

Trends and Patterns in Gender Violence: What does the Bangladeshi National Popular Newspaper Say?

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Abstract: Gender based violence is rising. Bangladesh stands second in the world in terms of violence against women in different forms like women battering, wife beating, domestic and dowry-related violence, acid attack, rape, physical and verbal harassment, fatwa, sexual harassment in the workplace, trafficking and prostitution, polygamy and child abuse. The rate of violence against women has dropped by 4.9 percent in between the years 2011 and 2015. Abusing rate was 87.1 per cent in 2011 which came down to 82.2 percent in 2015 and in the Daily Star newspaper came down to 80 percent in 2016. Around 72.6 per cent of women who are married in Bangladesh experience one or more such forms of violence it the hands of their husbands at least once during their marriage and 49.6 percent of lifelong married women suffered physical violence, 28.7 percent emotional violence, 27.2 percent sexual violence and 11.4 percent financial violence according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. Gender discrimination also leads to women having less opportunity. The literacy rate for women in Bangladesh is only 43.2%, while 61.0% of Bangladeshi men are literate. The unemployment rate for women is 70.7%, much higher than the 12.4% unemployment rate for men. Most of the victims, around 39.7 percent, of forced or coerced sexual intercourse, are aged between 15 and 19. Child marriage that legitimizes sexual abuse of minors must be stopped immediately. The government should enhance legal and criminal justice systems to prevent further violence and need interventions to change male attitudes.

Keywords: Gender Violence, Newspaper, Women, Bangladesh.

INTRODUCTION

Violence knows no boundaries of geography, wealth or culture and as long as it continues, no nation can claim to be making real progress towards development, equality and peace in the world [1]. WHO found that 35 percent of women worldwide have experienced either intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence whereas, 38 percent of murders of women are committed by an intimate partner [2]. Unfortunately, despite magnificent history of women's freedom commotion and noticeable achievements in women's development filed, incidences of violence against women are still burning issues [3], especially in Bangladesh. Khan [4] stated that two forms of gender violence in Bangladesh: one is traditional form that takes place inside the home or the private sphere; the other more public and modern in nature, often associated with transitions in the particular locality, with displacement, or with globalization. She also mentioned that several agencies which helps to reduce violence that will be helpful for our development. Heisse [5] also found that religious and historical traditions in the past have sanctioned the chastising and beating of wives. Women's are one of the main victims of physical violence where Swan *et al.*, [6] noted that

women and men report the perpetration of physical aggression at similar rates; however, it is still believed that women are more likely to be injured in a domestic violence situation. Naved & Akhter [7] explored the prevalence of lifetime suicidal ideation among reproductive aged “ever-married” women. Sambisa *et al.*, [8] explored that the prevalence and correlates of physical violence in slum and non-slum urban areas through a population based survey on 9122 currently married women, revealing that the prevalence of self-reported past-year physical spousal violence is 31% higher in slums (35%) than in non-slums (20%). Patriarchal customs mean that many women in Bangladesh face threats of violence [9].

METHODS

Bangladesh is a small South Asian country which shares borders with India, Myanmar, and the Bay of Bengal. Since it gained independence in 1971, Bangladesh's economy has been growing about 6% while the economy in Bangladesh is becoming more progressive, socially; Bangladesh still has room for advancement. Patriarchal customs mean that many women in Bangladesh face threats of violence [9]. In

this study I will discuss the contemporary facts that have published in the daily newspapers of Bangladesh.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Trends and Patterns in Gendered Violence

Gender based violence is rising. Bangladesh stands second in the world in terms of violence against

women in different forms like women battering, wife beating, domestic and dowry-related violence, acid attack, rape, physical and verbal harassment, fatwa, sexual harassment in the workplace, trafficking and prostitution, polygamy and child abuse [10]. Nearly two out of every three women in Bangladesh are victims of some form of violence [9].

Table-1: Increasing Trends of Dowry Related Violence

Dowry related violence	Year	Cases	Percent (%)
	2004	2981	53.07
	2012	4563	

Source: Ittefaq, October 2, 2016

In 2004, there were 2,981 cases of dowry related violence; women are beaten or killed because their parents fail to pay the dowry that her in-laws request. This number rose to 4,563 cases in 2012 where percentage increases in 53.07% (Table-1).

The rate of violence against women has dropped by 4.9 percent in between the years 2011 and 2015. Abusing rate was 87.1 per cent in 2011 which came down to 82.2 percent in 2015 [9] and in the Daily Star newspaper came down to 80 percent in 2016 (Figure-1).

