

# Original Research Article

## Domestic Violence and Women Autonomy: The Darkest Truth of Our Society

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### ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted to find out the current situation of domestic violence and women autonomy in northern Bangladesh. In this study we found socio-economic and demographic condition, abusive status and women autonomy of employed women in northern Bangladesh. A total of 160 employed women from different district of northern Bangladesh were selected through cluster sampling as a sample of this research. The results found that only 45.6% women maintain non abusive relationship with their husband. Whereas about 53.1% women were moderately abuse and 1.3% women was seriously abuse. This was a critical situation in terms of women violence. Result obtained that about 83.1% women take permission to go outside the residence, 76.9% women take permission to visit their relatives or friends, 38.8% women take permission to go the local health center and 45.0% women take permission to go the local market. That means their freedom of movement depends on their husband or family members. About in 11.9% families others decided about to do when a child falls sick. Only in 10.6% families women decided and 85.6% families both husband and wife decided about how much schooling to give to your children. Only in 46.6% family's wife decided about what food to buy for family meals. The variable respondent's monthly income was found positively correlated with domestic violence scores. That means if women's income increases, there violence status was decreases.

*Keywords: Socio-economic, Demographic, Domestic Violence, Women Autonomy.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the study

Domestic violence against women is a global public health and human rights concern. Domestic violence against women (DVAW), especially beating wives by husbands, has been common in all culture perhaps in all times. Bangladesh seems to be no exception. Newspaper reports in the country clearly indicate that the prevalence of violence against women is very high. The prevalence of less severe, severe and sexual violence are markedly high (47% of ever-married women aged 15 - 49) in Nepal (Ahmad and Jaleel, 2015). In India, life time prevalence of domestic violence against married women was found to be 50.9% and prevalence of domestic violence was 47.9% (Aswar et al. (2013). High prevalence of domestic violence among women who work for pay who were 13 or younger when first married; for women married at age 14 and older there is little difference in domestic violence between those who work for pay and those who do not (Heath (2013).

In Bangladesh about 87% of currently married women have ever experienced any type of violence by current husband and 77% reported any type of violence faced during the past 12 months from the survey time. Almost 90% of those who have ever violated by current husband has the past 12-month experience of violence which implies the persistence nature of violence by the spouse. About half of ever married women have ever experienced economic violence while one third experienced in the past 12 months. The prevalence seems a little bit higher in rural areas than urban. Older women seem to be less likely to have experienced such violence. About one third of women (33.7%) have paid dowry for the current marriage. More than one-third (36.5%) of women experienced sexual violence perpetrated by their current husbands in

their lifetime (BBS, 2013). Women have more said in decisions related to their children's health care; 15 percent say that they mainly make these decisions, and 20 percent report that their husbands mainly make these decisions. Eight percent of women agree that refusing to have sexual intercourse is an acceptable reason for a man to beat his wife, and 4 percent of women agree that a husband is justified in beating his wife if she burns the food. Women who are employed and get paid in cash (30 percent), reside in urban areas (24 percent), reside in Khulna (27 percent), have completed secondary or higher education (18 percent), and are in households within the highest wealth quintile (19 percent) are less likely than most other women to agree with at least one reason for wife beating (BDHS, 2013). Education, occupation, income and gender-based awareness had a significant influence on women's decision-making power (Alam, M. S., 2011). About half of ever married women have ever experienced economic violence while one third experienced. The prevalence seems a little bit higher in rural areas than urban. Older women seem to be less likely to have experienced such violence (Hossen, 2014).

Majority (73%) of the women having bachelor degrees and 81% of the women with Masters' degree did not report any kind of physical violence. The results demonstrated a significant decrease in physical violence against women with increasing the level of education. Therefore, female education seems necessary for eliminating violence against women and guaranteeing their basic human rights (Khan et al., 2013). Women who are unemployed or financially dependent on their spouses may be more likely to experience DV (Fageeh, 2013). Classification of employment based on type of remuneration and frequency of work illustrates that women who experienced spousal violence are significantly more likely to be employed for cash earnings and work all year. Women who experienced spousal violence (ever or in past 12 months) are significantly less likely to have a say on the money they earn than women who did not experience spousal violence (ever or in past 12 months), which can be an indicator of their financial exploitation rather than financial empowerment (Bhattacharya, 2013).

