

## Domestic Violence Against Women: Observations from the Field

Mushrat Jahan<sup>1</sup>

Argina Akter<sup>2</sup>

**Abstract:** This paper is concerned with the patterns, structure, and implications of domestic violence against women in some areas of Gazipur and Tangail district of Bangladesh. Domestic violence against women is being increased as a type of inequality and violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms.. Women in different classes are facing various forms of domestic violence such as dowry, marital conflict, assault, are common characteristics of domestic violence among these women. Along with patriarchal social structure, cultural and religious dogma, superstitions, economic and educational backwardness are some major factors that are contributing to induce domestic violence. The ultimate impact of domestic abuse is social, physical, mental, economic and sexual.

**Keywords:** Domestic Violence, Patriarchy, Psychological and Sociological effects

### 1. Introduction

Domestic violence is a widespread and significant societal ailment that affects both industrialized and developing countries. In the last decade, every country faced this horrific and continuous domestic violence. According to a study (Bhuyia, 2003), the character and types of domestic violence against women are growing in proportion to the increase in population. Martin et al. (1999) compiled data from a variety of research that revealed alarming proportions of domestic violence in several nations. According to Martin et al., (1999) in Sri Lanka, husbands were responsible for 60% of all female killings. In Bangladesh, husbands are killing wives accounting for half of all female murders, one out of every three women in Mexico is a victim of family domestic violence, 50% of women in Bangkok's largest slum and 60% of women from both poor and elite groups in Papua New Guinea are beaten regularly. In Bangladesh, the situation is considerably worse, half of women reporting that their spouses had mistreated them. Women have to "adapt" to all types of domestic violence as bearers of ideal Bengalese values. Even though women are discriminated in every way, they continue to work and fulfil their roles as housekeepers, care givers of children and family members. When males lose their jobs, they vent their frustrations on women. Domestic violence against women, such as physical assault, rape, sexual abuse, and dowry-related torture and murder, is common in Bangladesh, although it goes unnoticed. Furthermore, data is scarce, and research on the magnitude and patterns of marital violence is lacking. Even little is known about the implications for women's lives, physical and mental health.

The concept 'domestic' refers to the house or residence of the family members, where the house is considered a secured place for all member of the unit. The image of a family consist of few member who are bonded to each other through blood, affinal and other terms. The term 'domestic violence' refers to some incidents which is considered

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<sup>1</sup> Assistant Professor, Dept. of Anthropology, Jagannath University, Dhaka-1100, Bangladesh.  
Email: tagor.monalisa@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup> Research Assitant, SID Foundation, Dhaka

unexpected within the family structure and inside the house while the members are devoted to provide love and affection to each other. Women as a vulnerable group become the the sufferers of violence that takes place within the house or the family structure. In this case a house might be the least reliable place for women in compare the opposite gender. Social scientists refers many synonyms and familiar terms of domestic violence such as domestic abuse, spousal violence (mostly by male to his female spouse), abuse of women (or women abuse), partner assault (mostly by male partner to his female partner), intimate partner violence/abuse, intimate fighting, wife-beating/ wife assault /wife assault, mate beating, conjugal violence, conjugal abuse, etc. The relationship among the family members are also the subject matter of few terms such as family violence (where one or more family members are engaged in the incidents), marital violence, marital disputes/ marital discord, etc.

In socio-economic and political views, patriarchy is a mechanism of interactions, ideas, and values that organizes gender disparity between males and females. Both the private and public realms are structured by patriarchal norms, assuring that men govern in all sectors. a social structure in which men wield authority as a result of cultural norms and customs that benefit men and limit women's opportunities (Catherine 2019).

This paper will focus on the domestic violence on women. The issues that have been considered here are, i) to analyze the different categories of violence, ii) to look for the psychological and sociological effects of domestic violence on women, iii) to explore the causes and impacts of violence against women. It focused on the various categories of victims and how women in the study areas become victims as well as learning more about the causal factors of domestic abuse on women.

## 2. Review of Literature

Domestic violence is often employed as a means of control, asserting one family member's dominance over the others. This violence, on the other hand, stems from inequity inside marriage and perpetuates male supremacy and female submission both inside and outside the house (Yllö, 2005). Many sorts of abuse have been classified as domestic violence by various academics, activists, and theorists who have researched and worked with abused women. Domestic violence is described as a pattern of conduct in a relationship in which the one uses a variety of strategies to try to control the victim. Fear and hate, any type of abuse, destruction of property, segregation and confinement, economic abuse, and severe expectations of sex roles are examples of these approaches (Postmus, 2000 cited in Johnson, 2008).

