

## Gender-Based Violence Specially Sexual Harassment Prevention In Higher Educational Institution

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### Abstract

Masculinity is not a fixed entity embedded in the body or personality traits of an individual but rather involves configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action. Bangladesh has a strong legal framework to reduce violence against women; however, the law and reality are different. Women in this society are generally perceived as mothers and wives and not as equal working partners. So, women's education has a significant impact on family income and development and the males in household activities are also absent and women's activities are entertaining guests, preparing food, and cooking. The deep-rooted gender inequalities and discrimination makes women helpless also in the higher education level. Sexual harassment in public universities had the highest proportion (76 percent) of women that reported 'never telling anyone' about their experience of harassment by friends or teachers. This research would like to find out the ways of breaking masculinity and gender-based violence in the higher educational institution, which is authorized under the relevant disciplinary rules to take action in case of misconduct. This article will also explore the protection mechanism from sexual harassment and how the right to education and work with dignity is recognized as basic human rights in higher education levels.

**Keywords:** Gender, Discrimination, Masculinity, Violence, Higher Education

### Prelude

Sexual harassment against women has been recognized as a significant obstacle on development as an out of sight issue. One in three women worldwide has reported experiencing physical or sexual violence in her lifetime, most often at the hands of an intimate partner, in particular her husband. In most countries of the Asia-Pacific region women are much more to have experienced intimate partner violence than to have experienced physical or sexual violence by someone other than a partner. United Nations Entity is working for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women for the prevention of violence against women and girls in Asia and the Pacific. In Bangladesh the UN interventions were implemented with a focus on VAWG primary prevention and the transformation of harmful masculinities through participatory methods and capacity building of local and regional organizations for positive and promising development [1].

The *University of Rajshahi* is structured into 59 departments with ten faculties. With 32,000 students and close to 1000 academic staff and 1300 teacher, it is one of the largest universities in Bangladesh [2]. In addition to hosting programs in engineering, arts, law, sciences, agriculture, social sciences, business studies and medical sciences. The university has 18 residential halls for students, six for women and eleven for men and one International Dormitory. The housing system can accommodate more than

10,000 students, which has created an intensifying lodging crisis as the student body has increased to 32000. Apart from the seat limitations, the amenities of these halls do not always congregate decent accommodation arrangement. This has escorted to the establishment of many privately owned off-campus "messes" both for male and female. The male dominate society and perceived social hierarchies put the women student in lower status getting in rights and dignity. The need for happier and more harmonious families and communities the reduction of violence and increasing gender equitable attitudes should be developing. Gender parity is not possible without addressing underlying social norms and preventing violence addressing harmful masculinities and social norm in education area.

### Reviewing Research Background

Bangladesh had the highest proportion (68 percent) of women that reported 'never telling anyone' about their experience of intimate partner violence [3]. In Bangladesh a survey conducted by ICD-DRB is authenticated that among whom between 55 percent (urban) and 57 percent (rural) reported ever in their life carried out the experience either physical or sexual violence against an intimate partner. Moreover, about 60 percent of men's attitude in one survey agreed that women at times justify to be beaten [4].

Levels of sexual violence tend to be also very high in the *Univer-*

sity of Rajshahi but it is unreported. It is to be reported that girls are experiencing sexual harassment both in class and outside the class even by their teachers. Sometimes newspaper highlighted the fact and in Bengali society it is common to forced marriage and women have no control over right to marry rather than guardian. In another study, half of the male respondents reported that it was not necessary for a husband to get a wife's consent before sex while a quantitative icddr,b study of gender-based violence in Bangladesh found a lower figure with 10 percent in the urban site and 15 percent in the rural site of men reporting ever forcing their intimate partner into sex [5, 6] . Most of the physical and sexual violence that women experience is caused by men, and a large share is committed by the friend, relative, partner or husband. Half of all women ever married have experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime, with 1 in 4 of these experiences occurring within the past 12 months [7]. In one study, more than half of men reported ever physically assaulting female intimate partners and more than one in ten men reported perpetrating sexual violence against women (partner and/or non-partner) [8].

