SHAPING THE ABORTION NARRATIVE IN NEPAL: ANALYSIS OF ONLINE AND PRINT NEWS MEDIA COVERAGE ON ABORTION IN NEPAL FROM 2016-2020

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Shaping the abortion narrative in Nepal: Analysis of online and print news media coverage on abortion in Nepal 2016-2020

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By

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Declaration:

Where other people's work has been used (from either a printed or virtual source, or any

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Key Terms

Abortion: In this study, the term abortion implies to induced abortion. Induced abortion is defined as "a procedure done or medication taken to end a pregnancy".(1)

Safe Abortion: According to WHO, an abortion is safe when it is done following an appropriate method recommended by WHO by a skilled provider. Safe abortion can be done using medications, also known as medical abortion, or through a "simple outpatient procedure".

Unsafe abortion: An abortion is considered unsafe "when it is carried out either by a person lacking the necessary skills or in an environment that does not conform to minimal medical standards, or both." (2)

Mass media: Mass media can be defined as "sources of public communication" to a large audience. Traditionally, mass media consists of newspaper, magazines, radio, and television broadcasts but now it also includes internet.(3)

News media: News media refers to "newspaper or other periodical issued at regular intervals, news service in paper or electronic form, radio station, television station, television network, community antenna television service, or person or corporation engaged in making news reels or other motion picture news for public showing."(4)

Print media: Print media refers to" any written or pictorial form of communication produced mechanically or electronically using printing, photocopying, or digital methods from which multiple copies can be made through automated processes."(5)

Online media: Online media refers to "media which is published over the Internet, and includes, without limitation, web-sites, blogs, and social media"(6)

Frames: Frames is a result of "selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described"(7)

Abbreviations

ATLAS.ti: Archive for Technology Lifeworld and Everyday Language

BPfA: Beijing Platform for Action

CEDAW: Convention on Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women

CREHPA: Center for Research on Environment Health and Population Activities

CRR: Center for Reproductive Rights

DDA: Department of Drug Administration

DPHO: District Public Health Office

FWD: Family Welfare Division

FWLD: Forum on Women Law and Development

HDI: Human development Index

HIV: Human Immunodeficiency Virus

ICPD PoA: International Conference on Population and Development Program of Action

INGO: International Non-government Organization

IPPF: International Planned Parenthood Federation

IWD: International Women's Day

MMR: Maternal Mortality Ratio

MoHP: Ministry of Health and Population

NDHS: Nepal Demographic Health Survey

NGO: Non-government Organization

NHP: National Health Policy

NHSS: Nepal Health Sector Strategy

PPP: Purchasing Power Parity

SMRHRA: Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health and Rights Act

SRH: Sexual and Reproductive Health

STI: Sexually Transmitted Infection

UHC: Universal Health Coverage

UNFPA: United Nations Population Fund

US: United States

WHO: World Health Organization

WOREC: Women's Rehabilitation Center

YCAN: Youth Champions Advocacy Nepal

Abstract

Introduction: Unsafe abortion is one of the major public health issues in Nepal. Abortion stigma has been one of the major factors contributing to unsafe abortion. News media play an important role in reducing or reinforcing stigma at different levels, therefore it's important to understand how abortion is represented in news media. This study aims to explore and analyze media frames on abortion in online and print news media in Nepal from 2016-2020 and provide recommendations to Family Welfare Division, Press Council Nepal, and civil society organizations.

Methodology: A qualitative content analysis of news articles from four popular Nepali print and online news outlets from 2016-2020 was done.

Results: The key results include summary of news coverage on abortion and its content. The key findings include increased news coverage on abortion before and after policy reforms in 2018, emphasis on the adolescent and young girls, abortion mostly co-occurring with negative legal and health consequences and use of stigmatizing languages and images in abortion news articles.

Conclusion and Recommendations: Abortion has been portrayed negatively in news media in Nepal. All these representations of abortion create negative perception towards abortion and promote misconceptions regarding the legal status, abortion procedure and its consequences. Additionally, it also creates fear and reinforces abortion stigma which could act as barrier in health seeking behavior related to abortion and lead to unsafe abortions. Recommendations include increased research, capacity strengthening of journalists, editors and members of Press Council Nepal, advocacy for decriminalization of abortion and engagement of news media to increase access to correct information on abortion.

Keywords:

Abortion Stigma, Framing, News media, Nepal

Word count:

13,075

Chapter 1: Background

1.1 Country context:

Nepal is one of least developed countries in South Asia with a population of approximately 30 million. (8) Nepal is also a land-locked country with diverse geographical terrains like mountains, hills, and plains. It is also a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic country with more than 123 ethnic groups.(9) The population of the country is very young with two-third of the population estimated to belong to the age-group 15-64 years.(8) Around one-third of the population is multidimensionally poor.(10) There has been a significant improvement in Nepal's Human Development Index, increasing from 0.378 in 1990 to 0.587 in 2019. Between 1990 and 2018, the life expectancy at birth increased by 16.3 years to 70.5 years in 2018. Similarly, mean years of schooling and expected years of schooling has improved by 2.9 years and 5.2 years, respectively. The gross national income per capita (in PPP dollars) was $2,748 in 2018. Despite some improvement in the HDI, Nepal still lags compared to most other South Asian countries.(11)

Nepal has been through decades of political transition from armed conflict for ten years followed by removal of monarchy to establishment of Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal in 2008. The country promulgated its new constitution in 2015 and is currently transitioning from a unitary form of centralized government to three-tiered government at federal, provincial, and local level. At present Nepal's administrative structure has been divided into one federal government, seven provincial governments and 753 local governments.(12) The new constitution incorporates the principles of human rights and aims to address the issues of long-term inequities within the Nepali society and expedite the process of development and prosperity. Similarly, after the new constitution in 2015, many new federal Acts and Regulations related to fundamental rights like health, education, food, housing, and social security were introduced to align with the values and principles of human rights and equity in the constitution.(13)

Nepal has committed to achieve Universal Health Coverage and worked toward major health system reforms which can be reflected in sectoral plans and policies like Nepal Health Sector Strategy 2015-2020 and National Health Policy 2019. Nepal has recently updated its National Health Policy in 2019 to guide the restructuring process of health services, improve quality and access to health services, strengthen social health protection, promote multi-sectoral partnership, and ensure that all citizens can enjoy their fundamental right to health.(14) In the past few decades, Nepal has made some remarkable progress and improvement in health outcomes like decrease in child and maternal mortality rates, incidence of major infectious diseases like HIV, tuberculosis, malaria and so on. Despite the progress, there are many health-

related indicators that has been stagnant or progressed slowly like maternal mortality ratio, contraceptive prevalence rate, unmet need for modern contraceptives, incidence of unsafe abortion and so on.(13)(14) Moreover, there is an increase in other social and gender issues like child marriage, chhaupadi (isolation of menstruator in a small shed during menstruation)(15), gender-based violence(16) like sexual harassment, rape, and trafficking.(17)(16)(18) These harmful social and cultural practices and gender-related issues not only hinders growth and development of an individual but also exposes them to risk of unintended pregnancy, unsafe abortion related death and morbidities, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infections.(19)(20) Besides, financial, socio-economic, and structural barriers are other reasons for the inequitable access to health services and information.(14) The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated the situation of health service access and utilization leading to poor health outcomes especially in contraceptive use, maternal health, child health, and chronic diseases.(21)(22)

Mass media plays an important role in disseminating information and updates about public health issues, new policies, and interventions.(23) Similarly, in Nepal, studies have shown that mass media could affect individual knowledge, attitude, health behaviors and utilization health services.(24–26) These studies have indicated the importance of further research on health communications and use of mass media. Many forms mass media like print media, broadcasting media and digital news outlets are found in Nepal. With significant increase in mobile and broadband penetration up to 140% and 70% respectively in 2019(27), most of the forms of mass media have shifted to online spaces to increase their reach. The print media in Nepal have existed for more than hundred years, however the first private commercial print media only started in 1993 after democracy and press freedom. There are nearly 3,900 newspapers registered that consists of daily, bi-weekly, weekly, and fortnightly newspapers. However, only few mainstream national dailies have strength to set agendas. (28)

Chapter 2: Problem statement, Justification and Objectives

2.1 Problem Statement

Unsafe abortion has been identified one of the major public health issues in many countries.(29) Unsafe abortion is one of the major reasons for high maternal deaths and disabilities which are preventable. Over the years, abortion has also been recognized as a human right in different international treaties, conventions, and conferences like International Conference on Population and Development Program of Action (ICPD PoA), Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)(30) and Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Forcing an individual to continue unwanted pregnancy by denying access to abortion services or forcing them to resort to unsafe abortion is considered as violation of human rights including right to life, right to health, right to bodily autonomy, right to be free from violence, discrimination, and torture. It also violates the right to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to the information, education and means to enable them to exercise these rights.

