

Living with Violence: Experiences of the Financially Solvent Women in Dhaka City

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Abstract: *The objective of this paper is to explore the reasons financially solvent women continue to live with their abusive husbands. To that end, a qualitative approach was applied and 11 cases were studied with a view to know the subjective experiences of the victims that they face in their everyday lives. Primary data was collected through face to face interviews using a semi-structured guideline. A thematic approach was applied to organize and analyse data. The findings reveal that the universality of marriage and its effect on women, social acceptance of wife-beating, concerns of a mother for her children, social stigma and shame associated with divorce, parental pressure to cope with violence at the husband's home, lack of social and legal support, inadequate legal instruments and lack of separate and safe dwelling for women are factors that make financially solvent women continue living with violence. This paper argues that women's financial independence cannot buy their freedom of choice to leave an abusive relationship in Bangladesh. It recommends effective enforcement of the existing laws related to the issue as well as amendment of them, ensuring safe abodes and financial security for the victims, building mass consciousness and changing patriarchal social values.*

Key words: *violence against women, spousal violence, intimate partner violence, domestic violence.*

Introduction

Violence against women is a common phenomenon around the world. Most of the women experience violence in their own homes and mainly at the hand of their spouses (Thompson et al., 2006 as cited in Johnston & Naved, 2008). The case of Bangladesh is no exception and pieces of evidence show that the prevalence of such incidents is rather very high. A survey on 21,688 women of 15 and above shows that 72.6 percent of the married women experienced violence

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at their husbands' hand at least once in their lifetime (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics [BBS], 2016). BRAC's database of 55 districts in Bangladesh reported that 7489 women and girls have experienced several forms of violence from January to December in 2016 and 82 per cent of violence took place in the domestic sphere (Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee [BRAC], 2017). BBS (2016) also shows that working women (60.6%) experienced more sexual and physical violence than non-working women (53.0%) by their husbands.

Although the government of Bangladesh has enacted various laws to prevent violence against women, especially violence within the family¹, one study shows that only 2.6 per cent of women took any legal recourse against violence by their husbands in the context of a high prevalence of spousal violence and 72.7 per cent women even did not disclose about spousal violence to anyone (BBS, 2016). Most of the violence perpetrated by husbands goes unreported and women continue to suffer from abusive relationships and financially solvent women are no exception.

Bangladeshi women, in general, don't earn for themselves and are dependent on their husbands for economic security (Hartmann & Boyce, 1998). Therefore, these women have limited or no scope to escape from their conjugal life. Women who earn enough for themselves are supposed to escape such violence. However, pieces of evidence show that financially solvent women also continue their abusive relationships condoning the violence. Nevertheless, they could start a new life by leaving their abusive relationships behind. Therefore, the question that arises is, what makes financially solvent women continue to live in violence? On account of this, this paper traces factors that bind a financially solvent battered woman to an abusive relationship and prevent her escape from it.

Literature Review

Violence against women in the domestic sphere is termed in many ways worldwide (Khan, 2015a). Kishor & Johnson (2004) define

¹ In 2010, *the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2010* was enacted criminalizing spousal violence

domestic violence as a subset of violence committed by intimate partners. However, in the context of Bangladesh, such violence is also perpetrated by other family members. Therefore, domestic violence, for many studies, includes violence perpetrated by husbands and other in-law family members (Khan, 2000). However, there is no universally accepted term portraying the issue and studies in Bangladesh use terms like 'domestic violence' (Bajracharya & Amin, 2013), 'intimate partner violence' (Ahmed, 2005; Silverman, Decker, Gupta, Kapur, Raj, & Naved, 2009), 'spousal abuse' (Salam, Alim & Noguchi, 2006), 'marital violence' (Mannan, 2002; Hadi, 2000 & 2005), and 'family violence' (Jahan, 1994). For this paper 'domestic violence', 'intimate partner violence', 'spousal violence', 'marital violence' and 'family violence' will be used interchangeably.

