could sense her joy was in small moments when people cared, otherwise, most of the time she felt a sense of emotional violence from the part of her husband and mother-in-law. And it got even worse once the gender of the baby was revealed. She recalls the incident, with full of emotions in her voice, and her hands trembling as she was taking a sip of coffee out of the cup she was holding. She was around 5 months pregnant; she had doctor’s appointment for check-up and ultrasound. When she got to the clinic, she was surprised to see her mother-in-law there, and as soon as the doctor revealed the gender of the child- a daughter, she could see her mother- in-law’s change of expression. Smriti told me that she can never forget her mother-in-law’s facial expression that day in the car back home, the air in-between them was very tense, and her face had completely turned black, it clearly showed that she was angry. That day, her mother-in-law instead of accompanying her home decided to go to her maternal home instead.

From that incident on-wards, her mother- in- law started behaving very rudely with her; she recounts how her mother-in-law made her work long hours in the kitchen, and increased the household chores for her. Despite her physical condition, her mother-in-law would invite people for meals, she would be working all day in the kitchen, cooking and cleaning with no help from any other family members. She recounts how her feet would swell-up due to standing long hours, to the extent that

her shoe size had gone up by one size. When Smriti was narrating the moments, her face had gone tense, and I could sense that she was re-living those moments as if it had happened just yesterday, she was telling me how her baby used to move inside her belly, and how the sound of the blender or the pressure cooker in her kitchen made her baby move, which used to make her feel sick. She looked at me as if she could still sense those feelings now, she says: “*no one would help me and I used to get very tired*”.

Her expression of helplessness was clear in her voice when she said: “*ma chai kaam garne manche jasto, ma bhitra chori bhayo bhanera , bahira na niklidai ta yesto cha bhane- janme pachi k hola bhanera malai daar thiyo. La yo condition le chori lai po asar garcha ki bhanera, Ma arkai kisim ko depression ma gaye* (I was treated like a maid in the house, if they behave this way when they found out that I have daughter inside, I was scared what would happen after her birth, I was also scared if my condition would affect my unborn baby, I went to a different state of depression).

Hearing Smriti’s story, I felt a deep sense of pain for what she had to undergo, a severe mental torture. However, at that time, the situation did not permit her to openly discuss her mental health; there was social pressure for her to keep pretending that she was happy. She used to act like she was happy, in front of her mother and family, but she very depressed from inside. Her pregnancy clearly grew her vulnerability, and the violence she was facing was a mix of both mental and physical. Despite being an ambitious working women, I gathered from her story that she was still a victim of the conventional mindset, that made her pretend to be happy in her relationship; she attempted to make the relationship work for the sake of the baby, and

was scared for the consequences of how the society was to perceive her if she had to come out of the relationship.

Her experience of violence also includes hitting, but not necessarily because of pregnancy but for a reason unknown. She says:

“He was irritated for 2-3 days before that incident. I don’t exactly remember what incidence was that, maybe during his sister’s wedding. It was about his sister, he had gotten irritated and hit me- I don’t know whether it was intentional. I did not retaliate, but I may have cried but did not say anything”

Getting pushed or beaten was few incidents that were physical for her, but the emotional violence that she endured was much larger than any other forms of violence that she continued to tolerate. She remembers that later stage of pregnancy was a vulnerable period for her, physically and mentally. She explained herself to be a very shy woman by nature, introvert, and not vocal. In the midst of the depression and unhappiness, she expressed gaining considerable confidence, because she was working and earning money. In the office, she felt happy with her close friends; she started sharing about her unhappiness and feelings, and that she felt have her some level of confidence. She recounts the time when her sister-in-law was just gotten off married; she was able to make considerable financial contribution to the event. Her financial status gave her the power to speak up; she remembers the time after her sister-in-law’s wedding was over, she gathered up the courage one day, and told her mother-in-law that she is ready to either separate or die, but not ready to go-on like this in life. I could see a light of happiness in her eyes as she explained how she had been able to voice her opinion that day, which slightly changed her husband’s treatment towards her, but did not change her mother-in-law. Her stories were full of pain, anger and feeling of helplessness against the violence she had to face in her

relationship and especially in the period of pregnancy. She eventually came out of that relationship, but much later, after the birth of her daughter.

When we came to the end of our inquiry process, the meaning I got from Smriti's story was truly unique, undeniably psychological violence that impacted on her well-being. And largely, I interpret her vulnerability as a result of the 'pregnancy' to be a reinforcement of the social norms that provides male the privilege over women, and women are subjected to the responsibility of maintaining the peace in family, which continues to be the dominant narrative of 'normalization' of violence, regardless of educational status.

Summary of the Chapter

These individual narratives of participants are telling the stories of individual lives and various forms of violence that women endure during pregnancy, regardless of their educational background. In my interpretation, the pregnancy journey of each participant is different, and their experience of violence is a unique knowledge on its own, however, there are similarities in some form, there is anger, frustration and helplessness for the reason that their educational values alone could not help them to change the existing gendered norms. And more so, pregnancy though may not directly be the cause of violence, has led to increased vulnerability for women in experiencing violence whether at home or at work locations. In all these stories, the reinforcing values and beliefs remained a dominant narrative in enabling the acceptance of the discriminatory practices and 'normalization' of violence. The unequal positioning of women vis- a- vis men in our society, was visible in the participant's accounts of incidences, embedded in the day to day experiences. Therefore, here, I continue to question the grounds of whether education helps foster awareness and emancipation for women to fight the discrimination, and violence.

