

Demographic Variations and Situational Patterns in Sexual Assault : A Retrospective Study

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Conflict of Interest: None

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ABSTRACT:

Background: Sexual assault is a major global issue now-a-days affecting both males and females across all demographic categories. While many international studies have documented prevalence and patterns of sexual assault, there is limited data for Bangladesh.

Objective: To analyze demographic variations and situational patterns among sexual assault victims in Bangladesh.

Methods: A retrospective cross-sectional study was conducted at the Department of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology, Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College from 1st January, 2023 to 31st December, 2023. Total 100 sexual assault victims who gave consent to participate in this study were chosen by Simple Random Sampling. Individuals with mental disorder were excluded from this study. Data obtained from departmental records, interviews and medical requisition letter.

Result: Among 100 victims, majority were female (66%). Male victims were predominant in 0-10 and 11-20 years age group. Highest victims were noticed in between 11-20 years of age (43%), followed by 21-30 years (25%), 0-10 years (22%), 31-40 years (7%) and 41-50 years (3%). Genital injuries were found in 36% victims. Repetition of the act by same perpetrator were found in 65% of cases. 93% of the victims knew their perpetrators. Among the victims, majority (59%) was unmarried. 11 victims (17%) had become pregnant followed by the assault and they were found to be in severe psychological trauma.

Conclusion: Sexual assault in Bangladesh affects females of all ages and male children, with the perpetrators of being acquaint. High rate of repetitive acts and under-evaluated pregnancy has spiked urgent needs to strengthened legal framework, support and community based interventions to protect the vulnerable populations.

Key Words: Sexual assault ,
Demographic variations , Child sexual
abuse , Repetitive assault , Perpetrator
acquaintances , Post-assault pregnancy.

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Introduction

Sexual violence affects all demographic categories globally (Cagney et al., 2025). Globally, according to the age, 18.9% were female victims, while 14.8% were male victims (Cagney et al., 2025). Among adolescents and young people, 67.3% females and 71.9% were males first experienced sexual violence before age of 18 years (Cagney et al., 2025). In Croatia, 10.8% children aged 11 - 16 years old experienced some sort of sexual abuse and majority of the perpetrators were known to the victim (Ajdukovic et al., 2013). In Ireland, 6% children and 1.5% adults are sexually abused by female perpetrators (Bourke et al., 2013). In South Africa, 24.9% females encounter sexual violence with 18-49 years and 9% experience before 15 years (Steele et al., 2019). In Nigeria, 10,079 cases were reported between 2001 and 2005 but only 18% was reported to the police and pregnancy, HIV became common outcomes of sexual violence in Nigeria (Peters and Olowa, 2010). In India, 27,863 rape incidents were reported in 2020 although true incidence is believed to be higher (Chauhan, 2022). In Bangladesh, for sodomy cases, 83.1% victims were under the age of 18 years (Sumon et al., 2025). Most victims knew the perpetrator as a friend or relative (Sumon et al., 2025). In Pakistan, among 102 sodomy cases, 99% was found to be homosexual in nature (Waheed et al., 2021). Almost 50% of the accused, were aged from 21-30 years, 78.4% were illiterate, 86.3% lived alone without family and almost 100% were from poor socio-economic backgrounds (Waheed et al., 2021). In Egypt, for sodomy, male children were found to be 74.19% while female children were found to be 25.81% and 96.67% perpetrator had no relation to the victims, while 50% children were assaulted by the relatives (Khater et al., 2021). For adults, females were more likely to be the victim scaling up to 85% (Khater et al., 2021). In United States, study showed that the incidents of forceful vaginal sex was 87% and anal sex was 37.9% among the people aged between 25-39 years of age (Roberts et al., 2021). Black participants reported an earlier age of initiation than white participants (Roberts et al., 2021).

A legal approach is necessary for prevention of sexual violence where the majority of the victims are females and male dominance is often used to justify violence and blame the victims (UNICEF, 2020). The sociological framework where long-term sustainable changes are required at all levels of the society including legal frame-

works, system and institutions, communities, households and individuals (UNICEF, 2020). Understanding demographic variations and implementing strategies to prevent are critical steps towards eliminating sexual violence against all children, adolescent and adults worldwide.

