Violence against University Female Students: An Appraisal in the Context of Bangladesh

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Abstract
Violence against women has become one of the pivotal areas of concern in Bangladesh. It is almost a daily phenomenon and the daily newspapers come up with massive reports of violence against women, girls, children and female students. *Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum* shows that there were 15 reported incidents of rapes and 4 reported cases of sexual harassment in schools, colleges and madrasas across the country in the first three months of 2019. The number of incidents reported is much lower than the actual number of violence happening against female students nationwide. The BRAC Study shows physical abuse is considered as the only form of violence by more than 40 percent of people in Bangladesh. Threat, intimidation, controlling or dominating, verbal abuse, eve-teasing, emotional abuse, honor killing, and harassment in cyberspace are also different forms of violence against female students. This study attempts to explore the major dimensions of violence against female university students in Bangladesh. The paper also explains the relationship between forms of violence and associated perpetrators. Later, it finds out the reasons behind violence as well as hurdles to stop violence against female students. On the basis of findings, some recommendations are made to prevent violence against female university students in Bangladesh.
Keywords: Violence, Female Students, Physical Assault, Rape and Harrasment in Cyber Space

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I.   INTRODUCTION AND PERSPECTIVE OF THE STUDY

Bangladesh's position is 8th in terms of population in the world where female citizens have been estimated 75 million. Due to changing environment and government assistance, more female is enrolling into educational institutions in both rural and urban areas. Although female students are doing well in the Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSC) and Higher Secondary Certificate Examination (HSC), their participation in higher education is still low. For instance, the percentage of them was 34.63 in 2011 at Dhaka University (Kabir, Sultana: 2016).

According to the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life" (Ji, Laviosa: 2020). Besides, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) defines sexual violence as "an undesirable and unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature that is upsetting to the individual and causes that individual to be threatened, humiliated or embarrassed" (ILO, 2012).

'We Can Bangladesh', a collective platform of civil society organizations showed the cases of violence against female and children in 2018: 468 casualties and 396 rapes, 135 suicides and 179 sexual harassment. Among these, "467 incidents took place in family surroundings, 8 happened at workplace, 45 at educational institutions, 18 in public transports, 21 in public places and 11 at hotels" (The Daily Star, 2019).

Some researchers conducted research for decades on violence against women where they put importance on domestic violence against women or sexual harassment and focused mostly on college campuses or workplaces in different countries and the female students of the university for long were not treated as victims of such violence in their study. So this study is conducted to explore violence against female students in different universities in Bangladesh. The research will put in appearances with recommendations on appropriate

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policies that will show some guidelines and inform appropriate management strategies on violence in the selected institutions which can also be applied in other institutions country-wide.

Before starting the study, the purpose of the study in order to attain their confidence, trust as well as ethical aspects were briefed to the participants before explaining the nature of the study.

II.   METHODOLOGY

Basically, the study is quantitative in nature and mostly based on primary data collected from six selected public and private universities i.e., both are equal in numbers namely, University of Dhaka (DU), Jahangirnagar University (JU), Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Science and Technology University (BSMRSTU), North South University (NSU), Ahsanullh University of Science and Technology (AUST) and University of Asia Pacific (UAP). The data were collected during the months of June-July 2019. Total number of respondents for this study was 260 and they were selected by using a non-probability judgmental sampling method. Here, a closed-ended questionnaire was used in the survey in order to collect primary data. The respondents willingly took part in this survey. Besides, respondents who participated in the survey had full freedom to answer the question and they also enjoyed liberty to avoid answering any question. Other relevant secondary data were gathered from various books, journals, national and international reports, government reports, research papers, NGO reports, magazines, and newspapers as well. And finally, MS Excel and SPSS software were used for analyzing the data.

III.   THEORETICAL DISCUSSION

The term violence may refer to a number of different behaviors. In the everyday lives of individuals, violence is experienced in different ways. In a broad theoretical level, Sorel reflected on violence in terms of class conflict (Sorel: 1950). Weiner Zahn and Sagi define violence as "the threat, attempt, or use of physical force by one or more other persons" (Zahn, Sagi: 1990). For instance, violence means an act of aggression that results in injury or death or being raped, abducted or taken as redemption or destruction of property, or economic suffering. However, this definition is more concerned with physical injury and with the avoidance of or neglect of mental abuse or attack. Newman defines violence as "the use of force to gain dominance over another or others" (Newman: 1979). A more appropriate but grievous definition of violence is "the direct or indirect physical attack, injury, or psychological abuse of a person or animal, or the direct or indirect destruction or damage of property or potential property" (McLean, McMillan: 1996).

