

Contested Family: Masculinity, Sex Discrimination and Emotion

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Abstract:

Conventionally, it is assumed that the family holds care, love, and cooperation within its members. On the other hand, masculinity and sex discrimination are clearly visible features within the family in Nepali society. Thus, the "role transaction" between male and female contradicts the previous school of thought. Then, what is "care" within a family? As family constitutes male and female members (the third sexes—lesbian and gay are excluded in this paper) of different generations from various roles and capacities, the paper attempts to explore the competing meaning of "care" from the family members' perspectives. I carried out five in-depth interviews from July 15 to September 5, 2014, with a modern Nepali nuclear Hindu family employing a grounded theory approach (Corbin and Strauss 2008). The family has five members: two males (the father and son) and three females (the mother and two daughters). The youngest daughter of the family attempted suicide on July 10, 2014, after a violent conflict occurred with her father. Fortunately, the incident was resolved with the help of her mother and sister and the intervention of a social worker and police. From these cases, I found individuals' meaning formations are reflexive, the consciousness impelled to the individual self-perception that produces action, counteraction, reaction, and emotion. Interestingly, from these in-depth interviews, primarily two competing knowledge structures emerged—a male and female perspective—to view the notion of 'care'. The male group advocates that care is the fulfillment of basic material needs (food, money, education, etc.) and shelter (house). However, female members visualize "decision making", self, and "collective respect" as also inseparable components of care. Unequal opportunity structures between male and female members of the family are defined as "constraints of care" by female members. Collective and individual freedoms of females are their rights, which produce "real care" within the family. Thus, I argue that (i) "role location" is a matrix of the meaning (of care) formation, and (ii) "family care" includes both material and emotional components.

Keywords: family, masculinity, discrimination, emotion, care

Introduction

In Nepal, females hold 25.73 percent houses as chief of the family (CBS 2011)¹. In the recent history of Nepal, the rural-urban migration is increasing, however, only 17 percent peoples reside in the urban areas and its annual growth rate is 3.62 percent.²With growing rural-urban migration, the family structure is changing from extended to joint, and joint to nuclear. Thus, the traditional meaning of care is changing rapidly we can find in any joint or nuclear family that the main head of the family are mostly male members because of their masculinity and thus decision making, authority, responsibility are directly or indirectly in their hand and because of this power, which is provided to them by social and cultural practices following from generation to this modern period sex discrimination practices can be seen occurring. Women are perceived and treated physically weak, foolish, and trouble maker compared to men.

¹ Female-headed households increased by 10.86 percent compared to 2001 census to 2011 census (CBS 2011).

²Here urban areas include metropolises, sub-metropolises and municipalities (CBS 2011).

Therefore perception of superiority in men can be seen and this results to different behavior and emotion from women in same circumstances and in situation of time. Thus when different thinking process of man and women occur in same situation than understanding, behaving pattern, emotion, way of caring also differs .thus it creates gap between emotion, care and feeling of man and women and this gap invites the conflict within man and women .Hence, in this research also the husband and wife thinking process are different because the husband is overrule by the feeling of masculinity and doesn't wants' to understand or hear women(wife and daughter) thinking and perspective.

Therefore, the husband doesn't listen to regarding the meaning of "care" .he defines care as a supporting female member through economically and providing them with all materialistic comfort. Whereas female member defines care as a getting equal opportunity, decision making power, respect Hence,this understanding of care by male members and female member of this family is different to each other. This gap and differences in the meaning and understanding of care brings conflict and violence in the family and situation turns up to the level of committing suicide. Thus the global definition of care which we perceives and do to each other has not same definition for all. The meaning of care is defined individually according to the size, structure, behavior and perception of the family members towards to each other.

