

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN: A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION

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ABSTRACT: *Children are doubly vulnerable due to their age along with the other factors like gender. This paper is based on eleven case studies on children who were sexually violated in rural areas of Bangladesh within the period of 2011-2015. Apart from the causes and victim-perpetrator relationship the research shed light on victims' action against the incidents and hindrance on the way to justice. This study is expected to provide with insights in planning an effective development intervention addressing sexual violence against children. The study found that the patriarchal ideology of relating women's chastity to the 'ideal' women punishes the victims and let the perpetrators go unpunished. It suggests for the extensive work on traditional gender roles and power relations responsible for such violence. In addition, it recommends to adopt a holistic approach by addressing cultural and social values and stigma, as well as legal aspects to combat the issue.*

KEYWORDS: Sexual Violence, Non-Government Organization, Patriarchal Ideology, Marriage, Rape

INTRODUCTION

Ending all forms of child abuse including sexual violence is one of the major agenda of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Children become the easy target of sexual violence both within and outside home due to their vulnerability for their age and dependency on adult. Various development and Non-Government Organizations (NGO) play role in eliminating all types of violence including sexual violence against children. However, this effort possesses challenges due to lack of information on the incidents. This paper is based on a study that aimed to explore the issue of sexual violence against children in the rural areas of Bangladesh, a typical patriarchal country in South Asia. Considering the lack of information on the incidents resulting from victims' and their family members' tendency of non-reporting, this paper shed light on the reasons of sexual violence, nature of the event, victim-perpetrator relationship, and victims' action against the incident as well as the hindrance for victim on the way to justice.

This paper is expected to provide insight about the strategies and interventions the NGOs or relevant organizations can adopt to combat this evil act by revealing the various dimensions of sexual violence perpetrated against children. Moreover, the paper will also put light on the reasons behind the act of demotivation from victims' and their families' side to take any steps against the perpetrators in spite of existing Government and NGO initiative to support victims of such kind.

Theoretical Framework

Sexual violence against children is highly sensitive and unreported crime in the world as well as in Bangladesh. Cultural and social values along with patriarchal ideology prevent the reporting of sexual abuse and exploitation. In countries of South Asia reporting the sexual

violence damages victims more than perpetrators (ECPAT 2016). Therefore, though there is a growing body of literature on men's use of physical violence, there is a less information on sexual violence against women and especially children. A WHO multi-country study conducted in 2005 pointed to the fact that coerced sex and sexual violence may be the common childhood experience for some women and girls (WHO 2005). While considering the sexual violence against children, male child are also made the target, although the vulnerability encourages sexual violence has gender dimension. This difference has reflected from a review of studies from 20 countries, including ten national representative surveys that showed that in the case of girls the childhood sexual abuse ranged from 7-36 percent and the figure was 3-29 percent for boys (Finkelhor 1994).

As a part of South Asia, reality for Bangladesh is similar. Here, the child sexual abuse is largely a taboo topic to discuss or talk about. Gaining information, both in the form of quantitative and qualitative, is a challenging task because of the shame and cultural stigma attached to sexual abuse. Keeping this context ahead the present study aimed to gather empirical data to provide insight about the nature of the violence as well as the potential areas need to be intervened to address the issue. Considering the nature of the problem, the qualitative approach was taken as the best fitted since this study intended to go deeper to understand the problem, rather than to quantify it.

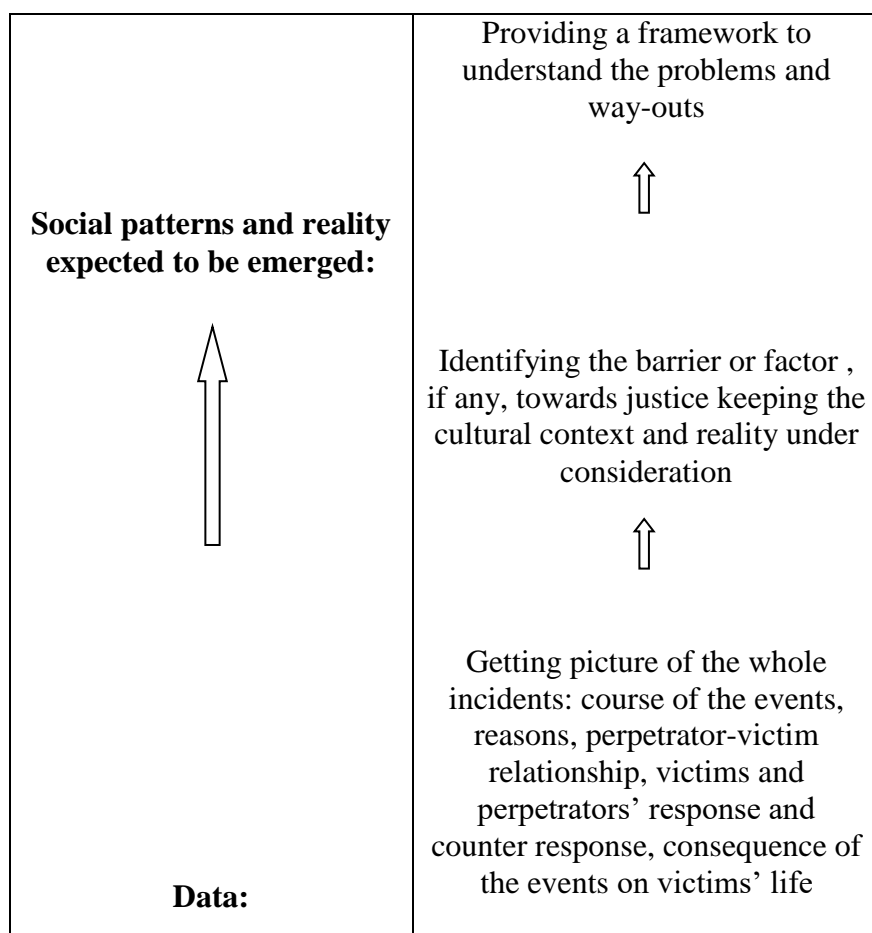


Figure1. The inductive pathways followed to meet the objectives of the present study

This study employed Grounded Theory framework (Strauss & Corbin 1996) to achieve the objectives of the study. The process and the analysis of this research rely on the gender norms as well as the socio-cultural and religious context of the study areas to get the meaning of the data. Therefore, the present study aims to offer an understanding about the nature of the problems as well as to propose the areas of intervention for different organizations and practitioners and people who work or are interested to work over the issue (Figure 1).

METHODOLOGY

The study followed qualitative approach, and case study was the method used in this study to achieve the objectives. Considering the sensitivity in the context of cultural values and stigma associated with the issue, the study chose case study over survey to collect information. By following the grounded theory, the data collection and analysis went simultaneously in order to minimize the gap of information and to have the new kinds of relevant information in the next sample.

Participant Recruitment

The office records of the incidents of sexual violence maintained by BRAC, the world's largest NGO based in Bangladesh, had been used to identify the cases. From this record, the incident of sexual violence against children (aged 1-18 years) taken place in between 2011-2015 were selected.

Possibility of catching various dimensions of sexual violence, the availability of informants during the data collection period and victims' attitude of cooperation towards the research were the factors that influenced the selection of cases for case studies. Participants from whom the data were collected included a) victims themselves so that the information would be absolutely authentic; and b) adults including parents, other family members and actors like neighbors, community leaders who witnessed or played role in one or different stages of the incidents. Two male and two female research assistants having social science background and experience of working in the gender issues, especially on violence and children, were employed as the interviewers or data collectors. The data were collected in March 2016.

Case had been taken from the list of sexual violence recorded by Community Empowerment Programme and Human Rights and Legal Aid Services Programmes of BRAC in field offices under the three districts (district is a type of administrative division, and Bangladesh is divided into 64 districts) of Bangladesh: Shirajganj, Cumilla and Gazipur.

