

Necessity of Self-Defence Training for Prevention of Rape against Women: A Dhaka City Experience

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore self-defence training for Rape prevention for females in Dhaka city. Nowadays, rape has been one of the most dominant forms of violence against women. Women of Bangladesh are also going through this unavoidable problem and are always in a risk of being raped. As Dhaka is the capital of Bangladesh and all forms of people are living in this city for many purposes, so the authors have selected this city to run their research.

Objective of this research is to explore the techniques for self-defence for combatting the rape incident; young learners' perception on self-defence tactics for preventing rape and to know how the self-defence techniques strength body and mind for combatting the rape incident.

The authors have collected data and information from the cases, broad-casted news, articles, journals, books and interviews.

The authors have used qualitative approach. The in-depth interview and case study analysis method are used as research tool and 15 Trainers, 15 Learners and 2 psychiatrists are chosen using snowball sampling and purposive sampling. In consequences of the study, after analysing the data and literatures, the authors have found that self-defence techniques are the efficient weapon of women to prevent being rape victim.

The authors have tried to give some referendum on the basis of their studies and it will give the unique idea to impede rape. This study will make women understand how they can protect themselves by using these strategies and examine the effect of self-defence in rape prevention.

Key words: Rape, prevention, self-defence, strategies, legal views, prevention

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Introduction

Sohagi Jahan Tonu, a 19-year-old student of Comilla Victoria College was brutally gang raped and murdered and her body was found in Comilla Cantonment on 20th March, 2016. But the law enforcement agencies couldn't be able to apprehend the culprits (The Daily Star,2020). In Dhaka, Yasmin Akhter was a 14-year-old domestic helper. On August 24, 1995, she went back to her hometown in the Dashmile district of Dinajpur. Members of the Bangladesh police gave her an elevator in a police truck. Three officers of the Bangladesh Police Force then raped and killed her(The Daily Star,2017). Now 49.47% male and 50.46% female among the total population are living in Bangladesh (National Population and Housing Census, 2022).¹ So, we can see the ratio is not so higher or lower, a quite balanced ratio indeed. But why those incidents happened? Why the women are being raped, sometimes murdered very brutally after rape?

Though men and women both are contributing in social, cultural and economic sectors of our country, women do not get recognized like men for years. In fact, they have to be suppressed and stigmatized in the society which leads to violence like physical tortures, psychological trauma or sexual violence. Feminists contends that male dominance has prevailed systematically throughout the years for dominating women and our society traditionally legitimize male superiority for ‘correcting women’s mistakes or misconduct’ through abuse (Rahman,2019). This forced ‘correction or control, to be more accurate’ leads to physical, sexual, psychological trauma, economic, social deprivation and interminable dread (Seeley & Plunkett, 2002). Nowadays, rape has been one of the most dominant forms of violence against women and 13 rape incidents are occurred day by day in Bangladesh (Rashid,2019). That is why the authors want to find out the effectiveness of self-defence from youths’ perception in preventing rape against women.

632 rape cases reported from April to August this year according to human rights organization Ain o Salish Kendra and 142 incidents of attempted to rape have taken place during the same time frame (ASK, 2020; Rabbi, 2020). 20835 incidents reported since 2014, and on an average nearly 13 women and girls were raped in every day from January to April (Rashid, 2019). Only 2% rape cases are facing trial each year and victims combat to achieve proper justice for slow investigations by the police and other authorities because total 1,229 out of 4,541 lawsuits have been settled to date (ASK, 2020). Sadeka Halim, Dean of Dhaka

¹Total population of Bangladesh 2022: 165,158,616. Male: 81,712,824; Female: 83,347,206

University said, “*Familial, social, political and moral degradation are ruining our societies and people cannot fulfilling their responsibilities*” (Rabbi, 2020). BRAC’s counsel, Ummehani Binte Ariff, said that “the number of confirmed cases of rape in 2017 was 93. The number had climbed to 138 by the time this article was ready for publication” (Atiaand Tanjina, 2015). Lack of sufficient evidence, poor prosecution case presentation, technicalities of legislation, out-of-court settlements, insufficient police investigation and case are also responsible (Ariff, 2017). According to estimates, of the 4,541 lawsuits, a total of 1,229 lawsuits have been settled to date (ASK, 2020). In those cases, a total of 60 defendants were indicted. And 73% of the lawsuits are yet to be resolved (ASK, 2020). Being anonymous, a multi-sectorial program official told Prothom Alo that none of the government agencies is working adequately and competently enough to provide justice for the victims of rape. The same response came from the experts in forensic medicine and the others at the police headquarters (Alam, 2017).

