

SCOPING STUDY

A QUALITATIVE STUDY
ON VIOLENCE AGAINST
WOMEN IN SIX VILLAGES
FROM THREE DISTRICTS
OF BANGLADESH



UN WOMEN
AUGUST 2019

Canada



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the last few decades, Bangladesh has achieved impressive economic growth, poverty reduction and an improved human development rating. Despite these achievements, gender discrimination and violence against women (VAW) remain rampant at home, in the workplace and in society at large (BBS, 2016). VAW in all its forms, including in the psychological, physical, sexual and economic realms, is rooted in harmful notions of masculinities and social norms that tolerate violence and allow it to continue unchallenged (Connell, 1987; Herek, 1987; Parrott & Zeichner, 2003; Yount et al., 2016). The economic, social and psychological costs of VAW for women, their children and society at large are considerable (Devries et al., 2013; Ellsberg et al., 2008; Ziaei et al., 2014; Waters et al., 2005).

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The study follows women from home, to the street, to educational institution and to workplace. It also follows their experience of abuse in different relationships in these different spheres. Thus, it draws a more or less comprehensive picture of VAW as experienced by women in different spheres and relationships. Further, it explores perceptions and attitudes related to violence; and the

context in which violence takes place. Qualitative research methods were employed in the study.

Although the study was conducted in three geographically different districts, namely Bogura, Cumilla and Patuakahli, a commonality in perceptions, attitudes and practices in VAW among these villages is striking. Spousal violence manifests itself in psychological, economic, physical and sexual forms. Controlling behaviour is an integral part of psychological spousal violence. Villages from Bogura are less conservative compared to villages from Cumilla and Patuakhali in relation to *purdah*¹ norms and women's outside employment practices.

According to the study's participants across all research sites, women are expected to obey their husbands and seek permission before undertaking anything beyond routine activities. The data gives an impression that overall spousal violence is lower in Bogura compared to the other districts focused on in this study. Data on economic violence by

1 The practice among certain Muslim and Hindu societies of having women live in a separate room or behind a curtain, or of dressing in all-enveloping clothes, in order to stay out of the sight of men or strangers.

husband suggest that dowry has become more widespread and inflated in size over time. The penalty for non-payment of dowry ranges from verbal abuse to severe physical violence by the husband and the in-laws. Frequently, a marriage is dissolved due to the non-payment of a dowry. Across the sites, economic violence is widespread.

The most common type of economic violence is not allowing women to work as it contradicts patriarchal gender roles. Women's employment is also problematic for men as many of them are concerned about the women's prospects of meeting and interacting with other men at work.

These concerns are so overwhelming that women are often threatened with divorce if they want to work. Due to these concerns, even in poor families struggling for survival, men often restrict women's employment. In households where a woman works, men often expect her to handover her earnings to them. Not fulfilling this expectation may lead to verbal and physical abuse. Some men may reduce their contribution to household income once their wife starts earning. Men may not work and may not provide for the family despite their ability to do so. They may also inadequately provide for their family despite having the resources and spend resources on themselves despite household needs.

Patriarchal social norms in the villages studied entrust men with the responsibility and entitlement of 'disciplining' a wife if she deviates from her gender roles and responsibilities. Examples of such roles and responsibilities include carrying out household chores to the satisfaction of the marital family, obeying the husband, observing *pardah*, inter alia.

There is also a general acceptance that a man can vent out his frustrations by abusing his

wife. Thus, psychological and physical abuse is widely accepted both by men and women in these villages. The interviewees recognised that the transgression of gender roles and responsibilities, the involvement of the husband in an extramarital relationship, another marriage by a husband and drug abuse as the being the main drivers of physical spousal violence. The interviewees believed that the severity of physical spousal violence was higher in their villages compared to urban Bangladesh. Acts of physical spousal violence narrated by the interviewees ranged from a few slaps to actual homicide.

Women and men interviewed in selected villages considered it as a wife's duty to satisfy the husband's sexual needs. Most women had sex with their husbands out of fear, even when they were unwilling partners. They were afraid of verbal and physical abuse by the husband if they refused to have sex with him. Their main fear was based on concerns that he would destroy household items, be aggressive with the children, not supplying finances for the family, obtain paid sex, get involved in extramarital relationship or marry again. On the rare occasions that women refused sex, their husbands raped them.

Our data show that most of the women from the selected districts (17 out of 25) are exposed to more than one form of spousal violence. Controlling behaviour and economic violence happens to be the most common forms of spousal violence. Male relatives had relatively greater access to women compared to strangers and thus ample opportunities to sexually abuse women. Some male relatives, such as cousins, ***dulabhai, debor, bhashur*** (brother-in-law) and uncles are known to be common perpetrators. Sexual violence by male in-laws is more common in families where the husband is a migrant worker.

Many women now are believed to have premarital romantic relationships. Sometimes sexual relationship develops out of such affairs, which may or may not be consensual. In some cases, men obtain sex in such a relationship using coercion/threat/force. Thus, for instance, obtaining sex by promising marriage or blackmailing the woman threatening to bring about her disrepute by spreading inappropriate stories about her or by sharing inappropriate photographs on the Internet. If a woman gets pregnant from such a relationship, men often deny any responsibility and pressure the woman to get an abortion. Data also showed alarming cases of gang rape initiated by the boyfriends.

In public space, common types of sexual harassment experienced by women were: sexual remarks, gestures, winking, whistling, touching, grabbing, bumping or pressing against women, pinching, kissing and snatching *orhna*. For women attending college, sexual harassment on public transport was particularly concerning.

In educational institutions and workplaces, the teachers and the supervisors were identified among the most common perpetrators of sexual harassment. Both types of perpetrators had greater power than their victims by virtue of their higher position. Their entitlement to abuse and related impunity, often discourage women to continue education or income earning. In case of sexual harassment by students or co-workers, women have the option to lodge complaints to the authority. Perhaps this is why this violence seemed less of a concern among women, compared to those perpetrated by persons in more powerful position.

The conceptual framework of VAW that emerged from the data was in line with the

widely accepted ecological framework (Heise, 1998). Individual attributes of the perpetrator and victim contributing to VAW are: young age, low education and gender inequitable attitudes. Additionally, substance abuse and religious conservatism heighten the risk of VAW. At the couple level, conflict increases the risk of VAW, while spousal communication, mutual understanding and joint decision making ameliorate VAW. At family level, poverty, extended family structure, lack of social capital, patriarchal attitudes and lack of will to support the woman increase the risk of VAW. Factors increasing the risk of VAW at the community level are low level of women's education, mobility, strict *pardah* norms, patriarchal attitudes and religious conservatism. The same contributing factors were found in non-partner violence.

Many of the study participants strongly believed that conforming to the patriarchal norms and not transgressing gender roles and expectations are the panacea for VAW prevention. Thus, they believe that obeying the husband and in-laws, avoiding arguments, being silent, and keeping them happy by following conventional gender roles are the only ways to avoid experiencing violence. They also suggested strengthening **PURDAH** norms, restricting women's mobility and interaction with other people as a way to prevent violence.

Useful recommendations for addressing VAW also emerged, particularly from Bogura. The recommendations for addressing spousal violence were to: empower women, abolish dowry practice, improve couple communication, take legal measures, and undertake joint initiatives involving communities, families and women.

For addressing non-spousal VAW the interviewees suggested to passing laws prohibiting violence;

joint initiatives taken by the government and the NGOs to work on this issue; empowerment of women for enabling them to protect themselves and to protest against such violence and sensitizing the perpetrators and other stakeholders.

This study shows that women from the villages surveyed are vulnerable to multiple forms of violence, from multiple actors within and outside home. Despite many improvements in gender roles and practices witnessed in these villages over time, (e.g. in women's education, employment, and mobility) the patriarchal ideologies are still resistant to these changes, holding women accountable and penalizing them using violence. The main drivers of these different types of VAW are the same patriarchal social norms, which assign women a lower status compared to men, and create a space for women's vulnerability to violence. In order to prevent VAW, it is imperative to address patriarchal social norms and ideologies pertaining to the innate superiority of men over women in the community and to empower both women and men to address VAW.

INTRODUCTION

Despite impressive achievements of Bangladesh in terms of economic growth, reduction of poverty and improvement in human development rating over the last few decades gender discrimination and violence against women (VAW) remain rampant at home, workplace and in the society at large (BBS, 2016).

INTRODUCTION

Despite impressive achievements of Bangladesh in terms of economic growth, reduction of poverty and improvement in human development rating over the last few decades gender discrimination and violence against women (VAW) remain rampant at home, workplace and in the society at large (BBS, 2016). VAW is rooted in harmful notions of masculinities and social norms that tolerate violence and allow it to continue unchallenged (Connell, 1987; Herek, 1987; Parrott & Zeichner, 2003; Yount et al., 2016). VAW results into high economic, social and psychological costs for women, their children, and for the wider society (Devries et al., 2013; Ellsberg et al., 2008; Ziaei et al., 2014; Waters et al., 2005).

The rates of VAW at home, workplace and public places in Bangladesh are among the highest in the world (WHO, 2013). According to the 2015 National Violence against Women Survey, 73% of ever-married women experienced spousal violence during lifetime (BBS, 2016). In contrast to the literature on spousal or intimate partner violence, there are only a handful of small-scale studies on workplace violence and sexual harassment. One of them found that 43% of the rural adolescent girls were subjected to sexual harassment in public space (Alam et al., 2010). A study in Dhaka city found that 85% of female garment workers, 100% of female day labourers, 29% of female school teachers, and 11% of office female staff experienced physical, psychological, and sexual harassment in their workplace (Rahman 2007). Another study has found that more than 79 per cent of female labourers working in rice mills are sexually harassed by their male co-workers, as well as managers and owners. A UN Women study shows that more than three quarters of female students in tertiary education institutes faced sexual harassment at least once (UN Women, 2013). The prevalence of sexual harassment in public transport is as high as 94% (BRAC University, March 2017). Another study conducted among rural and urban men reports that 10% of urban and 14% of rural men have

perpetrated rape against female partner and non-partner during lifetime (Naved et al., 2011).

The UN Women Combating Gender Based Violence in Bangladesh (CGBV) project recognizes that prevention of violence requires sustained and comprehensive action at individual, family, organizational and societal levels. The project will focus on primary prevention, stopping violence before it occurs, as it is a strategic approach to ending violence against women and girls. The project aims to generate knowledge and evidence to create evidence-based prevention interventions.

This scoping study is expected to support the CGBV in understanding the context related to VAW in the project sites (i.e., Cumilla, Bogura and Patuakhali districts) for informing research design and a baseline to measure the impact of Project interventions. The specific objectives of the qualitative scoping study were to:

- (1) Explore women's experiences of violence at home, in public spaces, in educational institutions and in the workplace.
- (2) Explore perceptions and attitudes regarding violence against women.
- (3) Understand the context and triggers of violence against women.
- (4) Identify recommended ways to address violence against women.

METHODS

Two key criteria were applied by UN Women to select the potential geographical locations. The first one related to the high prevalence of VAW; and the second criteria was linked with important economic sectors for women's economic engagement, including those that the government prioritised for further investment in the coming years.

2.1 STUDY SITES

The study sites include villages from Bogura, Cumilla and Patuakhali districts (Table 1).

Two key criteria were applied by UN Women to select the potential geographical locations. The first one related to the high prevalence of VAW; and the second criteria was linked with important economic sectors for women's economic engagement, including those that the government prioritised for further investment in the coming years. The National VAW Survey 2015 conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) provides information on the first criteria whereas information on the second one was collected from the Bangladesh Board of Investment. Socioeconomic conditions, cultural diversity and extreme weather and environmental vulnerability were also considered in selecting the districts for this study.

Bogura was identified as a district with a high prevalence of VAW (BBS, 2016). The district is also well known for its agro-based industries. Recent newspaper reports suggest the extremism is increasing in the district. Patuakhali, on the other hand, is a disaster-prone district in the southwest with agro- and fishery-based small industries. Cumilla is religiously conservative. The government is planning to establish Cumilla as an economic zone.

Two villages from one union in each of the three districts were chosen for the scoping study. The criteria used for the selecting the villages were as follows:

Size of the village: Small villages were avoided so that more than two villages were not required for recruiting the required sample. This was also important in gaining an in-depth understanding of the multifarious factors contributing to VAW in a community.

Migration: In order to make exploration of spousal violence easier we selected villages where male migrants were not an overwhelming majority.

Number of NGOs: Villages with a relatively lower number of NGOs were preferred for enabling better CGBV impact assessment in the future.

Distance: Inclusion of semi-urban/peri-urban areas was avoided for keeping the study sites completely rural.

Religion: We avoided predominantly non-Muslim villages as they are uncommon in Bangladesh.

Religious conservatism: We tried to ensure a variation in the study sites in regard to religious conservatism. As Patuakhali is well known for its religious conservatism it was decided not to select overtly conservative villages from the two other districts.

