A Comparative Study of Divorce Levels and Patterns and their Determinants in an Urban and a Rural Area of Chattogram, Bangladesh

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of selected socio-economic and demographic factors on divorced in Chattogram Metropolitan Area (urban area) and rural areas of Chattogram district, Bangladesh. In both the areas, logistic regression analysis reveals that occupation of respondents (women) and husbands, respondent's age, drug addiction status of husbands, respondent's educational qualifications, dowry taken by husbands, use of mobile phone or Facebook etc. are the positively significant effects on divorce.

এ গবেষণা প্রবন্ধে বাংলাদেশের চট্টগ্রাম মেট্রোপলিটন এলাকা (শহর এলাকা) এবং চট্টগ্রাম জেলার (পল্লী এলাকা) বিবাহ বিচ্ছেদের উপর নির্বাচিত সামাজিক, অর্থনৈতিক ও জনমিতিক উপাদানগুলোর প্রভাব যাচাই করা হয়েছে। উভয় এলাকার লজিস্টিক নির্বরণ বিশ্লেষণে দেখা যায় যে, উত্তরদাতা (মহিলা) এবং স্বামীদের পেশা, উত্তরদাতার বয়স, স্বামীর মাদকাসক্তি, উত্তরদাতার শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা, স্বামী দ্বারা যৌতুক গ্রহণ, মোবাইল ফোন বা ফেইসবুকের ব্যবহার প্রভৃতির উপর বিবাহ বিচ্ছেদের ধনাত্মক তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ প্রভাব আছে।

1. Introduction

Bangladesh is an over densely populated country in the world. In the country, the per capita low-income, adverse climate conditions, high fertility rate and high mortality rate etc. are the common features of the country compared to other developed countries in the world. In 2019, the Monitoring the Situation of Vital Statistics

(MSVS) data showed that the country had a population of 166.50 million, with 83.33 million being males and 83.17 million females. The density of population of the country is 1,128 per square kilometer, and the population growth rate is 1.37 per cent [1]. The expected population will reach 250 million in 2025 if the present growth rate remains constant.

In recent times, divorce is a major social problem all over the world. In Bangladesh, both in urban and rural areas, divorce rate and divorce pattern are increasing day by day. In the year 2019, it was observed that the highest and the lowest rates of divorce are 16 and 14 per cent in Rajshahi and Sylhet divisions respectively [1]. It is a major social problem in our society. Ages differentials between husbands and wives are the important patterns of divorce in urban and rural areas of Bangladesh. The rate of divorce applications filed by women increases rapidly in each year. In our country, divorce affected among the all types of people such as poor, middle and upper classes. It also affected the different types of professional people, say, workers, business men, service holders and elite society [1]. The divorce rate is extremely higher among the highly educated families and the elite societies [1]. In the last six years (2013-2018), it was observed that in Chattogram City Corporation, there were 9,685 individually submitted applications to take divorce from their husbands and the year 2019, from January to September, there were 1,390 applicants submitted application to take divorce in that city corporation [2]. The data also indicates that there were 5,635 women completely divorced from their husbands in the last six years (2013-2018). In 2011, the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) data show that in several divisional and district headquarters, the divorce rates are 49 per cent and 36 per cent respectively [3]. So, it is extremely higher among the urban areas compared to other areas in Bangladesh. It is an alarming and a scenario in Bangladesh.

The literacy rate in Bangladesh is increasing day by day. The country had a literacy rate of 74.70 per cent with 76.51 per cent being males and 72.3 per cent females [1]. Generally, literate women work outside the home. Now, they work in different professions such as banks, government and non- government organizations, teaching,

garments and business etc. In Bangladesh, female labor force participation rates for urban and rural areas are 32.9 and 33.7 per cent respectively [4]. The females earning are increasing gradually for economic solvency as well as an economic independence so that they can easily take decisions regarding their family issues. For seeking divorce by women, the main causes are dowry taken by husbands, extramarital relationship, mental and physical torture by husbands, long- time stay overseas by their husbands, greed over wives' earned money, violation of religious rules, lack of self-respect between husband and wife and increasing conflict between the two families, etc. On the other hand, in case of men, the main causes are wives' bad character and bad temper, extramarital relationship with another woman, infertility, disrespect to the husbands and members of his family, failing to take care of the children, etc. Sometimes it is observed that due to enmity, third person (which is out of spouse) take parts in divorce cases is one kind of divorce pattern in Bangladesh.

