



GLOBAL JOURNAL OF HUMAN-SOCIAL SCIENCE: C
SOCIOLOGY & CULTURE
Volume 16 Issue 6 Version 1.0 Year 2016
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Publisher: Global Journals Inc. (USA)
Online ISSN: 2249-460X & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

Trends and Patterns of Violence Against Women in Bangladesh

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GJHSS-C Classification : FOR Code: 370199



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Trends and Patterns of Violence Against Women in Bangladesh

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Abstract- Women throughout the world face different forms of violence in their day to day life from domestic sphere to public sphere ranging from psychological abuse to physical torture and even death. Domestic violence is the most common form of VAW in Bangladesh, the recent trend of which shows that battering type violence followed a slacken slope while dowry related violence is on increase yet, pushed by psychological violence. In public sphere, though Acid, and Fatwa and Illegal Arbitration related violence are on decrease, sexual violence and harassment are on increase, kindling by trafficking and negative use of various media. The most heinous situation is on commute to work and workplace where women workers often become the victim of differential violence including rape with no record. The paper recommends accurate maintenance of violence data with awareness program and proper implementation of existed laws for the emancipation of women.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Violence against Women is a common phenomenon throughout the world though the nature and extensity vary from country to country, the worst atrocity of which may be followed in developing to least developed countries with least recognized as infringement of human rights. Violence knows no boundaries of geography, wealth or culture and as long as it continues, no nation can claim to be making real progress towards development, equality and peace in the world (Annan, 1999 cited from Khatun and Rahman, 2012). WHO found that 35 percent of women worldwide have experienced either intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence whereas, 38 percent of murders of women are committed by an intimate partner (Begum, 2014). VAW in Bangladesh is not new, got its supremacy at the very end of the 20th century but harmful and discriminatory practices against women are dominant yet that rooted in traditional patriarchal social norms. Unfortunately, despite magnificent history of women's freedom commotion and noticeable achievements in women's development filed, incidences of violence against women are still burning issues (Hossain, 2016), especially in Bangladesh. Considering VAW, the government of Bangladesh has enacted various laws, legislations, and policies; sanctioned numerous conventions, guaranteed constitutional rights; numerous NGOs are working to safeguard women rights and empowerment; yet the

trend, in some cases, is on increase. Even perpetrators often go unpunished by legal jurisdiction as victim not seek legal remedies to become superfluous stigmatized by the society. BNWLA reported that victim dares not file complaints fearing negligence and harassment in police station, courts, and society while the members of the police, in most cases, look down upon the oppressed women and will not to take their complaints unless they are pushed from a higher authority (Basu & Jaising, 2005).

II. METHODOLOGY

Hundreds of studies have been carried out marking VAW in Bangladesh since independence but poor concentration was put to analyze its long-term trends, almost left this segment to the dark. Hence the overall objective of this study is to critically review and sketch the trend of VAW in Bangladesh with suggestive measures. Basically 2001 to 2015 VAW recorded data, especially from documentations unit, annual reports, and human rights reports of numerous NGOs working with women have been collected and analyzed in three phases (2001 to 2005, 2006 to 2010, and 2011 to 2015) through statistical methods, and finally presented in report using Microsoft Excel to look into the trend of VAW and in depicting real pictures. Comprehensive literatures on VAW in Bangladesh were also reviewed from various published sources. Additionally, 10 In-depth Interviews (IDI) were carried out on employed women, excluding administrative professionals as they are less susceptible to violence in workplace and commute to work, and placed as primary data to this research.

III. FINDINGS

Violence in family sphere was not considered as problematic issue till 1960s due to cultural norms but the second wave of feminist's movement in United State after 1970s provided major contribution in this direction (Kelmendi, 2013). On the contrary, woman's lower socioeconomic background made their position less authoritative in comparison to their male counterparts and that is why many new jobs have been created and the access of women increased in the apparel industries of Bangladesh since 1980s (Al-Amin & Hoque, 2015). The access of women in job market boosted at the very end of 20th century followed by differential violence in commute to work and workplace. Hence the trend of