TABLE 1: PROFILE OF THE STUDY DISTRICTS

HIGH VAW PREVALENT DISTRICT (HI TO LO)	MAJOR ECONOMIC SECTORS	CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITION	MARGINALIZATION	NGO INTERVENTIONS	COMMENTS
Bogura	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Overseas migration of men and women – Small- and medium- industries – Agro-processing industries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Reputed for its cultural activism – Literacy rate 49.4% – 94% Muslim – Very high rate of child marriage. Proportion of female teenage (15-19 years) married population is 46.4% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Drought prone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Heavy presence of NGOs. At least 75 international, national and local organizations are working here, including TMSS, CARE, BRAC, Plan, RDRS – Some NGOs are addressing VAW 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – High prevalence of VAW, growing industrialization, high child marriage rate – Recent newspaper report also shows spread of extremism in some part of the district
Patuakhali	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Agriculture – Fishing – Agro and fishery based small- and medium- industries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 93% Muslim – 54% Literacy – Women age 15-19 years currently married is 17.2-27.7% (moderate) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Cyclone prone – Riverine zone – Small indigenous population (Rakhine) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Health, legal aid and micro credit organizations – BRAC, BLAST, ASA, Save the Children, CWFD – Generation Breakthrough covered the district 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Higher literacy rate
Cumilla	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Overseas migration is highest among all districts – Growing industrialization (RMG, agro- processing, textile) – Agriculture – Cottage industries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 53.3% literacy rate – 95% population is Muslim, 5% Hindus – Politically vibrant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Trafficking/ cross-border movement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – About 150 NGOs are working. Key focus on micro credit, premiership development, education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not among the 10 districts with highest VAW prevalence as identified in BBS VAW Survey 2015 Some part of the district and adjacent districts is religiously conservative - Border town

2.2 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF VAW

This study was guided by the United Nations definitions of VAW and its different manifestations. These definitions are presented below.

Violence against women: The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women 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 of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life”. This definition encompasses physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community and physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetuated or condoned by the State.

Physical violence: Physical violence consists of acts aimed at hurting the victim and include, but are not limited, to pushing, grabbing, twisting the arm, pulling the hair, slapping, kicking, biting or hitting the victim with the fist or an object, to trying to strangle or suffocate

her, or burning or scalding on purpose and attacking with weapon, a gun or knife.

Sexual violence: Sexual violence is any sort of harmful or unwanted sexual behaviour that is imposed on someone. It includes acts of abusive sexual contact, forced engagement in sexual acts, attempted or completed sexual acts with a woman without her consent, sexual harassment, verbal abuse, threats, exposure, unwanted touching, incest, inter alia.

Psychological violence: Psychological violence includes a range of behaviours that encompass acts of emotional abuse and controlling behaviour. These often coexist with acts of physical and sexual violence by intimate partners and are acts of violence in themselves.

Economic violence: Economic violence is said to occur when an individual denies his intimate partner access to financial resources, typically as a form of abuse or control or in order to isolate her or to impose other adverse consequences to her well-being.

2.3 DATA COLLECTION AND SAMPLE SIZE

Since the scoping study was conducted in a fairly structured way, it was assumed that a small sample size would be sufficient for reaching a point of saturation. The data were collected through 6 key interviews (KII), 8 focus group discussions (FGD) and 37 in-depth interviews (IDI) (Table 2). FGDs were categorized by women’s marital and working status. Each FGD included 6-8 participants. It was not possible to conduct FGDs with unmarried women in Cumilla as unmarried women aged 18 years or above were not available for FGD during our fieldwork. Both married and unmarried women aged 18–49 years were purposively selected for IDIs with support from the local NGOs, schoolteachers, KIs and IDI participants. Data were collected between 6 November and 29, November 2018.

A team of four female researchers with a master’s degree in anthropology collected the data. One of them served as the field coordinator. The data collectors attended a six-day training course on gender issues, research ethics and tools for data collection. During the fieldwork, the research team held regular debriefing and brainstorming sessions at the end of each working day, where interesting findings and challenges were shared, and future fieldwork was planned. The regular debriefing meetings were also helpful for sharing the research team members learning, issues and feelings. These meetings aimed to reduce the stress of the fieldwork, and to avert any negative consequences.

TABLE 2: DISTRIBUTION OF QUALITATIVE SAMPLE BY SITE AND DATA COLLECTION METHOD

DATA COLLECTION METHOD	CUMILLA	BOGURA	PATUAKHALI	TOTAL
IDI				
Married	9	8	8	25
Unmarried	4	4	4	12
TOTAL	13	12	12	37
KII	2	2	2	6
FGD				
Married	2	2	2	6
Unmarried	0	1	1	2
TOTAL	12	2	3	8

2.4 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analyses were conducted using Grounded Theory and Narrative Analysis approaches. Each of the KIIs, FGDs and IDIs were read for identifying cross-cutting themes. These themes linked into an explanatory framework to understand more fully the context of violence. Descriptive and

comparative analyses were conducted for revealing patterns in the data. Each IDI was examined for a core narrative about their experience of violence. Core narratives across study participants were compared to identify distinct and shared features of the narratives.

2.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study was guided by the WHO recommendations for ethical considerations in researching violence against women and the CIOMS International Guidelines for Ethical Review of Epidemiological Studies (WHO 2001; CIOMS & WHO, 2002).

Informed oral consent was obtained from the interviewees prior to the interviews. The interviews were conducted in private. Data were audio recorded upon receiving the consent from the interviewees. Pseudonyms were used verbally and in writing to refer to the study participants. All the interviewees agreed to follow-up visits. In some cases, follow-ups were conducted, over the phone to fill gaps in the data.

Due to safety concerns, the study was introduced to the community as a study

of women's health and life experiences. At the local and household level the study was introduced in the same manner to avoid potential retaliation from the perpetrators and community members harming the researchers and/or the study participants

Interviewers were trained to terminate or quickly change violence-related discussions if anyone interrupted an interview. The interviewer forewarned the interviewee that she would terminate or change the topic of conversation if the interview was interrupted. To ensure that interviewers gained experience about how to handle interrupted interviews, the training included a number of role-playing exercises simulating different situations that they might encounter.

RESULTS

Most of the population in these villages depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. Minimum tow crops usually grow in these villages. Electricity is available in all the villages. Most women are engaged in home based small income generating activities such as handicrafts, poultry and livestock raising, kitchen gardening, tailoring and private tuition.

3.1 GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY SITES

Background characteristics of the villages studied in Bogura, Cumilla and Patuakhali were presented in Table 3.

Villages from Bogura

We selected two villages from one union, the lowest tier of rural administrative and local government, in Bogura for the scoping study. Although the road for reaching the union was in poor condition, the roads from the union to the villages were good. One village (BV1) had 350 households, whereas the other (BV2) had 300 households. Most of the houses were two-storied and made of mud. Some newly-built

houses used cement instead. The houses face a common courtyard at the centre. There are no boundaries around the houses. Most of the population in these villages depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. Three crops usually grow in these villages. Each village had a bazaar nearby. Electricity was available in both the villages.

BV1 has one primary school, two *madrasas* and two *maktabs*, while BV2 has no schools, one *madrasa* and one *maktab*. Judging by the lack of educational institutions it is not surprising that the level of education is quite low in these villages. Many boys of school-going age are

TABLE 3: PROFILE OF THE VILLAGES IN THE STUDY

CHARACTERISTIC	BOGURA		CUMILLA		PATUAKHALI	
	VILLAGE BV1	VILLAGE BV2	VILLAGE CV1	VILLAGE CV2	VILLAGE PV1	VILLAGE PV2
Household no.	350	300	582	400	500	400
Nearby market, no.	1	1	1	1	1	1
Road from Upazila to Union	Paved	Paved	Paved	Paved	Paved	Paved
Roads inside the village	Semi-paved, unpaved	Paved, unpaved	Paved, unpaved	Paved, semi-paved, unpaved	Paved, unpaved	Paved, unpaved
Electricity	Available	Available	Available	Available	Available	Available
Main source of livelihood	Agriculture	Agriculture	Agriculture	Agriculture	Agriculture, fishing	Agriculture, fishing

CHARACTERISTIC	BOGURA		CUMILLA		PATUAKHALI	
	VILLAGE BV1	VILLAGE BV2	VILLAGE CV1	VILLAGE CV2	VILLAGE PV1	VILLAGE PV2
EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, NO.						
Primary school	1	0	2	8	4	1
Secondary school	0	0	1	1	1	0
College	0	0	0	1	0	0
Madrasas	2	1	2	1	2	0
Maktabs	2	1	11	15	15	13
ACTIVE NGOS						
BRAC	+	+	+	+	+	+
ASA	+	+	+	+	+	+
Uddipon	+	+	+	+	+	+
TMSS	+	+	-	-	-	-
RDA	-	-	-	-	+	+
Youth club, no.	0	0	0	2	0	0

involved with income-generating work. Drug abuse is rampant among males, who do not care for education. National NGOs, such as BRAC, Uddipon and TMSS, operate in these villages. While BRAC addresses dowry and child marriage in these villages, the other NGOs do not have any programmes related to gender-based violence.

Most women in BV2 are income earners, while a much lower proportion of them are working in BV1. The women from BV2 make fishing nets, collect harvested potatoes, raise poultry or livestock, make quilts, engage in tailoring or offer private tuition. Women with a relatively

higher education in the area work as NGO staff or volunteers. Those who do not earn an income are involved in agricultural activities at home and on their own land. Some women help their husbands run small village shops.

Religious conservatism seems relatively low in these villages compared to the villages studied in Cumilla and Patuakhali. Still, most women wear a *burkha* outside of the home (Table 4). Child marriage is high, although not as high as in the villages studied in Cumilla. It is common for men to have multiple marriages. Drug addiction is an important issue of concern in these villages.

Villages from Cumilla

Villages selected from Cumilla, CV1 and CV2 have 582 and 400 households respectively. CV2 has higher proportion of overseas migrant workers and enjoys higher prosperity than CV1. The road for reaching CV1 is in better condition than the one leading to CV2. Most of the houses are made of tin. The floor is either made of mud or cement depending on the financial status of the household. The roadside houses have fencing on the outer side. For most of the population agriculture was the main source of livelihood. There are usually two harvests in these villages. There is one bazaar near each of these villages. Electricity is available in both villages.

CV1 has two primary schools, one secondary school, two *madrasas* and 11 *maktabs*. Despite its smaller size, CV2 has more educational institutions compared to CV1. Thus, there are eight primary schools, one secondary school, one higher secondary school, one *madrasa* and 15 *maktabs* in CV2. Clearly, the educational infrastructure here is much more developed than in the villages in Bogura.

Large national NGOs, such as BRAC, Grameen Bank, ASA and Uddipon, operate in both villages. Thus, microcredit is more available in these villages compared to the villages from Bogura.

Despite such a strong presence of NGOs, women are mostly not involved in income earning. Some

women are engaged in home-based quilt making, tailoring or private tuition. Outside the home, most women help their husbands with agricultural activities on their own land. Like any other places in Bangladesh, women from poor families work in other households and/or get involved with the government's Food for Work (FFW) program, or work on a daily wage basis. Daughters from some of such families are sent to Dhaka for garment factory employment. A few unmarried women work in jute factories in a nearby subdistrict. Some of the relatively higher educated women work as NGO staff or volunteers or as school teachers. BRAC is the only NGO working on prevention of dowry and child marriage in these villages. There were two youth clubs in CV1. More men migrated for work to other parts of Bangladesh in Cumilla than in Bogura.

The presence of numerous *maktabs* corresponds to higher religious conservatism in these villages compared to the villages from Bogura. Girls from these villages marry between 12 and 16 years. All females, including small girls wear a *burkah* or *hijab* (Table 4). Married women interviewed consider it a sin to criticize their husbands or to complain about them. They follow stringent *pardah* rules. Most of them feel that a voice recording is a transgression of the *pardah* norm as men may hear their voice from the record. Thus, refusal by some women made it impossible to record some interviews/FGDs in Cumilla.

TABLE 4: PURDAH NORMS IN THE STUDY SITES

ITEMS	BOGURA DISTRICT	CUMILLA DISTRICT	PATUAKHALI DISTRICT
Fence around the house	*	++	+++
Women wear <i>burkah</i>	+	+++	++
Girls wear <i>hijab</i>	-	+	+

+ Low prevalent; ++ moderately prevalent; +++ Most prevalent; *none

Villages from Patuakhali

The villages PV1 and PV2 studied in Patuakhali have 500 and 400 households respectively. Both of them are roadside villages. Part of the road from the Upazila to these villages is in good condition. Just like in Bogura and Cumilla, the condition of the roads inside the villages is quite good. Most of the houses are two-storied and built with tin. All the houses have boundaries either made of tin or shrubs.

Agriculture and fishing are the main sources of livelihood here. There are three crops in these villages. Each village has a bazaar attached to it. Electricity is available in both villages.

Large national NGOs, such as BRAC, ASA, Grameen Bank and Uddipon and a local NGO known as Rural Development Agency (RDA), operate in both the villages. In PV1 there are four primary schools, one secondary school, two *madradas* and 15 *maktabs*. There is one primary school and 13 *maktabs* in PV2.

