

Dating Violence among College Students: Nature, Extent and Consequences

Ramesh Adhikari

Mahendra Ratna Campus, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal

**Abstract for:
Population Association of America
Washington DC, USA
March 31-2 April, 2011**

Short abstract

Dating violence is an unexplored issue in Nepal. This paper aims to explore the nature, extent, and consequences related to dating violence, and to examine potential underlying factors that contribute to and perpetuate dating violence among college students in Nepal. Multivariate logistic regression was used for analysis of the self-administered questionnaire that was completed by 1276 college students in 2010. Nearly half reported being a victim of dating violence, with females reporting a higher incidence of victimization than males. Violence ranged in severity from unwanted physical touching to rape. Gender, education level, migration status, relationship with parents, and living arrangements had significant associations with dating violence. Depression, lack of sexual desire, pain during intercourse, and thoughts of suicide were reported as consequences of dating violence. High levels of dating violence and related negative consequences indicate a need for comprehensive programs to address the issue.

Extended abstract

Background

Research on sexual aggression has increasingly focused on dating violence especially rape in a dating relationship (Ward et al, 1994). However, there is not a single study that has focused on dating violence in Nepal. Most of the studies conducted in Euro-American found that reported rates of physical violence in dating relationship among high school students vary from 12% (Bergman, 1992) to 59% (Jezl et al., 1996). One national survey conducted in USA found that over the course of college carrier, one fifth to one quarter of college women experienced a completed or attempted rape and 9.5 % to 66.4% had experienced other form of sexual victimization (i.e. unwanted sexual contact and sexual coercion) and the overwhelming majority of victims knew the offender (Fisher et al, 2000).

Dating violence among adolescent and youth is not only an important personal and social issues but also important from the public health point of view. Dating violence encompasses several types of abusive behaviors, including emotional, physical, sexual and psychological. Physical dating violence is associated with negative mental health outcomes, including eating disorder (Ackard et al., 2003), depression (Howard et al., 2003), and suicide ideation (Ackard et al., 2003). Dating violence also is associated with increased participation in health risk behaviors, such as cigarette use, alcohol use and drug use (Ackard et al., 2003), and sexual risky behaviors, including early initiation of sexual intercourse, lack of condom use, and more sexual partners (Howard & Wang, 2003). Similarly, study also found that adolescents who experienced dating violence victimization reported about twice as much cigarette, alcohol, and illegal drug use as those who were not victimized (Ackard et al., 2003).

Dating violence does not appear to be consistently associated with gender or race or ethnicity. Some studies found the prevalence of dating violence greatest among female (Ackard et al., 2003), others found the greatest prevalence among male (Jezl et al, 1996;

O'Keefe & Treister, 1998) while some other study found no difference by gender (Foshee, 1996; Howard et al., 2003).

In Nepal, more than one third of the country's population consists of adolescent and youth (CBS, 2002). Most of the college students are adolescent and youth. Despite the fact that the young people comprise a significant proportion of the population of the country, poor attention is given to their behavioral patterns, sexual and reproductive health problems. Violence in dating relationship has always been a neglected topic from the researchers, policymakers and program designers in Nepal. Since sexual violence has negative impacts on reproductive and sexual health such as unwanted pregnancy, STIs and HIV/AIDS, the government has major responsibility in protecting the vulnerable population from violence. However, no strategies or program are proposed in newly developed adolescent reproductive health strategies of the government to prevent violence and to provide care and support to the victims. This may be due to the fact that there is no systematic documentation on this issue in Nepal. Concrete evidences are needed for the policy formulation and designing education program and health services especially from those who are facing the problem.

The objectives of this paper are to explore nature, extent and consequences of dating violence, and to examine potential underlying factors that contribute and perpetuate dating violence among college students in Nepal. The findings will help to fill the gap in literature. The findings will also be very useful for the (I)NGOs, and rights activists to advocate on the issue and to design appropriate sexual and reproductive health care interventions for young people in Nepal.

Methods

The data used in this paper is from a cross-sectional survey on "*Exploring the nature and extent of dating violence among college students in Nepal*" carried out in 2010. A multi-staged random sampling technique was employed for selection of the college male and female students. In the first stage, 20 colleges were selected randomly from five out

of seventy-five districts of Nepal. In the second stage, two classes were selected randomly from each sampled college. In each class 32 students were selected randomly. A self-administrated structured questionnaire in the Nepali language was used to obtain information from the students. The questionnaires were pre-tested among college students in a non-selected college and later refined as required. Four male students who were selected for interview refused to participate in the study. A total of 1,276 college students (636 males and 640 females) were interviewed.

Verbal informed consent was obtained from the participants before they were enrolled in the study. The consent form was written in the Nepali language stating the study's objectives, nature of participant's involvement, risk and benefits, and confidentiality of the data. Students were requested to read the consent form carefully. They were given clear options on voluntary participation. It was also made clear that they could refuse to answer any questions and terminate the interview when they desired. Confidentiality of information was also ensured by removing personal identifiers from the completed questionnaires.