Research family³ at a glance

This nuclear family is the residence of Lalitpur district, Kusunti are living here from more than 30 years and is my neighbor. The respondent "father" age 45 originally belongs from the village area "charikot". Later in his age of 41 he joined private college and completed higher education and is engaged in real estate business. Whereas "mother" age 43 respondent belongs from the village "kavrepalanchok" and from the age of 14 she started living in Kathmandu doing job and supporting her family and after getting arrange marriage she quit the job by accepting husband request for not working. At the age of 38 she felt the need of education because she became embarrassed when she was not able to sign in children's report card and in cheque books. So, she joined school and completed up to grade 4. In order to look after her children and house she couldn't continue her study. All the three children's were born and brought up in city area. Father feeling the importance of education has placed all three children's in good school and college of city area. Thus, elder daughter age 23 is studying masters. Younger daughter age 21 is studying in grade 12 and son age 18 also in grade 12.

Research methodology and methods

Since the nature of the study is fluid and mercurial, the article has employed grounded theory (methodology) approach (Corbin and Strauss 2008) to interpret care in the "contentious conception" between male and female within a biological family. Even though, theoretically and morally "family" has been imagined as a 'care institution' but in practice within Nepali biological family varied values exist to take care of male and female (Rana et.al. 2002, Aziz 2001). But, academically it should be understood how these varied values evolved in Nepal analyzing Nepali society, history and culture similar to Japanese academic tradition (Shizuko 2013). However, discriminatory practices within male and female employing various social and cultural markers have been leading activism, social movements and revolutions across different points of time in Nepal (Karki 2006, 2010).

However, in private space,⁴ beyond theological conception, the definition of the 'care' has been always

³In this paper family includes only 'biological family'.

⁴Private space includes household affairs.

been problematic, and any study focusing on care must acknowledge the overlapping meanings and conceptualisations associated with the notion. Very generally speaking, the notion 'care' has been conceptualized as 'presence of emotional bond between help seeker and help provider' (Harris & White 2013). Here, I argue care would be described as activities where all sorts of social and cultural boundary would be broken out to help others in dignified manner with mutually respectful emotional bond.

Here, the study is very close with Weber's general causal logic theory (Kalberg 2005). The infusion of the two or multiple nodes may generate new logic and space for meaning of care formation. The 'care salience' in personal developmental sense is, undoubtedly, quite essential in the care dynamics. Unlike psychological methods to measure care, in this article the notion of 'care' of an activist has been measured using the causal conceptions of material fulfillment, disrespect, dignity, mutuality etc. as respondents identified their reference worldviews.

Thus, to discover the meaning of care I carried out five in-depth interviews from July 15 to September 5, 2014 and in October 5th with a modern Nepali nuclear Hindu family in Lalitpur municipality 10, in Lalitpur district. The family holds two males (father and son) and three females (mother and two daughters) members. To interpret the deeply lying meaning of care in different context between male and female, and bread provider and bread receiver, I took several in-depth interviews in different time post-suicide-attempt by youngest daughter. Several memos I developed from the interview with youngest daughter and father who always ignored her. Relatively, fewer interviews I took with the rest family members because the suicide attempt was happened after a violent incident occurred between the father and daughter.

I developed various diagrams from these memos and from these memos the body of the article has developed. In another language, I have followed techniques of Corbin and Strauss (2008), ground level response to middle level concept and middle level concept to high level themes.

Life cases and research question

Following cases reflects the contentious meaning of care in a family.

Cases

Case 1

Having arrogant personality, limited friend circle and is uninterested to study, always seeking attention, becomes happy whenever anyone supports and praise her therefore is ready to do anything for them. Where as in absence of it feels "hela" (unequal distribution of love and care) to her and has attempt suicide several time because she don't find usefulness of living life in disrespect, isolation, demotivation and in distrust. Therefore women and man always have different kind of emotional feelings, nature and role in the society and when this differences is not understood and accepted by each other than feeling of "hela" occurs which leads to conflict within family and continuous conflict leads to frustration and thus it takes person to the level of committing suicide.

