

A Study on Exploring the Functions of Community Stakeholders Practicing Restorative Justice in Bangladesh

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Date of Submission: 18-10-2025

Date of Acceptance: 15-04-2026

Date of Publication: 12-05-2026

Keywords:

restorative justice, community stakeholders, restorative dialogue, post-impact of verdict.

ISSN: 3079-1855

<http://doi.org/10.71253/jsd-iswr.dec25.34.1.03>

ABSTRACT

The study aims to explain the community-level restorative functions carried out by restorative justice agencies to reduce community-based criminal victimizations. It selected two restorative justice agencies (RJA) from different areas to examine the actions taken by restorative justice practitioners (RJP) in minimizing criminal activities and involvement. Restorative justice (RJ) is viewed as a community-centered justice approach where the accused and survivors are encouraged to heal the pain and trauma caused by criminal acts. The study reviewed relevant literature and the theoretical framework to understand restorative actions within community settings. As a qualitative research, twelve community stakeholders from various categories were interviewed to gather data about restorative practices. Victims and offenders often played opposing roles after criminal acts and disputes. According to community-based ethics, community members live and interact based on shared customs and practices. This relationship is disrupted when a crime occurs, creating divisions between the victim and offender. A pre-tested interview schedule was used to gather data from community stakeholders, aligned with the research objectives. Additionally, twenty family members, comprising victims and offenders, were asked about the effectiveness of restorative justice, and the post-impact of RJ was assessed through a qualitative framework covering various restorative interventions. The data collected were categorized by characteristics, and a cluster-based design was applied to present the information and respondents' comments. Ethical considerations were properly maintained, including conducting interviews and explaining the data in relation to the research topic. Policy recommendations were made to expand restorative justice and interventions, aiming to reduce trauma and foster a stronger community life.

1.1 Background and Logical Explanation

People gain applied experience in the form of their community life and the existing system of government. When criminal victimization is being discussed, one is bound to revisit the causal aspect of victimization, which pertains to perspectives of crime and anti-social behavior in the community (Cohen, 2004). People having criminal motives are usually affected by the sociological

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environment of the criminalization process, which can make individuals inclined to break laws and rules and commit crimes. Members of the community are socialized within it, where they learn to adapt and respond to different social situations. The pressure of peer companions of good mind may cause people to engage in crimes. According to Siegel (2003), the developmental process in a given community influences individuals' personalities, their ability to justify illegal behavior, and their coping styles. The societal environment is notable towards survival (Shafi, 2010; Islam and Rahman, 2015) to allow community members to grow to understand each other and to have a collective interest to combat injustice and criminal activities.

The needs and wants of the people determine the composition of the social structure as they build up structures that fit a certain goal and even a particular mindset. According to Rigby (2022), level of consumption is determined by social structure and its attendant attributes. The key principles in community activities that should be directed to prevention of the cycles of revenge and recidivism are principles of togetherness and integrative approaches. Brennan et al. (2013) studied the patterns of community livelihoods to assess collective preventative measures against detrimental habits and external risks. Community resources (Brennan et al., 2013; Rahman, 2024) fall under two different dimensions: the first is in the areas of sharing of infrastructural resources to create confidence in everyday life, the environment, and thus to increase survival and resistance criminal networks. The second dimension focuses on the formation of emotional attachments that lead to the long-term collective action that is likely to prevent illegal activities that can be driven by self-interest.

The social fabric of a community includes a variety of lifestyle factors, such as food habits, clothing styles, ways of thinking, work styles, patterns of community interactions, predilections to violate communal norms and the degree of social solidarity. According to the lifestyle theory (Maxfield, 1987) people in a community are influenced by their activities and needs in everyday life, which is closely tied with interactions among community members and institutions. Communal norms and legislative orders are often violated by individuals who do not satisfy their needs and desires via traditional ways. As it is stated by Brennan et al. (2013) such violations are caused by different factors, but simultaneously, remedial actions and responsive actions are demanded. Laws that are out of order and a culture of manipulation are cited as the main causes of criminal victimization.

Several have affected the members of the community to break the set rules and customs due to different reasons. Lanier et al. (2018) affirm that issues related to lifestyles have led to the development of criminal behaviors and incidences occurring within communities. These lifestyle variables expose people to various

social contacts and experiences that could promote criminal attitudes and processes. Several factors cause criminal victimization to occur, including monetary poverty, moral decay, absence of judicial system, an untrustful relationship, a lack of community-based crime prevention, pervasive discrimination, lack of social solidarity and pursuant of personal gain without any legitimate mean. The post-modernization complexities have instead promoted selfish and self-interest oriented actions that have heightened the risks of victimization to crimes. This research will focus on uncovering the strengths and relational bases of communities in solving criminal victimization using restorative justice. The study aims to determine social attitudes of communities to restorative justice as a method of solving the crimes against victims who belong to the society.

1.2 Research Questions

The study has been conducted following some specific questions:

- (a) What opinions have been understood by the community people regarding the causal factors of criminal victimization?
- (b) What actions have been taken by the community people as stakeholders in combating criminal victimization?
- (c) Which issue(s) are hampering the re-framing of the relationship between the victim and offender according to community stakeholders?
- (d) What recommendations are suggested by the community people to promote a restorative approach for connecting local strengths and experiences?

