

Constructions of Masculinity and Domestic Violence against Women: Perspectives from Ghana and Nepal

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Abstract

This study explores how men from two different cultural contexts (Nepal and Ghana) construct their masculinity and what is the linkage between masculinity and domestic violence against women. Five (5) male PhD students from the National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA), Bangkok, Thailand were included as research participants and both semi-structured and unstructured in-depth interview schedules were used in the study to explore the multiple views of the participants around the research questions. The findings confirm that there are some broader constructs of masculinity which are practiced and perceived almost in a similar manner, and also some constructs which are practiced and perceived in a different manner in both the countries. The study further confirms that the participants hold strong motivations in maintaining their masculinity through adopting various means of domestic violence. Therefore, the fundamental assumption of this study is that the relationship between masculinity and domestic violence against women is very strong.

Keywords: Masculinity, domestic violence against women, qualitative research, interviewing, Nepal, Ghana

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โครงสร้างของความเป็นชาย กับการใช้ความรุนแรงต่อผู้หญิง: มุมมองจากกานาและเนปาล

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บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษานี้เป็นการสำรวจว่าผู้ชายจากสองวัฒนธรรมที่แตกต่างกัน (เนปาล และ กานา) มีการสร้างลักษณะความเป็นชายอย่างไร และอะไรที่เชื่อมโยงระหว่างความเป็นชายกับความรุนแรงต่อผู้หญิงภายในประเทศ การศึกษาใช้การสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งมีโครงสร้างและไม่มีโครงสร้างจากนักศึกษาระดับปริญญาเอกของสถาบันบัณฑิตพัฒนบริหารศาสตร์ จำนวน 5 คน ในการสำรวจมุมมองตามประเด็นคำถามการวิจัย ผลการศึกษาพบว่าโครงสร้างความเป็นชายบางประการ ซึ่งมีวิถีปฏิบัติและการรับรู้ในลักษณะที่คล้ายคลึงกัน ในขณะที่มีโครงสร้างบางประการมีความแตกต่างกันจากทั้งสองประเทศ นอกจากนี้ผลการศึกษายังพบว่าผู้ที่ให้ข้อมูลมีแรงจูงใจที่สูงในการรักษาความเป็นชายผ่านการนำวิธีการต่างๆ มาใช้เกี่ยวกับความรุนแรงในประเทศ ดังนั้น ฐานคติสำคัญที่ได้จากการศึกษาในครั้งนี้คือ ความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างความเป็นชายและความรุนแรงต่อผู้หญิงในประเทศยังคงมีอยู่ในระดับสูง

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Introduction

In this study some attempts were made to uncover how men (research participants) from two different cultures construct their masculinity, the differences and similarities thereof, and also their expressions and perceptions in regard to the linkage between domestic violence and masculinity. It is said that masculinity varies and changes across time and space, within societies and through life courses and biographies. Every culture has a gender system that contains shared expectations appropriate for male behavior, norms, or roles (Harris, 1995). Hence, masculinity might mean different things and might have different meanings to different people and groups (Hoffman et. al., 2005). Although it is difficult to come up with broader generalisations about the concept of 'masculinity' and its linkage to domestic violence, the basic argument here is that scrutinizing the concept from a cross-cultural perspective might help reveal some important dynamics of the concept. For sure, it was one of the motivations for conducting the research. Moreover, excavating the similarities and dissimilarities associated with various constructions of masculinity, and the linkages between masculinity and domestic violence from two cultural perspectives have added substantial value to the existing literature as there is no indication of past such effort. On the other hand, there is a global demand to engage men in the problematic areas of women. In truth, men are increasingly acknowledged as a critical part of addressing and ultimately preventing violence against women (Kaufman, 2001 in ICRW, 2002). In order to engage men in the problematic areas of women, the critical understanding of men and masculinity from diverse perspectives and locations is of immense importance. Without such an effort it would be extremely difficult to devise strategies on how to engage men to eliminate the problems of women. The current study was conducted using a qualitative interpretative approach where the researcher's own reflexivity (Cresswell, 2011) was positioned in the whole process and product of the research. Although conducted on a limited scale, this research, for sure, has generated some important inputs in the fields of gender, men, masculinity and violence against women.

Research Questions

The research was guided by the following research questions;

1. What is masculinity and how is it generally perceived, expressed and practiced (constructed)?
2. Is masculinity constructed differently or similarly in different cultures?
3. Can masculinity potentially lead to domestic violence against women?

Objectives

The objectives of this study were as follows;

1. To explore the perceptions, expressions and practices (constructions) of masculinity/manhood of NIDA's male students from Nepal & Ghana;
2. To examine the similarities and differences of Nepalese and Ghanaian male students' constructions of masculinity;
3. To excavate the links between masculinity and domestic violence against women.

Scope of the Study

The study aimed at examining how Nepalese and Ghanaian students at the National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA), Bangkok construct their masculinity and what are the similarities and differences thereof along with the linkages with domestic violence against women. In doing so, in this study, only Nepalese and Ghanaian male students who are currently studying at the PhD level at various graduate schools at NIDA, Bangkok, Thailand were included as research participants.

Limitations of the Study

The study surely had some limitations. Due to time and resource constraints, the research was limited within NIDA, Bangkok, and only included male students from Nepal and Ghana as research participants. At NIDA, students from these two countries are very few in numbers. Therefore, the study could not obtain the views of different segments of participants. Moreover, it could not include women as research participants as no woman is currently pursuing a PhD degree

at NIDA from these two countries. Masculinity and domestic violence against women are two important gender phenomena. The ways women view and experience these phenomena have significant implications in portraying the exact binary notion of gender relations. It is admitted that the research could not sketch such an important binary notion; it only portrayed a one-sided picture.