In Nepal, abortion is legal under certain period of pregnancy and conditions. A women can have an abortion upon request up to 12 weeks of gestation and up to 28 weeks in case of rape, incest, fetal anomalies or threat to pregnant women's health or well-being.(31) Abortion without consent of pregnant women and sex-selective abortions are considered illegal according to the Penal Code of Nepal.(32) Abortion was legalized in Nepal since 2002, which aimed to reduce high rates of maternal morbidity and mortality attributed to unsafe abortion.(33) Before 2002, abortion was criminalized and women who had abortions or health providers who performed abortions were prosecuted and imprisoned. Any abortion under any condition was equated with violent crimes like infanticide and murder which resulted in life sentences.(34) During that time, only few urban women had access to abortions through skilled providers.(35) Most of the women, especially from rural areas had no access to skilled providers and resorted to unsafe abortion which led to more deaths or life-long health complications or had legal implications like risk of life-long imprisonment. However, after the constitutional monarchy in 1990, there was an increased civic space and press freedom which led to wider civil society movement and advocacy for reforms in abortion law. Besides, Nepal as a signatory of International Conference on Population and Development Program of Action and Beijing Platform for Action in Beijing Conference in 1994 and 1995 respectively, contributed to discourses and advocacy for abortion law reforms from women's right perspective.(34) Since the legalization of abortion, there has been significant progress in legal and policy

environment for safe abortion. Different abortion methods including medical abortions were made available and free at all levels of public health facilities.(36) Safe abortion service has also been included in the national basic health service package.(37) There has been some significant reduction in the abortion related morbidity and mortality after the legalization of abortion.(38) Despite government's efforts to improve provisions and access to safe abortion services, the proportion of unsafe abortions has not reduced as expected which still accounted for more than half of all abortions.(39) This could be attributed to high unintended pregnancies(39) because of low modern contraceptive prevalence rate and high unmet need for modern contraceptives which has remained stagnant for many years. In 2019, the modern contraceptive prevalence rate was 39% and the proportion of contraceptive users discontinuing the method increased to 59%.(14) The median age at first marriage decreased to 17.9 years due to child marriage which increased the number of unintended pregnancy among adolescent girls.(16)

According to many past studies in Nepal, the access to safe abortion services was found to be limited due to several demand-side factors such as abortion stigma, lack of information about legality of safe abortion and its services, lack of women's decision-making autonomy and financial barriers are the common factors hindering access to safe abortion. (40–44) According to Nepal Demographic Health Survey (NDHS) 2016 report, around two-third women in reproductive age do not have knowledge about the legal status of abortion.(16) In addition, there were also supply-related factors such as limited safe abortion service facilities, distance from the facility, lack of confidentiality at the health facility, judgmental attitude and behavior among health service providers, indirect costs like transportation, shortage of medical supplies and lack of proper monitoring and evaluation are some of the key factors identified as a barrier for these services.(40,45–47) Some restrictive abortion policies like parental consent for minors, decrease in gestational age from any time during pregnancy to 28 weeks in case of fetal impairment and threat to pregnant woman's health and persistence of abortion in the criminal code create legal barriers for access to safe abortion.(31)(32)

Abortion stigma is one of the main factors that affect both abortion seeker and provider. Fear and stigma also prevent some women from seeking abortion services.(45) For service providers, it may lead to denying of abortion related training, psychological distress, denying abortion services and so on. Similarly, for women who seek abortion, the stigma might lead to continuation of the unintended pregnancy with increased financial and socio-economic burden, unsafe methods of abortion, post-abortion mental stress and anxieties. (48)

News media play an important role in setting the agenda for policy issues and public debates and influence people what to think about and how to think about a certain issue.(49–51) Since abortion in media is presented as one of the most controversial issues globally, different patterns of its representation can be observed in news media across different countries including countries with liberal abortion laws.(52–54) Despite abortion being common and a safe medical procedure(55), negative portrayal of abortion is more common.(52–54,56,57) According to a study in Great Britain in 2010, most of the print news media portrayed abortion as being dangerous, rare, and associated with physical, mental, and emotional risks. Moreover, women having abortions were labelled as irresponsible, immoral, and selfish. The news media constructed a label or a type for women who have abortions which stigmatized groups with certain characteristics like young, single, and childless and excluded other groups of women who have abortions.(52) A study regarding news coverage on abortion in US found that fetal personhood and emphasis on fetal life was more common compared to women's personal stories of abortion.(53) Another study in the US found that personification of embryo or fetus does not stigmatize directly, however, the implications on providers performing abortion and women receiving abortion as murderers create stigma and discrimination among these groups.(54) Similarly, emphasis on late term abortions through image depictions of full-term pregnant belly is also commonly found in media while in fact most of the abortions occur in first trimester. Health service providers providing abortion care services are also portrayed negatively, isolated from other health providers and labelled as 'murderers' or referred to as doing it for making profits. Also, there were very few news coverages that referred to common abortion facts and personal abortion stories.(54) These negative portrayals of abortion not only create abortion stigma and affect at individual level of decision-making regarding abortion, but it also affects public perception and policies on abortion which can get more regressive. This further threatens women's right to bodily autonomy and reproductive choices.

Some of the low- and middle-income countries in Africa, where abortion policies are highly restrictive, the abortion discourse in media mainly occurred as pro-choice vs pro-life.(56,57) In Uganda, Catholic Church had a strong influence in the abortion debates in media which led to lack of varied and balanced arguments in media.(57) However, in a study conducted in Zimbabwe, media was highly polarized and presented both pro-life and pro-choice issues. They also discussed the discursive strategies of media to promote opposition to abortion. They used horrifying experiences and consequences of abortion, both legal and health-related, which discouraged women to seek abortions.(56)

2.2 Justification of the Study

In Nepal, between 1990 and 2002, with democracy and increased press freedom, media supported and played an important role in abortion rights movement and advocacy.(34) However, after the legalization, there has been no research to understand the portrayal of abortion issue in the news media of Nepal. Unlike in the past, news media like national dailies do not only rely on the number of newspapers circulated as the reach has been maximized through online versions of the newspaper using social media. This has increased the potential of news media to reach a wider audience. While the most consumed form of media is radio, newspapers or news media are the main agenda-setters in Nepal and primary source of public and policy discourses.(28) In the past recent years, there have been some significant changes in abortion policies in Nepal like introduction of Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Act in 2018 and its Regulations in 2020.(31) This study would explore the pattern of news coverage and framing of abortion issues before and after 2018. Since, there has been no studies on framing of abortion issues in news media in Nepal, this study focuses on identifying existing frames of abortion in news media and emerging public and policy discourses on abortion. This study is important as it would reflect existing abortion narratives in news media and its implications on individual perception, knowledge, attitude, and health-seeking behavior related to abortion. This study also provides recommendations to key stakeholders to improve abortion representations in media and engage media to reduce abortion stigma in Nepal. This study can further serve as a foundation for future research on causal relationships of these frames on abortion and inform policymakers, health providers, media professionals and advocates about the coverage and portrayal of abortion issues in Nepal.

2.3 Objectives

To explore and analyze existing media frames on abortion in online and print news media in Nepal from 2016-2020 to provide recommendations to Family Welfare Division, Press Council Nepal, and civil society organizations regarding media-related interventions to improve perception, attitude, and health-seeking behavior on abortion.

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. Analyze the content of media coverage on abortion in online and print news media from 2016-2020 in Nepal.

2. Discuss the potential implications of existing media frames on abortion in online and print news media in Nepal from 2016-2020.

3. Provide recommendations to Family Welfare Division, Press Council Nepal, and civil society organizations to design and support media-related interventions to improve perception, attitude, and health-seeking behavior on abortion.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Analytical Framework

3.1 Study Design

This study aimed to explore and analyze existing media frames on abortion in online and print news media in Nepal from 2016-2020. With increasing mobile penetration and broadband connectivity(27), the news outlets have been able to reach wider audience both through print and online versions of newspapers. Since newspapers have been one of the most common sources of news and play an important role in agenda-setting(28), online and print news media have been used as primary source of data or platform for this study. The methodology for the study was a qualitative content analysis.

3.2 Sampling Method

Five most popular online and print news media based in Nepal were selected based on number of website visits(58), range of audience and availability of news archive for the time-period between 2016-2020. This includes two English national daily newspapers, one Nepali national daily newspaper and one popular online news portals. The selected news media outlets are Kantipur, The Kathmandu Post, The Himalayan Times and Online Khabar. Keywords such as "abortion", "termination of pregnancy", "safe abortion", "unsafe abortion", "abortion law" were used both in English and Nepali language in search box of selected news archives period of 2016 to 2020. The profiles of the selected news outlets are briefly discussed below:

i. Kantipur: Kantipur is a privately owned most popular national daily newspaper in Nepali language. It has the highest number of daily circulations up to 360,000. Further, it is also available through online e-papers and present in social media.

ii. The Kathmandu Post: The Kathmandu Post is also a privately owned popular national daily newspaper in English language. The daily circulations claimed by this news outlet is 82,000.

iii. The Himalayan Times: the Himalayan Times is another privately owned popular national daily newspaper in English language.

iv. Online Khabar: Online Khabar is one of most popular online news portals available both in English and Nepali language. However, for this study, Nepali version was used.

The news articles were selected based on inclusion and exclusion criteria as follows:

Inclusion criteria:

i. Any news stories, features, and opinion articles from the selected news outlets, primarily focused on abortion were included in the study.

ii. Articles focused on the issue of abortion in context of Nepal were included.

iii. Articles published between January 1, 2016, and December 31, 2020, were included.

iv. Articles in any language, English or Nepali were included.

v. Articles containing more than 100 words were included.

Exclusion Criteria:

i. Duplicated news articles were excluded

ii. Articles focused on miscarriage/ spontaneous abortion were excluded.

The duration of past five years i.e., 2016-2020 was selected for retrieving the articles since there has been some major policy changes regarding abortion in 2018, which enabled me to identify media frames before and after the policy change. As mentioned above, the Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Act was passed in 2018 which recognized abortion as a reproductive right of women with some changes in the gestational age limit.

3.3 Analytical Framework

The data analysis method of the study is based on some important concepts and theories of abortion stigma and framing theory which are described below.