1.3 Research Objectives

The *primary objective* of the study is to unveil the community functions to resolve the criminal victimization within the framework of restorative interventions.

The *specific objectives* of the study are to:

- (a) Uncover the causes behind criminal victimization based on the community frame;
- (b) Identify the harms and pains of committed criminal incidents;
- (c) Know the community strengths and relational pillars in combating criminal actions;
- (d) Explore the unity of the community based on demand and requirements for resolving victimization; and
- (e) Suggest the potential recommendations to promote the restorative services within the community settings.

1.4 Conceptual Clarification

The study has focused on community functions to explore restoration methods and approaches to address criminal victimization. Identifying this objective, the study has used concepts with specific meanings and understandings. *These concepts were used to explore the study following objectivity and conceptuality:* (a) *Community Stakeholders:* The concept of community stakeholders refers to individuals or groups who take responsibility for resolving the criminal victimization and conflicts committed within their community. A person with a public reputation can play a vital role in minimizing the harms and hazards arising from a criminal event. By controlling the post-consequences, community members, as stakeholders, come forward and participate in the process of reconciliation. According to Freeman and Menghwar (2024), community stakeholders are persons who are responsible for bearing the stake in any conflicts and grievances. Through various initiatives, community peace and solidarity have been sustained with the participation of all parties. (b) *Restorative Justice:* Restorative justice is a process by which community-based criminal victimization can be resolved, gathering all parties involved in the victimization within the community. It is viewed as a community-based justice approach that outlines the community's rules and regulations to minimize grievances and conflicts among community members. According to Zehr (2002), restorative justice is an approach to justice implemented within the community to resolve non-serious criminal issues, achieve meaningful solutions, and address the post-impact effects of criminal victimization.

1.5 Used Research Method and Approach

The study has been designed to unearth the role of community stakeholders in resolving community-based criminal victimization and conflicts. In this qualitative study, fifteen victims were interviewed using a semi-structured interview checklist. The interview checklist includes comprehensive questions about restorative actions, using both open-ended and closed-ended formats. Victims' post-experiences have been systematically documented in this study. The research was conducted in two regions of Bangladesh, *Pirojpur and Madaripur*, where restorative justice practices are implemented, and community stakeholders actively fulfill their respective roles and responsibilities.

Restorative efforts (Hass-Wisecup & Saxon, 2018) should be systematically implemented in community settings to address compoundable disputes and victimization. Incorporating victims' perspectives and post-victim experiences is essential for advancing restorative justice by addressing local deficiencies and challenges. To gain comprehensive insights into restorative actions, a qualitative research design (Creswell & Poth, 2017) was adopted for this study. Victims were

interviewed using the *Case Study Method (CSM)* to collect relevant data and contextual information. The CSM facilitated an in-depth exploration of textual data and the relationships among the study objectives.

In addition, community stakeholders (CS) were interviewed using *Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)*. Ten stakeholders participated in KIIs to provide insights into restorative practices and underlying motivations. An interview checklist guided the discussions to ensure comprehensive coverage of healing approaches associated with restorative justice. The collected data were analyzed using narrative analysis, conceptual interpretation, verbatim quotations, and thematic analysis. Creswell and Poth (2017) identified these techniques as effective for qualitative data analysis.

1.6 Reviewed Relevant Literature and Contexts

The community stakeholders, as a part of restorative justice, are involved in the process to say their opinions and views to make an impactful conclusion. Getting the previous study and related contexts, the following literature has been reviewed and understood:

Maryfield et al. (2020) developed '**Research on Restorative Justice Practices**' to examine the emergence of restorative justice on a global scale and its implementation within communities to address criminal victimization and promote victim-offender satisfaction. Their research highlights the significance of restorative justice in managing criminal and juvenile delinquency within community settings through appropriate interventions and victim-offender management. The study identifies restorative justice as a community-based approach that involves victims, offenders, and the broader community in resolving incidents through inclusive participation and shared decision-making. Various approaches are employed to facilitate collaboration between victims and offenders, with community support being integral to the restorative justice process. These approaches have been implemented in diverse countries and contexts, as outlined below:

Table1*Approaches to Restorative Justice Used in Different Countries*

Approaches to Restorative Justice	Working Frame using Approaches
Victim-offender Mediation (VOM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criminal victimizations involving both victim and offender have been addressed and repaired through mediation. • Mediation serves as an approach that addresses misunderstandings and disputes by facilitating responsive actions from the offender and support from the victim. • The restorative body has adopted a win-win approach to promote community peace and discipline.
Victim-offender Dialogue (VOD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through victim-offender dialogue (VOD), both the victim and the offender become aware of the consequences resulting from the criminal act. • Dialogue between the victim and the offender should foster a culture of understanding and encourage a commitment to compensation as a form of recovery. • Dialogue contributes to the development of a culture that discourages revenge and reduces the likelihood of recidivism.
Restorative Justice Conferencing (RJC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RJC engages community members in discussions about the factors that contribute to violations of laws and community norms, and subsequently decides on strategies to address them.
Peace making Circles (PmC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PmC promotes peace within the community and encourages individuals to adhere to community guidelines and regulations in their daily activities and functions.

