

Do Female Education and Mobility Lead to Less Intra-family Abuse ?

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Abstract

Abuse to women is very common in Bangladesh. Sometimes, it takes the form of verbal abuse, while at other times, it takes the form of either physical violence or threat of divorce or both. The cycle of this abuse begins at birth, and continues through later phases of life. Its actual magnitude is hard to measure, since it is often seen as a private matter.

Female abuse leads to unwanted marital dissolution and leaves behind detrimental consequences for later generations. In this study, we found that around 78 per cent of the women in the total study sample had encountered some kind of abuse. A significant proportion of the rural Bangladeshi women who have attained neither education nor social mobility is specially vulnerable to abuse. The educational status of the husband is similarly important. Educated husbands tend to abuse their wives less than the illiterate husbands. We have found that household economic status is an important determinant of abuse to women. High-expenditure households seldom face abuse of any kind.

We have used "attendance at women's meetings", and "mother's club membership" to represent the social mobility of women. Bivariate analyses show that social mobility greatly reduces the risk of abuse of all kinds, whereas results of multivariate analysis for the mother's club membership concluded that mobility was significant in the case of verbal and physical abuse only. Educational attainment of both primary and higher level is significantly related to all kinds of abuse. Age is another important determinant of female abuse. The findings suggest that younger women are at a greater risk than older women. Also, if a woman owns land, and it is registered in her name, she faces less risk of being abused. Husband's occupation is another factor. We found that day-labourers and farmers are more likely to abuse their wives than are businessmen and serviceholders.

Introduction

Background

The female population of Bangladesh during 1989-90 was estimated at 53.3 million [1], representing around 48.5 per cent of the country's total population. An overwhelming majority of this group is illiterate, malnourished, poor, deprived and abused. By tradition and cultural norm, women hold a much lower status than do men. The discrimination in the treatment of male and female begins at birth and continues through all subsequent phases of life. Gender inequality is established through unequal distribution of authority and assets between the sexes, as determined by the family organization and stratification of society [2].

Contrary to global norms, female life expectancy in Bangladesh is lower (54 years) than male (56 years) [1]. In fact, female life expectancy in Bangladesh is amongst the lowest in the world. Of the total female population, roughly 37 per cent are in the reproductive age group. Nutritional in-take of this group, however, has decreased over time [3]. This has serious implications for future population growth, since it has resulted in a disproportionate increase of chronic, long-term malnutrition among women [4].

In terms of education, the female literacy rate is around 16 per cent - a little over half the male literacy rate of 36 per cent [5]. Only 50 per cent of the school-age girls are enrolled in the primary school system, compared to 90 per cent of the boys. Similarly, the dropout rate at the primary stage is significantly higher among girls.

Current trends, however, indicate that the traditional roles of women in Bangladesh are rapidly changing, due to increasing landlessness, poverty, and male out-migration in search of employment. As a result, a larger number of women are entering into the labour market, in search of employment. Thus, for necessity, women are becoming more mobile.

One of the poignant indicators and reminders of the subordinate

status of women and their marginalized position in society is found in the many instances of gender violence, threat of divorce or simply verbal abuse. Social and economic deprivation perpetuates the situation. In all these forms, women become victims. In Bangladesh, daily newspapers often print stories of this nature in front-page coverage. However unfortunate, the country's male-dominated society strives to conceal them with condemnation, rather than investigating causes. Existing research shows that the common denominators of all these phenomena are economic marginalization, women's lack of education, mobility, and access to resources, which in our legal and social system, are usually controlled by the male members [6].

Abuse to women begins in the family of origin, and is carried on to subsequent generations, as female children observe that their mothers are subject to intra-family abuse and are given less authority in family decision-making. Official records of gender abuse in Bangladesh are practically nonexistent. Police records are obscure and inaccessible, especially with regard to intra-family abuse. Wife battering is one of the most common forms of intra-family physical violence committed on women, but is one that most often eludes both law enforcement agencies and journalistic efforts, since it is usually successfully concealed within the family. Other forms of abuse include verbal abuse and threat of divorce.

