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## **VIOLENCE AGAINST WIVES IN HOUSEHOLD: A CASE STUDY IN RURAL BANGLADESH**

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### **Abstract**

This paper tries to examine the factors related to domestic violence against women in rural Bangladesh and find the remedies to this problem. A cross-sectional study was conducted at Kandigoan Union Parishad under Sylhet Sadar Upazila in Sylhet district, Bangladesh. Data were collected using social survey method. Two-stage cluster sampling method was applied to select the sample. Chi-square test was applied to examine the association between independent variables and dependent variable while binary logistic regression was applied to measure the effects of socio-economic factors on domestic violence against women in the household. The chi-square test shows that the age of wife, age of husband, NGOs' membership of wife and couple's income were related to the battering by husbands. Logistic regression shows that wife's working status, age of husband and couple's income were related to women battering by husbands in the family.

Key Words: Bangladesh, Domestic Violence, Household, Husband, Women.

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### **Introduction**

Violence against women is recognized as a serious human rights violation and a persistent public health crisis that concerns every sector of society (Wahed & Bhuiya, 2007). It is a global phenomenon, which takes place regularly across the geographical, cultural, political, economic and social boundaries. Each year, at least two million women and girls are trafficked who go into prostitution, forced slavery and servitude. Up to 60 percent of women experience some form of physical

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or sexual abuse during their lifetime (UNDP, 2013). Globally, as many as one in every three women is beaten, coerced into sex, or abused in some way during her lifetime (UN General Assembly, 2006). The Asia-Pacific region has some of the highest reported levels of violence against women and girls in the world and in Bangladesh previous studies indicated that one in two women have faced some form of violence in their lives (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2006).

WHO Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence shows the prevalence of physical violence by an intimate partner ranges from 23 to 61 percent; sexual violence from 10 to 59 percent; and physical or sexual violence or both from 29 to 71 percent in developing countries (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2006). As a third world country, Bangladesh is not an exception in regard to violence against women. It is a grim pressure to largely improve and advance the objective conditions of women in Bangladesh. Many types of violence against women is taking place in Bangladesh, such as, domestic violence, dowry-related violence, acid violence, killing, rape, rape followed by death, forced or induced abortion, forced prostitution, sexual harassment, violence at work place and trafficking (Hossain & Suman, 2013). Also 'eve-teasing' has gained tremendous importance as an alarming violent phenomenon in recent times (Hossain & Suman, 2013).

The rate of reported violent acts against women has risen consistently and at an alarming rate, especially since the early 1990s (Annual report on Violence against Women in Bangladesh, 2002). Since the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), the Government of Bangladesh, has also identified violence against women as a priority issue. Bangladesh Mahila Parishad report reconed that the deaths of 1,450 women in 2011 as against 1,377 in 2010 and 1,373 in 2009 resulted from various forms of violence, including dowry, rape and assault (Khan, 2012). This data discloses that in the present day Bangladesh more and more women are living at direct risk of different forms of violence. The lower social and economic status of female is foremost responsible for the cause of violence against women (Baseline Report, 1995). Moreover, there are other causes, such as, traditional behavior and attitudes, religious values, existence of gender-based social status, child marriage, poverty, lack of women security, lack of economic freedom and income, illiteracy, abuse by law enforcement agencies which are widely considered responsible for violence against women.

Likewise, violence against women impacts not only the women's individual rights including civil and political rights like legal protections against sexual assault but also curtailing her access to economic and

social rights like healthcare, education, and livelihood (CREA, 2012). If women live in a hostile condition, they cannot realize their full human virtues or participate in the economic, social, cultural, civil and political activities on the basis of equality with men (Baseline Report, 1995). Sometimes, some violence destroys the physical and mental ability of women which also deprives them from accessing to equal entertainment, enjoying the human rights and fundamental freedoms (CEDAW, 1979). Furthermore, another critical impact of violence against women includes homicide, suicide, maternal mortality and AIDS-related death, permanent disabilities, unwarranted and complicated disabilities, depression, anxiety, chronic pain syndrome, suicidal attitudes, shranked quality of life with a permanent constrain on women's mobility, limited women's access to resources and daily basic activities (Hossain & Suman, 2013).