Both bivariate and multivariate techniques were applied to identify the factors associated with the likelihood of being victim of dating violence. The Chi-square test was used to test the association. The variables were re-examined in the multivariate analysis (binary logistic regression) in order to identify the significant predictors after controlling other variables.

Results

Background characteristics of sampled population

An overwhelming majority of the students (91%) were in the youth category (15-24 years). 87% students were unmarried. More than two-thirds (70%) were migrants from different districts. About a quarter students were working part-time. Furthermore, about a third student reported their relation with parents was neither good nor bad. More than half

of the students (57%) reported that their source of family income was agriculture. More than a third student (37%) was living without their family members. About a fifth (18%) frequently consumed alcohol. More than three-fifths students had exposure to pornographic movie (Table 1).

Demographic, socio-economic and cultural correlates of dating violence

Slightly less than half (46%) of 1276 students (n=588) had experienced dating. A significantly higher proportion of male than female reported that they have experienced dating (data not shown). About a half student (47%) reported being a victim of dating violence. Females (55%) reported higher incidence of victimization than males (43%). Similarly, violence was significant higher among those who were aged 20-24, were from Mongolian ethnic group (Rai/Tamang/Gurung/Magar), who had Masters level education, who were migrants, and who did not have good relation with their parents (Table 1).

These observed associations in bivariate analysis were reassessed by logistic regression to identify adjusted association with the probably of being victim of dating violence. The results are presented in table 1. As can be seen from the table, variables such as age, sex, education level, migration status, relationship with parents, living arrangement were significant predictors of experienced of dating violence after controlling for other variables. For instance, female students were more than 2 times (aOR=2.13) more likely to experience dating violence than male students. Student aged 20-24 were more likely (aOR=1.78) to experience dating violence than the students of 15-19 age group. Those students who had Bachelor degree education were 37% less likely (aOR=0.63) to experience of dating violence than students who were studying intermediate level (11-12 grades). Migrants students were more likely to experience dating violence (aOR=1.69) than non-migrants students. Those students who have neither good nor bad relation with their parents were 30% more likely (aOR=1.30) to experience dating violence than those who have very good/good relation with their parents. Furthermore, those students who lived without parents were more likely to experience dating violence (aOR=1.23) than those who live with family members (Table 1).

Types of dating violence

More than a quarter females reported that they were victim of unwanted touching (28%) and unwanted kissing (28%) while more than a quarter males (26%) reported that their dating girlfriend became angry when they talked with other girls. Percentages of reporting victimization of unwanted kissing (6%) and unwanted touching (4%) were low among males. The percentage of students reporting slapped by their dating friend is higher among males (11%) than females (6%). Almost one out of ten (8%) females reported that their male partner had attempted rape. Notably, about one in twenty females (5%) reported that they were victim of rape by their dating partners (Table 2).

Consequences of dating violence

Victim students reported various consequences due to dating violence. For instance, more than half (56%) males and about half females (47%) had suffered periodic depression after the violence. About one in five male (18%) reported that they had started having sexual intercourse in the early age while about a tenth (9%) reported that they had sex with multiple partners. About a fifth male and a tenth female didn't use condom during sexual intercourse. About a fourth (24%) females and a tenth males (12%) reported that they had lack of sexual desire. Eight percent males reported that they have smoking and alcohol consuming habits due to dating violence. Furthermore, more than a tenth female (12%) reported that they had pain during sexual intercourse. Almost one in ten female victims (8%) had suicidal feeling due to dating violence by their dating partners (Table 3).

Discussion and conclusion

Discussion and conclusion on progress.

Acknowledgement

The author would like to thank the University Grant Commission, Nepal for providing the funds for this research, to the administrators of all sampled colleges for their support and the students for participating in the study.

Reference:

Ackard, D. M., & Neumark-Sztainer, D. (2002). Date violence and date rape among adolescents: Associations with disordered eating behaviors and psychological health. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 26, 455-473.

Ackard, D. M., Neumark-Sztainer, D., & Hannan, P. (2003). Dating violence among a nationally representative sample of adolescent girls and boys: Associations with behavioral and mental health. *Journal of Gender Specific Medicine*, 6, 39-48.

Bergman, L. (1992). Dating violence among high school students. *Social Work*, 3, 21-27.

CBS, (2002). Population census 2001: National report. Kathmandu, Nepal: Central Bureau of Statistics.

Fisher, B. S., Cullen, F. T., & Turner, M. G. (2000). The sexual victimization of college women. Washington, DC: National Institutes of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Foshee, V. A., Linder, G. F., Bauman, K. E., Langwick, S. A., Arriaga, X. B., & Heath, J. L., et al. (1996). The Safe Dates Project: Theoretical basis, evaluation design, and selected baseline findings. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 12, 39-47.

Howard, D. E., Qiu, Y., & Boekeloo, B. (2003). Personal and social contextual correlates of adolescent dating violence. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 33, 9-17.