Women's occupational profile in Patuakhali is similar to Cumilla. Most women are engaged in

home-based small income-earning activities, such as handicrafts (e.g., making quilts, bamboo stools, mats, purses and bags from beads), poultry and livestock raising, vegetable gardening, tailoring and private tuition. Women from farming households sometimes help husbands on owned land. A few women run grocery stalls or teashops. The women from poor households take part in FFW projects and work as agricultural day labourers. A few women with ten grades of schooling work as NGO staff. Male migration for work was high in these villages.

In both villages people follow the *mollas* (*mullas*). As one of the key interviewees mentioned, "*They listen to the mollas more than they do to their parents*". In line with this, more students go to *maktabs* and *madradas* than to schools or colleges. Girls are usually married off before reaching 18, but not as young as in Cumilla. All women wear the *burkah*, while all girls wear a *hijab* (Table 4). Similar to women in Cumilla, women in Patuakhali also consider it a sin to complain about their husband.

3.2 BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDY PARTICIPANTS

A total of 37 women had in-depth interviews for this study (Table 5). Among them, 25 were currently married, while 12 were never married. Half of the women who were never married were aged 18-19 while the other half were 20 to 29 years, while about half of the married women were aged 30 to 45. The level of education varied

highly in the sample with younger women having more education than their older counterparts. While all of the single women had some education, two of the ever-married women had none. Nine of the single women had an education beyond G-10, while only two ever-married women had a similar level of education. The sample

from Bogura showed a higher education rate educated compared to the other two districts. All women from Patuakhali were married during their childhood (i.e., below 18 years). The research

team attempted to recruit a sufficient number of working women resulting in 22 working women in the sample of 37. Among the working women 17 were ever-married and 5 were never-married.

3.3 SPOUSAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

In this subsection, we present the context, attitudes, triggers and practices that contribute to spousal violence against women.

3.3.1 CONTROLLING BEHAVIOUR OF THE HUSBAND

ATTITUDES REGARDING THE HUSBAND'S CONTROL OVER HIS WIFE

In conformity with the patriarchal structures of society, power imbalances between women and men are normalised across the study sites. A woman's position is treated as lower than that of a man. Men – the providers-- are entitled to women's unquestionable obedience and acceptance of control. It is customary for a woman's freedom to be curtailed once she gets married. She experiences a compromised status not only within the husband-wife setting, but also within the marital family.

A woman has to 'obey' her husband and the in-laws and observe strict *purdah*² norms. As a key interviewee from Cumilla said,

"A woman's place is underfoot in relation to her husband. ...A wife has a subordinate position to her husband. She cannot do something freely without his permission." KII-15_C

The importance of obeying and being subjugated to a husband is fuelled through religion. Some women are socialised to believe that a husband's permission is essential for enabling a woman to go to heaven. Thus, obeying a husband and keeping him happy becomes necessary for obtaining a ticket to heaven. One woman explained this as follows:

"A woman must obtain her husband's permission to go to the market. Heaven will not open its doors to her if her husband does not wish it. If I don't obey him praying five times a day is not going to save me. Allah said, 'Your husband is your top priority. Serve him first and serve me only after him'". IDI-9_B

Purdah plays a very important role in controlling women in the communities studied. Common rules of control over women across sites include not allowing women to go out without a *burkha* and to talk to men. Depending upon the marital family and/or the community, a finer variation may exist in control over women's attire. Thus, some women are allowed to keep their faces uncovered, while others are not. Variation is also observed in respect of categories of 'men' with whom women are not allowed to talk to. In some families, any

2 The practice among certain Muslim and Hindu societies of having women live in a separate room or behind a curtain, or of dressing in all-enveloping clothes, in order to stay out of the sight of men or strangers.

TABLE 5: BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE INTERVIEWED IN-DEPTH (N=37)

CHARACTERISTICS	CURRENTLY MARRIED (N=25)	NEVER MARRIED (N=12)	TOTAL (N=37)
AGE GROUP (YEAR)			
< 20	0	6	6
20-24	2	5	7
25-29	10	1	11
≥30	13	0	13
EDUCATION			
No education	2	0	2
1-4	6	1	7
5-10	15	2	17
> 10	2	9	11
EMPLOYMENT STATUS			
Working	17	6	23
Non-working	8	6	14

men within and outside the family are included in this category, while for others only strangers fall into this category.

“If I talk to a man who is not a relative then he’d sever all ties (i.e., divorce her).” FGD-2_C

“He is upset if I talk to another man. We have a lot of squabbles about this.” IDI-3_C

“Men tell their wives, “Don’t chat with anyone! Stay home and make fishing nets. Don’t you dare chat with others! I don’t like it. Stay home and watch TV.” KII-14_B

These rules are usually more stringent in families with *hujur* or *mollas* (a man employed by the

mosque), or a male member with a *madrasa* education.

Separate spheres are assigned to females and males. Women are supposed to stay and work at home, while men usually work outside the house, earn income and provide for the family. Women are expected not to associate with male strangers. They are not supposed to go to places where men gather. Thus, women are commonly not allowed to go to public places (e.g., market, public events). If they ever go outside of their home, they are supposed to cover up and/or be accompanied. Such restrictions are often followed up by threats of divorce if a woman does not want to comply with such practices.

“Suppose everybody went out, but I was still not allowed to do so then I would feel sad. [In such instances] he’d tell me, ‘Let them go out naked if they wish. You can’t wander naked. You can’t go to the market. If you can’t follow this rule go back to your family.’” FGD-2_P

In some families, restrictions also apply to visiting the neighbours or chatting with a group of women. In Cumilla, it is customary to allow a woman to visit her neighbours only two to three years into the marriage. It is considered shameful to deviate from this rule and a bride is criticized if she is found to transgress this custom.

WOMEN’S EXPERIENCES OF CONTROLLING BEHAVIOUR BY THE HUSBAND

Controlling behaviour of the husband was rampant with 16 out of 25 women in the sample reporting it (Table 6). Not allowing speaking to men, particularly to strangers, was the most frequently reported forms of controlling behaviour. Women in many families were not allowed to go to the market as it was considered *kharap* (bad). Shopping is considered a man’s job. This norm is relaxed when the husband accompanies her. Villagers also accept shopping by an immigrant worker’s wife. Sometimes women are also excused when shopping for children.

TABLE 6: FREQUENCY OF ACTS OF CONTROLLING BEHAVIOUR BY THE HUSBAND (N=16)

ACTS OF CONTROL	CUMILLA (N=9)	BAGURA (N=8)	PATUAKHALI (N=8)	TOTAL (N=25)
Not allowing speaking to men	3	3	2	8
Not allowing to do anything routine outside without his permission	1	3	3	7
Not allowing going outside without wearing burkah	2	2	3	7
Not allowing going to market alone	3	2	1	6
Not allowing her to stay overnight at her natal home/ Not allowing her to visit natal family frequently	2	2	3	7
Not allowing to appear in front of male visitors	1	2	1	4
Not allowing her to go out in the evening	2	1	1	4
Not allowing access to cell phone at times	3	1	0	4
Not allowing gossiping with other women	2	0	1	3
Not allowing going to theatre/ wedding or any other social events	1	0	1	2
Not allowing singing/ joking/speaking loudly	2	0	0	2
Not allowing her to visit/live the marital home	0	1	1	2
Overworking her despite a financial capacity to hire help	1	0	0	1
Not allowing fuel collection /grazing cattle	0	0	1	1

Across three districts, women said there they had to ask their husband's permission for most things (Table 6). Their narratives underscored the fact that only routine activities could be an exception. Still it was mandatory to keep the husband informed. It is often not easy to get permission. A woman has to answer questions satisfactorily before getting permission. If the husband cannot be reached, a woman needs to ask permission from her in-laws.

The data show that women's mobility and **purdah** are less restrictive in Bogura and most restrictive in Patuakhali (Table 5). The observations of the data collectors showed that both in Cumilla and Patuakhali, almost all young women wear a **hijab** or headscarves, but it is not a common practice in

Bogura. In Bogura, many women work in farming in the field without covering up. This relatively more relaxed **purdah** tradition was also reflected in the lack of fences around houses in Bogura, a practice that stands in stark contrast to the villages from the other two districts. More women from Patuakhli reported not being allowed to go out with wearing a **burkah**.

The data suggests that women are not allowed to visit their natal family without their husband's permission. The frequency of such visits is often restricted, and some women are not allowed to stay there overnight. Moreover, before granting permission for such a visit, the husband usually demands and checks that the household needs will be taken care of during her absence. Some women need permission for visiting neighbours as well.

*"They don't send women on **nayor** (i.e. visiting natal family). If a woman says she will go on **nayor**, he'd ask, 'Hey, why would you go on **nayor** and abandon your home? Who will look after this house? Okay, I'll leave too! To hell with this household! I hope a thief comes and steals everything!"* KII-14_C

"He doesn't let me visit my family frequently. He doesn't like me leaving. I have cattle and a goat. I run a separate household. I have to cook for my husband. I have to arrange fodder for livestock."

IDI-2_C

Community members deem it proper for a bride to be confined within the boundaries of her home. Thus, many women are not allowed to study or to attend any training workshops after marriage. Such control limits women's development. A woman recounted how she was prevented from taking the certification exam for her secondary education,

"I could have passed the HSC exam or at least the SSC by now. Although my father was an illiterate man, he urged me to take the exam. He promised to cover the costs and pleaded with my husband to allow me to take the exam. But he did not heed him." IDI-11_C

Another woman from Cumilla wanted to continue her studies after her marriage at 15, but her husband and in-laws refused.

*"My in-laws and the neighbours used to tell me, 'Your husband works away from home. You need to stay home. Why would you go to see boys under the pretext of studying? Do you want to have an affair with a boy? If you start studying you won't develop an attachment with your **shongshar** (i.e. marital family, the household and its responsibilities). You won't cook for your mother-in-law or serve her. And then who knows you may elope with a boy.' When I used to tell my husband what they said, my husband would reply, 'They are right. If you study, you'll leave home in the morning and return late in the afternoon. Is that what you call a **shongshar**? I married you so you'd take care of my mother and look after the **shongshar**. I won't let you study.'"*

IDI-2_C

With the advent of technology, limiting women's access to a mobile phone has emerged as a new way of exerting a husband's control over his wife. Although some husbands do allow their wife to have a personal mobile phone, they restrict its use. For example, a woman is not allowed to talk to men outside her natal family over the phone. Men are usually very suspicious of their wife's infidelities which results in angry outcries when their wife is on the phone. A key interviewee narrated an incident: a man discovered his wife was regularly talking to another man over phone. He called relatives from both sides of the family and arranged an informal arbitration. During the session everybody scolded and insulted the woman. As a punishment, the husband then beat her up in public. Moreover, both the woman and her family had to beg the man's forgiveness to salvage the marriage.

3.3.2. ECONOMIC VIOLENCE BY THE HUSBAND

ATTITUDES REGARDING WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

According to patriarchal social norms, a woman's conventional role is to do household chores, take care of and serve the household members and bear children. Such gender roles underlie the negative attitudes towards women's employment in general. These attitudes may, however, vary by location and type of employment and by socioeconomic status. While historically women have always carried out major expenditure-saving activities in the household economy (e.g. post-harvest operations), many of them find it hard to obtain their husband's and/or in-laws' permission to engage in home-based income earning activities, such as offering tuition to school students or tailoring.

The place where a woman's income-generating activity takes place (e.g. at home or outside the home) has great importance in such a patriarchal society. In line with patriarchal ideology, the attitudes of villagers vary regarding women's home-based and outside employment. Although women's employment is not approved in general, home-based employment is preferred to employment outside the household. People in these communities are socialized to consider women who work outside the household as shameful (*shorom*).

Poverty and/or an urge to improve the socioeconomic condition of the household, however, compel rural families to come up with coping strategies. One such strategy is to treat household cultivable land as land within the boundaries of the home. Thus, working on such land is not considered as working outside the home. Thus, women's work is accepted and/or tolerated outside the actual boundaries of the home as long as it involves their own land and the labour does not directly bring an income.

Attitudes vary regarding female employment depending on different socioeconomic strata. Community members were more or less neutral towards women doing a decent job and to employed women from the upper class. Teaching and other kinds of private or public service are usually deemed to be a decent job. The employment of very poor women who have to work for their survival is usually not scorned upon. The employment of middle-class women, however, is stigmatised.

Women's income earning is considered a transgression of socially prescribed gender roles. In patriarchal societies, men are supposed to be providers for the family. Thus, women's income-generating work in these villages is associated

with the honour of the family and notion of masculinity. A man is considered less of a man if he allows his wife to work. Members of the community often consider a woman who earns income as akin to sex work.

“People think an employed woman is ‘bad’. Why won’t they if the woman works with a man? Even though she isn’t earning money doing ‘bad work’ (sex work) she’ll still be labelled as ‘bad’. If a woman gets married to a real man, she’ll never earn any money. She will stay home and wear purdah.” FGD-3_B

Husbands of working women are also stigmatized. Community members make comments insinuating that these men are actually engaging their wives in commercial sex (FGD-1_P).