CHAPTER V

GENDERED NORMS: A REALITY CHECK TO THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND RESISTANCE

In this chapter, I bring in the analysis and interpretation of the meaning that I was able to generate from the stories in the earlier chapter. The stories of individual experiences of violence, in my interpretation continues to be dominated by the ‘patriarchy’ narrative that tends to discriminate women in the ways that fosters ‘normalization’ of violence even amongst an educated and working woman. The patriarchy has prevailed in reinstating the unequal gender norms of how a woman should ‘tolerate’ or endure the anger, physical or emotional violence they may go through. Further, I bring in discussion around the area of whether education provides women the capacity to fight against violence. While pregnancy may not be the cause of violence, does ‘pregnancy’ bring vulnerability in women that leads to acceptance and reinforcement of gender norms? And whether there is an increased pressure on women to prove equal in the work-place during pregnancy, therefore, the self-infliction of violence.

Table 1

Summary Interpretation of the Individual Narratives

Participant's background	How they interpreted violence?	How they explained resistance?	How they explained acceptance?
1. Educated/Literate: conscious and Knowledge of equity. 2. Economically independent/Working 3. Assumptions as modern, with liberal values	1. Discrimination 2. Restrictions 3. Work load 4. Physical violence (hitting, being pushed, sexual) 5. Emotional violence 6. Workplace violence (self- overworking, others-blaming and perception of inability to work during pregnancy)	1. Anger 2. Saying 'no' 3. Speaking up	1. Gender norms: how a good wife should behave. 2. Family reputation 3. Fear of social stigma 4. Self –pride (Pregnancy brought a sense of vulnerability and having to compromise)

The above table presents a range of experiences explained by the participants in a summary, starting with what is the background of the participants, to understand the myth of an educated women having an ample life choice, limited restrictions, and may never endure violence. However, the right side of the table explains the experiences of different forms of violence they have faced. And more so, how they resisted and why they think they are not resisting the violence they have endured? The lists at extreme right negates the assumptions on the left, it is a reflection of re-production of patriarchy and social norms in 'normalizing' what the participants experienced as violence. I interpret that the educational values here was not significant in fighting or resisting violence, but rather the influence of existing

gendered norms, that continues to dominate the narrative of ‘normalization’ of violence, as Foucault (1997) explains to function in the micro system in the form of social norms, that are consciously or unconsciously practiced over time.

Adopting narrative inquiry as the knowledge, I have attempted to generate the key messages out of the narratives that was told to me by the participants. Without generalizing, and also acknowledging the uniqueness of each story that was being told, I also see some similarities in the feelings expressed by the participants, one of the common feelings was of the anger during pregnancy. All the participants expressed that they felt angry with their husbands during pregnancy, and many thought that this is because they were experiencing mental and physical changes within, whereas, their husbands were as normal as before. Some even expressed experiencing restrictions and imposition of additional rules to their daily lives. Therefore, in my analysis, the violence in these scenarios were more a manifestation of frustration due to the ‘gendered’ social norms they simply wanted to fight, but could not succeed. Most of the participants agreed that these feelings of anger against their partner/husband was because they were more conscious, educated and aware, thus, wanted to question the discriminatory social norms.

One of the participants told me, that she relates to the phrase “Ignorance is Bliss”. This popular English phrase ‘ignorance is bliss’ means, if one is unaware – one cannot be troubled with. For Priyanka, being an educated woman, she understands her self-worth, however, the pregnancy experience and having to deal with it alone, led to dissatisfaction and unhappiness in her relationship. Not only Priyanka, but Karishma also expressed the same feeling of anger for her husband, and when the expectation was not met, it gave her emotional stress. More so for Arushi, she felt the triple burden, and was angry with her husband for not being able

to share the responsibilities. The 'anger' explained to me by all the participants, I understand, is a sub-conscious fight in their minds, due to the difference between their expectation and reality. I describe that the expectation is a result of awareness and education, that led to woman believe that there is a shared responsibility.

However, the prevailing gendered narrative in a Nepali society, can be understood in the form of a social norm that explains pregnancy to be a women's issue, and to be mostly endured by women in physical sense, hence, the non-compliance of expectation led to the anger and mental violence. Thus, I critique the notion of educational values that is commonly understood to empower individuals. Here, the narrative shows that the educational values Vis-a-Vis violence against women, does not prove to be empowering, but rather fostering helplessness and frustrations within, because of the situation they could not fight. When one is aware but do not have power to change the way the 'norms' prevail, it becomes frustrating. Thus, while the anger expressed by many could also be considered as a step towards resistance, the way it was narrated by most of the participants and also expressed explicitly by Priyanka is more of a self-endurance of violence, because it was silently lived and not expressed to the world or people outside.

On the other hand, my research did not focus on men's perspective of care during pregnancy. I can only assume that, the upbringing in any Nepali household, always reinforces the role of a man to be a protector or a bread winner, and woman are taught to be child bearer, tolerant, and one who are to protect family honor and reputation. Thus, there may be no realization on men's part that they are contributing to violence by following the norms, since they do not physically carry a child, they may not naturally be aware what it takes to share the roles and burden. One of the participants, Arushi, also expressed the same feeling when she told me that she sees

men to be very non-sympathetic in South Asia, and it may be a cultural thing. This could be an area of further research to understand men's perspective to violence and how is patriarchy and masculinity affecting men as well. However, for this research, it brings to my discussion whether education really helped women fight against the violence. As for the stories told, it was rather the reason for their unhappiness and anger for not being able to fight and revolt, and education played a big role in bringing the dissatisfaction and violation to the individual awareness within.