Abortion Stigma:

One of the important concepts in this study is abortion stigma. This concept will be used to understand how abortion stigma are formed and manifested at different levels and its implications at different levels. It can be used identify common frames related to abortion in media specifically in relation to abortion stigma. Abortion stigma can be defined "as a negative attribute ascribed to women who seek to terminate a pregnancy that marks them, internally or externally, as inferior to ideals of womanhood." Here ideals of womanhood in relation to abortion stigma implies broadly to perception of female sexuality, motherhood, and nurture instinct. When female sexuality is perceived only for procreation, motherhood as an inevitable phenomenon for women and women as life-giver and nurturer, these social constructs of femininity or womanhood stigmatizes women who seek abortion. Although abortion is common, the under-reporting of abortion affects the true prevalence data which leads to a narrative of abortion as uncommon and rare. Therefore, women having abortion is considered or labelled as deviant from the "normal" and face discrimination. Women who have abortion observe and fear the stigma and

discrimination and choose to under-report it, thereby continuing the cycle of abortion of stigma. To exclude women who had abortion, different stereotypes and labels are given that represent undesirable characteristics like promiscuous, selfish, sinner, murderer, irresponsible and so on. As mentioned earlier, there are many factors that contribute to the stigma however, systemic factors like inequality in access to power and resources, harmful gender roles and attempt to control female sexuality are considered as the foundations that perpetuate abortion stigma.(59)

Abortion stigma can be found at different levels like individual, community, organizational, structural, and framing discourses as shown in Figure 1.(59) At individual level, perceived stigma of abortion in the form of shame and guilt can be found. This perceived stigma discredits a woman's own experience of abortion and is forced to internalize the associated stigma which is influenced by the negative stereotypes at community level. This leads to secrecy and isolation which may cause denial of abortion services, introducing restrictive policies on abortion or opting for unsafe methods of abortion. At community level, negative stereotypes used to describe individual who had abortions or performed abortions can perpetuate stigma. It could also include terms or words used for abortion itself in the local context which may portray the procedure as positive or negative. Stigma can also be reflected at institutional and structural level through regressive organizational policies, legal and service provisions for abortion and so on.(59) This study focuses stigma at the level of framing discourses or media. As mentioned in earlier sections media plays an important role to reinforce or reduce these stigmas through their choice of words and framing of the issue. Some of prominent themes that have been identified in the media across different contexts is fetal personhood through words like child and images of full-term pregnant belly which portrays abortion as cruel, violence and unjust act. (59) But in fact, most of the abortions occur in the first trimester when the embryo or fetus is not well-developed. Proportion of first trimester abortions are increasing in countries with liberal abortion laws which may be due to the availability of medical abortion which is recommended within 9 weeks of pregnancy.(60) Comparing these safe medical procedures with serious crimes like murder may form a dominant narrative in the media that abortion is a crime, which further manifests at community and individual level. In this way, the stigma at one level may affect how stigma manifests at other levels. Abortion stigma can have a huge impact and consequences on women's health like complications due to unsafe abortion, maternal deaths, suicide, abuse, limited opportunities for education and employment, financial burden, legal prosecution and so on.

Framing Theory:

The concept of framing has been extensively studied and used for media research. Different authors across different study disciplines like sociology, psychology, linguistics, and mass communications have discussed and defined the term framing and described the process, result, and effects of framing. One of the earliest concepts of frames was given by Erving Goffman in 1974, who defined frames as the "schemata of interpretation that enable individuals to locate, perceive, identify and label occurrences or information".(61) Similarly, Gamson defines frames as "central organizing idea for making sense of relevant events".(62) He further discussed about the "symbolic devices" where frames can be located that included "metaphors, catchphrases, visual images and moral appeals".(63) One of the most comprehensive and widely used definitions of framing was given by Entman who mentioned that framing was all about "selection and salience". According to Entman, framing means "to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described".(7) This definition of frames will be used as the primary definition for this study to understand the concept of frames.

Frames can define a particular problem from certain point of view indicating gain or loss and emphasize what the problem is; it can further diagnose the problem by indicating causal association between a problem-causing agent and a problem; suggest moral implications and recommend a solution or a call to action. It could be possible that all or a part of the above-mentioned framing functions could be used in a sentence. In a communication process, frames can be found in four places including communicator, text, receiver, and culture. For example, communicators could make a conscious or unconscious decisions about what to say which might be guided by their own set of beliefs or other factors. Similarly, a text may reflect certain frames which can be identified through inclusion or exclusion of specific words, phrases, stereotypical images and sources of quotes and information that emphasizes certain point of view. Also, the receiver's frame may or may not be aligned with the frame in the text or as intended by the communicator. Culture is considered as the source of common frames found in a discourse or a community. However, this study exclusively focuses on identifying existing frames in the text.(7)

An experimental study done by Kahneman and Tversky provides strong evidence on effect of framing. The study proves that framing can have a common effect on large number of receivers on whether an issue is

noticed and how it is understood and evaluated. The study also focuses on the importance of omissions of certain aspect of a problem or issue which can further impact receiver's judgement about the issue.(64)

The concept framing in media provides an alternative to objectivity and bias paradigm. It has been important to understand the effects of mass communication and provide valuable insights to communicators and actors.(65)

Since identification of frames is an important aspect of the study, two approaches to media framing will be used for the analysis of the selected news text. "Framing as a multi-dimensional concept" and a part of "the list of frames approach" will be used. The first concept about framing as a multi-dimensional concept explains how frames can be measured by considering different elements or dimensions of an issue. In 1990, Swenson identified eight elements or dimensions for the framing of abortion in news coverage which includes "gender of the writer", "placement of the article", "terms used to refer pro-choice group", "terms used to refer pro-life group", "whether women's right or fetal right is considered paramount", "morality orientation", "discussion of when life begins", and "terms used to refer fetus".(65) These dimensions were used as broad categories to identify frames within these dimensions. Also, new dimensions like terms used for abortions, women who have abortions and providers performing abortions, reasons for abortions and consequences after abortion were added to the list. The list of frames approach required the researcher to first identify all possible list of frames for the selected topic of discussion. The identified frames were described with "specific keywords and catchphrases". Furthermore, it suggested 11 framing mechanisms or focal points to identify frames which included headlines, lead paragraph, photo, photo caption, selection of sources, selection of quotes, pull quotes, logos, statistics and concluding statements.(65) In this study, only the 11 framing mechanisms from the list of frames approach were used to locate frames in the news text. However, other parts of text were also coded and used as evidence to support the identified frames.

3.4 Data Analysis

The unit of analysis for the study were sentences and paragraphs of the news articles. Theoretical concept of framing as defined by Robert Entman was used as the operational definition of framing for the study. Entman defined framing as "To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating context, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.''(66)

Thematic coding approach was used and the emergent codes were considered and included during analysis. Line-by-line coding was done. Some pre-defined codes were used for dimensions like gender of the writer, placement of the article, terms used for fetus, terms used for pro-choice and pro-life, discussion of when life begins, and importance given to women's life vs fetal life. This was based on the literature review and analytical framework of the study. Some emergent codes were defined during the coding process for emerging themes within the articles such as co-occurring topics and sub-topics on abortion. The definitions of code can be found in the annex. The text data were coded, categorized, and organized using ATLAS.ti 9. The prevalence of themes and categories were identified, analyzed, and interpreted in Microsoft word.

3.5 Limitations of study

Some of the limitations of the study could be the limited variations of the news outlets which does not include weekly tabloids, magazines, local newspapers, and newspapers in languages other than English and Nepali due to time limitations and remote accessibility issues.

Chapter 4: Findings

This section presents the key findings of the study which includes an overview and summary of news articles and its content related to abortion. Then, it also describes and interprets key themes that were identified in the news articles such as adolescent, gender, policy, language, and images in relation to abortion.

4.1 Overview of selected news articles and its content

This section provides an overview of selected news articles on abortion based on the news type and news section. It also provides the number of articles found in each year from 2016 to 2020 across four news outlets. This will help to understand how the number of news coverage varies across different news outlets and years. The type of news, news section and placement of article reflects the extent of importance and relevance given to the issue of abortion. This section also contains information like the gender of author, sources of data used in the articles and co-occurring topics and sub-topics related to abortion that appeared in the news articles.

4.1.1 Profile of selected news articles on abortion:

A total of 144 articles were selected for the study. As shown in Table 1, based on the number of articles, Kantipur has the highest number news articles on abortion from 2016-2020, followed by Online Khabar, the Himalayan Times and The Kathmandu Post. Based on the type of news, most of the news articles were straight news/hard news while only few were features and opinion articles. Based on the news sections, most of news articles on abortion were featured in national news followed by local, provincial, health, opinion, miscellaneous and entertainment section. The profiles of the selected news articles are described in the table below.

Table 6: Summary of news articles based on the type of news and news section among selected news outlets.

Number of selected news articles	The Kathmandu Post	The Himalayan Times	Kantipur	Online Khabar	Total number (n=144)	Percentage
Type of News						
Hard News	14	25	45	25	109	75.7%
Features	1	0	0	12	13	9%
Opinions	7	7	3	5	22	15.3%
News Sections						

National	7	8	3	23	41	28%
Provincial	1	0	26	0	27	19%
Local	0	16	13	1	30	21%
Health	5	1	4	14	24	17%
Entertainment	1	0	0	2	3	2%
Politics	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Miscellaneous	2	0	1	1	4	3%
Editorial/Opinion	6	7	1	1	15	10%

As shown in Figure 2, highest number of news coverage on abortion occurred in the year 2017 and 2018. This could be due to the policy discourses before and during the new abortion law i.e., Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health and Rights Act 2018 and the contradictions between the new law and the penal code which will be discussed in the upcoming sections. The news coverage on abortion is lowest in 2020 which could probably be due to COVID-19 as most of the media attention and coverage was about COVID-19. As mentioned previously, Kantipur has the highest coverage, and The Kathmandu Post has the lowest coverage from 2016 to 2020. In 2016, all the news outlets had equal number of news coverage on abortion.

Figure 1: Number of news article coverage on abortion from 2016-2020 according to the news outlets.

4.1.2 Gender of the writer

As shown in Table 2, the gender of the author was not available for more than half of the news articles. However, among the articles that mentioned about the gender of the author, 43 of the articles were written by male authors and only 22 articles were written by female authors. Among the four news outlets, Kantipur has highest number female authors and comparatively more than male authors. However, all other news outlets have more male authors and very few female authors writing a news article on abortion. There were no non-binary authors found in the news articles.

Table 7: Number of news articles based on the gender of the author.

	The Kathmandu Post	The Himalayan Times	Kantipur	Online Khabar	Total
Male	11	8	14	10	43
Female	2	2	16	2	22
Non-binary	0	0	0	0	0
Not available	9	22	18	30	79

4.1.3 Placement of the article:

As shown in Table 3, most of the news articles on abortion were placed in section front followed by inside. Here section front means the front page of a section in the newspaper and inside means in any other page apart from front page and section front. Only five articles appeared in the front page of the newspaper where four of them were featured in The Kathmandu Post and one in The Himalayan Times. The placement of article was only applicable for three print newspapers and not applicable for online news portal like Online Khabar. Besides, some of the e-paper versions of print newspapers from older years could not be retrieved and placed as not applicable.

Table 8: Number of news articles based on their placement in the newspaper.

