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Identifying Markers of Success in Help-Seeking Following Instances of Gender-based Violence
(GBV) in Nepal

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ABSTRACT

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Introduction: Gender-based violence is a prevalent issue affecting as many as 1 in 3 women worldwide in various forms. Help-seeking is intentional action to end the violence an individual is experiencing, and it is more often done with informal rather than formal resources. Lack of disclosure and help-seeking is a global problem. In Nepal, 22% of women and girls (15-49) have experienced physical violence, among those 66% have not disclosed nor sought help for it. The purpose of this thesis is to explore the forms of violence experienced and the factors that mitigated or stopped it.

Methods: Qualitative analysis was conducted on data collected during mixed methods evaluation of the Integrated Programme for Strengthening Security and Justice: Strengthening Access to Holistic, Gender Responsive and Accountable Justice (IPSSJ-SAHAJ) program. Thematic analysis was conducted on 23 key informant interviews from security and justice (S&J) providers at baseline and 7 from help-seeking survivors at baseline and midline. Themes were created based on the Model of Help-Seeking and Change proposed by Liang et al. (2005). Additionally, case studies and a matrix were generated for further exploration.

Results: Of the 7 help-seeking survivors, 4 saw a cessation of violence, 2 experienced continued violence and 1 had an unclear resolution. 5 survivors sought help from more than one location with the police being visited most often. The forms of violence highlighted were physical, sexual, and emotional with scant mentions of financial abuse. Violence was believed to be caused by alcohol abuse, child marriage, dowry disputes and discrimination borne of misogyny typical of a patriarchal society. A lack of knowledge of resources, poverty, shame, and unresponsive S&J providers were barriers to help-seeking, while familial support and increased awareness were facilitators.

Conclusion: Strong social support and perceivably responsive S&J infrastructure improve the chances of a desirable outcome of help-seeking. Additionally, negative experiences with S&J providers coupled with social repercussions may prevent survivors from seeking help. Future frameworks focusing on violence and help-seeking should incorporate outcomes of the process and how that may influence future attempts.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

Gender-based violence (GBV), also referred to as violence against women and girls (VAWG), is defined by the United Nations as

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"any act that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm of suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life"

GBV takes numerous forms including but not limited to, intimate partner violence, sexual violence, female genital mutilation, human trafficking, and certain marriage practices [1]. Certain forms of gender based violence are especially prevalent, such as intimate partner violence (IPV) that affects 1 in 3 women worldwide [2].

In Nepal, 22% of women and girls aged 15-49 have experienced physical violence, from their husbands and/or others, in their lifetime, with the highest rates in Province 2 [3]. Among ever-married women, 26% experienced some form of violence (physical, emotional, or sexual) at the hands of their husbands. This rises to 37% for Province 2 and 29% for Province 5 [3]. Members of underprivileged castes and ethnic groups are more susceptible to violence [4].

Of those who have experienced violence, 66% of them have not disclosed this violence or sought help for it [3]. This reflects a global pattern of a lack of help-seeking following violence [5].

A general definition of help-seeking [behavior] is given as "intentional action to solve a problem that challenges personal abilities" [6]. Reframing in the context of GBV, help-seeking can then be described as intentional action to end the violence an individual is experiencing. Help-seeking can further be classified as formal or informal based on the where help is sought. Formal help-seeking involves seeking help from institutions like the police, courts, and even the medical field, while informal involves family, friends, neighbors etc. [7]. Globally, survivors more often disclose the abuse they face to informal sources [5].

Success in ending violence is defined in a variety of ways, but cultural context is important in any definition of success. In Western settings, success is often defined as the single act of leaving an abusive relationship [8]. However, the fact is that this option does not exist for certain groups around the world, as leaving a marriage for whatever reason, may incur considerable financial and social costs on a woman and her family [9]. Women may not even desire to leave their relationships, they simply want the violence to stop. So, a definition of success in help-seeking must be created in such contexts where the alternative to staying in an abusive relationship is to deprive oneself of resources and social connections. Additionally, definitions of success, should be nuanced to take into consideration the degree to which violence is normalized.

This, among other things, shows the need to synthesize bodies of work that elaborate on non-Western and low-income contexts, as help-seeking behaviors and attitudes are heavily dependent on the society in which they are happening. As such, the purpose of this thesis is to:

1. Visualize and describe experiences of violence in Nepal through key informant interviews with help-seeking survivors and security and justice providers, and

2. Highlight the factors that mitigated and/or stopped violence by applying the Model of Help-Seeking and Change to help-seeking survivor interviews.

Chapter 2: Comprehensive Review of Literature

The process of help-seeking in intimate partner violence scenarios was elucidated by Patzel in 2001, where key themes of help-seeking/leaving an abusive situation were highlighted. These were turning point, realization, reframing, agency, and self-efficacy [10]. While these occurred in no particular order, it was reported that the turning point (the event that made survivors view their relationships differently), realization and reframing served to strengthen self-efficacy, which was pivotal for leaving [10]. A key point of discussion is to determine what happens after these processes, after these women realize their situation is not ideal and even harmful.

Barriers to and Facilitators of Help-Seeking

Help-seeking can be defined as the "intentional action to solve a problem that challenges personal abilities" [6]. An alternative definition of help-seeking is locating and making use of formal or informal resources that support victims [11]. Various factors can stop survivors of violence from completing this process. However, some are more common than the others. The barriers to help-seeking will be explored first.

Barriers range from a societal/interpersonal level down to an individual one, however it is not accurate to describe them as being totally separate from one another. A notable individual level barrier is the belief that the situation will change or that they can resolve the problem on their own. This belief leads to individuals viewing seeking help as unnecessary [12, 13] Another common barrier, seen in both Western and non-Western contexts and across gender and sexuality, is that the view of violence experienced as being "not serious enough" [14-16]. Shame, coupled with fear of

being judged or blamed, is another common barrier that prevents individuals from disclosing or seeking help for the violence they experienced [13, 14, 17-19]. In more insecure settings, like refugee complexes, a potent barrier is the fear that whatever is shared during the help-seeking process will not be kept confidential [20].

The survivor may choose to not seek out help because the perpetrator threatens them, or they fear that the perpetrator will retaliate if they tell anyone about the violence [20, 21]. Some survivors also fear the consequences of reporting the perpetrator because they may not necessarily want to be separated from them. This may be for emotional/personal reasons of attachment to the perpetrator or for the sake of their children [13, 16, 17, 21-23], or their belief in the sanctity of marriage [24].