Howard, D. E., & Wang, M. Q. (2003). Risk profiles of adolescent girls who were victims of dating violence. *Adolescence*, 38, 1-14.

Jezl, D. R., Molidor, C. E. and Wright, T. L. (1996). Physical, sexual and psychological abuse in high school dating relationships: prevalence rates and self-esteem issues. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 13(1), 69-87.

O'Keefe, M., & Treister, L. (1998). Victims of dating violence among high school students: Are the predictors different for males and females? *Violence against Women*, 4, 195-223.

Ward, S.K., Dziuba-Leatherman, J., Stapleton, J.G., & Yodanis, C.L. (1994). *Acquaintance and date rape: An annotated bibliography*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Tables

Table 1 Characteristics of students, experience of dating violence and adjusted odds ratios (aOR) by demographic and socio-economic characteristics

	% of sample students (N=1276)	% experienced violence from dating partner (n=588)	Adjusted odds ratios
Sex of the respondents		**	
Male	49.8	42.5	1.00
Female	50.2	54.9	2.13**
Age group		*	
15-19	23.5	37.3	1.00
20-24	67.7	50.5	1.78*
25 and above	8.8	48.1	1.32
Caste/Ethnicity		*	
Brahmin/Chhetri	78.6	47.7	1.00
Newar	6.5	38.3	0.79
Rai/Tamang/Gururng/Magar	10.2	58.6	1.58
Others	4.7	32.3	0.45
Education level		*	
Intermediate	34.8	49.5	1.00
Bachelor	46.2	42.4	0.63*
Masters	19.0	57.1	1.09
Religion		ns	
Non-Hindu	4.1	57.6	1.00
Hindu	95.9	46.8	0.91
Marital Status		ns	
Married	13.2	46.4	1.00
Unmarried	86.8	47.6	1.24
Migration status		**	
Non-migrant	29.8	37.9	1.00
Migrant	70.2	51.3	1.69*
Working status		ns	
Not working	76.4	47.8	1.00
Working	23.6	46.7	1.06
Relationship with parents		*	
Very good/good	69.7	45.5	1.00
Neither good nor bad/bad	30.3	51.3	1.30*
Family Structure		ns	
Joint family	23.5	51.5	1.00
Nuclear family	76.5	46.3	0.82
Source of family income		ns	
Agriculture	56.7	49.2	1.00
Non-agriculture	43.3	45.2	1.04

Contd....

	% of sample students (N=1276)	% experienced violence from dating partner Total (n=588)	Adjusted odds ratios
Living arrangement		ns	
With family members	65.1	46.0	1.00
Without family members	34.9	49.2	1.23*
Alcohol consumption		ns	
Never/rarely drunk	82.4	48.5	1.00
Frequently consumed alcohol	17.6	44.2	0.85
Exposure to pornographic		ns	
No exposure	38.0	49.4	1.00
Moderate exposure	58.2	47.2	1.34
High exposure	3.8	41.0	1.35
Peer drinking habits		Ns	
Never/rarely drunk	71.2	49.9	1.00
Frequently consumed alcohol	28.8	44.0	0.94
Have unmarried friends who have sexual intercourse		ns	
No	58.7	46.5	1.00
Yes	41.3	48.0	1.11
Total	100.0	47.4	-
Intercept			0.25*
-2 Log likelihood			763.07
Cox & Snell R Square			0.108

Note * Significant at P<0.05, **P < 0.01, ***P < 0.001,

Table 2 Types of dating violence experienced by boys and girls

Forms of dating violence experienced (% yes only)	Boys	Girls	Total
Angry while talking to other	26.2	19.0	23.3
Slapped	11.4	5.9	9.2
Unwanted kissing	5.7	27.8	14.6
Unwanted Physical touching	3.7	27.8	13.4
Attempted rape	-	8.4	4.1
Raped	-	4.6	2.2
N	351	237	588

Table 3 Consequences of dating violence experienced by boys and girls

	Boys	Girls	Total
Periodic depression			
Yes	56.0	47.2	53.5
No	44.0	52.8	46.5
Smoking and alcohol consuming habits			
Yes	8.0	-	5.7
No	92.0	100.0	94.3
Drug taking habit			
Yes	3.1	-	2.2
No	96.9	100.0	97.8
Sex in the early age			
Yes	18.2	3.4	14.0
No	81.8	96.6	86.0
Sex with multiple partners			
Yes	8.9	2.2	7.0
No	91.1	97.8	93.0
Not using condom during sexual intercourse			
Yes	18.7	9.0	15.9
No	81.3	91.0	84.1
Lack of sexual desire			
Yes	11.6	23.6	15.0
No	88.4	76.4	85.0
Sexually transmitted disease			
Yes	4.9	-	3.5
No	95.1	100.0	96.5
Pain during sexual intercourse			
Yes	1.8	12.4	4.8
No	98.2	87.6	95.2
Suicidal feeling			
Yes	0.9	7.9	2.9
No	99.1	92.1	97.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	351	237	588