

Newspaper Portrayal of Gender-Based Violence during COVID-19 Lockdown in Bangladesh

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Abstract - SARS-CoV-2 or COVID-19, has emerged as the most serious public health threat of the contemporary age. More than 4.2 million individuals died as a result of this infectious virus, which has infected about 200 million people. Coronavirus spread quickly across the world due to its infectious nature, resulting in a large number of deaths. In many ways, COVID-19 had an impact on nearly every nation in economic, social, cultural, political, and other spheres. The study aims to find out the portrayal of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in popular English newspapers in Bangladesh. Data were collected from the 12 most-read English dailies that published news on IPV all over the country. The study used a summative approach of the qualitative content analysis method as formulated by Bengtsson (2016). Findings show that the frequency of published news on IPV considerably increased amid COVID-19 induced lockdown in Bangladesh. The causes of such incidents go back to deep-rooted patriarchal norms, gender roles and the powerlessness of women. Many incidents occurred during lockdown that, as victims reported, were triggered by shocks like sudden joblessness, chronic stress, abject poverty, etc. caused by the pandemic. Such violence often affected women's physical, mental and reproductive health. Many incidents like stabbing to death, killing with the home weapon, and physical abuse became national headings amid lockdown. The study suggests undertaking special protection measures for women in any such future event. Awareness and cooperation of people along with appropriate policies can be major steps towards combating the impacts of COVID-19.

Keywords: IPV, COVID-19, Violence, Abuse, Reproductive Health

I. INTRODUCTION

SARS-CoV-2 or COVID-19 emerged as the biggest threat to public health in the modern era. Almost a hundred million people were infected, and more than 2 million people died from this contagious virus. COVID-19 affected almost every country in many aspects. Due to its contagious nature, coronavirus rapidly spread all over the world, causing a huge loss of lives. In December 2019 it was first identified in Wuhan, China. (Lauren, 2020). On 8th March 2020 Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control, and Research (IEDCR) ensured three COVID-19 cases in Bangladesh (WHO, 2020). Bangladesh was enlisted within the top twenty-five vulnerable countries due to the speedy transmission of COVID-19. (The Financial Express, 2020). Though coronavirus appeared as a public health issue, it

triggered various economic, social and cultural challenges that were felt all over the world. Due to the countrywide lockdown due to the spread of coronavirus, it was reported that domestic violence had increased dramatically (MJF, 2020).

Gender-based violence (GBV) was common all over the world owing to several factors associated with it. One of the forms of GBV is Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) which is the major focus of this research. IPV is defined as “[it] describes physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse”. (CDC). WHO defined it as “IPV refers to any behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in the relationship.” It is a pattern of abusive behavior that is embedded in individual power imbalances that exist mostly in intimate relationships where one person uses power to manipulate and coerce the other.

Across all types of violence and abuse, women are more vulnerable to men they encounter (Greenan, 2004). According to a population survey from around the world, between 10% and 69 percent of women in various settings have been physically assaulted by a male intimate partner at least once (Heise *et al.*, 1999).

Another study conducted in 2010 found that 30% of women globally aged 15 and older have experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence. Though domestic violence is a worldwide problem, it is particularly severe in less developed countries like Bangladesh. According to a study conducted in Bangladesh, 94% of women have endured physical, emotional, or psychological abuse at some stage during their marriage or intimate relationship (Hussain *et al.*, 2014). IPV has been linked to a number of negative effects, including a negative impact on maternal, physical, and mental health.

Bakchi *et al.*, (2018:20) stated that “...for females, in all levels of life, such as adolescents, pregnant women, older adults’ experiences of IPV had been documented, and the kinds of IPV experienced consisting of physical, sexual, emotional, and verbal abuse and a variety of controlling behaviour in varying frequencies.” A recent study found

that 82.7% of women experienced any form of IPV, 44.4% experienced physical IPV, 77.2% experienced psychological IPV, and 58.8% experienced sexual IPV in Bangladesh (Esie *et al.*, 2019).

Many women were abused, beaten, and even killed by their partners during the lockdown or quarantine. The condition of Bangladesh was no different, as a study by Manusher Jonno Foundation suggested that 4249 women were subjected to violence in April 2020 in 27 districts of Bangladesh. According to Ain O Shalish Kendra (ASK), a total of 58 women were murdered between January-April 2020. A study by the BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (2020) suggest that the media activities amid pandemic focused mostly on preventive measures. Mainstream media telecasted content that helped people to find the way to speak out and complain if they face any kind of violence (Mahpara, 2020).