In the case of Fariha Hasin (Adnin, 2020), she became concerned about her safety after facing many cases of sexual abuse on roads and in her personal life, and her self-esteem started to erode. Faria found out about the self-defence course entitled "Warrior Women Bangladesh (Joya, 2019)." in 2017 while searching for anything to regain her confidence. The Warrior Women Bangladesh project, launched in September 2017, is run by Martial Art Instructor Abdullah Mohammad Hossain at his KO Battle Studio in Gulshan, Dhaka (Joya, 2019). He began to teach methods of self-defense to women and to increase their inner and outer power in the fight against sexual assault (Joya, 2019). She started to feel better and more confident about herself after Faria began to take self-defence lessons at KO Battle Studio (Adnin, 2020). The KO Fight Studio is registered under the World Karate Organization (WKO) with offices in 101 countries and the approved branch in Bangladesh is the KO Fight Studio (Joya, 2019). Since Abdullah is a "Kyokushin" Japanese martial art specialist, the studio offers its students this form of karate. Abdullah said to the Business Standard, "*I have always been worried about the sexual harassment situation in Bangladesh; the 2015 TSC incident (attack on women during Pahela Baishakh celebrations) especially disturbed me and since then I wanted to do something about it*" (Adnin, 2020). As most of the women remain busy domestic activities or workplaces both of them are risk of being victimized of these incidents and so training can improve the stamina and physical strength of women for striking back in the event of harassment or violence," Abdullah explained about his methods of training (Adnin, 2020)

So it is clearly shown that the incidents of rape are increasing day by day and year by year rather than decreasing. That is why the authors have tried to find out the effectiveness of self-defence for preventing those kinds of incidents.

Literature Review

As rape against women is one of the most abominable types of violence against women, it has a broader and thicker perspective in the context of crime and legal views. “Forcible rape” had been defined by the Uniform Crime Report (UCR) as “*the penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim*” (Department of Justice, 2020). Besides that, the Penal of 1860 of Bangladesh defines rape, “*A man is said to commit ‘rape’ who except in the case hereinafter excepted, has sexual intercourse with a woman under circumstances falling under any of the five following descriptions- a) Against her will, b) without her consent c) with her consent, when her consent has been obtained by putting her in fear of death, or of hurt d) with her consent, when the man knows that he is not her husband, and that her consent is given because she believes that he is another man to whom she is or believes herself to be lawfully married and e) with or without her consent, when she is under fourteen years of age*” (The Penal Code, 1860). Self-defence protects one from assault, battery, and criminal homicide because as it always involves the use of force (Criminal Law, 2015). Learning self-defence can be a technique of preventing rape from happening and also fight back the perpetrators.

The researchers explored the responses of survivors to the actions of assault and rape coverage. In a particular study, 36 victims of rape and half of them reported to the police about their rape and half of the incidents are underreported and those researchers developed a six-scale questionnaire: “Rape Myth Acceptance, Just World Beliefs, Police Attitudes, Locus of Control, Pro-Victim Scale, and Anti- Rapist Scale.” The results showed that rape ‘Victims-Not Report’ had sustainably higher levels of ‘Rape Myth Acceptance and Control and Rape Victims – Report Internet Locus’. Women may choose many probable techniques for preventing or reducing of chance of being assaulted (rape prevention) or defend themselves when assaulted (self- defence) when deciding whether and what to do to reduce their risk of being raped and should evaluate these approaches as there are risk of being raped, chances being injured and lose of self- esteem. The two studies reported here are developing methods to ask women about these difficult trade-offs. The study was conducted using open-ended questionnaire along with a comprehensive list of 162 positive and negative strategic outcomes that provides an