	The Kathmandu Post	The Himalayan Times	Kantipur	Online Khabar	Total
Front page	4	1	0	0	5
Section Front	8	16	19	0	43
Inside	4	6	12	0	22
Not applicable	6	9	17	42	74

4.1.4 Co-occurring topics and sub-topics among excluded and included articles:

For the excluded articles, most commonly co-occurring topic with abortion were sex-selective abortion, forced abortion, child marriage, teenage pregnancy, rape, contraceptive use, Sexual and Reproductive Health services, International Women's Day, Maternal Mortality Ratio, infertility, uterine prolapse, illegal pharmacies, migration, irrational use of drugs, disability, Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). These articles were excluded as they merely mentioned about abortion or were not primarily focused on abortion.

Among selected articles, the co-occurring topics reflect the common themes found in news articles within and outside abortion. The list of general co-occurring topics is shown in Table 4 and co-occurring sub-topics related to abortion are shown in Table 5. Most of these topics are interrelated and will be discussed within key themes.

Table 9: List of general co-occurring topics in the news articles and the number of times coded in the articles.

S.N.	General Co-occurring topics	Number of times coded in articles
1.	Adolescent and Young girls	124
2.	Contraception	81
3.	Crime and Punishment	90
4.	Cultural norms and values	22
5.	Child marriage	13
6.	Early Pregnancy	16
7.	Gender-based violence	24
8.	Gender equality	34
9.	Global gag rule	10
10.	Human right	62
11.	Policy and Guidelines	77
12.	Sexuality	20
13.	Sex Education	15
14.	Unmarried adolescents and young girls	35
15.	Others	90

As shown in Table 4, the most common co-occurring topics include adolescent and young girls, crime and punishment, contraception, policy and guidelines, and human right. Others category includes topic that occurred less than 10 times like caste-based discrimination, COVID-19, disability, drug abuse, ectopic pregnancy, emergency contraceptive pills, extramarital affair, health tourism, healthcare fund, media, political ideology, migration, poverty, premarital sex, religion, Sustainable Development Goals, and sex workers.

Table 10: List of co-occurring sub-topics in abortion and number of times coded in the articles.

S.N.	Co-occurring sub-topics in abortion	Number of times coded in articles
1.	Abortion as a family planning method	13
2.	Access to safe abortion	323

3.	Awareness on legal and safe abortion	93
4.	Financial barriers	23
5.	Forced abortion	41
6.	Illegal abortion	77
7.	Increasing abortion	131
8.	Legal abortion	143
9.	Medical abortion	109
10.	Multiple abortion	57
11.	Sex-selective abortion	70
12.	Abortion Stigma	57
13.	Unsafe abortion	286
14.	Others	41

As shown in Table 5, the most common sub-topics in abortion that appeared in the news articles were about access to safe abortion, unsafe abortion, legal abortion, increasing abortion and medical abortion. These articles included about increasing access to safe abortion, new safe abortion service provisions, barriers to access safe abortion, cases of unsafe abortions, risks and consequences of unsafe abortions, legal provisions of safe abortion, increasing abortion, increase in use of medical abortion, illegal use of medical abortion, risks of medical abortion and so on. Increasing abortion was the most common sub-topic found in the headlines. The articles moderately mentioned about lack of awareness on legal and safe abortions, financial barriers to safe abortion, illegal abortion, sex-selective abortion, multiple abortions, abortion stigma, forced abortion and abortion as a family planning method. Other sub-topics that were least mentioned and categorized as others in Table 5 include abortion as a complex procedure, abortion as a sin, abortions later in pregnancy, abortion as controversial, destigmatizing abortion, day celebrations on safe abortion, miscarriage, positive consequences after legalization of abortion and viability of fetus.

4.1.5: Common reasons for abortion

The table below lists the reasons for abortion that were mentioned in the selected news articles.

Table 6: List of reasons for abortions appeared in the article and number of times coded in the articles.

S.N.	Reasons for abortion	Number of times coded in the articles
i.	Failed contraceptives	4
ii.	Fetal anomalies	1
iii.	Health risks	6
iv.	Illegitimate pregnancy	24
v.	Rape/Incest	6
vi.	Socio-economic reasons	16
vii.	Son preference	25
viii.	Unintended pregnancy	36

The most common reasons mentioned for abortion were unintended pregnancy, son-preference, illegitimate pregnancy, and socio-economic reasons. Only few articles mentioned rape/incest, health risks, fetal anomalies, and failed contraceptives as the reason for abortion.

Unintended pregnancy as a reason for abortion was mentioned in 31 articles across all four news outlets. This included news articles mentioning about unwanted as well as mistimed pregnancy. Son-preference is the second most common reason for abortion mentioned in 20 articles across all news outlets. The articles mostly include cases of sex-selective abortion, son-preference as a cause for increasing forced abortion and multiple abortions. Articles include about prevalence of sex-selective abortion both in rural and urban area and among people from varying socio-economic status.

Illegitimate pregnancy was another reason for abortion that was mentioned in 15 articles from The Kathmandu Post, Kantipur and Online Khabar. Most of the articles mentioned about increasing abortion among women who were engaged in extramarital sex when husbands were abroad, unmarried adolescent and young girls who engaged in premarital sex and abortion stigma in general associated with women engaged in illicit sex.

Socio-economic reasons for abortion were mentioned in 11 articles of all four news outlets. Most of the articles mentioned about financial issues followed by education and employment opportunities.

4.1.6: Consequences after abortion:

Most of the news articles mentioned about the negative consequences of abortion. It was mentioned in 48 articles across all four news outlets. Most of the articles included about the negative consequences related to unsafe abortion, illegal abortion through unregistered medication, multiple abortions, and abortion at young age. Only some articles mentioned about negative health effects from safe abortion. Regarding the consequences, both short-term and long-term effects of abortions were mentioned. Short-term and immediate effects included excessive bleeding, weakness, abdominal pain, fever, injuries, infection, and death. While long-term effects included infertility, menstrual cycle issues, uterus problems, blocked fallopian tube, tumor, cancer, pelvic inflammatory disease, thinning of uterus, mental illness, and aging. Some negative socio-economic consequences included interrupted education, high medical expenses, and early marriage. Most of the long-term consequences were mentioned because of multiple abortions.

Only seven articles mentioned about the positive consequences of abortion in all the news outlet. The articles mentioned about decrease in persecution and jail terms for women who terminated their pregnancies, decrease in maternal mortality deaths due to unsafe abortion and saved many lives.

4.1.7: Sources of data and quotes in the articles

The sources of data quoted in the articles included public institutions, public and private non-profit health service providers, not-for-profit non-government organizations (NGOs), international NGOs (INGOs), international research organizations, Supreme Court, Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and World Health Organization (WHO). The most common source of data were Center for research on Environment Health and Population Activities (CREHPA), a national not-for-profit private research institution, and District Public Health Office.

Similarly, the most common source of quotes used in the news articles were health specialist, local health worker, District Public Health Office and Ministry of Health and Population. Other sources of quotes include Central Child Welfare Board, sub-regional hospital, CREHPA, Centre for Reproductive Rights, Department of Drug Administration, disability rights activist, District Coordination Committee, district hospital, district police office, Family Welfare division, Forum on women Law and development, Ipas, International Planned Parenthood Federation, legal advocates, municipality representative, National Women commission, parliamentarian, Regional Health Directorate, tertiary maternity hospital, women rights activist, women's rehabilitation center (WOREC), and Youth Champions Advocacy Nepal (YCAN).

4.2 Key Themes:

This section of the findings describes and interprets the occurrence of key over-arching themes found in the news articles such as adolescent, gender, policy, languages, and images in relation to abortion.

4.2.1 Adolescents and Abortion

Adolescent and young girls was the most common co-occurring topics found across all news outlets. Most of the articles in Kantipur and Online Khabar which are in Nepali language discussed about increasing safe and unsafe abortions among adolescent girls and young women both in rural and urban areas of Nepal. Nine of the news articles mentioned it in the headline. While some articles mentioned that the legalization of abortion and free safe abortion services have increased access to safe abortion which increased the number safe abortions among the adolescent and young girls, others discussed about the lack of adolescent-friendly services, abortion stigma, lack of confidentiality resulting in unsafe abortions through medications from local pharmacies. The articles described about negative consequences of having abortions at young age like infertility, problems in uterus, thinning of uterus and uterine rupture. They also mentioned about multiple abortions, use of illegal medical abortions and abortions being used as a method of family planning among adolescent and young girls.

While talking about abortions among adolescents and young girls, the news articles also referred to sociocultural norms like child marriage in rural areas. Child marriage was referred to in 11 articles in three news outlets. Most articles refer to child marriage as the reason for increasing abortions among adolescent girls. One article mentions about child marriage because of abortion. Some of the articles discussed that the causes of increasing unsafe abortions among urban adolescent and young girls were mobile phones, social media, early initiation of sex, "live-in relationships" and "western culture" such as movie influence, smoking and drinking, while only few mentioned about lack of sex education, contraceptives, and abortion stigma.

Adolescent and young people's sexuality was another common topic related to abortion. A total of 12 articles referred to sexuality in Kantipur and Online Khabar. The articles quoted health experts, health specialists, government officials and teachers. The articles mentioned that adolescents lack guidance and easily have sex, engage in romantic relationships early and initiate sexual activity early in school, considers love, attraction, and sex as the same thing, seek sexual pleasure, have high sexual desire and sexual

curiosity, normalized sexual relationship, engage in social media, online dating, and casual sex. Most of the articles consider the elements of sexuality as the cause for high rates of abortion among adolescent and young people.

Unmarried adolescent was also a frequently mentioned topic in the news articles of all the news outlets. It was mostly mentioned in Kantipur and Online Khabar. Headlines of three articles mentioned about unmarried adolescents and increasing abortions. Some articles mentioned that abortion among unmarried adolescents and young women was uncommon practice in the area. Many articles referred to the increasing abortion among unmarried adolescents and young women, multiple abortions, illegal and unsafe abortion, statistics of unmarried women receiving abortion services and social stigma of being unmarried and pregnant. According to the news articles, most of the unmarried women seek unsafe and illegal abortions due to stigma and privacy issues. They tend to buy unregistered medication for abortion from local pharmacies and suffer serious consequences like continuous and excessive bleeding and seek post-abortion care services.

Many articles quoted government officials, health experts, gynecologists and teachers saying that young people are informed about their right to abortion, but they are not informed about their responsibilities. Most articles describe adolescent and young girls who had abortions as naïve, irresponsible, and reckless.