Sample Size

It was planned that number of case study conducted would be dependent on the information received from each case. That is, when additional information would not be achieved from subsequent case, the study would stop taking new one. By following this strategy, the study required to conduct eleven case studies.

Data Analysis

The present study followed Strauss and Corbin's (1996) approach to Grounded Theory for analysis. For adopting this theoretical stand, the study acknowledges the fact that the findings or inferences that would be drawn from this study would be the result of co-construction of

the reality by both research participants and researcher. That is, the reality reflected from this study would be influenced by researcher's own context and prior knowledge. Moreover, the inference would be achieved through the systematic process of induction, deduction, verification and categorization of the field data (Charmaz 2008).

Ethical Consideration

Informed consent has been taken from the respondents. The objectives of the research were disclosed explicitly to the participants. This was the proposition that the participants could withdraw from conversation whenever they wanted. Since the victims of the violence in the case of this research were children, both victims and their caregivers were informed about the purpose of the interview. They were made assured that their identity and given information would be unrevealed and used only for the research purpose. The maximum effort had been made to prevent any possible harm of the respondents due to this research.

FINDINGS

The findings of the research, with the description of three cases, have been presented below after describing the demographic information of the victims and perpetrators.

Demographic information on victims and perpetrators

Victim: Out of eleven cases, victim of only one case was male in his middle childhood stage (10yrs of age) and the rest of them were female. Out of the eleven cases, nine belonged to the age group of 13-<18 one to 9-12 age groups and one from 3-8 age group. Five victims out of eleven were student during the data collection period while others were non-school going, homemaker and involved in income generation. All of the victims were Muslim by religion. By social status, all were ordinary villagers.

Perpetrator: In total fourteen perpetrators were found to be involved in 11 cases. Two of them belonged to their adolescent stage (17-18 age group) at the time of data collection. Five were from 19-30 age group, another five from 31-40 age group while other two belonged to 41-50+ of age group. All of the perpetrators except three were involved in income generating activities. Unlike victims, social status of perpetrators varied. Although six of them were ordinary villagers, the rest belonged to the group of community assumed to have influence in their locality, either by political or social. Among them one was political leader, one had acceptability as Muslim learned (*Quran e Hafiz*), one was school teacher and another one worked in Police Department as Police Constable. All of the perpetrators were male by sex.

Nature of the Incidents

The study tried to explore the nature of the incidents by the time and place of the occurrence, and also by victim-perpetrator relationship. All the incidents explored in this study were taken place in afternoon, night and the time between. Therefore, the presence or the absence of daylight did not seem to influence perpetrator's move, rather their impulsion and opportunistic attitude determine their move towards victims in most cases. In some cases, rapist's anger and vindictiveness also acted as the reason for their perpetration of sexual violence. Moreover, both home and outside home were found to be the place where the

sexual violence took place in the cases under study. The perpetrators in both places were family members and outsiders. The place of occurrence of the incidents included:

- I. **Home:** In case of incidents where the violence occurred inside home, perpetrators were with different relationship with victims ranges from household members like intimate partner, i.e. husband and lover and non-household members such as other family members like cousin to outsiders came to provide services for that household in exchange of money, like *kabiraz* and mason.
- II. **Other's house:** In cases, children became victims when they were in neighbour's houses. In all such cases, victims were in socially and professionally vulnerable position, like a child of a domestic worker or as a coworker with a lower rank than that of host who turned to be perpetrator. In one case, a female child was sexually violated by her host or the owner of the house due to her vulnerability resulting from intellectual disabilities.
- III. **Educational institution (class room):** Educational institution was appeared to be a place where sexual violence was perpetrated on a female student by a teacher. In this hierarchical, i.e. teacher-student relationship, powerful side had the advantage of creating the favorable environment of perpetrating the violence against the less powerful or the powerless.
- IV. **Place far from crowd/ locality:** It has been appeared that a place far away from locality had been selected by perpetrator to commit the violence. In one case of this kind, victim was taken to an empty thatched room situated in a river side and then was severely beaten before rape. Here, victim's crying and desperate attempt of seeking people's attention for help went in vain since there was no people to hear his plea to come forward (Case 3). In another case, victim was taken into a forest and was raped by two perpetrators several times, one after another.
- V. **Paddy field:** In a rural setting, paddy field was found to be chosen by perpetrator to commit sexual harassment. In a case under this study, a man attempted to rape his cousin sister while she was walking along the paddy field. When he was found her all alone he pushed her into the paddy field and tried to rape.

Types of Sexual Violence

Out of 11 cases explored, six were rape, three were attempt to rape, one was about touching child's sexual organ and another was about developing sexual relationship with victim with the promise of marrying that had been denied by the perpetrator afterwards. In the cases regarding rape dealt here were found to have fallen under the category of acquaintance rape. A rape that is perpetrated by a person who is known to the victims is called as acquaintance rape. In most of the cases (8 out 15) perpetrators were found to be nonrelatives of victims. The relationships of perpetrators with victims in these cases were neighbors, school teacher, employer and father's friend. Out of the cases where family members were involved as perpetrators, relationship ranged from intimate partner of the victim (husband) to cousins and distant relatives like step uncle. Therefore, the three cases on rape in this study have found to have fallen under the following sub categories of the acquaintance rape:

- I. **Marital rape:** If husband forcefully has sex with his wife without her consent it turns out to be a sexual violence. This may be termed as marital rape (Akhter 2005). One of

the cases dealt in this study revealed an incident of marital rape of a girl married at her fifteen. She became the victim of marital rape at the first night during the consummation of their marriage. Here, the victim had been suffering from heavy and prolonged menstrual period with abnormal bleeding from the uterus since her childhood. Therefore, at the first day of their intercourse, she was reluctant to have sex but was forced by her husband, and that caused her going through heavy bleeding and physical complicity. She was then hospitalized by her family members although was taken back from the hospital without completing the treatment. Her family members believed that the victim had been exorcised by evil spirit, and therefore, they tried to cure her by blowing water and amulets from *huzur* (religious scholar) or local religious leaders. Her gynecological complicity accompanied with normal symptoms of menstruation like irritability, anger and mood swings were considered, by her family members, as symptoms of being affected by bad spirit (Case 2).

- II. **Rape by deception:** The rape by deception takes place when perpetrator gains victim's sexual consent and compliance but takes it by deception or fraud. In this study, one case where victim had love relationship with perpetrator, and then got pregnant but had been rejected and denied by the perpetrator and his family, can be categorized as the rape by deception.
- III. **Gang rape:** Gang rape occurs when at least two or more violators participate in the rape of a single victim. In this study one case represents the rape of this kind. In this particular case, three men were involved in the sexual violation of three women from different age. Before committing the rape the victim were made senseless, and raped several times by more than one men.

The reasons and patterns

Imbalance of power was revealed to be the cause of sexual violence explored in this study. Children are vulnerable because they are powerless in so many facets of their lives. The imbalance due to age and physique is obvious.

- I. **Age vulnerability:** In the cases of child abuse, age appears to be one of the major factors that contribute in victims' vulnerable position. In this sense, both male and female child are vulnerable to any kind of gender based violence. This vulnerability due to age has been reflected in one case under the present study where the victim was nine-year-old male child (Case 3).

In Case 3, it was seen that the perpetrator took advantage of victim's dependency on him to go to home alone at night from his work. Here, the male child was raped by a male perpetrator who was 45 years of age. In this case, victim's family could not bring the matter into the court due to their financial incapability. Social acceptance and victim's marriage did not come as the concern in the case of male victim and his family like it was in the case of female victims. Female victims were doubly vulnerable due to their age and gender.