In Bangladesh, especially in rural areas, some of the parents get their daughters married approximately at the age of 15 or less than that. Child marriage and early birth are the common features of our society. Especially, in rural areas, it is the main reason for increasing women's divorce rate. In the case of child marriage, they can't earn maturity in this stage. They don't take the exact and proper responsibility of their husbands, children as well as members of the families. It's also a major social problem in Bangladesh. For these complexities, a huge gap is created between a husband and a wife. For these reasons, husbands' often torture their wives and ultimately it turns into a divorce from their husbands gradually.

A few studies on divorce have already been made using data of different sectors of Bangladesh. In 1983, Kabir has studied on divorce in Dhaka City area using odds ratios analysis and found that age of respondents, education and employment status have significant effects on divorce [5]. Ahmad and Khuda have worked on divorce of household heads of a rural area of Dhaka district and found that profession and education have significant impact on divorce [6]. In 1978, Rahman and Khatun has conducted a comparative study of divorce on different occupational groups using

logistic regression analysis. He has found that occupation, income, family expenditure and education are the significant effects on divorce [7].

The purpose of the present paper is to study the level of divorce and to examine the association between the selected socio-economic and demographic factors and divorce and also to examine the influences of those selected variables on divorce.

2. Data and Methodology

The data for the present study have been collected from a random sample of women who have already divorced in Chattogram Metropolitan Area (urban area) and Chattogram district (rural area), of Bangladesh. According to 2011 census, the total areas of Chattogram Metropolitan City and Chattogram district are 155.40 and 5,282.92 square kilometers respectively with a population of 26,92,579 and 79,13,365 [8]. In the study areas, the population per square kilometer are 17,327 and 1,498 persons respectively which is much higher than that of 1,128 persons for Bangladesh [8]. For data collection, in case of urban area, firstly, 5 wards were randomly selected out of 41 wards. The population of the selected wards are 3,751 and then 465 respondents (women) were randomly selected out of 3, 751 those who are included for the detailed investigation. In case of rural areas, a multistage sampling procedure was applied. First, from each of the following four Upazilas namely Hathazari, Raozan, Fatikchari, and Sitakunda, two unions were selected at random. All the villages from each union were then classified into two patterns according to varying population size. Finally, one village from each pattern was selected randomly and then those women who have already divorced were included for the detailed investigation. A total of 372 respondents were successively interviewed out of 1,423 respondents and included in the analysis. The interviews were conducted by four trained female investigators who had an educational level not below graduation during the period from January to May, 2019.

In order to examine whether each of the selected socio-economic and demographic factors has significant relationship with divorce, a contingency chi-square test statistic has been used. Logistic regression analysis was adopted to study the

influences of the selected socio-economic and demographic factors on divorce in Chattogram Metropolitan Area (urban area) and Chattogram district (rural areas) of Bangladesh.

3. Results and Discussions

Percentage distribution of respondents (women) who had already divorced by the selected socio-economic and demographic factors are shown in the Table 1. Respondents was considered to be divorced if she completely separated from her husband. The table shows that in urban areas, the percentage of divorced women is higher among households with better socio-economic status (households with higher income, use of mobile phone or Facebook, higher educational level of both respondents and husbands) whereas in rural areas, it was observed that the percentage of divorced women is higher among households with lower socio-economic status (household with no land, lower income, lower profession, lower educational level). The table 1 also shows that in both urban and rural areas, the divorce rate is much higher among respondents who have more female children. This may be due to the fact that in Bangladesh, sons are more valued offspring because they are treated as an economic support for the family even from early boyhood.

Table 1. Percentage distribution of respondents who had divorced by the selected socio-economic and demographic variables.

