THE NORMALIZATION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN BANGLADESH: ANALYSING THROUGH THE LENS OF SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY

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Abstract

The study focuses on the gender-biased socialization process inside the patriarchal social system, which institutionalizes domestic violence against women and transmits it from generation to generation. A culture of normalization contributes to the increased incidence of domestic violence against women, which is socially acceptable despite the fact that it affects women. Domestic violence was predicted to decrease annually in Bangladesh due to improved literacy rates, women's empowerment and participation, and economic prosperity, among other factors. Despite these assumptions, the frequency of violence continues to rise. This qualitative study analyses how sociocultural factors influence domestic violence's acceptance in Bangladeshi society. Additionally, it has an intergenerational effect, which has been examined through Albert Bandura's social learning theory. The researchers conducted extensive semi-structured interviews with participants to understand the issue as a social phenomenon. The paper concludes with a few ideas for a long-term policy to eradicate the root causes of domestic violence against women in society.

Keywords: Spousal violence, Domestic violence, Socialization, Normalization, Patriarchy, Social Learning theory, Secondary Victimization.

Introduction

The most pervasive and destructive systematic violation of human rights in contemporary society has been domestic violence against women (DVAW).

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According to several gender indicators, Bangladesh has recently made significant advancements in women's empowerment. It is disappointing that the development has not been as good as it could be regarding domestic violence. The rising prevalence of domestic violence has been the subject of numerous empirical studies on a worldwide and local level. As violence against women is so common, research studies show that one in three women have been physically or sexually abused by a partner or someone else at some point in their lives (WHO, 2017). The World Health Organization (WHO) also found that 42% of women whose partners had been sexually or physically abused were injured (WHO, 2013). According to the violence against women survey of 2015, over 80% of women are victims of domestic violence, and around two thirds of married women in Bangladesh experience one or more such forms of violence at the hands of their husbands at least once during their married life (Bureau of Statistics, 2015). According to Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK), between January and October of 2021, 197 women were murdered by their spouses. The number was 240 in 2020, slightly higher than in 2019 and 2018 (Rahman, 2020). Surprisingly, rape-related violence has rapidly increased from 2018 onwards. In 2019, it became almost doubled from 732 to 1413. The number of cases was also on the rise during the Covid-19 pandemic, and 15% more reports were seen in 2020. In total, 7338 rape-related violence were seen from 2015 to the first ten months of 2021. Almost 5% of these incidents ended with the death of the victims. Domestic violence against women has increased to an alarming degree during the Covid-19 outbreak. BRAC reported about a 31% increase in reporting violence against women and girls in 2020 compared to 2019 (Jabbar, 2021).

Domestic violence in Bangladesh (2015-2021*)
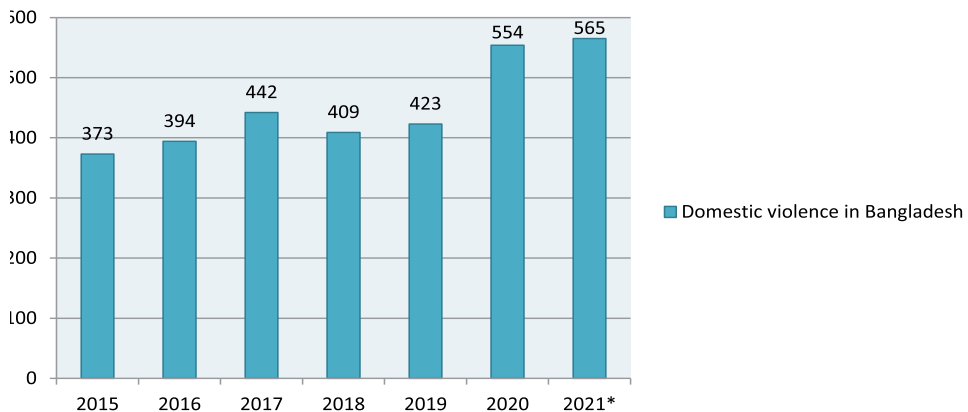
Till October, 2021

Figure 1: Domestic violence in Bangladesh 2015-2021* (ASK, cited in Akhter, 2021)

Despite such a high rate of domestic violence in Bangladesh, it is astonishing that, in reality, the rate is higher than what has been brought to light. According to current expertise, the underlying 'culture of acceptance,' reinforced by religious allegiance, has been recognized as the primary reason for this occurrence in Bangladesh. It makes women potential victims of violence within the household. Societal norms, patriarchal mindsets, and traditional values associated with gender roles and men's supremacy that develop through socialization tend to trigger and provoke domestic violence against women in patriarchal social structures like Bangladesh (Khan, 2005). Individual acts in the community are conducted according to established norms and customs and how they socialize within a particular society. This learning process continues from the family at the micro-level and through the neighbourhood, society, and state at the macro level. Albert Bandura's social learning theory is widely used and one of the most popular explanatory perspectives in the domestic violence sphere because it provides a behavioural approach to explain the perspective of domestic violence as one of the leading factors. Women suffer from many health, psychological and social problems due to domestic violence.