By the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century, it has been seen that gender discrimination is no more a national concern rather it has become a matter of global interest. To protect women from violence and establish their rights many conventions, provisions and laws have been enacted all over the world. The UN General Assembly approved an important document on 10 December, 1948 what is titled as "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights". It mentioned that 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood' (UN General Assembly, 1948). In 1966, two conventions were passed which include International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. International agencies are playing vital role to establish women's rights such as the UN 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 (ratified by Bangladesh in 1984), four World Conferences on Women, the adoption by consensus of the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies (1985), and the Beijing Platform for Action (1995).

## **1.2 Violence against Women**

CEDAW in 1979, defines discrimination against women as “any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality with men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedom, in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field” (CEDAW, 1979). From this definition, it can easily be said that if the female discriminated at any place or deprived from any facility on the basis of sex, it’s called violence against women.

In 1993, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women which says that the “Violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women....” (General Assembly Resolution, 1993). The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, UN Resolution 48/104 defines violence against women as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation from liberty, whether in public or private life. Jahan (1994) mentioned, “Violence against women is defined as any act involving the use of force/coercion with intent of perpetuation/promotion hierarchical gender relations in all social structures”.

Any gender-based act which affects directly or indirectly on the women’s physical, sexual, psychological, social, political and economic status; it is also known as violence against women.

## **1.1 Present Situation of Violence against Women in Bangladesh**

As per United Nations Gender Development Index, Bangladesh is ranked 121<sup>st</sup> among 146 countries world wide (UNDP, 2001). Violence against women is seen not only as a recent phenomenon but also found in the ancient period in the society. The experts mentioned that women’s position was weakened because of her economic dependence, lesser physical strength, legal and social subordination to her husband, and her obligation to fulfill the physical demands of her husband (Levinson, 1989). Although the documentation of violence against women has remained poor, it has been argued that the incidence of rape, incest, molestation and sexual harassment has been increasing in Bangladesh (Jahan, 1994). In the recent population-based study, the physical assault by male partners in Bangladesh has been reported as high as 47% (UNFPA, 2000). However, traditional social and orthodox religious

practices continue in many areas in the country. Marriages without the consent of girls occur in rural areas and sometimes the wife is divorced by husband at any time and without any valid reason (Rashid, 2004).

The WHO multi-country study reported from the data collected by ICDDR, B-Naripokkho survey, that 53.3 per cent in the urban and 79.3 percent of women in the rural area believed that a man had a right to beat his wife under certain circumstances. The various circumstances include: not completing home-chores adequately, refusing sex, disobeying the husband, or being unfaithful (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2005). The incident of violence against women and children has increased manifold in the country over the last two decades. In fact, its rate is alarmingly high and terribly crossed the number of previous records. Women right groups in Bangladesh reported deaths of newly married women due to dowry demands (Dhaka Courier, 2002). The occurrence of acid throwing on girls by disgruntled young men remains in the country (Dhaka Courier, 2002).

Odhikar reported that from 1 January 2001 to 29 February 2012, 2338 woman have already been killed, 1025 women physically abused and 172 women committed suicide because of dowry violence, 8478 women have been raped. Human Rights Watch 2013 mentioned that Violence against women, including rape, dowry-related assaults, and other forms of domestic violence such as acid attacks, sexual harassment, and illegal punishments in the name of 'fatwas' continue (Babul, 2013). Ain O Salish Kendro reported 22,701 incidents of violence against women and girls that took place between January 2009 and March 2013, including gang rape, murder, and dowry-related violence, trafficking and acid attacks (Dhaka Tribune Editorial, 2013). Almost half of Bangladeshi women with young children experience violence from their husbands; where more than two of every five (42.4 percent) of the mothers had experienced intimate partner violence from their husband within the past year (Jay et. al., 2009). In Bangladesh, for example, only in January 2013, according to a report of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, a total of 446 women faced violence across the country. Of them, 125 were raped, 30 were gang-raped, 14 were killed after rape and 14 faced sexual harassment. A total of 12 domestic workers also were the victims of repression (Babul, 2013).