Methodology

A retrospective cross-sectional analytical study was conducted at Department of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology of Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College (ShSMC). The study covered a time frame of 1 year from 1st January, 2023 to 31st December, 2023. Total 100 sexual assault victims were taken as study population by Simple Random Technique. Mental disordered individuals were excluded from this study. Datas were obtained from departmental records, interviews. Information included :

- Age of the victims
- Gender of the victims
- Pregnancy status
- Marital status
- Genital injuries sustained by the victims
- Repetition of the assault
- Acquaint to the victim

During the whole study procedure, ethical principles were strictly maintained.

Observation

Statistical methods were applied to the data to determine their frequencies and percentages. Correlation between sexual assault and demographic variations like age, gender; pregnancy and marital status of the victims were analyzed. The analyzed datas were summarized in tables and charts for clarity.

Table 01. Correlation between sexual assault and age of the victims

Age group	Age	Number of the victims	Percentage
1	0-10	22	22%
2	11-20	43	43%
3	21-30	25	25%
4	31-40	7	7%
5	41-50	3	3%

Victims were grouped as per their age in decades starting from 6 years of age to 55 years of age. In 1st group of 0-10 years, there was 22 victims. Similarly in 2nd (11-20 years), 3rd (21-30 years), 4th (31-40 years) and 5th (41-50 years) age group, 43, 25, 7 and 3 victims were found accordingly.

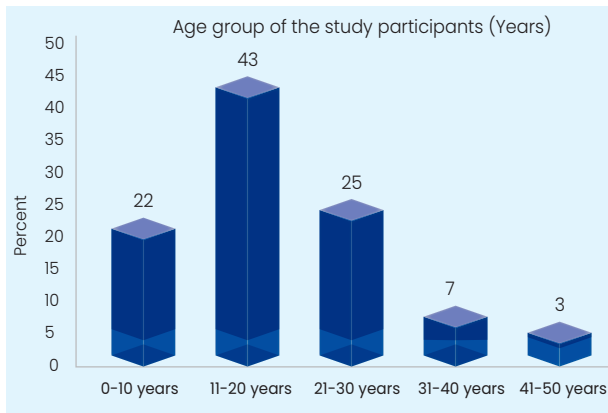


Figure 01: Number of sexual assault victims as per age group

Table 02. Correlation between sexual assault and gender of the victim

Gender	Number of the victims	Percentage
Male	34	34%
Female	66	66%

Among the studied 100 victims, females were found to be dominant with an alarming number of 66, covering the 66% of total studied population. Males were found to be the victim of 34 cases, covering up to 34% of total studied population. But among the male victims no one exceeded the age of 18 years. Majority of them were below 10 years of age which gave rise of the issue about child safety.

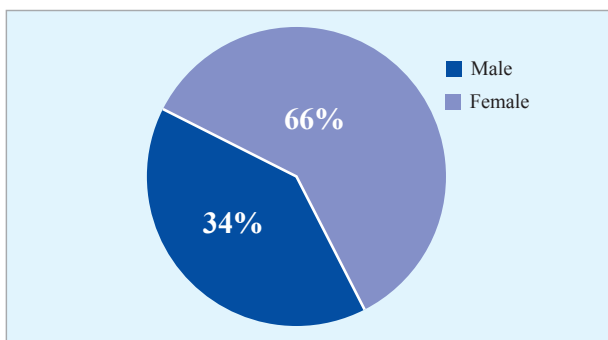


Figure 02 : Number of sexual assault victims as per their gender

Table 03. Pregnancy status of the victims

Pregnancy status	Number of the victims	Percentage
Pregnant	2	3%
Non-pregnant	53	80%
Pregnant followed by assault	11	17%

Among the 66 female victims of sexual assault, only 2 were pregnant before the incident took place, which summed to the 3% of total female victims. 53 out of 66 victims were non-pregnant, which was almost 80% of total female victims. But 11 victims became pregnant followed by the sexual assault, which was about 17% of total female victims.