This paper mainly focused on domestic violence as the most dominant, even relatively hidden and neglected form of violence nowadays. A little or no studies were conducted in Bangladesh to look at domestic violence from the point of view of social learning theory. This paper will try to understand the root causes of domestic violence against women from Social learning theory as an explanatory perspective. The researchers also attempt to understand the discriminatory socialization practices that create a culture of normalization in our patriarchal society and then persist for long periods through intergenerational transmission. Additionally, the goal of this research is to find a way out of the previous stereotypes and find a sustainable solution for society's betterment based on our respondents' personal experiences. Hopefully, it will help prevent domestic violence against women in Bangladesh by developing new ideas and thoughts regarding influential socio-cultural factors from a preventive perspective. Because it is common knowledge that "prevention is better than cure," it is necessary to investigate the factors that contribute to domestic violence against women and make an effort to eliminate this problem from our society. It will allow for the development of a long-term solution and a stringent control mechanism achieved through the correct application of laws.

Methodology

The descriptive characteristic of the qualitative approach helps extract information from the participants through interview. Problems like women being victims of domestic abuse are not always amenable to being described through numbers. It needs detailed understanding by generating conversations, interviews, discussions, and life stories. This paper will follow a qualitative research method. We will rely on primary and secondary data sources to understand and construct our research question. Hence, our focus will be on understanding the subject matter rather than finding out the numbers related to the phenomenon.

The researchers will use in-depth semi-structured interviews to collect primary data from participants for this paper. They have selected twenty five married women for in-depth interviews with homemakers and working women from Dhaka city. In-depth interviews help gather detailed information from participants because domestic violence against women is considered a personal and sensitive issue.

The main goal was to develop the right ideas about the problem. For the interview, the researchers asked a mix of semi-structured and unstructured questions. These questions do not really tell the participant precisely what to do; instead, they help the participant open up a conversation more. As secondary sources of information, the authors relied on a variety of print and digital publications, including books, articles, internet publications, newspapers, journals, websites, reports, and online archives primarily from government and non-government institutions.

In this study, 'population' means every married woman whom her husband has abused. The total number of people is huge, making it hard for researchers to talk to each one and get information. For this paper, data will be collected using purposive sampling that is not based on chance. The authors used a technique for sampling that is known as 'homogeneous purposive sampling.' They chose married women living in Dhaka city. So, the people who answered are all the same and were chosen on purpose. Because of time and financial constraints, researchers find it difficult to speak with married women outside of the Dhaka city. They chose people from the neighbourhood, their families, friends, and acquaintances. Additionally, the individuals are picked based on their individual histories.

Socio Economic Status of the Respondents

The researchers interviewed 25 respondents. They are from diversified age groups, education and profession. These are described below:

Age Structure

The age of the respondents ranges between 18-50 years. The respondent's age structures are given below;

Age Group	Frequency
16-20	06
21-25	03
26-30	06
31-35	06
36-40	01
41-45	01
46-50	02
Total	**25**

Figure 2: Age structure of the respondents (Field data, 2021)

Literacy Rate

The literacy levels of the interviewees range widely from those with no formal education to those with advanced degrees. The authors have classified the respondents into three groups, each consisting of a different number of respondents: non-educated to HSC level, graduated to post-graduate level comprises eight, seven and ten respondents respectively.

Occupational Structure

The 25 responders are employed at various levels. Two are teachers, one is a physician, four are homemakers, three are bankers, one is a receptionist, one is an assistant cataloguer, two are garment workers, one is a learning facilitator, one is a student, one is a computer operator, one is a chartered accountant, one is an employee of the government, two are domestic workers, two are engaged in business, and one is a trainer.

The researchers had conversations with 25 different people who participated in the interview. They come from a wide range of age groups, educational levels, and occupational backgrounds. The monthly salary of the respondents also differs depending on the occupations they hold. Four of the participants' answers do not