Source: Developed by Researcher

Restorative justice approaches have been implemented to address trauma resulting from criminal victimization and to repair damaged relationships within communities. The reviewed study indicates that criminal victimization has negatively impacted relationships and social cohesion among community members. Community integration and unity have been undermined. The author

notes that restorative justice methods have resolved disputes and criminal victimizations by providing accepted solutions and meaningful outcomes. Community-based monitoring and vigilance have increased to address the aftermath of victimization and to support victims in reintegration and adjustment. The article further states that the concept of restorative justice originated in Canada in 1974 as a response to youth vandalism.

Restorative justice boards in various counties have addressed a range of community-based criminal victimizations and behavioral disputes. The article emphasizes the effectiveness of restorative justice in repairing criminal harm and victimization, which disrupts relationships within communities. The reviewed article reports that victim-offender mediation (VOM), as a restorative justice approach, has prevented acts of revenge in 32% of cases. Additionally, restorative justice conferencing (RJC) has reduced juvenile violence by 26% across nineteen research projects conducted in different countries. The most significant qualitative findings of the reviewed research are as follows:

Table 2

Approaches to Prevent Criminal Victimizations

- (a) *The reduction of recidivism within the community has been addressed through the provision of various services and programs designed to raise awareness among community members. Community members have participated in crime prevention activities by employing diverse techniques and strategies. Additionally, the use of coercive approaches has influenced individuals to refrain from criminal behavior and adopt less confrontational attitudes.*
 - (b) *Legal mechanisms for crime prevention within community settings are often insufficient. Community-based social governance plays a significant role in maintaining local rules and social norms. Practices that foster a culture of togetherness and empathy are implemented to discourage antisocial behavior, prevent criminal victimization, and guide residents in accordance with the rule of law.*
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Source: Developed by Researcher

The reviewed article states that restorative justice is a philosophy aimed at preventing re-offending and repairing criminal victimization within community settings. The concept of restorative justice has gained global recognition, with various countries adopting its models and strategic perspectives to address criminal victimization. Since criminal victimizations originate within communities, solutions are most effective when accepted and implemented by

the community itself. The article emphasizes that both the causes of crime and the strategies for repair and reintegration should involve all parties, with the community acting as a key stakeholder. As a community-based mechanism, restorative justice encourages all parties to share their experiences and collaboratively determine recovery strategies that uphold human dignity and mutual respect. This approach fosters human connection, supports the establishment of victims' rights and recovery, and assigns responsibilities to offenders.

Marshall (1999), in 'Restorative Justice: An Overview,' discusses key concepts and theoretical foundations for understanding restorative justice as a community-based justice model. Restorative justice is presented as a problem-solving approach that addresses victimization by involving all affected parties and seeking mutually satisfactory solutions. Historically, communities have preferred to repair criminal victimizations internally and have been committed to reducing the likelihood of re-offending. The article notes that community-based resolution is often viewed as more effective than formal interventions, as it decentralizes responsibility for offender correction and prioritizes victim satisfaction.

Restorative justice posits that criminal victimization arises from underlying social conditions and that such acts damage relationships within the community. The article argues that the social contexts of both victims and offenders should be examined to achieve amicable and well-managed solutions. Restorative justice emphasizes victims' rights and promotes reintegrated interventions by leveraging community resources and institutional relationships. The aftermath of criminal victimization often creates complex challenges for both victims and offenders. As a restorative approach, this model is effective in facilitating offender correction and supporting victims' re-establishment by addressing their needs and requirements. Victims often experience a range of crises following victimization, including physical trauma, psychological suffering, social stigma, isolation, ongoing threats from offenders, and pressure to avoid legal proceedings or accept compromise. The article suggests that restorative interventions, with the community as a stakeholder, can effectively address these aftermath situations. Community members play a crucial role in supporting both victims and offenders, facilitating progress and relief from the consequences of criminal victimization. The significance of community involvement lies in its advocacy for the interests of both parties.

The article highlights the community's essential role as a stakeholder in restorative justice, particularly in providing correctional support for offenders. Offenders often experience trauma and stigma as a result of their actions and the violation of legal and community norms. Restorative justice encourages

offenders to address victims' suffering by fulfilling responsibilities assigned by restorative agencies. The study notes that offenders seek to resolve complaints and rebuild relationships with victims and their families. Globally, the practice of restorative justice is recognized for fostering community togetherness and relationships by involving all stakeholders and supporters.

Restorative justice employs various theories to rebuild trust and confidence between victims and offenders. Theoretical frameworks such as control theory, reintegrated shaming theory, social discipline window theory, procedural justice theory, the theory of unacknowledged shame, and defiance theory are applied to alter criminal tendencies and encourage adherence to community norms. The article identifies restorative justice as a global movement that fosters community-based tolerance and promotes a culture of restoration. This approach cultivates a community environment that discourages revenge and reduces recidivism by applying theoretical models to influence behavior. Restorative justice addresses criminal victimizations by reaching appropriate resolutions, encouraging adherence to community values and legal obligations, highlighting victims' needs, and facilitating offender correction through assigned duties and compensation.