Most cases under this study showed that perpetrators were known to the victims and their families for sufficient amount of time, and over time they gained trust of their families and then abused the children. In cases, at first adults did not trust children when they shared their feelings and incidents on perpetrators. They even was too scared after the violence took place on them, and did not want to share with their parents.

One case where child was raped by outsider indicates child's susceptibility of being allured by attractive things like chocolates. Child's vulnerability due to particular power relationship like teacher-student had been explicit in another case (Case 1) where a child were sexually abused by someone, here it was teacher, who were in a position of power over the victim. Here, child's vulnerability and power imbalance were used as the advantage by adult in order to prey on the child. However, family members like cousins and husband were found to be perpetrators in some cases.

II. Socio-economic vulnerability: Poverty increases the vulnerability to abuse, and the fact has been revealed to some cases in this study. Lower socio-economic status than that of perpetrators made the child vulnerable to abuse. In one case, child was vulnerable to being attracted by entertainment like TV in the house where her mother worked as a domestic worker. The owner of the house who turned to be the abuser was seen to have taken advantage of her vulnerability and raped her. In this particular case, perpetrators side offered monetary advantage and lucrative offer to prevent the victim side from making the incident public.

In another case, the child's love relationship with one of her neighbours was objected by his family due to her lower socio-economic status. Centering this opposition, the child was targeted for sexual violence by the other male members of that neighboring house. In this case, when the victim's side went to seek justice for the local elites, the perpetrators' side did not respond, rather they came to victim's house and tortured them physically for asking justice. The perpetrators' side was not worried about any legal consequences since they were confident that the victim's side was too poor to bear the cost required to run cases in the court. When victim's side went to file the case in the local police station, the police refused to take case as the perpetrator's side already managed the police station not to take the case. Instead, the police started to discourage the victim's side not to make the incident public by highlighting the possible problem of arranging the marriage of their daughter in future.

III. Gender vulnerability: In all cases except one victims were female. In a patriarchal society like Bangladesh "women's labour power, reproduction, sexuality, mobility and property and other economic resources – are under patriarchal control" (Walby 1990:20). Here, men and women are prescribed to perform certain tasks to confirm masculinity and femininity respectively. Individuals who deny or fail to act accordingly is labeled as 'perverted' or 'bad' member of the society. As a part of controlling women's body, women's sexuality is always under strict scrutiny, and therefore, 'sexual purity' or women's so called 'virginity' as one of the central element in defining a 'good woman'. Hence, sexual violence not only harm the victim physically or sexually but also cause social disgrace or dishonor to victim and her family. In the long run, victim's family faces difficulties to arrange marriage that put the premium on women's chastity or virginity for the victim. That is, the victim, and not the perpetrator is perceived to be of bad character. Therefore, factors like culture of silence to sexual violence and the ideology of setting marriage as the major goal of women's life were appeared to reinforce the perpetration of sexual violence against girl child.

Culture of silence: Girl child was found to be doubly vulnerable due to their age and the subordinate status of their gender. In all cases victims and their families did not want to make the incident public due to their fear of social humiliation and especially due to the concern of the possible complications in arranging victims' marriage in future. Although in immediate reaction, in cases, victims' families intended to go for legal action, they changed their plan after being suggested by community or neighbors. In another case, a victim was instructed

by her families not to open up about the incident of rape before community during *shalish* since they feared that the incident would bring disgrace for the family. Rather, the victim in that particular case was punished by her caregiver due to being raped. In another case where the perpetrator took attempt to rape, the victim's side did not want to go far with the matter, they settled the matter by receiving the monetary compensation from the perpetrator's side decided by the local elites through *shalish*.

Therefore, due to the social stigma attached to the victim of rape and sexual violence, victims who were female in most cases, and their families became reluctant to reveal the incident. In all such cases, victims acted desperately to hide the crime. This culture of silence from victims' side made perpetrator confident to commit the crime, the fact had been revealed in the comments made by one of the perpetrator under this study:

I have made you pregnant. You will not be able to say my name to anybody out of the shame and disgrace for being raped. Nobody will know my name. Before you, I have raped and damaged the life of many other girls, nobody could tell it!

Ideology of setting marriage as the central of women's life: The overriding concern about women's marriage was appeared to be the major factor that directed the way how the incident was dealt by victims' side in all cases under study. In a male dominated society, women are relegated to domestic sphere and according to the patriarchal ideology women's main task is to serve the society as wife and mother. Therefore, from the childhood a girl's family groom and socialize their daughter to make her capable of playing her these prescribed roles properly. Thus, marriage has been set as the central point for a woman from where she should achieve the fulfillment of her life. This ideology has been seen as the main force that made the victims of sexual violence and their families under study hide the incident, and that in turn would let perpetrators go without or minimum penalty.

In all cases, except the one dealing with male victim and one with marital rape, victims of sexual violence and their families were found to be concern about the future of the victims' marriage. In these cases, the idea of arranging victims' marriage with the perpetrators was seen to be considered as the best compensation of marriage by victims' families. In all instances, these proposals were rejected by the perpetrators' side. In a case where the perpetrator was the husband of the victim, the victim denied the incident of sexual violence later and went back to husband. This dominant ideology putting high emphasis on the institution of marriage in women's life and relegate women in a position of responsibility to preserve their chastity in order to be desired in the marriage market have seen to leave the victims' and their families in a vulnerable situation, and prevented them to go to the court.

However, in some cases where victims family did not show interest in marriage with perpetrators, their concern of arranging marriage with other person in future were found to have prevented victims' side from going to the court even though they were not happy with the decision made by *shalish* or traditional dispute resolution system. In some cases, it was seen that although victim was offered free legal service by NGO like BRAC, the victim's side denied to take the support due to the fear of society's attitude of the victim of sexual violence. In another case, victim's father denied to accept the decision made by local influential during *shalish* and then he took the legal action, but the thought of his daughter's marriage in future made him think to withdraw the case.

In one case, victim's family were found to take legal step against perpetrator only after their failure of arranging victim's marriage with perpetrators as well as of receiving any monetary compensation. The case was going on at the time of data collection.

IV. Disability: Disability adds another aspect to vulnerability in the case of any violence including sexual violence. The fact has been illustrated in one case under study in which intellectual disability had relegated the child in more vulnerable position plus the susceptibility due to her age, gender and socio-economic status. This particular case shows that victim had been made responsible for her victimization afterwards showing her behavior resulting from her disability as inappropriate. Her certain behaviors like going neighbour's house now and then without thinking any consequence had been interpreted as the behavior of girl with 'bad character' who wanted to have sex with any man. Placing this logic, the perpetrator's side denied to name the incident as rape, rather they claimed that it was sexual act done by mutual consent. On the other hand, family's pressure on victim to deny the incident during *shalish* along with victim's intellectual disability encouraged perpetrator's side to interpret the incident in their favor.

In most cases more than one factors or all the factors of vulnerability mentioned above worked together and were responsible for sexual violence.

Responses to sexual violence

Different strategies had been taken by victims and their families in response to their victimization of sexual violence. Apart from the immediate step addressing physical damage or injuries, social stigma attached to sexual violence for girls and the dominant ideology of attaching women's honor to chastity and marriage had directed the way victim's side took to overcome the situation.

I. Addressing physical damage: Actions taken by victims' side addressing physical damages was influenced by both their attitude of hiding the incident and the immediate physical situation of the victims. In the cases of rape, most of the cases, though not all, victims were not taken to the hospital immediately after the incident. In three such cases (rape), victims were not taken to doctor at all. In cases, even though victim's family did not bring the victim under medical care, later the court required the victim to go through the medical test for producing the evidence of rape. But due to the delayed action, the evidence of rape was not found since the clothes the victim was wearing during being raped was washed several times by the time of medical test occurred. No evidence of rape was also found on her genital organ by that time.