have a regular source of income, and as a result, they are wholly reliant on the income provided by their husbands. The percentages of respondents' monthly income are represented in the graph below;
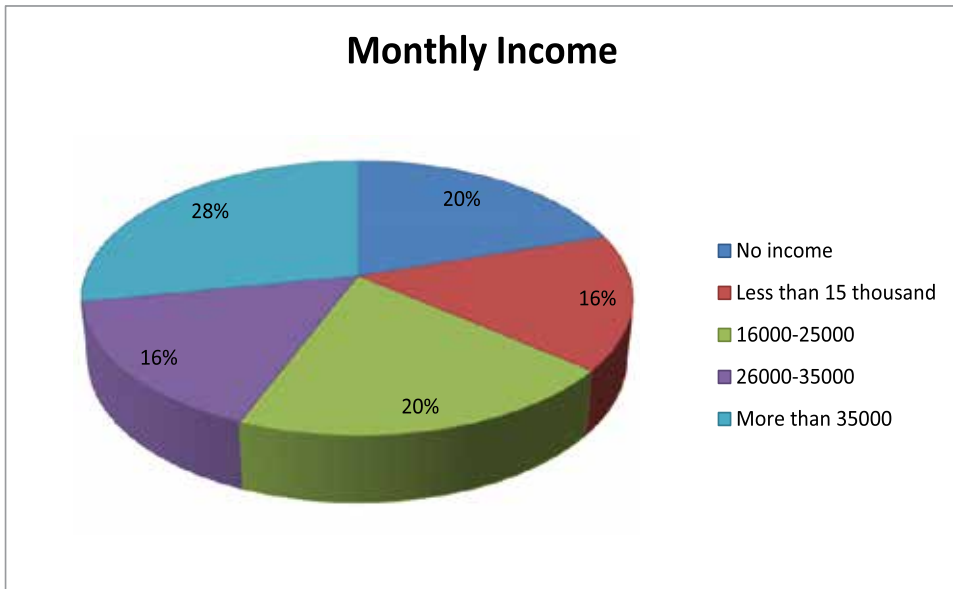

Figure 3: Monthly Income of the respondents (Field data, 2021)

During the period of this study, a few limitations were identified. Most of the people who answered were not willing to give precise details because they still think that domestic violence is a private matter. As usual, they have different ideas about the different ways in which their husbands hurt them at home. Because of this, sometimes the facts were not told. In addition to the small size of the sample, this study is limited by the fact that information from the women's husbands could not be gathered due to lack of time and wives didn't want to allow having discussion with their husbands on this sensitive issue. These restrictions must be addressed in order to carry out such a study in the future.

Analysing domestic violence: Social Learning Theory perspective

Social learning theory (SLT) has become the most dominant theory of learning and development that provides a behavioural approach to explaining the perception of domestic violence. The work of Albert Bandura (1973) focuses on a person's behaviour as a result of cognitive processes. This approach to human behaviour

considers learning instead of inherent qualities, stimulating the nature versus nurture debate and suggests that as human beings, we learn how to behave by observing and then modelling others (Bandura, 1973). Social learning theory is founded on the concept that people learn from their interactions with others in a social context by observing and imitating behaviours. Bandura also argues that direct reinforcement alone cannot account for all forms of learning. Therefore, he added a social component to his theory, believing that people may acquire new knowledge and actions by observing others. People internalize and replicate other people's behaviour after witnessing it, especially if their observational experiences are favourable or contain incentives and rewards connected to the observed behaviour (Bandura, 1977). According to Bandura, if a person witnesses favourable and desirable results in the first stage for any action, the second and third phases of socialization, simulation and behaviour modelling will likely occur. They can then use the behaviour they experienced to imitate and model others (Bandura, 1986). Thus, observational learning can happen at any age when a person is exposed to new models that are powerful, influential, and have control over resources. There is always the potential for new learning through the process of modelling (Newman & Newman, 2016).

According to Bandura, 'Violence is learned,' meaning that it can be acquired in either a direct or indirect way, that it is reinforced in infancy, and that it is carried into adulthood as a coping method for dealing with stress or dispute resolution (Crowell & Burgess, 1996). Social learning theory confirmed that children who are direct victims of violence or witness violence between their parents are more likely to use violence when they are adults and learn from their family members how to socially and morally justify violence (Gelles & Chung, 1997). Girls who experience their father abusing their mother will be future victims of the same; similarly, boys who witness their father abusing their mother would likely abuse their wives (Okun, 1985). The theory of social learning reveals that young boys learn to be abusive toward women by watching their fathers assault their mothers. This helps to explain why men are aggressive towards their wives.

In order to acquire what they want from their wives; these males learn that using violence and abuse is both acceptable in society and effective. Also, Social learning theory argues that boys frequently are influenced by seeing other men abuse and dominate their wives by their social network, peers, family members, and public figures throughout adulthood (Wallpe, 2010). These social learning concepts are expected to work similarly throughout life. The idea that violent behaviour is transmitted down from generation to generation within families is the core

principle of the social learning theory. It explains why persons who experienced physical familial aggression as children are substantially more likely to live in a violent household environment later in life (Kaufman & Zigler, 1987; Pagelow, 1981; Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980).
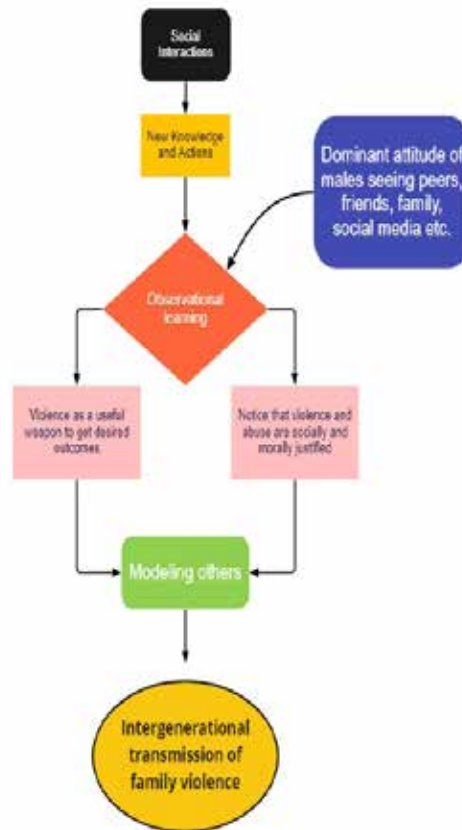

Figure 4: Theoretical framework of the paper (Bandura, 1977).