In Bangladesh, abuse to women is likely to take place if:

- (i) bride's family fails to provide dowry;

In our rural societies, dowry is quite common during marriage. Although it is legally prohibited, it is seen as a common practice among both rural and urban communities. Acceptance of dowry takes place, irrespective of income status. This dowry often becomes the main reason of emergence of gender-based abuse in a family. The husbands abuse their wives if their pre-marital demands are not fully met. In many cases, bride's family becomes unable to fulfill their promises due to unforeseen reasons.

(ii) there is asymmetry in marriage selection;

Selection of partners during marriage has an anticipated link between current spouse selection and future possibility of gender-based abuse. If there is an asymmetric selection of partners, although not intentionally, partners become incompatible to each other and, as a consequence, frustration concocts which ultimately takes the shape of gender abuse where women become the victim, since in our male-dominated society, woman very seldom speaks out if she finds her husband incompatible; instead, she tries her best to adjust to the situation.

(iii) pervasive poverty exists in a family;

Around 85 per cent of our rural people are gripped with pervasive poverty. This affects the behaviour of people substantially. Poverty not only changes one's expectation about life, but also influences one's behaviour, status, perception of life, etc. Poverty has direct consequences on spousal relationship. Often, it leads to bad spousal relationship where wives are abused frequently. This abusive behaviour should not be seen as a normal behaviour of the abuser; it merely reflects the mental frustration and agony he has due to poverty.

(iv) there is a lack of female education;

It is universally known that education plays an important role in individual's behaviour, outlook and aspirations. Female education not only helps the female community understand the complexity of life better but also helps the next generation in getting education properly. An educated mother can bring a big difference to her family. Educated women tend to marry educated men, and this forms a good relationship between spouses which helps reduce the likelihood of abuse. An educated woman can understand the needs of her husband better than an uneducated woman.

- (v) there is a lack of female mobility;

Mobility serves as a good indicator for raising awareness of different social issues. Mobile women can get information about problems of spousal relationship and their solutions from other women, and can act accordingly in reducing the extent of gender abuse.

Objectives of the Study

In this paper, we seek to determine how female education and female mobility are related to female violence that takes place at home between spouses. In our study, we have included only currently married women who are residing with their spouses. First, we seek to determine the extent of the three forms of female abuse: verbal abuse, physical violence, and threat of divorce, and their relationship with female education and mobility. We shall then test the significance of female education and mobility, through both bivariate and multivariate analyses. In the multivariate analysis, we shall test three models-- with verbal abuse, physical violence, and threat of divorce as dependent variables in each case, and an array of plausible explanatory variables to determine which variables respond best.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- (i) determine the relative importance of female education and mobility in their relationship with intra-family violence;
- (ii) find the association between gender violence and husband's education, woman's asset and land ownership, woman's age, access to radio and electricity, family income, and husband's occupation;
- (iii) ascertain the most significant determinants of such violence from multivariate analysis;

- (iv) locate the actual cases of marital dissolution among those women who had encountered violence, by tracing the women who were interviewed during the in-depth survey 1993 until August 1996.

Literature Review

The abuse to women by men occurs in all socio-economic classes, in all known countries of the world. Studies have shown that 20-50 per cent of women in many countries have been physically assaulted by a male intimate. This type of gender abuse arises from complex cultural, economic, and social systems that subordinate women. Gender-based abuse sometimes emerges due to coerced sexual relationships which promote fear. In this context, it also tends to inhibit contraceptive use, since a woman in an abusive relationship is not likely to stress contraception, for fear of the reaction of her male partner [7]. To date, there has been no systematic attempt to study the issue of gender violence and its consequences in Bangladesh.

Sanchez [8], in his paper on the emotional consequences of the domestic abuse to women in Mexico, presents a theoretical framework for the analysis of violence against women. According to his work, gender violence is a manifestation of a societal view of violence as a natural phenomenon, based on a biological and deterministic model, in which the "strong" dominate the "weak." He further claims that as long as society places inordinate value on masculinity, simultaneously tolerating the violent treatment of women, domestic violence will persist. Such abuse occurs in 31 per cent of the middle class, and 57 per cent of the impoverished Mexican families. Nearly two-thirds of the women reported that the violence, in the form of verbal, and/or physical assault, had continued for ten years or longer. Based on this theory, then, domestic violence should not be merely seen as a private matter, since it is a social problem whose resolution will require public intervention, including appropriate legislative protection.