Moving on to barriers that are seemingly outside of the individual, the most prevalent one is cost. The places where individuals may seek help may not easily be accessible, so cost of transportation becomes significant, preventing them from seeking help [17]. In some instances, individuals seek help by seeking out healthcare services to overcome the effects of the violence they experienced, but they are unable to do so due to the cost of sessions [12, 19, 25]. Finally, survivors may simply not be aware of the resources available to them for help-seeking, so they do not attempt to access them [14-16, 20, 22, 23]. There also appears to be a lack of trust in the help-seeking systems that exist [16, 18, 26]. Notably ethnic minorities and immigrants may face the additional barriers of their immigration status and speaking a different language [27].

Stigma and gender roles are societal/interpersonal level barriers whose effects can be seen on an individual level. One major reason male survivors of violence do not seek out help because they feel as though it calls their masculinity into question [19, 22]. However, this perception of masculinity can be seen in the lack of visibility given to male survivors of violence, and resources that a survivor

may seek out could hold these same prejudices [22]. The matter of stigma also extends to members of sexual minority groups and others who face discrimination in their particular setting [28].

On the other hand, the facilitators of help-seeking seem to be outnumbered by the barriers to it. A commonly mentioned facilitator for help-seeking was social support and strong social network connections [14, 17]. Social support served to give survivors some of the validation needed to seek help for the violence they were experiencing [17]. Another factor that pushed individuals toward seeking help was the severity of the violence they were experience. In some cases, the violence reaches a "breaking point" where survivors can no longer tolerate the abuse, for personal reasons or because the safety of their children becomes a concern [14, 16, 20, 21, 27]. Finally, individuals' help-seeking process was facilitated by knowledge. Knowledge of the resources available to them, how to access them, and what the process would look like [20, 21].

Help-Seeking in Nepal

The Demographic Health Survey (DHS) Nepal found that 66% of those that had experienced violence had neither disclosed nor sought help for the violence. Among those that sought help, most (65%) did so from a family member with the police being used the least (7%) [3]. Help-seeking from police and other formal sources are frowned upon due to strong communal ties. It is believed that seeking help from the police is introducing an outsider into family matters, and diminishing the authority of community leaders [29].

Frameworks of GBV and Help-Seeking

Barriers Model

One of the first models seeking to describe violence against women was the Barriers model purported by Grisgby & Hartman. The Barriers model was created in response to the therapy

practice of pathologizing survivors of abuse by emphasizing codependency. This model shifted

primary focus to external factors that went beyond the individual like society and context [30].

This model used layers to describe the barriers a survivor may encounter seeking help. It is

presented as concentric circles that have the survivor in the middle, and the further out the layer, the

less individualistic the barrier is. An image of the framework can be found below (Figure 1).
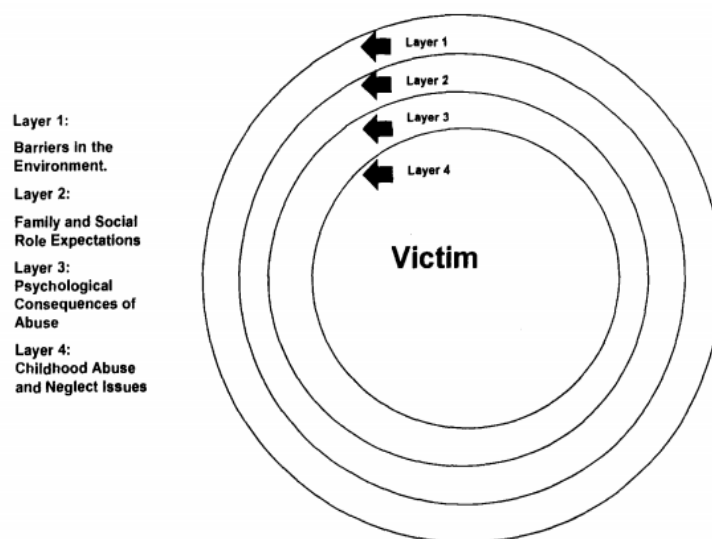
Figure 1: Barriers Model

The first layer, the one furthest away from the individual, is 'Barriers in the Environment'. These

barriers were Information and Misinformation, the Batterer (the abuser), Money, Transportation,

Police assistance, Criminal justice system, Attorneys, Religious counseling/guidance, Mental health

system, Physical and cultural accessibility to shelters/services which has sub-barriers of

Discrimination, Language, Physical barriers, Culture, Immigration, and Affordable housing. These

are societal level barriers that highlight issues women would face even if they were able to break out

of their "codependency" and seek help. Women are often faced with losing their way of life and

their place in their respective communities if they reveal their abuse. Additionally, leaving abusive

situations may place women in unfamiliar situations where they could still be at risk for further violence.

The second layer is 'Barriers Due to Family/Socialization/Role Expectations'. These barriers were Values/beliefs about relationships, Identity, Values/beliefs about abuse, Religious values/beliefs, and Family of origin values/beliefs. These barriers center around how the survivor may be socialized to accept their abuse as something to be expected. This socialization influences their beliefs and perceptions about themselves and the abuse they experience. It is meant to place into consideration how women are socialized in a patriarchal society.

The third layer is 'Barriers from Psychological Consequences of Violence'. These are defense mechanisms, physical/somatic results, psychological consequences, brainwashing, compliance strategies, and posttraumatic stress disorder. Following instances of abuse, the survivor may develop psychological issues that prevent them from seeking help, it may affect their appraisal of the situation or settle into a state of learned helplessness to survive.

The final and closest layer to the individual is 'Barriers from Childhood Abuse and Neglect Issues'. This includes early messages about abuse and safety and psychological consequences

While it was made for therapists, the framework laid down is also relevant in public health contexts, as the barriers stated are relevant in considerations for programming. It also emphasized the need to shift away from a disease-model approach for intimate partner violence.

While the issues of immigrant women were highlighted, it was still a mostly American focus. This is not a drawback, but caution is still to be taken when attempting to apply it in international contexts.