Studies undertaken in the field of domestic violence could be summarized into several groups. The first group of studies focus on the extent, forms or types and causes of domestic violence. Studies show that irrespective of social, economic or geographical status a significant percentage of studied women are victims of domestic violence. Bates, Schuler, Islam and Islam (2004) found that 67 per cent of their surveyed women had experienced violence by their husbands. Mannan (2002) shows that 46 per cent of the studied women reported to be tortured physically while 67 per cent reported verbal torture. Khan and Aeron (2006) found 80 per cent of the surveyed women to be victims of physical violence. While some researchers claim that physical violence is the most common form (Jahan, 1994; Mannan, 2002) of violence others claim verbal/emotional violence to be so (Khan, Rob & Hossain, 2000; Bhuiyan, Sharmin & Hanifi, 2003). Among the physical violence- slapping, pulling the hair (Mannan, 2002) severe beating, forced sex (marital rape) (Khan et al., 2000), kicking, burning or use of a weapon (Koenig, Ahmed, Hossain & Khorshed, 2003), arm-twisting and pushing/shaking/throwing something (Sambisa, Angeles, Lance, Naved & Thornton, 2011) are very common. On the other hand, verbal abuse, excessive controlling, restricting or disrupting routine activities, social relationship and access to money (Mannan, 2002), humiliation, threat (World Health Organization [WHO], 2005), insulting them and their parents, criticizing, scolding, and restricting movement (Khan & Aeron, 2006) are common psychological violence married women face.

Studies identified quite a long list of factors behind such violence. Bhuiyan et al., (2003) identified 73 reasons for verbal and 53 reasons for physical violence. Among them not meeting the husband and in-law family members' expectations in managing household chores, sexual relationships, poverty, dowry, economic dependence of women (Khan et al., 2000), instigation of others, husband's second marriage and suspicion (Mannan, 2002), not conforming to veil or other expected behaviour (Hadi, 2005; Bhuiyan et al., 2003), cultural conservativeness (Koening et al., 2003), traditional family practice of beating wives (Naved & Persson, 2005) are some of the reasons. However, some studies identified patriarchy as a vital factor (Naved & Persson, 2005) while many other studies found a positive correlation between domestic violence and marriage with dowry arrangements (Bates et al., 2004). Husbands' perception that they have the legitimacy to beat their wives is another vital reason behind such violence (Schuler, Hashemi, Riley & Akhter, 1996).

The second group of studies focused on the consequences of the domestic violence and found that it not only impacted battered women's physical and mental health conditions but also their families and children. Silverman et al. (2009) showed that violence by husbands caused unwanted pregnancy, a pregnancy loss in the form of induced abortion, miscarriage, or stillbirth. Sexual violence adversely affects women which may include reproductive tract infection, pelvic pain, irritable bowel syndrome, injuries and unwanted pregnancy and violence during pregnancy ends up in miscarriage (Salam et al., 2006; Rahman, Sasagawa, Fuji, Tamizawa & Makinoda, 2012). Studying the effect of domestic violence against women on their children, Silverman et al. (2009) argue that children of violence victim women often suffer from respiratory tract infection and diarrhoea along with other health problems. Asling-Monemi, Tabassum & Persson (2007) found that severe spousal violence increased the risks of under-five deaths among girls of educated rural mothers.

Ahmed, Ginneken, Razzaque and Alam (2004) found that although the death of women caused by other factors decreased between 1982 and 1998, deaths caused by domestic violence remained the same. They also found that suicides were often preceded by physical and mental

torture perpetrated by husbands and in-law family members and half of the suicides were caused by quarrels and serious tensions with the husbands. Naved and Akter (2008) compared suicidal tendencies among violence victim women and women who are not exposed to such violence and found that the former were more likely to report suicidal tendency.