279:6 ¶ 19 in 109_2020_OK

"I am surprised that even adolescent girls studying in Grade 10-11 visit my clinic for abortion. Adolescent girls chewing gum and giggling come along with their friends asking for abortion services. I provide them abortion services and counsel them about family planning methods, but I don't think they listen to me."

- *Health service provider quoted in a news article titled "Facebook, Relationships and Accidents" published in Online Khabar on December 31, 2020, by Dr. Aruna Upreti.*

However, some articles also mentioned about drug abuse, rape, and incest as the reason for increasing abortions among adolescent and young girls. According to the news articles, adolescent and young girls engaged in drug abuse have irregular menstrual cycle. They are either discarded by their family or live away from home and engage in unsafe sex. They realize it quite late that they are pregnant, making them ineligible for abortion on request and eventually sought for other unsafe methods of abortion.

Sex education also appeared in 12 news articles across all news outlets. The news articles either referred to lack of sex education as the reason for high unintended pregnancies and unsafe abortions or suggested that sex education is important and should be compulsory for in and out of school children.

4.2.2 Gender and Abortion

Gender was also one of the common themes occurring in the abortion news articles. Sub-themes like gender-based violence and gender inequality were mentioned. Gender-based violence appeared in 14 news articles across all news outlets. Headlines of four news articles referred to gender-based violence. New articles were about cases of rape, incest, abortion laws in case of rape and incest, sex-selective abortions, and physical assault. Gender inequality was referred in 22 news articles. These articles referred to gender inequality as an intersectional issue in abortion, gender equality because of safe abortion, empowering women, gender inequality and sex-selective abortions, harmful gender norms, gender inequality as a barrier for access to safe abortion, lack of decision-making power among women especially in relation to fertility and contraception.

According to news articles, socio-cultural norms like child marriage, son preference, religious rituals, patriarchal norms, and values reinforced harmful gender norms. Contraception was also one of the common topics in most of the articles and was discussed in relation to gender. This topic was found across all news outlets. Only two news articles had it in the headlines. The news article mostly mentioned about the lack of access to contraceptives and low use of contraceptives among couples which led to multiple abortions. Some articles based on interviews with health service providers, mentioned that the husband would not use any contraceptives and forbid their partner as well. Also, among partners of migrant husband, they were forbidden to use contraceptives as a sign of fidelity. This shows lack of control in contraceptive use and fertility issues among women which can be demonstrated by the text coded below.

182:5 ¶ 14 in 12_20190526_TKP

"When hospital staff asked her why she had used abortion kits so frequently, instead of other easily available contraceptives, she replied that her husband didn't like to use condoms since he didn't get much pleasure from sex. He had also forbidden her from using other means of contraception, like the Copper-T, an intrauterine device, as it apparently 'poked' him."

- *Hospital staff quoted in an article titled "With abortion pills easily available, men are refusing to use condoms" published in The Kathmandu Post on May 26, 2019.*

4.2.3 Policy and Abortion

Policy was one of the over-arching themes in the news articles that consists of reference to abortion law, policies and guidelines, crime and punishment, human rights, and international policies such as global gag rule. Policy and guidelines were one of most common themes that appeared in 40 articles across all news outlets. Among four news outlets, Online Khabar referred to policy and guidelines least number of times i.e., only three articles referred to it. This topic included articles that referred to national laws, policies and guidelines related to safe abortion. In 2016, new articles referred to free safe abortion guidelines, plan and budget, comprehensive abortion policy 2002, safe abortion bill, National Abortion Policy 2002, Safe Abortion Procedure 2003, Safe Abortion directives 2016 and Bill for managing pregnancy protection. Most of them are related to safe abortion service provision, however the bill for managing pregnancy protection was about sex-selective abortion, registered in parliament in 1997 but it was not introduced for debate. In 2017, most articles referred to legalization of abortion and Safe Abortion Procedure 2003. In 2018, articles referred to legalization of safe abortion, National Health Policy and medical abortion provision, safe abortion law in penal code, Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health and Rights Act (SMRHRA) 2018, reproductive Health and Regulations for Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health and Rights Act. Most of the articles referring to policy and guidelines appeared in 2019. In 2019, the articles referred the new abortion law which was protested by medical professionals and defended by the government, Supreme Court Ruling on Lakshmi Dhikta v. Nepal case for affordable and accessible safe abortion services, monitoring budget for sex-selective abortion, contradiction between revised penal code and SMRHRA 2018, delayed regulations for SMRHRA and its effect.

Crime and punishment was the second-most common topic after adolescent and young girls, that appeared in the news articles across all news outlets. This topic appeared in the headlines of 14 news articles. The headlines mostly included about individuals being charged or imprisoned due to abortion which included women who had abortions, health providers performing abortion and individuals forcing abortions. In general, most articles under this theme were about sex-selective abortions, forced abortions, drug abuse and law amendment discourses. Some news articles discussed about the negative effects of having abortion laws in the penal code that criminalizes abortion. Many women had to face homicide charges and suffer imprisonment even in case of miscarriage. This further adds to the stigma and fear around abortion. The articles discussed about how activists and legal advocates were demanding to decriminalize abortion and remove it from the penal code as per the ruling of the Supreme Court in

Lakshmi Devi Dhikta vs Government of Nepal case. Similarly, the news articles also discussed about the policy debates around abortion. In 2018, Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health and Right Act (SMRHRA) was introduced which contradicts the revised penal code regarding abortion laws. Some articles in The Himalayan Times in 2019 explored activists' thoughts on the Act. According to these activists, few aspects of the new Act were regressive and needs to be amended since the revised Penal code allowed abortion at any stage of the pregnancy for women whose life is at risk or affects their physical or mental health or have any fetal anomalies, but the Act does not allow abortion above 28 weeks in these cases. However, the positive aspect of the Act compared to penal code was that it allowed abortion up to 28 weeks in case of rape or incest while the penal code only allows up to 18 weeks of pregnancy.

200:12 ¶ 34 in 30_20190303_THT

"SMRHRA should be amended to incorporate provisions to enable women to terminate pregnancy at any stage in some serious situations as provisioned in the penal code,"

– Meera Dhungana, Legal Advocate, The Himalayan Times, 2019.

Human right was also one of the most common themes mentioned across all news outlets in 34 articles. Most of the articles in The Kantipur Post and The Himalayan Times mentioned about reproductive health right as a fundamental right of women, abortion as a right of women to health and life, women's right to bodily autonomy, right to safe abortion, abortion as basic human right and sexual rights. Some news articles mostly in Kantipur and Online Khabar mentioned that women are not aware of their right to safe abortion, abortion rights have been misused, women know about their right to abortion but do not know the risk of having abortion, abortion rights have been used excessively, abortion rights should be used less, women only know about their right to abortion and that they can choose to have abortion but lack responsibility and awareness about everything else.

Global gag rule or The Mexico City Policy was referred in only five new articles in the two English dailies. The news articles referred to the damaging effects on the sexual and reproductive health among women in Nepal due to the restricted US funding for private non-profits providing sexual and reproductive health services.

4.2.4 Languages and Images used for abortion

Languages and images used in news articles are important tools for framing issues like abortion. This section examines the terms used to refer abortion, fetus, women who had abortions, health service providers who perform abortion, morality orientation and images used in the news articles. The language and images used in the news articles reflect the extent to which abortion stigma is reduced or reinforced.

I.   Term used to refer abortion:

Table 7: List of terms used to refer abortion and number of times coded in the articles

S.N.	Terms used to refer abortion	Number of times coded in articles
1.	Abortion	210
2.	Feticide	14
3.	Get rid of pregnancy	3
4.	Murder	19
5.	Termination of fetus	6
6.	Termination of pregnancy	3
7.	Throwing baby	5
8.	Throwing fetus	9
9.	Cleaning uterus	2
10.	Infanticide	1

As shown in Table 6, most of the articles in all the news outlets used the term "abortion" to refer abortion. However, some articles used the term "feticide" and "murder". There were 13 articles from all news outlets that referred to abortion as "feticide". Only article used the term "feticide" in the headline. The term feticide was used mostly for to describe sex-selective abortion and some in case of forced abortion. Some articles mentioned that many women are falsely accused of "feticide" and even if they get clearance, they are highly stigmatized in society. One article also quoted a gynecologist saying that the term like "feticide" is not an appropriate term and should not be used as it weakens the abortion rights. In Nepali language, the term "feticide" is called

"bhrun hatya" which translates to" killing of the fetus" in English. Only five articles referred to abortion as "murder" and it was used by all news outlets. Some articles used the term to refute the argument that "abortion is murder", some used it to refer to sex-selective abortion and some to describe how doctors have made profit out of the abortion business. One of the news articles mentioned about the release of a music video focused on preventing sex selective abortion which was entitled as "Don't kill me" which personified fetus. Other terms used for abortion include "throwing fetus", "throwing baby", "infanticide" which are stigmatizing terms but very commonly used in Nepal. Also, other terms like "termination of fetus", "termination pregnancy" and "cleaning uterus" which are comparatively neutral.

II.   **Terms used to refer fetus:**

The term used to refer fetus include "fetus", "child", "baby", "embryo" and "infant". Most of the articles used the term fetus across all news outlets. There were 30 articles that used the term "fetus". However, out of 30 articles, only four articles in Kantipur and six articles in Online Khabar used the term fetus. In Nepali language, any articles using the word "garbha" were coded in this category. The second most used term for fetus was "child" across three news outlets. The news articles in The Kathmandu Post did not use this term. The term "child" appeared in 20 articles and mostly accompanied with the terms like "feticide" and "murder". It was used mostly in news related to sex-selective abortion, forced abortion and conditions for legal abortion. Other terms like "baby", "embryo" and "infant" were used. The term "baby" was used to refer fetus in six articles and one headline from The Kathmandu Post and Kantipur. These news articles were related multiple abortions, increasing abortions, unsafe abortion, and policy debate regarding abortions later in pregnancy. The term "embryo" was used in five articles and one headline from Kantipur and Online Khabar. It was only used in Nepali language news outlet. However, in Nepali language, the Nepali word "bhrun" is mostly used interchangeably for "embryo" and "fetus". In this, study the word "bhrun" is categorized under "embryo". It was mostly used in news related to sex-selective abortion and medical abortion. The term "infant" was used in only three articles and one headline from Kantipur and Online Khabar. The text in the news articles were about cases of illegal abortion and conditions for legal abortion.