Despite the seriousness of the problem in terms of violation of human rights and public health consequences, there is a dearth of knowledge on the extent, nature, and the context of DVAW in Bangladesh and other developing countries for various reasons. Of them, methodological difficulties in studying the topic are the important ones. Interventions to alleviate the problem have mostly been driven towards reducing the harm after the incidence through medical treatment and counseling. Preventive efforts, on the other hand, have been limited to enactment of punitive legislative measures against the aggressor for abusing women. Although the incidence of domestic violence against women directly involves husband, wife, and other family members, and is possibly perpetuated by the societal context, a family and/or community-centred approach to alleviate the problem has largely been absent so far. It is with this background that this paper seeks to generate knowledge about domestic violence against women with a special focus on the nature, extent, and correlates of domestic violence against women in Bangladesh, using an alternative data collection technique. Based on the findings and their careful review, the possibility of family/community centred interventions to reduce the incidence of violence against women has been discussed. For this reason the present study has been conducted to make an in depth study to fill the knowledge gap in the field domestic violence and women autonomy in Bangladesh.

## **1.2 Specific objectives**

- To determine the socio-economic status of the respondent.
- To know the status of women autonomy in northern Bangladesh.
- To examine the link between women's employment status on domestic violence.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Study area**

The present study was conducted at different part of northern Bangladesh, mainly at Bogura, Gaibandha, Joypurhat, Sirajgong, Rangpur and Rajshahi district. The area was taken as the basis of purposive techniques.

### **2.2 Population and units of analysis**

All employed women living in the study area are the population of the study. All employed women were considered in the population of the study and every employed woman was the unit of analysis.

### **2.3 Sampling design and sample size**

The sample size refers to the number of married employed woman to be included in the study. To select the sample size, cluster sampling procedure has been followed. The study area covered several clusters according to the density to the employed women. Among then 6 (six) clusters were selected using simple random sampling procedure. From the selected cluster, respondents were selected randomly. Therefore, the targeted sample size was 160 for the study.

## **2.4 Data Collection Technique**

The investigator went to employed women in their offices to take permission if they are interested in this study or not. Then investigator met with individual subject to find out if they were interested in participating. On the basis of objectives, information was collected from every selected employed woman through interview schedule. To make assure that respondent can easily understand, the purpose of the study was clearly described to the respondent and also the interview schedule was clearly describe to the respondent for their better concern.

## **2.5 Data management**

The data analysis was performed in the program Statistical Package for social science (SPSS) version22. The data presentation was performed in SPSS and in Microsoft office word 2010. Every questionnaire was rechecked for missing information or unclear information. After input all data researcher checked the inputted data to ensure that all data had been accurately transcribed from the questionnaire sheet to SPSS data view. Then the raw data was ready for analysis in SPSS. Microsoft Word Excel was also used to present data using column and pie chart.

## **3.7 Conceptual analysis of key concept**

### **3.7.1 Domestic violence (DV)**

Domestic violence (DV) is not a new phenomenon in a married woman's life. The term violence against women, domestic violence, domestic abuse, intimate partner violence and spousal violence is often used interchangeably (Fischbach & Herbert, 1997; Hindin, Kishor, & Ansara, 2008). The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (1993) provided a consensus definition of 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 private life" (p. 2). According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2000), violence against women and girls continues to be a global epidemic that kills, tortures and maims physically, psychologically, sexually and economically. We know that it is an indicator of power and control and a tool to maintain gender inequalities, distracting the health, survival, safety, and freedom of women and their families around the world.