In Bangladesh, patriarchal capitalism places women in such a low position within their society that they are always submissive to male dominance, which is sometimes shown through abuse (Hadi, 2009). As a result, a woman is more likely to be subjected to domestic violence inside her family, and it is unsurprising that if she is not able to fulfil his dowry expectations or complete household chores, the husband seems to be more likely to abuse and/or assault her. Khan (2015) also said that despite the insufficient statistics on numerous types of violence against women in Bangladesh, it is obvious that domestic violence is the most pervasive problem for women here. Home is a site of agony and humiliation for many women, and violence is an everyday occurrence. Schular and Islam (2008) took a different approach, investigating the presence of physical abuse

in marriage in six rural communities using both quantitative and qualitative methods. According to the findings, 67 percent of women "have ever" suffered physical assault. Furthermore, the researchers discovered that having no other choice, women must accept their partner's violence as an unavoidable aspect of their marital life.

Women are prone to domestic abuse since they have no other choice but to marry and are completely reliant on their husbands in every way. According to researchers, domestic violence is linked to several personal, spousal, and social characteristics. They claimed, domestic violence against women, is sometimes related to women's specific characteristics such as age, schooling, financial flexibility, autonomy, previous record of violence, and familial history of violence (Farouk, 2005). Violence against women is the most obvious gender-specific violence of Human Rights, and is a form of discrimination against women (CEDAW, 1993). It enforces women's subordination and patriarchal structures throughout all levels of society, leading to issues such as the undervaluation of women's economic contributions.

Violence against Women is not only embedded in gender norms, it constitutes both culturally and politically. The "low status of women economically, socially, culturally and politically both constitutes and enables the further denial of human rights in gender-specific ways, often at the hands of family members, male and female" (Reilly, 2009). Thus, Violence against Women both reflects and determines gendered social structure (McMillan, 2007). That is why, framing violence against Women as a Human Rights violation requiring immediate action. It is crucial to challenge the economic, social and cultural marginalization of women in Bangladesh (Wiegand, 2012).

According to the CEDAW report (1979), the 'violence against women conflicts with the basic Human Rights established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNHR) in 1948 and other document like the International Convention on Civil Political Rights. Such violence denies women's right to life (ICCPR Article 6); right to be free from discrimination; right to health; right to bodily integrity; right to privacy; the right not to be subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment (ICCPR Article 7); the right to liberty and security of person (ICCPR Article 9); and the right to be free from all kinds of violence including sexual violence. Early marriage and pregnancy are also violations of the rights of the female child to equal opportunities in education and training' (Wiegand, 2012). According to Human Rights Watch (2020), violence against women almost always goes unpunished in Bangladesh. It says South Asian nations are working toward eliminating domestic abuse by 2015, while the Bangladesh government facing a lack of judicial consequences (Chowdhury, 2007). During the COVID-19 Pandemic, the incidents of violence against Women increased instead of being eliminated that reported by WHO (2021). The COVID-19 Pandemic extended the risk of violence against women a double blow to women in many countries, making them even more vulnerable (UN Women, 2021).

Women often believe the male domination is normal and they should accept it for their own betterment. The males rule women for the familial prosperity. Social protest and eliminating gender stereotyping can reduce the acceptability of such violence (OHCHR, 2014). The patriarchal socio-cultural system induce the subjugation of women. Violence against women requires state and non-state actions through specific programs, politics and regulations. More specifically, it is the responsibility of the state to eradicate all

forms of violence against women and protect women through policy and legal action. Public policies constitute state action through programs designed for specific sectors of society (Begum, 2022) .

To state an individual Feminism is the recognition of patriarchal dominance, exploitation, and oppression in the home, at work, in society, and the state as a whole. This is essentially a fight for women's equality both at home and in the workplace. According to feminist theory, patriarchy is the root cause of all violence against women. Domestic violence has become a topic of concern in recent decades, especially since the rise of the feminist school in the 1960s and 1970s. Patriarchy was regarded as the sole cause of all types of violence against women in the social framework that primarily promotes violence in early modern feminist work. (Perin, 2019). According to Sylvia Walby (1990), patriarchy is a social framework in which "*males rule, exploit, and abuse women*". As a result, patriarchy encourages men and women to have hierarchical and unequal power relationships, with women being treated as second-class citizens. Moreover, many religious feminists claim that patriarchy is the primary reason for abuse against women. Similarly, Fardosh (2013) claimed that "*domestic violence against women is rooted in and is the natural result of core patriarchal notions about women's subservient status*".

