

# Gender Violence: A Case in Rural Northwestern Region of Bangladesh

Moon MP<sup>1\*</sup>, Kabir MS<sup>2</sup>, Begum F<sup>2</sup>, Islam MM<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Rural Development, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Agricultural University, Gazipur-1706, Bangladesh;

<sup>2</sup>Department of Rural Sociology, Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh-2202, Bangladesh

## ABSTRACT

While the economy in Bangladesh is becoming more progressive socially, still there is enough room for advancement. In Bangladesh, women face several threats of violence which is the nature of patriarchal social system in Bangladesh. This study was, therefore, conducted to find out the gender inequalities at the household level, major gaps of gender violence, main causes and consequences of gender violence in northwestern region (Sirajganj) of Bangladesh. The research was both qualitative and quantitative in nature. For quantitative analysis, all respondents have been selected with 41 married women and men. Finding showed that dowry and financial problem was a major cause of domestic/household violence. Mental stress, reduced family income and poor family health were some of the consequences of gender violence. Therefore, it was recommended that there is need for education on family living, provision of guidance and counseling services to the affected population, and formulation of policies that helps to overcome violence.

**Keywords:** Gender violence; Inequalities; Victims

## INTRODUCTION

Gender is the range of characteristics pertaining to, and differentiating between, masculinity and femininity [1]. Violence is defined by the World Health Organization as "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation" [2]. The term "gender violence" reflects the idea that violence often serves to maintain structural gender inequalities, and includes all types of violence against men, women, children, adolescents, gay, transgender people and gender non-conforming. Gender violence includes rape, sexual assault, relationship violence in heterosexual partnerships, sexual harassment, stalking, prostitution and sex trafficking. This type of violence is influenced by gender relations. To adequately address this violence, we have to address cultural issues that encourage violence as part of masculinity [2].

Gender violence is a common picture in our country. Gender violence denotes both violence against men and women. Male and female, the two basic components of human society, depend upon each other and each one of them constitutes about half of the population. Women are predominantly the victim of violence. So, we find that men and women have been established as the two wheels of a chariot. Violence against women is a common

and insidious phenomenon in Bangladesh. Domestic violence is the most common form of violence and its prevalence is higher in rural areas. It is highly believed that women are the typical victims/survivors of household/domestic violence, and that most perpetrators are men. "Domestic violence" is now being replaced by the term "intimate partner violence" [3]. Violence against women includes all verbal, physical, and sexual assaults which violate a woman's physical body, sense of self and sense of trust, regardless of age, race, ethnicity, or country [4]. Violence against women has been identified as a major public health and human rights issue [5]. Although women constitute about half of the Bangladesh population, their social status especially in rural areas remains very low. Rural women belong to the most deprived section of the society facing adverse conditions in terms of social oppression and economic inequality, a visible majority of them being extremely poor. Violence against women has been recognized, at both the national and international levels, as a serious and ongoing impediment to gender equality and women's human rights and fundamental freedoms [6].

Although women constitute half of the population, various indicators reveal that the status of women is much lower than that of men. Female literacy rate is only 54.8%, much lower than that of men 61.1%. Excessive mortality among women due to discrimination has resulted in a sex ratio in the population of 105 men to every 100 women [7]. Men's violence against intimate

\*Correspondence to: Monira Pervin Moon, Department of Rural Development, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Agricultural University, Gazipur-1706, Bangladesh, Tel: +88091674016; E-mail: moniramoon@bsmrau.edu.bd

Received: February 21, 2019; Accepted: March 13, 2019; Published: March 20, 2019

Citation: Moon MP, Kabir MS, Begum F, Islam MM (2019) Gender Violence: A Case in Rural Northwestern Region of Bangladesh. Social and Criminol 7:199. doi:10.35248/2375-4435.19.7.199

Copyright: © 2019 Moon MP, et al. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

female partners is considered more serious than women's violence against intimate male partners. As a result, many men fear that seeking help would label them as aggressor, especially if they defend themselves. This double standard view in society has resulted in many male victims not seeking the assistance of law enforcement as well [8]. Gender violence in Bangladesh is a health, legal, economic, educational, developmental and human rights problem. Therefore, multifarious strategies should be designed for implementation of the existing law of the country regarding the gender violence.