On the other hand, in some cases, victims' family took the immediate actions to address the physical injuries. In this case a difference had been noticed in these actions according to the gender of the victims. In one case where the victim was male who was found senseless and seriously injured after the incident. He, then, was immediately taken to the nearest local doctor, and followed by the recommendation by the doctor, he was taken to the emergency unit of the nearest hospital. Although he required to be admitted, he could not due to his family's financial inability to bear the medical expense.

In contrary, in the case of two rape cases of female victims where their family took immediate action, the tendency of hiding the real incident was found. In one case, the victim was raped by her husband, and the case was not considered as the rape either party. Although

she was taken to the hospital considering the magnitude of the injury caused by the forced sexual intercourse, she was brought to home without completing her treatment due to her family's judgment about her problem as 'influence of bad spirit on her' that required to be treated by blowing water and amulets (Case 2).

In another case where the child victim along with two adult women was raped by three perpetrators, all three victims were taken to the hospital immediately and were admitted to hospital for four days. However, they were not gone through any medical testing. Besides, victims became half senseless after the incident, and so there was not any witness except victims for the incident. After coming back from the hospital, victims informed their family members that they were raped. While filing the case, the household head did not mention the fact that fifteen-year-old child and her sister-in-law (23) was raped, rather he only mentioned about the rape of his wife who was in her mid-age of forty two year old.

In cases except the cases regarding rape, some were taken to the hospital five to ten hours later of the incident, and some were not provided with any medical intervention by their families. In one case where victim's mother was recommended by a relative to take the victim to the hospital immediately, victim was taken to the hospital almost 10 hours after the incident. It took time partly due to her not believing the victim's description of the incident at the beginning, and partly for her inability to take the decision of taking the victim to the medical. Household head (victim's father) was out of the district (Dhaka) that time and on his arrival he took the victim to hospital.

II. Addressing social injuries: Since all of victims except one were female, the cultural and social concern over marriage and family honor from the gender perspective barred victim's side to make the incident public. Although the immediate reaction for some victim's families was to take the legal step against the crime of such types, i.e. rape and attempted to rape, later they prevented themselves from working on their plan, and tried to solve the problem through *shalish* at family level. In one case, the victim's family was so afraid of losing their family prestige that they threatened victim not to confess about her victimization during *shalish*.

Approaching perpetrator's family with marriage proposal. In some cases, first attempt taken by victims' side was to go to perpetrator's family with the proposal of resolving the problem through arranging victims' marriage with perpetrators. In one case, victim's family tried to arrange marriage with a family member of a perpetrator with whom the she had love relation. In another case, initially victim's side went to perpetrator's family with the marriage proposal and got rejected. Then they tried to resolve through *shalish* and then went for legal step after failing to get justice in *shalish*.

Choosing informal justice system over court/ formal legal procedure. In most cases victims' sides avoided the legal procedure and tried to solve the problem with mutual understanding through *shalish* (*shalish* is social system for informal adjudication or dispute mechanism other than through court based litigation) with presence of senior or socially accepted members at family and community level.

In one case regarding male victim, victim's side did not go to legal step due to financial incapability but went to local representative in Union Parishad (Union Parishad is the lower tier of local government system in Bangladesh) office to seek justice through *shalish* or at community level. The chairman or other influential did not pay any attention to the

complaint, rather they threat victim's father that he would be punished if he would bring the matter to the court. In this particular case, personal land-related problem between victim's family and the chairman resulted the incorporation from the elite's side that in turn favored the perpetrator.

In cases, victim's side received cash as compensation, and the perpetrator was physically punished before the community. Although in one case where teacher took attempt to rape his student in a school compound (Case 1), victim's side took the legal step at first, but had to withdraw the case from the court due to the pressure from the School Management Committee and then went to *shalish* that resolved the matter through monetary compensation in minimum amount.

Refusing legal support offered by NGO due to social stigma about rape victim. In some cases, victims' families did not take the legal support offered by NGO free of cost due to the fear of making the incident public. In a case under study, it has been seen that victim with lower economic condition was offered assistance legal help free of cost for justice by NGO like BRAC. But as a part of effort of concealing the incident they showed reluctance to take the support. Here, they chose formal institution over the informal justice system where victim's family had been compensated by cash, and the perpetrator went through minor physical reprimand, although in another case they took legal step by their own and took other support like counseling from a NGO. In another case where the perpetrator was husband (Case 2), they did not only refuse the offer given by the same NGO, but also pointed out victim's physical inability during intercourse as the cause of such incident and then they sent victim back to her husband's place.

Moving towards legal Justice. In cases, victim's family went to court after their failure to receive justice from local elites through *shalish*. In one case, victim's family wanted to punish the perpetrator while the *shalish* tried to settle the matter through monetary compensation. In cases, after being failed to convince the perpetrator's family to marrying their son to victim, victim's family took the legal step, but the perpetrators were not arrested. Again in Case 1, victim's side immediately went to court but had to withdraw the case due to the social pressure. In the case where three women were raped by a group, the male household head filed the case accusing perpetrator of raping the most senior and married women in the household while hiding the truth about other two who were his daughter-in-law and his unmarried daughter by relation respectively.

No step taken. In one case regarding male victim, no step against perpetrator had been taken by victim's side due to the financial inability to run the case in the court as well as their land-related problems with one of the local elite who threatened to harm victim's father if they took legal step.

Various kinds of counter reactions from perpetrator's side had been found in the cases under the present study:

Obeying the decision of *shalish*. In response to victims' action to go to local elites to resolve the matter through *shalish* perpetrators' side obeyed the decision of the meeting in some cases. In these cases, perpetrators faced penalties like monetary compensation along with physical reprimand and asking apology to victims and their families.

In some cases, perpetrators were arrested and went under court procedure as the result of victims' step to bring the case to the court. In cases, the victim's side had to withdraw the cases under pressure from various sources like perpetrator's employer or acquaintance. In one case where more than one perpetrators were involved and victim had love relationship with the relative of one of the perpetrator, perpetrators did not respond to the call of *shalish* taken by victim's family with the help of local elites. They denied the incident as well as denied to attend to *shalish* and therefore refused to arrange marriage between victim and the relative with whom she had love affair. This situation brought the case into the court and perpetrators were arrested. In response to this, perpetrators' side filed another case against victim's father with the accusation that victim's father solved the problem outside court by taking the monetary compensation but still continuing the case in the court. Similar action was found to have taken in another case where perpetrator's side in response to victim's legal step filed a false criminal case against victim's family.

Threatening. After the case being under the legal procedure, in some cases it was seen that perpetrators kept victim's side always under pressure to withdraw the case. In cases, even before the case was filed perpetrators families were found to beat and harass victim's families and threatened them not to take the issue to the court. They also threatened victim's family to make them socially isolated if they do so. As a means of threatening, perpetrator's family tried to create negative image of victim as 'perverted', 'characterless' or 'bad girl' in community to make them withdraw the case from the court. Threat to murder to victim and her family was also used by perpetrator's side in this particular case.

Physical attack to victim. In cases, victim's family member had become the subject of physical attack by perpetrator's side in order to make them withdraw the case from the court. In a particular case, victim's father beaten by perpetrator's side filed another case apart from the sexual violence case, against the same party for beating him, and in response to this case, another false criminal case was filed against victim's father by the counter side.

Case 1: Thirteen-year-old Laboni

Location- Village: Balshabari, District: Sirajganj

Thirteen-year-old Laboni resides in Balshabari village under Sirajganj district. Two years have passed since she stopped going to school and started to assist her family to run their loom business. Her father Mohammad Lal Mia (53) is a weaver, and her mother Lata Khatun (39) helps in their family profession in addition to taking care of house chore activities. Apart from his work at family loom, Lal Mia also has a grocer's shop as his second source of earning. Laboni's only sister Ayesha (11) is a student of grade four in a Government Primary School in their locality.

