

Dowry Related Violence Against Rural Women in Bangladesh

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Abstract

The study was conducted at Tangail district in Bangladesh taking 108 dowry victimized women using purposive sampling method. There found 9.3% respondents were attempted to suicide, 5.6% suicide and 19.4% beating fellows for dowry related violence at their families in Tangail. About 56.5% violence caused by their husbands resulting 18.5% rebuke and 5.6% defrauded from freedom on the basis of the current study. Some 80.5% women felt insecurity giving liability of their fate in order to their prevailing gender identity in the society. 56.5% respondent's husbands were PSC level education achievers while 38.9% were businessmen in occupational continuation. An all out measure is essential to curb dowry related violence affecting the family to ensue an apt society in the country.

Keywords

Dowry, Violence, Rural Women, Bangladesh

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1. Introduction

Dowry is the transferring parental property at the marriage of a daughter [1], referred as the money, goods or estate that a wife brings to her husband at marriage [2] and it contrasts with bride price paid to the bride's parents and dower, which is property settled on the bride herself by their grooms at the time of marriage [3]. According to Section 2(j) of Anti-Women and Children Oppression Act (Amendment 2013), dowry means any money or material or any other property demanded from the party of the bride by the bridegroom or his parents or nay person on his behalf directly connected with the marriage or during the continuance thereof consideration for marriage or as a condition of continuing the marital relation or any money or article or any other property given or agreed to given by the party of the bride to the bridegroom, his parents or any person on his behalf directly connected with the marriage before or during the continuing the marital relation [4]. Dowry system is neither uncommon

nor a recent phenomenon in Bangladesh. This evil culture has been in practice since ancient period. History shows that, Dowry system emerged mainly in Hindu community and the most ancient institute of marriage in Vedic period was associated with 'Kanyadhana' which was gifts to virgin bride and 'Varadakshina' 'Stridhana' were voluntary gifts given by the bride's father to the groom, and voluntary gifts given by the relatives and others to bride respectively. In all, these were contributions to the groom and his family from the bride's side. It seems that the dowry system, as it practiced today was unknown in early period [5]. This unknown and willing practice of ancient period which was mostly prevalent in wealthier families now unfortunately transformed into the greed of dowry and struck to most ordinary families and has become an open secret demand for marriages [6] and thus dowry is accepted in the society through social custom in Bangladesh [7]. According to section 3 and 4 of Dowry Prohibition Act 1980, If any person, gives or takes or abets the giving or taking of dowry, he shall be punishable with imprisonment which may extend to five years and shall not be

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less than one year or with fine or with both and if any person demands directly or indirectly, from the parents or guardian of a bride or bridegroom, as the case may be, any dowry, he shall be punishable with imprisonment which may extend to five years and shall not be less than one year, or with fine or with both [8].

Violence against women is, collectively, violent acts that are primarily or exclusively committed against women. Sometimes considered a hate crime [9-11] and the most pervasive human rights violation, regardless of any distinction as to geography, culture or wealth, is a great concern for any society [12]. Bangladesh is no exception to this. At present violence against women has been increased in an alarming rate and one of the most common violence is for dowry demands. In recent years, dowry levels have risen to previously unforeseen levels. Although dowry demand is illegal under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act 2000 (amended in 2003) and the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1980 the practice still persists as a custom, especially in the rural areas of Bangladesh. As a consequence of unpaid dowry, women are tortured by their husbands and in-laws, burnt by acid or even murdered [13]. Despite the law against dowry, implemented 31 years ago, and the work of NGOs on women rights, legal awareness, the discussion of the consequences and disadvantages of dowry, it persists and the number of people practicing even increases [14]. Due to dowry related violence many women have been killed and the rest victimized by physical and mental abuses. Sometime husband alone or in collaboration with in laws or with the help of other family members torture and kill wives for failing the dowry demands. Dowry violence is the part of male's power implement. Dowry completely demolishes the dignity of women and makes them very helpless at their homes [15-17]. Therefore, the current study was conducted to assess multidimensional violence against women due to dowry at different places in Tangail, Bangladesh.

2. Methodology

2.1. Study Type

The study was a cross-sectional study.

2.2. Population Selection

There were taken a total of 108 dowry victimized women caused by violence at different places under Tangail District in Bangladesh.

2.3. Sampling Method

The non-probability (Purposive sampling) method was used to frame the dowry victims from the study places.