Violence against women is a pervasive problem as well as a constant challenge for society that responds inappropriately to those who experience such violence and those who appropriately. Men's violence against women[4] takes various forms such as domestic abuse, rape and sexual violence, sex work/ prostitution and trafficking, child abuse, and so-called 'honor crimes' that affects adult women, young and teenage women and children and does not discriminate by ethnicity, sexuality or class (Nancy Lombard, Lesley McMillan, Violence Against Women: Current Theory and Practice in Domestic Abuse, Sexual Violence and Exploitation, Jessica Kingsely Publishers: London- 2013). According to the definition of United Nations (UN) and the World Bank, "Violence against women" includes "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life" (Lori Heise et al, 1994). Article 2 of the UN Declaration illustrates three common areas where violence takes place:

•   "Physical, sexual and psychological violence that occurs in the family, including battering; sexual abuse of female children in the household; dowry-related violence; marital rape; female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women; non-spousal violence; and violence related to exploitation;
•   Physical, sexual and psychological violence that occurs within the general community, including rape; sexual abuse; sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere; trafficking in women; and forced prostitution;
•   Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs."
The Beijing Platform for Action resumes the aforementioned definition and emphasizes that "in all societies, to a greater or lesser degree, women and girls are subjected to physical, sexual and psychological abuse that cuts across lines of income, class, and culture" (PFA, 1995).
For this study, violence against female university students includes a broad range of abusive, harassing, degrading and violent language, insult or physical and psychological harm or threat to harm in their daily life

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[4] Not only men's violence against women but also women's violence against women is also common in Bangladesh. Specially in in-law's house, women are facing domestic violence from their mother- in- law, sister-in- law and other female members of the family.

and also similar harassment that circulating on the internet, text messages across a range of intensities (from sexist slurs to direct threats of physical harm).

IV. DATA ANYLYSIS AND FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

To anaylyze the date, MS Excel and SPSS software are shadowed. Moreover, findings of the study are shown by categorizing it into seven plots and four figures as well as five tables are used for graphical representation.

4.1 Institutions, Age and Residence of the Respondents

Data for conducting this study were collected from different public and private universities. Most of the respondents were selected from DU (25 percent). The students from JU and BSMRSTU were the female students from different departments (random selection). For private universities, NSU, AUST and UAP were selected. The percentages of the respondents from JU, BSMRSTU, NSU, AUST and UAP are 18 percent, 16 percent, and 12 percent, 15 percent and 14 percent respectively. DU's population size is comparatively larger than other instituitons that is why the sample size of the participants from DU is relatively greater than other samples. (Figure 1).
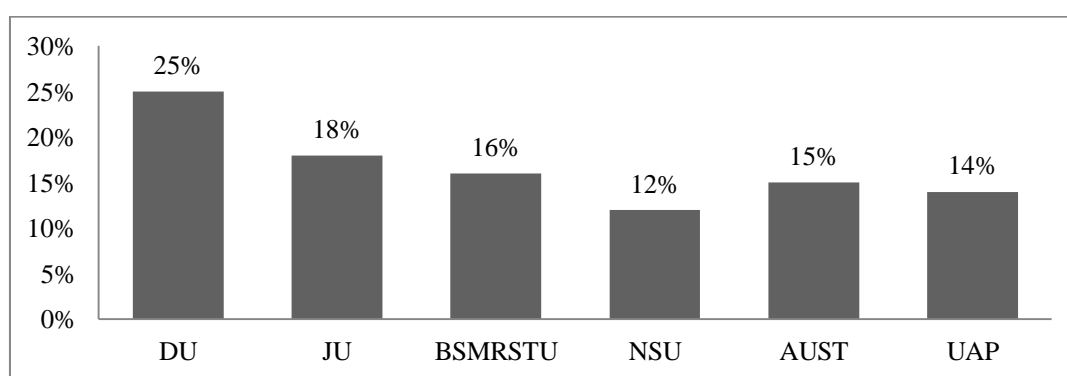
Figure 1: Institutions of the Respondent