South [9] attempts to shed light on the often-observed relationship between spousal age difference and marital dissolution, by first deriving a hypothesis from marital search theory that relates both variables to the supply of spousal alternatives in the local marriage market. Some of the marital dissolutions associated with spousal age difference are attributable to the detrimental effect of early marriage on educational attainment. Guest [10] explores the relationship between marital dissolution and development in Indonesia. Using Indonesia Fertility Survey (IFS) data, he shows that ethnicity and religion have significant effect on the likelihood of marital dissolution in Indonesia. Jensen [11] shows that unemployment is a major factor behind marital dissolution in Denmark. Similarly, Axinn et al. [12] describes the influence of parental marriage dissolution on a child's attitude toward family formation. They have concluded that parental marriage dissolution bears a strong negative impact on a child's attitude toward family formation.

Methodology

Data Source

In this study, we have used the 1993 In-depth Survey data, collected from six areas (Sirajganj, Gopalpur, Abhoynagar, Fultala, Bagherpara and Keshobpur thanas) of rural Bangladesh. The In-depth Survey collected a wide range of data on contraceptive use by eligible women, demographic variables, family size, education, occupation, economic status, living condition, women's status, etc. The general characteristics of these areas are representative of rural Bangladesh. The survey was conducted by the Sample Registration System (SRS) of the MCH-FP Extension Project (Rural), of the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B). The SRS collects data on issues relating to contraceptive use of eligible currently married women, migration and socio-demography. It

collects data longitudinally at 60-day intervals, in two thanas—namely, Sirajganj and Abhoynagar under Sirajganj and Jessore districts respectively.

Gopalpur is serving as the comparison site for the treatment thana Sirajganj. Similarly, Fultala, Bagherpara and Keshobpur are comparison thanas for Abhoynagar. The sample of our study comprises 10,368 eligible currently married women between the ages of 15 and 49, who reside within the SRS areas.

Analytical Framework

The relationship between verbal abuse, physical violence and threat of divorce and different independent factors are shown with their expected signs below:

Verbal abuse/physical violence/threat of divorce = f [woman's age (-ve), religion (?), woman's primary education (-ve), woman's higher education (-ve), husband's primary education (-ve), husband's higher education (-ve), women's meeting (-ve), access to radio (-ve), access to electricity (-ve), household expenditure (-ve), woman's cash money ownership (-ve), woman's land ownership (-ve), husband's occupation (?)]

It is expected that older women (more than 30 years of age) are less likely to be abused since their duration of marital life is relatively long and they have established themselves more securely in their husbands' homes by giving birth to children. Young women have fewer number of children and their marital experience is somewhat different than women above 30 years of age. Since they live with their in-laws in the same household, they tend to exert less authority in familial issues.

We have included religion to see if it has any differential impact on gender-based abuse. Generally, Hindu religion does not permit anyone to divorce. On the other hand, divorce is permitted among the Muslims and such laws are fairly easy to execute.

We have used female education as an independent variable since female education is expected to have influence on overall intra-family behaviour, which includes husband's attitude toward his wife. We have split the variable into two groups, i.e., primary education (0-5 years of schooling) and higher education (more than 5 years of schooling). Husband's education is similarly important in analysing the intra-family behaviour. As in wife's education, we have split husband's education into two groups.

Women's mobility is also an important factor in determining family behaviour, and it is expected that mobile women will encounter less abuse than relatively immobile women. Here, we have taken women's meeting and mother's club membership as proxies of women's mobility. Women's meetings are held outside the village, and is usually attended by like-minded women who exchange their views on social and familial issues in an informal setting. On the other hand, mother's club is a kind of credit union organized by different NGOs. It is usually attended by women who have borrowed funds for different activities. In our rural social structure, women are usually confined in their homes. They are not generally permitted to go outside their homes unless it is urgent. Even when a woman visits her parents, someone from her parents' home comes to escort her. Although the situation is fast changing, we believe that the attendance at women's meeting, and having membership in mother's club are still reasonably good indicators of the woman's mobility.