Case 2

Bad family life experience, betrayal from own father, rude behavior from stepmother and spending lonely, hard and struggle life from childhood to teenager age, had make the father very rude and misbehaving character, as well as has develop the concept of money is everything and can buy actual happiness and care, which he didn't get in absence of money. His step mother marrying his father and his involvement in real estate professions, which deals with various types of females, leaves impression that working females can get characterless very fast for materialistic desire. So he is very authoritative towards female members of his family, does restriction and takes every decision for them. Lastly, concept of son will look in old age and daughters will go to other's house, after getting married creates unequal

distribution of care in son and daughter.

Case 3:

"Dependent to husband fully reduces the self respect as well as love and care from husband" wife stated". After marriage we don't have the freedom to live in "self interest" every minute has to be dedicated to husband and his children only. Therefore, female being illiterate and dependent to male motivates male to be more authoritative and controlling towards female members. Thus, provides only basic needs and materialistic wants as a care to them and fails to understand the real care which is giving respect, decision making power or in a one word no individual freedom is given.

Case 4:

18 years of son has developed the sense of proudness and masculinity in him. Thus he acts, behave in authoritative manner. Therefore this proudness acts changes into discrimination shape to his sisters. Understanding the concept that son has to look after parents in their old age, within now he starts playing a role as a protector for his family member which he denotes as a care.

Case 5:

Suffering from isolation, gender discrimination, distrust leads to fight for self identity, and for existence within family. The elder daughter develops the hatred and competitor feeling towards man. Accordingly, getting Materialistic support only brings momentum happiness which doesn't last in front of real care. And the real care, she never gets from her father and always craves for it. Therefore, have always given best effort in order to get it but couldn't succeed and as a result becomes more emotionally far from the father companion.

These cases reveals that care include two meaning within a single family from gender perspectives. First, male members define care as a fulfillment of basic, societal, educational need as well as fulfillment of all materialistic wants. Showing emotional support, motivation, encouragement to female members by male member is taken as going beyond the role of "real man" which is not accepted by the masculinity definition of males. Second, whereas female member define care as a getting respect, trust, empathy, emotional support, decisions making power, freedom to do anything which they desire for. Therefore fulfilling basic and materialistic wants is the duty of male members because being masculine. So, it doesn't fulfill the meaning of real care. Hence, I argue that fulfillment of basic to materialistic want and giving respect, freedom, equality, motivation, empathy to female member by male is a real care.

Emotional support

When an individual is feeling lonely, helpless, depressed, and confused as well as is happy, excited, curious in any situation of circumstances and case he/she desires emotional attention and support from their own ones, their presence and listening will make them feel better and motivates them in both happy and in sadness situation.

And in absence of it, it will take them to the level of committing suicide. Hence emotional support for female has got very much importance in their day to day life. The case of younger daughter describes the meaning more clearly which is as follows

From my childhood I never get attention and respect from my father, I failed thus; my father beat me instead of motivating me to study. I was even weak in studies and I still remember when I failed in class seven, I have to repeat my class, at that time I was scolded and beaten by belt from my father. I always expected love and care from my father, wish he had helped me to study and to do my homework's but whenever I asked him to help me in study he used to say, if I sit teaching you than who will go to work and pay your school fee? My friend's father also works but they have time for their children Therefore I used to feel so sad and used to think why he just can't give me a few minutes? 'When my brother failed in exam my father didn't scold him neither beat him but instead told him that if he passed the exam he will give him a

cycle .I was so much disappointed with his discrimination done in same case'. Whenever, I used to go outside to roam with my friends, my father scold me but when my brother used to go he didn't say a word. He allowed my brother to go to visit different places at evening time with his friend and whenever I tried to go he used to scold me saying "you are daughter so don't go outside in evening time only bad girls roam outside at evening time" {chori manche vayera bayluka bayluka ghumnay haina bigreko kayti matra ghumcha}.