The study was conducted on the students studying at the university level, and most of the female students of this study belonged to 19 years to 27 years. 43.10 percent bears 19 years to 21 years, 43.10 percent has 22 years to 24 years and 13.34 percents fits 25years to 27 years. In the context of the society of Bangladesh, all of them are quite matured and experienced enough to take precautions to prevent violence and harassment. At the same time, they are the most educated female and conscious of their rights and duties. They are the most active female youth of society.
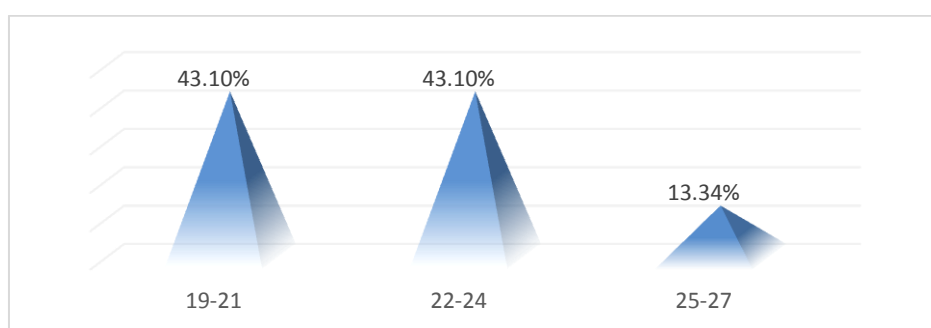
Figure 2: Age of the Respondents

Both residential and non-residential students have been extracted to illustrate the overall scenerio. Non-residential which means they stay with family or hostel (outside the university) is 36.20 percent and residential has been defined as staying in university's dormitory or hall (inside the university) is 58.62 and 5.17 percent of respondents skip this question.

4.2 Forms of Violence Faced by the Participants

Forms of violence have been explained through a table that includes diverse responses from the participants. This table reveals that the most frequent form of victimization of violence is psychological violence that a female student faces in her educational life and 92 percent of the respondents faced verbal insult, eve-

teasing and bullying in their lives. Secondly, another form of violence is touching the body sexually without compliance to the girls or intentionally touching the sensitive parts of the body. 53% of the total incidents among them opined such an unexpected touch from male. Besides, the third frequent form of violence has been mentioned here is hacking facebook/ email/ twitter ID (15%) and then threatened to physical harm or any kind of harm (11%) by the perpetrators. Other than these forms of violence, a large number of respondents shared that the most common forms of harassment which they faced were physical assault (like holding hand forcefully), pushed or shoved the hair, throwing something like letters, flowers, narrating and insulting sexual comments, revealing or indicating any part of the body of girls or the perpetrators themselves, sending e-mails as well as messages through social media, spreading private photos in facebook or other social networking sites, spreading edited or modified photos or videos in internet, etc. (See Table 1). All of these incidents are illicit and considered as the definition of violence against female students.

Types of Violence	Percent of case
Intentionally touch body parts	53%
Any kind of threat/ threat to physical harm	11%
Throwing something	9%
Pushed or shoved the hair	8%
Forced sexual intercourse	1%
Verbal insult, Eve teasing, Bullying	92%
Hacking facebook/email/twitter ID	15%
Spreading private photos on facebook or other social networks	8%
Spreading edited or modified photos or videos on the internet	7%

Table 1: Types of Violence

4.3 Co-Relation between the Forms of Violence and the Associated Perpetrators

This study attempts to trace the relationship between the forms of violence and their associated perpetrators. It also shows that most of the incidents of violence against the participants were committed by unfamiliar persons or random people outside the university or educational institutions. Among the incidents, a large amount of violence was committed by the University students (other than classmates) inside the institutions. A group of respondents though they were small in number claimed that their teachers, classmates, university staffs and family members harassed them and the ratio to such harassment are given in the following (Table 2)-

Perpetrator	Psychological Violence				Physical Violence	Sexual Violence			Cyber Violence		
	Verbal Insult	Eve Teasing	Treating to Harm	Bullying	Any kind of physical harm.	Sexual comments	Touching private parts without consent	Forced sexual intercourse	Hacking facebook/mail/twitter ID	Spreading private photos on facebook or other social network	Spreading edited or modified photos or videos on the internet
Class Mate	14%	6%	5%	15%	2%	2%	0	0	3%	3%	2%
University Students (other than Classmate)	7%	10%	1%	6%	0%	46%	51%	0	21%	10%	10%
University Staff	2%	0%	2%	1%	0%	3%	0	0	2%	0	0
Teachers	6%	5%	0%	4%	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0
Family Members	15%	0%	0%	0%	13%	0	0	0	0	0	0
Random People Outside the University	37%	71%	31%	18%	9%	3%	2%	2%	0	0	0
Never Faced	18%	8%	61%	56%	76%	46%	47%	98%	74%	87%	88%

