

Emergency In An Emergency

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Abstract: This article is an attempt to discuss the impact of the sars-cov-2 outbreak on domestic violence against women in Bangladesh. Using data from various secondary sources, this paper opted for a comparative analysis with a view to examining how Covid-19 coronavirus pandemic impact on the earlier trend, nature, and magnitude of domestic violence in Bangladesh. This paper further contributes to unveiling the reasons behind these. The authors found the infection preventing measurements have significant impact on domestic violence

Keywords: Covid-19, Bangladesh, infection preventing measures, Lockdown.

Introduction

Domestic violence against women (DVAW) is said to happen when violence is directed against a female member of a family by the intimate partner or any other family member (Krug *et al.* 2002; Momsen, 2009). The prevalence of domestic violence is linked with socio-economic variables such as homelessness and poverty (Gulati and Kelly, 2020). As natural disasters cause socio-economic disruptions (Etkin, 2016; Gilbert, 1998; Smith, 2005), incidences of domestic violence may get heightened. Although there is a lack of data on domestic violence concerning the pandemic response, research on domestic violence during times of natural disaster justifies the argument (Anurudran *et al.*, 2020; Parkinson, 2019, UNFPA, 2020).

For that reason, after the sars-cov-2 outbreak, increasing concerns about domestic violence have been expressed even in many developed countries like China, France, Spain, Italy, and the

United Kingdom, since governments took infection-reducing measures and such measure heighten the risk of domestic violence (Taub, 2020, van Gelder et al., 2020, Thompson et al., 2006).

For Bangladesh, NGOs like Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) ran a surveyed 4,249 women in April 2020 and found that 1672 women were exposed to domestic violence for the first time amid this pandemic (MJF, 2020a). Later, in May and June, MJF surveyed 53340 and 57704 women respectively from where 2085 and 1839 women were found exposed to domestic violence (MJF, 2020b, 2020c). Such increasing trends of domestic violence amid this pandemic let the authors conduct this comparative analysis.

This study helps to understand the dynamics of domestic violence during the pandemic in a third world country like Bangladesh. As there is a lack of data on domestic violence concerning the pandemic response, this study indeed fills the gap at least to some extent.

Methodology

Key concept.

2.1.1. Domestic violence of women (DVAW). In its broadest sense refers to any types of abuse (physical, mental, sexual) faced by women such abuses are perpetrated by any of the family members- either parental or marital.

Operationalization of the concept.

2.2.1 Domestic violence of women (DVAW). In this paper the term DVAW indicates only the physical violence faced by women DVAW here comprises seven types of physical abuses such as a) Tortured by Husband, b) Tortured by In-Laws, c) Murdered by Husband, d) Murdered by In-Laws, e) Murdered by own family, f) tortured by own family, g) Suicide.

Data Sources.

This study is entirely based on secondary data collected from the database of 'Ain O Salish Kendra, (ASK) (Ain O Salish Kendra, 2020). ASK is one of the leading human-rights based NGO of Bangladesh, which periodically updates its datasets of different violence occurring in

contemporary society. They compile the data from the daily newspapers and TV Channels. ASK has the datasets of domestic violence against women from 2014 to 2020.

Authors considered this dataset as no other dataset related to this context is available on the internet, and in this pandemic scenario, it is impossible to collect primary data. Thus, instead of any other survey technique, the authors find it feasible to adapt this data set for this paper.

Data Management and Measurement

This exploratory study follows a quantitative method and all the data are collected from a secondary source, mentioned above. The authors acknowledge that this study fails to portray the perfect scenario due to the nature of data¹ but indeed illustrates an overarching scene. However, half-yearly data (January to June) of each year is taken into consideration as data of the year 2020 is available only till June. Using the data, the authors applied two models, (a) year over year (YOY) growth model and (b) simple growth model to examine the impact of Sars-cov-2 more inclusively.

YOY growth model helps to understand the year to year growth or degrowth of any particular event. Here, this model helps us understanding the gradual dynamics of DVAW from 2014 to 2019 and comparing it with the current pattern of 2020. In this method of analysis, no base year is fixed. The formula is as follows-

$$\text{Year-Over-Year growth model} = \frac{\text{Current Year} - \text{Previous Year}}{\text{Previous Year}} * 100$$