Three years ago Laboni used to go to the same school her sister Ayesha is enrolled at present. Her school was half kilometer away from their house. In 2013 at the age of 10, she was a student of grade four and had to go through an experience of sexual violence perpetrated by one of her school teacher Mohammad Abu Sayem (49). Abu Sayem, father of two children- son Shaikat (11) and daughter Afreen (20), had the habit of giving Laboni unwanted touches, like touching hands and parts of body in many excuses in the class session. After embarrassing Laboni several times during class, Sayem attempted to rape her in February 26,

2013.

Laboni's school used to start at 10.00 am. On the day of the incident, Abu Sayem came to teach Bangla language in the first session. After 20 minutes, while checking Laboni's homework, he purposefully touched her breast. Then he asked her to stay in the class room during the lunch break. Later, at 2.00 pm during the break Laboni stayed in the class room according to Sayem's instruction. Her class room was at the first floor and all the teachers and students were in the ground floor to have food and refreshment. So Laboni was all alone in the room waiting for Sayem. After some minutes, Sayem entered the room and grabbed Laboni to molest and rape. Laboni tried to scream and protest. At such point, one of her classmates appeared in the room and saw Laboni struggling to free herself from Sayem. Witnessing this she (classmate) became scared and started screaming for help that made other students and teachers come to the spot and rescue Laboni.

After coming back home at 4.00 pm, Laboni, accompanied by some of her classmates, described the whole incident to Laboni's father Lal Mia (53) and mother Lata Khatun (39). Then, Lal Mia, with one of his relatives Sobhan (35) and a neighbor Rafiqul Islam (40) went to Mohammad Rabi Chan (67), the Chairman of School Managing Committee to make complaint against Sayem. At 5.00 pm in the evening of the same day Lal Mia filed a case under Women and Children Repression Act 2003 at the local police station. In the next day, Sayem had been arrested during his work in the school. At that time, the number of 50 community people and some journalists were present in the spot. This incident became the news of two national newspapers and two local newspapers. Abu Sayem stayed under police custody for seven days until Lal Mia withdrew the case against him.

The school managing committee did not like the step against Sayem taken by Lal Mia. The chairman of the committee rebuked him for taking the legal step. So from the day Sayem got arrested, the committee, therefore, put pressure to Lal Mia to resolve it outside the court. Under this pressure Lal Mia had to agree to sit for *shalish* where UP member Shubhash Chandra Bhadra (48), local political leader and *matabbar* and ex UP member Amzad (58), local political leader Abdul Hey (40) and Shukkur Ali (35) and influential businessman Afsar (50) were present. According to the decision of the meeting, Lal Mia was paid to Tk. 3000/- from Sayem's side as compensation and then he withdrew the case from the police station. After the incident Sayem's payment was adjourned which he managed to collect after three months.

After this incident, Laboni left Balshabari Dadpur Government Primary School and enrolled to BRAC School in class four. She studied there for two years. After completing class five, she stopped going to school and involved herself to family's weaving business on the full time basis. Now her work is to spin the thread on a spinning-wheel and prepare the thread for weaving clothes or *sarees*.

Now Laboni's parents have plan to find a husband for their daughter. They do not make the incident public that, they believe, can hamper the process of arranging marriage. They think that no man will want to marry their daughter after knowing the incident, and that was the only reason they solved the problem socially not legally.

Consequence

Various immediate and long term effect of sexual violence had been noticed on both victim and perpetrator. Following are the consequences that have been revealed from the case studies dealt here:

Consequence for Victims

Psychological trauma. Victims were found to have gone through severe mental trauma immediately after the incident, and although they overcame over time to some extent they still were suffering from the memories of the incident. Signs that had associated with the trauma included fever, speechlessness, loss of appetite, sleeplessness, insecure feelings and feelings of fear. Screaming out of fear now and then, and also in the middle of night at sleep were the common symptoms victims were suffering from. In one case where the male victim used to work as a local *bazar* and was violated sexually by his coworker (Case 3), he stopped going to his work out of his feelings of trauma and insecurity. In the case of one victim who was raped by two perpetrators several times in row remained depressed most of the time after years of the incident.

Child marriage. Victims' family arranged marriage before they reached at the legal age of marriage in some cases after the incident. In one case, victim went through the child marriage some days after being raped at the age of eleven and at the age of fourteen she became mother. In another case, the marriage was arranged with high amount of dowry due to the vulnerability from victim's side. In cases, where the victims were not married, parents were on the determination to marry their daughters as soon as they got suitable proposal no matter what age their daughter would be at that time out of their fear that the more time passed the more might be the possibility of spreading the incident and rumors regarding the incident. In arranging the marriage, families reported to have face problems due to her history of being sexually abused.

Hampered education. Dropping out from school either for temporary or permanent basis was appeared to be as another consequence of sexual violence on victim's life. The incident of sexual violence created fear and security not only to victim's but also to their caregivers or family members who did not feel secured to send them school out of the fear that victims could be harmed again by the perpetrators or their sides as a result of the action, either legal or informal, taken by them in response to such incidents.

Social embarrassment. As both immediate and long term effect, victims were found to be the subject of mockery and jock by the neighbors and relatives due to the social disgrace associated with the victims of sexual violence. In one case, after being pressurized by her family during the *shalish* victim denied about her victimization of sexual harassment. This denial had been interpreted by neighbors negatively. In this case, she was labelled by her neighbors as 'bad girl' who consented to have sex with perpetrator. In this particular case, the victim was being physically and mentally tortured by her parents for bringing disgrace to their family. In another case under study, it was found that even after four years of the incident some neighbors did not let their children to play with the five-year-old victim due to their fear that the victim might spoiled their children. In cases, family's frustration and anxiety over victim's marriage had also negative effect on victim's mental condition.

Increased poverty. In many cases the incident of sexual violence committed by employer resulted conflict between victim's family and their employer that in turn made the victim's family jobless and caused the poverty. In the case where the incident was taken into court, bearing cost involved in court along with the joblessness escalated the situation of poverty. This situation pushed family members to prefer income generating activities for victim over school.

Consequence for Perpetrators

Faced legal consequence. Perpetrators had to face legal consequence when victims' side took the case into the court. In some cases, they were on bail and went to the court whenever their attendance was needed. In one case, although the perpetrators were arrested at the beginning, later the victim's family had to withdraw the case from the court due to the pressure from perpetrator's side. In the other case, perpetrator continued to be involved in various illegal activities as he used to be before after being released on bail. In a case, perpetrator was not arrested though victim's side went for the legal action and filed case. It has happened in the case where perpetrator established sexual relationship with victim by deception and made the victim pregnant. Same was the fact for another case where in spite of arrest warrant issued, perpetrators (three were involved) were not arrested.

Feelings of guilt and Disappearance. A perpetrator was found to be repentant for his action of committing sexual violence on his three-year-old cousin though he considered the crime as "trivial" or "minor" which "should have not been taken too far" that the victim's side took it by bringing the matter in the *shalish* and receiving the monetary compensation from his family. After the incident the perpetrators were disappeared from the village and nobody still did not see them after the incident.

Case 2: Fifteen-year-old Nupur

Location- Village: Chala, District: Sirajganj

Fifteen year old Nupur lives in Chala village under Sirajganj district. Her father Shahabuddin (45) abandoned her mother Rekha (35) and herself when she was two years old. Since then she and her mother had been living in her uncle's house until she got married and went to her husband's house. Her uncle Moznu (35) has small business through which he supports his three-member family. The family members include: Moznu, his wife Minu (30) and Nupur's mother Rekha Khatun (43).

In October 2014 Nupur got married to a man Ershad Ali (31) who was an agricultural day labor living in the same village. Nupur's uncle Moznu arranged this marriage and her mother agreed to marry her daughter at the age of 14, since she thought her daughter as vulnerable in the marriage market due to her being fatherless, so she thought it as a wise decision to arrange marriage for Nupur if they got suitable bridegroom for her.