The terms like "child", "baby" and "infant" personifies fetus and imply abortion as "killing" or "murder" of the "child". Although the term "bhrun" in Nepali which means "embryo" may seem

harmless as an individual word, but it is often used as "bhrun hatya" which means "killing of the embryo".

III. **Terms used to describe women who had abortion:**

There were 10 articles from all four news outlets that negatively referred women who had abortions. One of the most common term was "mother" that was used to refer to a pregnant woman. A pregnant woman may or may not be a mother when they have an abortion. This implies pregnancy and motherhood as synonyms and motherhood as the ideal of womanhood. Although, in the news articles it has been used to describe conditions for legal abortion, court decisions supporting women's right and cases of rape, incest and forced abortion, this may stigmatize women who choose not to have children. Similarly, some articles referred that the reason for increasing abortion is that women easily find male partners on social media and have unsafe sex. Also, some articles mentioned that women who had abortions are stigmatized as they are considered promiscuous or engaged in illicit sex. They are also referred to as irresponsible. Although, there are not many explicit negative terms used to describe women, most news articles mentioned that abortion in increasing among certain sub-population of women like unmarried adolescent and young women and women whose husbands are abroad implying to "premarital sex" or "illicit sex".

Only three articles in The Kathmandu Post have used positive term to describe women who had abortion. The text in the news articles focused that women's choice to have an abortion and how women were able to avoid unwanted pregnancies due to safe abortion.

IV. **Terms used to describe health workers providing abortion services:**

Most of the articles referred to health workers providing abortion services in a neutral way. Only four articles and one headline from The Himalayan Times, Kantipur and Online Khabar referred to health workers providing abortion services in a negative way. The news articles were mostly related to sex-selective abortion and illegal abortions. The health service providers were referred to as murderers and abortion as a lucrative business with brokers and commissions. The articles have used the term "business" and "abortion farming". This can be demonstrated by the coded text below.

245:1 ¶ 2 in 75_2018_K

"Abortion: doctor's lucrative business"

– A headline in a news article in Kantipur, 2018 by Santosh Singh

It is also interesting to note that most of the articles referring to negative terms towards health service providers are news articles from Province 2 which has high number of sex-selective abortions.

Only six articles from The Kathmandu Post, Kantipur and Online Khabar used positive terms for service providers who provide abortion services. The text in these articles mentioned about provision of free safe abortion services, trained service providers for safe abortion and initiation of second trimester abortions, praised as lifesaving for women, safety and effectiveness of safe abortion performed by trained health workers and registered service providers. This can be demonstrated by the coded text below:

302:13 ¶ 23 in 132_2017_OK

"When performed by trained health professionals, abortion is 98% safe while less than 2% i.e., only 0.4% may have risk according to health experts."

– in a national news in Online Khabar, unknown author, 2017.

V.   **Images used in the news articles:**

Among the news articles 94 out of 144 articles used any photo or picture. Around 38 news articles contained a picture of either a full-term pregnant belly or full-term fetus. Among them, some of the most common pictures included health worker holding a knife with full-term fetus, full-term fetus with scissors inserted in the uterus and fetus in hands. Some pictures to represent sex-selective abortion also used two full-term pregnant bellies with sex revealed where female fetus is crossed. Another picture representing sex-selective abortion used picture of full-term fetus hanged with rope in stomach. Other pictures which appeared few times included women holding pregnancy test kit, handcuffs, exterior and interior of health facilities, woman holding pills and portrait of authors. These pictures represent personification of fetus, abortions during full-term pregnancies and incorrect and highly invasive procedures. Some of the pictures used in articles are as follows:

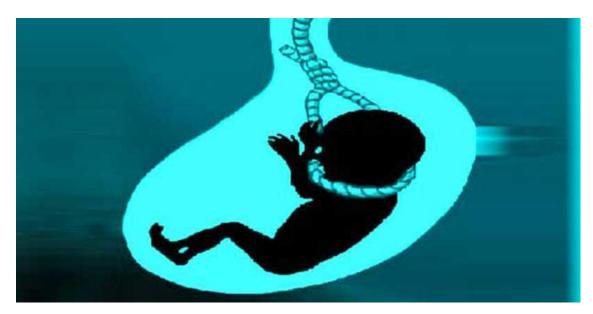228:3 ¶ 7 in 58_2020_K

Source: A news titled "Why is unsafe abortion increasing in lockdown?" published in Kantipur on May 19, 2020.

232:4 ¶ 5 in 62_2019_K

Source: A news titled "Abortion increases" published in Kantipur on June 22, 2019.

303:2 ¶ 7 in 133_2017_OK

Source: A news publshed titled "Abortion increases in Surkhet, female birth-rate decreases" in
Online Khabar on September 4, 2017.

VI. Morality Orientation:

In terms of morality orientation, only few articles explicitly mentioned about morality orientation on abortion. Three articles from The Kathmandu Post, The Himalayan Times and Online Khabar mentioned that abortion was morally wrong. These articles mostly included policy debates on new abortion law introduced in 2018 which mentioned about abortions later in pregnancy. One of articles also mentioned about a research finding stating that more than half of the respondents believed abortion to be wrong. Another article said that even though abortion is legalized it is not right. Some of the examples of the text are as follows:

183:2 ¶ 2 in 13_20190725_TKP

"Experts say the new abortion law which extends abortion period for special cases to 28 weeks
was wrong."

– News article in the Kathmandu Post titled "Health Ministry continues to defend new abortion
law even as gynecologists express strong reservations" by Arjun Poudel, 2019

There are no articles explicitly discussing if the abortion is morally right. However, since most of the articles mentioned about how abortion is legal and their conditions, it implies the legal acceptance and does not add any moral implication.

No articles explicitly discussed about when life begins. However, one opinion article in 2016 titled "A case for abortion" presented and discussed about the two opposing arguments about when life begins. However, in the end the author concludes that the life does not begin at conception, but it rather begins only after birth.

The news articles had very few discussions on women's right vs fetus's right. Only four articles mentioned about women's right being paramount. This can be demonstrated by the text below:

200:5 ¶ 23 in 30_20190303_THT

"A division bench of justices Kalyan Shrestha and Rajendra Prasad Koirala ruled in 2011 in a major precedent setting verdict that the foetus does not have an independent status in the mother's womb and its interests cannot be greater than that of the mother."

– A news piece in The Himalayan times by Ram Kumar Kamat, 2019.

Only one opinion article discussed and used the term pro-choice and pro-life which presented arguments from both side but supported abortion rights. There were no other articles explicitly discussing about pro-choice and pro-life in the selected articles.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This section aims to summarize the key findings of the study and extend the discussion on these findings as per the research objectives, problem statement and context of Nepal at broader level. News media coverage on abortion reflects public and policy discourses and can also affect these policy discussions and reinforce or reduce abortion stigma at individual and community level. Most of news media globally portray the issue of abortion as highly controversial. These representations are problematic and could affect the gains and progress made in abortion rights by affecting the health-seeking behavior on abortion.

The key findings of the study were increased news coverage on abortion before and after policy reforms, emphasis on the adolescent and young girls in abortion news articles, abortion mostly co-occurring with negative legal and health consequences and use of stigmatizing languages and images.

The findings indicate that between 2016 to 2020, the highest number of news coverage was found in the year 2017 and 2018 and lowest was found in 2020. This could be due the new abortion law introduced in Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health and Rights Act (SMRHRA) 2018 and revised penal code in 2017. As per the news articles, the bill was under discussion in the parliament since 2016 and was delayed, so the news media and civil society organizations advocated and lobbied for the urgency of the bill to be passed. Similarly, other discussions included the discussion on the gestational limit for abortion which was increased from 18 weeks to 28 weeks in case of rape/incest. According to the news articles, this faced a lot of criticism and backlash from the gynecologists and medical professionals and considered to be "unethical". Despite the strong reactions from the medical professionals, the Ministry defended the new law and expected it to protect women's right. Another policy discussion in the media was about the contradiction between the SMRHRA and the penal code. The new policy in SMRHRA decreased the gestational limit in cases of threat to pregnant woman's life and health and fetal anomalies from anytime during the pregnancy period to 28 weeks. This aspect of the new law considered regressive compared to the revised penal code in the news articles. Also, there was a confusion between two contradicting laws as which will be followed and had major negative implications in service delivery and access to abortion. These controversies in the Act and Penal code were presented by the news articles in a balanced way by representing both government and the opposing group.

As per the findings, the most common general co-occurring topic with abortion included adolescent and young girls. Like the findings of the previous study in The Great Britain, certain characteristics of women and girls have been emphasized like unmarried, young, women engaged in extramarital affairs and

excluded other women who also have abortions. Although, abortion is common among all groups of women, this kind of narrative exclude other groups of women who also have abortion thereby creating or reinforcing stigma among women who seek abortion. Adolescent and young girls have been represented as gullible, irresponsible, and reckless by the news media. Adolescent sexuality especially for females, has been represented as a moral panic. Furthermore, the news articles consider the access to mobile phones and "western culture" like live-in relationships to be the main reasons for increasing abortion among unmarried adolescent and young girls. The "western culture" as stated in the news articles, is believed to corrupt the adolescent and young girls, and is considered against the native culture i.e., being shy and silent on the issues of sex and sexuality. The main sources of these statements were health experts, gynecologists, government officials and teachers who reflect the existing socio-cultural norms. Only few articles discussed about lack of awareness on safe abortion, lack of comprehensive sexuality education and lack of access to contraceptives as the reason for increasing abortions among adolescent and young girls. This representation of adolescent sexuality could result in a more restrictive policies and social norms for adolescent girls as a means of intervention. As reflected in different news articles, the fear and abortion stigma forces women and girls to opt for distant, anonymous, and unsafe ways of abortion despite the available free services.