Table 2: Forms of Violence and the Associated Perpetrators

The majority of the respondents considered inside the university a relatively safe environment and 57 percent never faced any kind of violence inside the university. Respondents who reported having been victims of violence at the university indicated that the most common locations for the most serious incidents were at (25%), halls (6%), university transports (5%). A few numbers of respondents faced violence in teacher's room, library, and playground (see the table). But most of the respondents faced violence outside the university more specifically in public transports (40%), streets (31%), other public places (13%), and busy market areas (10%). Only 6 percent of respondents never faced any kind of violence outside the university.

4.4 Place of the Violence Incidents

		Percentage of Cases
Inside University	Hall	6%
	Canteen	0%
	Library	2%
	Playground	2%
	Teachers Room	3%
	University's Transport	5%
	Public Places inside University	25%
	Never Faced any kinds of Violence	57%
Outside University	Busy Market / Market Area	10%
	Street	31%
	Public Transport	40%
	Every Public Place	13%
	Never Faced any kinds of Violence	6%

Table 3: Places of The Violent Incidents

The number of violence against female students is increasing very rapidly in our country and most of the respondents indicated that the wrong mindset of males about females (39%) as the main reason behind violence. No stringent punishment to deter culprits or perpetrators (38%) is another major reason for this type of occurrence. The role of the police and state security forces are not satisfactory. 17 percent of respondents indicates that police are inefficient in ensuring a safe environment for female students. Some respondents indicate inappropriate dress (4 percent) as a reason for violence, especially sexual violence. A very few students showed it a natural phenomenon.

4.5 Reasons behind Violence against Female University Students in Bangladesh

Why Violence Occurs	Percentage
Male dominance over female is a natural phenomenon.	1%
Police are inefficient in ensuring a safe environment.	17%
Some female students dress inappropriately.	4%
Wrong mindset of male about female	39%
No stringent punishment to deter the culprits	38%
Other reasons not mentioned here	1%

Table 4: Reasons Behind Violence Against Female University Students

4.6 Legal Steps Against Violence
Though, the female students of universities are the most active, aware and conscious of their rights, 90 percent of the respondents did not take any legal step against the violence that they faced. Only 10 percent of respondents were taken steps against the violence they faced.
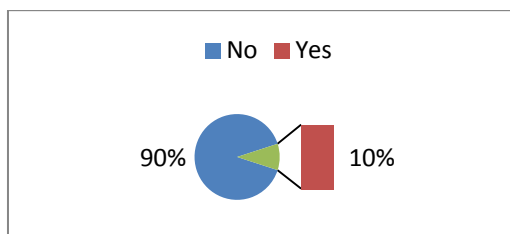
Figure 3: Legal Steps Against Violence

The reasons that the majority of violence cases are not reported to legal authorities are multifarious. Most of them are thought that the existing laws are not strong enough to convict the culprits or perpetrators. 37 percent of respondents identify lacking strong laws to convict the culprits as the main reason and the victims are not interested to report to the legal authorities. Many respondents feel hassles related to the legal procedures (22 percent). Another reason is the lack of awareness of existing mechanisms (19 percent). General fear of the police, not getting expected results are the main reasons according to the respondent who is not taken any legal steps. Only 3 percent of respondents responded that there are no problems; it is pretty convenient and effective to report a case.
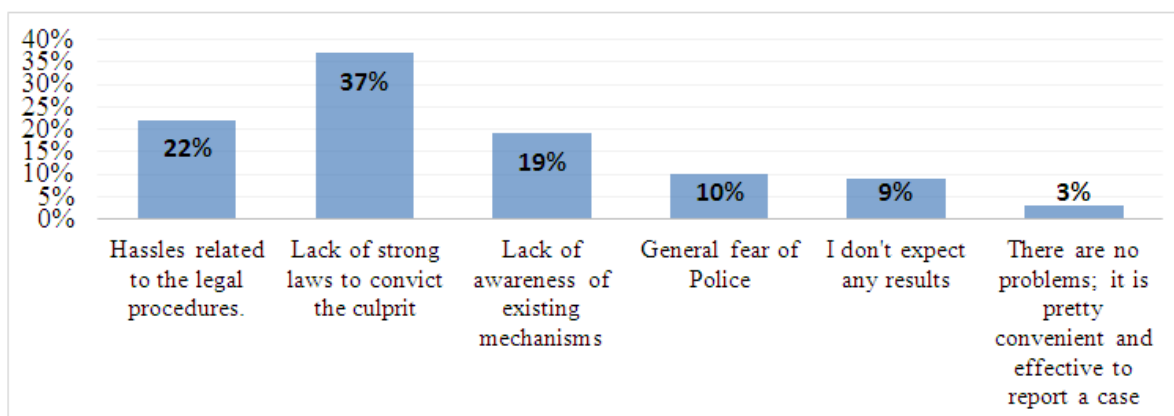