The third group of studies focus on empowerment and violence against women. Studies of this group yielded two contradictory results. While some studies show that empowerment in the form of women's involvement in financial and decision-making activities could potentially reduce violence against them, some other studies found that such empowerment may also provoke violence. A survey by Schuler et al. (1996) shows that women's participation in the credit programmes operated by NGOs can significantly reduce domestic violence against them. However, Schuler, Hashemi and Badal (1998) found that participation in credit programmes both reduced and provoked violence against women in the domestic sphere. Participation in the microcredit generates tensions as such participation is against traditional patriarchal norms. Men dislike their wives' independent income hate to allow them to be more mobile and autonomous (Schuler et al., 1996; Ahmed, 2005). Rahman, Hoque and Makinoda (2011) argue that women's empowerment doesn't safeguard them from the risk of intimate partner violence. They also argue that promoting women's empowerment without their husband's consent may put them even at greater risk of violence. A study by Ahmed (2005) found that BRAC's micro-credit recipients face a greater level of violence immediately after they join BRAC. However, violence was found to be subsequently reduced after they started gaining awareness, training, and skill for self-employment. However, Bajracharya & Amin (2013) show that microcredit group members experience more violence than non-members. However, studies by Hadi (2000 & 2005) found that women's participation in credit programmes and the financial contributions that they made through it to their families improved their position in the families and reduced domestic violence against them significantly.

The fourth group of studies focused on the reasons women live in violence. It is worth mentioning that no exclusive study has been done on this area. Some of the studies took this area as a part of their studies. Schuler & Islam (2008) argue that battered women condone spousal violence as an inevitable part of their conjugal life as they have no other alternative. They also argue the social obligations of marriage and absolute dependence on husband for everything make women vulnerable to violence. A study by Bhuiyan et al. (2003) also identified 50 reasons that make battered women to continue living with violence.

Thus, the review of literature shows that although some of the areas of domestic violence against women have been explored, there are areas yet to be explored. One of such areas is the reason women live with violence. Very few studies shed light on this area. Besides, studies undertaken on the issue are mainly quantitative which cannot grasp the subjective experiences that a woman faces in reality. A review of literature also shows that no study in this area so far has been done on financially solvent women. Schuler & Islam (2008) argue that the universality of marriage for women in Bangladesh and their absolute dependence upon their husbands make women vulnerable to domestic violence. However, this argument doesn't hold good for financially solvent women. Because a financially solvent woman doesn't need to depend upon her husband. Rather, financially solvent women can escape the violence as they have their means of subsistence. Therefore, it's a big question, why do financially solvent battered women continue to live with violence?

Methodology

This study aims at identifying and understanding factors that make financially solvent women live with violence by making sense of the meanings that the participants expressed. A qualitative approach was applied as it allows access to the complex world of individuals (Hossen & Westhues, 2013) and provides more promising avenues to understand the situation of the battered women that they experience every day. Only the subjective experiences of women can provide a greater understanding of experiences of violence they suffer in a particular socio-cultural context.

The case study method was employed for the study. The study was conducted in Dhaka city of Bangladesh. The majority of the working women in Bangladesh live in Dhaka. Therefore, it was easier to get access to the target participants. It wasn't easy to find suitable participants due to their unwillingness to participate. However, using social networks, a preliminary list of financially solvent women was developed. Then they were contacted to know their conjugal lives more specifically whether they were facing violence or not. Participants were selected from women who were continuing troublesome relationships and were interested to take part in the study. A diverse case selection technique was used in terms of women's profession/ occupation and income rankings to have as much variation as possible.

Data Collection

Primary data was collected mainly through face to face interviews using a guideline, developed in Bengali. Interviews were audio-recorded with interviewees' prior consent. Interviews were conducted in the participants' native language, Bangla, and the typical length of an interview was an hour. Recorded interviews were first transcribed in Bangla and then translated into English. While translating the transcript, the context was one of the prime considerations.

Data Analysis

A thematic approach was employed to analyse data. Recorded interviews were subsequently transcribed and translated. This process helped the researchers understand the data saturation level and a total 11 cases were studied to obtain the required data. Reading and rereading of transcripts helped researchers to develop initial codes that conceptualized the meaning of the data. Then transcripts were coded openly. Once initial coding was done, the analysis progressed to a second level, focused coding. Frequently mentioned codes were considered for the next level and were further reduced to bring forth major themes of the findings. A constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was applied in this process to develop ideas about emerging themes.