Also, many newspapers and TV channels continuously reported the cases of domestic violence regularly. The role of the media in portraying the cases of domestic or intimate partner violence is often questioned. It is alleged that the media desensitizes people to such violence due to repeated exposure; even it causes the public acceptance of such violence (Kohlman *et al.*, 2014). Also, the media do not represent the events properly (The Guardian, 2015). Therefore, it influences the perception of social reality and social risk (Carlyle *et al.*, 2008). The main objective of this research is to understand the media portrayal of IPV during lockdown owing to COVID-19; the paper identifies the triggering factors and consequences of domestic IPV. In doing so, the study collected newspaper contents from several newspapers to analyze in accordance with research objectives.

II. THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

IPV has been defined has been often defined as: “A pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviour that may include physical injury, psychological abuse, sexual assault, progressive social isolation, stalking, deprivation, intimidation and threats that adults or adolescents use against their intimate partners” (Mitchell and Anglin, 2008). In table I, various forms of IPV are mentioned categorically. IPV varies widely between countries but comparing them has been difficult due to significant variations in methodology and meaning (Stewart *et al.*, 2013). Studies often explored psychological factors such as personality disorder, depression, marital conflict, psychosis and poor family functioning as liable for a person’s abusive behavior (Krug *et al.*, 2002).

Besides, low self-esteem and assertiveness, emotional disengagement, marked jealousy, social and sexual inadequacy also have been found as crucial factors in IPV (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2002). Cultural factors like patriarchy are also notable as it has rigid gender roles and legitimizes men’s control over women.

Further, patriarchy promotes men’s dominance, control and aggression over women in a socially acceptable manner. Women on the other hand urged to endure IPV to preserve cultural values (Stewart *et al.*, 2013:4). Poverty is also a factor of IPV as it occurs mostly among poor families, the study found (Leone *et al.*, 2004).

In this paper, we will look into three theoretical perspectives on gender-based violence, which are: psychological, structural and interactionist.

TABLE I TYPES OF ABUSE IN INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Physical Abuse	Hitting, slapping, pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, biting, strangulation, burning, use of weapons such as knives or firearms, and preventing access to medicines or medical care
Sexual Abuse	Coerced sexual activity, sexual assault, forced unprotected sex, forced sex with or in front of others, and forced sex involving violence and the use of objects
Psychological Abuse	Berates, ridicules, intimidates, degrades, humiliates, emotionally isolates from friends or family, or stalks; threats of violence against the victim, the victim’s family, or pets; threatens suicide or homicide, or purchasing and/or displaying a firearm; uses children (threatens to hurt or take children away or withhold support)
Economic Abuse	Limiting access to work, education or resources; incurring crippling debt; threatening to withhold access to insurance; threatening to imperil immigration status

Source: Leone *et al.*, (2004)

In intimate relationships, not just one form of abuse occurs at a time; rather, emotional abuse is often accompanied, coincided by, and preceded by physical or sexual abuse (Mouradian, 2000). Since one form of abuse affects another, it’s difficult to draw a clear line between them. Emotional abuse causes psychological damage, making it easier for the perpetrator to assert control over the victim. In terms of psychological theories of gender-based violence, Jasinski (2001) proposed that an individual who is violent to women has a personality disorder that causes them to deviate from normal behavior and changes their perception of violent behavior. Sometimes, the factors of such violence are biological, as a person can choose to be violent if he is unable to indulge his desire in a socially acceptable manner. Also, violence against women occurs as a result of certain individuals’ unique personality and interaction traits, which cause them to perpetrate violence within family relationships (Bonnie & Steven, 2010).

An eminent social-psychological theory is social learning theory (SLT) proposed by Bandura and Walters in 1963, later modified by Bandura in 1977. This theory proposes that learning is a cognitive process that takes place in a social context. People learn a particular form of behavior by observing that behavior and it results in performing that

behavior. Thus, violence is also a learned behavior which involves a person to observe, extract information and perform that behavior. The prevailing environment plays a vital role in this process. When a child comes across such violent behavior in their families they tend to be influenced by such behavior. Prevailing social structure helps them to perform such actions.