WOMEN’S EXPERIENCE OF ECONOMIC VIOLENCE BY THE HUSBAND

Economic spousal violence was widespread in the villages selected for the survey (Table 7). Twenty-two women out of 25 reported such violence. Demand for a dowry is the most common act of economic violence in the study villages (11 cases out of 22). According to the interviewees, dowry has become more widespread over time. The size of a dowry has also increased. Inability to pay a dowry makes a bride more vulnerable, particularly to emotional and physical violence by the husband and the in-laws. Sometimes the in-law family arranges *shalish* (informal arbitration) for compelling the bride’s family to pay the committed dowry. The interviewees cited cases when the in-laws sent the bride back to her home calling off the marriage. The data suggest that homicide and suicide also take place as a result of dowry-related violence.

“He asked me to borrow money from my father. He also asked me to bring 100,000 takas from my brother for investment in his business. I used to tell him my brother does not have so much money. He’d retort, ‘You should leave if you cannot bring me the money.’ He used to beat me if I answered back. He hated me for not being able to bring money from my family.” IDI-10_P

Families not demanding a dowry at marriage may also demand resources from the woman’s family post-marriage. In such cases they are being influenced by other marriages in the village that involved dowries. Men who are alcoholics or drug addicts often pressure their wife to continue bringing more resources from her family. In Bogura, villagers sometimes help destitute families to raise funds to pay for a dowry in order to “salvage” a marriage.

Prohibiting women to earn an income is the next most common act of economic spousal violence (10 out of 22 cases). The interviewees repeatedly mentioned that criticism by community members and loss of honour by the family and husband were major deterrents to female employment.

“What would people say if you went outside the home and started raising cattle?” IDI-3_P

Such situations are treated so seriously that even men who do not earn an income may not allow his wife to work even for their economic survival. These women and their families had to face extreme challenges in order to survive.

“At my job I saw a woman who wanted to sew quilts, but her husband forbade her. The husband did not earn money for the family. So, the woman exclaimed, ‘How is that fair? You won’t let me earn two takas, but you won’t earn any money either.’” FGD-13_P

TABLE 7: FREQUENCY OF ACTS OF ECONOMIC SPOUSAL VIOLENCE (N=22)

ACTS OF ECONOMIC VIOLENCE	CUMILLA (N=9)	BAGURA (N=8)	PATUAKHALI (N=8)	TOTAL (N=22)
Dowry demanded at marriage	5	5	1	11
Prohibition to earn an income	4	2	4	10
Control over income use	3	2	0	5
Demanded resources from her family post marriage	2	1	2	5
Makes her give account of all expenses	2	1	2	5
He does not give her money	2	1	2	4
He does not earn despite his capability	2	2	1	5
Does not allow her to get training/education	2	1	0	3
Imposes huge workload making her unable to earn	2	1	0	3
He does not cover all household expenses despite being able to do so	1	0	1	2
Sold assets without informing her	1	0	1	2
He did not pay back the loan he took from her	0	0	2	2
Pressures her to leave the marital home	0	1	1	2
Does not allow her to inquire about income/ expenses	1	0	0	1
Blows away money from selling assets	0	0	1	1
Interferes with her income-generating activity	1	0	0	1
Withholds information on income	1	0	0	1
Bought asset in own name using her resources	1	0	0	1

“He says, ‘I can manage the [household finances] somehow. Even though I cannot eat chicken or fish every day, I still manage to eat rice and dal. I need to uphold my honour. Why would you go out for work? Wouldn’t that stigmatize me, and make people laugh at me?’” FGD-1_P

The highest number of women facing employment restrictions are those from Patuakhali – the most conservative area. The notion of employment is foreign to some women there to such extent that their motto has become:

“I’ll eat if he brings home food, but I’ll go without food if he doesn’t. We, the women from this village follow our husband’s hukum (order).” KII-13_P

Despite all the barriers to employment, some women are desperate to improve the financial situation of the family and to create a better future for their children. However, sometimes, their attempts to negotiate with their husband are unsuccessful:

“I told him I’d leave if he doesn’t let me work. He said, ‘Leave my house if you want to work.’” IDI-3_C

Due to concerns about *purdah* it was easier for women to get permission for home-based income generating activities compared to activities occurring outside the home. Thus, women seeking permission to work outside the house are unsuccessful in their quest.

“He doesn’t work. I told him since you don’t want to work, we have to think how to run the family. Let me go to Dhaka and work in a garment factory. He refused, saying, ‘If you decide to go, leave for good.’” IDI-2_P

Men were concerned that outside employment would create opportunities for women to mix with other men leading to extramarital relationships and a breakdown in marriage.

“If I let you work outside with other men, you’ll leave me.” IDI-3_P

Some men are not against home-based employment. However, some men in this group may have rigid preferences for certain home-based income-earning activities for their wives, which they insist on. (Case Study 4).

Women are sometimes allowed to work on the family land, as long as the husband gives his permission.

“He’s permitted me to work so I work. I can’t leave the home if he doesn’t allow me to do so. I can’t go out without his consent. I won’t ever work without his permission. If I did, I’d end up dead. He’d beat me and destroy household items. ... It’s impossible to disagree with him. You have to agree to whatever he says. If not, he’ll destroy everything” IDI-13_C

Employed women may experience different types of economic violence. In general, women wish to keep their earnings to cover expenses for their children or to cover costs that the husband does not usually meet. However, for various reasons often they can’t keep their earnings. Some men sell the products of their wife’s labour and keep the money. Sometimes, a working woman hands over her earnings to her husband so she can continue to work and keep him happy.

She also usually hands her husband money when he needs money. Such money is often difficult to recover. This is why women employ different strategies to keep control over their earnings either fully or partially. Sometimes they hide the fact that they are working, or the total amount earned. When they give the husband money some women pretend that they borrowed it from somebody. This is a smart strategy as it allows them to demand the money back subsequently and with a greater chance of recovery.

If a woman earns a negligible amount of money, most husbands are ready to ignore such sums. In such a case, a woman can keep it and use it as she wishes. But, if the amount is larger and the husband is abusive, the woman prefers to handover her income either fully or partially to keep him happy. Thus, a woman from Bogura earned about Taka3,500 ((USD 41) per month from poultry and livestock and selling fishing nets. Her husband was short-tempered and aggressive. She was afraid of him. He used

to give her his earnings to keep. While she served as the cash box of the family, she did not spend any money without his permission. She was certain that doing so would result in a thrashing. Moreover, she always handed over all her own earnings to him to avoid a conflict (IDI-12_B).

Most men in Patuakhali expected their working wives to handover the income to them. As a key interviewee from Patuakhali suggested, that was why a woman in Patuakhali usually hands over her earnings to her husband and asks him to buy productive assets (e.g. poultry, a goat or a cow) for her. Handing over money to him enables her to avoid tension, conflict and a backlash. Entrusting him with buying productive assets allows him to play a role in her plan and avoids alienating him. And the purchase of productive assets enables her to boost her income.

Some men closely monitor the money kept with their wives. This allows them to exercise greater control over the household earnings and deprive women of any control over their income.

“If my husband gives me money, I have to give him full account of it. Not all women know how much a husband earns. Men don’t tell them.” KII-13_P

“Some men don’t tell their wives know how much they earn or where they keep the money. But they need to know....if they need to build a room, a veranda or a kitchen.

In such a case the wife is usually told to take a loan. In such a case, a wife might demand to know what her husband did with his unspent money? Such challenges cause “warfare” to erupt. The husband may retort, ‘I won’t tell you. Do you want to disappear with the money?’ He may also beat her.” FGD-1_P

Some men sell their assets without consulting their wife, or against her wishes and without her

knowledge. This is well-illustrated in Case Study 4 from Cumilla.

Some men reduce their contribution to the family once their wife starts earning an income. They may also do this if their wife receives financial support from someone else. In Patuakhali, most men in such circumstances did so.

“[Once a woman starts earning or getting financial support from someone] the husband does not want to give her money anymore. He says, ‘Use your own money. Better you give me some of your money. Spend your money on your expenses. You don’t need my money. This is what happens in most cases. If for example she needs clothing he’d say, ‘You have your own money. Buy what you need with your own money.’”

Let me give you an example. There was a woman who had serious heart problem. Her uncle used to cover her treatment expenses. When she got pregnant, he never covered the check-up cost. If she ever asked him to bring her any medicine, he’d say, ‘I can’t bring you medicine unless you give me money.’ One day she was crying, and she told me, ‘He doesn’t buy me a simple medicine for gastritis if I don’t give him the money.’ The woman died in childbirth.” KII-13_P

Some men do not work even if able to and they do not provide for the family. As a result, their wife has to get financial support from others or to earn herself to feed the family. Despite earning enough, some men do not provide adequately for their family and squander the money. Some men intentionally kept their wife uninformed about household finances or about their income. Most men do not like to be asked by their wife for accounts of their income or expenditures.

“I’ll spend my money as I like. who are you to ask? Why would I need to give an account to my wife?” FGD-3_B

“I earned the money. Why do you need an account of how I spend it?” The man will beat her into a pulp. He will hit her with a bamboo stick, kick, punch and slap her.” FGD-2_C

“Despite having money with him he used to deny having any whenever she asked for it. He said he was going overseas for employment. So, he sold the land he inherited from his father, as well as his brother’s land. He earned Taka 700,000 from the sales. Later I discovered that he took a woman with him to Dhaka and then to Kuakata (a beach). The money disappeared.” IDI-10_P

3.3.3 PHYSICAL VIOLENCE BY THE HUSBAND

ATTITUDES TO PHYSICAL VIOLENCE BY HUSBAND AND ITS PROVOCATIONS

In accordance with the wider society, gender roles are rigidly defined in the areas selected for the study, and often reflect the persistent subordination of women in the household. A wife is supposed to carry out household chores, take care of the children and the sick and serve the husband and the in-laws to their satisfaction. She has to obey the husband and in-laws, never protest or talk back to the marital family members. If she fails to obey or satisfy them or transgresses any social norms the husband reserves the right to correct/discipline her by verbal abuse and/or beating. The interviewees described many scenarios, in which wife beating is accepted by the villagers. Some of them are mentioned below.

“A woman will be slapped if she does not obey her husband. She will be slapped or hit.” KII-14_C

“She’ll get beaten if she does not listen to her husband, neglects household chores, does not look after the children properly, or does not give husband what he wants.” KII-13_B

The interviewees justified wife beating in various ways. One line of argument was that it is the husband’s duty to correct his wife.

“A man is justified in beating his wife if she neglects her duties. This is her fault. It is the duty of the husband to punish her in such case.” KII-13_P

A man’s prerogative in beating his wife is justified as follows: he has to work very hard providing for the family. He gets exhausted and needs to be served properly. A person working as hard and tired out may very well become short tempered. Therefore, it is only natural that he would get angry if his wife does not serve him properly or if he finds her chores are not finished or unsatisfactory. Such instances may lead to verbal abuse and/or physical assault by the husband.

Another line of argument put forward was that due to mechanization, women’s workload has dramatically decreased over time compared to that of men. So, the expectations that she carries out the chores more efficiently are higher, and a failure would justify physical assault.

“Nobody tolerates unfairness. We women sit at home with nothing to do, while our husbands often return home after toiling hard on the farm. It’s only natural that they have a bad temper. We are engaged in light activities. We don’t have to use the mortar or thrash, parboil or dry rice anymore. Everything is done using machines now. If a woman still protests against his temper by saying, ‘Why do you shout? Am I your slave?’ Then a husband is bound to lose it. In such cases women are in the wrong.” FGD-1_P

A common theme underlying all these arguments was that a wife gets beaten due to her failings or faults. Some interviewees were clear on that point.

Participant 1: One husband beat his wife as she is bad.

Participant 2: No one approves of a woman who argues with her husband. It's okay if a husband strikes her once or twice when she is at fault."

FGD-3_B

Those who conform to social norms and gender roles are labelled good wives, while the rest are considered bad. According to the participants of this study, the bad ones are justifiably punished by violent means.

Participant 1: A man won't beat his wife if she is not at fault.

Participant 2: Bad women get abused. Those who are good will not even get beaten once in three years.

CASE STUDY 1

Re-victimisation for retaliating against husband's physical violence

A husband regularly beat his wife. The severe thrashing made her desperate. One day during such an episode she threw a pebble at him hoping to stop him. The pebble hit his nose making it bleed. This was considered a grave incident by the villagers. A shalish was arranged. She tried to present her history of severe abuse, which had led her to retaliate. But she was not allowed the opportunity to speak up. The village women, however, were allowed to talk and they told the shalish about her predicament. In response, the shalish told the woman plainly that her husband can do whatever he wishes to do with her. He can even murder her, and she doesn't have the right to do a thing about it. She was found guilty. She was labeled a "bad woman", "a husband beater". The shalish made her and her family ask for forgiveness from her husband.

Participant 3: There are families where the wife is beaten almost every day.

Participant 4: Right.

Participant 3: The wives in these families are extremely bad. This is why nobody tries to stop the beating. On the contrary, people actually wish they were beaten more often. These women are grabbed by their hair and beaten on the street.

Moderator: So, whom are you labeling as 'bad' women?

Participant 1: Wives who argue.

Participant 4: Those who don't obey their husband. FG-3_B

A few women claimed that women were not always at fault, but they were still abused. They believe that general opinion in the family and the community is usually biased towards men.