Findings and Discussion

This section will discuss how the respondents define their experiences of domestic violence in their marital life from their perspective. Notably, the findings will reveal how and why a patriarchal mindset and the gender-based socialization process play a significant role in generating a favourable environment for the increased prevalence of domestic violence against women. Findings also reflect the violence

practiced through a culture of normalization and passed down from generation to generation in a patriarchal culture. It will also uphold the reason behind the silence of victims that results in underreporting of domestic violence. As such silent acceptance later influences the potential perpetrator to exercise and repeat the violent activities further with impunity. How such a socialization process has allowed domestic violence against women to be perceived as a normal social phenomenon but not a severe offence in our culture is analysed. Furthermore, this study has strengthened its findings by connecting them to the social learning theory, which provides a behavioural approach to explaining domestic violence perspective by focusing on a person's behaviour resulting from cognitive processes. This study also corroborates the findings of prominent researchers in this field of interest.

- **Role of Patriarchy in Domestic Violence**

Domestic violence is rooted in the patriarchal ideology, which primarily is responsible for internalizing female inferiority through socialization, norms, values, culture, customs and rituals (Counts, Brown & Campbell, 1992). The authors emphasized the primary idea of patriarchy because it is necessary to understand the patriarchal societal structure, attitude, and mindset in traditional society to understand the notion of patriarchy in domestic violence. Patriarchy is a social structural phenomenon in which males have the freedom of control and dominance over females within the family at micro level and within society at the macro level. In most of the literature, writers focus on the power dynamic considered the basis of male superiority over females within marital relationships, which is also found in our research findings. For instance, Coleman and Straus (1983) argued that spousal violence is more likely to occur when there is a clash over the family's marital power structure. According to Bandura, violence is learned as a coping method for dealing with stressful situations or resolving conflicts (Crowell & Burgess, 1996). So, from the above discussion, it is clear that when males have limited resources than their wives, they may feel that their dominance in the household is undermined, which produces stress. As a taught coping strategy, husbands may turn to violence against their spouses as a means to relieve the pressure they are under. Hence, in this study, the findings bring forth how men usually use violence to control their wives who do not have the self-ability to defend themselves, enjoy the freedom, and become victims of domestic violence that they have to endure their whole lives. This practice continues in our society because men hold a sense of superiority from the beginning of life and can also exercise the power of a

privileged position within the patriarchal society irrespective of their economic status, they enjoy the same whether they have income or not.

In our research, researchers saw that women within the patriarchal society are socialized in a way where they regard themselves as inferior are taken for granted and perceive men as their owners. It teaches people to believe that only women should satisfy their partners, abide by them and ensure a typical marriage relationship. Our present research found that male dominance and control over women have been reinforced by patriarchal attitudes and celebrated not only by men but also by women. Such common belief is reflected in many of our participants' perspectives. A participant Sheuli, who is a homemaker, shared that,

"I do not have any contribution in family income. For my husband, I am good for nothing. My work has no economic value, and I am considered taken for granted. He is the head of my household, and only his decisions are important to us since he only understands what is right and wrong. I am nothing without my husband."

She also added that,

"Usually, I do not make decisions about important family matters, especially financial matters, as my husband does not like when I try to interfere. He always says I will not understand everything, so I also accept it."

Like Sheuli, most of the participants believed that their husbands had the right to control them because they believed in the inherent superiority of men and the inferior and subordinate position of women. Researchers also have a similar observation that women have no other choices and have to accept their husbands' aggression as a regular aspect of married life (Schular & Islam, 2008).

This perspective was noticed in both unemployed and working women. It is because patriarchy upholds men's power not only for their economic power, but it is their gender that makes them powerful in the eyes of society. One of our participants, named Firoza Khatun, lives in a slum and works in a garment factory. Her husband has some physical difficulties, so he cannot go to work most of the time. As a result, he contributes a small amount of money to the family and often pressures Firoza to bring money for him. She works very hard and contributes a lot to her family though she has to be the victim of physical abuse by her husband. He does not like his wives' engagement in economic activities. Firoza explained that,

"He (her husband) usually used to say that my position and job makes me arrogant, and I forget my actual duty. He also criticizes me in front of others by

saying that I should know my limit and remain within them. He also does not like to gift my parents anything with my own money."