Bonta et al. (2008) clarified that the traditional justice system emphasizes punishment as a means to reduce recidivism and re-offending by both offenders and victims. In contrast, restorative justice engages offenders and victims through alternative approaches, strategies, and perspectives to prevent re-offending. Restorative justice practitioners activate humanitarian perspectives for both parties, creating opportunities to implement decisions using tolerant methods and techniques. The traditional justice paradigm in most countries focuses on offender punishment and compensation, a practice generally recognized by the state. This system maintains that punishment will reduce and control the culture of re-offending. Conversely, restorative justice emphasizes the relational dynamics between offender and victim to achieve long-term outcomes. As a community-based approach, restorative justice seeks to repair the harms and traumas experienced by victims and to correct offenders through actions that promote recovery and victim satisfaction.

The reviewed study reported that 52.7% of victimization cases were resolved through restorative approaches involving both victims and offenders. Additionally, 75% of juvenile delinquents and 25% of adult offenders participated in restorative justice processes. Stakeholder interest in restorative justice is increasing globally. The study further revealed that restorative justice addressed cases of vandalism (8.2%), property-related victimizations (67.3%), juvenile delinquency (23.25%), and other offenses (10.3%). Victimizations (Bonta et al., 2008) were addressed using models such as victim-offender

mediation (62.3%), restitution (82.0%), community service and vigilance (82.0%), family group conferencing (24.6%), and community forums (8.2%). These models and strategies have gained acceptance within communities by effectively resolving disputes and compoundable victimizations.

Zernova and Wright (2015), in a chapter of *'Alternative Visions of Restorative Justice,'* highlight the significance of restorative justice in addressing criminal victimization within communities. The authors argue that restorative justice has evolved to repair criminal victimizations and behavioral disputes, in contrast to the retributive or punitive justice approach, which emphasizes punishment-based correctional treatment. There is a growing shift in public perception toward evaluating justice processes and adopting alternative methods for resolving criminal matters within the community context. The rising costs and delays in court-based justice have led to public dissatisfaction. Community-based justice approaches have gained popularity due to their accessibility, stakeholder involvement, and ability to foster community vigilance and solidarity. These approaches encourage offenders to provide compensation and fulfill responsibilities, while promoting dialogue among all stakeholders to reach mutually acceptable and implementable solutions.

Communities recognize restorative justice as an effective means of resolving various disputes and misunderstandings. This approach brings victims and offenders together to discuss incidents of victimization and seek mutually satisfactory solutions. The intervention of restorative justice has helped to reduce coercive practices. Restorative justice practitioners engage with both parties to understand the circumstances of victimization and determine the most appropriate resolution. The reviewed chapter notes that restorative justice provides an environment for victims and offenders to share their experiences following victimization.

The reviewed literature indicates that *conflict transformation* can be achieved through restorative justice interventions and programs. The implementation of restorative models and strategies has reduced cycles of conflict and desires for revenge among victims. Restorative justice creates an environment that alleviates trauma for both victims and offenders, while encouraging offenders to provide compensation and support to victims. In contrast, the punitive justice approach prioritizes punishment with limited focus on correction or community cohesion. Restorative justice, however, emphasizes rebuilding broken relationships. The analyzed article observes that traditional justice processes address criminal victimization as violations of law, whereas restorative justice views such matters as violations of relationships between victims and offenders. The restorative paradigm fosters relational progress, community integration, and

mutual respect, promoting human dignity for all community members regardless of status.

Restorative justice encourages victims to return to normalcy and calls upon offenders, through practitioners, to resolve matters within the community, thereby reducing conflict and fostering community cohesion. As a key stakeholder, the community motivates individuals to adhere to established norms and customs. The reviewed article notes that practices such as 'community feasting' and the 'Truth Commission' model in South Africa have effectively addressed community-based violence and injustice. Restorative justice encourages adherence to community regulations and aims to create an environment where all individuals can move freely with dignity and freedom. Although restorative justice is practiced differently across countries, its core objective remains consistent: to promote community well-being, reduce crime, and cultivate a supportive environment grounded in trust.

Hargovan (2005) conducted a study to examine the increasing incidence of domestic violence in South Africa, despite the existence of the Domestic Violence Act, 1998. The study highlights that the social context operates differently across countries, depending on their cultural and social values. Social legislation is identified as a key factor in addressing community victimization and behavioral disputes. However, the study argues that legislation alone is insufficient to control social crimes. The author asserts that a restorative approach may serve as a significant alternative for resolving social disputes and addressing challenges in community relationships. The study recommends that formal justice systems should authorize guidelines recognized as community service to raise awareness about social injustice and discrimination. Discriminatory cultural practices have led to varying levels of victimization and unrest, undermining social order and discipline. The study further observes that a culture of tolerance and good community governance (GCG) encourages adherence to community norms and guidelines as essential behavioral standards.