Respectful Motivation

Individual always desires for motivation from their family member to carry daily activity to biggest work of their life. Therefore insulting,untruthful untrustable suggestion to carry out those works will demotivate a person to work. Hence, respecting individual ideas though it may seem to achieve positive, encouragement and suggestion should be given as a respectful motivation. As following case expresses My father always used to be happy whenever I stayed home but sometimes when I used to go at get together and birthday party and become late just at 6 pm ,he used to create scandal at home shouting me, with by bad words as if I have done big crime. I couldn't bear his unreasonable shouting at me. Thus, I used to argue with him and he used to get angrier with me and later on, in anger he started beating me up very badly .I feel so bad, disrespect without any reason and mistake why I am always punished? consequently, being frustrated I start cutting my hand in order to punished myself that I am a girl and used to feel If I was a boy and have reached home lately than I wouldn't have got scolded and beating. And on one occasion I went to see movie with my friends and got home late and as usual my father scolded me saying that I went with a guy so I am late. I tried to convinced him that I was with my friend but he didn't believe my words and start saying abusive words,instant in anger I shout at him with bad languages ,as a result dad became more aggressive and threwed chair at me. Even I couldn't bear the pain so I also hit with him by makeup kits ,both were becoming more aggressive and was hitting each other with anything which was available in the room at that time .My mom and sister tried their best to control the situation and fight but dad even beat them up in his anger and was shouting women are not worthy in doing anything they are trouble makers only" {yo ayemai manche haru kayhi kam lagdaina khali dukha ko karan hun }" neither you can study properly nor you have good behaviors you are waste to this society .{na padera khana sakches na bani bayhora nai gatilo cha samaj ko lage boj ho ta}"his this kind of words were killing me day by day,I used to think neither I drink nor smoke, or have a bf than also why my father don't trust me ,disrespect me and make me feel that to be a girl is like a cruise 'paap'. He always said that female don't have brain they are powerless and always creates problem by being over smart and is not capable of doing anything like man are capable to do and after hearing all this, I used to counter instead of disrespecting and demotivating why don't u motivate me to become better than males?

Equal Respect

Without discriminating gender, freedom to choose, speak, opportunities to present ideas, suggestion, and rights for decision making from basic household activity to societal level by female members is termed as equal rights known as a care. Subsequent case of wife is very relevant to equal respect as she expresses "Before marriage I was independent women I used to work, earns myself and used to support my family but after marriage my husband didn't allow me to work and I have to be totally interdependent to him". I don't have anything to do except looking after husband and children .I have given birth to two daughter already and when I was pregnant for third time, my husband started giving me mental tortured that if I didn't give birth to a son, than this time he will marry another women to have a son. He wants' son because it brings prestige in society and support to family which girl birth won't give. My husband is very aggressive in nature he doesn't listen to anyone he always feels and thinks he is only right and especially women can't be right because they are foolish, weak by nature. He doesn't understand the meaning of love and care, giving food, money is not love and care but helping me in kitchen,rearingchildren, respecting my emotion, interest, decision, my parents ,relative and being happy in my happiness is actual love and care .The desire definition of love and care I fail to make him understand and be unsuccessful to get it from him till now.To

look after 3 children's is very hard for me ,he only provides money that's not care ,he never seats ,spends time with children, whenever I told to do so he used to state, if I start spending time with them who will earn money? And when children's do mistakes or fails the exam he used to scold and beat them up .So, he have only negative impression in children's mind and thus children have more negative feelings to their father .I tried my level best to make them understand about their distinct behavior, different thinking pattern and way of loving, caring to each other is different but couldn't succeed. "To take children's for checkup, shopping, school I have to do all by myself, as a husband and father he should have showed me care by helping in these activities, which he never did. Thus, I always felt uncared by my husband."I get freedom to look and care my children but didn't get freedom to decide what they should eat, wear, which school they go, at that moment I feel so much discriminated and disrespected and used to think that if I was a father than I could have get authority to decide anything for my family. I always feel that I shouldn't have given birth to daughters because they will also get through all this phase which I am going through.

