

Dowry Problem in Tangail District: A Cross Sectional Study

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Abstract

The present study aims at exploring critical factors causing dowry practice in Tangail district, Bangladesh. Primary data were collected through face to face interview with a semi structured interview schedule. Purposive sampling was used to select 122 victim women's of dowry related violence from five villages of Sadar upazila of Tangail district. Descriptive statistic and multiple regression analysis were used to analyze data. Results find that unemployment and poverty, illiteracy, dowry enhances women status, the ambition of becoming rich have positive co-efficient and socioeconomic status of women has negative co-efficient and these factors are statistically significant for causing dowry system in society. Ensuring women's proper education, improvement of women's economic status with multifaceted skill development programs that facilitates income earning activities, creating public awareness from family to community level and proper implementation of existing laws are most effective remedy to curb dowry system in the society.

Keywords: Dowry practice, Female violence, Bangladesh.

1. Introduction

Bangladesh has patriarchal social structure where women are dominated and tormented by male is an ordinary feature of society. Socially accepted norms, rules, rituals, sights, faiths and attitudes encourage men to oppress the female. Female violence is pervasive worldwide and heinous crimes in developing country like Bangladesh. The World Health Organization in the WRVH defines violence as 'the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation' [1]. Violence against women is a men's issue and no more confined to specific culture, region or country or to specific group of women in society. It is prevalent in every corner of the world irrespective of age, race, ethnicity, religion, social class and social status. In Bangladesh, women's are vulnerable to multiple forms of violence such as domestic violence, dowry related violence, rape, acid violence, forced or induced abortion, forced prostitution, sexual harassment, violence at workplace,

eve teasing, trafficking, pornography and so on due to patriarchal social system, economic backwardness, traditional mind sets of people, lack of awareness, religious misinterpretation and lack of proper implementation of existing laws [2]. Dowry demand is a common scenario of Bangladesh. It is an ancient and extensive practice as found in all society among all class of people like lower class, middle class and upper class. It is also prevalent in all forms of marriage. According to Section 2 of the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1980: Dowry means 'any property or valuable security given or agreed to be given at the time of marriage or at any time either directly or indirectly: a) by one party of the marriage to the other, or b) by the parents of bride or bridegroom or any other person to either party to the marriage' [3].

Dowry is a medium of transferring property to in-laws house upon marriage. Dowry includes cash money, ornaments, domestic animals, land property, household items, vehicles etc. Today cash is most preferable and larger component of payment.

Among 108 dowry victimized women about 9.3% respondents were attempted to suicide, 5.6% suicide and 19.4% beating fellows for dowry related violence at their families in Tangail [4]. In one year alone, total 325 women were died as a result of dowry related violence and about 66.7 per cent of the violent incidents against women occurred due to dowry demand [5]. Total 966 women were killed, 1266 women were physically abused and 66 women did suicide from 2012 to 2018 because of dowry related violence. Around 2% were killed, 5% were physically abused and 3% did suicide in 2018 and around 28.26% were killed, 42.25% were physically abused and 21.21% did suicide in 2012 due to dowry related violence. In 2018, the rate is showing decreasing rate compared to 2012 [6]. A good number of studies have been undertaken on dowry related violence in Bangladesh but a very few studies were conducted to know what critical factors are responsible for causing dowry practice in rural areas of Tangail district. Therefore, the present study was taken with a view to explore the critical factors causing dowry practice in Tangail district. Associated factors have statistically significant impact on dowry related violence in the study areas.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Selection of the Study Area

For the purpose of the study, a survey was conducted in rural areas in Tangail sadar upazila which belongs to Dhaka division. Five villages (Dhelikaratia, Garasin, Khudirampur, Khanpara, cumulli) of Karotia union under Tangail sadar upazilla were selected for the study.

2.2 Selection of Sample, Sampling Technique and Data Collections

Total 122 women aged (14-30+) were chosen purposively for the study. All the respondents were the victim of dowry related violence. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample in this study.