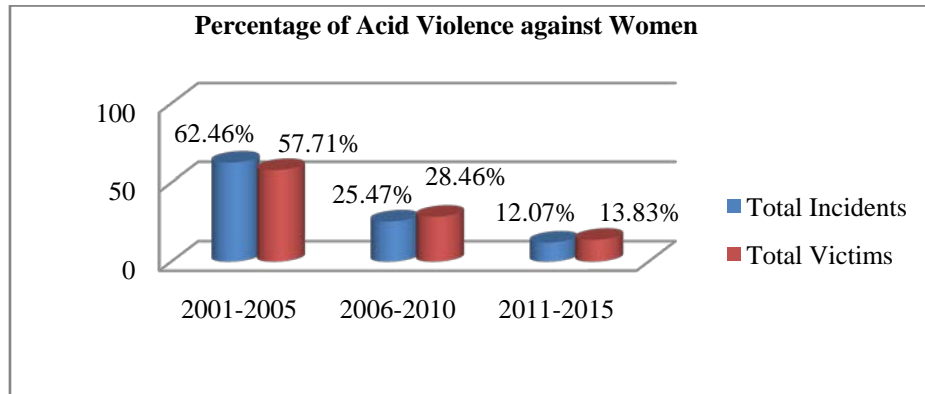
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public sphere violence, violence in commute to work and workplace, and domestic violence get place in this study.

IV. VIOLENCE IN PUBLIC SPHERE

Acid Violence: Basu & Jaising (2005) identified acid violence as popularized crime in between 2001 to 2005 in Bangladesh depicting its use as a means of revenge by rejected suitors since 1980. Nowadays, the slope of

acid victimization in Bangladesh is diminishing day by day. The documentation unit of Acid Survivors, a renowned NGO of Bangladesh, documented total of 2898 incidents of acid attack from 2001 to 2015 where the number of total victims were 3254. Figure 1 shows that the percentages of acid victims from 2001 to 2005 and 2006 to 2010 were more than four times and two times higher consecutively in comparison to the total victim of 2011 to 2015.

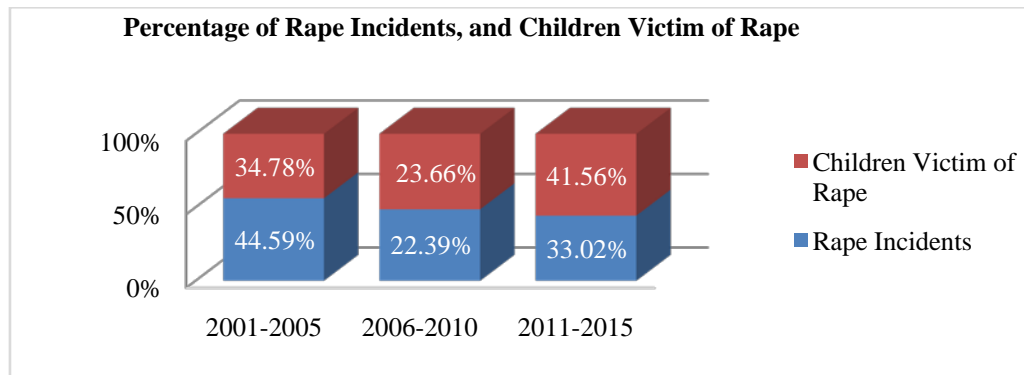


Source: Documentation Unit 2001 to 2015, Acid Survivors Foundation

Figure 1: Acid Violence against Women

Rape: Rape cases underreported due to the fear of losing family admiration and even not being approached to marriage (Chowdhuri, 2007). Following figure 2 shows that in last five years, as recorded by the statistics unit of Odhikar (2001 to 2015), the percentages of rape victim increased 10.61 percent in comparison to its previous

five years though the slope diminished in comparison to 2001 to 2005. Disproportionally, increase of child rape incidents is a thought-provoking matter that went up to 12 percent in last five years in comparison to the incidents of 2001 to 2010.