Schuler, Hashemi, and Badal's (1998) ethnographic study also shows that participation in a credit program can reduce domestic violence against women. In contrast, regarding other income-generating activities, another research found that women with personal earnings experience more domestic violence than women who do not have personal earnings (Bates, Schuler, Islam & Islam, 2004). Microfinance allows women to participate in economic activities in the public sphere, which goes against traditional patriarchal norms. Hence, men do not want their wives to be financially independent and self-sufficient. Naved and Persson claimed this trend is visible in rural areas in Bangladesh but not in urban areas. However, the researchers disagree with this view. Instead, they have noted that the experience of domestic violence among participants is evident in urban areas too. Hence, it cannot be said that only working women in rural areas are the victims of domestic violence in our country, but it is a prevalent scenario in both rural and urban areas.

- **Gender Specific and Discriminatory Socialization Process**

Gender-specific socialization and belief are the main factor of a male-dominant patriarchal society where gender role socialization is rooted in its social structure. It is how society passes on its culture to future generations. It teaches people the social and cultural role society demands and provides massage regarding socially acceptable behaviour, beliefs, and lifestyles (Grusec & Davidov, 2014). Therefore, individuals learn different values and behaviour patterns based on their gender refers to gender socialization that develops gender stereotypes and reinforces gender discrimination (Leaper & Farkas, 2015; Cvencek, Meltzoff & Greenwald, 2011; Abbott, Tyler, Wallace, 2005; Witt, 2006) because it can create and maintain gender roles as social realities, as well as promote gender discrimination as a genuine issue. In our research, almost all the respondents claimed that in their family, they and their brothers are brought up through discriminatory socialization processes from the very beginning. The researchers think that this gendered socialization process makes them helpless, deprived, and victims of discrimination and finally results in an unequal power relationship in adulthood. Men think of their wives as the most expected service provider and caregivers, but not the most valuable or honourable people. So, it can be said that, through such gendered socialization, women come to accept and believe dependence and discrimination that encourages them to accept the violent behaviour against them and sometimes even celebrate.

Gender stereotypes assert that males and females have naturally distinct attitudes and characteristics; for example, males are said to be aggressive, independent, and assertive, while women are thought to be gentle, empathetic, and vulnerable (Hoominfar, 2019). Where gender roles are more clearly defined, deviation from likely behaviour may cause violence and such legitimization of rigid gender roles, masculinity, and toughness within society results in gender violence (Counts, Brown & Campbell, 1992). According to our study respondents, men are supposed to be adventurous, aggressive, assertive, independent, decision-makers, and risk-takers. Females should be more sensitive, gentle, dependent, emotional, vulnerable, and weak. One of the participants, Saleha (homemaker), claimed that she is often psychologically and physically abused by her husband when she fails to complete any household work correctly and cannot fulfil his expectations. She never protests; instead, she feels guilty and become more careful about domestic tasks and caring for children as it is her primary duty to keep her husband happy and satisfied who is the head of the family. According to the statement of, Saleha,

"My husband is the head of our family, he has the right to control me, and I must obey him to endure our relationship. It is not a big issue if a husband tries to control his wife, but it is often required for those who do not obey their husband's orders and instead make them upset."

She also added that,

"I used to believe that as a woman and as a wife, my role is only to do household work, fulfil my husband's and his parent's expectations, give birth to a child and take care of them, but no other works outside the house. I was totally dependent on my husband and had no option to help my family; rather was a burden to them. I was tensed about my daughter's future as I was economically dependent on my husband. So, I did tolerate everything silently."

From the idea of social learning theory, the observational learning process of gender roles is evident. Observing others, children learn acceptable gender-typed behaviour determined by society and take it normally. Nevertheless, it is not only observation; they are also rewarded. As a result, children are encouraged to engage in gender-specific activities, reinforcing gender stereotypes (Crespi, 2004). Henceforth, such gender-biased socialization process also develops in the same way, either directly or indirectly, sustained by the interaction with parents, peers, and other persons and the mass media. So, it can be said that, where gender roles are more clearly defined, deviation from expected behaviour may cause violence due to discriminatory socialization process.

- **The Culture of Normalization and Acceptance**

Domestic violence has become socially approved **i**n our patriarchal society. In these societies, women also accept their miserable condition and low status compared to men. As we stated before, it is built up from the patriarchal-based biased socialization process. The culture of normalization of gender discrimination and stereotypes is received from indirect sources. Some of those sources we found during our study are parents, grandparents, neighbours, colleagues, peers, and the mass media. According to the idea of social learning theory, young men pick up negative attitudes toward women through observing how their fathers treat their own mothers. These men learn that using violence and abuse to get what they want from the women in their lives is okay and a useful tool.

Social learning theory indicated that children who are direct victims of violence or who see violence between their parents are more prone to utilize violence as adults and learn how to socially and ethically justify violence from their family members (Gelles & Chung, 1997). This study shows that aggression and violence against wives is a learnt behaviour that can also be learnt through models. Yet again, researchers reached the conclusion that young women who had seen their fathers use physical force against their mothers were more likely to tolerate physical force in their own marriages.