indirect measure of their relative importance with the relative frequency with which these consequences are mentioned. Study 2 more specially evaluated the value of the technique using two different scales of ranking. The mean ratings in this study suggest that consequences appear to be most important for women; the variation in these ratings shows how important a matter of personal opinion is as a consequence (Furby, Fischhoff & Morgan, 1991). A rape victim always believes that the perpetrator intends to kill or grievously harm her in order to be legally justified in shooting an attacker. The threat of serious physical harm is clear in many rape situations: the rapist is armed or threatens death or serious injury. In situations where a rapist does not explicitly or implicitly threaten physical harm beyond forcible intercourse, the right of the victim to use deadly force against the rapist is less clear. Current law does not clearly articulate that harm will be limited to forcible intercourse only. The high frequency of murder and serious injury incident to rape is one aspect that can justify the use of deadly force against a violator who does not threaten the victim with death or serious physical harm. This could reasonably cause any rape victim to believe that there is a serious danger to their life and health. The high rate of physical injury and psychological trauma associated with rape is a second factor that could justify the use of deadly force. The threat of venereal disease, unwanted pregnancy, and psychological weakening can be considered together as a serious harm threat. Generally, rape can be seen as a serious physical and psychological assault that can be avoided by any means whatsoever (Kates & Engberg, 1982). The effect of victim resistance on rape completion and injury was analysed using a broad probability sample of cases of sexual assault from the National Crime Victimization Survey (1992-2002) and taking into account whether the victim's damage accompanied or preceded acts of self-protection (SP). In addition to rape, subsequent injuries, especially serious injuries are common following victim resistance. Results indicate that most SP actions, both powerful and non-powerful, reduce the risk of rape completion and do not affect the risk of further injury significantly (Tark & Kleck, 2013). Besides, victim blaming, neglects acquaintance assault but does not target the underlying factors that facilitate sexual violence. The authors argue that "(1) misunderstandings of self-defence training, (2) stereotypes about gender, and (3) individualistic assumptions create impact on eagerness of self-defence education based on empowerment helps to change the root conditions that allow violence against women to flourish women's employment-based self-defence education should be part of any effort to prevent sexual violence (Hollander, 2016).

Research Objective

1. To explore the techniques for self-defence for combatting the rape incident.
2. To know young learners' perception on Self Defence Tactics for Preventing Rape
3. To know how the self-defence techniques strength body and mind for combatting the rape incident.

Methodology

This paper relies on qualitative data (derived from In-depth Interview and Secondary Data) to understand the rationality for having self-defence training in preventing rape against women in Bangladesh. Secondary data is analysed based on training manual from training academy. To establish the standpoint, the authors went some self-defence training academies in Dhaka and talked to both trainers and trainees to understand the real situation. That is why we use purposive sampling process to search and got the answer. Moreover, the authors carried out semi-structured interviews of 15 trainers and 15 trainees.

Ethical Consideration

1. All interviews were recorded, with the consent of the interviewees, and later transcribed and translated for analysis.
2. Interview locations are preferred by the interviewees.
3. The identities of the interviewees are kept secret. Facts that could reveal identities of the interviewees have not been reported. The exact locations and dates are also withheld to protect the interviewees.

Data Analysis

15 Trainers and 15 Female Learners of self-defense activities have taken part in our research. Participants were comfortable sharing information with us. Our methodology and ethical procedure allowed them to share their opinions without any hesitation and fear.

Self-defence Techniques for Combatting the Rape Incident

Bangladesh has many traditional martial arts such as Bolikhela (includes grappling, throws, and locks) and Lathi Khela (weapon based) are popular. Nowadays, other martial arts which have been popular form of self-defense; for instance, Karate, Judo, Taekwondo, Krav Maga, Kung Fu etc (IKUBD, 2020). International Karate Union Bangladesh (IKUBD), Jacky Martial Arts Academy, Dhaka University Judo & Karate Club-these are the karate institutes (Jacky Academy, 2020). **Karate** is empty hand martial art. In karate, there are many different ways of performing

techniques but basic techniques are same. International Karate Union Bangladesh (IKUBD), Jacky Martial Arts Academy and Dhaka University Judo & Karate Club (DUJKC) are performing as ‘Karate Training Institute’ (Jacky Academy, 2020). Karate is empty hand martial art. In Karate, there are many different ways of performing techniques but basic techniques are same. In **Judo**, it focuses on Throws and some grappling while taking the opponent on the ground (Jacky Academy, 2020). **Kung Fu**, a Chinese martial art is influenced by many animal movements. Chinese Kung Fu & Wuhu School of Dhaka and Young Tiger Kung Fu and Wuhu School emphasis on some Kung Fu techniques such as Sort Kung Fu, Animal Kung Fu, Drunken Kung Fu, Tai Chai, Wuhu, Jeet Kung Fu (DUJKC, 2020). Another form of martial art is **Krav Maga** (Dhaka Tribune, 2020), which is a kind of Military Self-Defense and Fighting style (Kung Fu & Wushu School, 2020). It mainly focuses on Street Fighting and ground Fighting (Royal School, 2020). Tactical Krav Maga Bangladesh is a training institute which teaches kicking, Punching, Striking and Stanching etc. (Royal School, 2020). Bangladesh young Taekwondo Academy, Royal Taekwondo school Bangladesh, Mirpur DOHS Self Defense Martial Art Taekwondo Club are also prominent. According to direction of the institutes, these techniques are predominant in self-defense from criminal activities such as- eve teasing, hijacking rape and violent crime, such as-