At the first night of the marriage, Nupur became the victim of sexual violence by her husband Ershad. She had heavy bleeding from her genitals while their intercourse, but her husband forced her to have sex. Then later she told her condition to Ershad's sister-in-law and she was taken to the nearest hospital (Ullah Para Purnima Goti Hospital). Then when her condition deteriorated she was transferred to Sirajganj *sadar* hospital. Hospital officials informed BRAC about the incident. Later, Moznu brought Nupur to his home without completing her treatment in the hospital for his believe that hospital would not be able to cure his niece. He,

then, brought blowing water (*pani pora*) and amulets (*tabiz*) for Nupur with the purpose of removing negative spirit from local religious leaders (*huzur*).

In the meantime, BRAC staff suggested Nupur's family to file a case against Ershad under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, but Nupur's family did not want to break the marriage rather they said that it was Nupur's problem that caused her to experience such bleeding during intercourse. According to them, Nupur has been affected by bad spirit from her puberty. During her menstruation period, she always became ill and used to recover after receiving blowing water and amulets from *huzur*. Therefore, according to them, no doctor could cure her during this time.

After one month of the incident, Nupur was sent to her husband's house and now they are living together. Nupur is now trying to conceive a child.

Factors hindered victim's move towards justice

Society. Social attitude and stigma regarding rape victims hindered victims' side from moving towards justice. The thought of possibility of facing problems in arranging victims' marriage as well as due to the fear of damaging family honor highly associated to the chastity of woman in the family appeared to be as the factors that drove them to hide the incident from public and therefore, not to take steps against the misdeed. Likewise, in one case, despite the case was still running on the court and the perpetrator was on the bail at the time of data collection, the victim's side was thinking to withdraw case from the court for their concern of victim's future in a marriage market. Over glorification on the institution of marriage also caused victim to come back to perpetrator in the case of marital rape (Case 2).

Poverty. Financial inability to bear the cost required in running a case in the court was revealed to be one of the major barriers prevented victims to fight for justice. In cases, victims had to sell the properties to bear the court cost that made them fall in poorer condition. In a case of male victim, financial incapability was appeared to be the major reasons for not seeking legal help for justice (Case 3).

Non-cooperation from local elite. Victim was often denied cooperation from local elites or influential in case they had personal problems with victim and his/her family. One case illustrated that victim's father went to the Chairman and other local elite of the village who usually conducted the *shalish* or presented in any informal dispute resolution as decision makers with the complaint on the sexual violence perpetrated on his son. But the persons did not pay any attention to the complaint, rather they threatened him that if he would go to the court they would harm him. Likewise, Case 1 describing the sexual abuse of a girl by her teacher shows that victim's father compelled to withdraw the legal case for being pressurized by School Managing Committee and other local elites.

Lack of initiatives to communicate NGOs offering legal support. Although there was organization like BRAC that served the legal support to victims belonged to underprivileged group in the community, victims under the present study did not seek their support. In cases, after receiving the information by its community network NGO representative came to them and took all the details of the incident, but lack of the initiative and interest from victim's side to communicate the organization was found (Case 2).

Abuse of power. Unequal power relationship and socio-economic status between victims and perpetrators along with the abuse of power from the perpetrators' side were revealed to be one of the barriers for victims to get justice. In cases, perpetrators tried to create hurdles in each stage of seeking justice- from preventing victim's side from going to the police station by creating fear for other people like driver of public transport to make them non-cooperative, to convince police not to take the complaint. In this case, perpetrators were accused of exerting political influence to manipulate medical report in their favor.

Lack of immediate action. Lack of evidence of rape was come to be one of the major barriers in the path of receiving justice for victims. Due to the tendency of hiding the incident of sexual violence at the beginning, lack of medical evidence required in the court came up as a challenge to get the justice for victims. Some cases under the present study shows that although the tendency of hiding the incident at the beginning, some victims later decided to go for legal step, but lack of evidence required to be collected earlier possess challenge to continue the legal procedure. For example, in one case it has been seen that although the victim was raped by two perpetrators several times, no evidence of rape had been found in victim's cloth since it was washed several times after incident.

Case 3: Ten-year-old Helal Mia

Location- Village: Gunoboti, District: Cumilla

Mohammad Helal Mia (10) is the youngest son of Abdul Samad (75) and Momena Khatun (45) living in Gunoboti village in Cumilla district. Abdul Samad is suffering from asthma for last 15 years and is unable to work, and therefore, could not support his family. Besides Helal, Samad had two other children Belal (23) and Tuni (18) living with him. He has another daughter Sharmeen (25) who are married and lives in her husband's house. Although some interruptions of his study for four years due to the financial constraint, Helal is now enrolled in a school run by a NGO. His elder brother Belal is a day labor and her sister is unemployed.

During the period of his break up from studies after completing his elementary or kindergarten level at the age of six, Helal worked in local market as day labor during day time and sometimes in night he used to work in a gas station as a cleaner.

During the time of his life as child labor, he became a victim of sexual violence in 2015 by one of his neighbor Mohsin (45) who lived in a next house of Helal's and so had close interaction with Helal's family. Mohsin used to pay frequent visit to Helal's house and Helal was also fond of him. Mohsin used to give different foods to Helal. In the time of the incident, Helal used to work in the same local market where Helal also worked. It has been known from other sales men of the market that very often Mohsin became drunk and talked incoherent words.

In December 2015, one day at six in the evening Helal was watching TV in a tea stall located in Gunoboti market. After some time, Mohsin joined him and asked to accompany Mohsin to his (Mohsin's) house, but Helal refused to go with him since it became dark. At seven in the evening, Helal went to work in the gas station with Mohsin, and after half an hour Mohsin invited him for tea and gave him biscuits and other food and some money in his hand and

asked him to wait for him in a grocer's shop until he came back. Then Mohsin left the place and then Helal waited for him almost three hours to hand over Mohsin's money to Mohsin.

After 10.00 pm Mohsin came and asked Helal again to go to his house with him. When Helal refused again to go to his house by showing the ground that it has been late in the night to go other places than own house, Mohsin tried to convince him first and then forced him to go with him. It took 10 minutes to reach Mohsin's house from the market, and then he kept Helal waiting outside his house and he entered inside. After some time he came out with quilt and pillow, and told Helal that they would go for fishing and would stay there in night. Helal were not interested to go there but at the same time became too scared to go alone to his own home which was in the other village. He refused to go for fishing and then Mohsin became very angry and threatened him that he would kill Helal if he did not obey what he said. Helal became more scared of Mohsin's anger, incoherent words and also the smell of alcohol coming from his mouth. Then Helal followed Mohsin to the river bank where Mohsin had a thatch.

After reaching the place he asked Helal to go inside the thatch with him. As soon as Helal entered the room, Mohsin tied Helal's hand and feet with rope and started beating him with a stick. Then Helal started screaming by saying "help help" but nobody came to help him. Then after some time, he put his hand on Helal's mouth and raped him. Mohsin raped her three times and beat him severely. At one point, Helal became sick and Mohsin fell asleep. Then Helal tried to free himself from the rope that had been tied around his arms and feet and after giving effort in the whole night, at dawn he finally had been succeed to be free from the tie. At the same time Mohsin woke up, and so Helal started running first to escape the place, and Mohsin also started to follow him.

Although at one point Helal was caught by Mohsin, finally he managed to escape and reach to his grandmother's house. Then he desperately knocked his uncle's door. His aunt Jorina Begum (30) opened the door for him and then he told his grandmother, uncle and aunt about what happened to him in the last night. Helal became so exhausted and senseless, and his whole body was full of mud and blood. His aunt informed his mother Momena Khatun about Helal's condition, and his mother rushed to the spot and started lamenting. Then, after some time, she took him to his own house and told the whole incident to Helal's father Samad (75).