2.4. Data Collecting Techniques

A planned questionnaire was developed containing both the closed and open ended query to collect data through face-to-face interview with the respondents. The questionnaire was pretested in areas far away from the sample areas and revised according to the feedback gained in the field level. The questionnaire was formed to obtain the relevant information considering personal, household, social and economic details.

2.5. Data Verification

The questionnaire was checked per day taking the interview and gain these were carefully rechecked after collecting all the data and coded prior the entrancing into computer technology. The data was edited in case of sighting discrepancy (doubt entry, wrong entry etc.).

2.6. Statistical Analysis

The data were processed to undergo statistical analysis using SPSS 16 windows program. Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel were used to represent the tabular and chart icon.

3. Results

Among the total respondents, it was observed that 51.9% had education up to the PSC level while most of the respondents (40.7%) were housewives having monthly income of 63.9% respondents < 1500 BDT (Table 1).

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Parameters	Frequency	Percentage
Age (years)		
<15	4	3.7
15-30	77	71.3
30-45	26	24.1
>45	1	0.9
Educational qualification		
Illiterate	44	40.7
PSC	56	51.9
SSC	6	5.6
HSC	2	1.9
Occupation of the respondents		
Housewife	44	40.7
Student	6	5.6
Service holder	3	2.8
Maid	13	12.0
Day labour	16	14.8
Handicraft	17	15.7
Poultry firm	9	8.3
Monthly income (BDT)		
<1500	69	63.9
1501-3000	36	33.3
3001-4500	3	2.8

According to table 2, about 38.9% husbands of the respondents were businessmen while 56.5% were the PSC level education holders and 22.2% were in SSC level. Maximum respondents (88%) were resided in joint family and

monthly incomes of 48.1% family were 3000 to 3500 BDT.

Table 2. Conjugal status of the respondents.

Parameters	Frequency	Percentage
Husband's education		
Illiterate	11	10.2
PSC	61	56.5
SSC	24	22.2
HSC	12	11.1
Husband's occupations		
Service holder	9	8.3
Businessman	42	38.9
Labour	35	32.4
Farmer	19	17.6
Unemployment	3	2.8
Family type		
Nuclear	10	9.3
Joint	95	88.0
Extended	3	2.8
Monthly income of the family (BDT)		
500-2000	13	12.0
2000-3500	22	20.4
3500-5000	52	48.1
5000-6500	21	19.4

There were 32.4% respondents found to torture while 19.4% by beating and 22.2 by insulting. It is also observed most of them (56.5%) were tortured by their husband (Table 3).

Table 3. Violence dimension.

Parameters	Frequency	Percentage
Nature of violence		
Torture	35	32.4
Harassment	18	16.7
Exploitation	14	13.0
Pressure for illegal act	25	23.1
Attempt to suicide	10	9.3
Suicide	6	5.6
Type of torture		
Beating	21	19.4
Rebuke	20	18.5
Deprivation	12	11.1
Insult	24	22.2
Impute to fault	15	13.9
Disgrace	10	9.3
Defrauded from freedom	6	5.6
Tortured by		
Husband	61	56.5
Others	47	43.5

Table 4 presented that, 80.6% respondents were contracted for dowry at the time of marriage and 28.7% demanded dowry for poverty while 51.9% with money. It's also showed 70.21% dowers were not fulfilled for sake of poverty while 30.6% dowers were given to ensure security.

Table 4. Dowry dimensions.

Parameters	Frequency	Percentage
Made contract for dowry (at the time of marriage)		
Yes	87	80.6
No	21	19.4
Reasons of demanding dowry		
Greed	29	26.9
Poverty	31	28.7
Prestige	12	11.1
Unemployment	16	14.8
Social custom	20	18.5
Materials demanded as dowry		
Money	56	51.9
Television	19	17.6
Motorbike	7	6.5
Furniture	16	14.8
Cycle	10	9.3
Amount of money demanded as dowry		
5000-20000	43	39.8
20000-50000	34	31.5
50000-100000	17	15.7
100000-150000	9	8.3
150000-200000	5	4.6
Reasons of not fulfilling the daman of dower		
Poverty	33	70.21
Unemployment	14	29.88
The reason of giving dower		
Lack of security	33	30.6
Social custom	14	13.0
Unemployment of husband	30	27.8
Imitiveness	15	13.9
Strain for dowry	13	12.0
Others	3	2.8

There were found that 80.6% respondents felt themselves unsecured and dowry victimized in order to their being the women in nature (Figure 1).