### 3. Methodological Considerations

This paper is based on fieldwork in Gazipur and Tangail. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used in field research. Both primary and secondary data have been gathered. Primary data gathered from various socioeconomic classes of women who had been victims of domestic abuse. Different techniques like a semi-structured questionnaire survey, Focus Group Discussion (FGD), case study methods have been applied to collect data about their events and experiences. 15 interviews were conducted to understand the experience of women facing domestic violence.

The total number of respondents were 50. It is found from the study that 30% percent of those who responded were between the ages of 15 and 25 years, 40% percent were between the ages of 26 and 35, 20% percent were between the ages of 36 and 45, and 10% percent were between the ages of 46 and above. The marital status of victims that 50% were married, 10% were unmarried, 20% were a widow and 20% were divorced. Among the respondents, most of the victims were married and to keep their marriage, they were always faced with physical, mental violence and endure various forms of domestic violence. They think that breaking a marriage is a shameful matter to society and in the eye of their family; divorced women have been shown in a very bad way.

Among the respondents, 16% were illiterate, 30% had a primary education, 30% had completed their secondary level, 20% had a higher secondary level and only 4% had a graduate level education. From this it is shown that most of the victims have primary and secondary levels of educational qualification. Behind the reason for this inverted situation of the educational level is the social construction of belief and moral systems. Regarding the occupation of victims, 20% were housewives, 6% were students, 40% were garments workers, 30% were maidservants and only 4% were others.

Most of the victims were garments workers in the semi-urban area along with the industrial zone where most of the respondents have been migrated from the rural areas

and work in the garments. In case of socioeconomic status of the victims, 70% belonged to the lower status, 20% belonged to the middle and 10% were the higher status. As, most of the victims were less educated and garment workers, it's easily understood that most of the victims belonged to the lower socioeconomic status.

#### **4. Forms of Domestic Violence Against Women**

Gender violence, namely violence against women, is now defined very broadly to include anything “involving use of force/coercion with an intent of perpetuation/promotion of hierarchical gender-relations in all social structure such as in the family, community, workplace and society” (ADWLD,1990). The United Nations Commission of the Status of Women defined violence against women as “any act that result in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women” (1993). Domestic Abuse, also called domestic violence or intimate partner violence, can be defined as a pattern of behaviors in any relationship that is used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner. According to the findings, women in the study are subjected to various forms of domestic abuse, which differs according to social status. For example, numerous types of domestic abuse such as physical, psychological, sexual, and economic aggression exist among the lower socioenomic groups.

Physical violence has many forms including assaulting during pregnancy, striking, slapping, forced abortion, shoving, beating, gripping, and separating in closed room.. Women are subjected to psychological types of domestic abuse, such as admonishing by partners or other family members, ferocious attitudes by spouses, the danger of physical domestic violence, and the fear of being split by husbands. Moreover, economic forms of marital abuse exist among the lower class women, such as persistent pressure to bring money from the parental residence, and refusal to pay the cost of family upkeep. On the other hand, numerous sorts of domestic violence exist among the middle and lower social classes in the case of physical, mental, sexual, and financial aggression. Women are experiencing physical violence includes hitting, shoving, grabbing, strangling, menacing or using a weapon, assaulting during pregnancy, and refusing to allow access to medical assistance. Apart from this, these social classes also experience physical violence such as rebuking by husbands and in-laws, husbands' violent behaviour, abandonment, neglecting wives, restricting mobility, etc. Along with physical and psychological domestic violence, sexual violence is found there such as forceful physical or sexual intercourse and spousal rape. Physical, psychological, sexual and economic violence are also found among the upper social class of women. The threat of physical domestic violence, emotional abuse, controlling by both husbands and in-laws, restricting freedom, rebuking in an open place, ignoring wives, the threat of divorce by husbands which forms of psychological domestic violence are seen among the upper class. Moreover, imposed on prostitution, forcefully rape is the usual scenario for the victim of upper-class women. Dowry demand is severely found in the upper class which is very much surprising.