Model of Help-Seeking and Change

Proposed by Liang, Goodman, Tummala-Narra and Weintraub in 2005, the model of help-seeking and change describes help-seeking processes among survivors of intimate partner violence. The framework describes three interconnected domains, and defines how personal, interpersonal, and sociocultural influences feed into each of them [31]. The framework focuses more on processes and includes both the nature and extent of help-seeking behaviors. It acknowledges that help-seeking is dynamic and not linear, hence the arrows connecting each of the domains. Additionally, it considers the context that influences each domain. An image of the framework can be found below (Figure 2).
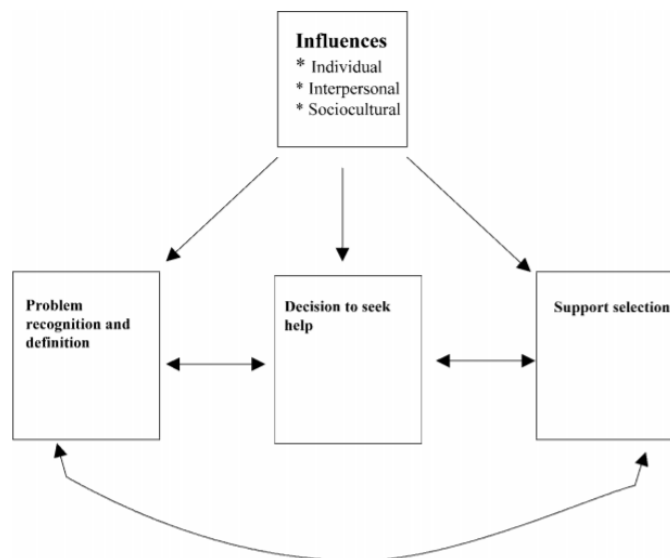

Figure 2: A Model of Help-Seeking and Change

The first domain is problem recognition and definition. This domain simply states that a person's response to their issues depends on how they define said issues. The second domain, decision to seek help, is what occurs after an individual determines that there is indeed a problem, and the results of this can in turn influence their definition of a problem. The final domain is support selection. An individual's definition of a problem determines the kind of help they seek out.

Disclosure Processes Model (DPM)

This model was developed to outline when and why disclosure is beneficial. It was developed with a focus on individuals living with concealable stigmatized identities. A concealable stigmatized identity is one that is socially devalued, but not immediately apparent to others [32]. An image of the framework can be found below (Figure 3).
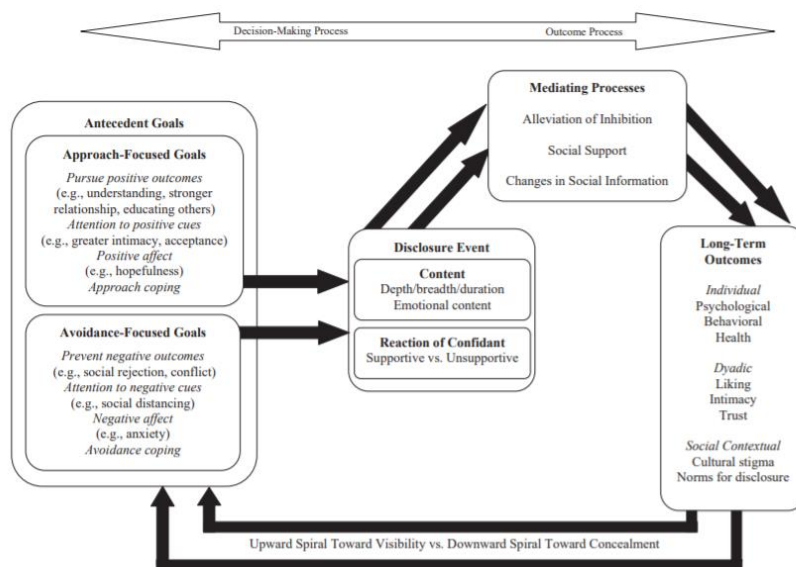
**Figure 3:** The Disclosure Processes Model (DPM)

The DPM also sought to address how the decision-making process leading up to disclosure influences the outcomes. Furthermore, it proposed that disclosure should be addressed as a single process that includes decision-making and outcomes. In addition to that, it proposed that motivations are the basis of disclosure behaviors and shape the entire disclosure process. Finally, the relationship between disclosure and outcomes is mediated by multiple factors. While this framework is not exclusive to experiences of violence or help-seeking, disclosure is an important factor in both. Disclosure does not necessarily equate to seeking help, but it is a portion of it that cannot be ignored.

Intimate Partner Stigmatization Model

The Intimate Partner Stigmatization Model was proposed by Overstreet and Quinn in 2013. Its purpose is to create a conceptual framework that outlines the role that intimate partner violence (IPV) stigma plays in reducing help-seeking behavior [33].

Stigma operates on an individual, interpersonal and sociocultural level. On an individual level, there is internalized stigma, where a person believes the negative stereotypes surrounding IPV to be true of themselves subsequently hindering help-seeking and causing stress. On an individual and interpersonal level, anticipated stigma exists. Anticipated stigma focuses on worries about how others will react upon learning of the abuse. Finally, cultural stigma involves societal level ideologies that delegitimize the experience of IPV and hinder help-seeking, and it is overarching. Centrality and salience were important concepts that influence anticipated and internalized stigma, but they were not explored thoroughly in the paper. They are both concepts that reflect the relevance of the violence one experienced as part of their identity. An image of the framework can be found below (Figure 4).
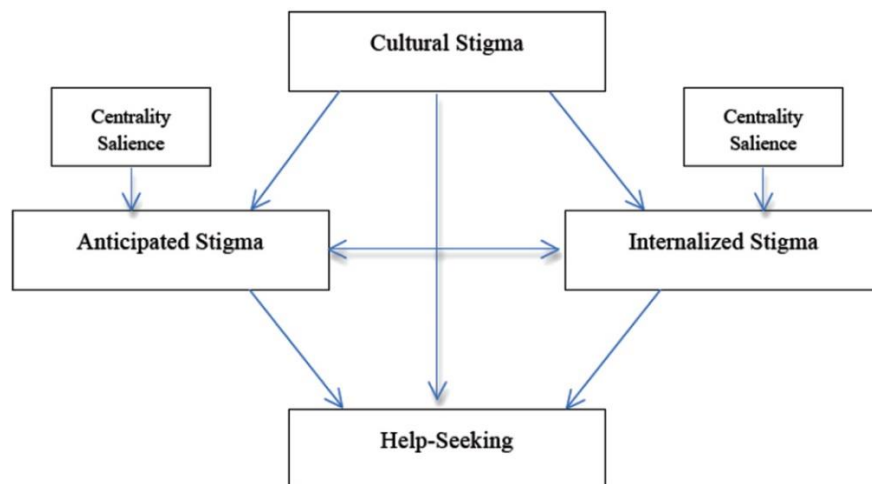
Figure 4: Intimate Partner Stigmatization Model

With the literature in mind, the questions raised are: What forms does violence take in Nepal, and what factors mitigate/stop it? And what barriers and facilitators of help-seeking are specific to Nepal?

To fully explore these research questions the model of help-seeking and change was chosen to guide analysis and result presentation due to its succinct nature. Additionally, this framework is believed to be simple enough to be modified to add new elements if need be.