The misunderstood word partner is not only included spouse or husband or often used as a short term for intimate partner. Again, in many countries and contexts the concept of partner is not understood as including spouse or husband. As intimate associate is a person with whom one has a close private relationship and may be characterized by the partners:

- Emotional connectedness
- Regular contact
- On-going physical contact and sexual behavior
- Identify as a couple or familiarity with and knowledge about each other's lives.

Intimate partners may or may not be cohabitating. They can be opposite sex or, same-sex. Bangladeshi society doesn't recognize partnerships between men and women outside of marriage. Internationally the term 'non partners' is sometimes used for anyone include parents, in laws and other relatives, friends, neigh-

bors, colleagues, acquaintances and strangers. In Bangladesh 87% of currently married women reported experiencing some type of violence from husbands or partners, 67% of which was physical violence [9]. It is often committed by parents, peers, in-laws, and strangers, and occurs in the public, private and political sphere, with no fear of repercussion [10]. In literature, sexual entitlement and fun have been identified as the predominant justifications for men's sexual violence against women. Gender inequitable attitudes and practices stemming from problematic and harmful patriarchal norms are widespread among men and women [11].

### Measuring Masculinity with Violence Against Women

The reasons for unequal powers relations between men and women are subordinate status of women caused the expression of violence in different forms. It is true that the deep-rooted gender inequalities and discrimination makes women helpless. As defined by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, violence against women is a form of discrimination that seriously inhibits women's ability to enjoy rights and freedoms on an equal basis with men.

In 2009 the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) requested the United Nations Statistical Division and other stakeholders including the World Health Organization, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime and the UN Regional Commissions, to draw upon and further elaborate existing methodological guidelines for measuring violence against women and to initiate a trial compilation of national statistics based on the interim set of indicators. This violence has taken place in their lifetime ranges from 15 percent in Japan and Lao PDR to 68 percent in Kiribati and Papua New Guinea [12]. Physical or sexual violence is by an intimate partner in the past 12 months' ranges from 4 percent in Japan to 46 percent in Afghanistan and Timor-Leste [13].

In 2011 the United Nations Statistical Commission adopted nine standard pointers for determining violence against women.

1.	Total and age specific rate of women subjected to physical violence in the last 12 months by severity of violence, relationship to the perpetrator and frequency
2.	Total and age specific rate of women subjected to physical violence during lifetime by severity of violence, relationship to the perpetrator and frequency
3.	Total and age specific rate of women subjected to sexual violence in the last 12 months by severity of violence, relationship to the perpetrator and frequency
4.	Total and age specific rate of women subjected to sexual violence during lifetime by severity of violence, relationship to the perpetrator and frequency
5.	Total and age specific rate of ever-partnered women subjected to sexual and/or physical violence by current or former intimate partner in the last 12 months by frequency
6.	Total and age specific rate of ever-partnered women subjected to sexual and/or physical violence by current or former intimate partner during lifetime by frequency
7.	Total and age specific rate of women subjected to psychological violence in the past 12 months by the intimate partner
8.	Total and age specific rate of women subjected to economic violence in the past 12 months by the intimate partner
9.	Total and age specific rate of women subjected to female genital mutilation

The new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development approved by Member States in September 2015 sets out 17 Goals and 169 associated objects to be achieved by 2030. Member States have agreed to a comprehensive framework that includes Goal 5: "Achieve

gender equality and empower all women and girls" as well as predictable of gender across other Goals and Targets. Moreover, SDG Target 11.7 announces on providing safe public spaces and goal 16.1 pronounces on reducing all forms of violence and related

deaths include explicit indicators that can also be used to measure and monitor incidence of violence against women and girls.

### **Masculinity and Gender-Based Violence**

Masculinity originates from residence and is a notion that embedded in social hierarchies. The UN Multi-country Study on Men and Violence in Asia and the Pacific defines masculinities as, “ways of living for men”, both identities and patterns of practices, associated with the positions of men in various gender systems” [14]. The following case portrayed how masculinity derives from childhood to educational life like university and extended to marital life.