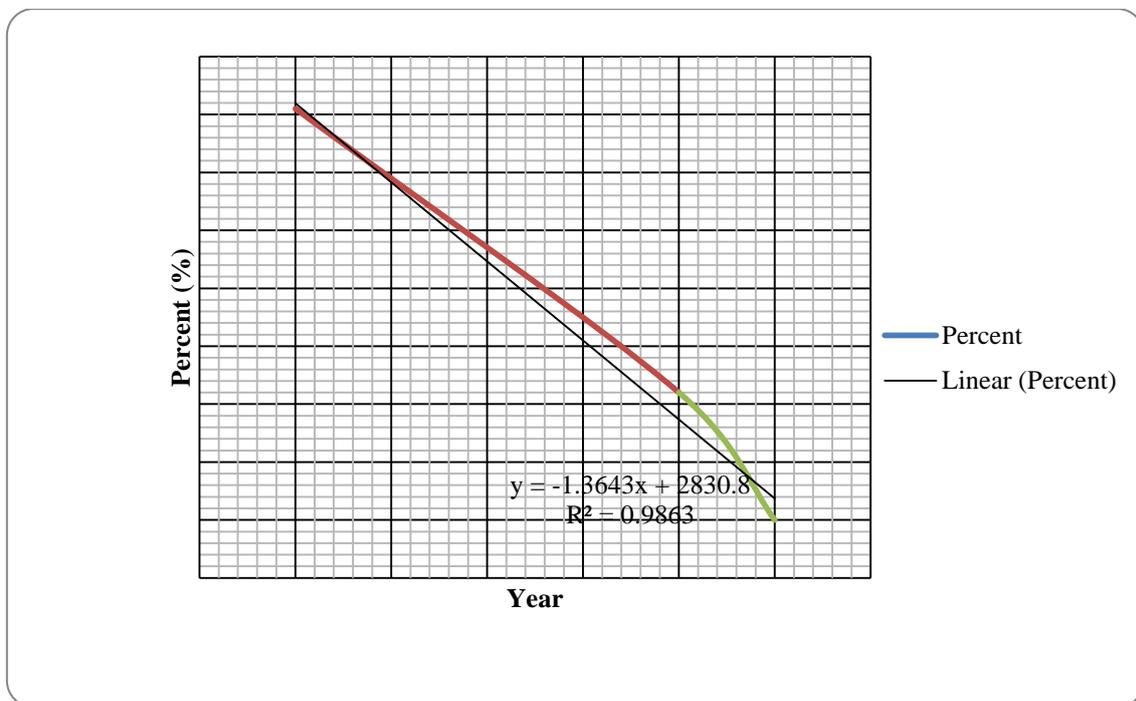


Fig-1: Abusing Rate by Husband

Source: (Daily Asian News, 3 October, 2016 and Daily Star, 4 October, 2016) [11]

As patriarchal family structure presents in Bangladesh, women always more or less suffer from several forms of violence and this a routine picture of

our country. Dowry related violence has already been presented in the above Figure. Beside this, other patterns of violence (Figure-2).