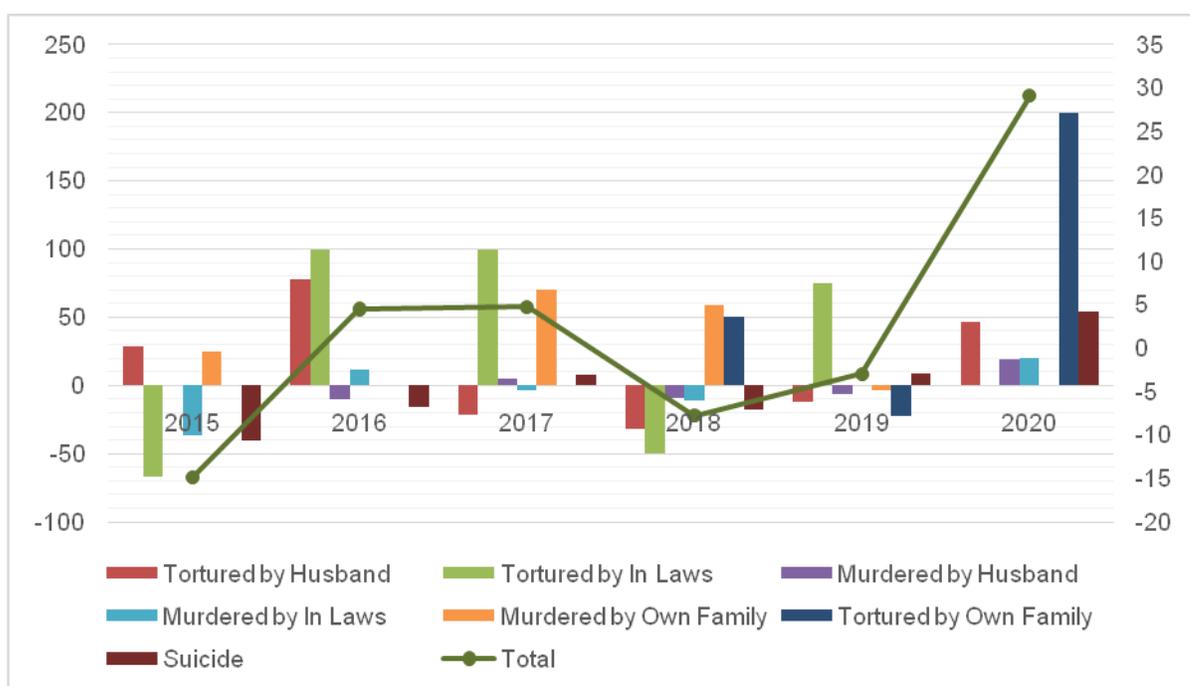
Unlike the previous, the simple growth analysis model requires a base year to analyze any context. Considering 2014 as the base year, the authors try to examine the scenario of DVAW in 2020 compared to the previous. Due to lack of data, authors considered 2016 as base year only for analyzing 'murdered by own family' cases. The formula used for this model is as follows-

$$\text{Simple growth model} = \frac{\text{Current Year} - \text{Base Year}}{\text{Base Year}} * 100$$

¹ ASK datasets incorporates the cases that are reported in the any of the print or electronic media. The authors believe that there are more cases than the reported ones.

The Impact

Among the sampled years and time frame, the year 2020 faced the maximum cases of domestic violence in Bangladesh. Other than this totality measurement, the authors as mentioned above, looked into seven different forms of DVAW (please visit section 2.2.1 for details) and found that five of them is increased from the immediately previous year and two was stable. For a more comprehensive picture, the authors applied the YOY growth model and the simple growth model. Following sections illustrate the findings with graphical representation.



