

# VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN - A STUDY DONE IN THE ONE-STOP CRISIS CENTRE (OCC) OF DHAKA MEDICAL COLLEGE HOSPITAL, DHAKA, BANGLADESH

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## **Abstract:**

**Objective:** This study aims to describe main perpetrator of violence area and prevention of violence against women.

**Study design:** A cross sectional study was carried out in One-stop Crisis Centre (OCC) of Dhaka Medical College Hospital, Dhaka, Bangladesh during the period of June 2006 to May 2007.

**Methods:** 284 victims reported in OCC during the study period were selected as cases for the study and quantitative information was collected from them using cross sectional for the present study.

**Results:** Study shows that most of the violence is done by husband (46.48%) and prevalence is more in rural areas (80.98%) in comparison to urban area (19.02%). Physical assault is the most common type of violence (50.35%), followed by sexual assault (36.63%) and burn (13.02%) Housewives are tortured more (67%).

**Conclusion:** Proper implementation of existing rules and community based interventions for raising awareness about the domestic violence against women are recommended.

**Key words:** Violence against women, assault, human rights, one-stop crisis centre (OCC), Bangladesh.

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## **Introduction:**

Domestic violence, also known as domestic abuse, spousal abuse or intimate partner violence (IPV), can be broadly defined as a pattern of abusive behaviors by one or both partners in an intimate relationship such as marriage, dating, family, friends or cohabitation<sup>1</sup>. Domestic violence has many forms including physical aggression (hitting, kicking, biting, shoving, restraining, slapping, throwing objects) or threats, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, controlling or domineering, intimidation, stalking, passive/covert abuse (e.g. neglect), and economic deprivation<sup>1</sup>.

Alcohol consumption<sup>2</sup> and mental illness<sup>3</sup> can be co-morbid with abuse, and present additional challenges when present alongside pattern of abuse.

Awareness, perception and documentation of domestic violence differ from country to country, and from era to era<sup>4,5</sup>. Estimates are that only about a third of cases of domestic violence are actually reported in the United States and United Kingdom. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), domestic violence is a serious, preventable public health problem affecting more than 32 million Americans, or over 10% of the U.S population<sup>4</sup>.

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Beating wives by husband has been common in all culture perhaps in all times<sup>6,7,8</sup>. Bangladesh seems to be no exception. Newspaper report in the country clearly indicate that the prevalence of violence against women is very high<sup>9,10</sup>. National data on the general population do not exist. However, small scale studies support the above conviction<sup>11</sup>. As of now, the estimate of the prevalence of physical violence against women by husbands in Bangladesh varies between 30% and 50%<sup>12,13</sup>. Despite the seriousness of the problem in terms of violation of human rights and public health consequences<sup>8,14</sup>, there is a dearth of knowledge on the extent, nature and the context of violence against women 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 treatments consulting<sup>8</sup>. More evaluation is needed to assess the effectiveness of violence prevention measures. To get promising result, it needs increasing education and opportunities for women and girls in their self-esteem and negotiation skills, reducing gender inequalities in communities.

#### Methods:

The study was carried out in the One-stop Crisis Centre (OCC) of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), Bangladesh, during the period of June 2006 to May 2007. 284 victims reported in OCC were selected as cases for the study. Quantitative information was collected using a cross sectional survey covering all victims attained to OCC in DMCH. We took precautions to ensure privacy and safety of the respondents, and made sure that no third person was present while a respondent attended the survey. The purpose of the study was not disclosed to her. The main focus of the study was violence by husbands. The questions exploring different forms of violence perpetrated by husbands were direct and behaviorally explicit. Thus the

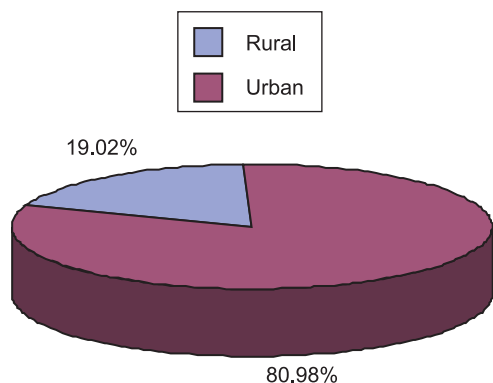
specific items for exploring physical violence included slapping, pushing, shoving, hitting, kicking, dragging, beating, choking, burning and threatening to use or actually using a weapon against her. The questions used for exploring sexual violence by husbands included use of physical force in sexual intercourse; participation out of fear and any sexual act that was considered by the woman to be degrading or humiliating. Occupation of husband was coded into three categories: with day labourer, boatmen, rickshaw pullers, as low earning, farmers, village doctors, mechanics and small businessman as middle earning and rich businessman, regular job holders and teachers as high earning groups.