Based on the reviewed findings, the present study has been planned to examine the role of community stakeholders in addressing the committed criminal victimization and grievances. In the restoration process, community stakeholders play a vital role in ensuring justice and implementing the verdict/decision to create a win-win situation. However, the role of community stakeholders is not adequately studied through methodical interventions and approaches. The present study was conducted to investigate stakeholders' involvement in community settings.

1.7 Findings and Analysis

The community stakeholders were interviewed to know their roles and take responsibility for resolving the community-based conflicts. At the same time, the victims were asked about the impacts of restorative justice and to assess the role of community stakeholders who played to address the criminal hazards. The findings of both are based on the research questions, which are described below with all necessary explanations and contexts:

1.7.1 Committed Criminal Victimizations according to Community Stakeholders

Crime is a pervasive and persistent phenomenon worldwide, including in Bangladesh. Crime is defined as an act or omission that is detrimental to the community and prohibited by law, which prescribes punishment and correction. In the context of Bangladesh, community-based criminal activities commonly include conjugal conflict, theft, and juvenile delinquency, damage to private property, extra-marital relationships, financial disputes, misconduct within the community, land-related disputes, and sexual violence.

Community members, as stakeholders in restorative justice, have articulated their perspectives and experiences along two primary dimensions. First, they have discussed criminal victimization occurring within community settings, noting that both direct and indirect impacts are experienced by victims and other community members. Stakeholders have also identified the causes and effects of various community criminal activities. Second, community stakeholders have evaluated the effectiveness and efficiency of restorative justice as a community-based justice approach. This approach addresses community disputes by involving victims, offenders, and other community members. Stakeholders have further described the operational mechanisms of restorative justice within these settings.

A respondent of community stakeholders 'E' noted the views about criminal victimizations which happened within the community as follows:

"I have observed that crime in Bangladesh is prevalent in both urban and rural areas. Most crimes can be classified into five categories: violent, property, public order, enterprise, and white-collar offenses. However, restorative justice primarily addresses non-violent and minor crimes that can be resolved through a restorative approach. In this process, victims may receive compensation, and offenders are held accountable for their actions. I consider restorative justice to be a form of peacekeeping within society. It is mainly applied to less serious offenses such as family-related disputes, conjugal conflicts, petty theft, property crimes, sexual misconduct, and other forms of misconduct. In Bangladesh,

various institutions have assumed responsibility for promoting restorative justice among the general population. As a member of the community, I observe life situations and disputes that arise among community members. Based on these observations, I believe that the community experiences different levels of victimization due to diverse reasons and backgrounds, most of which are related to social cohesion and patterns of livelihood.”

Community stakeholders provided diverse perspectives on community-based criminal activities, reflecting the specific circumstances within their communities. The responses varied considerably among participants, reflecting distinct analytical abilities and viewpoints regarding these activities. Community-based criminal acts have affected individuals in multiple ways, and explanations for criminal victimization often depend on personal capacities and social experiences acquired within the community. Respondent ‘A’ stated:

“Crime poses a significant challenge to society, disrupting both social life and the overall conditions within communities. I have observed that crime rates are increasing, in part due to a decline in community members' social responsibility. Many individuals are preoccupied with their personal affairs, leading to a gradual erosion of collective responsibility and a shift toward individualism. As a result, incidents of community-based victimization and petty crimes are on the rise, with community members often victimizing one another. Given these realities, I believe that restorative justice offers a valuable approach for fostering a healthier social environment. This process is essential for societal improvement and promotes reconciliation and harmony among individuals. Although restorative justice is often applied to family or conjugal conflicts and minor offenses, its principles could be extended to address a broader range of crimes within the community. In Bangladesh, the prevalence and impact of community-based criminal victimization have reached a level that significantly undermines social life and mutual expectations among citizens.”

Crimes and victimizations occurring within community settings are typically regarded as forms of anti-social behavior in Bangladesh. Compoundable criminal behaviors are often viewed as socially manageable disputes, necessitating the application of correctional approaches to alter the social environment that fosters criminal activity. A respondent identified as victim ‘D’ stated:

“Crime is regarded as anti-social behavior in Bangladesh for various reasons. In my experience, property-related crimes such as theft, vandalism, arson, and robbery, as well as sexual harassment, including eve teasing, rape, virtual sexual threats and violence, child rape, domestic violence, and community disputes, are increasingly prevalent. These offenses are often

perceived as non-serious crimes. Restorative justice agencies aim to reduce victimization within the community by organizing meetings in communal settings. Through these initiatives, attitudes toward victimization are shifting, and community members are increasingly motivated to resolve disputes internally and satisfactorily. I have observed that victimization significantly disrupts the lives of affected individuals, impacting their honor, property, social standing, and affiliations. As a member of the community, I believe that crimes and victimizations occur due to various dysfunctions within social institutions. To my knowledge, restorative justice seeks to address these issues by bringing together victims, offenders, and relevant stakeholders.”

Descriptions of community-based criminal victimization vary among respondents. Participants reported their experiences as eyewitnesses and described their involvement in addressing these incidents. Community stakeholders identified various forms of criminal victimization that occur frequently within the community.