Bangladesh is a highly patriarchal society. Within the household or outside (e.g. the *shamaj* and *salish*), men exercise control over women's labour, their sexuality, their choice of marriage partner, their income and assets. Women's access to social, economic, political and legal institutions is mediated by men. They are dependent on men throughout their lives, from fathers through husbands to sons that create gender subordination and dependence. Men's authority over women is reinforced by pervasive gender-based violence [9]. The specific objectives of the study are: To find out the gender inequalities at rural household level, to identify the major gaps of gender violence in rural areas, to explore the different cause and consequences of gender violence in rural household level and to suggest recommendations for future policy guidelines.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

To get a complete picture of gender violence that is practicing in the rural areas of Bangladesh, the study covered a range of types, victims and perpetrators in rural areas. Therefore, two different villages namely East-Purnimagati and Belkuchi village were selected purposively under the district of Sirajganj. The study was based on both qualitative and quantitative in nature. Data and information were gathered through focus group discussion (FGD), household survey, key informant's interviews and case studies. Each focus group was consisted of different aged people. The data were collected during the period from August to September, 2016 in a regular basis by the researcher herself. All the collected data were processed and analyzed in accordance with the objectives of the study (Appendix). For the identification of rural household survey of the village was conducted through a semi-structured interview schedule and selected 41 households in the study village. Secondary information was also used in this study such as articles, journals, newspapers, published books, governmental and non-governmental organization's information, BBS, BER etc.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Socio-economic characteristics of the respondent households

**Age and sex structure of the respondents:** This section examines the various aspects of age and sex composition of the respondents in the study areas. Ages of the respondents were ranged from 18 to 61+ years. Higher portion (31%) of the respondent belongs to the age group (41-50), 27% of the respondent belongs to the age group (31-40), 25% belongs to the age group (18-30) and percentage reduces to 10 and 7 in the age group 51-60 and 61+, respectively. Table 1 also indicates that respondents aged between 18 and 30 years are most victims; 31-40 years and 41-50 years are more victims; 51-60 years are few victim and more than 60 years are less victim. More than 60 years of the respondent are fewer victims because they try to avoid argument with his/her partner.

In each group, the first one is the number of the respondents that is known as frequency and second one is the percentage within the respondent's education. Education level ranged from illiterate to higher degree. Major educational status of the respondent in both of the study area is primary (36.58%) and lower educational status of the respondent in both of the study area is higher secondary (4.88%) and higher degree (4.88%). 25% of the male respondents and 24.14% of the female respondents have secondary education. Table 2 shows that male have more secondary education than female but in case of primary education, female have more primary education (37.93%) than male (33.33%). Education must be needed for every person because education is the process of facilitating learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and habits.

Marriage is one of the most important social institutions. The details of the marital status of the respondents are presented in Figure 1 which shows that overwhelming number of the respondents (87.8%) was married whereas 4.9% of the respondents were found to be single and 7.3% of the respondents were found to be divorced. The respondents under the category divorced were extremely negligible. Respondents who are married are more

Table 1: Age and sex structure of the respondents.

Age categories of the respondent	Percentage (Both male and female)	Opinion regarding gender violence
18-30	25	Most victim
31-40	27	More victim
41-50	31	More victim
51-60	10	Few victim
61+	7	Less victim
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	

Table 2: Educational status of the respondents.

Level of Education	Gender		Educational Status
	Male	Female	
Illiterate	4 (33.3)	8 (27.58)	12 (29.27)
Primary	4 (33.3)	11 (37.93)	15 (36.58)
Secondary	3 (25)	7 (24.14)	10 (24.39)
Higher secondary	0 (0)	2 (6.9)	2 (4.88)
Higher degree	1 (8.34)	1 (3.45)	2 (4.88)
<b>Total</b>	<b>12 (100)</b>	<b>29 (100)</b>	<b>41 (100)</b>

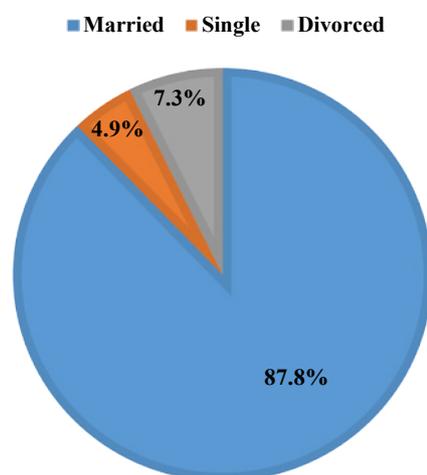


Figure 1: Distribution of the marital status of the respondents.

victims, single are few victim and the respondents who are divorced are most victim. Since the average respondents were from late adolescent age group, this is the age at which, normally a person gets marry and shoulders the responsibility of a household.

