

Factors Affecting Domestic Violences against Women and Children in Dumki Upazila of Patuakhali District: Can a More Effective Mechanism or Instrument Trim-Down Domestic Violences ?

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Abstract

Domestic violence on women and children continues to be a prevalent social problem in Bangladesh, especially in rural areas such as Dumki Upazila of Patuakhali District in Bangladesh. It seems that due to social stigma, economic dependency, and cultural norms, people do not report domestic violence incidents, thus allowing violence to go unnoticed and unchallenged. Bangladesh does have a legal framework that deals with domestic violence, including the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act of 2010, yet there are still implementation gaps affecting its efficiency. This paper seeks to analyze socio-economic, cultural, and legal factors that cause domestic violence and determine whether legal measures taken by the government can prevent it successfully. To achieve that goal, this study adopted a mixed-method approach collecting quantitative data from 375 respondents via surveying, qualitative information through conducting five focus groups, and performing five key informant interviews. According to results, some of the main reasons for domestic violence include excessive drinking, unemployment, traditional beliefs about the role of men in a family, and lack of awareness regarding the problem. Nevertheless, a high demand for change was revealed during the research process. The results have further highlighted the significance of empowering women economically, being knowledgeable about their rights, and educating both men and women as some of the long-term measures to mitigate violence against women. In summary, the paper reveals that domestic violence is a multifaceted issue influenced by the interaction of social, economic, and cultural factors. As such, the solution to this issue entails an integrated approach. Some of the necessary measures include improving collaboration among various government departments, enhancing support services for the victims, and educating both men and youth on gender roles.

KEYWORDS: Factors, Domestic Violences, Women, Children and Effective Mechanism.

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1. Introduction

In many societies, domestic violence was seen as a personal issue among family members, with violence perpetrated by a dominant partner remaining a secret within the confines of the family home. It is important, however, to address the issue of domestic violence for what it really is – an act of violence that requires attention and action. In this regard, domestic violence can be described as acts of violence perpetuated on women by their intimate partners, as well as any other family member, both inside and outside the house (Emenike, 2017). Violence is usually only identified in cases where it is so grave that it cannot be overlooked or ignored, especially in cases of acid attacks or injuries that require medical attention.

A more holistic approach needs to be taken to deal with domestic violence with equal significance. More effective laws need to be enacted and enforced to make sure that the perpetrators are punished accordingly. However, simultaneously, it needs to be ensured that victims speak up and break the taboo associated with such acts of violence (Johnston & Naved, 2008). A lawyer from Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association

(BNWLA) claims that loopholes in the criminal justice system act as one of the main hindrances in combating such violent acts against women due to the fact that offenders do not get suitable punishment. It is more troubling for the future when the exposure occurs during childhood and involves violence between parents, which helps to normalize the abuse, thereby perpetuating violence in later years (K.F. Rahman, 2019).

The continuation of the cycle of violence is not only based on fear and silence but also because of the decades of oppression against women. As the issue of violence against women is prevalent in Bangladesh, similar trends have been noticed in other places near Bangladesh such as India where the percentage of women subjected to physical and sexual violence is high (Rajani, Ferhana, & Rani, 2011). All these facts prove that domestic violence is not because of a sole reason. One popular myth associated with domestic violence is that it takes place due to illiteracy and poverty among people. However, this is not true as women belonging to educated and well-to-do families also become the target of domestic violence (Islam, 2015). Fear of being punished keeps abused women away from hospitals. Despite the presence of such policies and legislations to prevent acts of violence, they still do not cover enough ground. This can be seen through an examination of the policy on domestic violence in Bangladesh, where the National Women Development Policy of 2011 does not provide sufficient information on domestic violence. Research done today acknowledges that domestic violence against women is the product of many interrelated variables. (Rajani, Ferhana, & Rani, 2011).

2. Objectives of the Study

The specific objective of the study is to identify the factors affecting domestic violence against women and children and evaluate the effectiveness of existing legal mechanism to underlie its prevalence. Hence the specific objectives of this project are as follows-

- I. Scrutinize the answers of the questions of what are the factors affecting domestic violence against women and children in Dumki upazila of Patuakhali District.
- II. Examine how the existing legal mechanism can be implemented more effectively and conveniently to trim-down domestic violence.