Material support

Individual life in this modern society is miserable, in the absence of materialistic support.Absence of it will make the person neglected by the society. Nobody will look at your emotion (helplessness condition) and provides a care for a person if they don't have materialistic support.So, in order to carea family member, material support is first priority and mostly important thing to run a family life. The following case of father interview supports this statement which is as follows

I didn't get opportunity to go to school, my parents were very bad to me so, at the age of 7 they brought me to Kathmandu in order to work in hotel as a dish washer .Though my family was rich, my father in order to bring stepmother he even throwed out my mother from home. "I have spent my childhood and adolescent age working and staying alone, and with my all hard work I have earn enough property to take care of my family". "I have given them education, clothes, enough food to eat .So; they don't have to face any problem like I have face in my life. 'No relatives were there for me, when I need them most. All people are selfish in this world. I always felt and have seen that women are the reason for every problem form home to working place. Their over smartness and bitchy "chada bayhwara" nature creates problem'. So, I want women to behave polite and not to speak in male's matter or work. "Women are weak from nature they don't have strong thinking power and physical strength like male have. So, I don't allow my daughter and my wife to go outside from home because they will not be to tackle social problem, crime and incident which usually occurs in the society". 'I care for them so I take decision for them and thus made my own rule and regulation to prevent from any bad incident which takes outside the home'. I have seen outside worldand which is very bad, in every step of life there is danger and people are ever ready to stab you from back. 'So in order to protect from those evil I rarely allow my wife, daughter to go outside and to bring any relatives or their friends at home. So, they are provided with everything they wanted, I have provided all the materialistic things which is needed to live in this modern life.

Conclusion

All the female members in this study always expected for anemotional help, motivation, support,respect,equality and power to decide for what they want to wear, buy,and visit and to do which they didn't get.Because of the main head of the family who always take the authority from small decision making to big one. Many small to big incident which occur in this 3 femaleslife are similar to each other. Hence produces same meaning of care which they fail to get from expected that one person i.e. { younger daughter seeking emotional support from his father when she failed in her exam ,wanted, expected her father to be teacher and to taught her so that she can pass her exam } as well as elder daughter wanting her father to arrive in school for father's day celebration which didn't happen and feeling of being orphan took place in her heart and {wife getting beaten by husband after 6 months of marriage because she have a conversation with a male neighbor }. Demotivating in every work, unsupportiveness,distrust in every idea that they presented to do make this all three female member to have negative feeling towards him.As well as this gap creates two levels of definition of care from them in same family.

Without valid proof and reason doubting wife and daughter and scolding them with abusive words, started making feel this three female members that "They are curse to be get birth as women because by birth they were presented as physically weak as well as not having good sense of humor" and when the main head of the family started treating in same way, they feel disrespect, loss of their own position, identity in their own house.

When awife needed emotional support from herhusband she only gets materialistic support. She had to have handle all the child rearing process, household responsibility all alone but couldn't get any decision making power not even to take decision like to choose school for her children ,dresses ,toys for them.

As well as when younger daughter brought her friend at home and who was not allowed to appear because her father simply don't like because of her lower caste group ,when she brought her in house than extreme violence occur with father, where she reaches to commit suicide also.

All three female members always search and seek for the support when they were feeling unsuccessful, alone in their life but instead of support at such time they got scolding, beating, demotivation form the male member .Their expected behavior or care from male member was never fulfilled as they desired for. Slowly, this unfulfillment of desire started changing into frustration and thus frustration started converting into conflict. Hence, this three female always wanted to have a care which includes emotional support, express love, and respect, equality, which they fail to get and thus term it as absence of care.

And both the male members of this study have same thinking pattern or we can see the influence of father thought, behavior is adapted by son. So, they behave in same way. Both have the feeling of superiority because of being male. So, is controlling all the female members of the house having sense of authority as well as responsibility to care family. Thus they make decision, rules and regulation for female member's .The biggest care to family is to give food, education, and shelter and to provide the entire materialistic thing needed to run life. Thus male members feels giving enough care is by fulfilling all above responsibility.

Therefore, I conclude that role of a male and female member, their cultural norms values, and prejudice thinking pattern, gender difference, biological structure, and life experience divide the meaning of care in individual as well as in collective way within a same family.

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