1. Punching (straight punch, uppercut punch)
2. Kicking (Front kick, roundhouse kick, back kick)
3. Building Blocks (upper block, rising block) and blocking
4. Striking and stances
5. Grappling: In Judo, it focuses on Throws and some grappling while taking the opponent on the ground
6. Join locks
7. Choking techniques

Young Learners’ and Trainers’ Perception

According to the Trainers, they are teaching some free hand and leg techniques such as punching, striking, jabbing and kicking etc. Several trainers reported that some instrumental techniques are also trained specially for women on how pen, pencil or small stick can be used properly as a weapon in any unavoidable danger and when it is possible to defend without weapons, don’t need to use these. 4 trainers pointed out that they teach street fighting which can help a woman to defend herself in any place from instant attacks. 2 other trainers talked about ground fighting. While attacking if she falls on the ground, then the protecting and attacking techniques will be different.

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One trainer said, “*We teach some Japanese techniques like lock system which can break hands or legs of opponent and by this the attacker will get frightened.*” Another trainer commented, “*Self Defense is not only related with fighting always. Some mental operations of mind are also needed. We teach them some mental and brain exercise also.*”

But trainers unanimous on this point that these techniques can work through regular practice. Self-defense training is not a matter of 2or 3 months training at all. To apply these techniques perfectly one should practice the moves regularly that can sharpen the skills. One trainer said, “*If a girl knows how to punch but doesn't practice it. In this state, if the girl punches someone, she may break her wrist and it will be riskier for her. So regular practice is must.*”

On the other hand, according to the learners, they have learned some easy techniques of instant fighting like punching, kicking, and hand striking. Not only techniques but also many verbal assertiveness they learned. They have learned which part of the body are sensitive and wounding where will hurt a man most. Besides, some facial expressions, bodily movements, observing one's gesture and some easy tactics like carrying some instruments always and how can make proper use of all these things properly in required situation. One learner commented, “*I always carry pencil, pen, body spray in my bag to save myself. When anyone tries to get closer to me, I will spray on his eyes.*”

Participants have talked about the improvements of physical strength as well as mental strength. Self-defense techniques are most effective in self-efficacy also.

One trainer mentioned, “*My wife and my younger sisters are learning these self-defense techniques. It is important for every girl of our country.*” A learner commented, “*Self-defense training is necessary like our other daily needs (foods, health care, shelter) because it is related with our safety.*”

Physical Development

Trainers agreed that self-defense techniques improve physical fitness. Techniques give advantages but these are primarily based on physical fitness. It makes bodily parts flexible and can help to move bodily parts easily. Trainers say that they give emphasis on physical fitness also. They instruct how the learners can keep themselves fit by taking proper food and exercise. Regular exercise makes muscles stronger, increases breathing and makes bodily parts flexible. Normally people think girls are weak. In that case, when a girl is well trained, her fitness and gestures are different. And most of the time bad people can realize that committing rape will not be easy.

Learners felt that self-defense activities have improved their physical strength to defeat an attacker. One learner commented, “*Self-defense training changes the physical structure that anyone can understand and then an attacker will think further before harming physically.*”

Mental Development

According to the participants, self-defense is not only the training how to perform physically but also the training of mind. Being mentally prepared can help anyone half in the fighting. Sometimes mental strength is more needed than physical strength at the time of danger. A trained woman knows how to be mentally prepared for an attack but one cannot fight under pressure. Everyone has strength and weaknesses both inside them. Self-defense activities sharpen the inner strength and reduce inner weaknesses. This training increases our confidence level, courage, assertiveness which is helpful for our mental strength.

Confidence

Building confidence is one of the most important effects of self-defense. Trainers talked about mental confidence. Sometimes one attacker attacks the girl who seems very weak or tensed. If the girls show their confidence to other, then someone will not randomly attack them.

One trainer said, “*When a girl prepares herself properly, she can develop her confidence level. When she believes that she is able to protect herself, she will definitely feel confident and eradicate nervousness.*”

13 out of 15 learners agreed that by knowing self-defense techniques they feel confident. A girl with zero knowledge about self-defense and a trained girl who knows a lot of self-defense techniques are not their confidence level same. When a girl knows kicking, punching and the weak parts of a human body, she feels mentally strong. Regular practice gives mental strength.