**Family size, earning and dependent members:** Family is a group of people affiliated either by consanguinity, or co-residence or some combination of these. Members of the immediate family include spouses, parents, brothers, sisters, sons and/or daughters. Family size in this study has been defined as the total number of persons living together and taking meals from the same kitchen under the administration of the same head. The highest percentage of average number of earning members was found to be 49.37% among male and female had the lowest percentage of 13.98. The average number of earning and dependent member in a family was found to be 51 and 121, respectively. The dependency ratio for male was 1.05 and 6.15 for female where total dependency ratio was 2.37. Most of the respondents of this study are housewife. Thus the dependency ratio of female is mostly high (6.15). As female have to depend on male for their purposes thus male always try to dominate on female. As a result female are highly violated (Table 3).

It is evident from Table 4 that the more than half of the respondents (48.8%) were in the 'medium' income group whereas 41.5% of them were in the 'low' income group and remaining of them that is less than the respondents (9.8%) were in the 'High' income group. Income is an important indicator for measuring violence. Respondents who have low income (2000-5000) are most victim, who have medium income (6000-12000) are more victim and who have high income (13000-20000) are few victim of violence.

**Gender inequalities at the household level:** Gender inequality refers to unequal treatment or perceptions of individuals based on their gender. It arises from differences in socially constructed gender roles. Gender systems are often dichotomous and hierarchical, gender binary systems may reflect the inequalities that manifest in numerous dimensions of daily life. Gender inequality stems from distinctions, whether empirically grounded or socially constructed. It was found that most of the cases women suffer more inequality than the men. Table 5 shows the inequalities between men and women. From the above gender inequality table, it is easy to say that most of the cases women suffer more inequality than the men which result into gender violence. As patriarchy prevails in Bangladesh, male always try to dominate female in all cases thus creates a wide range of gender inequality. 80.5% male, 14.6% female and 4.9% others (including father, mother, etc.) earn most in this study and 82.9% male and 12.2% female hold the more decision making power. 19.5% male, 31.7% female, 43.9% both and 4.9% others hold the power to sending their children to school/college. 75.6% male and 10% female hold the power to move to another and thus it is found that there is a greater inequality between male and female. Within the 41 respondents, 48.8% male, 43.9% female, 1.4% both and 4.9% others has said that they work more for the family. The table also reveals that females are deprived more from decision making opportunity (82.9%) than male (7.3%). Within the respondents, 26.8% male and 65.9% female deprive more from financial support where percentage of none and others is too little.

Most of the cases, male is given the priority about family planning (65.9%) while female priority is too little (17.1%). 12.2% male and female both taken their family planning decision and only 4.9% people do not take any family planning decision within the

Table 3: Family size, earning and dependent members of the respondents.

Sex	Family size		Earning members		Dependent members		Dependency ratio
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Male	79	45.93	39	49.37	41	51.89	1.05
Female	93	54.07	13	13.98	80	86.02	6.15
Total	172	100	51	29.65	121	70.35	2.37

Table 4: Monthly household income of the family.

Income	Frequency	Percent	Opinion regarding gender violence
Low (2000-5000)	17	41.5	Most victim
Medium (6000-12000)	20	48.8	More victim
High (13000-20000)	4	9.8	Few victim
Total	41	100.0	

Table 5: Gender inequalities at the household level.

Categories	Male (husband)	Female (wife)	Both	Children	None	Others
Who is earning most within the family?	33 (80.5)	6 (14.6)				2 (4.9)
Who hold the more decision making power?	34 (82.9)	5 (12.2)				2 (4.9)
Who hold the power to sending their children to school/college?	8 (19.5)	13 (31.7)	18 (43.3)		2 (4.9)	
Who hold the power to move from one area to another?	31 (75.6)	10 (24.4)				
Who work more for the family?	20 (48.8)	18 (43.9)	1 (2.4)			2 (4.9)
Who deprived from decision making opportunities?	3 (7.3)	34 (82.9)		1 (2.4)	2 (4.9)	1 (2.4)
Who deprived from more financial support?	11 (26.8)	27 (65.9)			1 (2.4)	2 (4.9)
Who is given the priority about family planning?	27 (65.9)	7 (17.1)	5 (12.2)		2 (4.9)	
Who mainly face more illness?	12 (29.3)	26 (63.4)				3 (7.3)

respondent. Researcher also found that women face more illness (63.4%) than men (29.3%).