According to structural theorists, gender is a system of stratification which places women and men into categories which are unequal; further, separates their roles and occupations (Risman, 1998). Structural theorists stated that gender is a social force which performs beyond an individual's tendency and desire. In this way, "even when men and women do not desire to live gendered lives or to support male dominance, they often find themselves compelled to do so by the logic of gendered choices" (Risman, 1998:29). Individual sex does not predict violent behavior, rather the existing gender structure motivates such behavior by offering prospects and rewards for the use of it.

Structural forces, for instance, marriage, are organized by gender. It determines particular roles and responsibilities for both genders in different manners. As a result, the experience of men and women in marriage is different (Hochschild & Machung, 1989). Gelles (2003) mentioned that violence is caused by structural and conditional stimuli; where two factors are associated. Firstly, violence is caused by a particular structural or conditional stress, and secondly, the potential perpetrator has been socialized to believe that violence is the most effective solution to a given circumstance. People from lower-income, less-educated, or lower-occupational-status families, according to the structural theory, are more likely to face structural and situational strain than people from other socioeconomic classes (Flowers, 2000).

The interactionist perspective treats gender as a characteristic of social interaction rather than of individual persons. In this view, individuals "do gender" in daily interactions with others, performing 'masculinity' or 'femininity' in order to live up to social expectations (Butler, 1990; West & Zimmerman, 1987). From this perspective, gender is viewed as an outcome of social practices rather than as an individual characteristic that predicts behavior. Thus, the interactionist approach shifts our thinking from the question of how masculinity causes violence to the question of how violence causes masculinity (Anderson, 2005). Violence isn't a "gender-neutral" act. Gender is constructed by violent behavior in western traditions, the use of aggression is seen as a masculine trait. Since aggression is part of a culturally idealized concept of masculinity, it can be used to demonstrate to others that one is a 'real man'. Interactionists posit that gender is a social accomplishment (West & Zimmerman, 1987) that is based on the definitions and interpretations of others. According to scholars in the interactive tradition, viewers demand different outcomes from men and women, and the same actions would be judged differently based on the

performer's assumed sex and the interactive context (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

When the actor is considered to be a man, the same violent act that conveys "masculinity" to others, such as punching someone for insulting him, would be viewed differently when the actor is perceived to be a woman. This framework helps us to understand research findings that men's violence is viewed more seriously than women's violence. Because violence is defined as 'masculine' within popular culture, audiences expect, acknowledge, and encourage men's violence as normal behavior.

Tjaden and Thoennes (2000) found that male victims of partner assaults were significantly more likely than female victims to choose not to report the violence to the police because they defined the assault as a minor or one-time. This perspective also helps us to understand why male victims and criminal justice agents are reluctant to hold female perpetrators accountable for their violence. To be labeled as a 'victim' of an assault by a woman may threaten a man's sense of masculinity.

III. METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on qualitative content analysis of news items derived from 12 most-read English online news websites in Bangladesh. Qualitative content analysis is defined more broadly by some researchers to also include techniques in which the data are analyzed solely qualitatively, without the use of counting or statistical techniques (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). While the study is primarily based on interpretative qualitative content analysis techniques, we have also used some quantitative content analysis techniques, including theme counts (Elo and Kyngas, 2008), to visualize the findings. Qualitative content analysis method is adopted as it offers a broader explanation in comparison to quantitative content analysis.

IV. DATA SOURCES

A total of 63 News reports were collected from April 2020 to July 2020. Four months of monitoring is deemed to be adequate to account for any seasonal reporting impacts. Generally, there is no fixed sample size in the content analysis method, rather it is determined by 'informational needs' to address research questions with confidence (Krippendorff, 2018). Following the WHO framework (WHO, 2012) of Intimate partner violence (IPV), initial coding was prepared by the researchers. Newspaper reports were extracted through google search and the website of the respective newspaper. Collected reports then transferred to MS word for initial processing. Initially, before coding, news reports were read carefully. Some of the reports were excluded from the list upon not meeting the criteria of sampling. Sorted data were entered into Atlas.ti for coding and further analysis.

