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CAUSES AND DIFFERENT ASPECT OF GENDER INEQUALITY IN RURAL BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

Now-a-days Gender inequality against women is a global issue. Allah has created both male and female in this beautiful world. In Bangladesh, about 50% of population is female. This huge population can contribute to the development of the family, society and country. But in Bangladesh family there is unequal treatment towards boys and girls, male and female. Bangladesh family is patriarchal and women are considered inferior to men; husband have the right to dominate them. The head of the family is male; he dominates decision making in all affairs of the family. Female child get less food than male child. Their literary rate is low than male. Actually gender inequality has long-term negative effect on female child. It hampers their physical, mental and psychological growth. So gender inequality is a problem. Gender Inequality could have both short and long-term consequences not only for women but also the entire society. In developing countries like Bangladesh, gender inequality is more rampant in both rural as well as urban areas. The study aim is to find out the causes of low education, participation in decision making, causes of gender inequality and it's consequences in Bangladesh. Main purpose of this research is to analysis Gender inequality in Bangladesh. Study explores the various issues women face in their daily lives in education, health care, social relationship and decision making in context of gender inequality in rural Bangladesh.

INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality is still a very serious and widespread problem. For many centuries, men have been the dominant gender and women have been the minority. Women are dependent on men throughout every time of their life (Pervez et al. 2015). The range start from father to husbands to sons. Traditionally, women are recognised only for reproductive purposes and are encouraged to do only household works others than outside works. Both men and women works for the society but all over the world only women perform multiple roles in productive labour, which is not considered in their official measures of economic activity. Inequality is playing a crucial role in human society, which hampers the overall development of a country. In spite of these circumstances and effort is made in this report to explore the gender inequality in rural Bangladesh.

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Gender

Gender is whether a person was labelled male and female at birth. Gender identity is how a person feels inside: man, woman, boy or girl. Either the male or female division of a species, especially as differentiated by social and cultural roles and behaviour is called gender.

Gender inequality

Inequality can be defined as treating people differently or negatively without having a good reason. Gender inequality means the unequal treatment between male and female. It begins at birth and continues throughout the women's life. It refers to all women and men having individual opportunities. Finally, gender inequality is defined as the unequal and biased treatment between the two sexes.

Objective of the study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- i. To know the main reason of gender inequality in rural Bangladesh.
- ii. To find out the different aspect of gender inequality in rural Bangladesh.
- iii. To set suggestions to reduce the effects of gender inequality.

Limitation of research

To collect data every researcher faces some limitation. The researchers of this paper have also faced some limitation when the researchers collecting data from the respondents. The limitation of this research is given below:

1. Due to limited time, the researcher could not collect enough data.
2. Maximum respondents were busy and they could not want to give proper time to collect the research elements.
3. Most of the questions were personal and family related. For that reason, the respondents specially the women respondents could not eager to give the researchers appropriate answer.

In spite of all limitation, the researchers try to best to look for the research elements and the paper has submitted beyond all limitation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLING

Considering the objectives, time and availability of fund and manpower, three villages i.e. *Nishbetganj*, *Radhakrisnopur* and *Keranir hat* under *sadar upazila* in Rangpur district were selected purposively. The villages were selected considering easy communication facilities and accessibility to the village. In all 85 sample forming households were selected where women were participating in different farm (*Satranji art*) and non-farm activities and deprived from different facilities which they require. A quantitative research approach has been taken to fulfill the objectives of this research. A mixed sample of illiterate and literate, male and female respondents was chosen at random and data was collected through questionnaires distributed among the literate population while the illiterate population was interviewed. The study period was March to July 2018. The final survey was conducted during the period from May to June 2018 by direct interviews using a questionnaire. The researchers have collected most of data from secondary sources. Data has been collected through visiting and reading method. The data largely came from Internet, different types of Books and Journal and Various government and non government reports. Tabular and statistical Techniques were used for the analysis of the data.

Causes of gender inequality

Gender inequality refers to a situation where there is no equal treatment of men and women. This unequal treatment can be partially or wholly on basis of the gender. There are many causes behind the

gender inequality. Some of them are given below:

Negative mentality

Women are discriminated to the extent that they are best suited for such jobs like nurturing, housekeeping and service provision. While men are believed to be suited for such carriers involving high level of decision making authority. Most people believe that women cannot rule big organizations. Even the women themselves have the same mentality that they cannot most of top positions.

Lack of Education

Lack of proper educations one of the major causes of gender inequality. This is because nobody can go far without adequate education level in the world of today. Many families do not pay proper attention to girl child. They see them not better as compared to men. In this case, they end up not getting proper education.