Selected variables	Urban areas	Rural areas
Landownership status of husbands		
Having own land	68.3	28.5
Having no land	31.7	71.5
	$\chi^2 = 18.45**$	$\chi^2 = 11.67*$
Occupation of respondents		
Service holders	56.0	33.2
Businessmen	31.1	26.3
House wife	12.9	40.5
	$\chi^2 = 20.12***$	$\chi^2 = 31.51*$

<div align="right">Table 1 Continued</div>

Selected variables	Urban areas	Rural areas
Occupation of husbands		
Service holders	37.4	24.3
Businessmen	28.1	16.0
Day labors and rickshaw pullers		
Unemployment	12.0	28.1
	22.5	31.6
	$\chi^2 = 26.34**$	$\chi^2 = 19.01**$
Respondent's age (in years)		
< 25	32.7	19.0
25-45	52.4	62.2
>45	14.9	18.8
	$\chi^2 = 14.57***$	$\chi^2 = 23.87**$
Husband's age (in years)		
< 25	28.3	24.8
25-45	59.2	62.0
>45	12.5	13.2
	$\chi^2 = 27.09*$	$\chi^2 = 34.71*$
Husband's educational qualifications		
Illiterate	11.8	49.5
Primary-secondary	24.0	31.4
Higher secondary and above	64.7	19.1
	$\chi^2 = 14.23**$	$\chi^2 = 35.08*$
Households income (in taka per month)		
<20,000	26.1	62.5
20,000-40,000	29.9	19.2
>40,000	44.0	18.3
	$\chi^2 = 41.73**$	$\chi^2 = 25.61*$
Respondent's educational qualifications		
Illiterate	22.0	44.8
Primary-secondary	31.6	35.0
Higher secondary and above	46.4	20.2
	$\chi^2 = 14.07**$	$\chi^2 = 17.54***$

Table 1 Continued

Selected variables	Urban areas	Rural areas
Dowry taken by the husbands		
Yes	68.5	76.3
No	31.5	23.7
	$\chi^2 = 11.92***$	$\chi^2 = 17.62**$
Use of mobile phone or Facebook		
Used	81.8	36.6
Not used	18.2	63.4
	$\chi^2 = 10.83***$	$\chi^2 = 16.41***$
Number of female children		
1-2	24.0	17.5
3-4	29.1	23.2
>4	47.9	59.3
	$\chi^2 = 37.04*$	$\chi^2 = 41.76**$
Drug addiction status of husbands		
Addicted	58.5	67.7
Not addicted	41.5	32.3
	$\chi^2 = 13.91***$	$\chi^2 = 19.71***$
Type of marriage		
Settled	61.7	88.0
Loved	38.3	12.0
	$\chi^2 = 12.07*$	$\chi^2 = 9.88**$
Duration of marriage (in years)		
< 5	30.6	33.2
5-25	45.1	40.1
25-35	14.0	17.2
> 35	10.3	9.5
	$\chi^2 = 56.15**$	$\chi^2 = 38.04*$
Type of family		
Joint	34.7	47.0
Unique	65.3	53.0
	$\chi^2 = 16.96*$	$\chi^2 = 14.51**$
Fertility status of husbands		
Capable	40.6	38.4
Not capable	59.4	61.6
	$\chi^2 = 18.39**$	$\chi^2 = 13.67**$

Table 1 Continued

Selected variables	Urban areas	Rural areas
Other causes of divorce	11.5	10.5
(a) Husband's extramarital relationship		
with other women	10.1	8.4
(b) Impotence	13.0	15.2
(c) Family confliction	25.3	24.8
(d) Poverty	10.0	12.3
(e) Unemployment		
(f) Long- time stay in overseas by husbands	9.5	11.6
(g) Lack of personality	8.0	11.2
(h) Physical and mental torture by husbands		
	12.6	6.0
	$\chi^2 = 48.79***$	$\chi^2 = 51.03***$

Note:***=p<0.001,   **=p<0.01,   *=p<0.05

Husband's drug addiction has a positive influence on divorce. In both the areas, the percentage of divorced women is higher among respondents whose husbands are addicted to drugs, taken dowry, settled marriage, infertility and lives in a joint family. In urban areas, the rate of divorce is found to be higher among women whose husbands are engaged in service or business than those women whose husbands are engaged in other occupations. The women who work outside the home had higher level of divorce compared to those who do not work outside the home in the same areas. In both the areas, it was observed that the important causes of seeking divorce by the women whose husbands are extramarital relationships, impotence, unemployment, lack of personality, physical and mental torture, poverty etc.