Does education provide women with the power to resist the violence?

Getting the summary of the narratives as above, I would like to start my first discussion with the very question of whether education enables women to fight the injustice they face in their lives, more so, against the violence they endure and face during the period of pregnancy. My analysis of the stories reflects the gendered narrative of 'patriarchy' influencing the understanding of how the participants understood and reacted to the incidences of violence. While these women expressed having awareness of something wrong happening, and also the feeling of injustice and discrimination, they continued to understand their role in keeping the family at peace, and making the relationship work. While the existence of violence was in different forms for individual participants, amidst the sense of self-worth, educational background, and economic independence; there was a common value system of these participants in their understanding of women's role vis-a vis-men's. Unlike, the violence I witnessed in my neighborhood 38 years ago, on the woman who was an illiterate and battered soul, and had to endure continued cycle of violence in her life, here, these women were educated, carried the value of self-empowerment in a sense that understood the social norms are a human construct, and

had the agency. However, the agency was not realized, thus, limiting their resistance to discrimination, violence and decision making for themselves.

In these stories, I see educational values playing a vital role in creating the consciousness of what is discriminatory behavior, whether it was about Priyanka questioning her mother-in-law’s advice to wear the traditional bangles and necklace, or Arushi feeling triple burden of work taking on additional responsibilities during pregnancy, and Smriti feeling excluded and violated on the hands of her husband and mother-in-law. However, contrary to what Mc Carry and Lombard (2016) argued about the education supposedly brings awareness amongst women to challenge the patriarchal ideology behind normalizing the men’s violence against them, the narrative shows otherwise, when it comes to challenging the dominant narrative. The stories tell a tale about how these individual women despite being independent, educated, and aware, were following the norms that is prescriptive for women on their role in making the relationship work, and keeping the family harmony. Nonetheless, the stories also have brought a different perspective of how the ‘anger’ is understood, whether as a form of violence, feelings of self-endurance, or a first step towards the resistance to injustice. Thus I bring to this discussion, education vis a vis violence, whether the deeply rooted ‘norms’ can easily be changed?

Does pregnancy bring vulnerability and reinforces gendered norms?

Table 2

Pregnancy Journey in Summary

Period of Pregnancy	First Trimester	Second Trimester	Third/Final Trimester
Participant’s feeling	Starting of bodily changes. Anger for their partner	sex identification resulting indiscrimination	increased feeling of vulnerability helplessness

In the above table, I have plotted the feelings expressed by participants in relation to their pregnancy journey as a summary, while some feelings are common and some are not, I acknowledge the uniqueness of this journey for each participant as their own and different. One of the key elements of my investigation in this narrative inquiry was the focus on violence during pregnancy, thus, I attempt to understand whether pregnancy as a condition has affected each participant in their experiences of violence.

The journey of pregnancy in its initial phase as expressed by all the participants, started with a feeling of joy, and good feeling, because they were getting attention and support for their entry into a new journey of motherhood in their lives. However, as they started feeling the physical changes in their body, they all shared the similar feeling of anxiousness and anger. The anger expressed was mostly for their husbands, because the husbands did not have to endure the same physical changes. Above that, was the restrictions imposed during pregnancy on women that the husbands did not have to endure, and for which the men were not empathetic about. These feelings of inequity and injustice, was a result of self-questioning -why only me and why not him? It reflects the self-awareness on the existing women's unequal position and the reproductive role, where the pregnancy experience was solely for the women to bear and not the men.

As the pregnancy advanced, second trimester as participants' expressed were slow adaption to a new beginning, some even identified the sex of the child that led to the feeling of unhappiness. For Priyanka, she felt that she would rather have a boy who can enjoy the privileges of our society, than a girl who could be 'her' princess- but the discrimination she faces in our society will be no different to the other girls.

On the other hand, for Smriti, identification of the sex of her child brought an increased level of discrimination and violence in her life, that was entrusted by her mother-in-law. She would fear for her daughter's future, as she could not imagine how her daughter would be treated after she was born in the household.

Entering the third trimester of the pregnancy journey was the most vulnerable one, each participant expressed in their own way, how they felt helpless, how their bodily changes were affecting their mental well-being, and also their ability to fight against violence. The stories here reflect the situation of vulnerability in woman when they are physically growing big, emotionally requiring a home and a good relationship. There is a sense of acceptance of the gendered norms as 'normal' and attempt to keep up with the dominant narrative of a 'happy family' as the pregnancy advanced. While one participant shared that she gathered all her courage to speak up when she was eight-months into pregnancy, she still stayed and hoped the situation would improve.

Arushi's experience of helplessness when her husband hit her; is a clear example of the vulnerability because of the pregnancy. She explained that, she had multiple questions in her mind and was afraid to face the world alone. She thought, where is she going to go with that big belly? what will her family say? What if her child has to live without her father? All these thoughts made her compromise to the situation she was in, therefore, she could not revolt. Though she left for her friend's house that night, she returned back to her husband the next day.

