

Marital Dissolution in Nepal: The Influence of Spouses' Reports of Marital Conflict

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Abstract

In rural Nepal, marriage is a highly valued institution, guided by social norms and religion. Each marriage has significance that reaches beyond the husband and wife to their extended families, raising the stakes for marital success. In fact, marital dissolutions have historically been mainly attributable to the death of a spouse, but dissolutions resulting from marital discord have been recently increasing. Because divorce is so rare and stigmatized, we might not expect marital conflict to lead to dissolution in this setting. Yet, the relationship between marital conflict and marital dissolution may have significant implications for the lives and well-being of women. Using wives' and husbands' reports of three types of conflict, I find that greater conflict does increase couples' likelihood of marital dissolution, and that wives' reports of verbal conflict, but not physical conflict, have an influence on the odds of marital dissolution that is independent of husbands' reports.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Measure	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Marital dissolution (proportion)	0.05	0.21	0.00	1.00
Frequency of Disagreements				
Wives' report	3.20	0.70	1.00	4.00
Husbands' report	3.20	0.73	1.00	4.00
Frequency of being Criticized				
Wives' report	3.36	0.69	1.00	4.00
Husbands' report	3.43	0.67	1.00	4.00
Ever Hit by Spouse				
Wives' report	0.14	0.34	0.00	1.00
Husbands' report	0.03	0.17	0.00	1.00
Wife's Demographics				
Brahmin/Chettri (upper caste)	0.47	0.50	0.00	1.00
Dalit (low caste)	0.12	0.32	0.00	1.00
Hill Indigenous	0.16	0.36	0.00	1.00
Terai Indigenous	0.24	0.43	0.00	1.00
Marriage Characteristics				
Wife's age at marriage	16.79	2.50	9.00	28.00
Wife's level of spouse choice †	2.08	1.67	1.00	5.00
Husband's level of spouse choice †	3.00	1.46	0.00	10.00
Length of marriage (months)	237.46	67.15	4.00	414.00
Length of marriage, squared (months)	60890.16	31041.51	16.00	171396.00
Characteristics of Marital Home				
Household owns farmland (khet or bari)	0.79	0.41	0.00	1.00
Distance to wife's natal home	2.83	0.58	1.00	4.00
Fertility Experiences				
Number of kids born	2.93	1.46	0.00	10.00
Nonfamily Experiences				
Wife's educational Attainment	3.74	4.02	0.00	14.00
Difference between spouses educational attainment (wife-husband)	-2.67	3.57	-14.00	10.00
Wife ever worked for wages	0.45	0.50	0.00	1.00
Total couples in sample	703			
Total experiencing marital dissolution	33			

Table 1: Hazard Estimates of Marital Dissolution: Odds Ratios from Logistic Regression of Spouses' Reports of Conflict