Asma (Domestic Worker) said,

> *"I saw my stepfather beat my mother every day, and it was a common scene in our slum where men beat their wives because of little or no reason often. My fathers-in-law also used to beat my mother-in-law in front of my husband, and now my husband beat me in front of my children, who also get used to seeing it and take it normally."*

Participants claimed that their husbands were used to observing their fathers' aggressive or violent behaviour or other male family members as models; consequently, they became more aggressive. Therefore, it may be claimed that early learning of behavioural possibilities for men occurs during childhood and adolescence as a result of observations of how parents act in intimate relationships. They consider it as 'appropriate' behaviour for these relationships. Men seem to justify their wrong actions and instead blame the victims. Men learn that using violence and abuse to obtain whatever they want from women is socially acceptable.

In most cases, the researchers discovered that people considered husbands' use of violence against wives as an ordinary matter. To some extent, they try to establish it as the husband's right. It is also claimed by the social learning theory that if a person witnesses favourable and desirable results in the first stage for any action, the second and third phases of socialization, imitation and behaviour modelling will likely occur. This study found a similarity where those men who saw their father and other men including their siblings and neighbours and friends exercise power through violence and get social acceptance as an ordinary matter are more likely to abuse their wives later. Besides that, cultural approval of violence increases the rewards for this behaviour in some societies. However, if a husband is likely to suffer social censure and criticism, he may be less inclined to exercise violence that has little existence within our society.

A study claimed that peer relationships that support and appreciate patriarchal dominance in the family and use violence to support it exemplify this subculture (DeJonghe, 2015). However, in this study, researchers have found mixed opinions and experiences of participants regarding peer acceptance and influence in domestic violence. Our study found that educated peers are less likely to support such violence against spouses when the scenario is different among those of uneducated and low socio-economic backgrounds. Hence it is not always true.

Social learning theory asserts that examples from violent images on TV and other media can support a "culture of violence" against women (Bandura, 1978). In our society today, the media indirectly encourages domestic violence against women by supporting the patriarchal mindset rather than explicitly promoting violence against women. Gender-stereotyped behaviour and violent activities are often seen in dramas, movies, advertisements, and TV shows. Media unintentionally teaches young men that harassing a female partner is culturally acceptable.

The patriarchal content of the media encourages the next generation of men to feel the need to continually exert domination over women, thereby escalating the problem. According to male expectations, women are shown as attractive beings, capable housewives, and subservient wives in positive roles. When women are portrayed as a man's companions, they typically take on traditional roles like housewives and those who need a man to defend them (Zotos & Eirini, 2014). Again, when they appear in commercial advertisements, they are typically shown in ornamental roles (dummy, showcase-without any lead role).

For instance, the majority of popular spice manufacturers in Bangladesh use

female models acting as cooks in the advertising for their products at the beginning of their marketing campaigns. It implies that, whether or not they hold a job, women's social responsibility is to cook. They will have to prepare meals either before or after their outside work. The husband or the male character will not cook; they will merely consume and enjoy the dish. From 2000 to 2018, the stereotype that only women will work in the kitchen remained unexpectedly constant (Nahar, 2019). Numerous instances similar to those mentioned above are still frequent in the media, resulting in the eventual transmission of gendered ideology from one generation to the next. Therefore, it can be considered a significant influence in the formation of a patriarchal mentality among youths. Nevertheless, commercials in modern times have succeeded in shifting preconceptions, and they now feature both men and women working together in the kitchen.

- **Intergenerational Transmission of Domestic Violence**

There is an intergenerational consequence of domestic violence against women that can also be seen as very common in our society. We identified that gender roles and supremacy within households are further transmitted from generation to generation through the socialization process and prevail as a subculture within patriarchal societies. Abusive and violent behaviours are primarily learned through observation, just like other routine activities that people learn in their daily lives and naturally continue to practice. Naved and Persson (2005) and WHO (2017) explored that in both areas-urban and rural, the history of abuse by the husband's father towards his mother was the most significant factor associated with the husband's aggression against his wife.

In a related study, Naved and Persson (2005) found that in Bangladesh, a husband's violent behaviour is linked to the experience of multiple generations, which raises the likelihood that he will use violence against his partner. Similar to men, women who have experienced the same level of violence in their paternal household accept and normalize it as a typical occurrence (Naved & Persson, 2005). Except for five respondents in our study, the majority has had family disputes where their father used to abuse their mother, and their mothers-in-law have also had a history of abuse by their husbands. Afrin is an NGO worker, and her husband is a banker shared that,

"My mother in law sometimes shares her experience of being tortured both physically and emotionally by her husband and similar things I had also experienced in my childhood where I saw my mother abused by my father. Now I

saw my brother often abuse his wife as my husband does with me.”

The most important idea in the social learning theory is the intergenerational transmission of violence. This idea says that people who have been physically abused by a family member when they were young are more likely to live in a violent home as adults (Kaufman & Zigler, 1987; Pagelow, 1981; Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz 1980). From the above discussion, it becomes clear that domestic violence against women in our patriarchal social culture has obvious intergenerational consequences that are transmitted and continued through the gender-biased socialization process. This phenomenon is embedded in our societal beliefs, values, attitudes, practices, expectations, and institutions, and it is preserved and passed from generation to generation through socialization.