Methodology

This research debunks the qualitative interpretive approach. The interpretive approach aims at studying social reality in natural settings and attempts to make sense of phenomena from the perspectives of research participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). However, the first problem in conducting research is to select a topic or theme for investigation (Krishnaraj, 2005). And it is often influenced by personal interest, as happened to this researcher as well. The next is to select an appropriate site and gain access to the research participants. Many practical considerations influence the choice of research setting. Researchers are often concerned about easy access to the site (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1992), at least in terms of communication, and in terms of accessibility to the participants. Keeping in mind the troubles associated with access to the research site, and also to the research participants, the study limited its scope to examine the perceptions and experiences of only the male PhD students of NIDA around the research topic. Markedly, as a PhD student the researcher of this study himself belongs to the NIDA community and as such, has access to the research participants. For conducting this study, accessibility to the participants was not a big problem. According to Silverman (2010), researchers can utilize their existing relationships and contacts for their research. Therefore, at the *prima facie* level this research is 'site specific' (Marshall & Rossman 1999), because existing relations were used in the specific sites of the research.

It is noteworthy that qualitative research is concerned with smaller numbers of cases with more intensive analysis (Davidson & Layder, 1994), and relies heavily on detail and in-depth descriptions (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Hence, the approach of the research was more directed towards the quality of data rather

than size of samples. In selecting research participants, purposive sampling technique was employed. Purposive sampling is a technique which is premised on the researcher's judgment or purpose (Babbie, 2007). The study included three (3) students from Ghana and two (2) students from Nepal. The sample population of this study belonged to a homogenous group. All of them were PhD students at NIDA, and aged between 33 to 42 years. Face-to-face, in-depth, semi-structured and unstructured interview schedules were used as the key strategies to exploring the subjective experiences and perceptions of the research participants. Prior to the interviews, all the participants were apprised about the nature and procedures of the research, and their consents were sought. Moreover, there was no element in the research, nor was any attempt made, to cause harm to the participants. Personal, moral and ethical standards were carefully maintained in the research process. The researcher acted as a passionate and keen listener. Being a passionate and keen listener is an effective means to developing rapport and gaining access. As a matter of fact, throughout the research process constructive attempts were made to listen to and facilitate the construction and reconstruction of the experiences and perceptions of the research participants. All the five (5) interviews took approximately six hours and fifteen minutes. The interviews lasted between fifty minutes to one hour twenty minutes. All the interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. The initial data collection commenced through interviewing on June 8, 2013 and finished on June 13, 2013.

Data analysis is the systematic process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data and it primarily contains steps like organizing data, identifying categories, coding, generating potential themes, refining themes and presenting the overall story (Rossman & Rallies, 2012). A thematic analytical framework was used to analyze the data. This qualitative analytic method identifies and analyses themes and puts them together to form a comprehensive picture of the collective experiences of research participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Various patterns of experiences and perceptions of the research participants were grouped together according to their similarities and dissimi-

larities. Moreover, the confidentiality and anonymity of the research participants were maintained throughout the research process. For example, pseudonyms were used as a means of maintaining confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. Besides, the use of jargon was carefully avoided in writing the text and maximum efforts were made in order to make a clear and understandable explanation of the text.

Masculinity and Domestic Violence against Women: Basic Understandings in the Literature

As a grounded approach under the framework of qualitative methodology, in this study no specific attempt was made to examine how the existing conceptual underpinnings of masculinity and domestic violence are conceived by the research participants. Alternatively, those were floated to serve as initial thoughts and ideas to help in structuring the interview schedule. It was the participants who defined masculinity in their own ways and developed linkages in their own ways with domestic violence against women. The researcher in this study simply acted as a facilitator to guide the interactions. Nonetheless, in the existing literature masculinity and domestic violence are understood primarily in the following manner. Towards the end of this short review, the contexts of Ghana and Nepal have also been discussed briefly.

There are many different explanations and ideas ascribed to the term 'masculinity.' The term masculinity is used in a wide variety of ways and it is one of those terms which are endlessly debated. It is defined as values, ideologies, experiences and meanings that are natural for men or required for being a "real" or "proper" man in a particular cultural context (Flood, 2002). A "real" man is generally seen as being able to gratify his sexual needs and controls women. Moreover, he is the protector of women and children; he is the provider, the head of the household (Abboot, 2000) and the breadwinner in the family (Boonzaier & Rey, 2003). But it does not necessarily mean that there are certain human qualities which are inevitably or inherently masculine since maleness/

masculinity might mean different things and might have different meanings to different people and groups (Hoffman et. al., 2005). Masculinity is also a reaction against passivity, powerlessness and repression against all desires and traits which are treated negatively in a particular society (Kaufman, 1987). The notion of “woman” has generally been viewed as the negative version of masculinity (Hollway, 1996 in Alvesson & Billing, 1997). More specifically, traits, meanings, images and values that are associated with women are defined as components of femininity. Masculinity is viewed as the antithesis of femininity. The notion of antithesis of femininity is at the heart of contemporary and historical conceptions of manhood (Kimmel, 1994). In this sense, the term masculinity is fundamental in understanding gender relations. Gender relates to the classification of being masculine and feminine and also refers to the ways in which these are socially constructed and sustained (Reid & Wormald, 1982 in Walczak, 1988). It is also of note that the meanings of masculinity are constantly changing and the implications are always subject to proof, and once it is proved it is again questioned and has to be proved again (Kimmel, 1994).