On the other hand, Smriti was told by her parents that she should now work towards making her relationship work because she was pregnant. While, her parents knew about the unhealthy relationship that was giving Smriti the mental depression, she was still forced to obey the social obligation. It is also important to remember,

that she started faking her happiness even in front of her own mother and family, afraid to show them the pain she was enduring inside. This is a clear example of vulnerability- caused by pregnancy. This also reflects the ‘normalization’ of the situation, where family and friends tend to project the violence as common, and not to be bothered about, because others in the society also go through similar experience, therefore, maintaining the ‘happy family’ image remains a priority.

In the case of Karishma, she explained that she was taught to be tolerant, and always felt that it was her duty to do the household chores, no matter how sick she felt. Her inability to ask for a help for domestic chores at home, or her inability to voice her choice for the doctor, not only shows the values she upholds that are discriminatory and reinforcing patriarchy, but also her condition of vulnerability due to pregnancy. Here, the dominant narrative of patriarchy and gendered norms (Langley, 2017; Foucault, 1997), again prevailed, and situation of pregnancy added to that vulnerability to fight against the discrimination and injustice. As explained by Karishma, this was the situation where she was more dependent on others to understand her and support her physical condition.

Hearing these narratives, I gather the prevailing gendered norms as a result of woman’s reproductive role, continues to influence and reinforce unequal treatment to women in our society, even in the modern times, when women go out and work, and raise their children as a single parent. The pregnancy, and motherhood, as explained by Langley (2017) and Krishna (2007) glorifies femininity and women’s role at large, on the other hand, considers it to be a private matter. While I contest the condition of ‘motherhood’ to be entirely private in our society, where, participants narrated how involved the mothers and mother-in-laws were in the times of their pregnancy, the consideration of men’s and mother-in-laws’s violence against women

continues to be treated as private. Therefore, this dominant narrative of women's role as subordinate, reinforces the 'norms' that holds women accountable to keep peace in the family especially when the baby is on its way. Regardless of my participants being an educated woman, the state of being pregnant, created vulnerability for them, and reinforced the gendered norms. Their attempt to make their relationship work, fake their happiness to the family and society, keeping silence on injustice and discrimination, and accepting the imposed restrictions are all examples of how the gendered norms were reinforced and reproduced, and how the state of pregnancy increased their vulnerability.

Thus, here, my intention is not to discuss whether or not pregnancy is a cause of violence, but through these stories, drawing lessons of how pregnancy brings vulnerability to women, that reinforces the gendered norms that fosters women's inability to fight the inequity and injustice in a domestic setting.

Workplace and Violence: Proving to be Equal

As I gather my thoughts around 'patriarchy' as a dominant narrative influencing the 'normalization' of violence, I cannot help bring here the narratives from participants on the workplace violence. There were two participants in particular who had incidences that led them to feel under pressure to work hard and prove themselves equal to men. They did not want their employer to think that they are performing less because of the reason that they are pregnant.

Karishma's experience of work-place related violence, was about a non-supportive working environment, high expectation and no appreciation. The hardest part was the lack of empathy and sensitivity towards her pregnancy situation, and as a result, she was being blamed for all the things that did not work in the project, and

her probation period was extended to one year from the initial 4 months. She was working hard to prove her capacity with no visible support.

Priyanka also shared an experience of how she was working day and night to prove her capability despite her pregnancy, she recalls visiting the field even when she was 8 months pregnant. She never compromised her work and always felt the need to demonstrate more, because she was pregnant. Similar was the case of Arushi, who expressed 'work' as one of the triple burden she faced, she was to live up to the expectation of her boss, at her office. This makes me question the norms of equity; does equity in real sense mean women having to prove themselves by working extra hard, even when they are not physically fit? When I am discussing this, I also remember my own experience of work, where I also used to feel that I needed to prove myself. I always felt, that men at work feels that women make the pregnancy an excuse not to work. Hence, even when I was physically not well, I used to constantly try and work, and be present in the office and in the field. I thought that I should not let men think that my reproductive role is my weakness as a woman, therefore, I travelled, visited fields, and worked late hours during my pregnancy too. Therefore, I could somehow relate to what my participants were telling me.

Having to prove your excellence for being a woman and more so at the time of pregnancy, in itself is injustice and discrimination. While Priyanka was very much vocal at home, she says that she was unable to voice her need and remained silent in her workplace, and continued to feel the pressure to perform more. Whereas, Karishma did complain about the injustice to the Human Resource unit of her office, but did not receive any support. Drawing on the 'power' dynamics that Foucault claims to function in the multiple forms and structures in our society, the position of a staff vis-s vis- a supervisor in a workplace context, is in itself a discriminatory power

position, and being woman and pregnant adds to the subordination. This work place violence, and the participants working hard to prove themselves, is an example of violence in an environment where educational values are supposedly to be respected and realized. Workplace is a location where liberation and women emancipation is supposed to be visible and exemplary. Thus, I critique here the location of power and structure within the work-place unit that continues to be inherently gendered for women, and reinforces patriarchy and the unequal power relationship.