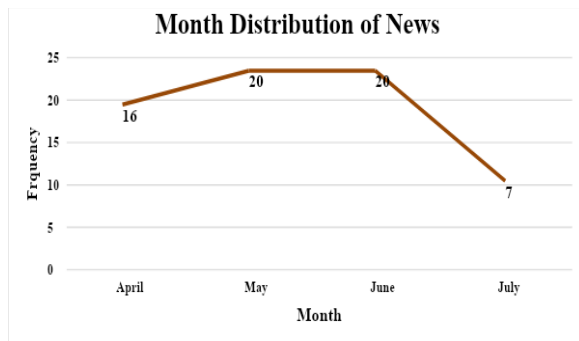


Fig. 1 Monthly distribution of news collected

V. DATA ANALYSIS

Some researchers describe qualitative content analysis as the approach in which data are analyzed only qualitatively, without the use of counting or statistical techniques (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). The case of IPV can't be understood only by numerical representation since the issue is associated with many other factors that need interpretation. Considering this, the study is designed to be interpretive and descriptive in nature. The qualitative content analysis goes beyond simply counting words to intensely analyzing language to classify vast volumes of text into an appropriate number of categories that reflect similar meanings (Weber, 1990). The process of analysis began with selecting the news reports appropriate for the study and excluding the unnecessary items to identify and group categories together to strengthen the understanding of it (Bengtsson, 2016).

The present study takes the 'summative' approach (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005) using WHO guidelines of IPV as themes or categories which seek contextual understanding (Hsieh and Shannon 2005:1284). Further, the study followed 4 stages of the data analysis process described by Bengtsson (2016:11) as follows.

1. De-contextualization
2. Re-contextualization
3. Categorization
4. The compilation

De-contextualization refers to the familiarization (Ibid: 12) with the topic at the beginning of any qualitative content analysis. Re-contextualization involves bordering the information into the most important to unimportant that does not resemble the aim of the study. Researchers saved all the selected news reports in MS word files for initial reading. After that, those reports have been transferred to Atlas.ti for coding and categorization. Initial coding involves the reading of the whole text and generating some common themes. Then, these themes were written in a separate file for operationalizing the generated codes (so that they elucidate the same meaning for everyone involved in the research project).

Categorization means understanding the depth of meaning of the text. Researchers generated a few themes and sub-themes based on initial coding by going back and forth with the original text. Themes were created on the basis of a profound understanding of the text and by relating it to existing literature. Generated themes are maintained to be internally homogenous and externally heterogeneous to avoid any mix-up between two groups.

Finally, the compilation denotes the process of analyzing the text upon finishing up with themes and categories. Usually, the qualitative content analysis involves a two-layer analysis of the text, manifest and latent, where the researcher can use one or both (Elo & Kyngas, 2007:109; Forman and Damschroder, 2007). Where manifest analysis concentrates on what is written in the text, the "latent analysis is extended to an interpretive level in which the researcher seeks to find the underlying meaning of the text: what the text is talking about" (Berg & Lune, 2007). Researchers used both forms of analysis in this paper. The manifest analysis focused much on the incidents regarding IPV reported in the online newspapers while latent analysis went beyond the news reports and analyzed the underlying pattern of IPV and the veiled reality of violence against women in Bangladesh (Bengtsson, 2016).

TABLE II DATA SOURCE

Sl. No.	Name of the Newspaper	No of the featured Stories	No. of Editorials	Total News Items (n)
1	The Daily Star	11	12	23
2	Dhaka Tribune	2	8	10
3	Daily Sun	1	7	8
4	The Business Standard	-	8	8
5	The Financial Express	-	4	4
6	Prothom Alo	-	3	3
7	New Nation	-	3	3
8	New Age	-	3	3
9	The Daily Observer	-	3	3
10	The Bangladesh Today	-	1	1
11	Asian Age	-	1	1
12	The Independent	1		1
	Total	15	53	68

VI. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

A. Triggering Factors of IPV

Any crisis situation affects women and men differently and often disproportionately. In a country where intimate partner violence remains mostly unaddressed and where the societal norm suppresses the victim, COVID-19 only exacerbates the suffering of the victims (Dhaka Tribune, 2020). Financial instability and economic suppression, of one or both parties, only increases the frustration and abuse between partners. Additionally, consequential drug and alcohol consumption may also trigger violence during the pandemic.