All over the world women are bound by a common thread of violence at the hands of the state or armed groups, the community or their own family. It is a global epidemic, a violation of human rights (Amnesty International, 2004). But the most common form of violence against women takes place in their families or at the domestic level mainly within marital relations (Heise, Raikes, Watts & Zwi, 1994 in Schular et. al., 2008). Domestic violence is the most pervasive form of abuse but mostly underreported because of its private nature. It is estimated that one in four women in their lifetime experience domestic violence by their intimate partners (Women’s Aid Federation, 2001 in Bostok et. al., 2009). The term ‘domestic violence’ has many names and meanings, predominantly ‘intimate partner violence’ and also ‘domestic abuse,’ ‘domestic assault,’ ‘battering,’ ‘partner abuse,’ ‘marital strife,’ ‘marital dispute,’ ‘wife beating,’ ‘marital discord,’ ‘women abuse,’ ‘dysfunctional relationship,’ ‘intimate fighting,’ ‘mate beating’ (MaCue, 2008), ‘spouse abuse, wife abuse and wife assault’ (Ellesberg,

1997: 3; Mears, 2003), 'conjugal violence,' 'marital violence' and 'family violence' (Hearn, 1998). The term 'domestic violence' is widely used in many parts of the world as violence by a man against a woman (Romito, 2008), and abuse of women by current or former male intimate partners (Amstrong, 1998 in Ellesberg, 1997). Domestic violence refers to the acts that are perpetrated by intimate partners or other family members and bring a great cost on the physical, sexual, psychological and economic wellbeing of women and girls (UNICEF, 2000). UNIFEM (2009) defines domestic violence as a form of violence against women that is perpetrated by intimate partners and family members. It often occurs in private spaces and is often tacitly condoned by the society as a "private" and "family" matter.

Recognizing masculinity or maleness as a resource, many researchers have argued that men use this resource through condoning violence against women to reproduce and maintain their relative status and authority over women (Alder, 1997). Alternatively, various forms of violence against women are the manifestations of a dynamic form of masculinity that separate men's activity from femininity (Kaufman, 1997). Many feminists argue that violence against women is a product of the social construction of masculinity. As an important intellectual and political issue in gender relations masculinity enables and encourages men to utilise masculine power to dominate and control women (Maynard & Winn, 1997). Masculinity symbolizes how to become a man and how to become a master of women. Being violent is an accepted and powerful way of being a man and perpetrating violence is a method of demonstrating manhood (Hearn, 1998). In this sense, masculinity and domestic violence/violence against women are explicitly interconnected. Though the factors and causes of violence against women are multiple and complex, there is an understanding that factors related to men's violence against women are deeply engrained in the social construction of masculinity (Barker, 2006). It is worthy of mention that globally, recent studies have more specifically indicated that domestic violence is linked to real or perceived fulfillment of masculinity (More 1994 in ICRW, 2002).

Moreover, the perceived crisis in masculinity also leads to domestic violence/ violence against women. Crisis in masculinity is something which is disrupted or in a process of transformation within a system of gender relations (Connell, 1995). Kimmel (2003 in Ikeda, 2007) opines that the displacement of men from their traditional roles, responsibilities and power is viewed as a crisis in masculinity. The frustration from such a displacement leads to many forms of violence as in this situation men might strive to re-establish their masculinity by turning towards violence against women. Nonetheless, both Connell (1995) and Messerschmidt (1993) have suggested that not all men use violence to maintain authority or dominance over women. There are other means of showing masculinity other than violence (Connell, 2000 in DesKeseredy & Schwartz, 2005). But as a powerful construct, masculinity can provide fundamental symbolic meanings of various acts of violence against women (Welzer-Lang, in Blanchet, 2001).

It is further of note that both Ghanaian and Nepalese societies have made fertile grounds to developing the notion of masculinity, practices of masculinity and that of domestic violence. For example, Ghanaian females occupy a subordinate status compared to males in every domain of social life. There is a general cultural expectation in Ghana that women demonstrate respect, passivity, obedience, submissiveness, and acquiescence toward men. They will particularly be obliged to husbands' wishes and demands. Men are regarded as the breadwinners of the family. Women are primarily responsible for all domestic chores and subject to various forms of violence in the domestic sphere (Adinkrah, 2008). Similarly, women in Nepal are subordinated by men in all spheres. Women live in a low profile at home and are subservient to men in society. Women are submissive to violence due to their low socio-economic status (Paudel et. al., 2007). The societal importance given to boys and men has translated into deep-rooted discriminatory practices towards girls and women, with devastating effects on their status. For men in Nepal, the stereotypical perceptions about masculinity are prevalent. Such perceptions give them a form of impunity and encourage them to practice violent behaviour against women, which is often socially sanctioned (ICRW, 2012).

Brief Overview of Gender Dynamics in Nepal and Ghana¹

Since masculinity is constructed in regard to men's relationships with women and domestic violence is perpetrated against women by men, both masculinity and domestic violence against women are gender concepts. It is, therefore, important to have an insight into the existing gender relations that prevail in both the countries. A brief snap-shot of gender dynamics in both Nepal and Ghana has been captured in the following;

Nepal

Nepal is predominantly a Hindu country in South Asia. Women constitute nearly 50 percent of the total population. Like all other highly patriarchal South Asian countries the state of women in Nepal is not satisfactory at all. They are marginalized from economic and social opportunities due to illiteracy, poverty and conservative social taboos. Socially and economically men are always considered as superior to women. Within the political and legal spheres, there is widespread discrimination against Nepalese women and girls. Discrimination against women and girls exist in the field of nationality, marriage and family relations, and property rights. Women and girls are not considered as heirs in the system of Nepali lineage. They are not granted the same opportunities in education, and other basic rights are often overlooked. Males enjoy a privileged status from their birth whereas females are often ignored and/or are isolated from social interactions. When a woman gives birth to a son, he is well cared for and is highly regarded by his family and society. In the event she gives birth to a daughter, she is ignored and poorly regarded. Situations of violence against women in Nepal is seemingly very terrible. Men enjoy dividends from patriarchy and condone all forms of violence against women in both public and private spheres.

¹ The contexts for Ghana and Nepal were prepared from various online source. The author acknowledges his debts to the contributors of those sources.