#### **Case Study: Asif’s Childhood to Adulthood**

Asif a University student were grown up in a village. He recalls playing with three aunts who were the same age as he was as a kid. ‘During childhood, we played together naked, ate whatever food my mom cooked’ he says. He also remembers playing with girls from the same neighborhood ‘Yes, we played many games like Kanamachi. Many girls played with us.’ But over time, as he grew older, societal norms discouraged such playful mixing. Asif became self-aware, adding ‘I used to feel ashamed as I grew up. Slowly I became shy regarding girls...slowly the barriers became insurmountable’. Asif didn’t mix with girls again till late in his teen, his father disapproved of a relation he developed with a girl at studying University, and selected a bride for him at the age of 23.

This theoretical framework draws heavily on the work of Connell who argues that “masculinity is not a fixed entity embedded in the body or personality traits of an individual” but rather involves “configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting” [15].

#### **Hegemonic’ Masculinity**

These hegemonic forms of masculinities reproduce overriding characteristics of what it means to be a man in any prearranged society. Hegemonic masculinities are used as a red marker for men’s individual manners and beliefs. It can be shaped dominant social norms and values. Hegemonic masculinities are supported and reinforced by complicit masculinities, which sanction hegemonic forms could play enacting some of its characteristics. Thus, some men may enact hegemonic forms of masculinity out of fear, even though they may not share its fundamental premises of domination. As such, hegemonic masculinity is normative, and requires “all other men to position themselves in relation to it” [16]. All men benefit from these structures of inequality, or patriarchy. Hegemonic masculinities are more often generate systems of power inequalities and imbalances between women and men. So these systems are often referred to as patriarchy. As a final result on gender-based violence becomes a means to acquire resources and deny access of these resources to women. It also becomes a means to freeze relations of domination that uphold this “structure of inequality” ... “involving a massive dispossession of social resources” [17].

#### **Marginalized and Subordinated Masculinities**

There are marginalized masculinities that imply failure to obey hegemonic forms of masculinities – are repressed in this environment, given men’s fear of being labeled weak or hijras [18]. This

would also include men whose behavior does not correspond to hegemonic forms of masculinities, such as sexual minorities (gay, transgender), non-violent and socially/environmentally conscious men, and others who think in terms of different (non-hegemonic) forms of masculinities.

#### **Gender Based Violence in Rajshahi University**

In University, a female at any point in her education may desire for consensual sex to ensure that she will receive a deserved high grade in a class, or may be a worker to get for a promotion or pay raise on a job. Those opportunities force her for sexual offence. Obviously, and perhaps most pervasively, a woman or girl may consent to undesired, unwanted, and unwelcome sex because her material security depends on it. The following major types of harassment may occur by partner or non-partner in University premises: physical, sexual, psychological and economic harassment. Physical harassment is intentional use of physical force with the potential for causing death, injury or harm. Specifically, it can be said girls have faced slapping, pushing, shoving, biting, hair pulling, kicking, throwing things, choking, burning and the use of or threats to use, a weapon including a gun, knife or other object. Economic harassment includes denying a woman access to and control over basic resources. It includes acts such as the denial of funds, refusal to contribute financially to household expenses, denial of food and basic needs, and controlling access to health care, employment, opportunity etc.

#### **Harassment Case with Teacher’s Wife**

Rajshahi police are investigating the assault on a teacher of Rajshahi university of Engineering and Technology (RUET) by a group of miscreants, for protesting sexual harassment of his wife in the city. A group of youths were harassing them for some time. One of the stalkers pushed his wife on her back thrice with the intention of sexually harassing her, and when the stalker pushed her again, Rashidul protested. At this, the stalkers began beating him up, he added. “Some five to seven of the youths were assaulting me while at least 50 others were watching. I cried for help and none responded” [19].

On Oct 11, 2014, in Rajshahi University a first-year Geology student had filed a written complaint to the ‘Sexual Harassment and Abuse Prevention Committee’ against a senior Professor of that department, prompting an investigation. The investigation team on Apr 27, 2015, had recommended his sacking after getting preliminary evidence of the allegation ‘objectionable proposal and harassment’ over mobile phone [20].

Approximately 100 students of Institute of Education and Research (IER) department of Rajshahi University (RU) arranged a human chain demanding punishment to a specific teacher who allegedly sexually harassed two female students of the institution [21].