In many cases, minor offenses committed within communities escalate into serious victimizations due to delayed intervention and inadequate restorative measures. Such crimes have affected community members both directly and indirectly. Primary victims experience direct harm from criminal disputes, while their family members often suffer trauma as secondary victims. According to community stakeholders, a limited number of individuals engage in criminal victimization, influenced by various factors and personal interests. The nature and severity of victimization vary across different communities. Community members are motivated by diverse aspirations, demands, and interests. Community-based criminal victimizations typically occur within the local context, where environmental and situational factors influence individuals to commit criminal acts.

1.7. 2 Factors Contributing to Criminal Victimizations within the Community

Victimization within community settings occurs due to multiple factors, and the processes by which victimization is enacted vary among individuals. The causal factors for criminal behavior are shaped within the community context, encompassing various levels such as lifestyle, beliefs, social norms, discipline, and legal orientation. Consequently, the nature of community criminal victimization differs according to these causal factors and the coping mechanisms employed in response to crime and victimization.

Managing the impacts of crime within community settings is challenging, and community institutions often rely on traditional intervention approaches. The study identified core factors contributing to criminal behavior, including

poverty, dishonesty, the pursuit of power, arrogance, personal interests, peer influence, audacity, and a tendency toward dominance within the community. However, the study also suggests that the application of shaming theory and discipline theory may effectively reduce criminal tendencies and the culture of revenge, while encouraging positive behaviors and motivations among community members.

In Bangladesh, women experience violence due to societal expectations of silence and dependency. Children are at risk of delinquency as a result of inadequate parenting and lack of guidance. Some community members engage in theft due to poverty, necessity, and peer influence. Similar to the diversity in the nature and types of victimization, the causal factors have been examined by three respondents, identified as H, J, and K, each considering different aspects.

Within the community context, individuals tend to form relationships based on shared interests. However, there is a notable lack of mutual trust and respect, which undermines social commitments. Although various customs are maintained, during emergencies or disputes, community members often do not support victims or those affected. Evidence suggests that individuals are influenced by multiple factors that pressure them to commit acts violating community norms and personal commitments. These influences contribute to increased criminal victimization. Furthermore, community education intended to foster responsible citizenship is not functioning effectively in Bangladesh. As a result, violations of community norms and human rights occur frequently, increasing the risk of victimization.

The study determined that women are subjected to both physical and psychological oppression in domestic environments due to dowry demands and unlawful expectations from their husbands, which intensify family and marital conflicts within the community. The research further established that lower income, insufficient education, and entrenched patriarchal norms contribute to offenses such as dowry demands, theft, and adultery. Moreover, children face an increased risk of delinquency resulting from peer pressure and adverse family circumstances, including inadequate parenting, insufficient guidance, and association with negative peer groups. These contributing factors were emphasized by community stakeholders. More broadly, the study identified a spectrum of influences on criminal victimization, encompassing biological, psychological, sociological, financial, political, environmental, and religious factors. Such influences promote violations of community norms and obligations, particularly among individuals lacking the power or capacity to resolve community disputes.

Typically, a combination of these factors contributes to the emergence of criminal behavior. The principal factors identified are poverty, overpopulation

and high population density, lack of ethical education and community engagement, personal interests, adverse family conditions, political involvement and depression, social and mental disorders, peer influence, substance abuse, absence of social justice and equity, and the erosion of human values and morality.

Most community stakeholders indicated that crime arises from a variety of influential factors. In summary, the primary causal elements include lack of social awareness, diminished self-respect, abuse of power, inequality and discrimination, inadequate parenting, and peer influence, all of which are embedded in sociological contexts. Additionally, the physical environment of individuals was identified as a significant factor. The interaction of these elements heightens the risk of criminal victimization within the community. A victim respondent observed that:

“In Bangladesh, I have observed that crimes often arise from a lack of social awareness, diminished self-respect, the misuse of power, inequality and discrimination, inadequate parenting, and peer influence. The likelihood of engaging in criminal behavior depends on an individual's capacity and resilience to manage challenging situations and adverse conditions. Within community life, individuals are influenced by situational demands and social boundaries. Under pressure, both individuals and groups may engage in criminal activity. In Bangladesh, the nature and methods of crime have evolved. Recently, incidents of child abuse and child rape have become more frequent. I believe these crimes are driven by psychological tendencies toward criminal behavior, difficulties in social adjustment, insufficient community collaboration, and the influence of power and arrogance. These factors are both social and psychological.”

Community stakeholders identified several factors that influence individuals to commit crimes within the community. Perceptions of community-based criminal activities varied among respondents. The perspectives of all respondents are presented below:

Table 3

Factors Related to Criminal Victimizations in Community Settings

B Criminal Victimizations based on Etiology (Cause)	Factors that Produce the Causes of Criminal Victimizations
Contributing factors include lack of social awareness, insufficient self-respect, and abuse of power, social inequality, discrimination,	Sociological and psychological factors.

inadequate parenting, peer influence, and negative attitudes.