4.1.1 Year-over-year (YOY) growth model.

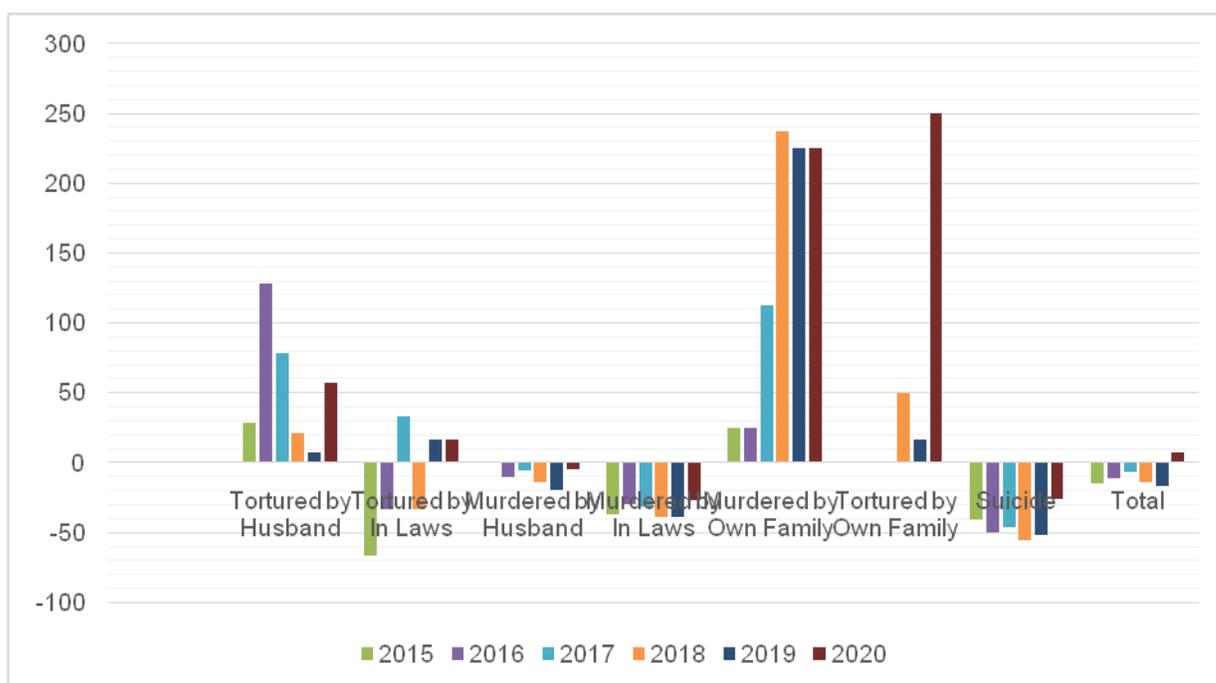
Fig. 1 Year-over-year Growth Analysis of DVAW in Bangladesh (Authors' analysis)

In terms of the total incidents, before the outbreak, Bangladesh had a growth rate ranging from '-5%' to '5%' approximately. Amid the pandemic, this rate becomes 30%, six times increase compared to the last five years. Moreover, four out of the seven forms of DVAW have the highest and very significant growth rate than the others. The four are murdered by husband, murdered by in-laws, tortured by in-laws, and suicide. Compared to 2019, murdered by husband increased by

19%, murdered by in-laws increased by 20%, tortured by in-laws increased by 200%, and suicide increased by 54% (approx.).

This rate for murdered by husband is three times higher than the highest value among the prior-pandemic² years. Likewise, for murdered by in-laws, it is 1.8 times; for tortured by in-laws, four times, and for suicide, of 6.5 times.

For tortured by in-laws and murdered by own family, no growth (0% growth rate) is seen compared to 2019. For the tortured by husband, a 47% growth is seen compared to 2019, which is the second-highest among the all.



4.1.2 Simple growth model.

Fig. 2 Simple Growth Analysis of DVAW in Bangladesh (Authors' analysis)

With this model, the authors aim to explore if the pre-pandemic trend (which is measured based on 2014) is carried out during the pandemic context or altered. Any altered scenario is perceived as 'significant' in this study regardless of the magnitude of the growth rate.

² 'Prior pandemic years' in this study refers to the years between 2014 to 2019

Here in terms of the total number of occurrences, all the years except 2020 have a negative growth rate. The highest growth rate was '-6.8%' before the pandemic, and in 2019 it was '-16.6%' whereas amid sars-cov-2 pandemic it is '7.65%.' Such heightening growth rate is simultaneously evident for five out of the seven distinct forms of DVAW. These five includes murdered by husband, tortured by husband, murdered by in-laws, tortured by own family and suicide.

Murdered by husband had a straight declining trend since 2014. Among the pre-pandemic years, the highest rate is found in 2017 with '-5.3%' and the lowest one in 2019 with '-19.6%'. However, in 2020, it has increased by 15% compared to 2019 value and reached '-4.4%.'

Tortured by husband had a massive growth in 2016 (128%) but from then, it steadily declined till 2019 with an astonishing pace. By only three years, in 2019 the rate became 7% (approx.). The current pandemic bars this alluring development. The year 2020 has shown a linear growth of 57% (approx.).

Context of murdered by in-laws is quite similar to murdered by husband's one. Since 2014, it declined until 2019 except for 2016. Among 2014 to 2019, the highest rate is found in 2016 with '-29%' (approx.) and the lowest one in 2018 and 2019 with '-39%' (approx.). From 2016, it steadily declined till 2019, but in 2020, it turned the table and showed an increase of 13% than the 2019 value and reached '-26%.'