Tradition and Culture

The way of life of a particular ethnic group while tradition is the belief of such a society culture and tradition are one of the major reasons which make female to be regarded as not important. Some of the village elders in most communities do not support women leadership.

Religion

Religion has been around for thousands of years. When religion first started, from that time men were regarded higher than women. Women weren't allowed to work or go anywhere, which is continue still now (Pervez et al. 2018). Women have a right to wear what they want, but in some places women obligated to wear a head to toe garment, covering all their cloths, called a Burqa. Where there are no obligation to men. Men are free from wearing cloth as their like. This is the sacramental of gender inequality.

Empowerment

The position of world women empowerment in Bangladesh is 72nd in 2018 and the position is 1st among the SAARC country.¹ In spite of this position women lack enough empowerment in some parts in Bangladesh understanding the importance of empowerment will motivate women and curb the issue of gender inequality. Gender inequality will lead to violation of rights, sexual violence. This problem can be addressed by empowering women, educating them, government taking specific policies in favour of balancing the genders.

Different aspect of Gender inequality

In 2018, Bangladesh has ranked 136th out of 187 countries on the Human Development Index.² But gender inequality has been improving a lot in Bangladesh. Many of the inequalities are result of extreme poverty and traditional gender norms centred on a patrilineal and patriarchal kinship system.³ The gender roles that a society assigns to its children, men and women affect their access to education and health care, labour force participation, recreation and sports, physical and psychological health and exert long term effects on the future physical and psychological development of both boys and girls and mother gender inequality affects reproductive health of women.

Inequality in Education

Gender inequality exists mostly in lower socio-economic classes and among those with poor educational background.⁴ According to respondents, those who belong to educated background and those with sound financial background were strongly in favor of education for women and also considered that women should be given equal educational rights. Educated families support female educational because they know that educating a women actually means educating a generation.

Another factor that educating girls considered a bad investment because they are not permitted to go out and work. In families where literacy rate is low or where educational background is weak, girls are considered a burden and a strain on the resources of the family.

The researchers specifically gave the example where the illiteracy rate was found to be the worst as 90% of the women were found to be illiterate.

Table 1: The participants are in favor of women's education

Questions	Yes	No	May be
Should girls be educated?	60%	30%	10%
Female education leads to betterment of socio-economic conditions?	45%	50%	5%
Should girls be given education beyond matric?	70%	30%	0%
Women should pursue education of their choice?	40%	52.5%	7.5%
Culture is the reason for illiteracy among women?	72.50%	15%	12.5%

Source: Field survey, 2018

Table 1 shows that the participants are in favor of women's education and admit that women's education brings betterment in our development. However some of the respondents believe that girls should not be educated beyond matric and they should not be given the right to choose subjects. The respondents also blamed the culture for low education among women.

Women participation and cooperation of other members in household activities

Most of the household activities were done by women. The women's participation rate was higher in cleaning house, child care, cooking and preparation of real and lowest in case of tree plantation, dairy farming and poultry rearing etc. The cooperation of the family members to different household activities was not sufficient enough. The highest cooperation was seen in case of child care. Table 2:

Women participation and cooperation of other members in household activities

Items of operation	Extent of participation (percentage)			Extent of cooperation (Percentage)		
	Regularly	Occasionally	Never	Sufficient	Moderate	Little
Cooking and preparation of meals	81	19	0	08	40	52
Vegetable production	46	14	40	34	40	26
Tree plantation	24	34	42	14	32	54
Poultry/dairy	52	20	28	12	48	40
Child care	80	20	0	46	30	24
Teaching children	28	36	36	30	22	48
Washing cloths	81	12	07	36	32	32
Cleaning house	92	08	0	31	26	43
Buying daily necessities	24	64	12	12	50	38

Source: Field survey, 2018

Inequality in food

Inequality in food: Food is one of the most essential gender inequality issue in rural Bangladesh. Food is a fundamental element in our life, which has a strong moral and societal value. Female play an important role in food production, processing, distribution and marketing. but, they face different inequality to get food. We observed that most of the housewife takes their meal after completing of eating others or male members of the family. In our society, female takes insufficient food than male. As a result it hampers their physical and mental growth as well as reproductive health.