B. Gender Inequitable Social Norms

Being abused by a partner or spouse is not uncommon in Bangladesh. It is deeply rooted in its patriarchal society; gender hierarchies that favor men endorse and reinforces such abuse. Socially constructed femininity and masculinity, and rigid gender roles all encourage the perpetration of IPV. It is believed to be a husband's responsibility and prerogative to *shashon* (discipline) a woman who transgresses against gendered or religious norms (Naved et al., 2017). Most of the collected articles on IPV addressed the suppression of society and long engraved norms that are triggering the violence. "Victims are often sent back from their natal homes to their abusive husband as it impacts the 'shamman' or honour of her family. This is a scenario that we are all too familiar with, and it has led to fatal results for some of these victims. Thus, women are taught to be tolerant and overlook abuse in a relationship, after all, it was 'just a slap' (Ali, 2020). Women, who are evidently and reportedly most victimized by their partner, are often oblivious of the fact that such violence is fundamentally and legally wrong. Social norms and practices have been internalized to such an extent by the IPV victims, that they do not identify themselves as victims of violence.

C. Substance Abuse and Personality Disorder

When the pandemic suppressed a large number of people, especially the lower income community, to a monetary crisis, the dagger of substantial consumption by a partner only intensifies the suffering. As the male cannot fulfil his demand for drugs and alcohol with his own money, he abuses the female for money. The Financial Express newspaper cited a study conducted by The Bangladesh Nari Sramik Kendra (BNSK) on internal women migrant workers of Dhaka during March and April of 2020, which elucidates the relation between drug and partner abuse. "My husband used to take ganja (marijuana), but it is not available in the city because of restrictions on public movement. So, he often tortures me. Even sometimes he sells foods that are donated from different charity organizations. So, I was forced to starve with my children quite a few times" (Ara, 2020).

Long-term consumption of drugs and alcohol consequently alienates the consumer that significantly influences, especially the close-netted surrounding. Emerging mental destruction, activated by the stress of pandemics, makes substantial consumers hostile. A woman who was exposed to violence amid lockdown mentioned: "Despite having been married to the 'love of his life' for five years, he murdered his wife Tahmina Akhter and streamed the whole incident live on. Signs of agony, frustration and vengeance could clearly be seen on his face as he hacked his wife to death. Neighbours assume Tutul, reportedly a drug addict had been frustrated as his wife failed to fetch dowry from her family. Married to a schizophrenic patient undergoing psychiatric treatment, her life quickly turned violent when Bangladesh enforced a countrywide shutdown" (Kamal, 2020).

D. Pre-Existing Relation Conflict and Prolonged Isolation

It's not uncommon for domestic violence abusers to isolate their victims as an act of control or to reduce the opportunity for disclosure of abuse, and the current societal conditions are likely furthering the impact of these actions (Campbell, 2020). As the global pandemic, COVID 19 is continuing, countries are taking necessary measures to reduce the spread of the virus, nationwide or regional lockdown is one of the steps taken for social distancing. Victims and their abusive partners are forced to self-isolate together at home which may lead to a rise in pre-existing and/or new abusive behaviour and violence. As victims now have to stay a longer period with the abuser within home confinement, this gives abusers more opportunities to abuse the victim. The worst part is that victims cannot reach out for help since they are surrounded by the abusers who often keep an eye on the victims' whereabouts. Due to social distancing methods, they cannot contact other family members or neighbours. Besides, protected lockdown is affecting mental health as office-going individuals are sitting at home idly, which is leading them to stress, frustration and anger. Stressed people often release their frustration on the weaker members of their families.

E. Economic Stress

Stress and frustration due to prolonged lockdown intensify with unemployment and financial uncertainty brought by the pandemic. Individuals feel pressurized as families run out of money and food, along with job uncertainty and salary cut off. It is significantly burdensome for poor people as they remain starved, or half starved. This makes people frustrated and angry which leads them to conflicts and dominance over their partner.

"Though shutdown is the main reason for increasing domestic violence, in our country poverty and job uncertainty has added salt to the wound. Majority of the country's population who depend on regular earnings have no job after they are asked to stay at home. Apart from the garment sector, most of the private sector offices have cut

short their expenditures by stopping salaries or terminating a good number of workers. In primary schools and kindergartens - where a huge number of women were employed - now closed schools are turning thousands of women teachers jobless. The situation is almost the same in every sector. Need of money for buying food and other essential items have made common people arrogant and aggressive. Moreover, they want money to pay house rent” (The New Nation, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic contributed to decreased employment and rendered many people jobless. This has created a ripple effect, metamorphosed into mental stress and further transformed into domestic violence.