Operational Definition of Term Relevant of the Study

Financially solvent women

A financially solvent woman is one who is able to survive on her own income and manage the household expenses without depending on others. Working women with a minimum gross monthly income of tk. 35,000/-¹ have been defined as financially solvent women for the purpose of this study. However, participants of this study include faculties of public and private universities, government officials, bankers, homeopathy physicians, and self-employed women.

Theoretical Perspective

Gender Role and social expectation

The Editors of Salem Press (2011) define gender role as “separate patterns of personality traits, mannerisms, interests, attitudes, and behaviours that are regarded as “male” and “female” by one’s culture” (p.166). They also view gender roles as “a product of the way in which one was raised and may not be in conformance with one’s gender identity”.

Gender roles are a set of socially appropriate behaviours which are placed in a contrasting manner as men are expected to play the masculine roles and women to play feminine roles. It is the society that has been designing these roles to be performed by men and women (Thobejane & Khoza, 2014). Blackstone (2003) also argues that the basis of gender roles are expectations of society, particularly social values and beliefs about gender. Gender roles are learnt in the process of socialization as boys learn how they are going to act in accordance with masculinity and girls in accordance with femininity which indicates the divided roles for men and women on the basis of inequality (Thobejane & Khoza, 2014; Blackstone, 2003). Burr, Dunn and Farquhar (1972) pointed out that society determines the ways of behaviour for men and women in marital relationships (as cited in De Sousa & Mehta, 2014).

¹ This amount is equivalent to 9th grade salary of the National Pay Scale, 2015 offered to a 1st class government official (National Pay Scale 2015, 2015).

However, Thobejane and Khoza (2014) noted that family, most often, is seen as a heterosexual unit where gender roles are divided to men and women in a way that women are to play the roles of care taker for her child and husband, whereas, men are to play the roles of provider for his child and wife. Therefore, taking care of children and husband and doing household chores are considered the first and foremost expected role to be performed even by the working women who make financial contributions to the family (Ali, 2012). Heise & Garcia-Moreno (2008) noted that in a patriarchal society where men are sanctioned to be categorized as dominant and women as submissive, violence against wife by husband is reportedly linked to the traditional gender roles (as cited in Owoaje & OlaOlorun, 2012). Similarly, O'Neil (1981) argued that men who are inclined to the more inflexibility in practicing and holding strong beliefs of traditional gender roles which serve as the masculine traits, the more they are likely to become violent if they feel threat to their perceived gender roles (as cited in Kwesiga, Bell, Pattie & Moe, 2007).

Social expectations refer to the common perception of a society on what its member should do (Hasegawa, Shinohara & Broadbent, 2007, p. 180). The elaborated concept goes as “an internalized social norm for individuals and organizations, thus for society as a whole, about what people should do” (Hasegawa et al., 2007, p. 180).

Chalabaev, Sarrazin, Stone and Cury (2008) stated that social expectations for men and women are developed on the basis of polarized roles and different stereotypes of men and women that have already been determined by the society itself such as strong vs weak, independent vs dependent, autonomous vs obedient, self-conscious vs nurturer and so on (as cited in Chinurum, Ogunjimi & O'Neill, 2014).

Lippa (2002) argued that it is common to expect men to be tough and aggressive whereas women are expected to be gentle and submissive. Men are encouraged and rewarded for engaging in aggressive acts but women are dissuaded to act with aggressiveness (as cited in Holt, n.d.).

Findings of the Study

Major themes that came out of the analytical process are universality of marriage, being battered by husband is an accepted value, concerns for children's future, pressure from the natal family, social stigma and shame, lack of social and legal support, and lack of dwelling place.