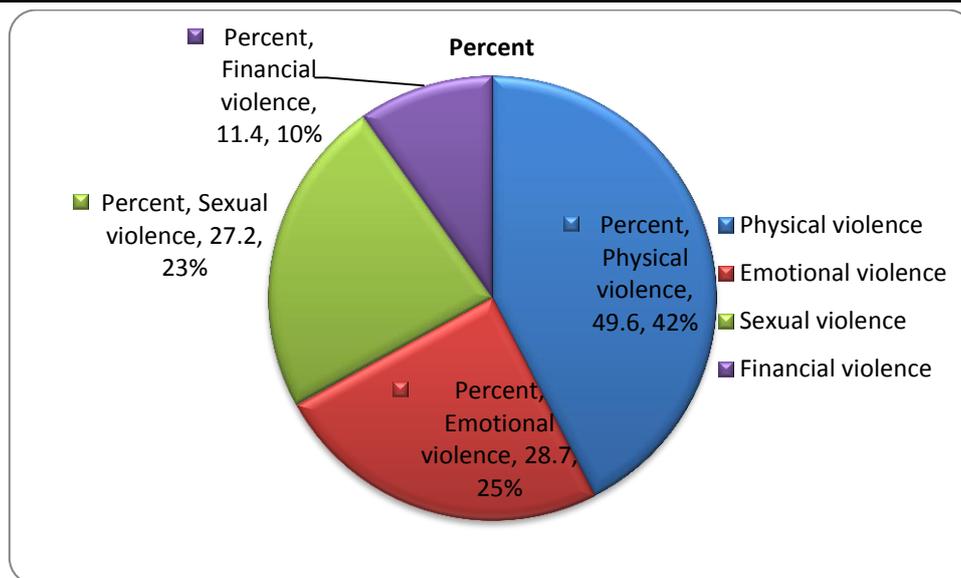


Fig-2: Patterns of Violence
Source: Daily Asian News, 3 October, 2016

Around 72.6 per cent of women who are married in Bangladesh experience one or more such forms of violence it the hands of their husbands at least once during their marriage and 49.6 percent of lifelong married women suffered physical violence, 28.7 percent

emotional violence, 27.2 percent sexual violence and 11.4 percent financial violence according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) findings titled “Violence Against Women Survey 2015” (Figure-3).

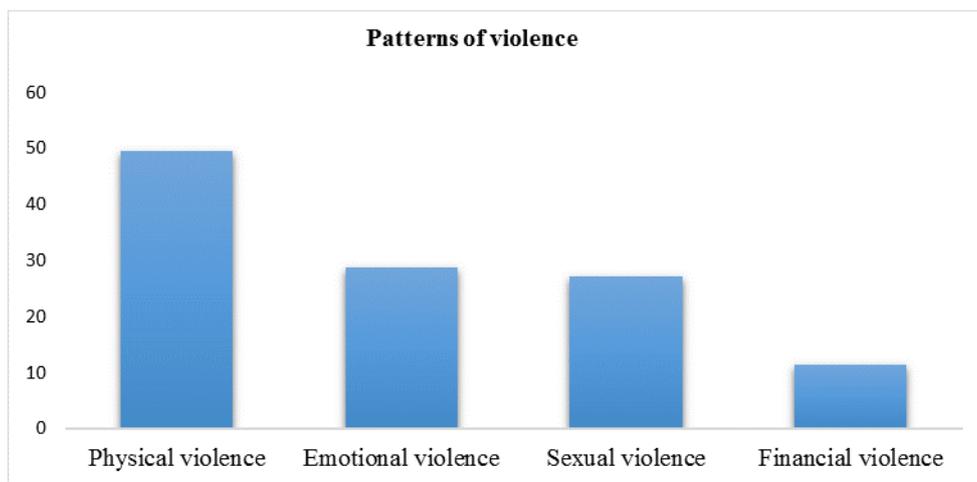


Fig-3: Distributions of Patterns of Violence

Gender discrimination also leads to women having less opportunity. The literacy rate for women in Bangladesh is only 43.2%, while 61.0% of Bangladeshi men are literate. The unemployment rate for women is 70.7%, much higher than the 12.4% unemployment rate for men. Many women help in the agricultural sector, 73% of those women contribute what is considered as unpaid ‘family labor’ and do not receive a salary [9]. This is so problematic because even if women work for their family, patriarchal values dictate that many of the women are not given control of the property and therefore the women are not able to spend the money they earn. Information published in the daily Prothom Alo on March 3, 2016 where they present as social

discrimination. Poor women are subject to violence relatively more (54%) because of social discrimination. Men were responsible for the majority of violence committed against women. It reveals that 88% of perpetrators are men who are family members of the victim women [12].

Acid throwing is another forms of domestic violence and most despicable forms of violence against women in Bangladesh. In a 10 March 2003 report to the United Nations' Commission on Human Rights, representatives of the Asian Legal Resource Centre (ALRC), a non-governmental organization, also expressed their concern over the number of acid attacks

on women in Bangladesh. Sulfuric acid is able to burn through skin, muscle and bone. The Bangladesh Acid Survivors Foundation (ASF) revealed that 244 women and 25 children were assaulted with acid from 1 January to 3 December 2003 [13].

Odhikar a human rights coalition group in Bangladesh, states that 278 women were victims of violence related to dowry during the first nine months of 2003 [13] where "184 were killed, 20 committed suicide, 67 were physically tortured, 11 sustained injuries from acid attacks and two were divorced" [10].