F. Weak Legal System

Even if a victim reaches for legal support, law enforcement officers refuse to take a case of ‘domestic violence until it is serious physical abuse or dowry abuse. Moreover, the concept of ‘intimate partner violence is considered a private affair. Even during normal times, police rarely entertain complaints of such violence unless it involves fatal physical injury, dowry claims etc. With the COVID-19 crisis, people may even think that talking about domestic violence is a luxury. This severely affects the victims. For male victims, there is the additional stigma of cowardice, preventing men from speaking up. And as hospitals, medical professionals and law enforcement agencies are busy with corona detection and isolation, may be unable/unwilling to help victims of domestic and sexual abuse. The newspaper article emphasizes the limitation of law enforcement to its services.

“In Dhaka or other cities, it is not easy to have a clear picture of abusive treatment of partners at home irrespective of classes during the lockdown. Many such incidents go unreported or underreported unless something fatal happens” (The Financial Express, 2020). In short, the rapid growth in domestic violence is due to unemployment, social distancing, drug abuse, and other socio-economic factors. Nonetheless, partners experiencing violence in this pandemic also find it difficult to file reports or get support from appropriate parties due to the lockdown. The home quarantine is actually a double-edged sword- it increases violence exponentially, but it is also the only way to limit the extensive spread of corona.

G. Consequences of IPV

During times like COVID-19 pandemic, different groups like men, women, children and the aged suffer in different ways. Especially for women, who are victims of domestic violence, the safest place at home has become the most unsafe place for them. Restrictions on movement forced people to spend more time at home which has led to a surge in domestic abuse cases, especially intimate partner violence. In Bangladesh, the economic and health uncertainties due to the nationwide lockdown have increased violence at an alarming rate. The nationwide

lockdown has compelled women to stay confined at home with their abusive husbands. As a result, they were restrained and failed to get the usual support systems or help.

H. Physical Health

During the COVID-19 lockdown, the violence escalated to a different level. Domestic violence, as well as IPV, became a global concern and public health crisis during the pandemic. The victims of IPV who are abused physically need to endure substantial health problems as well. They suffer from physical injuries and harm such as bruises, head injury, back and neck injury, and strangulation. Not only that, in some cases they were denied medical care and had to endure excessive household work and starvation. In a patriarchal society, women are considered weak, and this is one reason that they often fall victim to men’s frustration and stress due to financial constraints and unemployment during the lockdown. Dowry, domestic tension, household workload with looking after the children, and restricted mobility have also fueled violence.

According to the WHO, one in every three women around the world experienced physical or sexual violence, mostly by an intimate partner (UN News, 2019). A woman who was a victim of violence by her husband said that she had to do the work of all seven family members of her house. After working for the whole day at night she naturally felt tired and showed reluctance to respond to husband’s biological needs. Soon he started abusing and slapping her. Not only did he cut her hair he took her out of bed and threatened to cut a portion of her internal genitalia if she didn’t listen.

IPV sometimes becomes so extreme that it can end up in homicide. Such an incident happened with the 42 years old Jesmin Begum of Gafargaon Upazila of Mymensingh. She was strangled to death by her husband as the mother of three did not allow her husband to remarry. She was tortured physically and forced to go to her parent’s house often. Police said Shaheen strangled Jesmin with a rope. Her body also bore injury marks on different places the autopsy revealed (The Daily Star, 2020).

I. Mental Health

The socio-economic instability caused joblessness and unemployment. It has also caused many mental health issues such as anxiety, fear, stress, and frustration among people. Before the lockdown, women might have had an escape from the abuse for some time as their partners used to be away for work but during the lockdown, they had no option but to be with them for twenty-four/seven. . In some cases, women could not seek out help as they had the fear that after complaining they wouldn’t be able to live in the same house with their husbands. So, even after all the suffering, they remained quiet. Intimate partner violence is on the rise, and it is causing the victims to suffer from emotional stress, sexual disorder, depression, anxiety, and in the worst-case scenario suicide.

The perpetrator exercises their ability to control the victims and terrify them and, in many cases, they release their anger and frustration on the weaker members, especially women. Due to the unavailability of addiction substances during quarantine and inadequacy of habitual involvement in addiction due to the economic crisis, husbands torture them in anger. Sometimes, women are blamed for all the distress, and making them feel guilty for falling sick is also used as a tool for abuse. When the violence becomes grossly unbearable suicide and death cases are common in Bangladesh. Many women have found the situation suffocating and experienced mental distress and anxiety as they had to face the torture. Whether educated or uneducated, rich or poor women have experienced this stereotypical behaviour in a society where the male wants to establish their gender superiority. It is not considered domestic violence until it gets extreme. Inaccessibility to law and justice and also lack of support networks have also caused them to be lenient. But the victims have to suffer from poor self-esteem, PTSD (depression, anxiety, phobia), and lifelong trauma. Constant controlling behaviour limits the victim's accessibility to meet family members, and friends thereby isolating her from society by controlling her and depriving her of her right to move freely.