Tortured by own family, which was documented from 2016, shows a fluctuating trend. Compared to 2016, the number of occurrences had increased by 50% in 2018, and the following year, it was only 16.66%, an apparent decline. Nevertheless, during the pandemic, it has increased by 250%.

Context of suicide is quite similar to the case of murdered by in-laws and murdered by husband. Since 2014, it declined until 2019. Among the pre-pandemic years, the highest rate is found in 2015 with '-40%' (approx.) and the lowest one in 2018 with '-55.55%' (approx.). Such declining trend gets altered in 2020. Amid pandemic, the rate of suicide increased by 30% than the lowest value and reached '-25%' (approx.).

Contributing Factors Behind Such Impact

This study has several significant limitations. First, the number of cases. Only those cases that have received media coverage are considered in the ASK dataset. Second, the absence of demographic information. This study is unable to explore the impact over women of different religion, social class, place of living, age and level of education. At last, it is the research design. Due to the design of the research, no cause-and-effect relationships could be established.

Despite these limitations, the authors believe this study contributes to our understanding of the prevalence and possible trend of domestic violence in contemporary Bangladesh amid a global pandemic like sars-cov-2. Generated by using specific reference periods, these data on the prevalence and severity of physical abuse can be compared with the current socio-economic and psycho-sociodemographic factors, which is severely disrupted due to corona outbreak. By analyzing qualitatively and examining the relationships among possible factors, authors can begin to understand the interplay of these factors that influence women's risk of violence amid pandemic in the context of Bangladesh.

Our study results highlight that over the last five years (2013-2019), the overall growth rate of domestic violence was decreasing. But amid the pandemic, the rate has been heightened significantly. In addition, typological analysis of domestic violence in this context also shows a similar trend. Both the models we used to analyze the data shows that five out of the seven forms of domestic violence have very significant growth after the sars-cov-2 outbreak in Bangladesh.

One of the primary reasons for such consequences is the infection-preventing measures adopted by the Bangladesh government. Among the measures, nationwide lockdown, cut-off in international trade, and movement restriction are pivotal. Such preventive measures simultaneously stress the economic sector of the country. Especially the business sectors and private organizations of Bangladesh faced tremendous problems. Garments fail meeting their deadlines resulting in a severe loss. As a coping mechanism, garments either lay off their workers or reduces their wages. Workers of the transportation sector, recreation centres, and day labourers become jobless. Besides, a good number of officials working in different NGOs, private

organizations and teachers of different kindergartens faces at least a significant wage reduction if not unemployment. As such, all these people are currently under severe economic and social pressure.

These socio-economic pressures eventually curb the usual psychological and behavioural pattern. This unusual psycho-social context gone worse due to social isolation and movement restriction. As a whole, such exposure to economic and psychological stressors increase in harmful coping mechanisms (such as alcohol misuse) (Gulati and Kelly, 2020). In such condition, wives become the most vulnerable entity of any household as they become exposed to physical and mental torture not only from their intimate partners but also from the family members. More dangerously, wives despite this problem are unable to leave the house, at least amid the pandemic.

However, such incidents are found evident in many economically superior countries like China, USA and Italy also (Ibid). The statistical data that emerged from China, now at the end (for now at least) of the extraordinary isolation measures, have prompted brought increased instances of reports of domestic abuse, especially of women who were forced to live for months within an abusive relationship. Such forced cohabitation of many families around the world has shown signs of a real 'emergency in an emergency'.

Conclusion

Indeed, in Bangladesh, violence against women (VAW) within or without marriage, is not new. Several factors like patriarchy, systematic discrimination against women since birth, patrilocal marriage system and unequal power relations, etc. make them vulnerable to such incidences.

In this study, data on violence were collected from Ain O Salish Kendro, one of the national level NGOs works on many human rights issues. This paper from those data set simply tried to portray the concurrent trend of domestic violence against women (DVAW), one of the significant forms of VAW.

This paper eventually portrays the multidimensional factors and dynamics of DVAW in contemporary Bangladesh, which has a mimicable magnitude of economic growth. The findings of this paper subsequently raise a big question, i.e., 'why' such trend prevails in the case of

DVAW and 'what' are the trends of other forms of VAW in contemporary Bangladesh? For example, 'age sensitivity' in multiple forms of DVAW is one of the crucial factors of DVAW, which is found by the authors here.

Authors believe that this periphery requires much work and development. This particular area also requires a focus to reveal a new sphere as well. This paper opens up avenues for future researches in this context, which will be able to answer those questions pondered above.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Data Availability Statement

The datasets generated during and analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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