Ghana

Ghana, a West African country, is characterized by a diverse cultural and ethnic composition. Women constitute nearly 51% of the total population. In general, the Ghanaian social system continues to be largely patriarchal and unappreciative of the role of females. Most of the traditional areas are heavily weighted in favour of men, who control the patriarchal network at all levels of the family, the clan, and the entire tribe. Whether formally educated or not, women are socially invisible. Women's 'voices' are still not being heard clearly because of the patriarchal nature of Ghanaian society. Suppressing women appears to be the norm in most communities and discriminatory social norms and practices continue to present obstacles to women's empowerment. Customary practices in Ghana are still prevalent and continuously make a mockery of women's rights and privileges. Domestic violence has wide social acceptance. For example, despite being the first African country to criminalise female genital mutilation (FGM), it is continuously being practiced in many parts of Ghana. Women's property rights are unclear and they are often restricted in regard to the ownership of land. The preference for sons is still a cultural norm in Ghana. A female's ability to reproduce is the most important means by which women ensure social and economic security for themselves, especially if they give birth to male children.

Both the Nepalese and Ghanaian contexts mentioned above provide some confirmatory evidence that men enjoy superior positions in the gender hierarchy, and women are placed in a lower status. As a result of this marked distinction between men and women it is understandable that men try to uphold their perceived masculine ideals by adopting necessary means such as violence against women with a view to sustaining their dominant position over women. The following findings of my research confirmed this presupposition.

Findings and Discussions

A. Constructions of Masculinity and the Search for Similarities

Based on the interviews and interactions with the research participants from both countries, it is firmly confirmed that masculinity is a very important social and

cultural construct under the framework of gender relations. Men perceive their masculinity predominantly on the basis of their interface with the social and cultural world.

1. A Boy Is Different: The idea of masculinity is embedded in a man through a long process of socialization which begins at an early age. In this study, all the participants had undergone thorough restrictive gender training in their families, communities and schools. In both the cultures a boy grows up with a superior mentality which provides a strong fingerprint in moulding his masculinity and manliness for rest of his life. Ranjan, a participant from Nepal said:

Since my childhood my father used to teach me strict discipline and always encouraged me to try to do my best. Therefore, I also want my boy to be the best, even if he joins the underworld. I expect him to be the best, because a real man should be known by his deeds.

Laurence, a participant from Ghana asserted:

During my childhood I used to follow her everywhere she goes. In those days, my mom used to pass many hours in the kitchen, and so do I. One day, my father dragged me out of the kitchen, beat me so mercilessly and said you are the future ruler of this family and you will spend time in the field not in the kitchen. Kitchen is for girls. Believe me, since then, I never entered the kitchen.

From the experiences of the participants above, it is evident that the seed of masculinity is planted in a boy's mind early in his life. In this connection, Parsons and Balles have argued that men and women are suited to different types of roles: men are assigned to more instrumental (masculine) roles while women are consigned to more expressive (feminine) roles (Parsons & Balles, 1956 in Pease, 2007: 554). Masculinity and femininity are easily interpreted through sex roles - the product of social learning (Connell, 1995: 22). The study confirms that boys are treated differently in society, and inculcate various masculine norms starting from their birth through various agents of socialization. The role of family is paramount in this regard.

2. Not Much with Body and Male Genitals: The participants in this study were specifically asked to tell how do they feel or think themselves as men? They replied that they feel or think themselves as men primarily because of their genitals but also because of their distinct physical traits such as beard, loud voice, chest hair, body structure, etc. It is interesting to note that all of them are of the same opinion that the mere presence of male genitals does not give them a sense of masculinity. True masculinity lies in men's ability to initiate the process that gives birth to children or being the procreator, and also by their sexual performance. Deleon [Ghana] stated:

In Ghanaian culture if you are married and you cannot give birth to a child, your marriage is like a 'soup without salt.' You are not treated socially and culturally as a man. Let me give you one example: Mr. Quasi Bob was the first graduate in my community. He got married in 1988, but up to now he is childless. In 2010 Bob contested for parliament, but because of his childless state we did not vote for him because in our opinion he is not a man. A man who cannot give birth to a child cannot look after the community.

Gourav [Nepal] provided the following information:

In Nepalese culture if you do not have children people will raise questions about your masculinity. It is also important to be sexually capable. I know of the marriage of a police officer, who hails from a very prominent family as does his wife, which broke down within a year. As they were from prominent families, it became a media issue. In an interview with the media, the wife of the police officer informed that the man was sexually incapable and he refused to have sex with her even on the wedding night. After the interview, the whole situation became very complex for the police officer. It was a direct challenge to his masculinity, and it also became a matter of humiliation for his family. Finally, to reinstate family fame and masculinity, another marriage was organised for him within six months. Masculinity works in this way.

Both the perspectives mentioned above have subsumed the conventional or common-sense meaning of masculinity; a penis/phallus means masculinity or manhood (Edley & Wetherell, 1995). It speaks in the same tone as Tiefer (1987), who says male sexual performance or competence is a tool to

confirm the masculinity of a man, and it is a status symbol among men. On the other hand when they were specifically asked, “How can you see masculinity in the body”? It was surprising that they don’t see masculinity in the body. They do not even consider possession of heavy muscles or a stout bodily figure like Rambo or Commando [movie figures] as necessary indicators of masculinity. The proper functionalities of the body are more important in order to present one’s masculinity, they opined.

3. Breadwinner/Provider of the Family: All the participants from both countries considered the breadwinning role of men as the most important function or responsibility of manhood. According to the opinions of the participants, the breadwinner role was understood as being a head worker through earning money, providing food and meeting all the required needs and necessities of the members of the family. Herald [Ghana] stated:

As a man I must perform familial responsibilities. If I cannot perform my responsibilities, I would be disappointed. If my wife performs those works which I can’t - I am not a man. In this context, I think my assigned roles as a man are not being performed.

Gaurav [Nepal] said:

If I cannot earn, people will look down upon me, not upon my wife. I would not feel very comfortable depending on the earnings of my wife. It is a matter of dignity for a man.