Chapter 3: Methods

<u>Study Design</u>

The qualitative data used for this thesis derived from the qualitative portion of the 3-armed, 17-site mixed methods assessment of the Integrated Programme for Strengthening Security and Justice: Strengthening Access to Holistic, Gender Responsive and Accountable Justice in Nepal (IPSSJ-SAHAJ) program [34]. The assessment sought to evaluate the impact of multi-layered social norms interventions on social norms about family privacy; acceptability of violence against women; self-reported help-seeking for gender-based violence; and self-reported confidence in security and justice (S&J) providers. The full primary study protocol and results of the primary assessment are available [35]. The qualitative portion of the assessment involved key informant interviews and focus group discussions among S&J providers and family members. The foundation of this thesis will be a secondary data analysis of the key informant interviews conducted with the security and justice providers at baseline and those with help-seeking survivors at baseline and midline. The S&J providers were believed to provide a more robust elaboration on the perceived causes, types, and

scopes of gender-based violence and as such were included. The transcripts collected baseline were deemed sufficient for this purpose.

<u>Setting</u>

The study focused on Provinces 2 and 5 of Nepal. The qualitative portion of the study was conducted in the Siraha, Saptari, Rupandehi and Kapilvastu districts. Sites were chosen based on the prevalence of marginalized and vulnerable groups and historic locations of the IPSSJ program and the representation of all three major intervention approaches including family-centered programming, school-focused programming, and the social accountability approach designed to enhance police-community relationships [35].

<u>Participants' Characteristics</u>

A total of 23 key informant interviews were conducted with S&J providers at baseline, and 7 were conducted with help-seeking survivors at baseline and midline. The S&J providers included were ward chair, ward police chief, judicial committee head/representative, GBV watch group head, and GBV control group coordinator. A breakdown of participants and their respective districts can be found in Table 1.

Table 1: Qualitative Data Sources

Province	District	S&J Providers	Help-seeking Survivors	Total
2	Siraha	6	1	7
	Saptari	6	4	10

| 5	Kapilvastu	6	1	7
	Rupandehi	5	1	6
	Total	**23**	**7**	**30**

Data Collection

The key informant interviews were conducted from August to September 2019 for baseline, and February to March of 2020 for midline. Interview guides were created in English and translated to Nepali, or the local dialect when applicable. The interviews investigated norms, experiences of help-seeking and the service environment and capacity of S&J providers [35]. The interview guides can be found in Appendices A and B. The interview audio files were transcribed verbatim and translated from Nepali to English. The audio file was then listened to by a bilingual team member and checked against the existing English translation.

Data Analysis

Initial analysis and codebook creation was conducted by the SAHAJ team at Emory University. The codebook was created following an initial reading of 15 transcripts and was modified as the analysis process continued. Intercoder reliability was established with Cohen's kappa >0.7; and coding was conducted using the MAXQDA 2018 software (Berlin, Germany).

The themes for thick descriptions were pulled directly from the Liang et al. help-seeking framework seen below. The Liang et al. framework was chosen for its succinct nature. It was believed to provide a good foundation for a more detailed and focused framework. The themes chosen were Problem Recognition and Definition, Decision to Seek Help, and Support Selection. The existing and relevant codes were then organized under the theme that was most appropriate, based off

codebook definitions. The coded segments were then retrieved in MAXQDA. Summaries of the 7

survivor transcripts overlayed with the domains of the model of help-seeking and change were

compiled into a matrix to observe the respective outcomes of violence in each scenario. To further

highlight factors relevant to violence cessation, 3 help-seeking survivors were chosen based on

varying help-seeking sequences and violence outcomes. 2 of these cases represented a cessation of

violence, one resulting in separation and the other not, and the third one, continued violence.
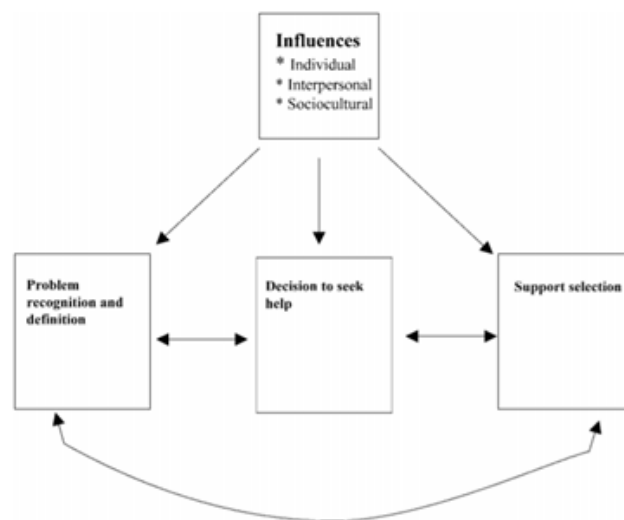
Figure 6: A Model of Help-Seeking and Change – Liang et al.

Ethical Considerations

The study received ethical approval from the Institutional Review Board at Emory University

(IRB00110703) and the Nepal Health Research Council. All participants were asked to provide

written consent. The consent statement was created in English, translated to Nepali and back to

English. and provided their signatures or an X in the presence of a translator for participants that

were not literate.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this thesis was to visualize the experiences of violence in Nepal and highlight the factors that influenced the cessation of violence. As the themes are interconnected, some elements of the thick descriptions may seem repetitive or redundant, but it is important to recall the nature of the framework. No facet of the framework stands on its own, they all feed into each other, so it is expected that the thick descriptions reflect this.

The matrix created to further explore the details of the help-seeking process as it relates to the Model of Help-Seeking and Change can be found below.

Table 2: Outcomes of violence among help-seeking survivors overlayed with domains from "A Model of Help-Seeking and Change"

		Problem Definition		Decision to Seek Help		Support Selection	Violence Outcome
	District	Abuse Type	Perpetrator	Influences	Sanctions		
1	Rupandehi	Emotional Physical Financial	Husband*	Family	Social vilification Retaliative Abuse	(1) Village Ward Office (2) Police Station	C
2	Saptari	Physical Financial	Husband*	Family (brother-in-law)	--	Community Meeting (Panchayat)	S
3	Kapilvastu	Emotional Physical	Husband Mother-in-law	Self	Social vilification	(1) Police Station (2) Women's Cell	S
4	Siraha	Physical Financial	Husband	Family	--	(1) Police Station (2) Community People	S
5	Saptari	Physical Emotional	Husband	Family	Familial intrusion	Court (basic sustenance rights)	S
6	Saptari	Physical	Husband* In-laws	Family (brothers and uncles)	Retaliative abuse	(1) Ward Chairperson (2) Police Station	C
7	Saptari	Physical	Husband* In-laws	Family (parents)	--	(1) DSP Police Officer (2) Court (basic sustenance rights)	U

Legend

*Alcohol was a factor in abuse

C: Violence continued

S: Violence stopped

U: Unclear Resolution

Notes: Under support selection, the numbering indicates the sequence that formal help-seeking resources were visited, multiple visits made to previous resources visited are not indicated. The matrix does not include disclosure sequence. Most of the survivor interviews analyzed were from the Saptari region. In 4 out of the 7 transcripts evaluated, survivors indicated that their husband had been under the influence of alcohol, or that their abuse would not have occurred if their husband was not drinking alcohol. The "--" found under the sanctions tab indicates that the survivors did not explicitly mention that they experienced any repercussions for reporting.