However, age of respondents is an important factor for seeking divorce of a woman. Table 1 shows that women of middle age group are more likely to take divorce from their husbands compared to those are the youngest and the oldest counterparts. The respondents aged between 25 and 45 years were more likely to have divorced than respondents aged below 25 years and greater than 45 years. In case of Bangladesh,

the highest divorce rate in the age group of married women 15 to 19 years is 32.6 per cent [1]. In the table, it was observed that there is a strong positive and significant relationship between all the selected socio-economic and demographic factors and divorce.

To study the influences of the selected socio-economic and demographic factors on divorce, we applied a multivariate analysis i. e., logistic regression analysis. The dependent variable divorce status was defined by a dichotomous variable in which a woman was completely separated from her husband. For this purpose, we fit two logistic regression models. The divorce pattern in the urban and the rural areas are for the first and for the second models respectively.

The positive regression coefficients of odds ratios greater than unity indicate that the respondents are more likely to take divorce from their husbands. From the table 2, we observed that respondents who have used mobile phone or Facebook are about 7 times more likely to seek divorce than those respondents who do not use mobile phone or Facebook. The table reveals that respondents given dowry to the husbands during marriage are about 9 times more likely to take divorce than those did not give any dowry to the husbands during marriage. These two factors are positively significant effects on divorce pattern. Table 2 also reveals that respondents with higher educational level is about 6 times more likely to take divorce than those having no formal education and this factor is also a positively significant effect on divorce. Table 2 shows that among the fifteen explanatory variables included in the first model, other significant factors on divorce are (2), (3), (4), (5), (7), (8), (9), (10), (11), and (13). It is interesting to note that land ownership status, husband's educational qualifications, duration of marriage, and having number of female children are not significant effects on divorce in this model although these appears to have significant relationship with divorce in bi-variate analysis.

Table 2. Logistic regression coefficients and odds ratios of selected socio-economic and demographic variables of divorce in Chittagong metropolitan area (urban area).

Serial no.	Selected variables	Regression coefficients	Standard errors	p-values	Odds ratios
1	Landownership status of husbands				
	Having no land	RC	.....	.....	.....
	Having own land	0.8011			2.2280
2	Occupation of respondents				
	House wife	RC	.....	.....	.....
	Service holders	1.4860***	0.0120	0.0011	4.4194
	Businessmen	1.1371**	0.4310	0.0121	3.1177
3	Occupation of husbands	0.9862**	0.4261	0.0124	2.6810
	Service holders	1.0957*	0.2300	0.0043	2.9913
	Businessmen				
	Day labors and rickshaw pullers	0.7908**	0.0231	0.0440	2.2052
	Unemployment	RC	.....	.....	.....
4	Respondent's age (in years)				
	< 25	RC	.....	.....	.....
	25-45	1.9831***	0.0031	0.0000	7.2652
	>45	0.7109*	0.0121	0.0004	2.0358
5	Husband's age (in years)				
	< 25	RC	.....	.....	.....
	25-45	1.5981**	0.1120	0.0000	4.9436
	>45	1.0628***	0.0032	0.0012	2.8945
6	Husband's educational qualifications	RC	.....	.....	.....
	Illiterate	0.7417	0.1431	0.2410	2.0995
	Primary-secondary	0.5106	0.2310	0.3081	1.6663
	Higher secondary and above				
7	Households income (in taka per month)	RC	.....	.....	.....
	<20,000	1.4927***	0.0029	0.0000	4.4491
	20,000-40,000	1.9063***	0.0030	0.0000	6.7281
	>40,000				

Table 2 Continued

Serial no.	Selected variables	Regression coefficients	Standard errors	p-values	Odds ratios
8	Respondent's educational qualifications				
	Illiterate	RC	.....	.....	......
	Primary-secondary	0.9840**	0.5013	0.0314	2.6751
	Higher secondary and above	1.8521***	0.01410	0.0000	6.3732
9	Dowry taken by husbands				
	Yes	2.1407***	0.0103	0.0000	8.5054
	No	RC	.....	.....	.....
10	Use of mobile phone or Facebook				
	Yes	1.9047***	0.0032	0.0000	6.7174
	No	RC	.....	.....	.....
11	Drug addiction status of husbands				
	Addicted	2.0750***	0.0011	0.0000	7.9645
	Not addicted	RC	.....	.....	.....
12	Duration of marriage (in years)				
	< 5	RC	.....	.....	.....
	5-25	0.9550	0.0008	0.0000	2.5987
	25-35	0.8743	0.0264	0.0430	2.3972
	> 35	0.6216	0.0172	0.0078	1.8619
13	Fertility status of husbands				
	Capable	RC	.....	.....	.....
	Not capable	1.4842***	0.0023	0.0000	4.4114
14	Number of female children				
	1-2	RC	.....	.....	.....
	3-4	0.5347	0.0053	0.5134	1.7069
	>4	0.7279	0.0127	0.2231	2.0707