Factors such as social reality, traditional perspectives, the absence of community guidelines, the effectiveness of social governance, the impact of trends in peer-group influences, and prevailing social trends contribute to understanding crime.

Sociological, community, and social-psychological factors.

Factors such as family misunderstandings, marital conflict, ineffective sibling relationships, inadequate parenting, peer influence, adoption of modern lifestyles, and neglect of cultural traditions, insufficient moral education, financial constraints, and limited family communication contribute to these issues.

Community and livelihood pattern, sociological points, and community governance.

Factors such as peer influence, inadequate family management, weakened family bonds, substance abuse, disregard for community norms, and deficiencies in empathy and personal resilience contribute to these outcomes.

Societal perspectives, psychological dimensions, associative networks, and self-cultural identity.

Contributing factors include inadequate education and moral development, high population density and growth, insufficient social awareness, adverse family conditions and low income levels, weak community affiliation and trust, political exploitation and abuse of power, and the ineffective functioning of social institutions.

Social perspectives, economic instability, community engagement, and lack of participation in community-based social functions.

Source: Developed by Researcher

Community stakeholders have identified several causal factors influencing individuals to commit crimes. They have observed that the cause-and-effect dynamics of community-based criminal activities have significantly impacted local residents. In Bangladesh, the patterns and nature of criminal victimization have evolved, with community members adopting modern and Western methods to perpetrate crimes. Notably, both youth and adults have acquired various techniques for committing offenses and have become informed about victimization practices from other countries through cultural exchange and prevailing social dynamics. The transnational sharing of victimization methods

is increasingly evident and is being implemented within local community contexts.

Community stakeholders involved in the restorative justice process, serving as community participants, have identified *causal factors* by considering societal perspectives and cultural identities as outlined below:

Respondent of community stakeholders 'K' noted that:

“In Bangladesh, I consider that crime is treated as a normal occurrence by most people and is socially constructed. Most community members are adjusting to the norms of victimization. No one speaks out against crime or takes effective steps to prevent it. It is becoming a way of life in developing countries to cope with the changing pattern of victimization. This is a real fact about the commission of crimes. So, social mentality and the way victimization is seen are responsible for committing crimes in Bangladesh. Nowadays, it has also been shown that criminals are moving from one place to another. Everyone knows he/she is a criminal, but no one takes action or calls the police for prevention. And in this way, we have to adjust to social life with crime--I observed.”

Respondent of victim 'H' mentioned that:

“Drug dealing and drug use are among the primary factors contributing to criminal activity. Within the context of Bangladesh, drug addiction is frequently associated with crimes such as the oppression of women, sexual harassment, domestic violence, theft, and other offences. Drug dealers also contribute to increased criminality, often facilitating more violent acts such as bombings, arms trafficking, and drug smuggling throughout Bangladesh. Consequently, the risk of victimization is rising, affecting community members to varying degrees.”

Respondent of community stakeholders 'I' revealed that:

“Crime often arises from the absence of fundamental rights such as access to food, clothing, shelter, education, and healthcare. In my view, individuals under the age of 18 are increasingly involved in criminal activities and are referred to as juvenile delinquents. Their involvement in crime can be attributed to factors such as inadequate parenting, peer influence, and the adoption of contemporary lifestyles. More broadly, crime is frequently linked to insufficient education, low income levels, and a lack of support from family and community.”

Respondent of the victim 'G' considered that:

"I have come to understand that crime arises from a variety of causes. In my community, people frequently discuss victimization and explore ways to address it through different services. Community members are increasingly aware of the concepts of crime and victimization. There is no single definition for crime or victimization, nor is there a single factor that leads individuals to violate community norms or harm others. In Bangladesh, several significant factors contribute to violations of community codes and acts of victimization. These include lack of awareness, insufficient emphasis on educational values, poor family conditions, low household income, and peer influence. Such factors may directly or indirectly motivate individuals to commit crimes. Additionally, certain pressures can compel individuals to violate social rules and standards of conduct, resulting in behaviors that fall under the broader concept of victimization."

1.7.3 Community Responsibility for Victim-Offender Reconciliation

The community is recognized as a significant component of restorative justice, facilitating restorative decisions and encouraging offenders to adhere to restorative outcomes. Community involvement in justice processes provides victims with support and cooperation, enabling them to rebuild their capacity to adjust to daily life. Community-based rehabilitation offers opportunities and resources for victims to regain lost strength and progress. Such initiatives foster reconciliation between victims, offenders, and community stakeholders. In both restorative and community-based social justice, community stakeholders serve as an active platform to protect victims from trauma and mitigate the consequences of victimization. Offenders are also encouraged to take responsibility and contribute to the healing of victims through community support. Respondents indicated that:

As community stakeholders, we must provide essential support to victims and their families to help them regain strength and capacity. We should offer psychological assistance and shelter to facilitate their reintegration as active members of the community. In our experience, we have observed that community care and guardianship play a significant role in protecting victims from the adverse consequences of criminal victimization.