- **Domestic Violence as a Silent Crime**

As a societal reality, domestic violence is a covert crime that occurs more or less everywhere in the country, including all parts, sectors, and groups of the population, but it is kept in the darkness. The social, cultural, and economic disadvantages that Bangladeshi women face in their society force them to take on the role of submissive victims. The poor socio-economic status allows the offence to continue and to be ignored, underreported, and carried out without fear of repercussions. In our society, family matters are believed by custom to be private. The abuse of spouses is not viewed as a crime, but rather as a common and private concern that should not be brought outside the family. Similar result was found in the research undertaken by Naved, Azim, Bhuiya & Persson (2006). The population-based survey of 2702 women and in-depth interviews conducted in rural and urban areas showed a more significant portion of the silence of the women. Moreover, there was an increase in physical assault (Naved, Azim, Bhuiya, & Persson, 2006). In another study, Bhuiya, Sharmin & Hanifi (2003) found that instead of filing complaints to the formal court system, women often seek help from their families and neighbours. Despite the fact that domestic violence against women in Bangladesh is treated as a private concern, the issue is relegated to the private margins of society due to the effects of such violence.

In this study, the authors discovered that women who try to seek help from the formal justice system face difficulties because the law enforcement agencies are not adequately trained in dealing gender-sensitive issues. Hence, they discourage women from filing complaints against their husbands and advise them to settle the matter informally. This adverse experience discouraged them, and at the same time, they had to face further challenges within the house when family members

came to know their step to seek help from a law enforcement agency. A participant Samina (Banker), said that,

"Once I visited a nearby police station when my husband beat me and forced me to leave my house, but unfortunately, the duty officer advised me to solve the problem with the help of family members. According to him, I should handle my family matter by Salish, but thana (police station) is not a proper place. It will worsen the situation, and society will label me and point on me but not my husband."

Schular, Bates & Islam (2008) found that abused women rarely seek recourse in domestic violence. The majority of the women interviewed stated that they did not have many options available to them to put an end to domestic violence. When they attempted to obtain assistance, they were mostly unsuccessful. Therefore, women were obliged to accept that physical abuse at the hands of their husbands was an inevitable aspect of marriage. In addition, the study further explored that woman even avoided *Salish,* a way for people in a community to settle disagreement. Traditionally, men and elites have been in charge of this, and so decisions made in Salish tend to favour men. Due to social stigma in Bangladesh, not enough women report domestic violence until it becomes a serious problem in their lives. Also, they do not like to make family matters public. In cases of domestic violence, there is also a lot of evidence of 'secondary victimization.' Often, victims might not disclose abuse to the police because of fear of not receiving support and attention. Furthermore, there is a fear of isolation from society.

In this study, most participants claimed that their relatives always advised them to endure abuse and save a troubled marriage, except for some women whose friends encouraged them to seek help from the formal justice system. However, in such cases, these women do not file any complaints due to many reasons, for instance; they think that disclosing such matters in front of others may hamper the reputation of their family, fear of social stigma and double victimization, fear of social blaming, fear of losing their children and also fear of hampering their children's social life in future. This study found that the police force generate biased, hostile and disrespectful attitudes toward women instead of supporting female victims of domestic violence. Even though they have created a crisis centre and a hotline for women who encounter domestic violence, the problem persists. Consequently, victims have to undergo 'secondary victimization' and social stigma and avoid such harassment. Saleha said,

"I accepted everything and sometimes tolerated his abuse because my mother always taught me that women should not talk about private matters outside and keep hiding inside the four walls. Otherwise, people may blame me instead of him (her husband). At the same time, it may also hamper my family's reputation."

A participant, Afroza concerned with her children, alleged that,

"My husband often threatens me that if I divorce him, he will not allow me to see my children. Thus, I have a fear of losing my children and cannot make any tough decisions against my husband. A mother cannot leave her children but everything."

These factors kept domestic violence and the seriousness of these abuses a seldom discussed and rarely acknowledged the problem in Bangladesh. This silence makes the overall situation worse for women as a continuing process. At the same time, by observing victims remain silent, the potential perpetrators get inspiration and the opportunity to repeat the heinous acts repetitively.