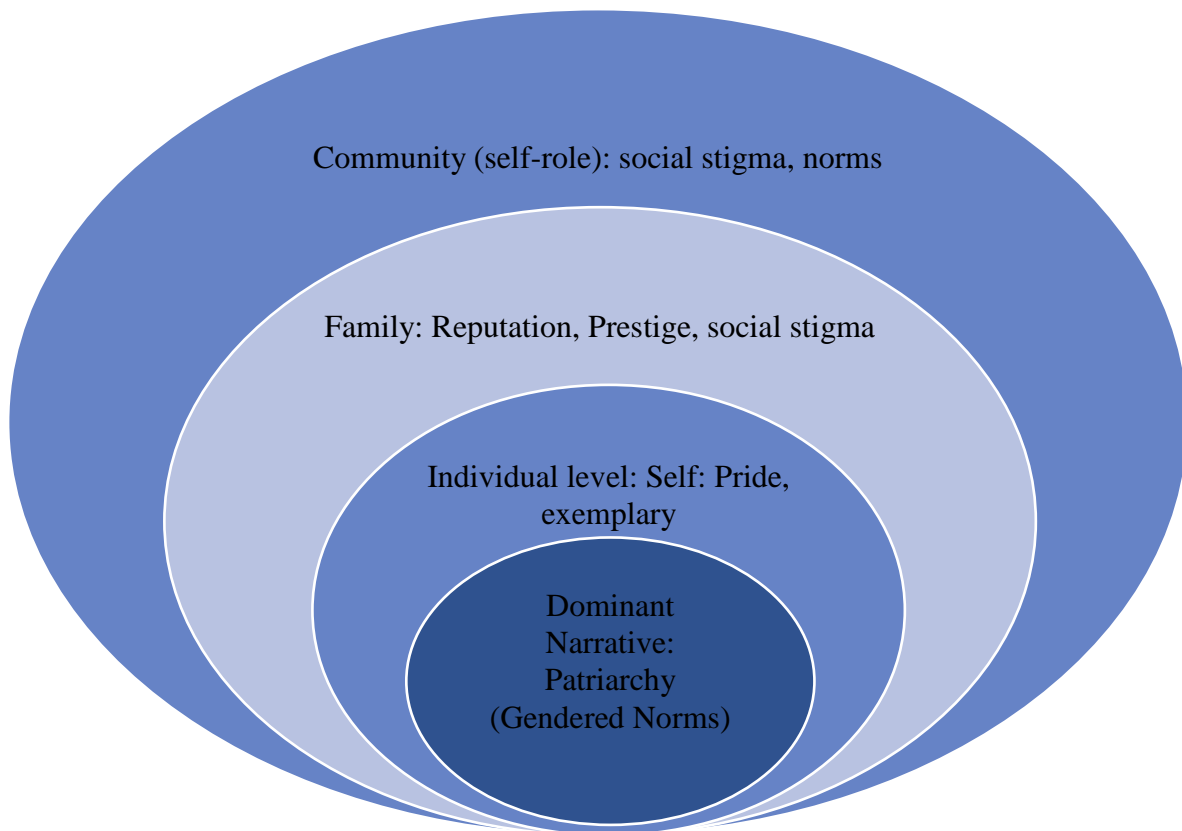
On the other hand, Priyanka expressed the hard-work for her was a self-endured violence, and was not because of her supervisor. She says that she made herself work hard, went to the field when she was eight months pregnant. While this may be self-inflicting, it is clearly reinstating the culture where women have to prove their capacity and strength against the prevailing dominant gendered norms. This brings me to question, is it important to demonstrate that women are equal to men? It is, because women still live the gendered norms every day, whether it is at home or work.

These narrative is situated in the educated environment, where both the narrators and perpetrators are located in a context of so called 'modern' world, where equity should have been well instituted, however, the underlying prevalence of 'patriarchy' is institutionalized in the system. Whether it is in the system of a workplace, or a dominant narrative that influences the mindset of a woman, that believes, women have to constantly prove themselves in comparison to men, more so when they get pregnant. The reproductive role of a woman continues to reinforce inequality and violence even in an educated domain.

Rethinking Normalization of Violence

These narrative of violence gave me a new insight to what it means to experience violence and how the normalization is reinforced. Violence not necessarily has to be physical, battering or otherwise, does not only happen in a village where people are illiterate. Here, the social positioning of women in their respective community can be considered privileged, as they belong to the category of educated women, who are from a good family with liberal values, and working. However, their social positioning negates the assumptions that they should not have experienced violence, or even in case of such situation, they would express retaliation and resistance. Here, the argument on ‘normalization’ of violence stands true, and reflects the reinforcement of social norms and values in reference to Foucault’s claims of disciplinary mechanism predominantly influenced by the power and patriarchy that is embedded in our culture and behavior of what is understood to be ‘normal’ in our society. Looking back at the table above, and deriving the diagram below, I am attempting to explain the normalization of violence embedded as part of the narrative.