The UNFPA's 'The State of World Population for 2000' found that 47 per cent of adult women in Bangladesh reported physical abuse by their male partners (2000) [14, 10]. The similar violence related information was presented in the Daily Asian News newspaper on October 3, 2016 where a survey was conducted titled "Violence against Women Survey 2015" was funded by United Nations Population Fund. The first survey on violence against women was prepared in 2011. Around 72.7 per cent of the victims shared their experiences with their neighbors. The survey also stated that 34.2 percent of girls aged 10-14 years are raped. The rate for the age group of 15-19 years is 39.7 percent. The survey showed that lifelong partner violence rates were highest in rural areas (74.8 per cent lifelong married women). It was far lower in city areas (54.4 per cent). The lifelong partner violence rate is 71.1 per cent in urban areas outside of city corporations. While addressing at the faction, AHM Mustafa Kamal said: "Violence towards women is a global problem. In our neighboring country India, a woman is tortured in every three minutes. In this context, the condition of Bangladesh is comparatively better" [11].

Patriarchal family structure present in Bangladesh thus men consider women as weak. Lata Gomes (not her real name for security reasons) told *Asia News* that "husbands consider us weak, and therefore believe that they have the right to dominate us, even beating us. I am a university graduate and I take care of our two children. But my husband does not listen to me, and if I do not do what he says, he beats me." Violence is correlated to illiteracy and low levels of education among women, she explained. According to human rights organization Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (BMP), 5,616 cases of violence against women

were recorded in 2012, mostly rapes (904), followed by murders (900), stalking and death as a result of stalking (662); dowry-related murders (558), and suicide (435) [15]. From another story of a women it will be clear to us that male thinks that wife beating has always been seen as a personal matter in our society and thus they wants to try to keep women "under control". Nomita Rozario (not her real name), a Catholic told to the correspondent of the daily star that "My husband beat me cruelly when I refused to have sex with him. He tortured me almost every day. He was an alcoholic. I was not worth anything in my family. My husband dominated me and my life was a living hell" [16].

Despite high rates of partner violence, around 72.7 percent of victim women do not share their experience and only 2.6 percent sought legal support. The "Violence against Women Survey 2015" report shows that concerns for family honour, being afraid of the perpetrator and shame or embarrassment are some of the reasons behind not sharing their experiences. More than 27.8 percent of women experienced physical violence by someone else at least once. Most of the victims, around 39.7 percent, of forced or coerced sexual intercourse, are aged between 15 and 19. Of the pregnant women, around 9.1 percent are victims of sexual violence and 4.7 percent faced physical violence [16].

Similar to the information was published in the Daily Ittefaq on October 2, 2016, Many women in Bangladesh fail to report violence committed against them because there persists a stigma surrounding rape, abuse, and domestic violence in the country. The police are also likely to blame the victim and favor the side of the abuser. From 2010 to 2012, the Bangladeshi police received 109,621 complaints about violence against women where the police determined that only 6,875 of these complaints were 'genuine' and should be further investigated [9].

BRAC prepared a report on the basis of field reports done by BRAC staff working in 55 districts across the country where the total number of incidents of violence against women in 2014 was 2,873, which has risen to the alarming figure of 5,008 in 2015. It is 74% higher than the previous year, and this is the highest incidence of violence against women in recent times (Table-2) [12].

Table-2: Total number of Incidents of Violence against Women in 2014

Year	No. of incidents	Change (%)
2014	2873	74.31
2015	5008	

Source: Prothom Alo, March 3, 2016

Table reveals that, violence against women increasing at an alarming rate which is not good for our country. Sometimes men also tortured by their partners

but they try to hide that because they think that it is their prestigious issue. Another data were published in the Prothom Alo titled "16 women killed by husbands

every month” where a total of 149 women were killed by their husbands in the first nine months of 2016. On average, this means that more than 16 women were killed by their husbands every month. Another 34 were killed by members of their husband’s family, while 39 committed suicide due to family torture where physical, mental and sexual abuse were included [17].

According to a study of the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research Bangladesh (icddr’b) on gender and men’s attitude and practice of violence against women, 89 percent of the men in villages feel that men have the right to beat their wives. Urban men are not far behind. The study showed that 93 percent urban men and 98 percent of rural men believed that being a man meant being tough. Again, 50 percent of urban men and 65 percent rural men believed that women should tolerate violence for the sake of the family. This study was based on the interviews of 2400 men taken from January to June 2011 [17].

CONCLUSION

Violence also related with educational background. Irrespective of different educational background, women are victim of violence at the hands of their husbands. A drastic change is therefore in order – a change in the way society as a whole treats its female members. Child marriage that legitimizes sexual abuse of minors must be stopped immediately. The government should enhance legal and criminal justice systems to prevent further violence and need interventions to change male attitudes.

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