In our rural society, when a woman enters into marriage, her prospect of future educational advancement becomes bleak, and she, being totally dependent on her husband for further schooling, usually does not proceed further with schooling due to family responsibilities. Hence, her pre-marital educational status remains as her life-long educational status [13]. Here, radio acts as a supplementary source of mass-education in order to update her knowledge about various familial and social issues. Radio generally broadcasts programmes relating to domestic/family problems, and advocates better intra-family relationship. It also provides information on how a woman and a man can make substantial difference to their existing life style.

Only 25 per cent of our rural households have access to electricity [13]. Thus, this access represents a social status among rural people in Bangladesh. We have included this variable to see if households with access to electricity are more prone to domestic violence compared to households with no electricity. Directly, there is no relationship between electricity and any kind of abuse, but it is a proxy for social status in an indirect way.

Household expenditure reflects the economic well-being of a given household. This is an indirect way of measuring a household's monthly income. Since we have earlier stated that pervasive poverty is a cause of gender abuse, we can infer that high-expenditure households will have lower incidence of violence. Household expenditure has been classified into three groups: low expenditure, medium, and high.

Cash money is the amount of petty cash earned by women from their independent income-generating activities in addition to their normal household activities. This cash amount is owned by the woman, and generally, the woman has the authority to spend the money according to her wishes. This cash money represents a degree of self-reliance, and it also represents her position in the family.

Woman's land ownership is characterized by the amount of land registered in her own name, and which is completely owned by the woman and given to her by her parents. This land ownership is not treated as dowry, and hence, there is no way that this land can be transferred to her husband's name unless she wishes so. This land ownership reflects her asset ownership, and in our society, it shows the shadow price of a woman to her husband. If a woman has land ownership, she assumes more respect in her husband's family. Thus, there is an expected negative relationship between land ownership and gender abuse.

Husband's occupation is also another major factor influencing gender abuse. It is expected that hard-working day-labourers and farmers will abuse more than the serviceholders and businessmen, since day-labourers work hard and quite often they are landless, and they have very little asset of their

own. This generates frustration and ultimately leads to gender abuse as an outburst of their frustration.

We analysed our data in two ways. Bivariate analysis is complemented by multivariate logistic analysis. It is worth mentioning that we have checked for multicollinearity problem among the independent variables, and did not find any such problem.

The logistic regression will be in the following form:

$$P (Y_i = 1 | X_i) = F (X_i \beta)$$

where the dependent variable Y takes either the value of 0 or 1; X is the set of explanatory variables, and

$$F (z) = \exp (z) / (1 + \exp (z))$$

Key Findings

Results of Bivariate Analysis

The actual number of women who encountered verbal abuse, physical violence or threat of divorce during the time of the 1993 In-depth Survey is staggering. Out of 10,357 eligible women, 78 percent had encountered verbal abuse, 42 percent had experienced physical violence, and 18 percent had received threat of divorce from their husbands. This shows that a significant proportion of Bangladeshi rural women experiences some kind of gender abuse from their husbands.

Table 1 shows the percentage of educated and uneducated women by their experience of verbal abuse. There are multiple responses in the verbal abuse variable. Accordingly, we have divided verbal abuse into three groups: (1) women who have never encountered any verbal abuse, (2) women who have experienced verbal abuse occasionally, and (3) women who have often encountered verbal abuse from their husbands. Table 1 shows that educated women are less likely to be abused than uneducated women. A higher percentage of educated women has never experienced verbal abuse than uneducated women. In fact, the percentage of educated women who encounter verbal abuse is quite often less than half that of the uneducated women.