3. Methodology of the Study

The study has been conducted in Dumki upazila of Patuakhali District of Bangladesh. Using a mixed-method approach, Primary Data has been collected using a validated structured questionnaire that asked about the (i) factors affecting domestic violence against women and children in Dumki upazila of Patuakhali District, and (ii) examining how the existing legal mechanism can be implemented more effectively and conveniently to trim-down domestic violence. The cluster random sampling method has been used to recruit participants, selecting individuals based on their availability and willingness to participate for conducting convenient/purposive survey. The study has been conducted between March and April of 2025. Total 375 Household Survey (Cochran's equation, confidence level 95%, margin of error 5%), 05 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and 05 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) have been conducted. Secondary Data has been collected through review of existing literature and relevant laws. After completion of survey, data has been analyzed in SPSS 20.3, Microsoft office excels and presented in word form in this study.

4. Results and Discussion

As a third-world country, Bangladesh after getting independence, is trying most to protect women's and children's rights. Bangladesh has signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 (UDHR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966 (ICESCR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966 (ICCPR), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women of 1979 (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 (CRC) which largely state various rights of men, women and children of the world. In line with these, Bangladesh has enacted a statute for giving protection to women and children against domestic violence, titled the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act of 2010. This Act defines domestic violence as a crime and provides complete procedures for taking action against any person causing domestic violence. Again, there is another enactment to ensure protection of women and children from any kinds of repression, titled the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act of 2000. Although having all these, the women and children of Bangladesh are becoming victims of domestic violence and various forms of repression and discrimination due

to weak enforcement mechanisms, complex legal procedures, lack of awareness about the law, and unwillingness to take legal action. This study has found out the causes of domestic violence, identified the challenges and provided some recommendations to improve the situation. The results of the household survey, focus group discussions and key informant interviews are discussed step by step in the later part of the study.

4.1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

This study has been conducted among 375 respondents in Dumki upazila of Patuakhali District of Bangladesh along with 05 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and 05 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs). The demographic profile of the respondents includes information about gender, age, education status, occupation etc. **Table 01** reflects the profile of the respondents and socio-economic conditions.

Table 01: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

01	Age	18–25 years	50	13.3%
		26–35 years	110	29.3%
		36–45 years	95	25.3%
		46–60 years	80	21.3%
		Above 60 years	40	10.8%
02	Education	No formal education	40	10.7%
		Primary	90	24.0%
		Secondary	110	29.3%
		Higher secondary	75	20.0%
		Graduate and above	60	16.0%
03	Marital Status	Married	290	77.3%
		Single/Unmarried	70	18.7%
		Widowed/Divorced/Separated	15	4.0%
04	Occupation	Housewife	190	50.7%
		Student	60	16.0%
		Employed (Government/Private)	95	25.3%
		Unemployed/Other	30	8.0%
05	Religion	Islam	345	92.0%
		Hinduism	25	6.7%
		Other (Christian, Buddhist, etc.)	5	1.3%
06	Types of Family	Nuclear	220	58.7%
		Joint/Extended	155	41.3%
07	Head of the Family	Male	310	82.7%
		Female	65	17.3%
08	Household Members	1–3 members	40	10.7%
		4–6 members	220	58.7%
		More than 6 members	115	30.6%
09	Monthly Household Income	Below BDT 10,000	60	16.0%
		BDT 10,001 – 20,000	140	37.3%
		BDT 20,001 – 30,000	95	25.3%
		BDT 30,001 and above	80	21.3%

The socio-demographic composition of the 375 respondents provides relevant contextual and analytical information about the study sample. It is crucial to understand these variables when analyzing the underlying factors behind certain problems, such as domestic abuse, gender discrimination and other socio-cultural problems.