By using a semi structured interview schedule, the researcher collects the data that fulfill the overall objectives of the study. The interview schedule was pretested with 5 women of the study area. On the basis of pretested observation, necessary information was included and unnecessary information was excluded from the interview schedule. Finally, after modification of correct and reliable information in the interview schedule, required data were collected by the researcher herself. A seven-point likert scale (Strongly disagree=1, disagree=2, somewhat disagree=3,

neither disagree nor agree=4, somewhat agree=5, agree=6, strongly agree=7) was used for accumulating information from the respondents. Data were collected from September to October, 2019.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Socio-Economic and Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The socio-economic and demographic variables of the respondents are presented in table 1. A total number of 122 women who are victims of dowry related violence participated in the study. The mean age of the respondents was 21.41(4.04) years. The majority of the respondents (50.81%) are in the age group of 14 to 20 years in the study area. About 38.53% of the respondents are in the age group 21 to 25 years and 7.38% of the respondents are in the age group 26 to 30 years becomes victims of dowry related violence by their husband, in-laws and other family members. Rest 3.28% belongs to age group above 30 years in the study areas.

About 17.21% of the respondents are illiterate where 55.74% of the respondents have primary education, 24.59% have secondary education, only 1.64% have higher secondary education and rest 0.82 percent have higher degree of education. The mean education of husband was 5.27(3.54). A majority (46.72%) of husbands of the respondents have passed primary level. Husbands have more secondary (29.51%) and higher secondary (6.56%) education compared to the respondents shown in table 1. The mean family size was 2.76(1.68) persons. Most of the respondents (61.5%) living in the joint family systems whereas they face various types of violence by their husbands, in-laws and other relatives. In most cases the main perpetrators were in-laws in the study areas. As Bangladesh has patriarchal family structure, the most of the family is headed by husband (95.1%) but less number of the family is headed by wife (4.9%) in the study area. Most of the respondents (82.8%) are housewife in the study areas. The monthly mean income level of the family was 12836.07(7644.32) taka. The maximum families (54.9%) have low income whereas 36.9% families have medium income (1100-20000) taka and 8.2% families have high income (above 21000) taka. A majority 65.57% of the respondents belong to 1 to 5 years of marriage whereas about 32.79% respondents and 1.64% respondents belongs to 5 to 10 and 10 to 15 years of marriage becomes victims of dowry related violence respectively.

Variables	n(%)	Mean(SD)
Age		21.41(4.04)
14-20	62(50.81)	
21-25	47(38.53)	
26-30	9(7.38)	
>30	4(3.28)	
Educational level of the respondents		4.43(3.06)

Illiterate	21(17.21)	
Primary	68(55.74)	
Secondary	30(24.59)	
Higher Secondary	2(1.64)	
Higher degree	1(0.82)	
Husbands educations		5.27(3.54)
Illiterate	20(16.39)	
Primary	57(46.72)	
Secondary	36(29.51)	
Higher Secondary	8(6.56)	
Higher degree	1(0.82)	
Total Family Size		
2.76(1.68)		
<3 members	6(4.92)	
3-5 members	59(48.36)	
>5 members	57(46.72)	
Types of family		1.61(0.49)
Joint	75(61.5)	
Nuclear	47(38.5)	
Respondents occupation		
Housewife	101(82.8)	
Sewing	8(6.6)	
Maidservant	7(5.7)	
Garments worker	3(2.5)	
Vegetable grower	3(2.5)	
Monthly income (Tk.) of the family		12836.07(7644.32)
Low(up to 10000)	67(54.9)	
Medium (11000-20000)	45(36.9)	
High (above 21000)	10(8.2)	
Head of the family		1.05(0.22)
Husband	116(95.1)	
Wife	6(4.9)	
Years of marriage		5.16(2.7)
1-5	80(65.57)	
5-10	40(32.79)	
10-15	2(1.64)	

Source: Field Survey, 2019.

Table 1: Socio-economic and demographic variables of the respondents (n=122)

3.2 Factors

3.2.1 Unemployment and Poverty

Unemployed young male wants dowry as a source of earning. To start a new business and to mitigate their poverty they want more dowries. At one time, parents would want a son to becoming

an earning member of the family, but as now the possibilities of securing a good job being reduced in a competitive job markets, they consider the taking of dowry through marriage as the only source of their possible income. There is a close relation between poverty and institution of dowry among young male in rural areas

in Bangladesh and they consider the taking of dowry through marriage as a possible source of their income that may help to reduce poverty [7].