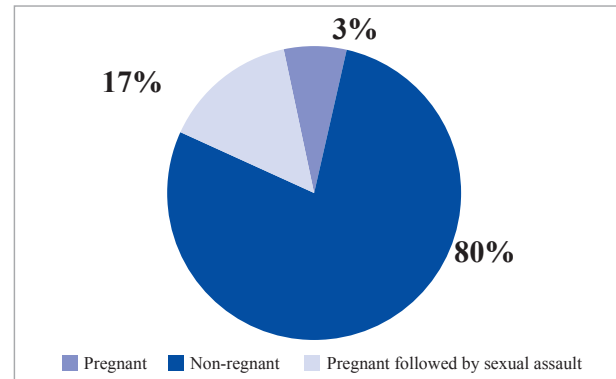


Figure 03 : Pregnancy status of the female victims

Table 04. Marital status of the victims

Marital status	Number of the victims	Percentage
Married	41	41%
Unmarried	59	59%

Among all the victims, on those this study was conducted, 41 of them was married with the percentage of 41% and 59 of them was unmarried summed up to the percentage of 59%.

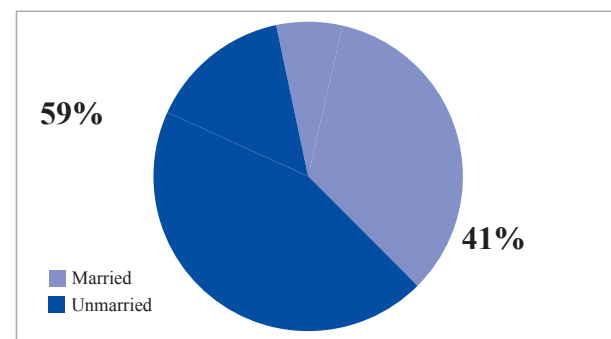


Figure 04 : Marital status of the victims

Table 05. Genital injuries sustained by the victims

Genital injuries	Number of the victims	Percentage
Injuries sustained	36	36%
Injuries not sustained	64	64%

Among 100 victims of the sexual assault, 36 victims suffered from genital injuries due to sexual assault done by the perpetrator. They summed up to 36% of total victims. Remaining 64 victims (64%) showed no sign of genital injury.

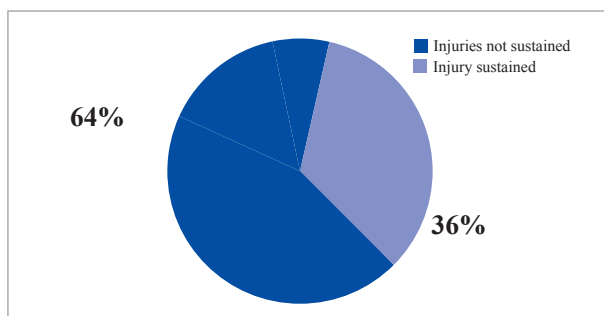


Figure 05 : Genital injury sustained by the victims

Table 06. Repetition of the assault

Repetition of the assault	Number of the victims	Percentage
Repeated acts	65	65%
Non-repeated acts	35	35%

In this study, among all 100 victims, 65 victims (65%) complained about suffering repeated assault by the same perpetrator, while remaining 35 victims (35%) suffered once.

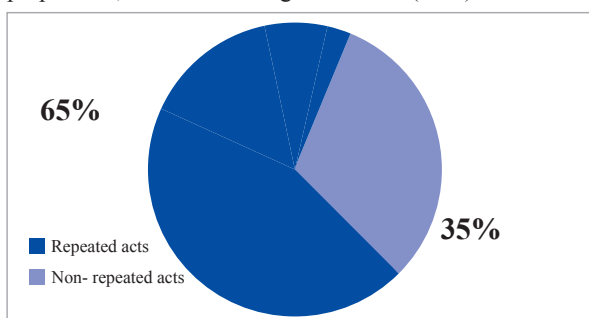


Figure 06 : Repetition of the assault

Table 07. Acquaint to the victim

Acquaint to the victim	Number of the victims	Percentage
Acquaint	93	93%
Unknown	7	7%

This study showed that majority of the perpetrators were somehow known to the victims. So the victims were accessible by the perpetrators. 93 victims (93%) stated that they knew the perpetrator. Only 7 victims (7%) of the 100 stated that they didn't know the perpetrator.