One of the cases that was published recently depicts the mental health issues faced by women during lockdown. A housewife named Shila managed her small family quite well when her husband was abroad. She used to take care of all the expenses that her husband used to send. But when her husband lost his job, it became difficult to run the family so, when Shila spoke about it, her husband accused her of having 'bad habits. Not being able to prove herself right she tried to commit suicide. She was somehow saved and since then receiving psychological treatment from the psychological counsellors of an NGO (Saltmarsh, 2020). In a patriarchal society like Bangladesh, the perception of marriage is somewhat different. Society forces a woman to save their marriage at any cost. Being pressured by society many women killed themselves to be saved from violence. Some women could not overcome the trauma and become mentally unstable. A survivor of domestic violence said that she decided to move on for her child. But the fear of criticism from society restrained her to do that. . So, it becomes a reassurance for the abusers to continue their abuse. The constant criticism by their partner affects women psychologically and emotionally. Another victim of IPV added:

"I was physically abused every week, round the year, and the very morning after the abuse, my former husband turned more romantic and I kept waiting for a morning from where these abuses will all come to a stop, they actually shadow our thinking process. They stop us from thinking (Hasan, 2020)."

J. Sexual and Reproductive Health

IPV has a serious impact on the sexual and reproductive health of women. Women can be abused sexually by the

closest members of the family or even husbands. The husband sharing the same bed can abuse, assault, or humiliate women sexually. According to WHO, the consequences of sexual violence are unintended and unwanted pregnancy, abortion and unsafe abortion, sexually transmitted infections including HIV, pregnancy complications, pelvic inflammatory disease, urinary tract infections, and sexual dysfunction. A study revealed that in Bangladesh, two out of five mothers under age 25 said that their last pregnancy was unintended. Sometimes the husbands don't let them use contraceptives and the pandemic has also created obstacles for women to access contraceptives. Due to COVID-19, around 68% of pregnant and lactating women surveyed are not receiving sufficient nutritious food. This can be a reason for small gestational age (SGA) and low birth weight (LBW). In Bangladesh, rape and sexual assaults continues during the pandemic. A survey among 38,125 women was conducted by a human rights organization in 53 out of 64 districts where 4,622 women were mentally tortured, 1,839 women were physically abused, and 203 were sexually abused by an intimate or not sexually intimate partner (MJF, 2020).

The pandemic has increased the number at an alarming rate that almost every day there are one or more cases of sexual violence in the newspapers. For women, the impact was devastating, as their sexual and reproductive health rights were violated. A victim who had suffered severely was from a so-called highly educated family in the medical profession. The husband never used any contraceptives nor allowed his wife to use them. When she got pregnant, which was also her fourth pregnancy, the husband terminated her pregnancy at home without any medical assistance. So, this unsafe abortion caused severe agonizing pain and bleeding. When the maid tried to protest, he shouted at her and threatened to send her back to her house (Begum, 2020).

K. Violence during Pregnancy

The health risks are greater for pregnant women who become the victims of domestic violence. Abuse during pregnancy can cause adverse physical and psychological effects on mothers. According to WHO violence against women can result in miscarriage, gynecological problems, injury, substance abuse, anxiety, stress, and other chronic illness as well as poor nutrition, inadequate weight gain, substance use, increased prevalence of depression, adverse neonatal outcomes (e.g., low birth weight, preterm birth, and small for gestational age and maternal and neonatal death. COVID-19 has also created barriers to get sufficient nutritious food and medical care which has exacerbated the risk for mother and child.

Globally it has been reported that around 27% of women of age 15-49 who have been in a relationship have said that they have experienced some sort of physical and sexual violence by their intimate partners (WHO, 2018). In Bangladesh, this scenario is very common. IPV is also the reason for a large number of maternal mortalities. Women who face abuse are twice as likely to miss prenatal care

appointments during pregnancy and show symptoms of depression which are likely to cause PTSD. Another research result examining maternal, fetal, neonatal, and infant outcomes of women hospitalized for assault during pregnancy found that women who delivered an infant during the assault hospitalization were over three times as likely to deliver an LBW neonate as compared with non-assaulted women.