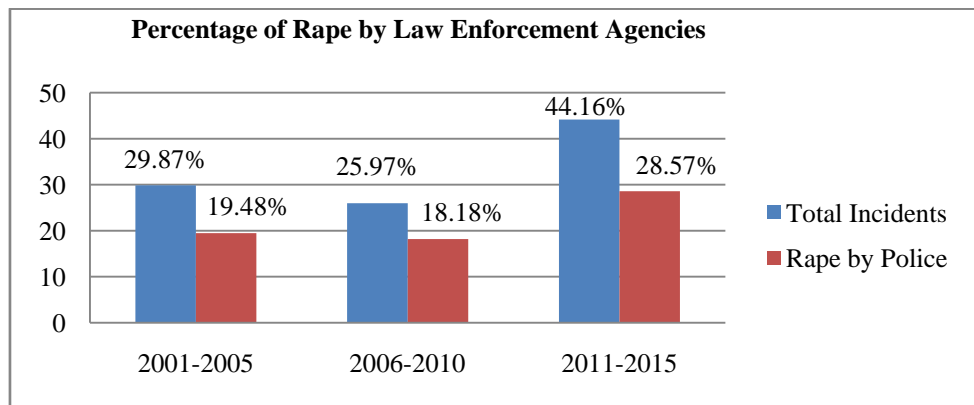
Source: Statistics Unit on Rape 2001 to 2015, Odhikar.

Figure 2: Rape Incidents, and Children Victim of Rape

Rape by Law Enforcement Agencies: Rape by law enforcement agencies is surprisingly uprising in Bangladesh who being the safeguard to women. Figure 3 shows that the statistics unit of Odhikar (2001 to 2015) has documented 77 rape incidents committed by law enforcement agencies from 2001 to 2015 reporting 44.16 from 2011 to 2015, that is 14.29 percent and 18.19 percent higher in comparison to the incidents of 2006 to 2010 and 2001 to 2005 successively. Rape is the second most common form of violence among police (Chowdhuri, 2007). It can be predicted that

women are the most vulnerable to Police yet bearing 66.23 percent from grand total law enforcement agency rapes committed by them.

One of the respondents stated, "In all cases I am not safe to the police as they rarely come forward to help me and very often avoid feigning not to see me in time of crisis moment".

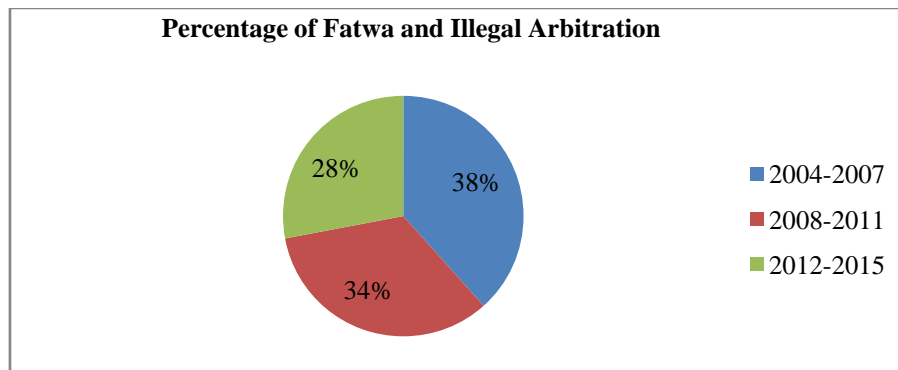


Source: Statistics Unit on Rape by Law Enforcement Agency 2001 to 2015, Odhikar.

Figure 3: Rape by Law Enforcement Agencies

Fatwa and Illegal Arbitration: Mannan (2002) identified 'Fatwa' as a form of VAW in 2002. Figure 4 shows that fatwa and illegal arbitration related violence followed by slacken slope today, as documented by Ain o Salish Kendra (in their documentation unit of 2013 to 2015, Human Rights- HR report of 2007, and annual report of

2011 and 2012), that reached to 28 percent in last four years from 38 percent from 2004 to 2007, though Odhikar traced, of total 08 years violence, only 9.24 percent Fatwa and illegal arbitration related violence placed in last four years.



Sources: Documentation Unit 2013 to 2015, HR Report 2007, Annual Report 2011 to 2012, Aino Salish Kendra

Figure 4: Fatwa and Illegal Arbitration Violence

Additionally unreported violence, as victims testament not to report, in public sphere include eve-teasing, harassment through social and electronic media, and trafficking for forced labor and prostitution outnumber the incidents of previous years.