Crime and punishment was second most common topic that appeared in the articles. This could be the result of abortion still being criminalized and present in the penal code. The news articles referred to sex-selective abortions, forced abortions, physical assault, caste-based discrimination, and illicit sex. Illicit sex referred to premarital sex and extramarital sex in the news articles where premarital sex was often accompanied with adolescent and young girls. Premarital sex is a social taboo and sexual relationship among adolescents is criminalized. A frequent association of abortion with pre-conceived social taboos and criminal offences could establish a negative perception towards abortion as mentioned in the previous British study. Nepal is a country where more than half of the women of reproductive age-group do not have knowledge on legality of abortion, therefore abortion news associated with crime and punishment could further increase the misinformation on abortion laws. Lack of knowledge on the legal status of abortion and available abortion services could compel women to opt for illegal and unsafe methods of abortion. In articles where abortion is mentioned as a human right or women's right and referred to the conditions for legal abortion, they have been emphasized on "misuse" or "excess use" of rights. Recently, on July 8, 2021, Nepal accepted the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) recommendation to decriminalize abortion. This was also recommended by CEDAW committee in 2018.(67) This is an important commitment and would also decrease the media coverage of abortion in relation to crime.

In addition to negative legal consequences, the findings also state that most of the news articles presented negative health consequences related to abortion which is similar to the study findings in The Great Britain. One of the common consequences stated in the articles was infertility which was associated with multiple abortions or abortions at young age where the articles did not specify unsafe abortion. Besides, some articles also mentioned about the risk of cancer due to abortion. As we know from previous studies, there is a very less chance of fertility issues or cancer if the abortion is safe including in cases of multiple abortions. However, emphasis of news articles on these false negative consequences of abortion creates fear and denial from service providers which forces them to opt for other illegal and unsafe methods of abortion. This is similar to the findings from a previous study done in Zimbabwe where the media uses discursive strategies like tragic and horrifying stories of abortion consequences to instill fear among women seeking abortion services. Stories of negative experiences also creates a mistrust on health service providers and discourage them seek safe abortions.

The findings suggests that stigmatizing languages are still being used in the news articles. Most of the news articles referred to abortion as "abortion". However, some articles mentioned terms like "feticide", "murder", "throwing baby", and "infanticide". The terms like "feticide", "murder" and "infanticide" were mostly used for sex-selective abortions and forced abortions. It can also relate to the terms used for fetus. While most of the articles referred to fetus as "fetus", some of the articles used the term "child", "baby" and "infant" along with "feticide" and "murder". These terms promote the personhood of fetus and label abortion as "murder". As stated by previous studies, fetal personhood characterizes abortion as murder and stigmatize women who have abortions and health workers who perform abortions. This stigma could either act as a barrier for women to access safe abortion or make the abortion experience unpleasant with guilt and shame.

In contrast to previous studies, very few news articles referred to service providers with negative terms like "murderers" or abortion service as a "lucrative business". This was mostly referred in cases of sex-selective abortion in Province 2. This could be due to high son preference and sex-selective abortions in the communities of Province 2. Also, very few articles discussed about when does the life begin or referred to groups that support or oppose abortion as pro-choice or pro-life. This could be partly attributed to the progressive abortion laws and policies, strong position and reach of abortion rights group and absence of anti-abortion movements in Nepal.

Like the previous studies, findings also showed the emphasis on fetal personhood and late-term abortions through frequent use of images of full-term fetus, full-term pregnant belly along with inappropriate

abortion procedures like scissors inserted in uterus or health workers holding a knife. These images do not represent facts regarding abortion i.e., most of the abortions take place in first trimester and are safe. Although, the text or the content might be positive, but the images like these create a strong negative impression about abortion. Moreover, the service providers are also portrayed negatively in the images. This could also create a sense of mistrust among service providers and affect their decisions to seek abortion services.

The analytical framework especially the dimensions for abortion frames and 11 framing mechanisms was useful and convenient to define codes and was less time-consuming. However, I also added some new dimensions and adapted to it based on literature review and context of Nepal. Some of the dimensions like terms used for pro-life vs pro-choice and discussion about fetal life were not applicable for the context of Nepal. Furthermore, I also captured emerging co-occurring topics and sub-topics in the news articles which was not mentioned the selected framework. However, framing as a multidimensional concept and list of frames approach could still be useful identify possible dimensions of frames.

Some of the limitations of the study are limited available literature related to the effect of different abortion representations in media globally. The available literatures were more focused on identification of abortion frames than the causes or effect of those frames. Additionally, absence of literature in a context like Nepal i.e., a low-income country with progressive abortion laws did not help to better contextualize the effects of media portrayal of abortion in Nepal.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter provides a conclusion and recommendations based on the findings and discussion of the study. The recommendations are provided in broad areas and the role of stakeholders like Family Welfare Division, Press Council Nepal and civil society organizations are described within each recommendation. The recommendations aim to improve the media representation on abortion in Nepali print and online news media.

6.1 Conclusion

To conclude the study findings and discussion, as we know that the representation of abortion in news media can affect public perception and discourses regarding abortion, this study was able to provide an overview of the abortion news coverage and identify important abortion frames in the print and online news media in Nepal. This research also described how these abortion frames have been portrayed and discussed their possible implications on women's health-seeking behavior.

There was an increase in the news coverage on abortion among all four news outlets in the year 2017 and 2018 which consisted of policy debates and discourses related to Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Act and revision Penal code which stated contradictory laws on abortion. Compared to other news, abortion news was given a less to moderate importance in print media since only five news articles made it to the front page of the news.

The key findings were emphasis on the adolescent and young girls in abortion news articles, abortion mostly co-occurring with negative legal and health consequences and use of stigmatizing languages and images in the print and online news media. Abortion was presented as common among adolescent and young girls. Adolescent sexuality was mostly portrayed as the reason for increasing abortions. Adolescent and young girls who had abortion were presented as gullible, irresponsible, and reckless. Although abortion is common, the news articles excluded other groups of women and created stigma for adolescent and young girls. Negative legal and health consequences frequently accompanied abortion news headlines and articles. Abortion was mostly associated with illegal terms like sex-selective abortion, forced abortion, rape, illicit sex and imprisonment and criminal charges. Infertility and cancer were some of commonly mentioned false health consequences of abortion. Stigmatizing languages and images were used to refer abortion, fetus, women who had abortions and health service provider who performed abortions. These languages and images emphasized on fetal personhood, late-term abortions, and inappropriate and wrong abortion procedures. All these representations of abortion create negative perception towards abortion and promote misconceptions regarding the legal status, abortion procedure

and its consequences. Additionally, it also creates fear and reinforces abortion stigma which could act as barrier in health seeking behavior related to abortion and lead to unsafe abortions. Furthermore, presenting female adolescent sexuality as a moral panic could lead to more restrictive policies and social norms for adolescent girls.

Therefore, it is important address these portrayals of abortion in news media to counter misconceptions regarding abortion, reduce abortion stigma and improve public perception towards abortion.

6.2 Recommendations

Research:

1. More quantitative and qualitative research to evaluate the causal effects of these media frames on abortion shall be conducted by research institutions focused on abortion-related research. This thesis can provide a foundation for future research that would fill knowledge and information gap on media and abortion.

2. Nepal Health Research Council, a government research institution, shall promote and support research related to media and abortion.

Capacity strengthening on abortion issues for journalists, editors, and members Press Council Nepal

3. Family Welfare Division in collaboration with civil society organizations working on abortion shall design and implement Value Clarification and Attitude Transformation (VCAT) trainings and orientations for journalists, editors, and members of Press Council Nepal.

Decriminalization of abortion

4. Civil society organizations shall advocate and lobby for full decriminalization of abortion in Nepal.

5. The Government of Nepal shall fully decriminalize abortion in Nepal. As the Government of Nepal recently accepted the Universal Periodic Review recommendation on decriminalization of abortion in July 2021, the government is more likely to remove the abortion from the penal code and decriminalize abortion. Decriminalizing abortion could further improve news coverage on abortion through less emphasis on negative legal consequences.

Engaging news media to disseminate correct information regarding abortion

6. Family Welfare Division in collaboration with civil society organizations shall engage news media to counter misconceptions and misinformation and promote correct information on abortion. This shall be initiated by Family Welfare Division as an intervention to increase access to information on abortion. This could reduce the negative portrayals of abortion in the news media and promote positive perception towards abortion.

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Annex 1: Code definitions

The coding terms below are defined to analyze the headlines, photo, photo caption, lead paragraphs, concluding paragraphs, selection of sources, quotes, statistics, and sentences.

Elements

Article ID – Label each article filename with a number, full published date and specify the news outlet

Headline – A headline is defined as the words across the top of a news article.

First Paragraph (Lead) – The first paragraph is the lead paragraph of a news article.

Last Paragraph (Conclusion) – The last paragraph is the concluding paragraph of a news article.

Body Sentence/Paragraph – The sentence/paragraph are those within the body of a news article, between the first and last paragraphs, referring to abortion. The reference can be made by the reporter or other source.

Quote – A quote is signified by quote marks and has a verb; Do not code individually quoted words.

Paragraph Number – Specify the number of the paragraph in which a sentence/quote is coded.

Coding Terms – The coding terms are defined as the words used in the headline, first paragraph, last paragraph, and sentence/quote in relation to abortion.

1. Type of News stories:
    i.   Hard news: Stories that report only the most essential information in a concise and impartial manner are referred to as straight or hard news stories. This type of story typically follows the inverted pyramid style, which organizes information by descending order of importance or places the most newsworthy information at the beginning of the article. Examples of hard news stories include those about political topics and crime[1]
    ii. Features: A feature article is more in-depth than a traditional hard news article and uses the types of storytelling devices and details that you might find in novels. Feature stories are considered soft news and do not focus merely on the basic facts. Writers typically have more flexibility to use a wider range of formats, provide rich descriptions, and include scene-setting anecdotes. Features often are given more space on the page and are accompanied by pictures,

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[1] https://ohiostate.pressbooks.pub/stratcommwriting/chapter/types-of-news-stories/

illustrations, graphics, maps, and other visual components. A profile of an athlete or a political figure is an example of a feature article. [2]

    iii. Opinion: (Editorials and Columns) The editorial is a type of news story used to develop an argument about an issue and even sway readers' opinions. The essay also represents the official view of an editorial board that determines what views to share after deliberative process. [3]

2. Type of News section:

    i. National: News articles featured in national news section are coded into this category. This section can also be referred to as country news and is usually placed immediately after front page.

    ii. Provincial: News articles featured in Provincial news section are coded into this category. The section could be general province section or specific province section.

    iii. Local: News articles featured in capital news section, Kathmandu news section or any based in any district are coded in this category. This is usually placed after the national news.

    iv. Health: News articles placed in health section of the newspaper are coded in this category.

    v. Entertainment: News articles placed in entertainment section of the newspaper are coded in this category.

    vi. Politics: News articles placed in politics section of the newspaper are coded in this category

    vii. Miscellaneous: News articles placed in miscellaneous section of the newspaper are coded in this category.

    viii. Editorial/Opinion: News articles featured in Opinion section of the newspaper are coded in this category. It can be editorial articles, op-eds, and column articles.

