

Context and Consequences of Domestic Violence Against Women in a Rural Area of Bangladesh: Analysis from Sociological Perspective

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Abstract

Violence against women is an appalling chapter that has received considerable attention across the globe. To uphold women rights and protect them from various injustices many global initiatives have been taken, but the result is very insignificant, particularly in the case of Bangladesh. The study on 'Context and Consequences of Domestic Violence against women in a Rural Area of Bangladesh' is an outcome of extensive field work on this issue within the time period between June 2013 to December 2013, in a village of Narail district named Ratadanga. The broad objective of this study is to investigate the context, nature and the consequences of domestic violence against women of a particular village of Bangladesh. An integrated method has been applied in this regard. The study reveals that several socio-economic, cultural, and demographic variables and practices are responsible for the incidents of domestic violence and its effect is multifarious, which range from physical, mental, economical, and sexual to social life of the women and their children. All these make a socially both short and long term effects on the whole social fabrics, which need to be addressed immediately to ensure their rights and eliminate all form of violence against women.

Keywords: Violence, Domestic; Women's status, family conflict, patriarchal society

Introduction

“Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women,

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including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life"(United Nation,2002). Incidence of Domestic Violence against Women (DVAW) is a common phenomenon in most societies including ours whether it is physical, mental or economical. Being one of the most under reported crimes in Bangladesh, the incident of domestic violence was 264 in 2004 while 397 in the year of 2010 (Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) Documentation Unit, 2011), which indicates increasing trend. In a patriarchal society like Bangladesh, women's position, prestige, power etc., are generally determined and dominated by males. Accordingly, males' attitude towards females is important and it does not generally give equal and due treatment to the female counterparts (Hossain & Sumon 2013). Women are considered as men's property. Their incomes, labor- power, liberty, even sexual activity, are controlled by the men within their families. Social expectations still pivot around child rearing and household management (Farouk, 2005). As a result violence against women is viewed as a normal phenomenon even from the women's perspective and the findings of International Center for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR, B 2006), indicates that 60 per cent of women in Bangladesh experience any sorts of domestic violence during their lives.

The rural women are more vulnerable in this regard. Many global initiatives have been taken to endorse women's right. The declaration of the decade for women [1975-85], the adoption of the Convention of the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women [CEDAW] in 1979, are significant steps. Though Bangladesh ratified CEDAW in 1984, and formulates the women and child Repression Act, 2013' the picture of violence against women in this country seems never ending. According to the statistics of the police head-quarter of Bangladesh, the number of incidents of women oppression including the rape ,killing, abduction and sexual harassment reached 12904 in 2009 and 16212 in 2010[www.violence against.com]. Although, the past four decades the country is going forward in some cases like; increased political participation of women , better job prospects, improved education ,and the adoption of new laws to protect their rights , however, issue like domestic violence ,acid burning and rape still could not controlled as expected level. Until now, there is no

organized information regarding the context and consequences of DVAW. The Specific objectives of this study are:

1. To explore the types of domestic violence against women in Bangladesh
2. To investigate the context of domestic violence against women
3. Find out the impact of violence against women on the women and their children.

Methodology

Study has been selected a village named Ratadanga under Narail sadar upazila as its study area. The study area is located about four km. from its district head quarter at the bank of river Chitra. Most of its inhabitants are Muslims and their occupation is agriculture. Quantitative data has been collected through semi-structured interview technique as a part of survey method. At the same time, as the researcher is from the said village, personal observation has been also applied in this regard. So, to carry out the study, an integrated method has been applied as research methodology. Samples of 80 married women have been selected purposively as respondents from the age group ranging from 14 to 49 years. Data were computerized, analyzed and interpreted by using frequency distribution, percentage, etc.