Inequality in social behaviour

Gender inequality in everyday experiences is common in the developing countries. Bangladesh is one of the such countries where gender inequality is common. According to participant's rigid mentality,

narrow views and adherence to age old customs and traditions are the main reason of gender inequality against women in Bangladesh. People develop the same narrow minded view of the religion and mistreat women by not giving them their basic rights and giving the away in marriage at a very young age to a man much older than them. Families also marry off their girls at a young age to lessen the burden and also to secure their future. The respondent's were also against women venturing out alone because in their opinion women were helpless and incapable of taking care of themselves. For instance, the birth of a boy is celebrated more in both places as shown by the response to the questionnaire 78% of the participants considered daughters a burden. One of the findings of the study that influence of culture is quite strong in the society also aligned with the response of the questionnaire in which 72.50% of the respondent's agreed that cultural influence was strong.

Table 3: Interfamily Distribution of Food in Rural Areas daily in take in gms/person

Age group in years	Food in gms/person	
	Male	Female
1-3	259.4	263.4
4-6	527.2	485.3
7-9	604.0	542.5
10-12	656.3	614.2
13-15	797.8	701.3
16-19	819.2	756.3
20-39	927.7	775.4
40-49	965.8	693.9
50-59	903.4	640.8
60-69	900.4	705.4
70 and above	721.4	590.2

Source: Annual report of BRAC(NGO), Rangpur Sadar, 2017⁵

Table 4: Women face more inequality in social sphere as a girl child

Question	Yes	No	May be
Daughters are considered a burden?	78%	22%	0
Sons are given better food to eat?	79%	21%	0
Female are considered inferior to males?	82.5%	17.5%	0
Women can go outside unaccompanied?	47%	53%	0
Women can choose their life partner?	23%	77%	0
Do women should participate in decision making?	30%	70%	0
Women should observe purdah?	97%	03%	0
Influence of religions personalities is behind inequality?	77%	11.5%	11.5%
Influence of media on gender inequality?	72%	13%	16%
Govt. can play an important role in eliminating gender inequality?	82.5%	17.5%	0

Source: Field survey, 2018.

The above table 4 shows that women face more inequality in social sphere as a girl child is considered a burden and treated as a second class citizen with boys being given preference in every daily routine. Women are not allowed to participate in decision making even in important matters such as marriage. They can not go out alone and without a veil. The respondent's believe that media and the religious personalities promote gender inequality. The respondent are also views that the government can play an important role in reducing gender inequality.

Women participation in Household Income decision

Women are often less concerned in the decision making process even at the household level.

The above table 5 shows that women's participation rate in choice of crop to be grown and buying and selling of agricultural product was 19 percent and 34 percent respectively. The women's participation

rate was higher in livestock and poultry rearing 46 percent and lowest in case of buying and selling of real estate 17 percent from others. The tale 5 shows that only 31 percent household decisions were made by women.

Table 5: Participation of women in household income decisions

Decision making process	Female		Male	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Buying and selling of real estate	17	20	68	80
Buying and selling of agricultural product	29	34	66	66
Homestead gardening	35	41	50	59
Livestock and poultry rearing	39	46	46	54
Fishery operation	26	31	59	69
Purchase of Agricultural equipment	23	27	62	73
Working outside the home	27	32	58	68
Employment of the children	22	26	63	74
Borrowing of money	19	22	66	78
All decision matters	26	31	59	69
Choice of crop to be grown	16	19	69	81

Source: Field survey, 2018.

Women and Employment

In Bangladesh there are social and religious restrictions on women in doing works outside homestead area. Therefore their activities are confined to child care, household management, kitchen, gardening, processing of rice and maize service etc. The peace of development in any country largely depends upon the people's participation including women. In Bangladesh women constitute almost half of the population. Family culture and religious values that are taught by the family are the root causes of gender gap in employment.⁶ The lake of bargaining power of women is one of the major factors contributing to low female wage rates. This impotence arises level of education and training, low level of skills, the availability of female surplus labour and a lack of demand for skills developed in their roles as housewives. Even in situations where there is technically no inequality in male/female wage rates, such as in public sector, women's employment opportunities are mainly in low paid and low level jobs with limited possibilities of career advancement, which restrict their income earning potentials. According to respondent's a comparison of the mode of wage fixation in rural areas revealed that where 79 percent of male wage labour was based on market price, only 36 percent women's labour received market rates.

Table 6: Employment by Industry

Industry	Male	Female	Total
Agriculture	177	148	325
Manufacturing	249	448	697
Utilities	14	3	17
Construction	61	5	66
Wholesale and Retail	39	22	61
Transport, storage	15	9	24
Finance, Real-estate	22	8	30
Community, social, personal	25	9	34
Household sector	58	24	82

Source: Field survey and district statistical report, 2018

Women participation in Decision making Process

In Bangladesh, men enjoy privileges and rights over women in important family decisions. But few respondent's maintain that important family decisions including matters like education/treatment of

children, son's/daughter's marriage, major purchases/sale (land/valuable items) should be taken jointly by the father and mother. The opinion of the respondent's that before taking any major decision the husband should consult the wife is likely to have a salutary effect on empowerment of women.