The women hospitalized after assault has a more than 8-fold increased risk of fetal death and nearly 6-fold increased risk of neonatal death according to studies. Intimate partner violence during pregnancy can also impact the neonate classified as small for gestational age. The newborn is smaller in size and most commonly defined as having a birth weight below the 10th percentile for gestational age which amplifies further risks such as early childhood developmental and behavioural problems (Alhusen *et al.*, 2015).

L. Homicide and Other Mortality

During the lockdown, several causes of death associated with intimate partner violence occurred all over Bangladesh. Dowry is one of the major reasons that cause persecution, ill-treatment, abuse, and torture towards the partner. In most cases, women suffer in silence as society remains unaware of it. Society only comes to know about the problem when the victims die. Death can be a result of extreme physical, sexual, or psychological harm including physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse, or controlling the behaviour of the husband.

During the time it becomes difficult to reach out for help, the security during the COVID-19 is overburdened with the existing workload due to pandemics. It is possible that the number of cases will rise if the lockdown continues. One of the reports in a popular daily says that a woman was hacked to death using a sharp weapon by her husband when she failed to meet his needs (The Independent, 2020). Another such case of a patient who died when her husband and mother-in-law tried to bring out the placenta through the umbilical cord which was retained for 2-3 hours during a home delivery. The placenta was morbidly adherent, so she started bleeding. The cruel husband and mother-in-law poured hot water and a hot aluminum pot over her abdomen which caused the thermal burn, excess bleeding, and post-stress traumatic and neurogenic shock (Begum, 2020).

VII. CONCLUSION

The paper aimed to analyze the occurrence of IPV during the COVID-19-induced lockdown in Bangladesh. It used newspaper content to find out the incidents of IPV all over the country. The findings show that such incidents not only increased intensely, but they also became more violent. There were several incidents of death during the lockdown and husbands and in-laws were the main reasons behind most of the incidents. From abuse to homicide several incidents took place during the lockdown. Joblessness and

unemployment were found to be major factors behind such incidents that caused chronic stress for many people. Women used to be able to go away from their spouses for a short period of time while they were at work before the lockdown, but now they are forced to remain with them all day long in a cramped position. Even in this 21st century domestic violence is still a stigmatized topic to be discussed freely and openly. The actual number of cases of this kind of violence is widespread. The consequences of Intimate partner violence are far greater than one can think. IPV and other forms of violence results in long-term mental and physical health consequences. In Bangladesh, most women don't know the use of the national helpline to seek support and the practice of using it is almost non-existent. The victims of such abuse are often unable to protest to their partners because of social pressure and stigma, which has made the issue worse. One of the major causes of the dramatic increase in the IPV during the pandemic was the confinement of females to the home with their male counterparts who suffered due to financial instability. Their insecurity of livelihood has fueled their rage and frustration, leading to this aggressive behaviour. The repercussions harm not only the family and society but also the national economy. Therefore, to control any form of violence against women, society and the government must demonstrate a strong commitment and collaboration towards it. In an inequitable society, where the domination of men is favoured, women are the victims of IPV. Engraved imbalanced social norms coupled with a weak legal system intensify the violence rate by partners. Domestic violence cases are often undermined unless it is a critical physical abuse or dowry, and IPV is still a very new and unattended issue. Lack of expected legal support discourages victims to reach out for help and the abuser gets the advantage. Sudden unemployment, reduced salary, price hike etc. due to prolonged COVID-19 lockdown increased financial stress among the earning members of the family; the frustration led to domination and violence towards other family members, especially towards partners. Victims were more exposed during the lockdown as they were forced to stay with their abuser for a longer time, and pre-existing relationship conflict, substantial consumption and pre-existing mental health disorder only increased the risk. It was evident that the country would confront significant economic difficulties before the arrival of the virus in March 2020. The pandemic hit Bangladesh just as the country was beginning to make advances in social and economic spheres. The incidence of domestic violence increased terrifyingly amid the Corona pandemic. Global media reported a dramatic increase in the number of domestic violence all over the world (Sky News, 2020; ALJAZEERA, 2020; Reuters, 2020). Bangladesh was no exception. Alongside, the occurrence of child marriage has increased mostly because of the prolonged shutdown of schools and colleges (BRAC, 2020). The government along with its development partners must show proper concern and learn to take extraordinary measures to protect the victims of any sort of violence specially during an unprecedented event like COVID-19.

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