### Causes of gender violence

Factors that cause gender violence at the household level include: financial problem, lower income, lack of family support, argument, more than one marriage etc., which are presented in Figure 2. Among respondents, 41.5% gender violence occurred due to financial problem, 2.4% of gender violence occurred due to lower income, 7.3% of gender violence occurred due to lack of family support, 4.9% of gender violence occurred due to argument, 2.4% of gender violence occurred due to more than one marriage and 41.5% respondents are victims of violence other causes respectively. In rural areas, most of the respondents are very poor. As a result, financial problem is one of the main causes of gender violence. It covers 41.5% of all the causes.

### Tendency in hiding violence

In Bangladesh due to patriarchal family structure male always try to dominate female. Besides females, males are also the victim of gender violence by their partner. Most of the cases, male try to hide that violence because they think that if they express, it will be shamed for them. Table 6 shows that women mainly hide the act of violence (48.8%) and men hide the act of violence are lower (26.8%) than women among the respondents. Sometimes both also try to hide the violence 14.6% and others who convince them to hide the violence that is 9.8%. It is depicted from the Table 7 that 41.5% of the respondents have hidden gender violence due to social factors. Because they think that if they would express the violence they will be the victim of social obloquy. Again 34.1%

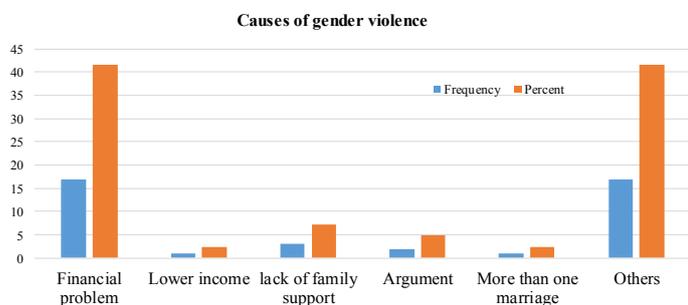


Figure 2: Distribution of causes of gender violence.

Table 6: Distribution of respondents who mainly hide the act of violence.

Mainly hide violence	Frequency	Percent
Male	11	26.8
Female	20	48.8
Both	6	14.6
Others	4	9.8
Total	41	100.0

Table 7: Factors responsible for hiding gender violence.

Factors	Frequency	Percent
Social factors	17	41.5
Religious factors	1	2.4
Individual factors	14	34.1
Other factors	5	12.2
None	4	9.8
Total	41	100.0

of the respondents has concealed the violence because they think that if they will reveal it, their parents might be get hearted. For that reason, the individual factors are responsible. The study found that within the 41 respondents, 34.1% suffer from mental depression like act as unsocial behavior, grouches, remain fierce always and where 7.3%, 2.4%, and 1% found that children cannot read well, try to hide violence from the children, don't get financial support from their husband. 53.7% of the respondents has the other consequences of gender violence such as physical sickness, malnutrition etc. (Table 8).

Gender violence, particularly domestic violence has been associated with many negative health consequences. These include: injuries; sexually transmitted diseases; unwanted pregnancy; hypertension; depression; anxiety disorders; headaches; and various psychosomatic manifestations. Domestic violence also impacts on children, whether they only witness the domestic violence. These consequences include behavioral problems, which are often associated with child management problems, school problems, and lack of positive peer relations [10]. Finally, it has been clear that all of these cause and consequences is the result of inequality. The consequences of gender violence are far reaching. It impacts on all aspects of family, their health and that of their children, and also on broader society [11].

### Relationship between income level of the respondents and gender violence

Correlation analysis was done to determine the relationship between income level and the gender violence. Therefore, Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient was used to test if there was significant relationship between income level and gender violence. Table 9 gives a summary of the findings. The correlation results shown in Table 9 indicates existence of statistically significant relationship ( $r = -0.323, p < 0.05$ ). This means that the rate of violence was higher among families of low income because the correlation

Table 8: Consequences of gender violence.