#### **5. Factors associated with domestic violence**

Many reasons have been discovered behind the different types of domestic violence against women according to social class, For upper class, the common features are second marriage, extramarital relations of husbands, excessive drug addiction, gambling passion, wives having a connection with paternal family, the patriarchal mindset of both

partners, etc. On the other hand, similar issues have been found those are contributing to domestic violence against women in the middle social class. Besides these, there are some reasons like infidelity of husbands, not having the capacity to give birth to the child, sickness of wives, paternalistic mentality of both the parents and distrust towards wives. The patriarchal mind of husbands, superiority complex of husbands, etc. are working severely behind the domestic violence against women in the middle class.

Likely upper class and middle-class different reasons are creating domestic violence against women among the lower class. As most of the participants (70%) of the study are belonging to the lower class and many of them are working in garments industries and maidservants and migration is a major part of their life and many of them are sufferings in living their life, domestic violence added new suffering to lead their life. Dowry demand or money demand is the main reason behind their distressed life and many participants' husbands married twice or more to get dowry. Many informants' husbands have a habit of gambling and being drug-addicted. Their husbands come home addicted, they were tortured, even snatching their money.

Domestic violence affects people of all social classes in various ways, ranging from physical abuse to financial loss. However, relatively low-class women face more economic hardships than others, while psychological distress is widespread across all social groups. Physical torture is more prevalent in the lowest and upper classes than in the middle class. Domestic violence is more common in a male-dominated society for a variety of reasons, the most common of which is a patriarchal attitude. Lack of education, economic insolvency motivate physical or psychological torture.

#### **i) Gender Identity and Power Relations**

There is no region, community or country in the world, where women's freedom from domestic abuse has been secured. Domestic violence against women exists across social, cultural, racial, socioeconomic, and religious lines. The roles of women and men are socially created, defined and perpetuated throughout history, with men wielding control and influence on women. Patriarchy has infiltrated society and culture from an ideological perspective. It is based on the legal and political framework, as well as local and global economics. Patriarchy is defined by the intersection of several elements, including colonialism and post-colonial dominance histories, dislocation, and migration, as evidenced by the findings of this research. Economic status, race, class, age, ethnicity, religion, disability, country, culture, and other factors influence its manifestations. A woman is victimized by family violence and is bound by family norms in this situation.

#### **Case 1**

*Khadija (33), is a housewife, who completed her graduate degree. She had an accidental wedding in 2010 throughout her graduating period. Khadija found out her husband Ruhul had premarital and extramarital affairs, as well as other undesirable behaviours, a few months later of marriage. Though she initially accepted it as her luck. There was no change was seen there, even after having a child. Ratul insisted on dowry money frequently, and she was forced to sell all of her belongings. He spent his income for drugs instead of domestic expenses. She eventually became dissatisfied and wanted to be separated. She was unable to do so due to her parental family's*

*opposition. Khadija and her family were publically humiliated by him. All her living cost beared by her parental family.*

### **Case 1**

*Kushum (a garment worker, 40) insisted on a boss-peon relationship in the home between her and her husband. Her spouse tries to manage her by keeping her occupied with domestic activities. She claimed she was terrified to speak with her spouse because he abused her physically and emotionally for no reason. She said “ at the very early stage, I was tried to stop him during torturing but gradually I realise it increases the limit of his torture. So I didn't protect myself.” Her in-laws, too, feel that the husband should beat the wife. Kushum embraced everything, considering her paternal family's condition, her parents' health, her daughter's future, and her social standing. She was unable to communicate anything with her family members and friends due to her concern about her family's and her social image. Kushum divorced her husband a few months ago and strived with her only daughter to exist with honour and without any types of domestic violence. Her parental family is not able or not interested to support financially. So, She earn to herself and lives separately with her daughter in a ented house. She does not want what happened to her and to her daughter. That's why she admitted her daughter a good school to study very well, grow up and stand on his own feet and courage to protest injustice.*

The two cases shows us that the patriarchal concept of power over the wife as a subordinate exists. Men and women have a strong relationship in which the individual, family, and society acknowledge man's dominance over woman. It has become necessary for the husband to beat his wife to display his masculinity and to maintain the patriarchal concept. The sole indication mechanism for them is dominance and control over women.