Table 2 Continued

Serial no.	Selected variables	Regression coefficients	Standard errors	p-values	Odds ratios
15	Other causes of divorce				
	(a) Poverty	RC	.....	.....	.....
	(b) Husband's extramarital relationship with other women	1.6420***	0.0008	0.0000	5.1655
	(c) Impotence	1.5673***	0.0025	0.0000	4.7937
	(d) Family confliction	0.9538*	0.0639	0.0131	2.5956
	(e) Unemployment	1.7002***	0.0014	0.0000	5.4750
	(f) Long- time stay in overseas by husbands	0.8991**	0.0687	0.0092	2.4574
	(g) Lack of personality	1.1529**	0.0315	0.0022	3.1674
	(h) Physical and mental torture by husbands	1.3347***	0.0097	0.0006	3.7989

Notes: 1.   ***=p<0.001,   **=p<0.01,   *=p<0.05
*   2. RC= Reference Category*

Table 3 shows the effects of selected socio-economic and demographic factors (found to significant in bi-variate analysis) on divorce in case of rural areas. The logistic regression analysis reveals that occupation of respondents and husbands, respondent's age, respondent's educational qualifications, dowry taken by husbands, drug addiction status of husbands, use of mobile phone or Facebook and fertility status of husbands have significant positive effects on divorce. It is remarkable that husband's age has no significant effect on divorce in rural areas while in urban areas, this factor has a positively significant effect on divorce. Although household income is found to be significantly effect on divorce in urban areas, but in rural areas, it is not statistically significant. Results of tables 2 and 3 reveal that the other causes of divorce are impotence, poverty, husband's extramarital relationship with other women, family confliction, unemployment, husband's long time overseas stay, lack of personality of husbands, and physical and mental persecution by the husbands and these factors are also statistically and positively significant effects on divorce.

Table 3. Logistic regression coefficients and odds ratios of selected socio-economic and demographic variables of divorce in the rural areas of Chittagong district.

Serial no.	Selected variables	Regression coefficients	Standard errors	p-values	Odds ratios
1	Landownership status of husbands				
	Having no land	RC	.....	.....	.....
	Having own land	0.9984	0.3510	0.3019	2.7139
2	Occupation of respondents				
	House wife	RC	.....	.....	.....
	Service holders	0.8853**	0.0270	0.0731	2.4065
	Businessmen	1.3214***	0.0940	0.0538	3.7487
3	Occupation of husbands				
	Service holders	1.1350***	0.0121	0.0000	3.1112
	Businessmen	0.9986*	0.0638	0.0241	2.7145
	Day labors and rickshaw pullers	1.5432***	0.0130	0.0000	4.6795
	Unemployment	RC	.....	.....	.....
4	Respondent's age (in years)				
	< 25	RC	.....	.....	.....
	25-45	1.5590***	0.0131	0.0000	4.7541
	>45	0.9843**	0.2434	0.0571	2.6759
5	Husband's age (in years)				
	< 25	RC	.....	.....	.....
	25-45	0.9923	0.0832	0.0144	2.6974
	>45	0.8973	0.0718	0.0732	2.4530
6	Husband's educational qualifications				
	Illiterate	RC	.....	.....	....
	Primary-secondary	0.9153	0.0952	0.0648	2.4975
	Higher secondary and above	0.7011	0.0987	0.02669	2.0160
7	Households income (in taka per month)	RC	.....	.....	.....
	<20,000	0.9083	0.1238	0.0531	2.4801
	20,000-40,000	0.7953	0.09852	0.0127	2.2151
	>40,000				
8	Respondent's educational qualifications	RC	.....	.....	......
	Illiterate	1.6770***	0.0014	0.0000	5.3495
	Primary-secondary	1.5970***	0.0221	0.0007	4.9382
	Higher secondary and above				