After some time Helal was taken to a doctor whose chamber was in the local market. But observing his physical condition, the doctor recommended Momena to take her son to the nearest hospital. With the help of a neighbor, she took Helal to the hospital where Helal was asked to be admitted. He was advised to get admitted in the Emergency Unit due to his severe injury in the whole body. Part of his body was bleeding, and his genital organ were seriously injured. However, due to the financial inability, Momena could not admit her son in the hospital, then doctor prescribed some medicine and antibiotics which Helal could take from home. At 5.00 pm, Momena and Helal came back home. Representative from BRAC CEP programme came to their house in the same morning and took the details of the incident. Later, BRAC or any other NGOs did not come to them again and they neither tried to communicate them for support.

With the hope of getting justice he, Helal's father Samad accompanied by Helal, went to Union *Parishad* office to file complain against Mohsin. That time, Chairman Anwar (35), UP member Kalam Mia (55) and a known political figure in the village Shiraj Habildar were present there. These persons used to present in most of the *shalishes* in the village. But none

of them paid any attention to what Samad complained about. Then, Samad told that he would go to the court with the case if they would not bring Mohsin under punishment through *shalish*. The chairman, then, threatened Samad not to file any police case regarding the matter or if he did he would face the consequence of not obeying them. According to Samad, he had some land-related problems going on with the Chairman, and that is why the chairman did not cooperate with him. Being frustrated Samad came back home, and he did not file any case due to his fear that even if he went to police to file case, police would not take the case due to the political influence of the chairman, and in case, if he would able to file the case the chairman would interrupt the process. Financial inability to bear the cost of the court was also one of the main reasons for him not to file the case in the formal system.

After the incident, neighbors, relatives and family members increased their attention to Helal. They do not let Helal go to the market very often. Although he is recovering from his physical injuries day by day, he is still with the mental damage caused by the incident. Helal also could not overcome the psychological trauma. Still, he feels insecure to go to the market, and so he does not work there anymore like the way he used to work before as day labor.

He has been subject of mockery and jock by some of the neighbors and friends. They use improper language indicating the sexual relationship in which Helal was forced to go with Mohsin. Now it has been three months that he have enrolled in a school run by a NGO.

Although there was no legal action taken from Helal's side, Mohsin have been disappeared from the next day he raped Helal. But Mohsin's elder brother Abdul Aziz (48) who lives in Mohsin's village does not support what Mohsin did to Helal. According to him, if Helal's family goes for any legal action against the incident, he (Aziz) would help them to arrest Mohsin.

DISCUSSION

Findings of the study indicate the gendered nature of violence against children. Gender identities established in a patriarchal system encourage men towards violent behavior in the context of privilege they have for being in a dominant position over women (Dobash and Dobash, 1980). The idea of femininity that portrays women as 'naturally' passive and submissive combined with objectified and sexualized identities is responsible for casting women as the target of exploitation or violence. Therefore, gender-based violence is grounded in ideas that instill in many men a sense of entitlement to use violence against women to maintain their advantageous position over women.

All cases, except one in this report, illustrate men exercising masculinity for fulfilling their sexual desire whenever they found female children in a vulnerable situation in terms of victim's location, time and physical set-up as well as mental condition and also the power relationship between perpetrators and victims. The cases described here show that the perpetrators were in most cases victims' acquaintance, like cousins, neighbors and parent's employers, and the incidents depicted were the manifestation of masculinity by perpetrator on children both within and outside home.

The study also reveals the fact that educational institution is a common place where many girls become victim of sexual violence and harassment by authoritative figure such as teachers (Leach and Mitchel 2006). Case 1 illustrates the vulnerability of a girl who had been

subjected to regular sexual harassment by her teacher. Although feelings of embarrassment, victims in this case remain silent due to the fear of being further exploited by the perpetrator positioned in the powerful side in hierarchy.

Sexual violence perpetrated on men and boys often is the manifestation of power intended to reinforce the dominant status of the perpetrator. Men's victimization of sexual violence can be the function of negating the masculinity of the victim and affirming the masculinity of the perpetrator (Gear 2007). In this context, males considered as powerless, such as boys, adolescents and men are vulnerable to sexual violence. Case 3 illustrates that a nine-year-old boy became the victim of rape by a 45-year-old man on whom he was dependent for going back home in the night after work.

Factors associated with gender inequality explain the gendered patterns of violence. Therefore, the practice of condoning of violence against women, in this study it was female children, as well as gender roles and identities appeared to be as the gendered drivers of violence. The study indicates the way the violence against female children was condoned through traditional values and rigid gender roles through Case 2 where a girl, married at her 13, became the victim of sexual violence by her husband. Here, the sense of entitlement associated with the idea of masculinity and gender role resulted in the use of force during intercourse in intimate relationship. However, the incident was not considered as violence by family members as well as the community because rape or sexual abuse within marriage was not recognized as violence according to the traditional cultural values. In this particular case, victim's family, without giving any second thought, were found to have sent the victim to the perpetrator as soon as she recovered the physical damage. Not only that, they also tried to shift the blame from perpetrator to the health problem the victim had been suffering since her puberty.

The findings also indicate how the ideology of linking women's chastity to the 'ideal' image of women punishes the victims and their families, and allows the perpetrators go unpunished. Families' concern about victims' marriage and their denial of taking the legal step against the perpetrators as part of their effort of hiding the incidents from public were seen in almost all the cases explored here.

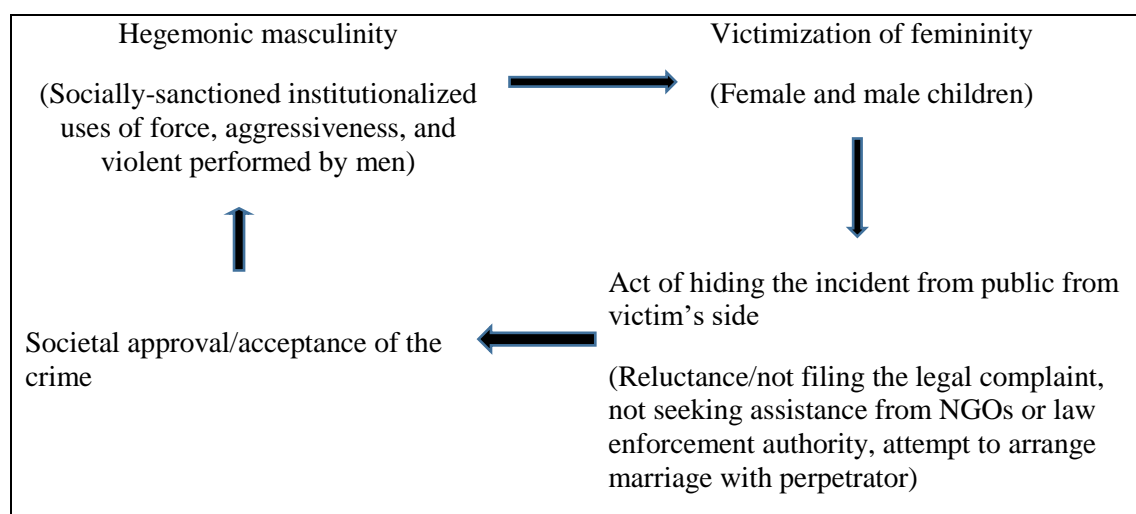


Figure 2: Perpetuation of sexual violence in the society through traditional ideology

The above figure developed on the basis of the findings of the study indicates that the tendency of hiding the incidents by not communicating with legal enforcement authority (police) as well as NGOs providing support in this issues gives the message to perpetrators about the tolerance of the society of this crime and encourages them to commit it again (Figure 2).