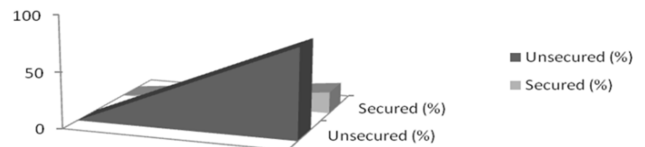


Figure 1. Felt lack of security as women.

4. Discussion

Bangladesh is a patriarchal society where oppression and subordination by males over females is the common feature in the society. Dowry related violence against women is largely embedded in gender norms. Generally the low living status of women (e.g. economic, social, cultural and political status) tends to be responsible for the violation of basic rights of females [18-20]. In the study the highest 71.3% of the respondents belong to the age group of 15-30 years were the victims of violence. It is also observed that educational qualification of 51.9% respondents up to secondary level and most of them (40.7%) were housewives while monthly income of 63.9% respondents was below 1500 BDT. Another study found, socio economic factors are highly related to

dowry where the rapidly spread of dowry in the mid-century emerged simultaneously with the increasing importance of wage-labour, which usually is done by men [21]. On the other hand, women secure the base of the preservation of their husband's manpower and his working ability. They do the domestic work, raise the children and teach them, how to adapt into the prevalent social structures and customs. But women's such unpaid labour is generally considered as valueless [22]. The current study showed that, most of the respondents (58.3%) were less than 10 years of age at the time of marriage and 38.9% husband of the respondents were businessman while 56.5% were primary educated and 22.2% were secondary level. Maximum respondents (88%) were resided in joint family and monthly incomes of 48.1% family were 3000 to 3500 BDT. A study found, we see a sizeable number of female children between 13-15 years of age get married because of the family's desires and decisions. Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey conducting a representative national survey in 2004 reveal that of all the married respondents, approximately 8.0% were found in the age category of 10-14 years [23]. Even if the law prohibits, such marriages take place unabated in rural areas of Bangladesh. However, existing law prohibits marriage for females less than 18 years of age and for males less than 21 years of age [24]. It is true that, Poverty and rising unemployment among young male in rural areas in Bangladesh has a close relation with the institution of dowry [25]. There were 32.4% respondents found to torture while 19.4% by beating and 22.2 by insulting. It is also observed most of them (56.5%) were tortured by their husband. Another survey showed that, 459 women were tortured physically, 317 caused death after tortured and 36 committed suicides for dowry related violence in Bangladesh from 2013 to June 2015 [26]. The study presented that, 80.6% respondents were contracted for dowry at the time of marriage and 28.7% demanded dowry for poverty while 51.9% with money. It's also showed 70.21% dowry were not fulfilled for sake of poverty while 30.6% dowry were given to ensure security. Another study showed that, the idea of social security as it is prevailing in our society is also responsible for the persistence of dowry [27, 28]. From the study found that, 80.6% respondents felt themselves insecure who were victim of dowry violence while other study showed female are most vulnerable and lead a unsecured life for various kinds of violence against them [29].

Anti-Women and Children Oppression Act (Amendment 2013), If any husband or his father, mother, guardian and any relative or any other person on his behalf causes death of his wife or attempts to cause death or causes grievous or simple hurt to her, the husband, his father, mother, guardian, relation or any such other person shall be punishable with death

sentence with fine (for causing death) or life time imprisonment with fine (for attempting to cause death) or not more than 12 years rigorous imprisonment with fine (for causing grievous hurt) or not exceeding 3 years rigorous imprisonment with fine (for simple hurt) [4]. Apart from legal sanctions, to stamp out dowry system the initiative must start from the women themselves [30]. Considering the overall study, it felt that the conjugal life of women should be safer and exploitation free according to the existing laws to reduce violence against them and to ensure their human rights.

5. Conclusion

Dowry is a curse in our society and all over the globe mainly in South Asia. Violence against women is a heinous crime while dowry related violence against women is highly threat to women's security in their family and society. Male domination should be changed for the development and peace as well as to ensure equal rights. Good governance, proper implementation of law against dowry and violence towards women, raising public awareness and launching program to empower women by government and NGOs would be effective to protect women from all sorts of dowry related violence.

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