### **3.7.2 Autonomy**

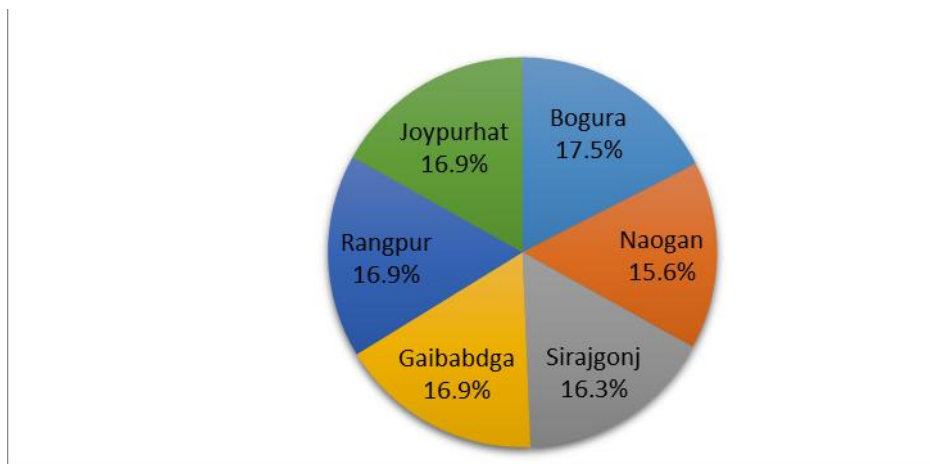
Autonomy indicates the ability-technical, social, and psychological - to obtain information and to use it as a basis for making decisions about one's private concerns and those of one's intimates. Female autonomy in simple terms indicates the decision making power of the women within the household relative to their husbands. Autonomy has been defined variously as 'the ability to influence and control one's environment' (Safilios-Rothschild, 1982), or the "capacity to obtain information and make decisions about one's private concerns and those of one's intimates" (Dyson and Moore, 1983). Dixon-Mueller (1978) defines it as "the degree of access to and control over material and social resources within the family, in the community and in the society at large". Autonomy can arise from "the enhancement of assets and capabilities" (Bennett, 2002), from processes that change "the distribution of power both in interpersonal relations and in institutions throughout society" (Stromquist, 1993) and from "a process of acquiring, providing, bestowing the resources and the means or enabling the access to a control over such means and resources" (Lazo, 1998).

## **3.8 Statistical analysis**

After collecting data, it was edited and coded classified accurately. Then the data was manipulated directly through using statistical procedure. Collected information is analyzed both qualitative and quantitative way. The data has been presented through tables and charts. To strength the qualitative analysis, the direct statements of the respondents have been used. Tabular analysis was used to preparation of simple tables of proportions describing the concentration of categorical variables and correlation table showing the relationship or association between two categorical variables.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 01 represented the percentage distribution of sample districts of northern Bangladesh. Result showed that 17.5% respondent from Bogura, 15.6% from Naogan, 16.9% Gaibandha, Joypurhat and Rangpur and 16.3% from Sirajgonj district.



**Figure 01: Percentage distribution of sample districts of northern Bangladesh.**

Table 01 showed the descriptive statistics of different socio-economic and demographic variables of women of northern Bangladesh. The mean age of respondent was 39 years approximately, mean education of respondent was 9<sup>th</sup> class passed, mean monthly income of respondent was 8203.13 BDT, mean monthly family expenditure from respondent income was 6561.25 BDT, respondent's mean monthly contribution to parent's family was 626.25 BDT, respondent's mean age at first marriage was 20 years old, mean marital duration was 18 years old, mean age of husband was 44 years old, husband's mean age at the time of marriage was 27 years old, mean education of husband was 9<sup>th</sup> class passed, husband's mean monthly income was 10309.38 BDT, husband's mean monthly family expenditure from own income was 8303.13 BDT, mean monthly family expenditure was 12983.75 BDT, mean earning members in family was 2 persons, mean farming land size of families was 0.8191 acres.

**Table 01: Descriptive statistics of different socio-economic and demographic variables of women of northern Bangladesh.**