Conclusion

The culture of 'normalization' and 'acceptance' of domestic violence against women deprives women of exercising their legal rights, and consequently, domestic violence-related cases remain underreported in our country. The above discussion on the culture of normalization as an intergenerational consequence of domestic violence against women represents a brief understanding of patriarchal social settings that can be considered one of the most dominant factors of domestic violence in Bangladesh. Analysing such factors in the light of social learning theory also supports the paper's findings. To conclude, the patriarchal mind developed by the gender-biased socialization process of both men and women has established domestic violence against women as a normal phenomenon. It allows men to exercise unequal power and perpetuates domestic violence against women with impunity in our society. The theory of Social Learning may be applied to the social setting of Bangladesh since most children are exposed to domestic abuse regularly. Such learned traditional gender roles make women vulnerable to being victims of domestic violence frequently. In a country like Bangladesh, prosperity can never be warranted until the negligence and disregard towards the female members of the society are not abated along with the extermination of this clandestine darkness of domestic violence. The authors believe that although it will be difficult to fully change such a patriarchal mindset and erase it from society in a single day, it will be feasible to do so gradually over the course of time. Only by addressing the

fundamental problems that lead to domestic violence in our country can eradicate the problem entirely from our culture and arrive at a long-term solution. Thus, it will be possible to eliminate the negative effects of domestic violence in our society. Bangladeshi people need to quit remaining silent when it comes to the issue of domestic abuse against women.

Therefore, the findings of this study may have restricted relevance, i.e., it cannot be expected to provide information capable of generalization to other locations as it was done in the urban area of a developing country. So, it could have regional biases, but surely the general similarities specific to a given gender and culture will provide some insight to the study. At the same time, in this work, the authors have implemented Bandura's Social Learning theory in the context of domestic violence against women that can be generalized.

Recommendations

It is required to establish adequate socialization at the family and societal levels from the beginning of a person's developmental phase in order to overcome attitudes, customs, and practices that perpetuate violence against women. Most importantly, it is critical to recognize that the status of gender disparity in our country's patriarchal culture and take practical actions to address and eradicate it from the root. The essential thing is for women to speak up against the violence they face within the domestic sphere. They should speak for themselves, their safety, and their daughters, who are also potential victims of future domestic violence by their husbands and in-laws. Even though the present legislation provides considerable flexibility, males must be counselled to change their thoughts and come out from the previous gender-biased mindset. It would assist them in developing respect and giving equal treatment to their spouses to minimize the rate of domestic violence.

Again, the Ministry of Women and Children of Bangladesh has established a helpline for women to report all forms of harassment at number 109. In addition, they developed an app named 'Joy' for the same reason. However, these attempts are not well disseminated, and women are unaware of this forward-thinking government strategy (Jahan, 2020). Radio, television, newspapers, and other printed materials, as well as social media, such as Facebook and YouTube, which have a lot more power and influence among the new generation of young people, can play a significant role in raising awareness and protesting against all forms of domestic violence against women and stand by the victims. When broadcasting news, in this case, the media should protect the privacy of the victims' identities.

The government should implement education and public awareness initiatives to help erase stereotypes and raise understanding of the adverse effects of domestic violence so that children may socialize appropriately, and parents can become more concerned about the issue through social awareness programs. Also, parenting education is an essential aspect that can play a significant role in the socialization of children. It will reduce family violence, particularly domestic violence that children learn from their parents, and help to raise the quality of child-rearing and quality of life in general. Progress has been noted in family life education and specifically parenting education around the globe, specifically in Europe (e.g., Baran & Jones, 2018; O'Doherty, 2019; Shulruf, O'Loughlin, & Tolley, 2009). Parenting education can be conducted in many settings, including educational institutions, health and religious organizations, and within the community under different community-based programs in rural and urban areas, especially in developing countries like ours. There are many different processes for educating parents: group meetings, social awareness programs, news, radio and TV programs, social media advertisements, home visits, mentoring, internet resources, and support groups.

Various training and short courses should be offered to the Police force and other law enforcement agencies, such as the judiciary's magistrates, judges, advocates, and prosecutors, to develop their understanding of the sensitive cases related to domestic violence. They should get training and orientation on domestic violence, human rights, and gender problems to play an active and positive role.

Since 2010, UNESCO has promoted Community-Based Parenting Education, which has been considered an excellent method for engaging young children due to its accessibility and low cost. The Parenting Guidebook and the Facilitators' Handbook for 'Parenting Education' were first published in 2011. They have been adapted and translated in 7 different countries, including Bangladesh, as part of a pilot project that is culturally sensitive and acceptable to Asia-Pacific nations (UNESCO, 2017). If we can implement a parenting education program in our country, it will encourage a safe, healthy, and violence-free home setting where children are born and socialized.

In many cases, women cannot share their problems regarding the family issue, as it is considered a private matter, with any trustworthy person or with someone who can suggest what should be done or provide her mental support. There is little availability of opportunities like online-based counselling for the assistance of this large portion of women in our country who are suffering from psychological

problems due to domestic abuse they face regularly. Government and other private organizations and NGOs should come forward to develop such a helpline by considering the mental health of these victims of domestic violence whose stories are still in the shadow.

The authors believe it is possible to accomplish the goal of a violence-free society over time, despite the challenges of immediately reforming and eradicating a patriarchal mentality. Addressing the root causes of domestic violence in our country only can help prevent it from our society and give a sustainable solution by addressing the following recommendations of this paper. Only then it will be feasible to reduce domestic violence against women and its harmful consequences in Bangladesh over time since prevention is always better than treatment.

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