V. VIOLENCE IN COMMUTE TO WORK

Violence in Commute to Work: Women's access into the employment market has made them more susceptible to various forms of violence as they went outside of home (Basu, & Jaising, 2005). Workers face harassment in commute to work regardless of their age. "During the day, offensive and suggestive comments and whistling from pedestrian, rickshaw pullers, storeowners as well as personnel and passengers on public busses are widespread" (Siddiqi, 2003, P-41). Data shows that the conductor and driver of public buses behaved roughly to 70 percent of women garment workers who used public bus (Paul-Majumdar and Begum, 2000). On the contrary, bus passengers- especially older males- also squeeze, shove, pinch, and made suggestive comments (Siddque, 2003).

One respondent narrated, "Boys are like dogs and they may bow-bow behind me like where is your house, what's about your family, very rare cases what's your rate or how much will you go for! But it's not my duty to protest rather it is better walking droop along the route" while another respondent stated, "Incidents like usage slang, pinch, and whistling are normal. Stalkers may do whatever they like but it is not wise to protest".

Violence in Workplace: Workers in workplace accused linemen, supervisors, production managers, and line chiefs for various forms of physical abuse—slapping, pulling hair, hitting on the head, touching the body, stroking, and even kissing; where, non-verbal forms of harassment include staring, winking, whistling standing very close and pinching (Siddque, 2003). Women are more prone to violence in night shifts as supervisors may call them to a desolate area demanding talk them about work related mistakes (Chowdhuri, 2007), may escorted into deserted or darkened areas and assaulted (Siddque, 2003).

One woman said, "Once lineman was stalking me and suddenly touched my body. Then I addressed him as father

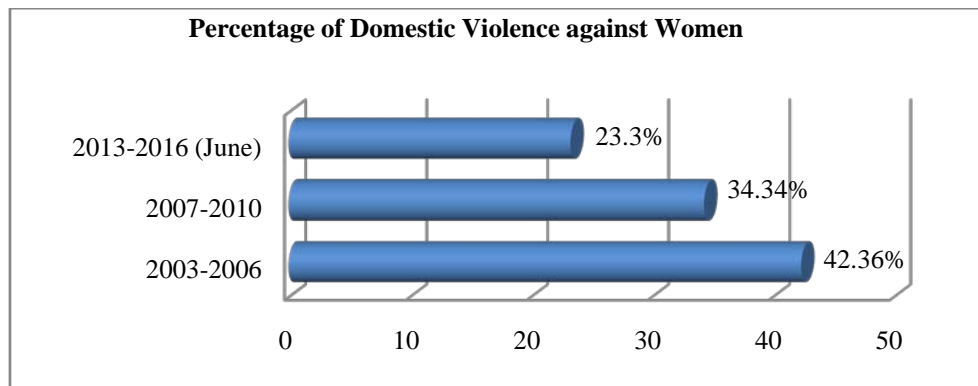
and then he let me go and assured not to do the same in future" where another woman described in the same ground, "Often bosses use slang in cases of mistakes and they cannot teach us without using slang. They also threaten us to terminate our jobs in cases of mistakes".

Nor organizations maintain a full-fledge report on workplace and commute violence, neither these incidents come out in public except rare cases. These incidents are tremendously rampant in our country day after day.

VI. VIOLENCE IN DOMESTIC SPHERE

Domestic Violence (DV): Domestic violence, especially wife battering, is perhaps the most extensive form of VAW in Bangladesh (Mannan, 2002). Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), a legal aid and human rights

organization, documented 6266 incidents on ground of DV on its documentation unit (2013 to 2016), HR report (2007, 2009, and 2010), and annual report (2010) that took place between 2003 to June-2016. Reported DV includes torture by husband and husbands' family, murder by husband and husbands' family members, murder by own relatives, and suicide etcetera. Figure 5 shows that incidents of DV are also knocking off day by day; reported 23.3 percent of total DV took place in between 2013 to June-2016 that is 12.04 and 19.06 percent lower in comparison to incidents of 2007 to 2010 and 2003 to 2006 consecutively. On the contrary, the matter of prostration is that murder by husband and husbands' family related DV incidents increased in comparison to previous years.