Table 1: Female education and verbal abuse in study areas (% distribution)

Education→	SIRAJGANJ		GOPALPUR		ABHOYNAGAR		FULTALA		BAGHERPARA		KESHOBPUR	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Has never encountered verbal abuse	27	18	30	16	34	23	33	21	19	11	21	14
Has encountered verbal abuse sometimes	66	70	64	71	63	71	59	64	69	68	73	76
Has encountered verbal abuse often	7	12	6	13	3	6	8	15	12	21	6	10
N	1350	1712	1312	1338	551	537	330	369	516	657	590	1106

Table 2 shows the percentage of educated and uneducated women, by their physical violence experience. In all areas, the percentage of educated women who have never encountered any physical violence is higher than the percentage of women who had received no education. In Gopalpur and Bagherpara, around 75 percent of the educated women had never experienced any physical violence from their spouses. Perhaps, this

is due to the fact that educated women tend to possess more intra-family bargaining power, which provides them with an entitlement in the household decision-making, and thus, helps reduce the potential for violence. In terms of experiencing occasional physical violence, educated women also fare better than their uneducated counterparts. Similarly, among the group of women who frequently encounter physical violence, educated women have a clear edge over uneducated women. Again, Gopalpur and Bagherpara are clear examples of this pattern. Thus, we find that educated women are less likely to be exposed to intra-family physical violence than women without education.

Table 2: Female education and physical violence in study areas (% distribution)

Education→	SIRAJGANJ		GOPALPUR		ABHOYNAGAR		FULTALA		BAGHERPARA		KESHOBPUR	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Has never encountered physical violence	58	47	73	57	64	51	66	58	75	61	60	45
Has encountered physical violence sometimes	40	48	26	39	35	46	32	33	24	34	35	48
Has encountered physical violence often	2	5	1	4	1	3	2	9	1	5	5	7
N	1350	1712	1312	1338	551	537	330	369	516	657	590	1106

Table 3 shows the percentage of educated and uneducated women who have never, occasionally, and often encountered threat of divorce from their husbands. The data indicate that educated women are less likely to receive divorce threats. In the "never encountered" scenario, we see that at Bagherpara, around 94 percent of the educated women (N=516) had not encountered threat of divorce.

Table 1, 2, and 3 similarly show that education significantly reduces the likelihood of abuse. We have also cross-tabulated the different abuses (i.e., verbal abuse, physical violence and threat of divorce) under four scenarios: (1) both wife and husband are not educated, (2) wife is educated but husband is not, (3) wife is not educated but husband is educated, and (4) both wife and husband are educated (results not shown here in tabular form). We have seen that in all areas, if scenario 4 (i.e., both wife and husband are educated) is true, the extent of all kinds of abuse drops down significantly. Husband's education has a strong negative relationship with female abuse in Gopalpur, Fultala, Keshobpur, and Bagherpara. In the remaining areas (i.e., Abhoynagar and Sirajganj), female education is more important than that of the male partner.

Table 3: Female education and threat of divorce in study areas (% distribution)

Education→	SIRAJGANJ		GOPALPUR		ABHOYNAGAR		FULTALA		BAGHERPARA		KESHOBPUR	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Has never encountered threat of divorce	84	77	88	78	89	80	88	80	94	84	85	76
Has encountered threat of divorce sometimes	15	19	11	19	10	18	11	17	5	13	13	20
Has encountered threat of divorce often	1	4	1	3	1	2	1	3	1	3	2	4
N =	1350	1712	1312	1338	551	537	330	369	516	657	590	1106

In Table 4, we have cross-tabulated the household expenditure patterns by educational status of the woman. We have divided women into four groups, according to their monthly household expenditure (at 1993 prices). Here, we use expenditure as a proxy of household income, since the given amount of income must be earned, or otherwise acquired, before it is spent. The table should be read as 51 percent of the women who live

in households with monthly expenditures of Tk 2000-2999 are educated in Sirajganj, and so on. It shows that a higher proportion of educated women is in higher expenditure brackets. Thus, one can argue that a woman's education leads to higher income opportunity, which, then, leads to better spousal relationships, by reducing the likelihood of intra-family abuse (since we have seen that among educated women, the extent of abuse is lower).

We estimated that there would be correlations between higher expenditure and violence and between lower expenditure and violence. We found that the correlation between higher expenditure and violence (i.e., verbal abuse, physical violence, and threat of divorce) is negative, and the correlation coefficients are -0.68, -0.52, and -0.11 respectively. On the other hand, the correlation between lower expenditure group and violence is positive, and the coefficients are 0.21, 0.17, and 0.05 respectively.