#### Results:

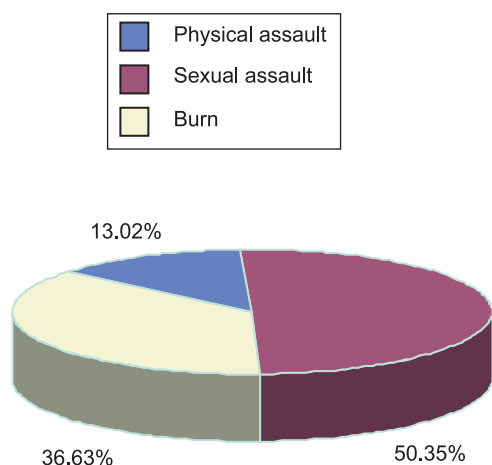
The present study shows that most of the violence is done by husband (46.48%) [Table-I] and prevalence is more in rural areas (80.98%) in comparison to urban area (19.02%) [Fig.1]. Physical assault is the most common type of violence (50.35%), followed by sexual assault (36.63%) and burn (13.02%) [Fig.2]. Housewives are tortured more (67%) [Table-II].

**Table-I**  
*Relationship with the victim.*

Relation of the accused person with the victim	No. of victims	Percentage
Husband	132	46.48
Brother-in-law	18	6.32
Ex-husband	08	2.82
Father	04	1.42
Mother	05	1.76
Grand mother	08	2.82
Land lord	22	7.74
Land lady	10	3.53
Son	05	1.76
Mother-in-law	15	5.28
Step brother-in-law	18	6.34
Neighbour	13	4.58
Client	10	3.52
Unknown	16	5.63
<b>Total</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>100</b>



**Fig. -1:** Pie chart showing geographical distribution of violence against women.



**Fig. -2:** Pie chart showing types of violence against women.

**Table-II**

*Occupation of the victims.*

Occupation of the victim	No. of victims	Percentage
Housewife	190	67
Maid servant	48	17
Madrassa Teacher	06	02
Service holder	09	03
Sex worker	11	04
Student	11	04
Business person	09	03
<b>Total</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>100</b>

**Discussion:**

Violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread violations of human rights. It can include physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse, and it cuts across boundaries of age, race, culture, wealth and geography<sup>11</sup>. It takes place in the home, on the streets, in schools, the workplace, in farm fields, refugee camps, during conflicts and crisis. It has many manifestations- from the most universally prevalent forms of domestic and sexual violence, to harmful practices, abuse during pregnancy, so called honour killings and other types of femicide.

Globally, up to six out of every ten women experience physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime. A World Health Organization study of 24,000 women in 10 countries found that the prevalence of physical and/or sexual violence by a partner varied from 15% in urban Japan to 71% in rural Ethiopia, with most areas being in the 30-60% range<sup>14</sup>.

From our study, we see that, in Bangladesh, the scenario of domestic violence/domestic abuse/spousal abuse/intimate partner violence is very alarming. This population study confirms the high levels of domestic violence suggested by earlier works<sup>1,4-6</sup> and confirms that it remains a major public health problem in Bangladesh. Since husbands are the greatest perpetrators of violence against women, effective interventions would need to target them.

**Limitations:**

This is single center study to describe main perpetrator of violence, type, area and prevention of violence against women in small number of victims. Further randomized studies are recommended for determining the actual scenario.

**Conclusion:**

The prevailing attitudes that permit and encourage male violence must be directly and creatively addressed. A part of these efforts involves careful research to identify messages and interventions that can change this attitude. At community level, improvement of economic status of women as well as women

empowerment is essential. Mass awareness about violence against women through mass media communication is needed to be diffused.

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