Figure 4: Reasons for Not Taking Legal Steps

4.7 Obstacles to Stop Violence against Female Students

Obstacles to stop violence against female university students are countless. In a male-dominated society, where the male is superior to the female. Here, the female is in the most vulnerable situations. This cultural or historical pattern of male dominance over the women in societies is one of the most important obstacles and 30 percent respondents identify it as an obstacle to stop violence against female university students. Lack of strong laws that punish the perpetrators is one of the most important obstacles to stop violence against female students in our country. Existing laws are not sufficient to prevent violence. 39 percent of respondents thought that there has very little instances of exemplary punishments for the perpetrators to deter future incidents. If punitive crimes are not brought under strong legal measures, these incidents have less chances to be stopped from the root of societies. Again the role of the state security forces or the police is not satisfactory. Though violence against girls or women is a very sensitive issue, the attitude of the police in this regard is insensitive. 26 percent responds that police do not treat the matter with due importance and sensitivity. Recently, some people are trying to misinterpret female students' dress up but most of the respondents do not agree with this type of statement. Only 4 percent of respondents do not recognize dress as a reason of violence against women.

Obstacles	Percentage
Lack of strong laws - No strong punishments to deter future incidents	**39%**
Insensitive police - do not treat the matter with due importance and sensitivity	**26%**
Cultural/historical patterns of male dominance over the female	**30%**
Changing attitude of female students - they dress inappropriately and venture out unsuitably	**4%**
Other reasons not mentioned here	**1%**

Table 5: Obstacles to Stop Violence Against Female Students

Only 1 percent of respondent identified some other obstacles like lack of proper religious knowledge and practice, lack of moral and ethical values, misuse of political power and political shelter, lack of family support, lack of support from the authority of the university to stop violence against female university students in Bangladesh.

V.   CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Violence against women as a social problem exists in every corner in the world. It has become a crucial instrument by which men establish their power, control and domination over women throughout the world. In present times, Bangladesh has witnessed the frightful rise of rape and other abuses against female students. Though both male and female can be the victims of violent incidents, violence against female students is considered as an identical category of violence which depends on historical and contemporary uneven balance of power between men and women. Here are some ways by which we can interrupt future incidents of violence as well as work for bringing the termination of this social problem. Every female student should be bold & strong enough to prevent these situations. Inside the universities, administrative authority should follow strict measures to prevent such incidents as well as punish the perpetrators. In public places, if the people around the victim come to help or protect her and if the culprit is punished in the most violent way by the public, it will help to prevent further violence. Besides, porn and other sexual-oriented 'entertainments' need to downright ban. Every family should stand beside the victims to support her. Moreover, Parents should teach their girls how to protect herself as well as they should teach their sons how to show respect and dignity to the girls. It is not possible to solve the problem by government alone. The people from all walks of life should come forward to uproot the culture of violence against female university students in Bangladesh. Here, we can erect some recommendations suggested by the respondents of the study. Those recommendations are as following:

Strong laws should be passed and implemented in order to punish the culprits as well as to deter future incidents. In our social perceptions of men towards women and their rights are not fair. Families should play an integral role to change such notions. Public empathy as well as people's cooperation is needed to confront such incidents. All incidents of violence should be filed to legal authorities. In this case, law enforcement agencies should treat the matter with due importance and sensitivity.

Further research on large samples and addressing this trend from various sectors of society is also required to understand the circumstances and concerns which can help mitigate violence against both female university students and the female community as a whole. Further study of cyber bullying, pornography and cyber sexual abuse, and violence against female university students in Bangladeh is suggested in this paper so as to understand the current pattern of violence. The Government has a strong commitment to end up all types of violence against women, girls and female students and has made it a priority to develop a legislative structure and institutional structures to prevent victimization. By changing our attitude towards women, female and girls, violence can be reduced.

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