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Frequency of Disagreements							
Wives' report	1.47** (2.75)	1.31* (1.84)					0.96 (-0.23)
Husbands' report		1.70*** (4.09)					2.33*** (4.78)
Frequency of being Criticized							
Wives' report			1.70*** (4.00)	1.71*** (3.97)			1.79*** (3.46)
Husbands' report				0.97 (-0.19)			0.58 (-2.90)
Ever Hit by Spouse							
Wives' report					1.08 (0.32)	1.07 (0.28)	0.59 (-1.56)
Husbands' report						4.67*** (3.54)	3.81** (2.56)
Wife's Demographics							
Dalit (low caste)	0.58+ (-1.34)	0.66 (-0.99)	0.59+ (-1.31)	0.58+ (-1.34)	0.54+ (-1.58)	0.52+ (-1.64)	0.60 (-1.19)
Hill Indigenous	1.17 (0.50)	1.17 (0.47)	1.22 (0.62)	1.21 (0.59)	1.15 (0.44)	1.32 (0.87)	1.08 (0.21)
Terai Indigenous	0.07*** (-4.79)	0.08*** (-4.47)	0.07*** (-4.86)	0.06*** (-4.86)	0.08*** (-4.81)	0.09*** (-4.57)	0.06*** (-4.63)
Marriage Characteristics							
Wife's age at marriage	0.90** (-2.34)	0.89** (-2.66)	0.90** (-2.33)	0.90** (-2.35)	0.91* (-2.14)	0.92* (-2.09)	0.84* (-3.64)
Wife's level of spouse choice	1.13* (1.86)	1.18** (2.33)	1.14* (1.82)	1.13* (1.81)	1.13* (1.85)	1.07 (0.94)	1.16* (1.92)
Husband's level of spouse choice	1.13* (1.86)	1.12+ (1.57)	1.13* (1.66)	1.13* (1.67)	1.11+ (1.48)	1.15* (2.02)	1.25** (2.76)
Length of marriage (months)	1.00 (-0.97)	1.00 (-0.67)	0.99 (-1.25)	0.99 (-1.27)	0.99 (-1.15)	0.99 (-1.13)	1.00 (-0.60)
Length of marriage, squared (months)	1.00 (0.39)	1.00 (0.29)	1.00 (0.73)	1.00 (0.74)	1.00 (0.57)	1.00 (0.58)	1.00 (0.36)
Characteristics of Marital Home							
Household owns farmland (khet or bari)	0.64+ (-1.58)	0.53* (-2.13)	0.61* (-1.72)	0.61* (-1.72)	0.58* (-2.03)	0.54* (-2.32)	0.42** (-2.81)
Distance to wife's natal home	0.63*** (-3.51)	0.60*** (-3.73)	0.65*** (-3.17)	0.65*** (-3.18)	0.61*** (-3.92)	0.60*** (-4.00)	0.55*** (-3.99)
Fertility Experiences							
Number of kids born	0.41*** (-7.68)	0.39*** (-7.73)	0.42*** (-7.35)	0.42*** (-7.36)	0.41*** (-7.96)	0.41*** (-7.89)	0.38*** (-7.53)
Nonfamily Experiences							
Wife's educational Attainment	0.78*** (-6.08)	0.80*** (-5.20)	0.77*** (-6.20)	0.77*** (-6.22)	0.78*** (-6.45)	0.78*** (-6.44)	0.81*** (-4.98)
Difference between spouses educational attainment (wife-husband)	1.26*** (6.27)	1.26*** (6.08)	1.27*** (6.23)	1.27*** (6.26)	1.27*** (6.62)	1.27*** (6.56)	1.27*** (6.11)
Wife ever worked for wages	1.86** (2.34)	1.75* (2.06)	1.98** (2.57)	1.99** (2.53)	2.09** (2.88)	2.10** (2.94)	2.14** (2.70)
N (person-months)	102545	102545	102545	102545	102545	102545	102545
N (persons experiencing marital dissolution)	33	33	33	33	33	33	33

These results are based on 162 months of data. Multi-level models, by neighborhood. Brahmin/Chettri and Newar are reference categories for caste. T-ratios are shown in parentheses.

One-tailed tests are used. + <p.10 *p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

Table 2: Hazard Estimates of Marital Dissolution: Odds Ratios from Logistic Regression of Spouses' Discrepant Reports of Conflict across Quadrants

	Model 1	Model 2
Frequency of Disagreements		
Wife report high, husband report low †	1.43 (0.75)	
Wife report high, husband report high †	3.62*** (3.32)	
Wife report low, husband report high †	2.20* (1.75)	
Frequency of being Criticized		
Wife report high, husband report low †		0.91 (-0.36)
Wife report high, husband report high †		0.88 (-0.52)
Wife report low, husband report high †		0.41** (-2.95)
Wife's Demographics		
Dalit (low caste)	0.63 (-1.06)	0.56+ (-1.53)
Hill Indigenous	1.08 (0.21)	1.05 (0.17)
Terai Indigenous	0.08*** (-4.28)	0.06*** (-5.33)
Marriage Characteristics		
Wife's age at marriage	0.92* (-1.75)	0.91** (-2.36)
Wife's level of spouse choice †	1.15* (1.95)	1.10+ (1.50)
Husband's level of spouse choice †	1.13+ (1.58)	1.16* (2.11)
Length of marriage (months)	1.00 (-0.83)	0.99+ (-1.38)
Length of marriage, squared (months)	1.00 (0.38)	1.00 (0.72)
Characteristics of Marital Home (Ghar)		
Household owns farmland (khet or bari)	0.56* (-1.90)	0.57* (-2.09)
Distance to wife's natal home (maiti)	0.64*** (-3.16)	0.61*** (-3.98)
Fertility Experiences		
Number of kids born	0.40*** (-7.33)	0.40*** (-8.25)
Nonfamily Experiences		
Wife's educational Attainment	0.80*** (-4.90)	0.75*** (-7.16)
Difference between spouses educational attainment (husband-wife)	1.25*** (5.82)	1.28*** (7.03)
Wife ever worked for wages	1.64* (1.75)	2.31*** (3.30)
N (person-months)	102545	102545
N (persons experiencing marital dissolution)	33	33

These results are based on 162 months of data. Multi-level models, by neighborhood.

Brahmin/Chettri and Newar are reference categories for caste. T- ratios are shown in parentheses.

† indicated a two-tailed test, otherwise one-tailed tests are used. + <p.10 *p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001