### **ii) Cultural explanation for accepting violence**

Some cultural values norms and practices raise women's power and develop their human rights, values, and status on the one hand and some cultural norms have been identified as possible causes of domestic violence against women, such as child marriage, the dowry system, and the prohibition of women going outside of the home, among other things on the other. The culture of each society shapes social behaviour, and influences the majority of domestic violence expressions. However, the unique correlation between culture and domestic violence against women is clarified based on distinct historical and geographic situations. Culture is always being generated and reformed through mechanisms of technical and conceptual change on a local and global scale, and the ability to change is a requirement for the survival of cultural identities and ideologies.

### **iii) Women's Economic discrepancies**

Domestic violence against women is exacerbated by economic inequities, which exist both as a result of individual acts of abuse and as a result of broader economic trends. These types of economic inequalities can be observed in a variety of classes and social positions. Women's economic inequalities and discrimination against women in the sectors of employment, income, economic resources, limitations of economic independence decrease the ability of women to act, take decisions and improve their

vulnerability to domestic violence. Due to the lack of economic empowerment, they have little control and access over financial means such as private property, earnings, and land, and making them more vulnerable to domestic abuse. Domestic violence against women in the family is also exacerbated by the loss of women's authority over wealth and resources such as household income. But it was revealed that the income alone cannot empower women, it can improve their ability to make decisions such as accessing protection and recourse procedures.

#### **iv) Health Consequences of Violence**

Women are more prone to suffer from faulty physical and reproductive health as a result of domestic abuse. Domestic abuse has substantial mental health and social functioning problems in addition to physical and reproductive health. Many spouses assault and abuse their wives as a result of drug addiction and bad habits. Those domestic violence influence a large number of women to suicide attempts, facing post-traumatic stress, psychological disorder, and physical injury.

Furthermore, injuries, disfigurement, and chronic medical conditions such as severe pain and digestive problems, sexually transmitted infections, unintended pregnancies, and other gynaecological impacts such as pelvic pain, bladder infections are common physical health implications of domestic abuse against women. Women who had suffered from domestic abuse had a greater likelihood of unwanted pregnancy, which can lead to miscarriages, desperation, and behavioural actions such as social exclusion, marginalisation, or even killings. Domestic abuse against women can lead to pilonidal tumours, hypertrophic marks, infant death rates, and sterility in the long run. Some informants have had both mental and bodily ramifications as a result of their actions. One of the most typical results of domestic female abuse is desperation.

#### **v) Social Impacts**

Domestic violence against women prevents women from participating socioeconomic activities in their surroundings. Women being constantly subjected to domestic abuse are hesitant to mix with other members of their society and are subjected to a slew of uncomfortable questions, whereas men are not subjected to such situations because society is structured around patriarchal ideology. Here men's position remains at the top and they have complete power over women. Because of accusations from men, many women have dropped out of community development projects. According to research, domestic abuse against women in the home and social violence are intimately linked. The mental development of many of these children who see domestic violence among their parents is impaired, and they suffer from sadness and become traumatized. They do not give full attention to their study and their behaviour become also violent.

### **6. Conclusion**

Domestic abuse against women has been a major concern in Bangladesh, as a large number of women in our society and culture are prone to abuse. As our society's policy, practices and social structure are based on patriarchal ideology, the implications include social, economic, psychological, and sexual. To get rid of this position, women first should make a stand against this practice. Generally, one could wonder why they remain mute and do not voice. The entire socio-cultural milieu in which women have been accustomed to anything and everything has made a great contribution to this situation.



The family is considered as the most nurturing and safe environment for women but it becomes a source of extortion, prejudice, and hardship. This binary features contribute to increased domestic abuse against women. In instances of marriage and family disputes, society blames women and makes them pay for failing to develop a strong family institution. Another factor contributes to the problem is that women cannot believe they have few options other than to stay with their spouses. Furthermore, in the majority of cases, women's parental families do not assist them during this difficult time and push them to comply with their in-laws' regulations. Women suffer from domestic violence since they are powerless in the family. According to socio-biological theory, women are regarded as less competent in economic work, and their status in the family has always been minor to men. Our socio-cultural belief system is mostly to blame for all forms of domestic abuse against women, as well as for allowing men to exercise authority and control over women. In addition, patriarchal ideology should be modified to put women in this society and culture in a stronger place and a more revised approach. To change the condition of women in families and society, a holistic awareness campaign involving all family members should be implemented at the family level.

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