"The father-in-law, mother-in-law and the neighbours blame women even if they are not responsible for the violence. They justify the men's violent acts." FGD-1_C

During a beating, a woman is supposed to keep quiet rather than protest or retaliate. Members of the community do not usually approve or tolerate women's protests against spousal violence.

"A husband is a husband. He has the right to beat his wife. So, people disapprove a woman who protests." KII-13_P

Moderator: If a wife protests against a husband's beating how do people in this area react to her?

Participant 1: People say men can beat their wives. Why is she protesting? Isn't she crossing the line? They disapprove of this. The elders, the Chairman and Member, who are part of the shalish committee, also do not approve of this. At times some women realize that it is important for her to protest and they approve of such actions. FGD-1_P

The participants from an FGD in Cumilla narrated a story from their village illustrating the negative consequences of retaliation (See Case Study 1). It is clear from the data that spousal violence is highly accepted and is considered a private matter. Consequently, bystander intervention is generally not approved in these communities.

WOMEN’S EXPERIENCE OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE BY THE HUSBAND

More than half of our sample (14 out of 25) reported being physically assaulted by their husband (Table 8).

Physical violence by a husband is a common experience across the villages surveyed. The exchange below in an FGD from Bogura suggests that physical spousal violence is widespread and normalised in this area and cuts across families, irrespective of the educational level.

The perception is that the difference in physical spousal violence perpetrated in uneducated and educated families is in the degree of severity of the violence. According to the interviewees, moderate physical spousal violence is usually

perpetrated in an educated family, while severe physical spousal violence is more common among uneducated families.

In our small sample of IDI data, however, we did not detect any difference in the severity of physical violence according to the educational level of the spouses. The interviewees also suggested that physical spousal violence is most severe in families where men drink and use heroine.

Participant 1: Nasty husbands kick their wives. They grab wife’s hair. They drink. They are bad. ‘Gentlemen’ only slap their wife. They are a bit different.

TABLE 8: FREQUENCY OF ACTS OF PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL SPOUSAL VIOLENCE (N=25)

	CUMILLA (N=9)	BAGURA (N=8)	PATUAKHALI (N=8)	TOTAL (N=25)
ACTS OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE				
Slapping (delay in cooking/obeying any command)	3	3	5	11
Pulling hair	2	0	0	2
Kicking	1	1	1	3
Hitting with stick/beating with shoe/ bamboo stick	1	0	2	3
Punching	1	0	0	1
Chocking	1	0	0	1
Beating	1	0	0	1
Attacking with a shovel	1	0	0	1
ACTS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE				
Sex out of fear	5	3	3	11
Physically forced to have sex	0	0	3	3

Participant 2: They are educated.

Participant 3: When angry they'd slap her and then stop.

Participant 1: [Those who drink and use heroine] would swear to kill her. They can slit a wife's throat.

Participant 3: Beat her using a stick.

Participant 4: They won't hesitate to kill their wife. FGD-1_B

None of the married IDI participants reported substance abuse by their husband. As a result, this claim remained unverified in this study.

The interviewees believed that physical spousal violence is more severe in rural areas compared to urban areas.

Participant 1: In a rural area, [wife] beatings are severe.

Several participants: He'll pull her by her hair and beat her using whatever he can lay his hands on. He'll have no mercy on his wife. He may hit her using a heavy stick. While beating he doesn't think about the consequences. Sometimes 4-5 people will be needed to separate them. FGD-1_P

In each village surveyed physical spousal violence ranged from moderate acts (e.g. slapping, shoving) to severe acts (e.g. choking, hitting with shovel/stick, bamboo stick).

"I cannot visit the neighbours. He does not like it. I am not allowed to go farther than the shop. I am not allowed to cross this road during the day. I can't speak to any man. If I broke the rules, he'd get furious. He'd tell me, 'Why have you done this? Don't you dare to do this anymore!' He'd slap me once or twice." IDI-8_P

"He was laying out the paddy to dry in the yard and swearing and calling us names making it feel like doomsday. I tried to snatch away the broom from him and told him, 'Leave it. Go to the shop [and hang out with your friends]. We'll manage this work

by ourselves.' He hit my hand hard with the thick stub of the broom. My hand swelled. It still hurts. But that was not the only thing. He slapped me hard in the ear. Since then I have a problem hearing. He then threw away the broom and choked me. Then he grabbed my hair. He took a shovel and threatened to hit me with it. He used to be more abusive hitting me with a shovel, stick or bamboo." IDI-11_C

The example below illustrates verbal and physical abuse and deprivation of a roof over the head just for taking Take 2 for buying their son an ice cream.

"At that time my son was in grade one, he needed Taka 5-10 every day for snacks. He wouldn't give me the money. One day, I found Taka 2 in his pocket, which I used to buy my son an icecream. When my husband couldn't find the money, he threw away all the quilts and hit me twice. My father-in-law rushed in and threw me out of the house grabbing me by my neck." IDI-3_P

At times husbands severely abuse women physically with the intention of driving them away so that they could marry again and/or move in with new wife. A woman from Cumilla had such an experience:

*"Once I returned home from my first husband's house, I stopped thinking about it. We women are able to survive [such abuse] only because we are as strong as a perch (**koi maser poran**. A perch is believed not to die easily). He (the first husband) wanted to marry his cousin. [In order to drive me away] he used to ask me to bring money from my family and beat me [for not doing so]. The beating was beyond description. He used to beat me using the power cable. The beating was so severe that I needed to see a doctor after each episode. Eventually he married his cousin. She also left him soon out of fear of his thrashing (**konnir dorey**). Then he married again, and that woman also left due to his thrashing. His current wife has*

no mother to go back to. So, she is putting up with him.” IDI-7_C

The interviewees stated that homicide by a husband was rare, but not altogether unheard of in these villages.

“Sometimes beating are so severe that the woman dies.” KII-13_B

3.3.4. SEXUAL VIOLENCE BY THE HUSBAND

ATTITUDES REGARDING SEXUAL VIOLENCE BY THE HUSBAND

According to the interviewees, a husband has a right of unlimited access to his wife’s body. His entitlement is labeled as his right, or *hok*. It is almost universally believed that it is a wife’s duty to realize this right of the husband. She has to fulfil his sexual demands whether or not she is willing to have sex. Sexual spousal violence is thus a common phenomenon in this context. The following quote sheds light on this.

*“This is a right of the husband. It’s a **hok** of the husband. A wife has to ensure this right is fulfilled. Even when you are not willing you are compelled to have sex. You have to follow his orders (**hukum**)”* IDI-9_B

Not fulfilling a husband’s sexual needs is regarded as a gross transgression of a woman’s role and is not acceptable. The in-laws exert a lot of pressure to make a woman submit to her husband’s sexual intentions.

“If my mother-in-law and aunt-in-law discover that I have not allowed my husband to have sex with me they will ask why I got married in the first place.” KII-14-C

“A woman shouldn’t marry if she has any problems in having sex with her husband as per his wish.” FGD-1_P

WOMEN’S EXPERIENCE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE BY THE HUSBAND

Sexual violence within a marriage is common with 12 women reporting it out of 25 in our sample (Table 8). Women are socialized to believe that a man is entitled to unlimited sexual access to his wife’s body. They also believe that it is their duty to fulfil sexual needs of the husband. Moreover, women are financially, socially and emotionally dependent on marriage and on men. If wives refuse to have sex with their husbands, they sometimes threaten them by smashing household items or developing an extramarital relationship, throwing them out, and marrying again.

Some men actually break household items, emotionally and physically abuse wives and children, and reduce their financial contribution to the household in such situations. It is not surprising that women are very concerned about the repercussions of refusing to have sex. As a result, keeping him sexually gratified is widely accepted as a key risk-aversion strategy. Eleven women reported having sex out of fear, while three reported experiencing being physically forced to have sex.

Participant 3: He’d often declare in fury, ‘I’ll smash all the household items. Who did I buy them for? Why don’t you want to have sex with me?’

Participant 2: This scares a wife, so she usually complies. If she still didn’t go to him, he’d slap her twice.

Participant 4: He threatens her, ‘Don’t you do this to me! I’ll beat you. ...If you don’t want to have sex with me, I’ll have a relationship. I’ll marry again.’ He scares her and she complies. FGD-1_B

“When I refuse [sex] he starts throwing things around and slapping me. So, I cannot deny him [sex] anymore. It feels intolerable [during intercourse] and I keep thinking when he will get off me.” IDI-1_P

“Often we agree to have sex and I think of the commotion he’d create the next day if he didn’t have sex. He might throw out the pots and pans trying to punish me. He wouldn’t give me

money for my daily expenses. He’d refuse to eat. He’ll decide to teach the wife a lesson for refusing to have sex the night before.” FGD-1_C

“We are afraid that they’d start beating us. Men may start accusing us of having another relationship.” FGD-2_C

“If I refuse him, he may go to another woman. Why would he have to do that when I exist?” IDI-7_C

“If I don’t have sex with my husband, he’ll go somewhere else for sex. He’ll have a relationship with another woman. If I don’t obey him, he may marry again. If the wife doesn’t want to have sex the repercussions will definitely involve slapping, shoving and tearing the hair.” KII-13_B

“[If a wife refuses to have sex] he’ll verbally and physically abuse her. He’d say, ‘If you don’t let me have sex I’ll marry again. You are not fulfilling your duty. I need another wife.’ A wife will do whatever her husband wants fearing such consequences. ‘What kind of a wife are you if you cannot give me what I married you for?’ He works the whole day. If a wife cannot satisfy his sexual needs, he won’t keep that wife.” KII-14_B

Participant 1: If I don’t have sex with him, if I don’t satisfy his needs, he may have a relationship with another woman.

Participant 2: He may start eyeing other women. Out of this fear we agree to have sex [despite my unwillingness to do so]

Participant 1: Often he won’t bring home rice or pulses. He won’t work the next day. He’ll abuse his spouse verbally and physically. He’ll break

household items. These are the fears that we have. FGD-1_P

Although a common belief across the villages surveyed is that men should have unlimited sexual access to a wife’s body, women still voiced their unwillingness to have sex at times. For most men a wife’s unwillingness is not a great impediment to obtaining sex. Women’s refusal of sex is often met with sexual coercion or being physically forced to have sex.

“Suppose I had no intention of having sex, but still he’d say, ‘This has to happen today’. This happens quite frequently.” IDI-2_B

Three women, all from Patuakhali, reported experiencing being physically forced to have sex (Table 8).

“I have a neighbour who is pregnant now. She told me her husband demands sex every day. If she refuses to have sex, he’ll get sex by beating, kicking, poking her and then tying her up.” KII-13_P

A key interviewee from Bogura mentioned that some men take male-enhancing drugs, which really puts pressure on the wife. The example below illustrates this.

“A woman told me that her husband used to take male enhancing medicines and she could not cope with his heightened demands for sex. The man’s relatives and neighbours made him stop taking the pills as his wife was on the verge of leaving him.” KII-14_B

Only women from Bogura mentioned in FGD (FGD-1_B) that some men forced their wives to perform sexual acts they disliked (e.g. undressing completely during sex, inserting their fingers into the vagina and performing oral sex).

3.4 SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE BY OTHER MALE FAMILY MEMBERS OR IN AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP OUTSIDE MARRIAGE

Women do not usually have to observe rigid ***pardah*** in front of their male family members. Thus, these men have greater access to women in the household and may sexually abuse them. They touch the women sexually, grab them and try to have sex with them. Male cousins, ***dulabhai*** (elder sister's husband), ***debor*** (younger brother of husband), ***bhashur*** (older brother of husband), uncles and even grandfathers are the usual perpetrators.

“My friend had such an experience. Her grandfather touched her breasts.” FGD-2_B

The interviewees did not report sexual violence by a father in these villages. Often sexual relationships among relatives start as forced sex, which the women usually conceal fearing blame, not being believed, or complicating the family dynamics.

“When a woman talks about being sexually abused by a family member the usual reaction will be, ‘This is absurd!’ None of the relatives will believe it. They will say, ‘He is a good man’. and add, ‘You are a bad woman.’” FGD-2_B

In such cases, the male perpetrators continue to abuse the women taking advantage of their vulnerability and silence. Some of these men ultimately marry the survivors, while others do not. The general sentiment among interviewees was that women feel more vulnerable if these men end up not marrying them. Sexual violence by ***debor*** or ***bhashur*** (husband's brothers) is more prevalent in families where the husband is a migrant worker.

Some unmarried women in all the villages surveyed had intimate relationship as a result of coercion. Sometimes men entrap women into a relationship by threatening them with abduction, rape, or the threat of suicide.

Participant 1: When a man likes a woman, but she doesn't agree [to enter into a relationship]

Participant 2: Then he blackmails her that he'll say something that would damage her honour. Sometimes the man threatens her with abduction. FGD-3_P

Participant 1: He'd ask her to meet him to have sex. If she refused, he'd say, ‘So, you can have a romantic relationship, but you can't have sex!’

