

ADAPTING AND TESTING FAMILY BASED INTERVENTION AMONG MARRIED WOMEN OF REPRODUCTIVE AGE TO ADDRESS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND MENTAL HEALTH IN NEPAL

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CONTEXT

- Domestic violence against women (DVAW) is a prevalent issue in low and middle-income countries (LMICs).¹
- Married women of reproductive age (MWRA) in LMICs often reside in extended households where family members may perpetrate violence and influence family dynamics. In Nepal, our study site, mothers-in-law (MILs) often can influence/perpetrate violence against women.²
- We designed a family-based intervention called "MILAP" engaging three key members of Nepalese households: wives, husbands and MILs, and earlier pilot-tested it among young married women.

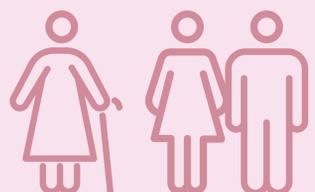
OBJECTIVE

Conduct a 6-month single-arm trial to assess acceptability, feasibility, and preliminary impact of a family-based intervention on reducing DVAW and depression among Nepalese MWRA.

METHODS

- **Design:** Mixed-methods
- **Recruitment:** referral-based recruitment in collaboration with local stakeholders, tiered consenting process.
- **Sample size:** 61 families (183 participants) including MWRA (15-49 years), their husbands, and MILs
- **Sites:** Dhanusa and Morang districts, Nepal
- **Duration:** February 2023 – July 2024
- **Inclusion criteria:** MWRA experiencing ongoing DVAW, willing to continue living together with family and improve relationships, no plans for migration during the study period.
- **Assessments:** Baseline; Follow-up at 1-,3-,6-months from the baseline

INTERVENTION (9 SESSIONS OVER 9 WEEKS, TOTAL 11 HOURS)

Mother-in-law (MIL) and daughter-in-law (DIL) sessions to enhance autonomy	Behavioral Couples therapy (BCT) to improve relationship and establish safety	Triad session to synthesize information
		
Four sessions: Two sessions of 2 hours Two sessions of 1 hour	Four sessions: Weekly session lasting for an hour	Final 1 hour session

QUALITATIVE INSIGHTS FROM PARTICIPANTS

"Things are much better now compared to before. Initially, conflicts were frequent, and we [wife-husband] would avoid talking to each other. But now when I [woman] express my feelings he [husband] understands and agrees. He [husband] often recalls the teachings from the program and shares how they [learnings from the intervention] have positively impacted him. We have internalized these lessons, and now we try to listen to each other and build connections within our family."

-Woman participant, Morang

References:

1. World Health Organization (WHO). Violence against women: intimate partner and sexual violence against women. Geneva, Switzerland: WHO; 2019.
2. Sapkota D, Baird K, Saito A, Anderson D. Interventions for reducing and/or controlling domestic violence among pregnant women in low-and middle-income countries: a systematic review. Syst Rev. 2019;8(1):79.

FINDINGS

Women, husbands, and MILs reported acceptability and satisfaction with the intervention, positive improvement in family relationship, and a strong willingness to recommend it to others.



FIG 1: WOMEN'S CONTROL OVER DECISION MAKING [Measured by Indian Family Violence and Control Scale (IFVCS); 14 items; 4-point Likert Scale; score range- 14-56; High Score explains high level of women's control over her decision making]



FIG 2: DVAW IN THE LAST MONTH [Measured by IFVCS; 15 items; High percent explains high incidence of IPV]



FIG 3: DEPRESSION AMONG WOMEN [Measured by Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9), 9 items, 4-point scale; PHQ 9>9= major depression; high percent indicates high depression]

IMPACT OF RESEARCH

- Findings showed early promise in reducing violence and depression by successfully engaging not just women, but also their husbands and influential family members (like mothers-in-law) establishing an evidence-based approach for future intervention design.
- The pilot was pivotal for maintaining momentum and engagement with stakeholders, facilitating the continuous adaptation of the intervention, and ultimately preparing and securing a large NIH-funded R01 randomized controlled trial.
- Dissemination of our learnings on national and international platforms deepened trust with local stakeholders, paving the way for policy engagement and future scale-up efforts.
- We've identified critical evidence gaps (e.g., for children or single women affected by DV) and are now seeking resources to test novel approaches.

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