Figure 5. Socio Ecological Model for Dominant Gendered Norm and Normalization of Violence



Adapted by (Bronfenbrenner, 1970)

Using the socio-ecologic model coined by Urie Bronfenbrenner in 1970s that was later developed into a theory in 1980s, this development model looks into the layers of self, inter-personal (family) and community at large, and used mostly for the behavioral change communication. Here, I am adopting this model to explain how violence is being ‘normalized’ at the level of self, family and community. In doing so, I am taking reference of the ‘dominant narrative’ that has influenced the participants understanding of violence and their action towards resistance. All the participants while being highly educated and working women, still have the values that are grounded in the social norms that are discriminatory, and teaches the distinct social construction of behavior and roles for a girl and a boy. Hence, at the personal level, the participants being educated, independent and working, demonstrates a sense of

self-pride, and they position themselves in a privileged category in the society, thus, they see their role to be an example in a society. Therefore, I draw from the narratives that the very self-pride and the pressure to be a 'good' example in the society, is highly influenced by the gendered values. This very dominant narrative has resulted in the participants being more reluctant to move away from the accepted normative role of a good woman, therefore, would prefer to live the paradox of their reality. While they are angry on the unequal treatment, or are facing violence, are still following the norms, that was reflected in the way they were telling the tales, of why they fear to be associated with a broken home notion, and why working on the relationship mattered to them, and importantly why they worked hard to prove themselves equal to men at workplace. As one participant well explained, she has moved ahead of the crowd, but she has to live amongst them every day, therefore, unless everyone moves ahead together, she has no choice but to live amongst the crowd and follow the norms. This also reflects how 'power' functions even at an individual level, in a form of widely accepted social norms.

More so, at the family level, there is another layer of pressure beyond your own self. The narrative tells the tales of women who have to manage the pressure of protecting their family's prestige and reputation. For some participants, their parents asked them to be tolerant, and to compromise, and pregnancy further added to the complexity for them to make the marriage work. In this sphere again, there is an increased layer of reinforcement of women's role within the structure of a family unit that plays prestige card for women to endure, re-producing the very subordinate position that women continue to uphold. The women's experiences of injustice tend to be of a less value compared to the consequences and repercussion of moving out of a violent relationship that demonstrates the gendered narrative governing the value

system in our family structure. This is well reflected in how Arushi expressed her fear, that her child may lose her father, or moving out would ruin her family reputation. Smriti on the other hand, was also mentally under pressure to make things work, more so for the unborn child. She faked happiness to maintain her family prestige and reputation at large.

Moreover, the family is associated with the community at large, where the social stigma plays a big role. The social perception of a woman who revolts, who leaves their husband, or is rebellious, are considered as 'bad', these values have guided the efforts for reconciliation and attempts to make the relationship work. The normalization of which was created by various social examples, where these women are searching for their role in the larger crowd, for larger acceptance of being a 'good' woman in a society and attempting to avoid the shame. Further, this notion is enforced not only by the family but also community and justice system at large, that is well reflected in the accounts were authorities reportedly denied registration of the cases of domestic abuse.

More so, the workplace violence can also be drawn as an example of a community level narrative of violence that is largely influenced by the state of pregnancy, and violence in workplace inferring to women's constant struggle to fight for equality. Karishma's probation period being extended to a year from mere three months, is a clear example of injustice for a simple reason of her pregnancy, and the blames being put on her for not being able to deliver her work results, despite her protest. This also projects how the structure within the workplace functions around the 'social norms' rather than tokenistic organizational policies. The notion of having to demonstrate performance at a different level, purely for the state of being pregnant, in itself carries the gendered values at large.

Most importantly, in all these layers of life, starting from self, to family to the community, the dominant narrative of patriarchy is seen prevalent in the stories told. There is a larger narrative – where family values and woman's role in making the marriage work, is placed at a higher level compared to women's experience of injustice. Thus, the participants though were educated, had better understanding of discrimination and equity, or even had resources to fight for the injustice, happened to continue to think about their self, their family and community in the realm of 'prestige' or 'happy-family' vis-a vis violence. Their vulnerability for having to live the consequences of a failed relationship superseded their education values. Hence, these narratives call for re-thinking of normalization of violence as universal that requires eliminating and deconstructing the unequal gender norms at large.

Concluding the Discussion

My analysis from the narratives I have gathered from individual stories, have raised major discussion points around the unique individual experiences of women, while also demonstrating some similarities on how they expressed their own interpretation of violence during pregnancy, whether that be an expression of anger, or their inability to change the circumstances despite being aware and conscious. The analysis brings in three key discussion points that surrounds this research, that is, 1) experience of violence vis-à-vis women's educational background, is it only a myth that education brings awareness, and their ability to fight injustice. However, more women are aware, more they feel helpless and violated for not being able to fight, creating increased psychological and emotional stress for their consciousness to injustice. 2) Pregnancy and vulnerability, while pregnancy may not necessarily increase violence, the stories certainly brought forward the evidence of vulnerability that each individual participant faced. The state of being vulnerable is not necessarily

negative, however, it certainly placed women in a situation where gendered norms were reinforced and re-produced. 3) The workplace related violence, it is a location of liberation for women, however, the double and triple burden to prove women's capacity at workplace were more for women compared to men, especially in a pregnancy situation. Therefore, it also brings in a key discussion point around why do women need to prove to be equal? Is it a form of violence too? Thus, further how these experiences are influenced by the dominant narrative of the gendered social norms, is well reflected on the socio-ecological model that looks at self-pride to family prestige and social stigma.

CHAPTER VI

REFLECTING ON MY RESEARCH JOURNEY

In this chapter, I am reflecting on my research journey that I started nearly a year ago. Here I have summarized, what inspired me to take this research work, what methods and theories I employed, what stories the individual narratives of women told and what is my interpretation of analysis of those tales being told. Further, I have drawn further elaboration on implications of this study at the policy and behavioral level, and the questions this study had brought forward for possible area of future research. With a few final thoughts from my side, I conclude this study.