CASE STUDY 2

Coercion for entering a relationship

A man from the neighbouring house was after Lima as he wanted to have a romantic relationship with her since she was a schoolgirl. She abhorred him. He used to follow her on her way to school. He used to nag her and send other people (e.g. friends, female neighbours) to convince her to agree to his proposal. He used to tell her that he would commit suicide either by taking sleeping pills or poison or jumping from a high building if she did not agree to have a relationship with him. Lima was only 15 at that time. She could not share this harassment with her mother as she was afraid this would make the family marry her off immediately.

But she wanted to study, which was usually not possible after marriage. Her other concern was that she would get blamed if he actually committed suicide. So, she did not dare to refuse him outright. Eventually under his pressure, Lima reluctantly agreed to have a relationship with him. He kept insisting they get more involved, but Lima would avoid him as much as possible. She would try to buy time by telling him, 'Everything in its own time.'

After some time, the man realized that Lima was only playing with him. He got furious and in order to harm her made the relationship public. Everybody started to criticize and insult Lima and her family. She felt so humiliated that she wanted to commit suicide. Lima's mother managed to convince her to not commit such a tragic act.

Participant 2: 'I'll show you who I am! I'll tell everybody what you did with me. I'll spread the word through the Internet.'

Participant 3: Once this sexual relationship is ongoing, he tells her, 'I have recorded our discussion and I have your photograph. I'll show them.' So, she has to continue having sex with him. FGD-3_P

Once a romantic relationship is over, men sometimes decide to harm the woman by posting photographs that compromise her honour. One interviewee recalls that one man told her:

"If you refuse to have a relationship with me, I'll disseminate your photo through Facebook'. And he did that." FGD-2_B

Ex-boyfriends may try to interfere in the marriage of an ex-girlfriend by informing the husband about the relationship. Some men have romantic relationships with multiple women. When these men finally get married girlfriends may be heartbroken. The interviewees cited incidents where such women committed suicide.

"Nowadays men usually take photos and get videos of the girlfriend. If at any point the relationship is over, men will post them online. ...Sometimes both promise to marry each other, and sex takes place by mutual consent. When the woman gets pregnant the man refuses to marry her. He makes her abort the child. This has happened [in this community]." FGD-1_C

Sometimes boyfriends blackmail women into having sex threatening to spread obscene photograph/s or recorded conversations via the Internet.

Participant 1: Men have a sexual relationship, and often the woman gets pregnant.

Participant 2: Yes, this happens.

Participant 1: There are hundreds of such incidents ...in our village.

Participant 2: They abort the child.

Participant 1: When a woman truly loves a man, she agrees to do anything he wants. Maybe she is afraid the relationship will not continue otherwise. Later, when the man gets tired of the relationship, but the woman insists on continuing relations, he tells her, 'I have a video. If you persist, I'll post it online'. FGD-2_B

Some sexual violence incidents perpetrated by boyfriends are more serious. Women from Patuakhali recounted the following incident,

"An incident occurred -- a boyfriend asked a woman to come to a certain place. When she went to meet him the boyfriend and three other men raped her. In similar circumstances, the woman can also get murdered after the rape." FGD-1_P

"One of my friends had a boyfriend. One day he took her to a park and raped her along with his friend. She could not reveal this to her parents. She requested us to keep her secret. When we asked her what she was planning to do, she said, 'I'll go to Dhaka'. [The next day] I went to her house at 10 a.m. She had committed suicide." IDI-7_P3.5

3.5 SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

The main perpetrators of sexual harassment or violence against women in educational institutions are the teachers and male students. The teachers often harass female students by scolding them either insinuating that they have a romantic relationship, or they interact with boys, both considered attributes of a "bad girl" in the village.

Some examples of scolding provided by FGD participants are given below. Participant 1, 2: 'Do you chat with men at home? Do you engage in **prem** (romantic affair)? You can be on the phone the whole day. Why can't you study?'

Participant 1: 'You can dress up and put on makeup and accessories the whole day. Why can't you study?'

Participant 2: 'You can be on Facebook the whole day. Why can't you study?'

Everyone: We consider such utterances to be a form of violence as it feels terrible when such things are said in front of others.FGD-3_P

Many college teachers offer the students private tuition. There is competition among teachers for enrolling students for private tuition. Some teachers, through unfair means, try to dictate who the students will receive private tuition from, for example by reducing exam marks if he was not their tutor, and taunting the students for their low grades.

Some teachers display extra concern towards female students they are sexually attracted to. They summon them to their rooms frequently (See Case Study 3). They get their phone numbers, call them frequently under the pretext of checking how they are doing in their studies. Sometimes

they offer these women tuition free of charges. They promise to give them the exam questions. Once the female students start attending these teachers' classes, they sometimes succeed in drawing the student into a romantic relationship. If a teacher is truly interested in her he ends up marrying her. In some cases, a sexual relationship may develop and if the student gets pregnant the teacher usually denies any involvement and no marriage takes place.

Participant 1: The good-looking ones land in greater trouble. Once a teacher eyes a good-looking female student, he tries to lure her into a relationship just like a boyfriend. He suggests giving her private tuition for free. He'll say] 'You come to me and I'll give you exam questions'.

Participant 2: Some say, 'Come to my place and I'll give you the exam question'.

Participant 3: Many students think, 'He is my teacher and he wishes me well'. They get involved

and a sexual relationship ensues. If they have a sexual relationship prior to marriage they usually do not get married. FGD-3_P

Co-education facilities do not exist in most of the colleges. Perhaps that is why women seemed more concerned about sexual harassment by the teachers compared to the male students.

Some interviewees said male students rejected by female students often try to harass the student in question. A young woman from Bogura gave an example of such harassment.

"He pushed her off her feet so that she lost her balance and fell on the other male students. Another incident happened with my classmate. A male student was waiting for an opportunity. One day when she went to the toilet, he caught her. He touched and grabbed her sexually. Another female student saw them and reported the incident to the college administration. The boy received a physical punishment." FGD-2-B

CASE STUDY 3

Sexual harassment in educational institution

Lima is an 18-year old woman, who got admitted to a college after passing her G-10. Everything was going well with her studies until a male teacher started taking a special interest in her. He used to call her frequently to the library to help him.

Once he summoned her to the library and asked her to give him a glass of water. While she handed him the glass, she noticed that the teacher was staring at her strangely. She realized that he liked her. Lima got to know that a couple of years ago this teacher forced another student to have a sexual relationship. She decided to avoid him. He kept calling her to the library and asking her to give him a drink of water. He tried to touch her hand every time she gave him the glass. She could not stand him. One day she told him that she didn't understand why she needed to bring him water and told him she would cease doing so.

The teacher suggested they have a romantic relationship. Lima ignored the proposal. He

then started to pick on her in class. He would target her in particular and punish her for not studying. He would scold her implicating that she was having an affair and not focusing on her studies. He would also ask why her parents were not ensuring that she was studying. He used to make her stand on the bench throughout his class.

When regular classes were over the teacher announced some extra classes to prepare the students for the exam. Lima knew her exam preparations would be better if she attended those classes. But she decided to avoid him. She concealed information about extra classes from her parents and got admitted to a coaching centre which involved extra cost. The teacher called her repeatedly over phone every 2-3 days and asked why she was not attending the extra classes. Lima told him her parents were not allowing her to go to college. Once the exams were over, she changed her sim card so he couldn't call her any more.

3.6 VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

As women in the villages that were surveyed had limited employment opportunities, the data refers mainly to workplace violence against women engaged in Food-for-Work activities, agriculture, brick production and NGO jobs. The data shows that the main perpetrators were the supervisors. Abuse of authority and harassment against female employees was widespread. If targets were not met the women were scolded, shouted at, insulted, humiliated and put down. Failure to deliver or to follow disciplinary procedures often means the supervisor resorts emotional and sometimes physical violence.

“I have picked so many potatoes, while you haven’t. But you’ll receive equal pay. ...

If a female cannot do the work properly the supervisor may slap her and exclaim, ‘Didn’t I explain to you how to do this?’ They may sack her too, telling her, ‘Don’t come to work anymore. You don’t understand anything although we’ve explained things to you hundreds of times.’”
FGD-1_B

“Why are you late? You must arrive on time, otherwise we won’t keep you.” KII-14_P

According to the interviewees, female domestic help were more prone to experience severe

physical aggression, with several reporting the following incident in Cumilla:

“She was late in doing something and as a punishment she was burned with a hot iron spatula.” FGD-1_C

Sexual harassment by the supervisor was mentioned particularly as occurring in NGOs. Some supervisors try to have a romantic relationship with female workers. They call them repeatedly and send them messages. A key interviewee, herself an NGO worker, provided the following example of such harassment:

“There was a field worker, who was a widow with two children. She came here to work leaving her children with her parents. The Field Officer supervising her used to harass her by repeatedly sending her messages, he tried to kiss her forcefully.” KII-13_P

Women, who offer private tuition to the students at their home, are at risk of being molested by men in those families. Such incidents usually happen when there is no one else at home and the student is a young child.

“My friends told me that this woman went to a house to teach her student. That day the mother was not at home, the father had a holiday. He touched her breasts.” FGD-2_B

3.7 SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND OTHER FORMS OF VIOLENCE IN THE PUBLIC SPACE

Women's mobility, particularly the mobility of unmarried women is very restricted in all the villages surveyed. They are rarely seen on the streets unless they are students. They do not usually attend any public events. According to the data, young unmarried women are more vulnerable to sexual harassment in public space than married women. The latter are usually identified by their nose pin, which is a sign of marriage.

As highlighted in the data, good-looking women are more vulnerable to harassment. Women are regularly exposed to whistling, sexual remarks and gestures, winking, bumping, touching, grabbing, pinching and snatching *orhna* (part of the dress that is supposed to cover the breasts). *"If I happen to meet a man's eyes on the street, he winks. Men whistle and they make humiliating remarks. ...The other day a man bumped against my friend's breasts pretending not to see her. A few days back my friend and I were walking towards our college, and a man was saying, 'They are groovy' and used bad language. We didn't protest. Protesting may be risky. So, we keep silent."* IDI-7_P

In most of the villages, the colleges are located outside the village. Almost all the college-going women need to use public transport to attend college. They mentioned being harassed on the transport. Crowded buses are particularly risky for them as men touch, grab, pinch, bump and press against them.

Participant 1: On the bus men routinely touch and grab women at every opportunity, for example, when the bus brakes suddenly.

Participant 2: They fall on women on purpose.

Participant 1: If you ask men to move, they say, 'There's nowhere to move. Why do you travel by bus? Go by auto-rickshaw'.

Participant 2: 'If you are on the street it is natural that men's and women's body will brush against each other. If you find that problematic book a transport all for yourself'. FGD-2_B

The data reveals an interesting fact -- that government policy to support female education by allowing a 50 per cent reduced bus fare somehow backfired. The buses started to discriminate against female college students as passengers. In the interest of their business they boarded them last and only when there were no other passengers. Thus, female college students often find the bus jam-packed and no seats available. They have to stand with other male passengers. This situation creates ample opportunities for men to sexually harass these students. There were only a few students who could afford to avoid this situation by hiring auto-rickshaws.

"The bus conductor will not let female students board the bus until all the seats are filled. If a college student tries to get on, he would block access. Two minutes before the bus starts, he will push the men

and women inside. There will always be some bad man who will touch and grab us. They let us get on last because the fare for female college students is half the normal fare price.

Now, if we stand no way can we avoid being touched by men. Some intentionally bump against you. If you ask them to move away, they say, 'What can we do? The road is bumpy so if you're not happy why did you board the bus?'

There are fewer seats for women than for men on a bus. So, the bus is usually full of women passengers who stand during the journey. We have to travel by bus to get home by a certain time." IDI-6_B

"I used to reserve an auto-rickshaw for going to college so that I didn't have to face the problems most women confront on public transport." IDI-7_P

A WOMAN'S EXPERIENCE OF VIOLENCE

It is critical to analyze how VAW plays out in the life of an individual women while analyzing each type of VAW separately.

While we analysed each type of VAW separately it was critical to also analyse how VAW plays out in the life of an individual woman. A woman may or may not experience VAW. Those who experience VAW may or may not be exposed to multiple types of VAW, or a woman may experience different forms of spousal VAW. Exposure to different types/forms of VAW is usually not disjointed phenomena. They all come together to embody the experience of VAW. Therefore, it is essential to analyse the data to capture the women’s experience of VAW in its totality.

A key point is that not all women experience spousal violence. In our sample of 25 women,

one from Patuakhali did not report any spousal violence (Table 9).

Two women from Cumilla and one woman from Bogura were exposed to a single form of IPV. One of them experienced controlling behaviour by the husband, while the two other experienced economic violence. Seventeen women out of 25 in our survey reported polyvictimisation. Exposure to three forms of spousal violence was reported by the highest number of women in this sample (10 out of 25). Four women experienced all four types of spousal violence.