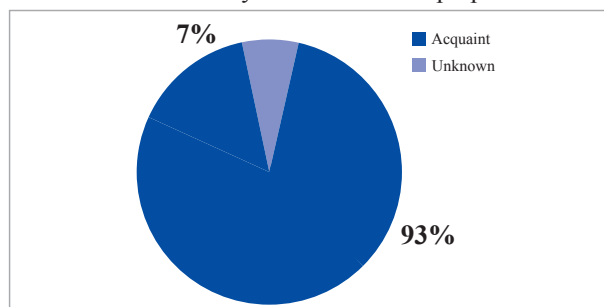


Figure 07 : Acquaint to the victim

Discussion

This study correlates with the demographic pattern, pregnancy and marital status, genital injuries sustained by victims, repetition of the acts and acquaint to the victims of sexual assault cases in Department of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology in Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College.

In Bangladesh, sexual assault victims can be categorized as mainly males and females. Subdivisions can be done according to the age, ethnicity, region etc. Each subdivision has its own medicolegal value. For males, the assault is termed as sodomy and for females it is termed as rape.

For males, all the victims who were the participants of this study, were within the 1st and 2nd age groups and unmarried. For majority, the perpetrator was known to the male victim. Some perpetrator were house tutors, some were relatives, some were seniors from the same area or school. Victims of 1st age group (0-10 years) were particularly lured by small gifts, while 2nd age group (11-20 years) were lured by emotional manipulation or blackmail. For both cases, victims were threatened not to share the matter with anyone. This resulted in repetitive acts as the perpetrators had manipulated the victims with fear to silence them to sustain the abuse. Victims of 1st age group was found to have anal injury. Due to their mental immaturity and gifts they receive, they suffer less from psychological trauma. However, victims of 2nd age group was found to have severe psychological trauma while they suffer less from anal injury.

Majority of the sexual assault victims were females of different ages. Females were found from 1st age group to 5th age group. In contrast to male, females were mostly found in 2nd and 3rd age group. This study categorized female victims of basis of their pregnancy status, marital status, genital injury sustained by them, repetition of the acts and whether the perpetrator was known to her or not. Study showed that, among the victims, majority were found to be unmarried. Few married victims were conceived by their husband and majority were not pregnant. Medicolegal issues spiked for those who became pregnant following the assault. Some victims suffered genital injuries while majority, specially those who were married or habituated on sexual acts, didn't suffer any. Those who suffered genital injury were

treated as per need. Marks of recent injury were found. But as majority of them were from 2nd, 3rd and 4th age groups, they were mentally developed and they suffered intense psychological trauma. Furthermore, females were sexually assaulted due to the perpetrator of being known to them. Females were less lured by small gifts, rather they were forced and threatened to remain silent. This resulted in repetitive acts by forcing the female in to sexual acts.

Conclusion

This retrospective study was conducted to analyze the demographical and situational patterns of sexual assault victims in Bangladesh. This study emphasis on the fact that sexual assault is not an isolated phenomenon but deeply seated within social spheres. With time, this has become a global issue, not to mention also in Bangladesh. Apart from females, males are also victims of this assault. Victims were found from a wide range of age groups with various findings. Genital injury was noted in several victims, specially in younger ones, while psychological trauma circulates among adolescent and adult victims. Individuals with pregnancy followed by the assault were markedly affected psychologically. A major cause of these assault to occur is the acquaintance to the victim. Sometimes victims were forced to remain silent which results in repetition of the acts.

These findings are used to determine medicolegal cases for individualization of the victims. Despite having some limitation, this study reveals current scenarios our society is stringing upon. These datas underscore an urgent need for legal framework and support systems to protect vulnerable populations. Highlighting the perpetrator familiarity and the repetition of abuse, this study advocates for systemic interventions that extend beyond medical treatment.

Limitation of The Study

The study is retrospective and limited sample size (100), which may restrict generalizability. Study was conducted on one institution only. Datas were taken only from the victims who were willing to participate in this study. Besides, victims statements may bias this study outcome.

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Conflict of Interest

This study didn't pose any conflict of interests.

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