My Reflection

As I ventured in the journey of my research, I was struggling between few topics, but the violence against women got me intrigued. In the midst of media outrage over the #metoo movement both at the national and global level, stories on violence against women were getting a wider media coverage, and while reading such stories got me thinking hard. This was not a new phenomenon, I remember witnessing violence in my neighborhood when I was a child, and I have been witnessing violence in different forms around me whether at home or work. There is also a myth about women empowerment, that when a woman is educated, has access to resources, she will have a power to make decision for herself, and she may not endure violence. Hence, in my research I aimed to understand educated women's experience and interpretation of violence during pregnancy. In doing so, I question the very premise of dominant narrative of gendered norms, power and normalization of violence, to understand how educated women understood and interpret violence? Do educational values foster prevention of violence or resistance? Or whether pregnancy increases

vulnerability in women and reinforces gendered norms? I have tried to tackle these questions in my research.

I employed the Foucauldian theory of power and normalization as an overarching framework in my interpretation of the narratives, to understand how power functions in various forms within a social unit, and the way power operates the disciplinary mechanism in a form of social 'norms', that reinforces and reproduces the dominant gendered values over time. In doing so, I also adopted the standpoint epistemology to construct the knowledge from women's individual experiences, with due consideration of their individual narratives as unique knowledge in itself. I used feminist narrative inquiry as the method of my research, where, I not only adopted Clandinin (2016) framework of making the meaning out of the experience and stories told, through understanding of the 'three dimensional space' of 'temporality, place and sociality', but also added a layer of feminist narrative inquiry as Woodiwiss (2017) claims as contextual and complex, to understand why and how the story is told and in what context.

When I look back in time, I had done the first narrative inquiry interview in July 2019, I was excited for the research and was looking forward to more individual interactions. Considering it to be a sensitive topic, I fully took into account the ethical and quality considerations. I undertook the research without any preconceived idea, assumptions or judgment. I employed relational approach to the narrative inquiry process and adopted the narrative as knowledge approach by Dodge, Espina, and Foldy (2005) to ensure quality standards. In doing so, I presented the narrative as it was told and not questioning the decision those women took in their lives, neither am I arguing for anything right or wrong. My argument upon my analysis here is, the

gendered social norms continue to construct our dominant narrative that is inherently patriarchal.

My inquiry with all four participants is very rich in content, it was frank and open sharing of individual pregnancy journey that had variance in stories told, and experience of violence also unique for individual participants. Despite some similarities that I could draw from their stories, such as the anger, frustration and helplessness they felt, each stories had a different tale to tell. However, within these 'knowledge' of variance of violence, I understood the meaning to be beyond hitting or beating or sexual, which normally are considered violence, here violence was more about feeling of frustration and anger, for not being able to change the existing structure and norms that are discriminatory for women. The violence expressed also included, imposing stricter rule on yourself, and self-inflicting hard-work and pressure to prove yourself worthy in the work culture just because you are a woman and pregnant. Here, violence was also about vulnerability induced by social norms that dominated the spheres of both home and work. I see helplessness to be a critical element in my analysis, that signified -aware but unable.

Therefore, I have brought in a few discussion points through my interpretation of the narratives, I have questioned the myth of educational values vis- a -vis violence and women's capacity to resist or rebel. I also have discussed how the state of pregnancy contributed in reinforcing gendered norms and patriarchy, whether at home or in office. And why women have to constantly prove themselves to be equal even in a liberal and educated environment like the work-place. In all these discussions, the unequal social positioning of women continued to prevail the dominant narrative, that have influenced the way even an educated woman reacts to the violence. It is difficult

to 'walk the talk' for many educated working women when they are few standing out in the crowd, but are expected to fit in, this becomes the rhetoric of life.

Implications of this Study

The study for me has generated the knowledge that can have greater significance in the area of gender policies and development. The prevalence of underlying narrative of gendered social norms cannot be negated, and it continues to influence the way we think, the way we behave, is what the narratives of this research clearly shows, regardless of women who are educated, and are working, and earning for themselves. There are women who are facing discrimination at the work place, and are not being able to voice their need. In the home settings, they are being violated in their daily lives, and are accepting the values that they do not agree with, just to maintain the social harmony and peace. This culture of acceptance will not go away easily, unless the women subordination and unequal position is addressed both at the policy as well as behavioral level.

Policy Implication

Nepal's public policies for women, are considerably progressive in ensuring women's rights that is well reflected in the country's constitution. Nepal is one of the few countries in South Asia, to have introduced domestic violence act, and related laws, in line with its international commitment to eliminate violence against women. However, the on-going incidences of violence that are reported in various media and research reports, including the narratives from this study clearly exemplify that the enforcement of laws in prevention and protection of violence against women needs to be strengthened whether at home or workplace. The weakness in enforcing the stronger legal system, and implementation of policies are largely impacted by the restrictive social norms and deeply rooted gendered practice that require to move

away from victim-centric approach, and address the barriers that limit women's ability to decide for themselves. Hence I see policy recommendation would be to create better accountability mechanism for enforcement of such existing positive policies, where women feel secure to take steps forward to justice. This is also to apply in workplace, where women can confidently raise issues without repercussions, unlike what one of my participants had faced in her office. From the development or organizational perspective, this challenges can be addressed by making organizational policy gender inclusive, understanding equity perspective for special situation, and making an affirmative action towards women's need with special consideration to pregnancy period.