Consequences	Frequency	Percent
Mental depression (act as unsocial behavior, grouches, remain fierce always)	14	34.1
Children cannot read well	3	7.3
Try to hide violence from the children but they face a lot of difficulties	1	2.4
Do not get financial support from their husband	1	2.4
Others	22	53.7
Total	41	100.0

Table 9: Relationship between income level of the respondents and gender violence.

Pearson Correlation	-0.323*
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.039
N	41
*Denotes correlation significant at 0.05 level	

Table 10: Relationship between education level of respondents and gender violence.

Pearson Correlation	-0.459**
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.003
N	41
*Denotes correlation significant at 0.05 level	

coefficient was -0.323. Therefore, the hypothesis that indicated that there is a negative relationship between income level and rate of violence. These results were consistent with findings from previous studies carried out by Heisse [12] which concluded that in families where there is poverty, violence is likely to occur due to stress and struggle to make a living. Gelles [13] also observed that low income and poverty in general are risk factors for victimization and abuse.

### Relationship between education level of respondents and gender violence

The null hypothesis stated that there was no statistically significant relationship between education level and gender violence. Based on the results obtained, it is evident that there is a significant relationship between education level and gender violence ( $r = -0.459$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). This implies that there was higher rate of violence in families with low education level. The rate of violence was increased as the decrease in education level. These findings are in line with the work of Kephart and Jedlicka [14]. They found that low education level leads to unemployment and hence low income, which contributes to poverty. This idea was further expressed by World Health Organization (WHO) [15] that there is a relationship between education level and domestic violence although differences may occur depending on gender, ethnicity, mental health status and level of income. In relating respondents' education level and gender violence, a Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient test was run. The results in Table 10 show a significant correlation coefficient of -0.459.

### CONCLUSIONS

There are many factors in the household level such as earning, decision making power, deprived from decision making opportunities, deprived from financial support etc. which creates gender inequalities. Although the nature of society in Bangladesh is patriarchal, major gaps of gender violence persists in the rural areas because besides female, male also the victim of violence. Currently the governmental and non-governmental organizations have a good understanding of the types of violence against men and women which occur in Bangladesh. Thus the study would provide a basis for the development of government policies in which gender based problems could be prioritized and strategic decisions made regarding how these issues could be addressed and which interventions would be appropriate. This would help government make informed decisions about the efficacy of policies and interventions and subsequent revisions to policy to gender violence.

### AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

MPM: Design, writing of manuscript, performing the field experiments, collection and analysis of data. MSK and FB: Supervision of experiments and review of manuscript. MMI: Review of manuscript.

### REFERENCES

1. Udry JR. The nature of gender. *Demography*. 1994;31:561-573.
2. Krug EG, Dahlberg LL, Mercy JA, Zwi A, Lozano R. World report on violence and health. World Health Organization, 2002;149.
3. World Health Organization. Violence against women: A Priority Health Issue. 2005
4. Campbell JC. Adult response to violence. In: Campbell JC (ed.) *Violence: A Plague in our land*. Washington, DC, American Academy of Nursing, 1995;19-29.
5. Joachim J. Shaping the human rights agenda: The case of violence against women. *Gender politics in global governance*, 2000;142-160.
6. United Nations. Declaration and platform for action: Fourth world conference on women, Beijing, United Nations. 1993.
7. Bangladesh Economic Review (BER). Ministry of Finance, Government of Bangladesh, Dhaka. 2014.
8. Barber C. Domestic violence against men. *Nursing Standard*. 2008;22:35-39.
9. Sharmeen AF. Violence against women: A statistical overview, challenges and gaps in data collection and methodology and approaches for overcoming them. Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA). 2005.
10. Jaffe PG, Wolfe DA, Wilson SK. *Children of Battered Women*. Developmental Clinical Psychology and Psychiatry Education, Newbury Park, CA, Sage Publications. 1990.
11. Finker K. Gender, Domestic Violence and Sickness in Mexico. *Social Science and Medicine*. 1997;45:1147-1166.
12. Heisse L. Violence against women: An Integrated Ecological Framework. *Journal of Social Science* 1998;4:262-290.
13. Gelles R. *Intimate violence in families*. London, Sage, 1997;146-149.
14. Kephart W, Jedlicka D. *The family society and the individual*. Harper and Row Publishers, New York. 1988.
15. World Health Organization. *Violence against women. Legislation*. World Health Organization, Geneva, 1999;5.