Age Profile

It can be deduced from the data that the study participants are a relatively young or middle-aged population. There were more respondents aged 26-45 years old (combined, 54.6%), who are generally productive in society and make significant decisions at home. The participation of a considerable proportion of elderly individuals (10.8%) requires consideration of the possible intergenerational dynamics in the respondents' households.

Educational Status

Education is an important determinant in educating people and enabling them to seek support legally and socially. While a majority of the people sampled are educated up to the primary level, the concerning fact remains that some people do not even receive elementary education (10.7%). This comes as no surprise because there are still challenges in getting people educated who belong to the disadvantaged class such as women and rural residents. The important point to note is that about 29.3% of the sample group are only educated up to the secondary level.

Marital Status

This is important considering the high percentage of respondents who were married at 77.3%. This means that the majority of the respondents come from stable families where marriage and family relationships have the ability to impact gender relations and acts of violence. The low percentage of respondents who are either widowed, divorced or separated may be underestimated because of its sensitive nature.

Occupation

The high percentage of housewives (50.7%) represents the common form of gender stratification. This variable has implications on issues related to economic dependence, susceptibility to domestic violence, and inability to act independently in matters related to law and finances. The low percentage of women involved in paid labor even though some (25.3%) are working points to difficulties in attaining economic independence.

Religion

Since 92% of the population is Muslim, the data show the religious demographics of Bangladesh. Problems related to religious sensitivity arise when it comes to cultural interventions. Although other religions are only a small minority, they must still be considered when formulating policies.

Type of Family

58.7% of the sample comes from nuclear families, while 41.3% have their origins from joint families. It is significant when considering factors such as family dynamics, decision-making, and the distribution of power among family members. In joint families, while a support system can be developed, it may also lead to a point of conflict.

Head of the Household

Male dominance in heads of households (82.7%) confirms the patriarchy that is characteristic of the rural and semi-urban environment. The 17.3% headed by females may not be negligible and could involve widows and empowered females whose husbands have left or migrated. These women may belong to the disadvantaged but resilient segment of society.

Size of the Household

The majority of households (58.7%) having medium size households (4-6 persons) could mean that family responsibilities are manageable. Larger households (30.6%) may pose challenges to resources. Smaller households (10.7%) may be because of nuclear families or widowhood.

Monthly Income

The average income level of the people shows that majority of the population has a low or moderate income. Nearly 53.3% earn less than BDT 20,000/month which is not enough for a decent life in case of joint families. Financial insecurity is an important determinant of exposure to domestic violence, education, and legal assistance.

Conclusively, the above data (Table:01) indicates that socio-demographic information reveals that most of the respondents fall under middle-aged, have moderate education levels, married, lives in nuclear families, financially weak, majority are Muslim religion and male dominates the household. The characteristics of the population are quite important for any program design in respect of education, employment, legal awareness, or domestic violence prevention. It appears that empowerment of house wives and educational campaign are important.

4.2 Factors Affecting Domestic Violences

After conducting survey, we have found some factors which cause or lead to domestic violences. **Table 02** shows the factors affecting domestic violences in Dumki upazila of Patuakhali District of Bangladesh.

Table 02: Factors Affecting Domestic Violences

SL	Causes	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Mean Score	Rank
01	Poverty	190 (50.7%)	120 (32.0%)	30 (8.0%)	25 (6.7%)	20 (2.7%)	4.21	3
02	Alcohol or Drug Abuse	225 (60.0%)	100 (26.7%)	20 (5.3%)	20 (5.3%)	10 (2.7%)	4.36	1
03	Lack of Education	180 (48.0%)	115 (30.7%)	35 (9.3%)	30 (8.0%)	15 (4.0%)	4.11	4
04	Patriarchal Attitudes & Cultural Norms	130 (34.7%)	140 (37.3%)	45 (12.0%)	35 (9.3%)	25 (6.7%)	3.84	6
05	Unemployment	210 (56.0%)	115 (30.7%)	25 (6.7%)	15 (4.0%)	10 (2.7%)	4.33	2
06	Lack of Legal Awareness	160 (42.7%)	130 (34.7%)	35 (9.3%)	30 (8.0%)	20 (5.3%)	4.01	5

Interpretation Guide: 4.50 – 5.00 = Strongly Agree, 3.50 – 4.49 = Agree, 2.50 – 3.49 = Neutral, 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree, 1.00 – 1.49 = Strongly Disagree.