Implication at the Individual/Behavioral Level

The gendered social norms are reinforced through individual and collective behavior, thus, this study also raises a question around how individual behavior and feelings are impacted by dominant narrative, that is often driven by our value system, social norms, and practices, albeit our education, and liberal workplace. Addressing the issue of social norms and deeply rooted gendered practice is a complex issue that requires behavioral change not only at the individual level, but also collectively at the family and social levels. Thus, this study also brings attention to the need for addressing behavioral issues, demystifying the myth of education automatically bringing positive change. Without bringing change in our value system and structures, that reinforces such gendered practices, behavior change is a challenge. Hence, I see engagement of men and boys as critical to bring this change, change in education from the very childhood, bringing equity perspective and practice in the school, in the curriculum and in the classroom. The education to change individual behavior

positively should be enforced to all genders equally, and should not be gender biased and binary.

Possible Future Research Areas

In drawing the above mentioned implications, I felt that violence as a topic of research is complex and layered. While this research brought in some key discussions and questions around educated women's experiences of violence during pregnancy, the stories could be further investigated for deeper theoretical analysis to understand the nuances and contradictions in future research.

Moreover, there is also absence of evidence to understand the policy barriers and challenges to be able to address the implementation gaps. Hence, I feel that possible future scope would be to look at Nepal's national policies on addressing violence against women vis-à-vis the international commitments and standards, so to first identify gaps in policies itself. Further, the study can also explore the implementation challenges to explore the policy versus practice in the area of prevention, response and protection for women against violence.

In addition, while in the process of narrative inquiry, I had encountered a question from one of my participants, that she expressed as being unaware of her partner's feeling on the issue of pregnancy and empathy, and she would be interested to know what her partner was feeling at that particular state. She also argued that 'men in Asian culture are non-empathetic'. Therefore, I was forced to think and started questioning myself, is it cultural? Is it again the reproduction of patriarchy that does not allow men to behave differently, and they too have to follow the crowd? Does pregnancy is for women only, if not what it means for men? Why men behave a certain way they do, how men perceive violence? Does masculinity also affect men as

equally as that it affects women when it comes to violence? Thus, I see an interesting scope for future research to study men's perspective to violence.

Final Thoughts

In this research, I focused on violence during pregnancy as a reason to narrow down the scope with the period of pregnancy for a woman, who are educated. However, I did not explore the details of types of violence and did not attempt to focus on men's violence against women, but rather attempted to understand how women explains their understanding of violence and their experience, how they express acceptance or resistance against the violence. Further, I did not also confine my study to a particular location, neither did I chose survivor of a violence, with the understanding that the violence can be experienced by anyone, anywhere, and it is only a matter of how we understand, analyze and interpret those feelings, and how normalization is often driven by our value system. Thus, the scope of the research was not limited to elaborating on only one form of violence.

Further, in the course of the research, I felt the term 'vulnerability' during pregnancy period came often and also expressed repeatedly by all the participants. I found that the understanding of the vulnerability is equally important, for the reason, that it touches the issue of equity, and not necessarily undermines women in any negative way. I understood it to be as equivalent to understanding the gendered concept of why men have to be brave, which created crisis for masculinity, similarly, not acknowledging vulnerability of women during pregnancy also negates the concept of equity.

More so, the knowledge and lessons drawn from this study on how educated women expressed violence, and how the forms of violence may vary in individual perspective, and how pregnancy brings in the aspect of vulnerability provides a

critical perspective to the myth of educational values bringing emancipation for women. However, the underpinning dominant narrative equally influences educated women, in the way they are complacent to follow the 'norms'. While I do not argue for why women being educated and aware, are not fighting against violence, but understanding 'violence' in the context of why it happened, and how it happened, and 'normalized' is equally important. Thus, I see violence against women as a topic of research will continue to be a subject of inquiry as long as the underlying causes continue to exist.

On a different note, while I was writing this paper, I constantly came across many social media posts and news on increasing incidences of violence against women, due to the current COVID19 context. There were reports on how the isolation and confinement of a home during the lockdown, subjected women to stay locked with their violent partners, and increased their vulnerability. While there are data on how many women sought helpline services for response to violence, I see very less information on the impact of emergency on women's vulnerability to violence and their resilience. I now see this to be my area of research interest in future, to understand whether the lockdown created vulnerability for women, and health systems and risk communication focused on response to violence against women was sufficient.

Conclusion

Finally, the narrative and stories I gathered from the inquiry process gave me an immense insight on experience of 'violence', some I can relate to as being a female, being a mother and a working woman myself. The use of Foucauldian framework of 'power' and 'normalization' to analyze the context and situation of what stories were told, provided an insight to how the underlying value system was

functioning within the home and work-place of the participants, that were inherently gendered, but unconsciously accepted. Whether the way participants were telling the stories or the stories that were told, it accounted for the incidences that were reinforcing social and cultural norms, that enabled continuation of the unequal social positioning of women in our society. While the unequal social positioning of women continued to dominate the narrative of violence against women, including the reinforcement of normalization and vulnerability, those were also the story of women who voiced their opinions for change, and expressed anger as the first sign of the resistance, whom I consider to be the warriors.

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