Most (4 out of 7) of the survivor interviews analyzed were from the Saptari region. All experienced physical violence, sometimes in combination with emotional and/or financial violence. 3 of the survivors did not report facing sanctions for seeking help, however, this is not to say that it did not occur. The domains of the model are further explored in the thematic analysis found below.

Problem Recognition and Definition

In the Liang et al. framework, problem recognition and definition encompass how responses to violence are based on the definition and labeling of problems, and it describes this on an individual, interpersonal, and sociocultural level.

This theme captures how participants describe gender-based violence and forms of gender-based violence they see in their daily lives and their work. As the Liang framework states, individuals respond to their problems based on how they appraise them. In other words, to seek help one needs to know that help should be sought. This theme also captures the societal attitudes towards gender-based violence and the social structures that allow it happen.

The "problem" of gender-based violence takes many forms. Physical, emotional, and financial abuse were the most common forms reported. More than one participant reported that their husband refused to clothe and feed them and their children. The violence survivors experienced was inflicted by their husbands with their in-laws being passive bystanders or inflicting violence themselves.

Physical abuse and rape were the most frequently mentioned forms of gender-based violence by both the help-seeking survivors and the security and justice providers. Help-seeking survivors reported being beaten by both their mothers-in-law and their husband. One participant even reported being beaten while pregnant, and another reported her husband biting her ear.

More than one survivor stated that their husbands would starve both them and their children for periods at a time. Their husbands would not allow them to eat, nor would they provide money for the upkeep of the family, leaving the survivors to find alternative funding or at the mercy of the kindness of neighbors and/or family.

A common reason stated for violence by both survivors and providers, particularly domestic violence, was alcohol abuse. In 4 out of 7 transcripts evaluated, survivors indicated that their husband had been under the influence of alcohol, or that their abuse would not have occurred if their husband had not been drinking alcohol.

Notably, dowry was considered a cause of various kinds of violence by both survivors and S&J providers. Mothers-in-law beat daughters-in-law because they brought in dowries that were not sufficient. Additionally, women aborted female pregnancies, especially when they had multiple daughters, because raising multiple daughters meant paying multiple dowries, and this financial burden was sought to be avoided. In discussing her strained relationship with her husband, one survivor mentioned how she believes that she was only married for the purpose of dowry.

> "…There are more dowry related violence here which puts a lot of restrictions on women. Once they are married they become a victim of domestic violence because of the husband's alcohol influence. The men who are addicted to alcohol are not bothered about their kids and their future. They are only worried about getting alcohol and making their wives suffer…" – Security & Justice Provider, Saptari, Province 2

Arching over everything is the patriarchal context where this violence takes place that leads to discrimination and misogyny. Girls are often not allowed to be educated past a certain point in their lives, because it is seen as a waste since they will be going to someone else's home, and remarkably, a lack of education was also brought up as a cause of violence. These factors lead to a dependency of women on men, and this dependency can make it seem as though women are "doing nothing", this perceived lack of contribution causes women not to be seen as worthy of respect, so they are treated poorly.

> "All these cases of gender-based violence are directly or indirectly related to gender inequality in our society. Usually, the land is also in the male person's name. A lot of women are dependent on the male members of the house. They will be in a position where they cannot report a person because that would mean that the women could end up on the streets too." – Security & Justice Provider, Rupandehi, Province 5

Influencers on the Decision to Seek Help

In the framework, the decision to seek help dimension occurs when individuals acknowledge that there is a problem and recognize that said problem will not go away without the help of others. On the interpersonal and sociocultural scale, it focuses on the traditions surrounding violence. These traditions influence a survivor's decision to seek help. This theme also captures the norms and societal attitudes towards gender-based violence, and the ramifications survivors face should they choose to make their experiences known. There was a greater abundance of information of the influencers on survivors' decision to seek help than the actual process, and as such that is what this theme will mostly encompass.

In terms of status quo, roles and expectations are instilled from a young age, as girls are often made to stay home and focus on chores while their male counterparts go to school and engage in other activities. They are also commonly not educated past the 10th grade. In some cases, even as adults their movements are limited, and they are expected to stay at home.

> "People here don't let their daughters study after they reach 20 years of age. That is gender-based violence too. They don't let women go to Haat bazar (local market) because they think their right place is at home – washing their clothes and doing the dishes. They don't want the women of their house to go anywhere" –
> Security & Justice Provider, Rupandehi, Province 5

In the marriage sphere, women are expected to bear the violence they experience, and even see it as a blessing, as well as their husband's right. Even those that do not bear this outlook often remain

and accept abuse because there is no certainty around the future if they decide to make their abuse known.

According to S&J provider accounts, reporting is heavily dependent on familial support, and this support is rare. Families prefer to keep these accounts within the home for fear that their reputation be tarnished and/or no one will marry their daughter if it comes to light. It is mentioned that in Terai (Siraha) it is a "humiliation" to be unmarried. This all ties into survivors keeping their experiences of violence a secret.

> "Generally, people wouldn't want to get such matters out of the house. They have the "concept" that matters of house should remain within the walls of the house. When things become a little too much or when the violence is a bit extreme, they approach different entities like the justice committee" – Security & Justice Provider, Rupandehi, Province 5

The consequences that a survivor may face if they decided to disclose their violence are varied and significant. Sharing accounts of violence may be seen as a betrayal of the family, and an attempt to mire the family's reputation. For this reason, in addition to the lack of condemnation by fellow community members, survivors that choose to report face backlash.

> "…they taught my husband to kick me out of the house because I used to go to the police and court to seek justice. They even used to say that I would never go [to] them for help if I was a good person" – Help-Seeking Survivor, Rupandehi, Province 5

> "They [neighbors and family] used to think what I was doing was wrong. They used to think that I went there to degrade the family's honor. They used to coerce me for going to Security and Justice Committee and for reporting about the issues faced at home to the Police" – Help-Seeking Survivor, Kapilvastu, Province 5

When survivors report instances of violence, they face criticism from their communities, and their characters are called into question. Additionally, they may face retaliation from their abuser or their family. In the case of family, making abusive situations known embarrasses them and the abuse continues. The fear of experiencing these things may cause women not to report at all, or to withdraw their reports after filing them. Additionally, there is worry about what comes after the report is made.