One learner frequently stated, “*I was depressed but when I started karate, it brings a strong mental feeling in myself. My depression started demolished and I started to feel confident.*”

Courage

A well-trained self-confident woman has the courage to defend herself. Through learning defensive techniques, people can control their fear and can express their internal anger by their facial or bodily expressions. A girl who has courage don't lose her sense instantly at the time of threatening situation and can think any way to save herself.

One learner said, “*If situation becomes worse or dangerous, I will be able to handle 5 or 6 men at a time. I gain this type of courage by adopting self-defense techniques.*”

Mental Assertiveness

2 trainers talked about mental assertiveness. Self-defense can increase assertiveness in oneself and it can prevent rape by developing assertiveness.

In our society women think that if they protest against any harassment and apply defensive techniques, people will not take it easily and they will blame her for creating the situation. So, when a girl needs to protest, she cannot do it for thinking about circumstances. A girl can feel a new set of assertiveness in mind and raise her voice for herself. One trainer commented that they always motivate the girls to stand up and raise their voice. He explained, “*Few days ago, a man died by the counter attack of a girl to defend herself. Then we gave her a gold medal from the federation to encourage other girls.*”

How can We Combat Rape Incident?

According to the trainers, the participation of women in self-defense activity is increasing day by day but it is not satisfactory yet. The girls should take self-defense techniques even their mother also because at the present time no one is safe from the risk of being raped and what can we do at this time is that we should depend on our own strength not others. For example, woman who has started her career as a sports person or a police officer or an army person is well trained and the way she stands or behaves are quite different than an ordinary woman. They have their own defensive techniques. They have faith on their own ways and express it by their works. One trainer said, “*Self-defense training is mainly risk reduction training. It focuses on adopting some techniques and attitudes to reduce the risk of being a victim of rape.*” Another trainer commented, “*I cannot say that only self-defense can prevent rape mostly. It is not the only way that is able to prevent rape, but it can minimize the rates*”.

Another learner explains- “*We must understand what ‘bad touch’ is. When I feel it, I must shout loudly. Keep it in your mind, shouting is also a self-defense tactic. If the offender tries attacking on me, I must punch on eye/face/lower abdomen. If he tries to open my salwar or pant, I must punch on his Gonad, if possible, use knee. You may wrench his hand or if he falls down, just run away but do not stop shouting loudly.*”

Learners also agreed that learning Self-defense activities can play a vital role in reducing the rate of rape. One learner commented, “*I think self-defense can help us to prevent rape 60% not 100%. There are many indicators involved here. To fight against a gang is quite tough but a trained woman can defeat one or two person easily.*”

Recommendations

After analyzing all data collected from various news reports, articles, research works as well as interviews of trainers and trainees, the authors have found that the self-defense trainings make a trainee both physically and mentally stronger than the average one. Those kinds of trainings also help them to protect themselves from any unwanted situation like snatching, hijacking, eve-teasing, assault, rape and many others. But the ratio of women in the field of learning self-defense is too low due to some myths such ‘it may be harmful for girls’ health, it may create masculine traits or it may reduce softness and beauty of women’ which has no scientific proof. That is why the authors have given some recommendations regarding this.

- As the self-defense trainings help in defending a person from a bad event, women should participate in this kind of trainings to protect them.
- Media and governmental institutions should promote awareness and promotion of the necessity and usefulness of learning self-defense techniques.
- We should be open minded to facilitate our female members so that they can learn defensive techniques.
- Governmental may establish some self-defense training institutes so that the interested people can get training in a reasonable fee and adequate manner.
- All of the educational institutions should have their own self-defense training sessions and they should encourage their students to learn and practice the techniques regularly besides their academic curriculums.

So, all sorts of social institutions should be aware and make our women aware about the self-defense training to prevent them from any unwanted circumstance.

Conclusion

At present, women are independent; goes to work and may not be in desirable positions several times. Hence, learning self-defense tactics will not only expand their horizons but also expand all-encompassing capacity in our everyday life. In an imperfect world, self-defense opens up this avenue of liberation for women. Building faith in physical resistance skills helps women to feel more capable and more at ease when they know the right strategies to help fend off an intruder in potentially dangerous environments. Though there were some limitations of both resources and emergency situation of Bangladesh, the authors have tried

to collect as much data as possible to find out the real facts and reasons so that the main motto of self-defense learning for preventing such heinous crimes like rape could be addressed properly. As self-defense training can make a person physically as well as psychologically fit and strong, governments, media as well as members of society should be involved in these kinds of activities as much as possible.

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