The last amendment of Bangladesh Constitution in 2011, in its article 19 mentioned that the state shall endeavor to ensure equality of opportunity for the participation of women in all spheres of national life. Article 27 states that all citizens are equal before law, article 28 provides that the state shall not discriminate against any citizens.....women shall have

equal rights with men in all spheres of the state and of public life. However, the government has taken action to reduce the gender-based discrimination in the county. In 1988, Bangladesh approved the 1962 Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages, the age of legal marriage is 18 years for women and 21 years for men under the amended Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929 and 1952 Convention on the Political Rights of Women. Bangladesh has signed to 1979 the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in November 1984. It has approved many significant Amendment, law, act and policy to establish human rights of women. Prominent among them are the Child Marriage Restraint (Amendment) ordinance, 1984 and the Dissolution of Muslim Marriage (Amendment) ordinance, 1986 (Mansoor, 1999). In fact, dowry has been made illegal under Dowry Prohibition Act, 1980 as amended in 1982 and 1984, trafficking of women is prohibited by Cruelty to Women (Deterrent Punishment) Act, 1983 as amended 1988 and under Section 372 of the Bangladesh Penal Code. On the other hand, the governmental legislation also maintained the women rights, the Repression against Women and Children Act 1995, the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, 2000, the Acid Offence Prevention Act, 2002, Acid Control Act 2002, (Rashid, 2004). Lastly, the government enacted Anti-Trafficking Act 2010 and the Domestic Violence Act 2010.

Although safeguard of women against violence has been ensured constitutionally and legally, the practical scenario is totally different. Everyday women face various forms of harassment, exploitation, and trafficking. Moreover, some conventional or customary practices, social and cultural prejudices and religious extremism are also harmful to women rights. It is, therefore, imperative to do study on where violence against women has been taking place and how it can be combated. The main objective of this study is to identify the various factors responsible for violence against married women in the family and possible remedies to that.

## **2. Data and method**

This was a cross-sectional study. The study was conducted in Kandigoan Union Parishad under Sylhet Sadar Upazila under Sylhet district, Bangladesh. Kandigoan Union Parishad was purposively selected as our study area. Two -stage cluster sampling technique was used to select the sample. At the first stage, ward no 3 and ward no 6 was randomly selected from the 9 wards of this Union. At the second stage the area was divided by 18 clusters. Then, 180 (18×10) samples were randomly selected from the cluster for this study.

Social survey method was applied to collect the data from the respondents. The data was collected through face to face interview.

### **2.1 DataAnalysis Technique**

Data was analyzed by using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) software 20. The data was examined by univariate, bivariate, and multivariate statistical tools. Univariate analysis as frequency distribution was applied to the presentation of the data. Bivariate analysis such as cross tabulations of the variables was used for description of the data and chi-square test was applied to examine the association between independent variables and dependent variable. Thereafter, the variables that found significant in the bivariate analysis were included in the logistic regression analysis.

### **2.2 Variables of the study**

The independent variables of this study were the age of women, education of women, and NGO membership of women, husband age, husband education, and income of the couple. The dependent variable was wife battering by husband in last six months.

### 3. Results

Table 3.1. Background characteristics of women and husband

Variables	Frequency	Percent
<b>Age of women (Years)</b>		
<30	82	45.6
30-39	32	17.8
40-49	47	26.1
50+	19	10.6
Total	180	100.0
<b>Education of women</b>		
Illiterates	60	33.3
Primary	78	43.4
Secondary and above	42	23.3
Total	180	100.0
<b>NGO membership of women</b>		
No	145	80.6
Yes	35	19.4
Total	180	100.0
<b>Husband's age (Years)</b>		
<30	73	40.6
30-39	27	15.0
40-49	41	22.8
50+	39	21.7
Total	180	100.0
<b>Husband's education</b>		
Illiterates	27	15.0
Primary	92	51.1
Secondary and above	61	33.9
Total	180	100.0
<b>Income of couple</b>		
Low	87	48.3
Medium	43	23.9
High	50	27.8
Total	180	100.0
<b>Women battered by husbands</b>		
No	84	46.7
Yes	96	53.3
Total	180	100.0