According to S&J providers, survivors often did not report their abuse until it was extremely severe, but examples of this severity were not given explicitly nor did the survivors highlight such a phenomenon, but their descriptions of abuse were severe in nature. Survivors reportedly did not disclose their abuse to formal sources until it became very severe, because they feared damage to their reputation and a loss of their financial support.

> Generally, people wouldn't want to get such matters out of the house. They have the "concept" that matters of house should remain within the walls of the house. When things become a little too much or when the violence is a bit extreme, they

approach different entities like the justice committee. – Security & Justice

Provider, Rupandehi, Province 5

After the help-seeking process, survivors may still have to live with the person they reported, so they do not bother.

"There is a perception that women should tolerate violence sometimes and not go

to the police otherwise how will they return to their house if they go to the

police" – Security & Justice Provider, Siraha, Province 2

Support Selection

Liang et al. state that a survivor's appraisal of their situation determines what kind of help they seek out. On the individual level, the survivor's perception of their problem influences what form of help they deem necessary. If the survivor determines that the violence they are experiencing is a personal problem, they may simply seek out a friend or a trusted authority figure like a religious leader. However, if they believe that what they have experienced was a crime, they may select to go through more formal avenues. The interpersonal level highlights that the reactions of their social support network determine the degree of formal help they seek out. Finally, the sociocultural level addresses the societal level beliefs that influence the attitudes around help-seeking. Survivors with a strong family orientation may not want to seek help from formal sources. This theme will capture survivor attitudes about existing S&J resources and highlight the facilitators and barriers they experienced. Additionally, it highlights the manner they sought help in and from whom.

All but one of the help-seeking survivors report a member of their family being the first one they told about their abuse. This was often a parent, disclosure to siblings and/or in-laws was not mentioned, and often not an option as in-laws were either passive bystanders or perpetrators themselves. It is important to note that while these were the first people they disclosed, they were not the only ones, and the results of this disclosure were varied. Survivors stated that community members and fellow villagers were also often aware of the situation of abuse and survivors reported varying levels of support when their abuse was made known. Generally, survivors were encouraged by their families, neighbors, and community members to accept their abuse for various reasons, from maintaining peace in their household, to ensuring their family reputation was not tainted, to thinking about the future of their children.

> "They used to suggest me to tolerate the abuse because I am a girl and that is what's expected of us. They used to suggest me that I had a son, and I should care about his future" – Help Seeking Survivor, Saptari, Province 2

After disclosing the abuse to their families, they either went to file an official complaint, visited the police station, visited the ward office, or called a communal village meeting. The official complaints were filed against the husband for basic sustenance rights.

When survivors reported their abuse to formal sources, some of the security and justice providers encouraged "harmony" in the household, and subsequently did nothing in response to the abuse. On the other hand, police sometimes called the abuser and told them to stop, but survivors report that this did not stop the violence they experienced. The survivors that reported visiting the police

station did not have positive experiences or the reporting was not fruitful. The most that the police officers did was call the husband and tell them to stop the abuse, this did nothing to stop the abuse. They also encouraged compromise and reconciliation among the families. After repeated visits did nothing to help, two survivors mentioned that they stopped going.

"No, they [the police] didn't [put my husband in jail]. They just used to call him, give him some advice, and send him home. If they would have taken some strict action, this would never happen" – Help-Seeking Survivor, Rupandehi, Province 5

"I've lost count of the number of times I have been to the police station. I have now given up on them and decided to stay home and do nothing. It's been more than 10 times at the police station and the ward office too, nobody did anything." – Help Seeking Survivor, Rupandehi, Province 5

After disclosure, survivors began the help-seeking process. They faced a number of hurdles during this process. While one of the survivors was going through the process of filing a case against her husband, her in-laws would often attempt to interfere and create an issue for her.

Two other survivors mentioned that when they sought help from formal resources like the police and ward office, they received negative treatment due to their poverty. They were not listened to and their visits did not yield results.

> "It's because of my poverty nobody tried listening to me." – Help-Seeking
>
> Survivor, Rupandehi, Province 5

Two survivors mentioned that they were not aware of the resources available to them, until someone informed them of it. One survivor was informed by her brother-in-law, and the other by a local women's organization that held meetings, the nature of these meetings was not highlighted.

The help-seeking process was notably facilitated when the survivor had a family member that supported their efforts. Despite not knowing anything about the S&J processes, a survivor was able to call a village meeting with the help of her brother-in-law.

> "No, I didn't go anywhere. I called upon community meeting with the help of my
>
> brother-in-law. I didn't have any knowledge about any security and justice
>
> provider to report about the incidences" – Help-Seeking Survivor, Saptari,
>
> Province 2

While familial support is quite helpful, it is also rather rare. One survivor even notes this saying:

> "…My maternal uncle supported me, and my brother supported me to fight
>
> against the abuse. It is rare to find such kind of support in this regions of the
>
> country" – Help-Seeking Survivor, Saptari, Province 2

To further contextualize the factors relevant to violence cessation, the following 3 help-seeking survivors case studies highlight various help-seeking sequences and violence outcomes. Two of these

cases represented a cessation of violence, one resulting in separation and the other not, and the third

one represents continued violence

Figure 7: Case study of violence stopping following community intervention

<u>**Case 1: Cessation of Violence**</u>
- Saptari, Province 5
- <u>Sequence</u>: disclosure to brother-in-law → disclosure to chief leader of village → called *panchayat** → husband was rebuked → **Violence stopped**
- Other Notes:
  - Her brother-in-law supported her through the process, encouraged her reporting, and helped her set up the meeting
  - She was not aware of the resources available to her till her brother-in-law informed her.
  - In the meeting, the representatives ensured her that she was not to blame

In this case, the survivor informed her brother-in-law about the abuse she experienced, after which

she shared it with the community leader. Following disclosure, she called a community meeting

(*Panchayat*) with the help of her brother-in-law. She previously did not know that this was a resource

available to her and had her brother-in-law to support her through the process. Following the

meeting, she explicitly stated that her husband no longer hit her. In summary, she remained in her

marriage and continued to live together with her husband and children.