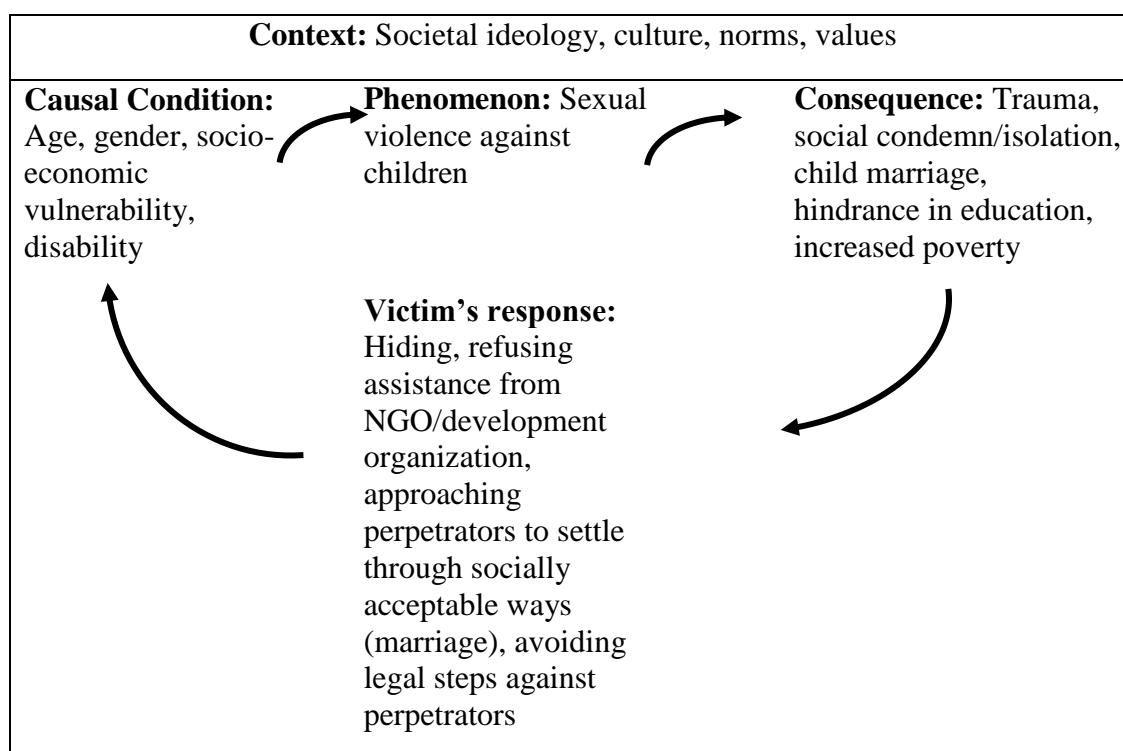


Figure 3: Exploration and perpetuation of phenomenon of sexual violence against children through grounded theory

By highlighting the cause, impact and victims' response to the phenomenon of sexual violence Figure 3 pointed out the need of working on the context in which the violence take place. It is evident from the study that context like dominant ideology, cultural and social values plays a major role in influencing victims and their families' decisions on how to react. In the setting of unequal power relation and oppressive cultural norms and practice, the implementation and effectiveness of any intervention, either legal or social and psychological, will be failed. It can be assumed in this context that victims' move against perpetrators would be free and right-based towards justice in the egalitarian context.

Implications to Research and Practice

The main aim of this research was to address the almost total lack of research evidence on the incidents of sexual violence against children, and it was, therefore, expected to contribute in the knowledge necessary to address the problem. This study has done so by going in-depth into the nature of the incidents of such violence, and the factors that hindered the victims' move from justice.

Accordingly, the most important implication for this research to both practice and research is that it provides much needed empirical data on the sexual violence against children. This information is needed in the context where the incidents of such type remain unnoticed in the case of children (Jensen 2005), and even known, remain unreported due to social stigma and some factors associated to perpetrators (Fontes & Plummer, 2010; Plummer, 2006).

The findings focusing on the reasons of non-reporting will hopefully allow the development practitioners, and policy makers redesign their activities accordingly. Therefore, it is expected to provide insight to the development practitioners and relevant population in addressing the issue in a holistic way covering the areas of prevention, protection and reintegration of the survivors.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study pointed out the need of extensive work and development intervention on the area of rigid gender roles and stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity for change. Since the factors associated with gender inequality contribute in making women victim of violence, changes must be brought to remove the obstacles at the level of culture, law, society, community as well as institutional level. Therefore, the development interventions designed to address the issue should intervene both at policy and ideological level. Furthermore, the findings of the study draw some recommendations for concerned organizations, groups and individuals to make the effective effort to combat the problem:

1. To redefine the concept of masculinity and femininity and the attributes associated to these concepts
2. To target both children and caregivers as well as community for awareness and sensitization to break the taboo attached to sexual violence
3. To revise and redesign the development interventions or strategies if necessary in such that encourage child victims and caregivers to take the services
4. Educate children and caregivers to open up the incidents of sexual violence
5. To set and publicize the examples of survivors who become successful for their courageous step against the perpetrators, fight against social stigma and other adversities emerged due to the incidents of sexual violence
6. To ensure exemplary sentences for the perpetrators to ensure justice
7. To gain trust of the survivors or community, so that in case of violation, they do not fear of losing the confidentiality and do not hesitate to come and share their very personal experience with the development workers and institutions
8. To develop a strong referral system with grass root activists and community volunteers to collect the information of the incidents as well as to approach with assistance, and also with counseling upon denial to take the assistance from the survivors' side

9. To develop collaboration among Government and Non-Government Organization, civil society, media, law-enforcement agency, academicians and practitioners to remove the obstacles responsible for non-reporting of sexual violence and to ensure justice

Furthermore, the study pointed out the necessity of adopting a holistic framework to combat the phenomena of sexual violence against children. This framework requires intervention on cultural and social values and stigma associated to sexuality and sexual violence, patriarchal ideology as well as the implementation of existing laws and formulation of new laws and policies if required.

Future Research

This study for being an exploratory and interpretative nature raises some opportunities for future research. The findings that had been presented in this paper need to be refined and elaborated through various empirical testing from the same and different perspectives. Although the issue of the research dealt in this paper was too sensitive to follow the quantitative approach, the numerical analysis, if possible, will definitely strengthen the validity of the findings. The result of the present study along with the empirical findings from different perspectives will create the strong base for implementation. Therefore, the scope of future research that has been opened up here includes:

1. Is the strategy taken by development organizations to address the issue of sexual violence adequate and cultural sensitive?
2. What is the long-term impact of the development intervention regarding reintegration on the victim? Is the existing development interventions failed to motivate the victims and their families to prefer taking the service over silence?
3. What is the consequence of sexual violence in the long run on victims' life? Do the victims and their families repentant afterwards for not taking any steps against perpetrators in time or for hiding the incident?
4. What is the definition of reintegration of the victims of sexual violence set and worked on by the relevant development organizations? Is it emancipatory in terms of transforming the power relations or addressing the issue in the existing social structure that creates fear to be labeled as 'flawed' according to traditional ideology if they come into the process ?
5. Which coping strategy child survivors of sexual violence adopt? How they deal with the social stigma and the image of 'impure' or 'spoilt' girl? In case of male child, what is their strategy? What is the gender difference in this adaptation strategy?

This study can also be extended for better understanding for developing an effective intervention over the issue. For example, this study gave very limited focus on the reasons, psychology and motivation act behind sexual violence from perpetrators' perspective, but understanding the problem from both sides is necessary for any interventions to be fruitful.

Further research can also shed light on the dynamics of information sharing on existing support and asking the relevant group about their ideas and opinions on what type of support they will avail in the situation of sexual violence for them and their children.

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