Table 4 : The pattern of household expenditure in study areas (% distribution)

	SIRAJGANJ	GOPALPUR	ABHOYNAGAR	FULTALA	BAGHERPARA	KESHOBPUR
Education→	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tk 2000 - < 3000	51(N = 599)	46(N = 853)	58(N = 217)	50(N = 262)	39(N = 335)	32(N = 498)
Tk 3000 - < 4000	61(N = 266)	59(N = 443)	67(N = 108)	60(N = 96)	54(N = 227)	45(N = 246)
Tk 4000 - < 5000	72(N = 96)	65(N = 213)	75(N = 65)	90(N = 19)	47(N = 127)	58(N = 129)
Tk 5000 and above	77(N = 87)	71(N = 290)	71(N = 24)	67(N = 27)	71(N = 160)	70(N = 155)

Now, let us examine the relationship between women's mobility and violence. Traditional social theory suggests that outward-looking women generally have more intra-family bargaining and decision-making power. According to Jensen (11), "..... in third world countries, women who have social mobility and who work outside their homes not only create income opportunity for themselves, but also encourage others to become mobile."

Table 5 shows the percentage of women who are educated, in terms of their attendance at women's meetings. The table indicates that a high percentage of educated women attend these meetings. Abhoynagar was the only exception. Perhaps, this is because Abhoynagar is relatively more urbanized than the other areas. Thus, in Abhoynagar, education had no impact on meeting attendance.

We cross-tabulated the types of violence with those women who attend meetings and those who do not. We found that attendance at women's meetings has no relationship with intra-family violence. We used this attendance as a proxy of the woman's mobility.

Table 5: Female education and attendance in women's meetings (% distribution)

	SIRA(JAN)	GOPALPUR	ABHOYNAGAR	FULTALA	BAGHERPARA	KESHOBPUR
Education →	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Goes to Women's Meetings	53	60	49	58	56	68
	N = 406	N = 235	N = 236	N = 96	N = 207	N = 186

Table 6 shows the percentage of women having membership in rural mothers' clubs, by their educational status. Educated women are more likely to belong to mothers' clubs than uneducated women. The mothers' club provides an excellent opportunity for women to discuss their personal and familial problems in a safe environment. It also enables a mother to become exposed to new ideas (i.e., use of different contraceptives, nutrition, immunization programmes, etc.). Generally, meetings at the mothers' clubs are held fortnightly, outside of the respondent's home. We used this membership as a proxy of the woman's mobility in addition to the attendance at women's meetings.

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expenditure 12, we combined households falling under expenditure group 1 and expenditure group 2. Similarly, we have created a composite occupational index by combining similar occupations into broader categories such as farming, business, and labour.

Table 8: Model specifications for multivariate analysis

Model I	Model II	Model III
<i>Dependent Variable</i> (a) verbal abuse	<i>Dependent Variable</i> (a) physical violence	<i>Dependent Variable</i> (a) threat of divorce
<i>Independent Variables</i> (a) woman's age (b) religion (c) woman's primary education (d) woman's higher education (e) husband's primary education (f) husband's higher education (g) women's meeting (h) access to radio (i) access to electricity (j) household expenditure (k) cash money (l) woman's land ownership (m) husband's occupation (n) mothers' club membership	<i>Independent Variables</i> (a) woman's age (b) religion (c) woman's primary education (d) woman's higher education (e) husband's primary education (f) husband's higher education (g) women's meeting (h) access to radio (i) access to electricity (j) household expenditure (k) cash money (l) woman's land ownership (m) husband's occupation (n) mothers' club membership	<i>Independent Variables</i> (a) woman's age (b) religion (c) woman's primary education (d) woman's higher education (e) husband's primary education (f) husband's higher education (g) women's meeting (h) access to radio (i) access to electricity (j) household expenditure (k) cash money (l) woman's land ownership (m) husband's occupation (n) mothers' club membership

Table 9 presents the odds ratios of the logistic regressions with the dependent variables of verbal abuse, physical violence and threat of divorce as specified in Model I, Model II and Model III, respectively. The odds ratios, an approximation of relative risk, are derived from the logistic regression coefficients (an exponent of the coefficient).