The constructs above conform to Pafu-Effinger’s (1999 in Bang et. al., 2000) classical male breadwinner/female home-career model. The model views men as responsible for maintaining the family with wages obtained from work in the public sphere, whereas women are responsible for household chores including child care. As a matter of fact, the breadwinning role and responsibility depict men as the provider of the family members. And being the family provider is an important construct of masculinity.

4. Protector/Defender: Being the protector/defender of the family was also considered as an important determinant of manhood by most of the participants in the study. The general perception of the participants is that it is the duty of capable men to protect all the members in their family.

Laurence, [Ghana] said;

I have been protecting my family for a long time. My father died in 2005. Since then, I have been shouldering all the familial responsibilities. I could have a family life by now, but I have sacrificed that because of my family. As a man it is my responsibility to care of my family when it is in crisis. I have saved my family. I believe a real man should be like that.

Ranjan, [Nepal] said;

People tend to accept and follow men who stand aside against all odds of his family, community and country. Protect means a lot of things. You must be the future caretaker of the family. In the community you must work as the social worker and when your country is in war, you must go to the battlefield and must not hesitate to die.

The idea of being the family protector provides a clear distinction between a normal man and a man with masculinity. A man is always expected to be the service provider of his family, community and country. Some of the participants opine that once a man can prove himself as a protector, he would be followed by others. He would, in the long run, be able to control others and earn respect and dignity from everybody. For example, Deleon [Ghana] informed that he actively participates in community activities in his village. He does that out of his responsibility of being a man. Because of accomplishing such responsibility he is well respected in his community. The underlying assumptions of being protector/defender and its association with masculinity go with the traditional notion of gender roles. According to the basic principles of gender role, protecting or defending others is one of the most important traits for proving one's masculine identity.

5. No Homosexuality or Bisexuality: All the participants in this study expressed their strong distaste for men who are homosexual or even bisexual. They consider homosexuality or bisexuality as failed or troubled masculinity. Heterosexuality is the most desired sexual norm in both the countries. Most of the participants think homosexuals and bisexuals are committing sin because they are violating the norms of their religion.

Deleon [Ghana] said:

I feel disappointed when I see some men are homosexual. God has created them with a purpose, but they have opted for another purpose. They are violating God's wish. If you go beyond the boundary of your God's wish you act like a beast. A real man does not go beyond the boundary of his God's wish.

One participant, Ranjan [Nepal] considered homosexuality as a disease for men and a complete opposite notion of masculinity. In this regard, the following experience of Gourav [Nepal] is very important. He asserted that:

Homosexuality is a curse for manliness. I wish I don't want to be homosexual. While I was working in a supermarket in the USA, a man wanted to be very friendly with me, and one day offered for me for a date. His offer came to me as a big surprise. It was a real threat to my masculinity. Is there anything wrong with me? Am I looking like a gay?

The notion of heterosexuality is a dominant form of masculinity and it is one of the most desired characteristics of manhood. In this connection, the opinions of the participants are quite similar with R.W. Connell's ideals of (1987) of the hegemonic or dominant form of masculinity. The most important construct of contemporary hegemonic masculinity is that it must be heterosexual. Connell, (2000) says that according to the cultural image of society men must be heterosexual because homosexuality and gay identity are culturally stigmatized.

6. A Man Brings Wife Home, Does Not Stay at Wife's Home: It is the dominant cultural practice in both the countries that upon marriage a man will take his wife to his own or father's home. The practice follows strict patrilocal ideology. On the other hand, upon marriage staying with the wife's family demeans men. It is a serious threat to manhood.

Gourav [Nepal] informed:

In Nepalese culture it is not possible to go to wife's house and stay permanently. In Nepal it is called Ghar Gami (man who stays at wife's family). Ghar Gami is a derogative word and the practice of it is a matter of disgrace for manhood. It is a big 'No' in Nepal. I will rather die than becoming Ghar Gami.

As an unmarried man Laurence's [Ghana] perception on this matter is quite interesting. He said:

If I am given a list of tasks including staying with wife's home to be accomplished before I die, staying with wife's home will be my last task. I will rather be happy if I die before I go to my wife's home to stay. I don't want to be a playing doll there.

Both the narratives above produce a substantial rationale for developing a strong resistance to staying at the wife's home after marriage. The practice appears to be a serious threat or challenge to masculinity in both the countries. Most of the participants were apprehensive that if they started living with their wife's family they might fall under the control not only of their wives but also of their in-laws. Such a situation would be extremely disgraceful for their manhood.

7. Courageous and Risk-taker: The participants from both the countries considered that being courageous and risk-taker were important for demonstrating manhood. They said men must take necessary risks in times of need. If men cannot prove that they have courage and they do not hesitate in the event of taking risks, they do not have masculinity. A man with courage can tolerate adversities and uses his courage to support the weaker persons including women.

Deleon [Ghana] said,

A man must take risks in his life and must show he has courage. Without that, people will shed doubt on his manhood. In our tribe, when women go to the stream to fetch water or to the field and on their way if they see a snake or other wild animal they would run away and call a man to help them. A man with courage will go and kill the snake or wild animal. These are the routine jobs for men. I have killed snakes and wild animals several times in my life. I have to do this because I am a man.

One participant [Gourav] from Nepal suggested that men have to be aggressive, courageous and risk-takers, otherwise there is no life for men. Men should not compromise against cowardly activities. For example, on one occasion, he swam across a big lake on a dare instigated by his friends. It was a big challenge for him to demonstrate his power or masculinity although he was not physically fit for that. Halfway through the swim, he was about to drown but luckily managed to survive and finally reached the shore. Interestingly, he thought it was his masculinity which helped him to survive from that dreadful event. Another participant, Herald [Ghana] opined that coming all the way to pursue the PhD degree at NIDA was a kind of risk which he attributed to his masculinity. In his opinion, a man who does not take risks cannot go up the ladder of success. Masculinity, as a matter of fact, is characterized by the ability to take risks.