Following criminal acts, victims and their families often occupy a vulnerable position within the community. Frequently, offenders and their associates possess greater influence than the victims and their supporters. Therefore, community stakeholders should implement regulations to mitigate offender dominance and prevent retaliatory actions by victims and their supporters. Establishing community oversight and support mechanisms can help manage the aftermath of criminal victimization and foster a peaceful environment. These measures increase the likelihood of recovery for victims while maintaining control over offenders.

It is necessary to assess the overall situation following incidents of criminal victimization within the community. A localized justice approach is implemented by engaging restorative justice agencies or the village court and ensuring the participation of all relevant stakeholders. Observations indicate that addressing cases of victimization effectively facilitates support for the reintegration of victims and their families within the community. Opportunities for readjustment and reconciliation are ensured through the active involvement of community members.

Source: Developed by Researcher

1.7.4 Role of Community Stakeholders in Minimizing the Risk of Victimization

The community, as a stakeholder, plays a significant role in minimizing victimization within community settings by repairing harm, alleviating suffering, and facilitating the recovery of lost property. Within restorative justice processes, the community is represented by elected leaders, influential non-elected individuals, relatives, peer groups, friends, and neighbors. As a third party, the community initiates key steps to address victimization in collaboration with restorative agencies.

Victims and offenders are members of the same community and are expected to uphold its values, ethics, and principles. Victims often return to the community seeking shelter, affiliation, and continuity of life, while offenders also remain within the community. Failure to address and repair victimization can result in offenders being stigmatized as antisocial individuals. The community, as a broad

arena for relational reconciliation, holds responsibilities for repairing victimization through offender contributions and by responding to the rights and needs of victims.

Micro-communities of victims and offenders are engaged in relational repair and are connected to processes that foster meaningful understanding. According to community stakeholder respondent 'R':

“I consider the community to be one of the most influential factors in the restorative justice process. The involvement of community members, particularly within micro-communities, inspires victims to recover lost resources, including property, honor, prestige, and both physical and emotional well-being. In my experience, offenders are often encouraged to take responsibility for reparations as determined by restorative justice decisions. Typically, restorative justice processes address minor cases of victimization (compoundable cases) with values not exceeding 75,000 tk. Importantly, the community, as a unit of restorative care, often agrees to resolve such matters internally. However, I have noticed that close associates of both victims and offenders sometimes display ambiguous attitudes during the reparative and restorative agreement process. Based on my experiences, I identify the role of the community as a critical factor influencing both victims and offenders to come together, facilitating minimization of harm and promoting further reconciliation for the collective benefit of the community.”

Community care plays a significant role in restorative justice. However, community members have often overlooked the post-incident attitudes of both victims and offenders. Within restorative justice practices, the community is recognized for providing emotional support to those affected and encouraging offenders to assume responsibility for addressing the harm caused. Respondents consistently identified and anticipated a role for the community in facilitating care and enhancing the recovery process, which can positively influence both victims and offenders.

1.7.5 Policy Interventions and Recommendations

Restorative justice heals the pains and traumas following a systematic approach and interventions. Bangladesh, as a crime-prone country, has enacted numerous laws and regulations to control and mitigate the impacts of crimes on livelihoods and social solidarity. Restorative justice is considered a community-based justice approach that organizes restorative settings to resolve community-based non-serious criminal victimizations. The community stakeholder is reviewed as a significant party to conduct the restorative justice and reconciliation. New policies and legal focus on the community-based stakeholders can be ensured by the government, which promotes the culture of mitigation of criminal

victimization within the community. The community stakeholders need to be involved in the justice process to ensure the verdict/decision facing challenges resulting from a criminal event. At the same time, more insights and other important issues can be studied by any researcher(s) applying a scientific research plan. The scope and involved areas of community stakeholders should be intervened by the researcher to explore the new dimensions and possibilities.

1.8 Concluding Remarks

The study has been conducted to examine the involvement of community stakeholders in the restorative functions to address community-based criminal victimizations. Community stakeholders and victims from the two research areas have been interviewed to gather information on their roles and interventions to mitigate criminal events. The stakeholders have mentioned numerous steps they have taken on behalf of the victims and their families. The victims and their families have faced different peculiar subjects after being victimized and harassed. The society, as a broader guardian, takes some pertinent decisions to address criminal victimization and injustice. Community stakeholders have noted various issues related to criminal victimization. The individual(s) from the community have overcome different unpleasant environments and problems that have affected their lives and social relationships. All themes aligned with the study objectives have been identified and assessed to explore community stakeholders' involvement and interventions. By contrast, victims have expressed their opinions on the process of victimization. The societal factors and environmental influences on criminal activities have been understood through step-by-step interventions. The victims eagerly expect that the community stakeholders will come forward to save the people who are marginalized and underprivileged. The insightful explanation of criminal activities noted that people with marginalization have been victimized frequently due to their social status and stratified position. Community governance to ensure the well-being of all should be implemented effectively, and people with diverse characteristics should live their lives and fulfil their duties without tension or pressure. Through the present study, the opinions and grounds for criminalization have been understood, and victims have opined that, through community interventions (CIs), the criminal movement must be controlled and curtailed. Community-related services for controlling community-based criminal events should be minimized, and people in all positions should have an environment in which they can pursue their desires and live without judgmental interference.

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