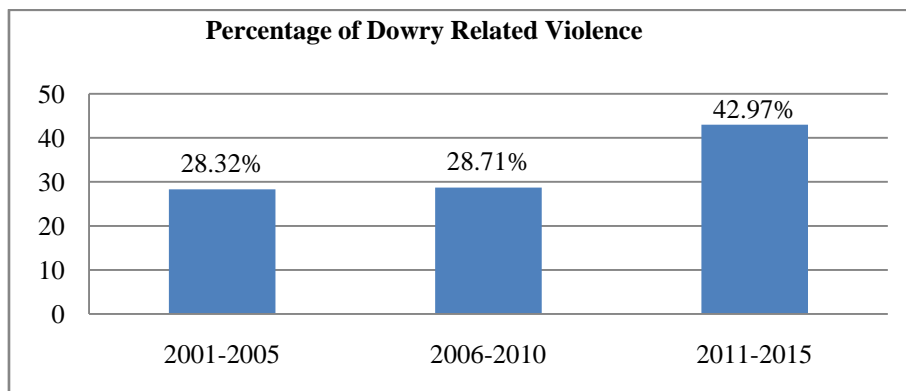
Sources: Documentation Unit 2013 to 2016, HR Report 2007 & 2009 to 2010, Annual Report 2010, Ain o Salish Kendra

Figure 5: Domestic Violence against Women (DVAW).

Dowry in Domestic Sphere: The practice of dowry demand was not deeply rooted in the tradition of Muslim but traced its origin as social evil since 2001 (Rozario, 2001). Odhikar, a leading human rights NGO of Bangladesh, documented 5151 dowry related violence on its documentation unit since 2001 to 2016. Though dowry in domestic sphere was traced out since many years before, resulted the enactment of dowry prohibition law in 1980, it is found out of control yet.

Figure 6 shows that in last five years, dowry related incidents increased more than 14 percent in average in comparison to the incidents of previous 10 years.

In describing Dowry demand, one of the respondents stated, "I had to give dowry to my husband in time of marriage. What I should say, I am asked yet to give more to him very often, even by his parents too. There is no end of their demands".



Source: Documentation Unit, Odhikar 2001-2015

Figure 6: Dowry Related Violence

Additionally women also face some other forms of violence in domestic sphere including child marriage, sexual harassment, and non-participation in decision making including pregnancy, abortion, and sterilization. On the contrary, in educated and wealthy family, psychological violence get new shapes including humiliation, dominance, threats, verbal abuse, denial and blame etcetera but all these forms of violence go unreported.

VII. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Firstly, accurate and systematic record on the incidents of VAW should be maintained by both governmental (police, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Women and Children Repression and Prevention Special Tribunal, Department of Women Affairs, and local government) and non-governmental organizations, and make available to masses to comprehend its trend and severity, might open the door of further researches. Secondly, workplace violence requires urgent and special concentration with measures while rape, eve-teasing; and of trafficking in public sphere; murder by husband and husbands family, dowry, and psychological aspects (require psychological counseling and treatment) in domestic sphere. Finally, legal and other initiatives i.e. castigating perpetrators (lifetime imprisonment in special cases) as well as motivation and awareness program are highly encouraged.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The overall trend show that some of the violence in family and public sphere are on decrease i.e. acid, fatwa, and suicide etcetera while rape, murder, and dowry related violence are on increase in the same sphere yet. Additionally, women often victimized by different sorts of violence in commute work and workplace but no proper records are maintained. In terms of measures addressing VAW, Bangladesh has enacted various laws, legislation, policies, and sanctioned numerous conventions to punish perpetrators. In the same way, many NGOs and women organizations also work to ensure the rights of women. The matter of exhaustion is that offenders often go unpunished yet as victims do not claim remedy or file any cases due to social stigma. Furthermore, corrupt police officials, less delegation of women in authoritative positions, parental tendency to put their girls to ferocious husband, illegal practices of politics, lack of proper record and documentations, and patriarchal family system kindling it. Sensitization of masses with awareness program, maintenance of proper record, transparency in police departments addressing patriarchy may lead to women's emancipation. Special attention requires in workplace challenging security, and safety in commute.

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