Universality of marriage and its effect on women

Marriage is a universal phenomenon in Bangladeshi society. Society expects an adult woman to be with a man through marriage. She cannot live alone. She will be performing her role and duties as a wife and a mother. When a marriage breaks, parents, relatives and other acquaintances become concerned about the singlehood of the divorced or abandoned woman. It doesn't matter what she thinks about remarriage or if she is interested or not. If a divorced young woman decides to live her life on her own, people in society will judge her chastity. Different assumptions are also cooked up about her stigmatizing her singlehood. People around start to assume that she may have an affair that's why she is not willing to get married and so on. In such a context, a woman thinks that if she divorces her husband and marries another person, there is no guarantee that the new husband will not be a violent person and the previous divorce could remain a topic to mock her. If this happens, she will be in a situation like out of the frying pan into the fire and it will fully entrap her into the extending stigma of being married twice as well as the stigmatized belief that it is she who is having the entire problem in marital life and thus she becomes a problem for herself. Society wants a woman to be married in her youth. If someone is divorced or becomes a widow, her family and relatives force her to marry again. One of the participants reported:

One must carry on her own family life...if I leave him, there will be pressure for getting married again...what if the second marriage becomes as violent as this marriage! Being married for the second time is another factor for me to continue this relationship.

Being battered by husband is an accepted value

Being battered by a husband is an accepted value in Bangladeshi society. Therefore, most of the battered women tolerate it without any resistance. Besides, many of the battered women consider it a private issue and don't disclose it to others. While taking interviews, a sense of uneasiness was observed in every case. Participants didn't feel comfortable describing the tortures by their husbands. A husband can beat his wife if he finds her performance dissatisfactory in household chores, giving birth and rearing children or obeying husband's commands. Most of the women take bettering husbands as their fate. As one of the participants mentioned:

It is my fate that I got such a violent husband. If I were a lucky woman, my marriage would be a good one. There are many women like me who are tortured by their husbands and they are not divorcing their husbands.

Concerns for children's future

Giving birth and rearing children are two prime jobs a woman has to do in Bangladeshi culture. However, a child is known by their fathers. When parents part from each other their children's future falls at a stake. Divorce creates a hostile relationship between two separated spouses. Consequently, divorced parents' children lack the opportunity of having both parents' love and care. Rather they have only one parent to live with. If they live with their mother, they face socio-cultural problems as a child is known by his/her father. Living with a separated father is even more difficult for children of a broken family. A divorced father, in most cases, remarries another woman, which creates a vulnerable situation for children from the first marriage. If a husband abstains from remarrying, still there are problems as men in Bangladeshi society are not habituated to child-rearing. Therefore, a mother doesn't want to take the risk of risking her children's future. As one of the respondents uttered:

If I leave my husband, he will remarry and the future of my children will be at a stake... I do not know whether he will be fulfilling his duty as a father anymore.... I become tense thinking about what may happen to my children if I leave him (husband).

Besides, children who live with single parents or stepfathers/mothers have to face tons of problems. Being a child of a broken family is a stigma as it is thought that broken family children lack proper upbringing and they are likely to get exposed to all negativity easily. A participant expressed:

Society looks down upon broken family children and stigmatizes them. They have to face adversity throughout their whole life. If I divorce my husband, my son will face many troubles when he will be admitted to a school.My children's future, their growing up, getting marriages- everything is yet to take place, something like divorce or separation will ruin everything.

Pressure from the natal family

Divorce, separation and even staying with the natal family for a long time after marriage are seen as something disgraceful, especially for a bride and her family. Consequently, victims' natal families don't want their girls to be divorced, estranged or abandoned. Therefore, there is substantial pressure from a victim's natal family to continue the marriage at any cost. When a daughter complains or informs her natal family about the torture she goes through, natal families condole her that everything will be alright soon, instead of saving their daughter from violence. Natal families encourage their daughters to tolerate violence terming it a 'normal phenomenon'. A respondent voiced:

When I shared my miseries with my mother, she told me that she also had gone through the same process and it is not something unique happening in my life. It happens to most of the women and with time everything will be alright. ...I have been enduring such torture because of lack of support from my father's family. ... When I told them that I wanted to terminate my married life, my parents and brothers scolded me and advised me not to think of such a thing.