Table 9: Logistic regression odds ratios measuring the association between socio-demographic factors and the likelihood of verbal abuse, physical violence, and threat of divorce

Factors	Odds Ratio		
	Model I	Model II	Model III
Age in years			
<21	1.21	1.19	1.09
22-30	1.09***	1.12*	1.08
30> (RC)†	1.00	1.00	1.00
Religion			
Hindu and others (RC)	1.00	1.00	1.00
Muslim	1.14	1.84****	2.92****
Woman's education			
None (RC)	1.00	1.00	1.00
Primary	0.72****	0.74****	0.83**
Higher	0.52****	0.46****	0.43****
Husband's education			
None (RC)	1.00	1.00	1.00
Primary	0.99	1.00	0.92
Higher	0.85*	0.86*	0.79**
Women's meeting			
Do not attend (RC)	1.00	1.00	1.00
attend	1.23**	1.07	1.00

continued ...

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	Model I	Model II	Model III
Mother's club			
Not Member	1.00	1.00	1.00
Member	0.86**	0.82*	0.77
Access to radio			
No (RC)	1.00	1.00	1.00
Yes	0.84**	0.90*	1.00
Access to electricity			
No (RC)	1.00	1.00	1.00
Yes	0.93	0.65****	0.68****
Expenditure			
High expenditure (RC)	1.00	1.00	1.00
Medium expenditure	1.07	1.29****	1.21*
Low expenditure	1.38*	1.75****	1.75****
Has cash money			
No (RC)	1.00	1.00	1.00
Yes	1.01	0.95	0.88***
Land ownership by woman			
No (RC)	1.00	1.00	1.00
Yes	0.95	0.92**	0.86
Husband's occupation			
Service (RC)	1.00	1.00	1.00
Labour	1.38***	1.17	1.12
Farmer	1.33**	0.93	0.90
Business	1.19	1.05	1.02

†RC = Reference Category; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001; ****p<0.0001

In Table 9, the odds ratios of the logistic regression between socio-demographic factors (independent variables) and verbal abuse, physical violence, and threat of violence (dependent variables) are presented with odds ratios and their significance levels. It shows that women in the age

groups below 21 and between 22 and 30 are more likely to be abused than women above 30 years of age. The results are significant for verbal abuse. Muslims are more likely to be physically abused and encountered with threat of divorce than non-Muslims. In terms of female education, both primary and higher educational attainment reduce the likelihood of all kinds of abuse, and these relationships are statistically significant. Higher educational attainment by husbands is similarly related to a decrease in all kinds of abuse, and these results are also statistically significant. Access to radio is significant and reduces the likelihood of both verbal and physical abuse. Similarly, access to electricity also reduces the likelihood of abuse, especially the physical abuse and threat of divorce.

Women from the low expenditure households encounter more verbal and physical abuse, and threat of divorce than those from high expenditure households. These results are significant. Land ownership by the woman is also a significant factor for all kinds of abuse. It is presumed that if a woman possesses land, she carries a higher bargaining power within the family. Husband's occupation is also an important determinant in predicting incidence of abuse. Wives of labourers and farmers are more likely to be abused, when compared to those of serviceholders.

Another variable, cash money, turns out to be statistically significant in Model III. Here, we are referring to a woman's possession of a source of income which she obtains through her own activities. This income is the woman's, and she has the authority to use it according to her own priorities. It is assumed that if the woman has cash money at her disposal, she is less likely to be a victim of abuse. In fact, the possession of cash money reduces the likelihood of receiving threats of divorce by 12 percent.

In terms of woman's mobility, the mother's club membership significantly reduces the likelihood of verbal and physical abuses.

Determinants of Abuse

From our multivariate analysis, we have been able to isolate the key determinants from the set of independent variables specified in Table 8. Our

analysis indicates that women above 30 years of age, Muslim women, illiterate women, women without access to a radio or electricity, women from low and medium-expenditure households, landless women and women whose husbands are either labourers, farmers or businessmen, are most likely to encounter abuse. Mothers club membership was found to be significant in cases of verbal abuse and physical violence, but insignificant in case of threat of divorce. Whether directly or indirectly, then, education is a key factor in all these groups.