Serial no.	Selected variables	Regression coefficients	Standard errors	p-values	Odds ratios
9	Dowry taken by husbands				
	Yes	1.3360**	0.0525	0.00111	3.8038
	No	RC	.....	.....	.....
10	Use of mobile phone or Facebook				
	Yes	1.7100***	0.0128	0.0000	5.5290
	No	RC	.....	.....	.....
11	Drug addiction status of husbands				
	Addicted	1.8978***	0.0041	0.0000	6.6712
	Not addicted	RC	.....	.....	.....
12	Duration of marriage (in years)				
	< 5	RC	.....	.....	.....
	5-25	0.9974	0.0438	0.0137	2.7112
	25-35	0.4210	0.0047	0.0000	1.5235
	> 35	1.0812	0.0361	0.0131	2.9482
13	Number of female children				
	1-2	RC	.....	.....	.....
	2-3	0.5741	0.2311	0.1103	
	>4	0.8940	0.4003	0.1094	
14	Fertility status of husbands				
	Capable	RC	.....	.....	.....
	Not capable	1.8649***	0.0051	0.0000	6.4553
15	Other causes of divorce				
	(a) Poverty	RC	.....	.....	.....
	(b) Husband's extramarital relationship with other women	1.8952***	0.0061	0.0000	6.6539
	(c) Impotence	1.7042***	0.0017	0.0000	5.4970
	(d) Family confliction	1.7719***	0.0639	0.0000	5.8820
	(e) Unemployment	0.9850*	0.0431	0.0316	2.6778
	(f) Long time stay in overseas by husbands	1.0042*	0.0139	0.0370	2.7297
	(g) Lack of personality	0.9840*	0.0852	0.0133	2.6751
	(h) Physical and mental torture by husbands	1.6083***	0.01160	0.0000	4.9943

Notes: 1. ***=p<0.001,   **=p<0.01,   *=p<0.05
2. RC= Reference Category

4. Conclusions and Policy Implications

Respondent's educational qualifications were found to have a significant positive relationship with divorce for both urban and rural areas. Respondents' education to some extent and standard of living also affect conjugal harmony. It is associated with some patterns such as family income, occupation, solvency, economic independence and freedom of women affect matrimonial bonds. An educated woman may have better knowledge of her life style, economic independence, personality, negative effect of drug addiction etc. Thus attention should be focused on the need of expanding educational facilities for women in both urban and rural areas with a view to discouraging the physical and mental torture by the husbands which will lead to cementing ties between the husband and wife.

This study also reveals that use of mobile phone or Facebook, extramarital relationship, husband's expatriate status, lack of personality of husbands, and family conflict have significant positive effects on divorce. The highly significant effect of these factors on divorce for both the areas indicates that a respondent is more likely to get divorce from her husband. Therefore, husbands should be motivated regarding these factors through mass media, mobile films, newspapers or magazines during their conjugal life in order to raise awareness about nuptial conflict between a husband and a wife as well as divorce. Government and non-government organizations should take proper steps creating the awareness of the people about the bad effects of divorce according to divorce patterns.

This study shows that in both the areas, dowry taken by husbands during marriage is a positively significant effect on divorce. Therefore, government should take proper initiative by mass media advertising programs, different TV channels, mobile films, newspapers or magazines etc. which can play a vital role to reducing divorce rate and if possible, government should include education against dowry at primary education level and the vast section of the people can be benefited. On the other hand, since in case of rural areas, different mass media can't be expected and so, in this case,

projector can play an important role through showing documentary or films on dowry.

The multivariate analysis has also shown that unemployment is one of the important determinants of seeking divorce by a woman. Similar result was also observed in an urban area of Bangladesh [5]. Thus along with taking necessary steps to improve the job facilities both government and non-government sectors in both the areas for men and all over the Bangladesh. The five year development plan of the country should also considering creation of different job market as a special target.

Logistic regression analysis also reveals that husband's drug addiction has a positively significant impact on divorce. It is an important social problem in Bangladesh. So, civil society and government should play an effective role by campaigning against drugs. Government should take necessary steps to increase the awareness of the people of Bangladesh from the adverse effects of drugs and strongly handle drug trafficking as well.

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