Social stigma and shame

Whatever happens in the conjugal life, it is the wife who is to blame. Obviously, parents of brides are also blamed for the wrong upbringing of their daughters. Therefore, whenever a marriage is broken, the wife

is blamed. It's a strong stigma that creates room for the humiliation of women in Bangladesh. A divorced woman is stigmatized because she has failed to bind the conjugal life together with her husband. Gender role confirms that it is a woman's responsibility to ensure that the conjugal life goes smoothly at whatever price she has to pay. Divorce is a stigma which brings shame especially to a girl's family and they (members of the family) lose face in society. This stigma is so strong that it may affect other siblings' marital life as well. Even this stigma could transfer inter-generationally. Marrying off a divorced mother's children is very tough. As a result, women usually don't go for divorce. Rather they endure torture with the hope that things will be changed one day. One of the participants explained,

If I divorce him, neighbours will be blaming my parents for this, relatives will be looking down upon my parents as if they did not implant the right upbringing in us. A woman's life is about compromise, the society looks down upon the divorced women... I will be also looked down upon by people around me if I leave him. They will point fingers at me like I failed to get along well with my husband.

Another respondent described:

In the case of my elder sister's marriage, there was so much inconvenience that took place. If I took any step against my husband, it would be scandalous for my family, people would ridicule us by telling us that every problem comes just to this family's daughters, that's why I do not want my family to go through all these troubles again.

Lack of social and legal support

Bangladeshi society is not a safe place for a single woman. A divorced (single) woman has to face different problems only because she is single or she is deserted by her husband. Besides, society looks down upon a divorced woman. This sense of insecurity compels them to stay within a marital relationship. So, marriage becomes the protection of their vulnerable situation in society. The house of the husband becomes their support of life to go on. Husbands are their guardians in society. When a woman gets divorced, becomes guardianless which is against social values. Therefore, society looks down upon her. Living

in such an environment is not easy. A respondent explained:

Even though I can earn for myself, without the support of society, life will become measurable. ...we cannot live alone. ... It is true that my husband is violent towards me, but society is no less violent towards a single woman.

There are inadequate legal instruments to support women in such a situation. Besides, most of the women don't want to go to the police or court as they don't think that this system will effectively help them solve their problems. According to a participant:

I don't trust the police or the court. Besides, the police cannot punish people who pass bad comments on me, stalk or tease me. Police or court cannot change people's outlook or mindset.

Lack of own abode

Women don't have their own residence and cannot live alone. They live in the shelter of fathers in their childhood, husbands in adulthood and sons in the elderly. They live in their fathers' houses until they get married and move out to their husbands' houses after marriage. The patriarchal system doesn't allow a woman to have her own house. As a result, when a woman divorces her husband, she has, eventually, no place to go. In a patriarchal society, when women get married their relationship with their natal family changes. They remain no more family members of their natal families. Living in the birth family after marriage is thought to be a matter of shame. Besides, as the birth family doesn't want their daughter to cease the marriage, she is not welcomed into her natal family. One of the respondents explained:

I thought of separating from my husband many times but have never been able to do so. I cannot live in my parents' home with respect even though I can manage myself financially. My parents won't allow me to divorce my husband.

Besides, a single woman in our society has to face enormous problems. Therefore, living isolated is a challenge which most women have not learned to face. In cases where women themselves want to take on the challenge, family, friends and people around discourage them.

According to another respondent:

It is not easy and safe for a woman to live in a separate house with a little child far away from family. Middle-class sentiment does not allow us to live on our own...even I do not want to spend my whole life in my parental house where my brothers have their own families.

Discussion and Policy recommendations

Findings of the study show that the universality of marriage and its effect on women, social values legitimating husbands' authority over wives, concerns for children, lack of parental support, social stigma and shame, lack of social and legal support, inadequate legal instruments, lack of dwelling for women are factors that make income earning women continue living with the violence. The decision of staying with the husband or stepping out of the marital life doesn't depend on a woman or her financial capacity. Rather it depends on different factors affecting their social lives.