Theoretical Framework

Sociological perspectives on violence such as the ‘power and control’ theory recognized the abuser intent to gain control over their wives’ action, thoughts and feelings. It assumed that that the purpose of the violence is to exert power and control over the victims. Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP, 1981) reported that for more power and better control over intimate partners, men also abuse the children. Gottfried (1998), Gelles and Loseke, (1993) argued that under this perspective domestic violence against women by their inmates seems to be a natural phenomenon. On the other hand, according to the ‘feminist’ perspective, domestic violence originated from the unequal distribution of gender power in a patriarchal society. It focuses on the societal messages that sanction a male’s use of violence and aggression

throughout life, and the proscribed gender roles that dictate how men and women should behave in their intimate relationships (Pence & Paymar, 1993). The ‘loss of control’ theory sees the incident of domestic violence as a result of men’s loss of control over their anger and frustration. As men often became violent and abusive against their wives in private and secured places, there could be no evidence of abuse their strong social counterparts like police or law making personnel, employer and persons at their hierarchy (1995). ‘The ecological model’ of violence describes the relationship between individual and contextual factors (Gelles and Murray, 1989). The model divides the cause of violence under four major leadings i.e. individual characteristics, relationship factors, community characteristics and societal factors of the praetors’ and victims. The “cycle of violence” was the next theory to gain popularity in the United States. This theory was based on the belief that men did not express their frustration and anger because they had been taught not to show their feelings. The man’s tension built until he exploded and became violent. The tension was released, and the couple enjoyed a “honeymoon” period, during which the husband was apologetic and remorseful (Walker, 1979).

Review of the Literature

Hossain et. al. (2001), identified that Violence against women is largely the result of perceived differences between men and women as ascribed by norms of patriarchy. Rahman, (2007) put the responsibility of VAW on the cultural beliefs, norms, social institutions that legitimize and hence perpetuate it. Hossain & Sumon (2013) asserted that different types of violence against women take place quite frequently in Bangladesh such as domestic violence, acid violence, rape, gang rape, murder, forced prostitution, “Eve-teasing” and recently eve-teasing has become a serious social problem in the country. They make a suggestion that under the existing social values and norms, males’ attitude and behavior towards females need to be changed as well. Khatun & Rahman’s (2012) socio-legal analysis suggests a comprehensive intervention where protective and preventive

measures would be devised to address the problem which will help in changing the patriarchal mindset and behavior against wife or women. Islam and Dey, (2013) shown the physical, mental, economical and sexual are more common forms of violence and these violence hampers the conjugal, marital, individual, family and social life of the respondents.

The Socio-economic Status of the Respondents:

The socio-economic features of this study illustrated that, among the respondents, age group of '30 to 35' years belonged to the highest (25%), all the respondents of this study are married and house wife (100%), and 99% respondent's religion is Islam, 43.75% of the respondents are illiterate and in respect of their husbands' educational status, half of them (50%), have completed only primary level. Observing the nature of husbands' occupation, maximum (46.25%) husbands' occupation is peasantry (46.25%) and the findings of this study indicated that majority (39%) respondent's husband's monthly income is between TK.10000 to15000.

Context of Domestic Violence against Women

To find out factors associated to violence against women, many studies have been done and many theories have been developed. Domestic violence is one of the most prevalent form of violence committed against women by men in Bangladesh; as a result the country posited second position in the year 2002 (BNWLA, 2010) among the UN countries. A study by ICDDR, B in 2006, indicated that 60% of violence occurs within their home. The ethnographic findings of this study revealed the background that led the women being tortured. Social relationship within the family particularly husband, mother in law, sister in law and others in-laws of family is a factor that directly contribute a lot to DVAW. Family's economics and educational status have direct implications on the repression of women. Cultural construction of motherhood, womanhood and other relevant construction that are socially maintained, contribute to women subordinate position and it reflect in forms of violence against them. The religious believes and values of the members of the family as well

as the woman her-self also responsible for both the shaky and oppressed conditions.

Polygamy of up to four wives is permitted for a Muslim man if he has legally take written permission from his current wife. In practice, however, the wife's permission is obtained through coercion, threat and violence (Farouk, 2005). The more specific direct factors behind domestic violence against women in this study are failure to meet dowry demand (39%), misbehave with their husband as well as other in laws (23%), Disagree with and interference of husband's second marriage, economic insolvency and some time without any visible rational cause. In the version of the women of the study area, the root causes of violence against them are: are poverty (45%), dowry (38.75%), family conflict (23%), patriarchal social system (31.5%), unemployment (42.5%). extra marital relation etc. This findings is similar to the findings of Khair (2001), Jahan (1994), Hossain and sumon (2013), where they argued that, deteriorating social values and a lack of respect for women acted as catalysts for sexual harassment.