A Rajshahi University law student of third year has been expelled after sexually harassing many female students, including classmates and seniors. The accused sent lewd messages and illicit pictures of him to classmates and seniors using a fake ID on Facebook. Students from the department looked up the ID, confirmed it belonged to him, and sent a written complaint to university authorities on March 25, 2018 [22].

It’s a matter of surprise and new phenomenon that the Rajshahi

University authority has suspended a female student from the university permanently. Suspended female student is identified as a second-year student of Language Department who is also a hall unit leader of Bangladesh Chatra League (BCL) of Begum Rokeya Hall. She made a false complain against house tutor and also a teacher of Islamic History and Culture Department for allegedly sexually harassing to her. Besides, BCL activists RU unit staged demonstration including burnt a dummy of the teacher at the university grounds. Later RU administration formed a three-member probe committee to investigate the matter and proves it false.

### Protecting Measures Against Masculinity in University Level

UN Women has launched a project piloting and promoting good practices in four of Bangladesh's tertiary educational Institutions as like Jahangir Nagor University, *University of Rajshahi*, East West University and *Shahajalal University of Science and Technology* [23]. That project targets to prevent sexual harassment through raising awareness, mobilization and developing instruments to execute the High Court Guidelines on Prevention of Sexual Harassment (2009). It also engages adjacent communities through civil society interventions. These programs in tertiary-level educational institutions have increased capability on awareness to make the University premises safer for women and girls but not can ensure permanent solution.

The project covers approximately 28,000 students and 2,900 staff at four universities. Excluding the technical universities, where men constitute the majority, the universities' gender breakdown is roughly 34% female students and 19% female teachers, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics' 2012 report on public universities. These following charts represents gender ratio in the *University of Rajshahi*.

Gender Ratio

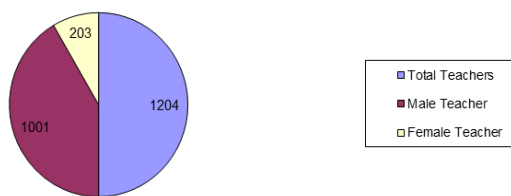


Figure- 1.1: Female Teachers in Rajshahi University

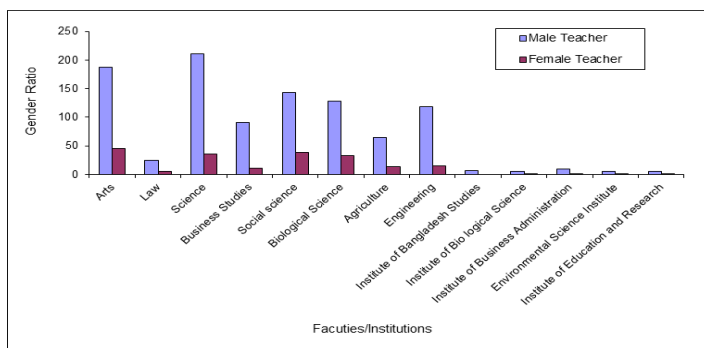


Figure-1.2: Gender Ratio in Rajshahi University

There are still very few women professors in business studies, science, social science, agriculture and engineering faculty. It clearly indicates that women academics remain concentrated in certain faculty such as Arts, whereas number of female teaches are very few in Law, Science, Agriculture, Engineering, Business studies. Research observed that more than twice many men than women teachers are teaching in these fields. This indicates gender division still persist in education and it could be linked that female do not do well at more advanced levels in some subjects [24].

Women in our society are generally perceived as mothers and wives and not as equal working partners. Research findings from other countries show that women's education has a significant impact on family income and development. In our society the males in household activities is also absent and women activities are entertaining guests, preparing food and cooking [25]. As a result of all these factors, Bangladeshi women continue to lag behind men in the competitive world of higher studies and job markets. The Constitution's fundamental rights prohibit discrimination in admission to any educational institution on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth. The fundamental principles of State policy have charged the government with responsibility for establishing uniform, mass oriented and universal system of education and ensuring free and compulsory education for all children up to a level as determined by law. They further instruct the government to adopt effective measures to relate education to the needs of society and eliminate illiteracy within such time as the government may determine. That's why it is very important to find out the women's free sphere against masculinity in the higher education and its allocation in national budget [26].