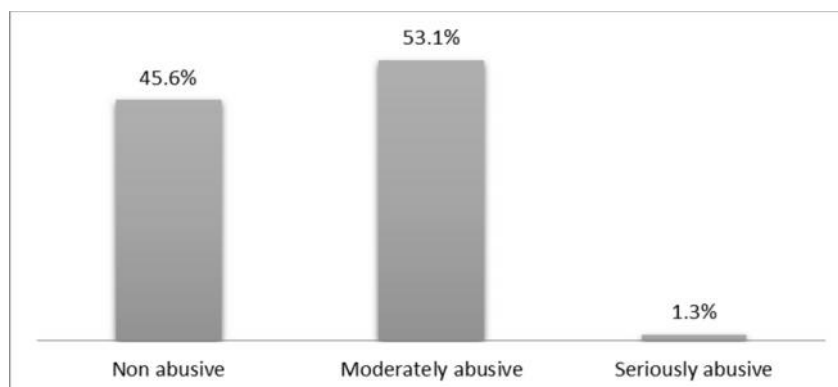
Variable	Mean	Std. Error of Mean
Age of respondent (years)	38.51	0.708
Education of respondent (class passed)	9.19	0.226
Respondent's monthly income (BDT)	8203.13	245.490
Respondent's monthly family expenditure from own income (BDT)	6561.25	197.074
Respondent's monthly contribution to parents family (BDT)	626.25	85.228
Respondent's age at first marriage (years)	20.14	0.262
Marital duration (years)	18.13	0.754
Present age of husband (years)	43.60	0.715
Husband's age at the time of marriage (years)	26.98	0.293
Education of husband (class passed)	9.02	0.262
Husband's monthly income (BDT)	10309.38	263.207
Husband's monthly family expenditure from own income (BDT)	8303.13	238.950
Total monthly family expenditure (BDT)	12983.75	368.855
Total earning members in family	1.99	0.020
Farming land size of families (acres)	0.8191	0.030

Table 02 exhibited the percentage distribution of different socio-economic and demographic variables of women of northern Bangladesh. Result obtained that 47.5% respondent's occupation was teaching (Non-government), 12.5% respondent's occupation was teaching (Government), 37.5% respondent's occupation was Govt. staff, 1.3% respondents occupation was Govt. officer and only 1.3% respondents occupation was NGO/Private sector. About 26.9% respondent

had son only, 16.9% respondent had daughter only and 46.9% respondent had both son and daughter, where as 9.4% respondent's had no child. In 94.4% families male members were household head. About 92.5% respondents were Muslim and 7.5% respondents were Hindu. About 90.0% respondent from single families and 10.0% respondents were from combined families. About 73.8% respondent lives in rural villages and 26.3% respondents were lives in urban areas. About 2.5% respondents husband's occupation was teaching (Non-government), 3.8% respondents husband's occupation was teaching (Govt.), 11.9% respondents husband's occupation was Govt. staff, 2.5% respondents husband's occupation was Govt. officer, 3.8% respondents husband's occupation was Bank/financial org (Corporate), 28.1% respondents husband's occupation was NGO/Private(Corporate) and 47.5% respondents husband's occupation was Business/others. About 46.9% respondents had member less than 2 years membership in savings/credits groups, 14.4% respondents had member more than 2 years and 38.8% respondents had no membership. About 88.8% respondents husband living in same residence regularly where as 11.3% respondents husband had not living in same residence regularly for their work please was different.

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>%</b>
Occupation of respondent	Teaching (Non-government)	76	47.5
	Teaching (Govt.)	20	12.5
	Govt. Staff	60	37.5
	Govt. officer	2	1.3
	NGO/Private	2	1.3
Sex of living children	No child	15	9.4
	Sons only	43	26.9
	Daughters only	27	16.9
	Both	75	46.9
Sex of the household head	Male	151	94.4
	Female	9	5.6
Religion of the household head	Hindu	12	7.5
	Muslim	148	92.5
Family structure	Single family	144	90.0
	Combined family	16	10.0
Place of residence	Rural village	118	73.8
	Urban	42	26.3
Occupation of husband	Teaching (Non-government)	4	2.5
	Teaching (Govt.)	6	3.8
	Govt. staff	19	11.9
	Govt. officer	4	2.5
	Bank/financial org (Corporate)	6	3.8
	NGO/Private(Corporate)	45	28.1
	Business/others	76	47.5
Membership in savings/credits groups	No membership	62	38.8
	Member<2 year	75	46.9
	Member 2+ year	23	14.4
Husband living in same residence	Yes	142	88.8
	No	18	11.3

Figure 02 represent the Percentage distribution of abusive status of women in northern Bangladesh. Result showed that only 45.6% women maintain non abusive relationship with their husband. Whereas about 53.1% women were moderately abuse and 1.3% women was seriously abuse. This was a critical situation in terms of women violence.