Alcohol or Drug Abuse

The cause ranked number one in terms of agreement, with 60% strongly agreeing and 26.7% agreeing. Only 8% disagreed or were neutral, implying that substance abuse is perceived as a dominant reason for domestic violence.

Unemployment

56% strongly agreed and 30.7% agreed that unemployment is a contributing factor to domestic violence. The

minimal rate of disagreement (<7%) implies that unemployment may be viewed as a significant source of stress, leading to conflicts at home.

Poverty

In excess of 82% agreed or strongly agreed that poverty was a dominant cause of domestic violence. This is consistent with socio-economic perspectives that assert that economic strain increases the likelihood of domestic conflicts.

Lack of Education

A total of 78.7% believed in this as one of the causes of gender-based violence, but the percentage who strongly agreed was lower than those agreeing on poverty and unemployment. This shows the assumption that poor levels of education might limit knowledge of rights and means to resolve disputes.

Legal Awareness

It is clear from the response (42.7% strongly agreed and 34.7% agreed) that poor legal knowledge makes women vulnerable because they cannot defend themselves against their abusers.

Patriarchal Attitudes and Culture

This is among the few factors where the lowest average score was recorded. However, it was still within the “Agree” category, whereby 34.7% strongly agreed, while 12% remained neutral and 16% disagreed.

Finally, the highest rated causes for the crime include alcohol/drug abuse, unemployment, and poverty, all of which have an economic and behavioral dimension to them. Social factors such as education, legal knowledge, and cultural aspects have been noted but with slightly reduced forcefulness. However, even the least mentioned cause – patriarchy – rates a mean score greater than 3.5.

4.3 Major Challenges with the Present Legal System

In this study, after conducting survey we have found some major obstacles with the existing legal system. **Table 03** shows the major challenges with the legal system

Table 03: Major Challenges with the Legal System

SL	Challenges	Mean Score (1–5)	Agree/Strongly Agree (%)	Rank
1	Lack of Awareness	4.35	85.6%	1
2	Long Legal Process/Delayed Justice	4.30	83.7%	2
3	Cost of Legal Action	4.22	81.3%	3
4	Corruption or Bias	4.18	78.5%	4
5	Family/Social Pressure	4.10	75.2%	5
6	Fear of Retaliation	4.02	72.0%	6
7	Lack of Local Legal Aid	3.98	69.6%	7
8	Lack of Trust in Law Enforcement	3.90	66.5%	8
9	Lack of Female Officers	3.75	63.1%	9
10	Fear of Filing a Case	3.68	60.4%	10
11	Other	2.85	35.2%	11

As indicated by the study findings conducted among 375 people, Lack of Awareness became the biggest problem within the legal system, since it had an average score of 4.35 and a consensus level of more than 85%, showing that there is an evident legal illiteracy. The long legal procedure and delayed justice remain the most prevalent issue, which ranks number two with an average score of 4.30. This finding reflects the common concern about judicial delay in rural areas. The cost of legal proceedings, corruption or bias and social/family pressure also ranked highly because they have an average score of more than 4.00, proving the fact that economic and socio-cultural factors are associated with legal access. Lack of female officers and fear of retaliation, as well as lack of trust in enforcing agencies prevent the victim, especially women, from accessing legal remedy.

One of the most serious limitations of the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2010 is its predominantly civil character. The law focuses heavily on: protection orders, residence orders, compensation, custody orders, injunction-type relief. This fragmentation creates procedural confusion and discourages victims from pursuing justice. the statute reflects a “welfare-protection model” rather than a robust “rights-enforcement model.” The law attempts to preserve family structures rather than decisively confront patriarchal violence. (Khan, 2015) The deepest flaw of the Act is philosophical. The statute was enacted within a socio-legal environment that seeks to: reduce violence but preserve patriarchal family stability simultaneously. These objectives often conflict. As a result, the law oscillates between: protection and preservation, autonomy and reconciliation, rights and social control. This internal contradiction weakens enforcement and judicial interpretation. the Act does not fully reconceptualize domestic violence as a violation of constitutional citizenship and bodily autonomy; instead, it treats it as a social welfare issue within the family domain. The gap between formal legality and lived justice remains profound. (Naved, 2013) Without structural reform, the Act risks functioning more as a symbolic declaration of protection than as an effective instrument of emancipation.