3. Gender of the writer:

    i. Male: Authors of news articles with distinct male names were coded in this category

    ii. Female: Authors of news articles with distinct female names were coded in this category

    iii. Non-binary: Authors of news articles profile mentioning about their queer or non-binary identity were placed under this category.

    iv. Not available: The news articles where authors were not mentioned, or the gender of the author was not distinct were coded in this category.

4. Placement of the article (Only applicable for print newspaper)

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[2] https://ohiostate.pressbooks.pub/stratcommwriting/chapter/types-of-news-stories/
[3] https://ohiostate.pressbooks.pub/stratcommwriting/chapter/types-of-news-stories/

i. Front page: News articles that were featured in the front page of a newspaper were coded in this category

ii. Section front: News articles that were placed in the first page of any section of newspaper like national, opinion, entertainment and so on were coded in this category.

iii. Inside: News articles placed in any part of the newspaper except the front page and section front were coded in this category.

iv. Not applicable: News articles of online news outlet that do not have the same layout as print newspaper are coded in this category. Additionally, news articles for which the e-paper version was not available or could not be retrieved were also coded in this category.

5. General co-occurring topics:

i. Adolescent and Young girls: Any sentence in news articles that mentioned the word adolescent or young girl were coded in this category.

ii. Contraception: Any sentence in news articles that mentioned the word contraception, contraceptives, family planning or the types of contraceptives like condoms, pills, intra-uterine devices or injectables were coded in this category.

iii. Crime and Punishment: Any sentence in the news articles that referred to prosecution, imprisonment, crimes, criminal offences like sex-selective abortion, forced abortion, rape, incest, physical assault and punishment were coded in this category

iv. Cultural norms and values: Any sentence in the news articles that refers to culture, social norms and traditions were coded in this category.

v. Child marriage: Any sentence in the news articles that referred to child marriage or marriage before 18 years of age were coded in this category.

vi. Early Pregnancy: Any sentence in the news articles that referred to early pregnancy or teenage pregnancy or pregnancy before 20 years or age were coded in this category.

vii. Gender-based violence: Any sentence in the news articles that referred to any kind of gender-based violence like rape, incest, forced abortion, sex-selective abortions were coded in this category.

viii. Gender equality: Any sentence in the news articles that referred to terms like gender equality or gender inequality or gender norms or woman empowerment were coded in this category.

ix. Global gag rule: Any sentence in the news articles that referred to Global Gag Rule or Mexico City Policy were coded in this category.

x. Human right: Any sentence in the news articles that referred to rights, woman rights, fundamental right and human right were coded in this category.

xi. Policy and Guidelines: Any sentence in the articles that referred to any national law, policy or guidelines were coded in this category.

xii. Sexuality: Any sentence in the news articles that referred to sex, sexual desires, sexual expression, sexual relationships, and sexual orientation were coded into this category.

xiii. Sex Education: Any sentence in the news articles that referred to sex education or awareness on sex education or lack of sex education were coded into this category.

xiv. Unmarried adolescents and young girls: Any sentence in the news articles that referred to unmarried adolescents and young girls, sex before marriage or premarital sex were coded into this category.

xv. Others: Any sentence that referred to caste-based discrimination, COVID-19, disability, drug abuse, ectopic pregnancy, emergency contraceptive pills, extramarital affair, health tourism, healthcare fund, media, political ideology, migration, poverty, premarital sex, religion, Sustainable Development Goals, and sex workers were coded in this category

6. Co-occurring sub-topics in abortion:

i. Abortion as a family planning method: Any sentence in the news articles that referred abortion as a means of family planning method were coded in this category.

ii. Access to safe abortion: Any sentence in the news articles that referred to access to safe abortion, new safe abortion services, barriers to access to safe abortion or status of access to safe abortion were coded in this category.

iii. Awareness on legal and safe abortion: Any sentence in the news articles that referred to awareness related to legality of abortion or safe abortion in general were coded in this category.

iv. Financial barriers: Any sentence in the news articles that referred to financial barriers or cost-related barriers regarding abortion were coded in this category.

v. Forced abortion: Any sentence in the news articles that referred to the term forced abortion or abortion without the consent of pregnant woman were coded in this category.

vi. Illegal abortion: Any sentence in the news articles that referred to the term illegal abortion were coded into this category. It mostly includes sex-selective abortion, forced abortion and any other method except safe abortion recommended by the law.

vii. Increasing abortion: Any sentence in the news articles that referred to increasing abortion were coded in this category.

viii. Legal abortion: Any sentence in the news articles that referred to the history of legalization of abortion or legal provisions of abortion in Nepal were coded in this category.

ix. Medical abortion: Any sentence in the news articles that referred to medical abortion, medical abortion pills or abortion pills were coded in this category.

x. Multiple abortion: Any sentence in the news articles that referred to multiple abortions, repeat abortions or abortion more than one time were coded in this category.

xi. Sex-selective abortion: Any sentence in the news articles that referred to sex-selective abortions or abortions due to son-preference were coded in this category.

xii. Abortion Stigma: Any sentence in the news articles that referred to abortion stigma or any discrimination related to abortion were coded in this category.

xiii. Unsafe abortion: Any sentence in the news articles that referred to unsafe abortions, illegal medications for abortion or mentions of any unsafe methods of abortion like abortion performed by unregistered health facility or health professional, risks or consequences of unsafe abortion were coded in this category.

xiv. Others: Any sentence in the news articles that referred to abortion as a complex procedure, abortion as a sin, abortions later in pregnancy, abortion as controversial, destigmatizing abortion, day celebrations on safe abortion, miscarriage, positive consequences after legalization of abortion and viability of fetus were coded in this category.

7. Common reasons for abortion:

i. Failed contraceptives: Any sentence in the news articles that referred to failed contraception as the reason for abortion were coded in this category. This refers to any unintended pregnancy despite the regular use of contraceptives.

ii. Fetal anomalies: Any sentence in the news articles that referred to fetal anomalies as the reason for abortion were coded in this category.

iii. Health risks: Any sentence in the news articles that referred to health risk related to pregnant woman as the reason for abortion were coded in this category.

iv. Illegitimate pregnancy: Any sentence in the news articles that referred to illegitimate pregnancy or pregnancy due to illicit sex, or pregnancy due to sex outside marriage as the reason for abortion is coded in this category.

v. Rape/Incest: Any sentence in the news articles that referred to rape/incest as the reason for abortion in coded in this category.

vi. Socio-economic reasons: Any sentence in the news articles that referred to socio-economic reasons like poor financial status, education, and job opportunities as the reason for abortion is coded in this category.

vii. Son preference: Any sentence in the news articles that referred to son preference as the reason for abortion or mentioned sex-selective abortion is coded in this category.

viii. Unintended pregnancy: Any sentence in the news articles that referred to unintended pregnancy, unwanted pregnancy or mistimed pregnancy were coded in this category.

8. Consequences after abortion
   i. Positive consequence: Any sentence in the articles that referred to positive consequence after abortion such as happy, relief, saving of life, reduced maternal mortality related to unsafe abortion is coded in this category.

   ii. Negative consequence: Any sentence in the articles that referred to negative consequence of abortion such as physical injuries, mental illnesses, chronic diseases and conditions, dropping out of school or job, expensive treatments or death is coded in this category.

9. Sources of quotes
   The sources of any quotes in the news articles were accurately labelled with organization or individual name or the profession of the individual.

10. Sources of data
    The sources of any data in the news articles were accurately labelled with organization or individual name.

11. Terms used to refer abortion

The terms used for abortion will be coded as it appears. It could be abortion, termination of pregnancy, feticide, murder and so on.

12. Terms used to refer fetus

The terms used for abortion will be coded as it appears. It could be fetus, child, baby, infant and son on.

13. Term used to describe women who have abortion

   i. Positive terms: The sentence in the articles that refer to choose of women relating to abortion in a positive way is coded in this category.

   ii. Negative terms: The sentence in the articles that referred to negative terms mother instead of pregnant woman or emphasized on perceived negative characteristics of women such as engaged in illicit sex in coded in this category.

14. Terms used to describe health service provider who perform abortion

   i. Positive terms: The sentence in the articles that refer to positive attributes of service provider performing abortion such as reference to skilled provider, saved lives is coded in this category.

   ii. Negative terms: The sentence in the articles that referred to negative attributes of service provider performing abortions such as murderer or profiteering business is coded in this category.

15. Morality orientation

   i. Morally right: The sentence in the articles that explicitly referred abortion as being morally right is coded in this category.

   ii. Morally wrong: The sentence in the news articles that explicitly refers abortion as being morally wrong referring to religious doctrines or moral ethics is coded in this category.

16. Terms used to refer Pro-choice group:

Terms used to refer to pro-choice groups in the news articles will be coded as it appears. It could be pro-choice, pro-abortion, abortion rights group, anti-life group and so on

17. Terms used to refer Pro-life group:

    Terms used to refer pro-life groups in the news articles will be coded as it appears. It could ne pro-life, anti-abortion and so on.

18. Whether the women's rights or fetus's rights are considered paramount

    i.   Women's right: A sentence in news articles that refers to women's right being important than fetal right is coded in this category.

    ii. Fetal right: A sentence in news articles that refers to fetal right being important than women's right is coded in this category.

19. Discussion of when life begins

    i.   At conception: A sentence in news articles referring to beginning of life at conception is coded in this category.

    ii. After birth: A sentence in news articles referring to beginning of life after birth is coded in this category.

    iii. Others: a sentence in news articles referring to beginning of life at a point apart from above two situation is coded in this category.

20. Images used in the articles

    Images will be coded with the description of image as it appears.