### Laws and Policies to Promote Gender Equality in Higher Education

Bangladesh has a physically powerful legal framework to trim down violence against women. The country's penal provisions criminalize several forms of mistreatment and violence directed at women, including acts related to acid attacks and those connected to the dowry system. The Prevention of Women and Child Prevention Act of 2000 and the Domestic Violence Prevention & Protection Act of 2010 also grant penalties to perpetrators of rape and other forms of violence against women, including domestic violence. Other acts related to violence include the Anti-Dowry Prohibition Act of 1980 and the Human Trafficking Prevention Act of 2012. Bangladesh is also a signatory party to many international conventions including the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which it ratified in 1984.

It is clear that the gap between general law and the Constitution is an issue of debate. It is for the reason laws and policies are not fully obligatory enforced and there is a lack of aptitude to put into practice existing legal frameworks. The constitution of Bangladesh and Muslim Personal Law is on the other side, especially with regard to marriage and divorce where inequalities are embedded in the law as forms of protection for women. In 2009, Supreme Court of Bangladesh has passed an order to establish sexual harassment cells in all educational institutions where students can take their complaints, but very few Universities have taken up the initiative. "When a woman tries to get justice for sexual harassment, she has to face a lot of harassment again. The case lingers for years, there

is shaming in society, a lack of willingness from police to properly investigate the allegations," said Salma Ali, a human rights lawyer and former director of the Women Lawyers' Association [27].

### Some Findings

Masculinity is not a fixed entity embedded in the body or personality traits of an individual but rather involves "configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting" [28]. Moreover, the following measures could repair social settings.

1. Gender equitable attitudes are negatively associated with men's perpetration of intimate partner violence against women in both public and private life. So it needed to develop and implement interventions targeted towards changing men and boy's gender attitudes. Therefore, positively changing gender-related attitudes actually matters for prevention of sexual harassment against women.
2. Promote new notions of masculinity that are associated with non-violence, respect and equality. Dominant notions of masculinity in Bangladesh are linked to toughness, honour, and sexual prowess and dominance, which promote sexual harassment against women and girls.
3. Promote non-violent masculinities orientation towards equality in school-based, sports- based or peer-to-peer education interventions that promote life skills and support healthy and caring ways to be a man. Changing deeply rooted social norms around gender, power, and violence is a complex and drawn out process through comprehensive media awareness campaigns especially at the beginning of each and every new academic session [29].
4. We found that both sexual and physical violence committed by men is to a large extent rooted in ideologies of male sexual entitlement. It is found that more than Seventy-Five (75%) percent of men who had raped were motivated by sexual entitlement. In addition, commonly held beliefs such as men need sex more than women do and they are entitled to sex with their wives irrespective of consent.
5. Develop and implement interventions that work with young boys and girls, men and women to promote social norms, perceptions and attitudes on healthy, equitable intimate relationships in School and University based prevention program.
6. To develop, pass and implement legislation and policy on gender equity that criminalize sexual harassment, stalking and violence against women.

### Conclusion

According to United Nations research regarding men and violence, less than 5% of rape perpetrators in Bangladesh ever face any sort of legal punishment for their actions. It is really a horrifying number in itself, until we remember that only a portion of rapes committed end up being reported in the first place [30]. The UN Multi-Country Study on Men and Violence in Asia and the Pacific characterizes masculinities as "ways of living for men", both identities and patterns of practices, associated with the positions of men in various gender systems" [31]. Engaging the educational community in taking action to address masculinities and prevent sexual harassment and other forms of gendered violence, students, faculty and administration in each of the institution or University

could increase capacity in developing some strategy. University Grants Commission can work with UN Women has to guide and monitor implementation of the High Court Directive to Prevent Sexual Harassment by universities. As we know Government hold the ultimate responsibility for implementing laws, policies and services around VAW and can achieve change so supporting campaign groups especially those working to prevent sexual harassment, to make changes and build strong and inclusive social movements is the most effective mechanism for ensuring sustainable change in the lives of women and girls.

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