Consequence of Intra-family Abuse to Women

Marital Dissolution

Intra-family abuse in the form of verbal abuse, physical violence, and threat of divorce have long-term effects. These abuses often result in tragic marital dissolution which not only affects the current generation, but leaves inter-temporal consequences as well.

In this section, we shall select the SRS cases in which the women were divorced or separated prior to August 1996, and who had encountered verbal abuse, physical violence and/or threat of divorce during the 1993 In-depth Survey. Then, we will examine the educational status, mobility, and other socio-demographic factors of these women. This will allow us to isolate the data on the divorce and separation cases from the rest of the data set, and cross-tabulate them with the original 1993 In-depth data set (the woman's permanent ID number is used in this process).

It should be noted that data collection has been discontinued at Sirajganj and Gopalpur since 1990, and Fultala was dropped from the SRS in 1992. Hence, we are only left with Abhoynagar, Bagherpara, and Keshobpur. Moreover, since the 1993 In-depth Survey was conducted, 600 eligible women have been dropped from the SRS in the remaining areas, due mainly to out-migration.

Tracing the women from 1993 till August 1996, a total of 53 women has been divorced or became separated since the 1993 In-depth Survey was conducted. Table 10 presents the distribution of women who had encountered verbal abuse, physical violence, and threat of divorce in the In-depth Survey. It shows that, of the total 53 cases of divorce/separation, 47 percent had encountered verbal abuse, according to the 1993 In-depth Survey. Similarly, out of the 53 cases, 31 percent had encountered physical violence in 1993. Surprisingly, with regard to threat of divorce, of the 53 divorce/separation cases, only 22 percent had encountered threats of divorce in 1993. The statistics show that, of the women who faced any or all forms of abuse in 1993, most were divorced or separated by August 1996.

Table 10: Percentage of women who encountered abuse, violence, and threat of divorce out of a total number of divorced/separated women till August 1996

Encountered verbal abuse during 1993 In-depth survey	Encountered physical violence during 1993 In-depth survey	Encountered threat of divorce during 1993 In-depth survey
47	31	22
N = 53	N = 53	N = 53

Now, we shall examine the percentage of divorcees by their educational status, mobility, and other important indicators, i.e., husband's educational status, expenditure, ownership of land, and religion. Around 62 percent of those who got divorced had received no formal education, while 85 percent of the divorcees have never attended a women's meeting of any kind, a proxy variable for women's mobility.

Finally, almost 87 percent of all divorcees were Muslim, and 91.5 percent of the divorcees had no land ownership, either before or after their divorce/separation. Thus, we can conclude that education and mobility have important implications with regard to marital dissolution.

Conclusion

Our study has shown an inordinately high incidence of abuse to women in rural Bangladesh. It has also confirmed the close association between a woman's education and mobility and the likelihood of gender-based abuse. The long-term implications of these findings are significant, since abuse among the most severely disadvantaged women often leads to divorce. Considering the negative consequences of divorce, steps should be taken to reduce the levels of gender abuse in our society. Emphasis on female education will be a crucial element in the campaign to reduce all kinds of abuse to women. Emphasis on education, however, will not affect the women who are approaching the age of marriage, or those who are already married.

The relationship we found between household expenditure and abuse was also very strong. Since the perpetrators tend to be largely uneducated and working as farmers and labourers, we can try to imagine the stresses they face, as they fulfill their parental responsibilities with the limited resources available to them. Realistically, it will be impossible to change their behaviour without addressing the difficulty of their predicament, while recognizing the learned aspect of their behaviour — for both males and females involved. Perhaps, by focusing our efforts on the male population through creating employment opportunity and better economic condition, the role of women will begin to evolve so that they become partners in both social and economic development.

Therefore, various Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) messages should be used for supplementing the effect of education. These messages should target the families of farmers and labourers, and inform them that abuse is not a private problem but a public issue. They should also promote the importance of education among female children, and alert parents of the negative consequences of divorce.

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