**Figure 02: Percentage distribution of abusive status of women in northern Bangladesh.**

Table 03 presented the percentage distribution of women autonomy in northern Bangladesh. Result obtained that about 83.1% women take permission to go outside the residence, 76.9% women take permission to visit your relatives or friends, 38.8% women take permission to go the local health center and 45.0% women take permission to go the local market. That means they have freedom of movement in their families. About in 11.9% families others decided about to do when a child falls sick. Only in 10.6% families women decided and 85.6% families both husband and wife decided about how much schooling to give to your children. Only 46.6% family's wife decided about what food to buy for family meals. About 17.5% family's wife decided about whether to purchase major goods for the HH (e.g.TV etc.), 26.9% families wife decided about whether or not you should work and only 11.3% families wife decided about the number of children to should have. This means women's low autonomy in their families.

<b>Table 03: Percentage distribution of women autonomy in northern Bangladesh.</b>			
<b>Variables</b>		<b>No</b>	<b>%</b>
Should take permission to go outside the residence	Yes	133	83.1
	No	27	16.9
Should take permission to visit your relatives or friends	Yes	123	76.9
	No	34	21.3
	2	3	1.9
Should take permission to go the local health center	Yes	62	38.8
	No	98	61.3
Should take permission to go the local market	Yes	72	45.0
	No	88	55.0
Person who take decision about to do when a child falls sick	Others	19	11.9
	Wife	88	55.0
	Both	51	31.9
	N/A	2	1.3
Person who take decision about how much schooling to give to your children	Others	22	13.8
	Wife	17	10.6
	Both	121	75.6
Person who decision about to whom to marry your children	Others	27	16.9
	Wife	23	14.4
	Both	109	68.1
	No child	1	0.6
Person who decision about what food to buy for family meals	Others	30	18.8
	Wife	74	46.3
	Both	56	35.0
Person who take decision about whether to purchase major goods for the HH (e.g.TV etc.)	Others	21	13.1
	Wife	28	17.5
	Both	111	69.4
Person who take decision about whether or not you should work	Others	47	29.4
	Wife	43	26.9
	Both	70	43.8
Person who take decision about the number of children to should have	Others	28	17.5
	Wife	18	11.3

	Both	114	71.3
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Table 04 described the correlation analysis of domestic violence scores with different socio-economic and demographic variables of women in northern Bangladesh. Here we consider employed women in our research. The variable respondent's monthly income was found positively correlated with domestic violence scores. That means if women's income increases, there violence status was decreases.

**Table 04: Correlation analysis of domestic violence scores with different socio-economic and demographic variables of women in northern Bangladesh.**

Variables	Total scores of DV	Age of respondent	Education of respondent	Respondent's monthly income	Respondent's monthly family expenditure from own income	Respondent's monthly contribution to parents family	Respondent's age at first marriage	Marital duration	Present age of husband	Education of husband	Husband's monthly income	Total monthly family expenditure
Total scores of DV	1	0.11	-0.11	0.18*	0.03	0.08	0.09	0.04	0.08	-0.09	0.05	-0.08
Age of respondent		1	-0.18*	0.06	0.16*	-0.19*	-0.05	0.91**	0.92**	-0.22**	-0.35**	0.17*
Education of respondent			1	0.12	0.23**	0.15	0.42**	-0.31**	-0.26**	0.40**	0.25**	0.27**
Respondent's monthly income				1	0.71**	0.53**	0.06	0.01	0.09	0.04	0.36**	0.22**
Respondent's monthly family expenditure from own income					1	0.24**	0.19*	0.08	0.18*	-0.12	0.19*	0.53**
Respondent's monthly contribution to parents family						1	0.11	-0.21**	-0.17*	0.08	0.45**	0.01
Respondent's age at first marriage							1	-0.37**	-0.11	0.12	0.26**	0.26**
Marital duration								1	0.88**	-0.22**	-0.42**	0.08
Present age of husband									1	-0.22**	-0.31**	0.15
Education of husband										1	0.18*	-0.16*
Husband's monthly income											1	0.21**
Total monthly family expenditure												1

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).  
 \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The socio-economic status of the respondents was very low and their educational qualification was also low. Most of them spend their total income for their family. They have no membership in savings or credits group. They also abuse by their husbands. They also have to take permission to go outside the residence and visit their relatives or friends. Study also found that respondents' monthly income was positively correlated with domestic violence. That means there was a positive link between women's employment status on domestic violence.

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