The number of violent acts a woman was exposed to range between 0 and 24. While one woman did

TABLE 9: DIFFERENT FORMS OF SPOUSAL VIOLENCE EXPERIENCED BY WOMEN (N=25)

DIFFERENT FORMS OF SPOUSAL VIOLENCE	FREQUENCY
No violence	1
Controlling behaviour only	1
Physical violence only	0
Sexual violence only	0
ECONOMIC VIOLENCE ONLY	4
Controlling behaviour and physical violence	0
Controlling behaviour and sexual violence	1
Controlling behaviour and economic violence	0
Physical and economic violence	1
Physical and sexual violence	0
Sexual and economic violence	0
Controlling behaviour, physical and sexual violence	0
CONTROLLING BEHAVIOUR, PHYSICAL AND ECONOMIC VIOLENCE	7
Controlling behaviour, economic and sexual violence	3
Physical, economic and sexual violence	3
CONTROLLING BEHAVIOUR, PHYSICAL, SEXUAL AND ECONOMIC VIOLENCE	4

CASE STUDY 4

Story of a woman who suffered the highest number of violent acts in the survey

Shila, 45, is married to Kashem, 60, who is retired from the army. They had been married for 17 years. Kashem completed school, while Shila failed in the school final exams. The fact of her failure was concealed during the marriage negotiations. Shila's family arranged a wedding feast. When the couple left for Kashem's house Shila's family was too flustered to remember to put the gifts for the newlyweds in her suitcase. In the evening Kashem's relatives and neighbours came to see the bride. Kashem was outraged finding no gifts to show off as per tradition. He claimed this incident made him lose his face in front of the guests. Ever since then he held her and her family in contempt.

Shila used to live with her in-laws. They made her work very hard, but never appreciated her. They used to complain to Kashem that Shila did not do enough. A year went by. Shila did not conceive. Kashem took her to the army doctor. The doctor said neither of them had any infertility issue. He advised them to have intercourse more frequently. Kashem applied for a staff quarter and was allotted one. When he wanted to take Shila with him the in-laws were enraged. They said there no one would do the household chores in her absence and they forbade Shila from going. This continued for another 3-4 years. Kashem was determined to have a baby and finally took Shila to live with him.

There was a job vacancy announcement and Shila wanted to apply. While going through her papers Kashem found out that Shila did not pass the school final exam. He was furious and

forbade her to apply. He threatened Shila with divorce. Ever since then he stopped her from completing school or getting any training that would qualify her for a job. She wanted to take a tailoring course from the women's association of spouses of army staff. The training was free of charge. The only requirement was to bring pieces of cloth, a pair of scissors and a notebook.

For a long time, he did not buy her the scissors and the notebook. Finally, when he brought her those items, he did not allow her to take part in the training. He made her learn from the other trainees. But he never bought her a sewing machine. So, she eventually lost the skill. Currently, she earns a small income by growing vegetables in the yard. Kashem is against her vegetable gardening. He insists she raise livestock instead, knowing only too well that she abhors livestock raising. From time to time, Kashem would display his anger by cutting and uprooting her plants.

After his retirement Kashem stopped covering all the family expenses. He does pay for their daughter's school fees but does not buy her clothes. He never gives Shila any money unless she asks for it and when asked he would always give her less than what she requested. He is always worried that the money he gives to Shila will be given to her family.

Despite such fears he himself is unscrupulous in demanding and receiving money and other resources from Shila's family. When Kashem wanted to buy some land Shila's father sold his

continued...

CASE STUDY 4 ... continued

own land and gave him the money. Kashem bought the land in his own name. Later he sold the land despite repeated protests from Shila. Shila never saw any of the money from this land sale as he kept the money with his sister-in-law. The gate of the house was built with money from Shila's father. Now, Kashem is putting pressure on Shila to ask her father to build a cow shed in their compound.

Several days back, Kashem wanted Shila to clean the yard and lay out the rice to dry. Shila was busy preparing breakfast for her son's friends at the time. Kashem could not tolerate any delay. He started hurling insults at her and hit her hard with the wooden handle of the broom. He slapped her and kicked her in the abdomen. Then he pulled her by her hair and choked her. Their daughter tried to protect Shila. Finally, Shila freed herself by biting Kashem. As a result of this fight Shila's hand got swollen and she suffered a hearing loss.

On another occasion, Kashem instructed Shila to give some rice to someone. When he found out that Shila failed to do so he grabbed a huge knife and threatened to stab her. Shila started to run for her life. Kashem chased her until his brothers stopped him.

Kashem was not the only attacker Shila had to deal with. Once, a stranger grabbed her breast when she was visiting a zoo. On another occasion, a man sitting next to Shila on a bus put his hand on her knee. She asked him to remove it. When he did not move Shila screamed and he promptly removed his hand.

not experience any spousal violence, three were exposed to economic spousal violence only (Table 10). In the rest of the cases different forms of spousal violence overlapped with each other. The most common combination of violence women experienced (n=7) was controlling behaviour + economic + physical violence. The next most common combinations included all four forms of violence studied here.

The data clearly show that spousal violence cuts across socioeconomic status. Thus, the woman exposed to 26 acts of violence came from a relatively better off family in Cumilla (Case study 4). Her experience encompasses controlling behaviour, economic and severe physical violence. In contrast, a woman from an economically disadvantaged household in Bogura was not exposed to any controlling behaviour or physical or sexual violence. A financial crisis was the major problem in this family and the main reason for that was the husband's unwillingness to work (Case study 5). Comparison of Case studies 4 and 5 illustrates that different notions of masculinity and the gender attitudes of men play a critical role in determining the nature of an intimate relationship between spouses. Family characteristics are also very important contributors to spousal violence.

The individual characteristics of the men in these case studies are in stark contrast with each other. Shila's husband Kashem holds her and her family in contempt, constantly ignores and insults them, puts them down, makes her painfully aware of her compromised status in the single and extended marital family, does not allow her any opportunities to develop herself, does not allow her to take part in any decision-making, interferes with her economic activities, unscrupulously uses her and her family's resources to his advantage and to her disadvantage. Saleha's husband Pintu is very caring towards her and the children. He is very concerned about Saleha's poor health. Once they

CASE STUDY 5

Story of a woman who did not face many acts of spousal violence

Saleha was a candidate for the higher secondary school exam when she married Pintu, who had a bachelor's degree. No dowry was demanded as it was not a tradition in her family. None of Pintu's brothers' marriages involved dowry. He did not have a job at the time of the marriage and was still not employed seven years into the marriage. The couple lived in the extended family and were provided by Pintu's father and brothers.

Pintu was not interested in finding a job and earning an income. Since Pintu showed no sign of wanting to change, Saleha's family wanted to arrange a divorce and get Saleha married to another man. Saleha was hoping Pintu would opt for a career, but meanwhile she gave birth to two girls and decided to stick to her marriage. Saleha was diagnosed with a slipped disc a few months after her marriage. She could not do household chores. Her mother-in-law used to think Saleha was pretending to be sick to avoid household chores. This made it difficult for Saleha not to work at her in-laws

So, Pintu sent her to her parents', where she received treatment, stayed in bed and came back a year later when her condition improved. Pintu is very careful about not letting her lift heavy objects. Saleha wanted to buy a sewing machine so that she could save on buying ready-made clothes and could also earn money by taking orders. Pintu, however, does not want her to tax her health. Saleha believes he would not interfere if she worked. He may just caution her about her ill-health. Actually, she has applied for several jobs without facing any resistance from Pintu.

Saleha has often taken financial support from her family. Once she brought a cow from her

father. The cow was fattened and then sold. Pintu did not hesitate to handover the money from the sale to Saleha. In contrast to many men, Pintu has never raised a finger on Saleha or the children. In this society, where preference for a son is common, Pintu has never put any pressure on Saleha to give birth to a son. He is actually very careful not to make her pregnant again. The doctor forbade them to have sex during her illness. Pintu followed this instruction and aptly controlled his sexual urge. He has never insisted to have sex. Saleha greatly appreciates Pintu's caring, considerate nature and his patience.

Saleha describes Pintu as a person of *shimito raag* (a person who cannot get very angry). While it is the norm to discipline children by scolding and physically assaulting them, Pintu will never rebuke his children no matter how naughty they are. Saleha worries that the children will grow up unruly and uneducated if Pintu does exert some control. However, the children are having a happy and carefree childhood.

Saleha requested her in-laws to separate the extended household so that Pintu is not financially dependent on the larger family. She argued that once Pintu is on his own he is bound to try to provide for the family. The in-laws supported Saleha and she was proven right. Once the couple formed a single household Pintu started working in his brothers' business as a salaried person. This has improved the family's financial and social status.

There is not much Saleha herself could do to help the family financially due to her slip disk. When she is well, she raises poultry and livestock. When she gets sick Pintu does not let her work.

separated from the extended family, which used to support them financially, he started working to provide for the family.

In both cases the women's families were very supportive. Shila's father was ready to provide financial and other support to make Kashem happy so that he treated Shila better. Saleha's family was ready to take her back and get her married to another man for freeing her from financial struggle. But the in-law families of these women were very different in their attitudes and practices. Saleha's in-laws were trying to find ways to reduce her hardship by providing financial support. Saleha, however, did not consider this to be a long-term solution.

So, she requested her in-laws to let them form a single family, which she believed would make Pintu assume financial responsibility. Her in-laws complied with her wishes. In contrast, Shila's in-laws were very abusive towards her. They imposed a heavy workload her disregarding her health condition and continuously abused her emotionally. They treated her more like a domestic help. Kashem usually sided with his family. Shila did not receive any support from the in-laws for preventing acts of violence by Kashem.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN HIGHLIGHTED BY THE DATA

The conceptual framework that emerges from the data for VAW is in line with the ecological framework developed by Heise (1998).

The conceptual framework that emerges from the data for VAW is in line with the ecological framework developed by Heise (1998). As we can see from Figure 1, factors at different levels contribute to VAW. At the larger societal level patriarchal structures/systems favouring men and upholding a gender hierarchy facilitate VAW at the lower levels (not shown in Figure 1). At the community level, women's education, mobility and *purdah*, notions of masculinity, gender attitudes and VAW-related attitudes contribute to VAW. Thus, VAW seemed to be less common in Bogura, which is more advanced in terms of women's education, mobility and *purdah* than in the other districts surveyed.

Religiously conservative families usually exert more control. They hold more gender inequitable

attitudes and condone VAW. They justify VAW using the tenets of religion and contribute in large measure to VAW. Strong spousal communication, joint decision making, and mutual understanding protect women from VAW. Lack of support from one's own family and from the in-laws increases the chances of VAW. A man, who endorses patriarchal attitudes, is an adherent to religious conservatism and suffers from substance abuse is more likely to perpetrate VAW.

For a girl/young woman, a young age, low education, dark complexion/untoward looks, limited social and familial support, gender inequity and attitudes that condone VAW make them more vulnerable to VAW. If related factors and some family factors are disregarded the conceptual framework also holds for VAW perpetrated by non-partners.

THE VIEWS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SURVEY PARTICIPANTS FOR ADDRESSING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The majority of interviewees in all the villages surveyed believe that spousal abuse will be eliminated if women obey their husbands.

The majority of interviewees in all the villages surveyed believe that spousal abuse will be eliminated if women obey their husbands.

Participant 1: Spousal violence will stop if a woman behaves.

Participant 2: Yes.

Participant 3: If she obeys him.

Participant 4: Everything will be resolved if she follows his instructions. FGD-2_P

Participant 1: Suppose I work outside. If he approves, I'll continue. If he doesn't, I won't. I'll manage with his earnings and follow his instructions.

Participant 2: I won't attend the events if he doesn't like me going. If he doesn't want me to talk to another man –I won't talk to another man. Stopping all this will bring...

Everyone in unison: peace to the family. FGD-1_P

Women from Bogura mentioned a range of other strategies for addressing violence by a husband, for example, the economic empowerment of women, the abolition of dowry as a practice, improving communication between a couple taking legal measures and undertaking joint initiatives by communities, families and women to convince men to stop this violence.