Figure 8: Case Study of violence stopping following court intervention

<u>**Case 2: Achieving "Justice"**</u>
- Saptari, Province 2
- <u>Sequence</u>: disclosure to brother-in-law → encouraged by police officer to file a complaint → filed official complaint against husband → **received *Maana-Chamal** + is separated from husband**
- Other Notes:
  - Her family supported her psychologically and financially through the process
  - Her in-laws tried to interfere with the case
  - After she won the case, she received support that she previously did not have
  - She still seeks to return to her marital home

The survivor in this case also disclosed her abuse to her brother-in-law first, and while being treated at the hospital was approached by an officer that encouraged her to file a complaint against her husband. After she filed a complaint, she was awarded basic sustenance rights (*Maana-Chamal*). She initially received criticism, from neighbors and community members, for taking the case to court at all, but following the award that criticism was replaced with encouragement. The violence that she was experiencing stopped as she was no longer living with her husband. However, she indicated that attempts at reconciliation were being made.

Figure 9: Case study of violence continuing despite help-seeking attempts

> ### Case 3: Violence Continues
> - Rupandehi, Province 5
> - <u>Sequence</u>: disclosure to villagers + village ward office → no one listened to her → disclosure to police officers at stations→ police officers called husband and told him to stop → **abuse continued, and she gave up on going to the police**
> - Other Notes:
>   - The police made her feel as though everything was her fault
>   - She believes her poverty is why no one listened to her
>   - She sought out help from police or the ward office more than 10 times
>   - She believes that if her husband stopped drinking so would the violence

This survivor disclosed the abuse she was experiencing to her fellow villagers and the ward office, she reported that no one listened to her, and so she went to the police. She had visited sought help from formal sources over 10 times and when she did, they would give her advice and send her home. She did not elucidate on the nature of the advice she received. This survivor also faced increased violence from her husband every time she visited the police station. As reporting did nothing, she said she quietly bore the beatings inflicted by her husband. Sometimes, she would run away from the home but received a beating when she returned.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This study adds to our understanding of help-seeking barriers and facilitators in a low income setting through the application of the Model of Help-Seeking and Change. Through an analysis of survivor-reported experiences and the perceptions of S&J officials who are tasked with ensuring safety and pursuit of justice, this thesis identified several barriers and facilitators to survivor help-seeking and concludes with recommendations for potential modifications to the framework used.

Help-seeking was found to be facilitated by familial support and increased awareness of resources by both the survivor and those in the survivor's social network. This is consistent with previous literature that found that significant social support and networks facilitated the help-seeking process [14, 17, 20, 21].

A lack of knowledge of resources, poverty, shame, and unresponsive S&J providers were found to be barriers in the help-seeking process. Unresponsiveness of S&J providers aligns with prior literature in Nepal [26]. The shame described in the key informant interviews was not a feeling of personal inadequacy, but it was attached to perceptions of their family's status in society. This is to be expected due to the collectivist nature of South Asian communities, and the large emphasis placed on family honor [36, 37].

Survivor interviews frequently mentioned the involvement of alcohol in their abuse. This is not an unexpected finding, as the Demographic Health Survey showed that there was some form of alcohol involvement in 74% of the reported violence cases [3]. While this involvement is relevant, it does not equate to causation [38]. Previous studies have shown that alcohol involvement has been shown

to be a strong predictor for sexual violence in Nepal [4], and has been used to justify acts of violence [29].

It was established among both survivors and S&J providers that tolerating violence is an expectation of women. Survivors often mentioned that they also faced sanctions from outside their homes and families, specifically neighbors and fellow villagers as their integrity was called into question after the sought help for violence they experienced. This is likely due to the expectation of the fulfillment of traditional gender roles that place men and boys as violent and women and girls as docile [39, 40]. These expectations are widely held by the community at large and deviations from them result in considerable repercussions. Women are raised to maintain the home and family; however, the husband is still seen as the leader and it is within his right to sanction his family as he deems fits. These findings reinforce the need for interventions, such as SAHAJ and other social norms interventions designed to reduce the acceptability of violence and improve gender equality as key components of successful and sanction-free help-seeking.

As previously mentioned, this study contributes to the existing body of literature as the first application of the Model of Help-seeking and Change [31], to the data collected from help-seeking survivors in Nepal. While this model did not include outcomes of the help-seeking process, that was still explored in the survivor interviews (Table 2). The outcome of interest was the status of violence survivors experienced following help-seeking.

In reviewing the framework matrix (Table 2) and the case studies (Figs. 7-9), attempts at help-seeking appear to end in a cessation of violence when the survivor had familial support. This was consistent with the literature that found that having the support of family was a facilitator for help-seeking [17, 20]. However, the influence and support of the family was not enough to result in a cessation of violence in all cases. In instances where the violence continued, in terms of sequence,

the police were the last S&J providers visited. Additionally, cases where the violence ceased, the police were not the only providers visited or were not visited at all. This seems to indicate that seeking help from the police alone is not likely to result in cessation of violence. A previous study conducted in Nepal among widows that survived violence found that police were insensitive to their experiences and were perceived to be corrupt [26].

However, it is important to note that the cases where violence continued, the ward office was also visited, and that none of the cases where violence stopped had visited the ward office. It is possible that seeking help from the ward office is likely to not lead to favorable results as well. In both cases, the ward office was visited first so it is possible that they referred the survivors to the police station which is an appropriate referral process. Greater detail in future interviews is needed to delve deeper into where the provided support fell short of that needed for a cessation of violence.

Initially, in this thesis, there was the intention to reframe success as simply the cessation of violence, but while that is a desirable outcome, it may not be sufficient to qualify that as a success. Even leaving the situation with financial support may not be enough to qualify as a success.

Despite potentially winning assets in court, in other words gaining financial support, one survivor still desired her marriage. She expressed that the assets won did not mean much as members of her caste were not allowed to remarry. Uncertainty surrounding the future especially with regards to finances is a common reason why survivors do not seek help [12, 19, 25]. So, if she is willing to forgo this financial certainty, it goes to show how much the institution of marriage is valued, and this may affect help-seeking outlooks. This event can also be seen in Case 2 (fig. 8), while she had won basic sustenance rights, she sought reunification with her husband.

With this mind, success in help-seeking should perhaps be more focused on the survivor's goal i.e., the outcome they hoped for when they began the help-seeking process, and from there a sort of

classification may come into play. It can be qualified as a "failure" where none of their goals were met and violence continued or a "success", and within success it can be "complete success" where the survivor gets exactly what they hoped for at the start of the process or a "partial success", where some goals were met but not all.

Limitations

Since the guides were not created nor the interviews conducted with the Model of Help-seeking and Change, saturation may not have been fully reached in all elements of the framework, notably the Decision to Seek Help domain. However, this was sought to be offset with the inclusion of security and justice provider interviews in the analysis. Additionally, some nuance may have been lost in the translations from Nepali to English, but this was mitigated by the checking of English translation against the Nepali verbatim transcript by a bilingual team member. A small number of survivors were interviewed, partially due to the onset of the COVID-19 lockdown which prevented the continuation of interviewing in Provinces 2 and 5, so the experiences cannot be extrapolated to all survivors.