4.4 Services that should be Improved to Prevent Domestic Violences

The respondents strongly believed that some services should be improved to trim down domestic violences. **Table 04** indicates the opinion of the respondents regarding services that should be improved.

Table 04: Services that should be Improved

SL	Service/Area	Mean Score (1–5)	Agree/Strongly Agree (%)	Rank
1	Strengthening Law Enforcement	4.42	88.3%	1
2	Safe Reporting Channels	4.35	85.7%	2
3	Economic Empowerment of Women	4.28	83.5%	3
4	Community Awareness Campaigns	4.20	81.0%	4
5	Counseling Services and Therapy	4.10	78.4%	5
6	Child Protection Centers	3.95	74.1%	6
7	Other	2.80	33.8%	7

The findings give us the following insight: -Law enforcement strengthening ranks first among areas to be intervened to improve service delivery, as per respondents, with an average score of 4.42 and 88.3% of those who participated agreeing or highly agreeing with its significance. Secondly, safe reporting avenues and empowering women economically were found to be of high priority. Awareness campaigns in communities, counseling and therapy were also viewed as critical towards preventing or mitigating the problem of domestic violence. Child safety centers also got considerable support from 74% of the respondents even though ranking slightly low in priority compared to others.

5. Recommendations

From the above discussion, it is clear that the primary causes of domestic violence against women occur due to a lack of adequate awareness and law violations. Furthermore, men have been exercising their traditional dominance over women since time immemorial. Nevertheless, the following recommendations should be made to create an equal environment for women's participation in socio-economic activities in Bangladesh.

- Complaints against abuse should be lodged confidentially at the union and upazila levels by the victims so that they feel secure and are not afraid of any kind of social stigma or backlash. Specialized domestic violence courts should be established. Protection order should be enforced on fast-track basis.
- Legal support, police and other necessary help should be more easily accessible for the victims from designated points of local services. Gender-sensitivity training for judges and police should be mandatory.
- Provision of counseling services for survivors and perpetrators as well as their families should be increased which would minimize the chances of future incidents of domestic violence.
- Creating more income sources, skill training, and microenterprise programs could decrease the dependency on others and empower women economically and in households.
- Community-wide awareness campaigns should inform both genders about laws related to domestic violence, the rights of victims and the available services.
- Men and youth should be involved in prevention programs to change the mindsets prevailing among the male-dominated community.
- Efforts to address domestic violence require coordination involving the various governmental agencies, the local governments, the police force, the health facilities, NGOs and community leaders.
- Women and children vulnerable to domestic violence should receive more safe sheltering, protective actions, trauma counseling and medical treatment.

6. Key Activities & Achievements of the Study

- i. Successfully conducted 375 structured household surveys.
- ii. Completed 5 FGDs and 5 KIIs.
- iii. Identified key socio-economic and cultural drivers of domestic violence specific to Dumki Upazila.
- iv. Mapped gaps in implementation of existing legal instruments.
- v. Generated community-driven recommendations for reducing domestic violences.
- vi. Contributed new data and insights to local policymakers, NGOs, and law enforcement agencies.

7. Concluding observations

Domestic violence in Dumki Upazila cannot be seen as a stand-alone phenomenon because domestic violence is a very serious social issue that emerges due to various reasons like poverty, patriarchy, alcoholism, ignorance, and ineffective legal practices. This clearly shows that legal policies will not solve the problem unless they are effectively implemented. What is more important is that many community members are interested in changes associated with domestic violence. All this shows that an integrated approach would be the most appropriate way to deal with the problem of domestic violence.

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