The table shows that 45.6% women's age was below 30 years, 17.8% were between 30-39 years, 26.1% between 40-49 years and 10.6% were above 50 years. A majority of women (43.3%) completed the primary examination, 33.3% secondary and above and 33.3% were illiterates. Maximum respondents were housewife (80.6%) and minimum were workers (19.4%). The table shows that 40.6% women's husband were below 30 years, 15.0% between 30-39 and 22.8% between 40-49 years, and 21.7% women's husband was above 50. Majority of the

husband (51.1%) completed primary education, 33.9% secondary and above education and 15.0% were illiterates. Majority (48.3%) of women have low income, where 23.9% have middle income and 27.8% have high income. Some 53.3% women faced violence in their households, rest 46.7% did not.

**Table 3.2. Percentage of women battered by husbands**

Variables	Women battered by husbands					
	No		Yes		Total	
Age of women	N	%	N	%	N	%
<30	22	26.8	60	73.2	82	100.0
30-39	16	50.0	16	50.0	32	100.0
40-49	31	66.0	16	34.0	47	100.0
50+	15	78.9	4	21.1	19	100.0
Total	84	46.7	96	53.3	180	100.0
$\chi^2 = 28.090, df=3, p \text{ value} < 0.000$						
Education of women						
Illiterates	32	53.3	28	46.7	60	100.0
Primary	32	41.0	46	59.0	78	100.0
Secondary and above	20	47.6	22	52.4	42	100.0
Total	84	46.7	96	53.3	180	100.0
$\chi^2 = 2.084, df=2, p \text{ value} = 0.353$						
Husband age						
<30	21	28.8	52	71.2	73	100.0
30-39	10	37.0	17	63.0	27	100.0
40-49	24	58.5	17	41.5	41	100.0
50+	29	74.4	10	25.6	39	100.0
Total	84	46.7	96	53.3	180	100.0
$\chi^2 = 24.741 df=3, p \text{ value} < 0.000$						
Husband education						
Illiterates	16	59.3	11	40.7	27	100.0
Primary	40	43.5	52	56.5	92	100.0
Secondary and above	28	45.9	33	54.1	61	100.0
Total	84	46.7	96	53.3	180	100.0
$\chi^2 = 2.110 df=2, p \text{ value} < 0.348$						
Couples income						
Low	26	29.9	61	70.1	87	100.0
Middle	20	46.5	23	53.5	43	100.0
High	38	76.0	12	24.0	50	100.0
Total	84	46.7	96	53.3	180	100.0
$\chi^2 = 27.130 df=2, p \text{ value} < 0.000$						
NGO membership						
No	76	52.4	69	47.6	145	100.0
Yes	8	22.9	27	77.1	35	100.0
Total	84	46.7	96	53.3	180	100.0
$\chi^2 = 9.896, df=1, p \text{ value} = 0.002$						

The age of women is negatively associated with the women battered by husbands in the household. Data presented in the table shows that women battered by husbands in the household are higher (73.2%) where the women have age less than 30 years. The women battered by husbands are 50.0%, 34.0% and 21.1% where women have age 30-39, 40-49 and 50+ years respectively. It clearly reveals that the domestic violence against women decreases with increase the age of women

The women battered by husbands are 46.7% where women have no formal education. The women battered by husbands are 59.0% and 52.4% where women have primary and secondary and above education respectively. However, chi-square test shows that differences in the women age have no significant influence on the women battered by husbands.

The age of husband is negatively associated with the women battered by husbands in the household. The table shows that women battered by husbands in the household are higher (71.2%) among the women where the husbands have age less than 30 years. The women battered by husbands are 63.0%, 41.5.0% and 25.6% where husband have age 30-39, 40-49 and 50+years respectively. Women battered by husband decreases with increases the age of husbands.