Implications for Programming and Research

Programming aimed at reducing alcohol abuse may contribute to a reduction in violence. Alcohol is strongly related to the perpetration of violence globally, and in Nepal [4]. There have been promising findings related to group therapy for perpetrators of domestic violence and domestic violence reduction [41]. The Common Elements Treatment Approach (CETA) was found to effective in reducing intimate partner violence compared to control couples in Zambia [42]. In Nepal, acceptability of GBV remains high [29], this suggests the need for interventions that target social norms change. These findings show that there is still a need for multilayered social norms interventions like IPSSJ.

The experiences of survivors in visiting the police station and ward office indicates that there should be a focus on improving the attitudes these providers have toward help-seekers. Previous work in Nepal has shown that survivors may not visit the police station because the police may simply offer advice, or refer them back to community leaders [29]. The role of the police and their handling of violence cases must be made clear to officers to better align with the law and be founded on survivor-centered, gender-sensitive practices to enhance the likelihood of success.

Future researchers seeking to elucidate help-seeking should consider basing their research on a framework that allows for proper exploration of the help-seeking process by including the outcomes of the process. The Disclosure Processes Model (fig. 3) highlights the outcomes of the disclosure process and how that can affect disclosure goals [32], however, it is a framework that focuses primarily on disclosure. A combination of frameworks may be needed to fully elucidate the process and influences on help-seeking.

S&J providers mentioned that survivors only sought help when their abuse was "severe". However, this dimension is yet to be explored from the survivor point of view. Additionally, exploring the dynamics of help-seeking among marginalized groups that face discrimination, like sexual minorities and members of lower caste systems, can help to further elucidate the lacking areas in the current infrastructure.

Conclusion

In conclusion, strong social support and perceivably competent and responsive security and justice personnel improve the chances of a desirable outcome of help-seeking. Additionally, negative experiences with S&J providers coupled with social repercussions may prevent survivors from seeking help. Future frameworks focusing on violence and help-seeking should incorporate outcomes of the process and how that may influence future attempts.

Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Guide – Help-Seeking Survivors

Date:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Interviewee's title:

Time and Location of the interview:

Intro: Thank you for meeting with me. I work with Inter Disciplinary Analysts, a research organization in Nepal and researchers at Emory University in the US on a project called SAHAJ, which stands for Strengthening Access to Holistic Justice. The project is funded by the Department for International Development in the United Kingdom. The SAHAJ study has been designed to provide evidence on what works to change harmful social norms and strengthen community-police relationships to support security and justice help-seeking. I am here today to ask you some questions about your experiences seeking help for the violence you experienced. If you allow, I will record this interview. I will just take a moment to review this form with you. It describes in more detail what you are being asked to do, how I will keep the information private and your rights in this study.

1. Who did you first tell about the violence you had faced?
2. Why did you choose this person?
3. How did that person react to you when you told them about the violence?
4. What, if anything, did they do to help?
5. How long had you been suffering before disclosing the violence to this person?
6. From which security and justice organizations did you seek help?
7. Which organization did you seek out first and why?
8. What made you decide to seek help from [name of the S&J provider mentioned]?
9. Had you heard of anyone else receiving help from [name of the S&J provider mentioned]?
10. How did [name of S&J provider] assist you?
11. Did the service providers work with other security and justice providers or community-based organizations to assist you? [probe for which organizations]
12. Did you find that they shared essential information among themselves to help you or did you find yourself repeating your story over and over?
13. How was your case handled by [name of the S&J provider mentioned]? [Probe for whether the case was taken seriously or not, amount of time the process took]

14. How would you say that you were treated personally? [Probe for whether she was treated with respect and dignity, discriminated against due to gender, poverty, caste]
15. How knowledgeable were the service providers about the unique needs of women and girls?
16. How was your privacy protected throughout the process? [probe for private rooms for discussion, discression used when transmitting information among service providers, ability to testify without having to look the accussed in the face]
17. What supports did you need to use these services? [Probe for persons, money, emotional support, information]
18. What challenges did you overcome to use these services?
19. How effective were the services in stopping violence you were experiencing? What action(s) did they take against the perpetrator of violence?
20. How were you received by your family and neighbors for having sought help from the security and justice provider? Were they aware that you had sought help? [probe for negative social consequences (e.g. stigma, shame, revenge, being ostracized, etc) and positive social consequences (receiving support, encouragement, acting as a role model for others]?
21. In your opinion, what is needed to increase the number of women and girls who seek security and justice services in cases of gender-based violence?
22. Is there anything that you would like to say about this topic that you think I have missed?

Thank you very much for your time.

Appendix B: Interview Guide – Security & Justice Providers

Date:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Interviewee's title:

Time and Location of the interview:

Intro: Thank you for meeting with me. I work with Inter Disciplinary Analysts, a research organization in Nepal and researchers at Emory University in the US on a project called SAHAJ, which stands for Strengthening Access to Holistic Justice. The project is funded by the Department for International Development in the United Kingdom. The SAHAJ study has been designed to provide evidence on what works to change harmful social norms and strengthen community-police relationships to support security and justice help-seeking. I am here today to ask you some questions about security and justice services available in this locality and how they serve victims of gender-based violence. If you allow, I will record this interview. I will just take a moment to review this form with you. It describes in more detail what you are being asked to do, how I will keep the information private and your rights in this study.

1. What are the key forms of gender-based violence experienced by women and girls in this locality?

2. Where do women and girls typically seek help for the violence and why?

3. Which security and justice services are available in this locality?

4. What are the circumstances under which gender-based victims seek out your services?

5. How do you [your organization] assist victims of gender-based violence?

6. How are these services perceived by violence victims and their families?

7. What steps does your organization take to ensure gender-sensitive services? Please provide an example

8. What steps does your organization take to ensure victim-centered services? Please provide an example.

9. What supports do women and girls need to use your services [or security and justice services in general]?

10. What challenges must women and girls overcome to use your services [or security and justice services in general]?

11. How effective are your services [or security and justice services in general] in stopping violence against women and girls who seek your help? [Probe for examples of success as well as failure]

12. What formal and informal mechanisms exist to refer cases and share information about victims of gender-based violence across security and justice organizations and with community-based organizations?

13. How effective are these mechanisms and how might they be strengthed? Please provide an example when the referral system worked well as well as an example where the referral did not work so well.

14. Which organizations do you find yourself referring the most cases to and receiving the most referalls from?

15. In your opinion, what changes are needed to increase the number of women and girls who seek justice for gender-based violence? Thank you very much for your time.

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