3.2.2 Illiteracy

Illiterate people demand dowry because their illiteracy makes them unaware about the pernicious characters of dowry and Islamic rules. They don't realize the harmful effect of dowry. They don't have proper knowledge about abhorrence of taking dowry in accordance with Islamic rules. This result is consistent with findings from previous study carried out by Qudder (2014) which stated illiteracy has significant impact on dowry [7].

3.2.3 Dowry Enhances Women Status

Bride's family feels that dowry enhances women status in groom's family, they provide dowry at the time of marriage and it converts into a tradition and custom of society. Bride's family also believes that dowry is a medium for attracting educated, qualified and resourceful men and to ensure a better future for one's daughter. This result is similar to previous studies in Bangladesh carried out by Qudder (2014), Siddiqua (2014), where they found that bride's family who feel that dowry will ensure a better position in the in-laws house and she will lead happier, secure and luxurious conjugal life provide dowry at the time of marriage or after marriage [7,8].

3.2.4 Ambition of Becoming Rich

Greed is the main reason for dowry practices. Bridegroom's family who have greed's to enrich themselves by means of others property and they feel that marriage is the only one option to fulfill their aspirations of taking money, ornaments or others property from

the bride's family, they demand dowry at the time of marriage or after marriage.

3.2.5 Socioeconomic Status of Women

Status may be defined as recognized position that an individual occupies in the society. Socioeconomic status encompasses income, educational attainment and financial security. Due to religious order and patriarchal kinship system, women's in rural areas of Bangladesh have low status in the society. Dowry demand and payments are primarily linked with acquired status of women in the society. An increase in female education (skill) would decrease the desired level of dowry demand by the groom's family. An educated female considers as productive assets who have a higher potential of earnings that adds an additional income is become the part of groom's family after marriage. On the other hands, groom's family who feel that women have weak position in society than men, they don't do any productive work, just do the household works, they don't produce any income that families demand more dowry at the time of marriage. This result is consistence with the findings carried out by Qudder (2014), Dugupta and Mukherhee (2003) [7,9].

Explanatory variables such as narrow mentality, family tradition and imbalance ratio of men and women are not statistically significant whereas narrow mentality has positive coefficient but family tradition and imbalance ratio of men and women have negative coefficient shown in the table 2. As these factors are statistically insignificant, these are not responsible for causing dowry practice in Bangladesh.

Explanatory Variables	Coefficient(β)	P value
Unemployment and Poverty(X_1)	2.840	0.002***
Narrow mentality (X_2)	0.055	0.514(ns)
Dowry enhances women status(X_3)	3.036	0.001***
Family tradition (X_4)	0.056	0.530(ns)
Illiteracy (X_5)	0.195	0.017**
Imbalance ratio of men and women (X_6)	- 0.111	0.197(ns)
Ambition of becoming rich (X_7)	0.194	0.023**
Socioeconomic status of women(X_8)	- 0.281	0.003***

Note: *** indicates significant at 1 percent level, ** indicates significant at 5 percent level and ns indicates not significant.

Table 2: Factors causing dowry practice in rural areas.

4. Conclusion

Dowry related violence makes the women feckless at their conjugal life. The researcher explores the critical factors causing dowry practice in the context of rural Bangladesh. The study finds that unemployment and poverty, illiteracy, dowry enhances women status, the ambition of becoming rich and socioeconomic status of women have significant influence on dowry system in society. Parents who have educated girls, they have provided less interest towards dowry payments. Creating public awareness from family

to community level to rooted out dowry practice in the society. Refuse to marry who demand dowry at the time of marriage policy should be taken to protect the brides. Mass media (radio, TV, newspapers, social media) can play a vital role to protect the brides. Ensuring women's proper education, improvement of women's economic status with multifaceted skill development programs that facilitate income earning activities are most effective remedy to curb dowry system. Government, NGOs and various voluntary organizations should launch effective programs, plans, policies

and proper implementation of existing laws to exterminate dowry practice from the society.

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