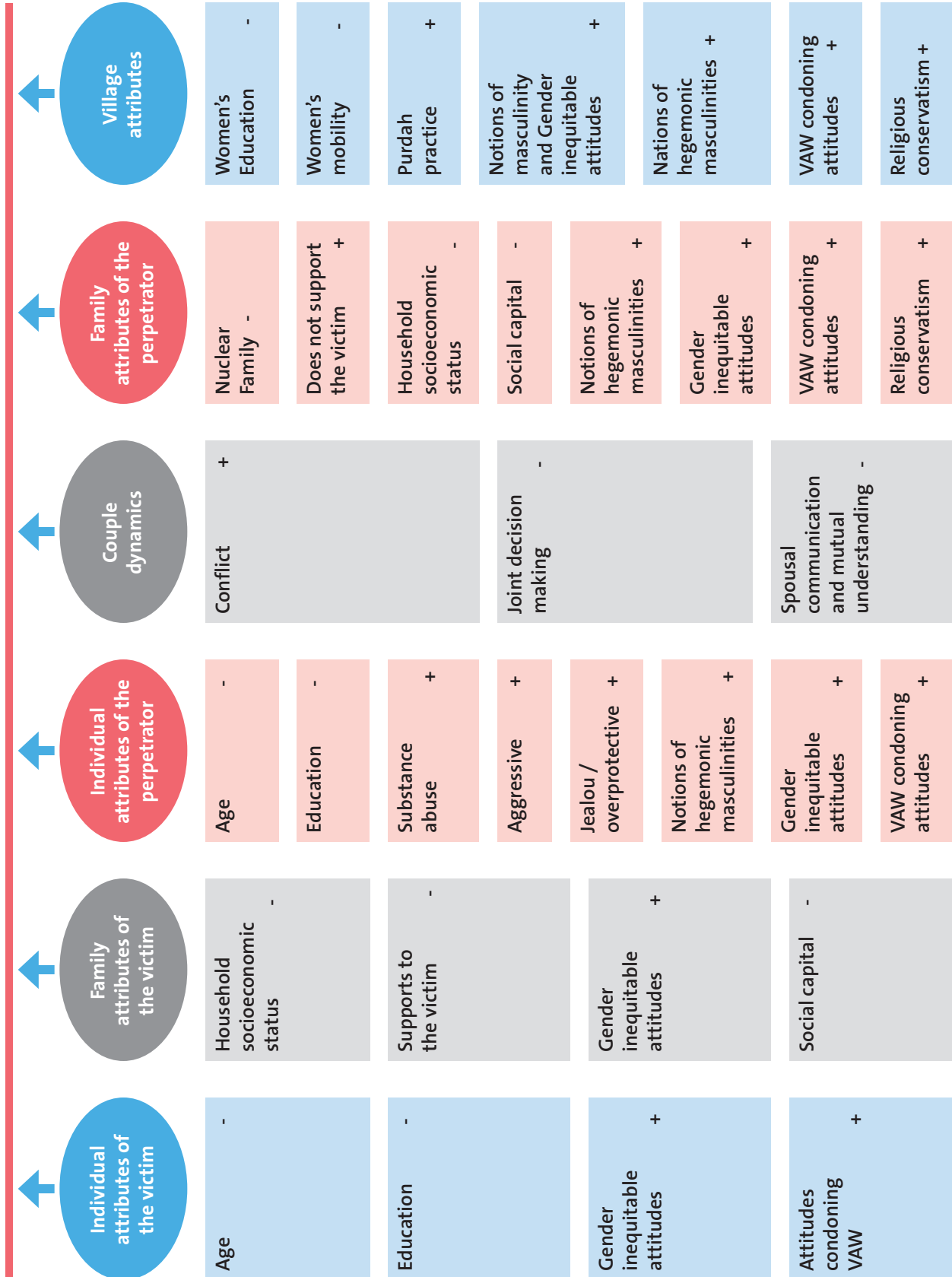
The main recommendation for addressing sexual harassment or violence in a pre- or extra-marital intimate relationship was not allowing women to get involved in such a relationship. The other recommendations included: passing laws prohibiting such violence; empowering women so

they can protect themselves against such violence; and disciplining the perpetrators in their families.

Two types of recommendations were made by the participants in the survey participants for addressing sexual harassment in public space. One emphasized strengthening patriarchal norms such as *pardah*, control over women, not allowing women to talk to men and monitoring who they speak to. The other type of recommendation emphasized joint initiatives taken by the government and the NGOs. The initiatives put forward included sensitizing and encouraging women to report such violence and to protest against such harassment; making the guardians, teachers and community leaders more vigilant; and taking proper measures against reported cases.

The interviewees were aware of the great importance of timely reporting of sexual harassment/violence in educational institutions to the parents, authorities and community leaders. The sensitization of parents, teachers and students was also mentioned as a measure to reduce this harassment/violence. Solidarity among the survivors was mentioned by women from Bogura as essential for addressing this violence. Some contradictory recommendations emerged from Bogura such as maintaining the physical distance between men and women to curtail the scope for such violence. Separate educational institutions for boys and girls were also recommended. In the case of co-education arranging separate shifts was suggested for segregating women. In order to address workplace violence against women one suggestion was to sensitize the management, the higher authority or business owners.

FIGURE 1. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



DISCUSSION

The perpetuation of women's entrenched disadvantages, discrimination and deprivation are based on patriarchal structures of society where power relations unabashedly favour of men.

This study provides us with a rich description of the context, namely the perceptions, attitudes and social norms, which condones and allows violence against women. The perpetuation of women's entrenched disadvantages, discrimination and deprivation are based on patriarchal structures of society where power relations unabashedly favour of men. All of these ultimately contribute to VAW in different spheres of women's lives.

This survey also provides an understanding of what provokes VAW. The data are especially interesting as they offer a perspective of polyvictimization of rural women in Bangladesh. Such studies are still rare in the literature and it is the first of its kind in Bangladesh.

Although the study was conducted in three geographically different districts, the commonalities among these villages in perceptions, attitudes and practices in regard to VAW are quite striking. The types of VAW presented in the report exist in all three villages without exception. However, there are variations in the combination/level/extent/severity of each type of violence depending on the characteristics of the marital family, perpetrator, woman and village. Thus, for instance, a conservative Muslim family may exert greater control over a woman than other families. It is important to remember that all men are not necessarily violent towards women, while some men are extremely violent. Many men's propensity to resort to VAW lie between these two extremes.

Across the villages surveyed, the custom of exerting control over a woman is very strong. Women are expected to obey their husbands and seek permission before engaging in anything beyond their routine work. Some women, however, transgress these norms and are penalized using different forms of violence.

Data on economic spousal violence show that dowry has become more widespread and inflated

over time, which supports the extant literature (Naved et al., 2010). The penalty for non-payment of dowry ranges from verbal abuse to severe physical violence by the husband and the in-laws. Often the marriage is dissolved due to the failure to provide a dowry. A predominant type of economic spousal violence is forbidding women to earn an income.

There are many factors contributing to the negative attitude towards women's employment in these communities. It challenges the patriarchal gender roles, affects family honour and the prestige and status of the husband. Both the family and the husband is criticised in their community for allowing a woman to work. Allowing women to work outside the home also jeopardizes *pardah* norms.

Men are particularly concerned that women may meet and interact with other men at work. These concerns are so overwhelming that women are threatened with divorce if they want to work. Even in poor families, men often restrict women's employment fearing a loss of prestige.

In households, where a woman works, men often expect her to handover their earnings to them. Not doing so may result in verbal and physical abuse. Some men may reduce their contribution to the household income once their wife starts earning a salary. Men may not work and may not provide for the family despite being able to. They may also inadequately provide for the family despite having the resources. They may spend the resources on themselves despite household needs.

According to the data, economic violence is one of the most common forms of spousal violence. Unfortunately, there is a lack of research on economic IPV worldwide, particularly in the LMIC (Fawole, 2008; Yount et al., 2015). Our qualitative data convincingly demonstrate the need for developing appropriate scales and measuring economic IPV for capturing women's experience of violence more fully. This is particularly important

in this rapidly changing world, where women are increasingly becoming active players in the economy.

Physical spousal violence ranges from a few slaps to homicide. The main reasons for physical spousal violence identified by the KII and FGD participants were transgression of gender roles and responsibilities, the involvement of a husband in an extramarital relationship and substance abuse. The IDI data points to overlaps between economic and sexual spousal violence with physical spousal violence. Women were often physically assaulted for refusing sex or for not paying a dowry or failing to bring additional resources from their family or for asking their husband for money, or failing to ask his permission before spending money, or failing to give him accounts.

Villagers consider it a wife's duty to satisfy the sexual needs of the husband. Such beliefs are common both among women and men in patriarchal settings (Jewkes et al., 2011). Women often have sex with their husband out of fear even when they were unwilling. They are afraid of verbal and physical abuse.

They are also afraid that he will destroy household items, be aggressive towards their children, not provide for the family, obtain paid sex, start an extramarital relationship or marry again. They still refused to have sex at times, which often led to emotional and physical spousal violence and/or marital rape.

It is important to note that not all women experience spousal violence. One woman in our sample did not report any spousal violence, while 5 reported experiencing a single form of violence and 19 reported polyvictimisation (Hamby et al., 2017). These finding highlights the importance of studying polyvictimisation rather than a discrete form of violence, which impedes a fuller understanding of the experience of violence and how different forms

of violence overlap with each other. Male relatives have prerogative over male strangers to mix with women in their family.

Thus, they have ample opportunities to sexually abuse women and some use those opportunities. Male cousins, *dulabhai* (brother-in-law), uncles, even grandfathers from a women's family are recognized as the common perpetrators of such violence. In the marital family, *debor, bhashur* (husband's brothers), and father-in-law may sexually abuse women. This happens particularly when the husband works away from home.

Many women now have pre-marital affairs. Sometimes sexual relationship develops out of such encounters. Such a relationship may be consensual or coerced. Sometimes men lure a woman by promising to marry the her. Sometimes men blackmail women into sex by threatening to ruin her reputation by spreading stories about her or posting an audio recording or indecent photographs. If a woman gets pregnant from such relationship men often refuse to assume responsibility and force the woman to get an abortion. A few cases of gang rape that the boyfriend initiated were mentioned in the data.

Common types of sexual harassment women experience in these villages are sexual remarks, gestures, winking, whistling, touching, grabbing, men bumping or pressing against women, pinching, kissing, snatching *orhna*, etc. For college-going female students, sexual harassment on public transport is a special concern.

In educational institutions and the workplace, the teachers and supervisors are the most common perpetrators of sexual harassment. In both cases the power dynamics are in their favour. Their ability to harm discourages female students from continuing their education or a job. Women seem less concerned about sexual harassment by other students and co-workers.

The conceptual framework for VAW that emerges from this qualitative data lends support to the ecological framework (Heise, 1998). The key drivers of VAW are generally common across the villages surveyed. They are an overwhelming power imbalance between men and women; the total economic dependence of women on men; patriarchal attitudes condoning violence; expectations that men will control women and ensure their conformity to patriarchal social norms; a belief that women will obey men; and when necessary men will punish women using violence.

Patriarchal attitudes among the wife's family and the in-laws, socioeconomic status, social capital and the level of support to a woman contribute to VAW. The individual attributes of the perpetrator and victim such as age, education, patriarchal attitudes and social capital also contribute to VAW. These findings are in line with the ecological model of VAW (Heise, 1998).

Villages from Bogura seem to be less conservative compared to villages from Cumilla and Patuakhali in relation to women's *pardah* norms, education and outside employment. Our data suggests, except for economic spousal VAW, that other forms of spousal VAW are less common in Bogura than in the other two districts. The greater reporting of economic spousal VAW in Bogura may be linked to the fact that more women in Bogura earn an income. However, we are unable to draw any conclusion or generalise these findings due to our small sample size.

The most common recommendations for preventing VAW elicited from the participants of the survey included the following: imposing greater control and restrictions over women; segregating them from the outside world and from men; and making them conform to patriarchal social norms. Some radical recommendations for addressing VAW emerged from Bogura in particular. Those were: empowering women, abolishing the dowry practice, improving the couple's communication, taking legal measures and undertaking joint

initiatives on behalf of communities, families and women.

Suggestions for addressing non-spousal VAW were passing laws prohibiting such violence; joint initiatives taken by the government and the NGOs; empowerment of women to enable them to protect themselves and to protest against such violence; and sensitizing the perpetrators and other stakeholders.

This survey gave rapid assessment of violence against women conducted in six villages from three different districts of Bangladesh involving 21 days of data collection. It was an overambitious study as it aimed to explore a wide range of VAW within a very short period of time. It is well known that women have a low employment rate in rural Bangladesh. Also, many of the women earning an income are engaged in home-based activities. Therefore, despite our attempt to over sample working women, most of them were not suitable for exploring workplace violence. We failed to arrange FGDs with unmarried women during our short stay in Cumilla,

Despite its limitations, this study shows that women from the villages surveyed are vulnerable to multiple forms of violence from manifold actors within and outside home. Despite many changes in gender norms and practices witnessed in these villages over time, (e.g. in women's education, employment and mobility), the patriarchal ideologies (i.e. beliefs and attitudes) are still resisting these changes and penalizing women by using violence. This is a gross violation of women's rights and a great impediment to the development of women's full potential. The main drivers of these different types of VAW are the same patriarchal social norms, which assign women a lower status compared to men and create a space for women's vulnerability to violence. In order to prevent VAW it is imperative to address patriarchal social norms, to confront the ideologies that subjugate women and to empower both women and men to address VAW.

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In April 2018, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) started the project entitled “Combating Gender-Based Violence in Bangladesh” (CGBV project) with funding from the Government of Canada.

The CGBV project recognizes that prevention of violence requires sustained and comprehensive action at individual, family, organizations and societal levels to challenge existing social norms and beliefs that confer an inferior status to women, enhance women’s and girls’ self-esteem and confidence, and transform masculinities. Therefore, CGBV intends to create a holistic framework of integrated and mutually reinforcing interventions to address the underlying causes and drivers of violence against women and girls; make duty bearers accountable to comply with international and national obligations addressing violence against women and promote their equal status in the society.

Simultaneously, CGBV will enhance the capacity of civil society to advocate and influence policies for a violence free society and strengthen women’s voice and agency. Furthermore, CGBV will engage and partner with district-based and high-level leadership of key institutions such as local government, civil society organizations, women’s organizations, education institutions and workplaces. This will foster ownership and buy-in of key local stakeholders, as well as sustainability. The Project is aligned with the Bangladesh’s 7th Five Year Plan and the National Women Development Policy. CGBV results will accelerate the progress on Agenda 2030 and the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).



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