B. Constructions of Masculinity and the Search for Dissimilarities

In this section, the dissimilarities regarding constructions of masculinity have been discussed. It was clearly revealed in the study that most of the dominant constructions of masculinity are practiced and perceived from similar ideological notions in both the countries. However, some patterns of dissimilarities were also prevalent in the expressions of participants regarding constructions of masculinity.

1. A Man Pays Bride Price vis-a-vis A Man Receives Groom Price/Dowry:

It is interesting to note that Ghana and Nepal have different cultural practices in terms of marriage payment. In Ghana, during marriage, a man needs to give a bride price. According to Ghanaian participants, it is a very rigid cultural practice associated with numerous complexities. Many young men cannot get married because of their inability to pay the bride price. Paying the bride price has a distinct symbolic meaning of manhood in Ghana.

Laurence [Ghana] said that:

Due to the high bride price and costs associated with marriage, many young men can't marry when they need to do so. Therefore, living together or cohabitation without marriage is becoming increasingly common in Ghana. In my tribe, if a man cohabitates with a woman and if she dies before the man, he has to marry the dead body/corpse before she is finally buried. This is very humiliating for a man. But this is practiced to remind that man of his inability to pay the bride price to the woman he cohabitated with. Such a man is not treated as masculine. He is like a dead man.

In Ghanaian culture bride price is a threat to manhood. Men try to defend against the threat in a number of ways. Herald [Ghana] said that when a man fails to pay the bride price he is given the option of providing physical labour on the farm of the prospective father-in-law for some time in exchange for paying the bride price.

In contrast, the context of Nepal is completely different. Participants from Nepal opine that upon marriage, a woman needs to take cash or kind to her in-laws' home. Such practice is commonly called dowry/groom price. Dowry is a forced financial and material arrangement. It is to be given by the parents of the bride to the parents of the groom or to the groom himself as an essential condition of marriage. Receiving the groom price or dowry is a symbol of manhood for men in Nepal. Dowry is particularly prevalent in rural areas in Nepal, but it is practiced even by educated urban men.

Ranjan, [Nepal] put it this way:

As an educated man I do not like dowry payment, but it is the cultural practice. People will ask you how much you have received as dowry, and if you reply "nothing," they will laugh at you.

Both the contexts are linked to the assumptions of idealised masculine practices that are culturally honoured, glorified and sustained (Connell, 1990, 1992 in Messerschmidt, 1993). Receiving dowry from the bride's family is a sustained and glorified practice of manhood in Nepal. Alternatively, giving bride price is also a sustained and glorified practice for demonstrating manhood in Ghana.

2. A Man Undergoes Circumcision vis-a-vis a Man Receives Sacred

Thread: Finally, when participants were asked to identify which other cultural practices infuse into them the notion of masculinity, most of the participants from Ghana identified circumcision as an important cultural practice in relation to the development of idea of masculinity. Alternatively, in Nepal, it came as the practice of receiving sacred thread. In Ghana circumcision is considered as a rite of passage, a turning point towards manhood. Lawrence [Ghana], referring to the implication of the practice, made the following observation:

I know a man who was not circumcised due to some reasons during his teens. As a result of this, he was used to be ridiculed by his peer groups and later by his wife. Finally, he cut it by himself with a blade in order to end the episode of humiliation.

In Nepal, the sacred thread ceremony is performed when a boy reaches a stage from where he can take over the role of adult. It is usually arranged, sometimes between the ages of 10 and 15. In this ceremony, the mother feeds the boy for the last time with a spoon. At the end of the ceremony, the boy is given the sacred thread, usually to be worn for life. In some caste structures a man might not be allowed to marry until he receives the thread. A boy who receives the thread is expected to control his thoughts, words and deeds. It gives a boy sense of confidence to become independent and self-reliant, and to attain the necessary qualities of manhood. In Nepal, it is the most important initiation that infuses a sense of manhood into a boy.

Gourav [Nepal] provided the following information:

I received sacred thread when I was only 10 years old. My old grandfather wanted to arrange the ceremony so early for me because he wanted to see me as his capable successor before he dies. After getting the sacred thread, I had to participate in many religious rites and rituals. I had to do these because after getting the sacred thread I was treated as equal a man.

Adorning sacred thread is an important juncture in Nepalese culture. It gives a boy a sense of confidence to becoming independent and self-reliant and to attain the necessary qualities of manhood. As a matter of fact, both circumci-

sion and sacred-thread provide significant meanings to the notion of masculinity in the cultural contexts of Ghana and Nepal respectively.

C. Masculinity and Its Links with Domestic Violence against Women

Apart from exploring constructs regarding masculinity and the similarities and differences in the perspective of both Nepal and Ghana, it was also attempted to trace out how masculinity is potentially linked to domestic violence against women. The interview schedule was framed not specifically to show the linkage of which particular forms of domestic violence, such as physical, sexual, psychological and economic, are caused by men's practices of masculinity, but rather to find an overall linkage between masculinity and domestic violence. Therefore, the participants were not asked to share their perceptions and experiences in perpetuation of domestic violence in regard to a particular form or practice. Rather, they were asked to share their experiences and perceptions keeping in mind the potential linkages between masculinity and domestic violence. Upon interviewing, it came as a surprise to this researcher that all the participants were aware of the basic concept and various forms and practices of domestic violence. Almost all of them defined domestic violence in line with conventional meanings of the existing literatures such as spouse abuse, wife abuse, marital violence, violence against wives, interpersonal violence etc. It was also observed that the participants were aware of various forms of domestic violence such as physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence. This awareness is attributable to the fact that a lot of campaigns are now in place on violence against women almost in all countries in the world and people are aware of these issues more than before. But it must be admitted that the participants' substantial understanding on issues surrounding domestic violence helped the discussions to proceed in a smooth manner. It is further of note that in this part of this research, this researcher did not make any endeavor to undertake a comparative analysis between the two countries, as it was neither my objective nor was it found to be relevant in terms of applicability of the research. The underlying intention was to draw a general overview on the linkages between masculinity and domestic

violence in the context of both the countries. As a matter of fact, coming up with a general overview would be of more use for policy implications.