The women battered by husbands are 40.7 where husband have no formal education. The women battered by husbands is 56.5% and 54.1% where husband have primary and secondary and above education respectively. However, chi-square test shows that differences in the husband age have no significant influence on the women battered by husbands.

The age of couple's income is negatively associated with the women battered by husbands in household. The table shows that women battered by husbands in the household are higher (70.1%) among the women where the couples have low income. The women battered by husbands is 53.5%, and 24.0% where husband has age 30-39, 40-49 and 50+years respectively. So, the domestic violence against women decreases with increase of the age of husbands.

The study shows that women battered by husbands are proportionally higher (77.1%) among women who are NGO member. Whereas women battered by husbands are lower among women (47.6%) who are not NGO member. The chi-square test shows that the association between women working status and women battered by husbands is statistically significant.

Table 3.3 Logistic regression shows the odds ratio of wife-battering by husband by independent variables

	B	S.E.	Odds ratio
Women age(years)			
<30	1.227	.745	3.412
30-39	-.168	.789	.845
40-49	.188	.823	1.207
50+(ref)			
NGO membership			
No(ref)			
Yes	1.698	.633	5.461***
Husband age			
<30	1.645	.617	5.183**
30-39	1.104	.565	3.017*
40-49	1.080	.616	2.945*
50+(ref)			
Couples income			
Low	1.321	.507	3.746**
Medium	.987	.543	2.682*
High( ref)			

Significant at \* $p < 0.10$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ ;

Ref= reference category

The odds of women battered by husbands are 2.68 times higher among the women who have medium couples income compares to the reference group who have high couple's income. The odds of women battered by husbands are 3.746 times higher among the women who have low couples' income compare to the reference group who have high couple's income.

The women battered by husbands is 5.46 times higher among the women who are involved with any NGOs and compared to the reference group who are housewives and not involved in any NGOs.

The women battered by husband are 5.183 times higher among the women whose husband age is less than 30 year compared to the reference group whose husband age is above 50 years. The women battered by husbands are 3.02 times higher among the women whose husband age is 30-39 years compared to the reference group whose husband age is above 50 years. The women battered by husbandsis 2.945 times higher among the women whose husband age is 40-49 years compared to the reference group whose husband age is above 50 years.

#### **4.1 Conclusion and Recommendation**

In this study, we examined the factor related to domestic violence against women in Bangladesh. We found that the age of husband, age of women, couple's income and women NGO membership were the main determinants of domestic violence against women in Bangladesh. Violence against women is the most common phenomena of the young couples in Bangladesh. Evidence supported that the probability of women being beaten by husband was lower whose husbands aged 50 years or more and probability of women being beaten by husband higher whose husbands aged less than 30 (Wahed & Bhuiya, 2007). Younger women are the main victims of domestic violence because the young wife has low social status in their home (Wahed & Bhuiya, 2007). The domestic violence against women is high among the low income household. Women from economically disadvantaged family have probability to face violence from their husbands (ICDDR, B, 2013). We found that women with NGOs membership have the higher probability of experiencing violence from their husband. A study conducted by Bhuiya et al. found that women were 1.88 times more likely to abuse by their husband who is involved in any microcredit programs (Bhuiya et al., 2003). But Schuler et al. showed that microcredit program of NGO could reduce the violence against women (Schuler et al 1996). It is true that microcredit enhance the economic condition of women in the household. But when women want to violate the traditional gender relation system such as family and social norms, custom and values, then the probability of violence may be enhanced by the husband. The following may be recommended:

- a. understanding of wife and husband needs to be developed on gender issue together to make them clearer about harm of gender violence;
- b. economic and social cost of the gender should be made clearer to wife and husband;
- c. media can play an effective role by making publicity against gender violence showing social and economic cost;
- d. legal actions to be initiated by the government under speedy trial court in the case fatal cases; and
- e. each union Parishad may open one counselling centre for giving counselling to the young couples.

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