As marriage is universal in Bangladesh (Joshi, 2004; Schuler & Islam, 2008), a woman is forced to remarry once she gets divorced. Findings from Schuler and Islam's study (2008) also show that women with experience of IPV don't want to break their marriage because they will have to marry again and there is no guarantee that the second husband will be a nonviolent person. However, divorce, being a stigma, creates new rooms for humiliation and violence when she remarries. Therefore, uncertainty about the post-divorce life makes a woman think thousand times before she decides on divorce. Besides, getting divorced from the husband or divorcing a husband is considered a matter of shame and parents lose face in the society. Naved, Bhuiya and Persson (2006); Bhuiyan et al. (2003); Wahed & Bhuyan (2007) also found that divorcing or getting separated from a husband is considered a stigma and the separated women, as well as their families, lose face in the society. There is also a huge uncertainty about a divorced woman's future as a society creates different sorts of problems in the life of a separated and divorced woman. Therefore, parents never want their daughters to leave their husbands. Gill (2004) argues that natal families advised their daughters to stay with an abusive spouse. Gangoli, Donovan, Hester and Westmarland (2005)

argue that if battered women leave their husbands' houses they are forced to return to their husbands.

Divorce, due to the social system, is a threat to the broken families' children which also obstructs a woman's decision of quitting an abusive relationship. Naved et al. (2006), Wahed and Bhuyan (2007), and Khan (2015b) also showed that children's future was a vital reason for not quitting abusive relations.

In terms of wife-beating as an accepted social value, Marcus (1993) mentions that beating women in Bangladesh is accepted and tolerated. Many other societies also have the same value. Ayat's (1989) study in the context of Morocco shows that wife-beating is an accepted norm (as cited in Adler, Mueller & Laufer, 2001). Heise, Ellsberg and Gottemoeller (1999), and Kishor and Johnson (2004) found that both men and women justified IPV worldwide under various circumstances. Therefore, when a daughter shares it with her natal family, they (natal family members) term it a 'normal' phenomenon and advise their daughters to cope with the situation.

A daughter must obey her family's decision as she cannot live in society without either the support of her natal or affinal family. A woman has to comply with the expectation of her natal family because most of the women in Bangladesh know only two places- natal and affinal. Studies by Bhuiyan et al. (2003), and Wahed and Bhuyan (2007) also support this finding. They also found that one of the reasons battered women didn't leave abusive relations is having no place to go. Living alone is not an accepted value and women who live alone face tons of problems. First of all, getting a rental house for a single woman or a woman with little children is very tough. Besides, such women have to face lots of problems and physical insecurity. Teasing, stalking and harassing them sexually are common forms of problems they face. They get support neither from society nor from the law enforcing authority. Thus, a woman hardly thinks of quitting their marital life and starting afresh.

Although there are laws to prevent domestic violence, they are largely ineffective. Besides, there is no clear provision for the punishment of the perpetrator for such an act. Therefore, the government should take

necessary steps to make appropriate amendments as well as ensure effective enforcement of these laws. A fair, first track and women-friendly court system will encourage battered women to seek legal recourses. Special desks in every police station dedicated to battered women should be initiated with women officers specially trained on this issue. Mass awareness is required to bring using different media. To ensure a gradual change in the patriarchal mindset, the curriculum should be designed in a way so that young learners learn to respect others' rights and treat women with dignity.

Conclusion

This paper shows that financially solvent women are also victims of violence in their conjugal life. Although they earn for themselves, their financial independence cannot buy their freedom of choice to leave an abusive relationship in Bangladesh. Rather there are other socio-cultural factors that determine their choices and compel them to live with violence whereas they could continue their lives independently. The universality of marriage and its effect on women, social acceptance of wife-beating, concerns of a mother for her children, social stigma and shame associated with the divorce, natal families' pressure to cope with the violence, lack of social and legal support, inadequate legal instruments and lack of abode for women are factors that compel a financially solvent woman to condone domestic violence and continue their marriages instead of quitting them. However, living a dignified life, free of persecution, is a basic human right. Besides, violence against women not only impacts the battered women's life but also their children, family, society and the country. Therefore, government should take appropriate measures to end such violence and ensure women's safety within their homes. Enforcement of the existing legal regimes with appropriate amendments, setting up separate desks at each police station dedicated to battered women, and establishing a fast track and women-friendly courts would ensure legal recourse against such crimes. However, bringing mass consciousness and changing the patriarchal mindset is also crucial. Therefore, it is required that children from their early childhood learn to respect others' rights, particularly the rights of women. Necessary steps should be taken to that end.

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