At the outset, when the participants were asked how they perceive domestic violence as a gender act, they said domestic violence is a critical problem for women; and as educated and conscious human beings they do not like to condone such an act as it creates a lot of problems in the family between husband and wife. In this context, it can be mentioned that the primary perception of the participants for not perpetuating violence is relevant with the assumption made by R. W Connell (1995: 83), who suggests not to assume that all men use violence to maintain their masculinity because apart from violence, there are other means of showing masculinity. Despite having the prevalence of such a positive perception among the participants, in this study it was found that almost all the participants hold a strong motivation that they would condone violence if they find anything goes against their masculinity. Violence as a punishment for women's actions is closely linked to men's sense of entitlement to certain masculine privileges. In this connection, the following comment of one of the participants is remarkable.

Laurence [Ghana] said:

After coming back from the office in the evening, if I ask my wife to serve food but get the reply it is in the freezer, I would not mind if it is for the first time. But if it continues on the next day or the day following I don't know what would happen. I am afraid at any time blood might come out from my hand.

The above is an excellent example of how men extend their expectations towards women. If men's expectations are not fulfilled, this might result in serious adverse consequences for women. When Laurence was asked why he expects that after coming from outside food must be ready for him, he replied that women must comply with their appropriate roles. In the event a wife works outside, it is better to make some compromises between the couple. Home-caring is an important role for women. At least they should pay some attention to it.

However, my assumption is that the distinction between men's roles and women's roles is still very functional. When some deviations occur from the women's side men might take it very seriously. It is the package of gender roles that infuses into men the masculine ideals. Earlier in this study, it was found that masculinity is infused into boys through various agents of socialization. Such socialization often creates a playing ground for practicing domestic violence. The following comments of Gourav [Nepal] have significant meaning in regard to gender roles and their interface with domestic violence. According to his perception, the implication of religion as an agent of socialization in perpetuating domestic violence is enormous:

In our religion a wife is expected to respect her husband as if he is God. I have seen women fast and pray for a long life and the betterment of their husbands. Women are very caring for their husbands. Having been grown up seeing these features, I could also expect my wife to do the same things and take proper care of me. But fortunately as an educated person I don't expect that much. But I must admit, at times, my masculinity says, Hey Gourav! you are sinning! You have every right to be served by your wife. If she does not take care and serve you properly you should make her fit.

It was found that all men in the study consider that the solemn responsibility of women is to properly take care of or treat the in-laws. If women do not fulfill this fundamental responsibility, domestic violence might be the ultimate consequence which women must confront. For most men, it is a violation of women's appropriate role and a serious challenge to their manhood. They opine that it is men's responsibility to ensure women are caring and not arrogant with their in-laws. Failure to ensure this is a failure of their masculinity.

In this connection Herald [Ghana] said:

I consider myself as a managing man. I would not tolerate if I say my wife to take proper care of my family members but she does not pay heed to my order. How can I tolerate such arrogance? My wife must know that I am Herald because of my family.

Ranjan [Nepal] said:

I clarified to my wife on the wedding night that she must respect and take care of my parents more than she would care and respect me, and must not be engaged in any unfair behavior with them. Failure to perform these responsibilities might make me very unhappy. I am a man. If I cannot ensure proper respect for my parents, what type of man am I? I have seen many of my friends give preference to their wives over their parents. They are cowardly. I am doubtful in their manliness. I will not tolerate such disrespect in any case.

From the two statements above, an interesting point can be noted which is that men consider women's arrogance of any kind to be a threat to their masculinity. For example, both Herald and Ranjan consider women's disrespect as a kind of arrogance. Men's perceptions regarding the arrogance of women might provoke them to violence against women. However, men define the disrespect or arrogance of their wives in their own ways and in relation to their masculinity. Men tend to strongly argue that it is their right to discipline their wives or partners (Wood, 2004 in Boonzaier, 2008: 184). However, when they were asked about their own responsibility towards their in-laws, they all said they thought themselves respectful to their in-laws, that they were educated and were aware of their responsibilities. It was, in fact, a defensive stance of the participants, and further research can explore that by taking into consideration the perceptions of women in the matter.

Another precipitating factor of domestic violence lies in the role of men as providers/breadwinners and its interface with a crisis in masculinity. When they were asked to share their experiences and explain in which situation they would become violent against their wives, almost all the participants said they would be violent if they were continuously embarrassed by their wives, particularly on matters concerning their breadwinner roles. It is interesting that earlier it was found that participants used to consider their breadwinning role as the most important indicator for demonstrating their manhood. They reconfirmed that any deviation of men from their expected roles is a deviation from their masculinity.

Deviation from the masculine norm makes men vulnerable and violence is a means to overcome their vulnerability.

DeLeon [Ghana] said:

Before marriage a woman must have been well informed of the income of her prospective husband. After marriage she has no right to say anything about his income. If my wife reminds me of my income I will tolerate it one or two times- everything will be finished on the third time. If she asks her father/mom to financially support me, I will tolerate it one or two times - everything will be finished on the third time. It is disgraceful for a man, isn't it? If I earn \$10, you cannot tell me to earn \$20. It is impossible for me.