Nature of Domestic Violence against Women

Globally 35% of women have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence (WHO, 2005). On the other hand in Bangladesh, 87 per cent of women victims of domestic violence (BBS, 2011). Most of the women specially married women faced the violence of their life course either in form of physical, mental, economical or sexual by their husband or in-laws in their husband's house. Wife beating is the most common feature of domestic violence in Bangladesh and ranked first (UN, 2000) in the world. The women of this village generally faced physical tortured in their everyday life. The data of this study reveals that respondents faced slapping (58%), pushing (50%), torture by socking (46 %), tortured by kick (37%) in their everyday life They also tortured by pulling by hair, beating by stick, chocking, burn by hot iron, pinching, spitting, and heat in sensitive organ. This findings are supported by the findings of Khatun and Rahman (2012) where they wrote that most of the women in Bangladesh experience DV in their lives which takes

different forms of abuses, i.e. physical (slapping, beating, arm twisting, stabbing, strangling, burning, choking, kicking, murder), psychological (threats of abandonment or abuse, to take away custody of the children, verbal aggression and humiliation, threats of killings), sexual abuse (coerced sex through threats, intimidation, forcing unwanted sexual acts), economic (denial of funds, refusal to contribute financially, denial of food and basic needs, controlling access to health care and employment) etc.

Consequences of Domestic Violence against Women

As the societal norms do not perceive Domestic Violence against Women to be a criminal offence, so as its consequences also do not get due important and recognized as a social crisis as well as a predicament of development. Moreover, common notion in this regard is that it is a family matter and it should be solved within the family. So, it is a matter of concern that a culture of acceptance, even, has grown and is being transmitted from generation to generation to the point of being institutionalized (Doza, 2013). A study of BNWLA shows that 30 percent of women think that husbands have the “right” to inflict physical violence upon their wives. However, in Bangladesh some times its magnitude became so high, and then it came out from the inside of the family. It is found that the impacts of domestic violence are multifarious. It hampered the conjugal and marital, individual, family and social life of women (Islam and Dey, 2013).

It is found from this study that due to violence the women suffered from physical trauma like, headache (73.75%), back pain (87.5%), Broken any parts(10%), abdomen-pain (45%), psychological impact includes, Inferiority (57%), Unwillingness to life (69%), sleeplessness (50%), socio-economical consequences are loss of social dignity (81%), insecurity (26%), decrease working ability (21%), economic crisis (58.75%), lowering social position (66.25%) and finally it hampered the social status of the women. Violence against women not only put an impact on the women, but also on the children of the family, because most of the respondents are tortured in the presence of their children. The nature of impact on children includes, frustration

(35%), impede in socialization (25%), behavioral problem (27%), unwillingness to go to school (66%), Criminal tendency (40%), that is a dangerous indication for the nation. In Bangladesh, a victimized woman usually tries to avoid the legal process as she becomes more stigmatized by the society. She dares not file complaints; fearing negligence and harassment in police station, courts and society (Farouk, 2005). As this oppression is considered as a hidden and family matter, most of the respondents did not seek the legal assistant from any quarter (75%). However a significant amount of respondents wanted to terminate their marital relationship (15%).

Conclusion

Domestic Violence against Women has been an issue of serious concern in Bangladesh for a long period. Despite experiencing a significant progress in women empowerment in certain fields over the past few years, Domestic Violence against Women still remains very high in comparison to many other developing countries. This fact may be startling to the international community, however, in Bangladesh it is common knowledge that husbands exert their authority and physically assault wives for even minor mistakes, such as an unsatisfactory meal, an untidy room, a conversation with another man, or any act of disagreement or disobedience (Farouk, 2005). Illiteracy, poverty, religious belief, patriarchal social norms, etc. seem to be considered as the key contributing factors in facilitating the increased rate of Domestic Violence against Women in the rural areas of our country.

There could be many other customs, socio-economic or cultural factors associated with this that are not well reported due to the lack of remarkable study in this field especially in the rural areas of Bangladesh. However, the study has been an effort to explore *the Context and consequences of domestic violence against women in a Rural Area of Bangladesh*. Therefore, the core objective of the study was to reveal the context in which the violence used to occur, more specifically, the causes that directly or indirectly facilitate the violence in rural Bangladesh as well as to expose the consequences of this

monstrous act. Understanding of the causes and consequences of domestic violence against women through this study will help the academicians as well as the policy makers to guide the use of widely viable interventions for the elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women.

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Source: Field survey, 2013