The above statement is a nice example to reinstate a man's masculinity through violent means in the event of his failure as breadwinner. Men's failure as breadwinners might push them in a critical situation to face numerous challenges from women. In such a situation, for many men, violence is an effective tool to re-establish their authority over women and also to avoid further humiliation. In this situation, the author agrees with Kimmel (2003 in Ikeda, 2007:116), who opines that the displacement of men from their traditional roles, responsibilities and power is viewed as a crisis in masculinity, and to overcome the frustration of this crisis, men may strive to reassert their masculinity by turning to violent means (Amuyunzu-Nyamongo & Francis, 2006: 220). In this researcher's opinion low income, poverty and unemployment provoke conflicts in the family as they are negatively associated with socially expected breadwinning roles. As a consequence, masculinity might fall into a crisis situation. Low income, poverty and unemployment are common phenomena in both Ghana and Nepal. Therefore, men in these countries might find it difficult to discharge their breadwinning responsibilities in a straightforward manner. In such a situation, violence against women at the domestic level might be the ultimate means for men.

Most of the participants considered the desire to have sex with their wives as an important masculine norm. Refusing sex by their wives on a continuous basis might lead to violence against women. They said they would feel

embarrassed being refused to have sex with their wives. They considered it as a threat to their masculinity. It is a big question to their sexual competency. Some of the participants said if their wives continuously refuse sex without any reason they might be violent. In their opinions, sex is a right for both the partners. When a wife refuses sex, there are grounds for believing that she is having an extra-marital affair or that she does not pay respect to his desire. In that case, violence could be a means to resolving the situation. In such a situation, some of the participants said they might condone violence, including marital rape. According to Messerschmidt (1993: 151), marital rape is a specific type of patriarchal masculinity in heterosexual relations targeted towards domination and control of women's sexuality. Interestingly, one participant from Ghana [Herald] said, had the situation been in his life, he would go for multiple partners. For him, this is the easiest means to give his wife a perfect lesson. Nevertheless, according to the general perceptions of women, if men's sexual desires are not fulfilled or if they are humiliated by their wives regarding their sexuality, violence could be a means to save their masculinity.

It was further noticed that one of the dominant perceptions of the participants was how to retain individual identity. Any intervention against individual identity is considered as a threat to their masculinity. Most of the participants put great importance on their personal time in order to keep themselves away from the troubles of life. They said that if their wives for reasons or no reasons want to poke nose into their personal time and personal world they would find some justifications to perpetrate violence.

Gourav [Nepal] said:

Sometimes I drink. I drink to get some relief of tensions. But I know my limit. When I drink at home my wife says, why do you drink? I don't like all the time she would poke her nose into my personal affairs. I am a man. I have my own world; nobody should try to enter into it. One day I lost my patience and instead of hitting her I hit the wall and said don't bother me.

Laurence [Ghana], on the other hand, said:

I respect women. But it does not necessarily mean that my wife would try to apply her decisions on me. As a man with reason, I know what I am doing. I would tell my wife don't raise your voice on my personal matters, otherwise I might be very deadly.

From the perspective above, it is understood that intervention of wives into men's personal lives is considered as a threat to manhood. For most of the men, it is neither desirable nor tolerable.

Interestingly, in terms of their own independence, my participants wished not to be intervened in by their wives, but in terms of allowing wives to take independent decisions of their income and choice, a majority of the participants had shown their strong reservations. They considered it is their right to know how their wives spend, how they lead their lives etc. If their wives do not share everything with them they would find something wrong with their intentions. They admitted such a situation might provoke them to be violent. Ranjan [Nepal] said:

I have given my wife freedom, but freedom does not mean free from everything. I do not want to capture her earnings. But she must ask my permission on how to spend money. She must also seek my permission for other familial matters too. Even though I live in Bangkok, she seeks my opinion. For me it is a means of maintaining your stranglehold in the family. If you cannot do this, you are not a man. At least, I understand in this way.

Herald [Ghana] said:

There is freedom for my wife. She can spend her income at her own. But she is always guided by me. I must know how the money is spent. If she does not seek permission from me I will be offended as well as dejected. I am the head of the family, and I must be in charge of the situation. If she does not do this I must take the right means.

Participants from both the countries produced reasonable justifications on how to allow their wives to enjoy freedom of spending, movement and decisions. However, it is clearly evident that they would be offended if their wives do

not seek their opinions on familial affairs. They need to ensure they are in charge of the situations. The assumption is that the situation mentioned above is a form of implied violence against women. At least, there is no freedom for women since they have to report to their husbands on all matters and situations.

Finally, it is opined that the context that depicts the linkage between masculinity and domestic violence is very complex. It is difficult to trace out exactly in which situations men would consider attacks are being perpetrated on their masculinity by their wives. Masculinity comes as a diverse meaning to men and as such, men hold diverse rationales to reinstate their masculinity through violent means.

Conclusion

To conclude, in this research, attempts were made to examine how men in two different cultures construct their masculinity and what the relationships are between masculinity and domestic violence in those cultural contexts. In doing so, no particular theory was considered as the basis for analysis. Rather, the intention was to make a reflexive account about men's narratives of masculinity and that of domestic violence based on grounded principles. An inductive approach was followed to sketch the subjective reflections of the participants on issues surrounding the research questions. It was noticed that there are differences as well as similarities amongst individuals in their respective constructions of masculinity. It was further noticed that there is a very strong motivation amongst the participants in both the cultures in regard to certain ideals of masculinity, such as being the breadwinner; heterosexuality; protector of the family; and pro-creator. Men believe that if they cannot adhere to these ideals they might lose their ultimate control and domination over women. Men's primary motivation to perpetuating violence against women at the domestic level rests much on their perceived fear of losing their masculine control. Therefore, a strong linkage between masculinity and domestic violence was also observed. Masculinity can potentially lead to violence against women. Masculinity naturalizes the notion

that violence is the exclusive province of men. The notion of masculine dominance invites unhealthy mayhem in gender relations. Violence against women is one of the components of that unhealthy mayhem. In this connection, on the basis of the research findings, the same conclusion is reached as Hearn (1998: 37), who says that masculinity symbolizes how to become a man and how to become a master of women. Being violent is an accepted and powerful way of demonstrating manhood.

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