Table 7: Terms of wage labour

Made of wage fixation	Percent of labour days for	
	Male	Female
Market price	78.8	35.7
Employer's terms	21.0	64.3
Combination of above	0.2	0.0

Source: District statistical report, Rangpur, 2017⁷

Table 8: Women's role in making decisions regarding household and social affairs

Decision making process	Male		Female	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Expenditure on family maintenance	67	79	18	21
Joining social ceremonies or visiting relatives	48	56	37	34
Family planning	50	59	35	41
Marriage of sons and daughters	59	69	26	31
Education of sons and daughters	45	53	40	47
Childcare	23	27	62	73
Buying health care facilities	59	69	26	31
To give a vote	52	61	33	39
Participating NGO's	53	62	32	38
Repairing house	57	67	28	33
All decision matters	50	59	35	41

Source: Field survey, 2018

The above table 8 shows that, women's participation rates in marriage of son's and daughter's, education of son's and daughter's, buying health care facilities and participating NGO's stood at 31, 47, 31 and 38 percent respectively. The women's participation rate was higher in child care 73 percent and lowest in case of expenditure on family maintenance 21 percent from others.

Inequality in Health Care

Health care is another field where women face inequality. Health care is a field where variations in response occur with educated respondents in favor of advanced health care for the women while the illiterate and poor respondents were of the opinion that women did not deserve good healthcare. Women eat after men have eaten and so there is not much left as a result of which they are malnourished. Marriage at an early age and child bearing too takes toll on their health.

Table 9: Women are entitled to good health care

Questions	Yes	No	May be
Females are entitled to good health?	60.5%	33.5%	6%
Son are given preference when providing medical facilities?	55%	45%	0%

Source: Field survey, 2018

The above table 9, the respondent's shows that although respondent's believed that women's are entitled to good healthcare, they give preference to sons when availing medical facilities.

Consequences of Gender inequality

In Asian Countries such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh, gender inequality is particularly common.⁸ Gender inequality is largely responsible for poverty and backwardness in Bangladesh.

In today's world economic progress is only possible when men and women work side by side. Women constitute approximately half of the population of Bangladesh and by denying them education the possibility of progress is reduced by half.⁹ The people usually claim that women education does not bring in returns, but they are wrong. Educating a women is beneficial for the whole generation; an educated women can bring up her children better and also contribute towards the family income if needed. Gender inequality faced by the women in rural area of Bangladesh revealed some similarities. For instance the birth of a boy is celebrated more in both places as shown by the response to the questionnaire 78% of the participants considered daughters a burden. One of the findings of the study that influence of culture is quite strong in the society also aligned with the response of the questionnaire in which 72.50% of the respondents agreed that cultural influence was strong. Another similarity was that the education of the women in family relied upon the education of the guardian; in families where the head was educated, women could pursue education.¹⁰ The researchers specifically gave the example where the illiteracy rate was found to be the worst as 90% of the women were found to be illiterate. The issue of restriction of movement was raised and 53% of the participants were not in favour of women going out of the house alone while 47% favoured it. However the respondents 97% wanted the females to observe purdah when leaving the house. The findings of this article as well as from the response to the questionnaire it is clear that 82.5% of the respondents stated that men were superior to women and 70% of the respondents were of the opinion that women should not participate in decision making. Even in important matters such as marriages, the opinion of women is not sought as indicated by 77% response from the participants who claimed that girls should not be allowed to choose their life partners. This means that all important matters such as education of children, their healthcare and marriage are solely decided by the men of the family.

Most men, even women support the traditional thinking that women has to submit to the will of man. Gender inequality on the basis of religion was more common in the lower socio-economic group, and low educational background people with educated background had a more tolerant view and a better understanding of religion and therefore gender inequality was low if not non-existent.¹¹ Finally the study shows that, gender inequality is not uniform in the urban society and generally people from higher educational background and higher socio-economic class did not inequality against women. Gender inequality exists mostly in lower socio-economic classes and among those with poor educational background. One finding of this research was that 72% of the participants believed that media influences people and that media can play a vital role in addressing gender inequality. Very few studies have researched the impact of media in lowering gender inequality while no study in Bangladesh has been carried out to specifically explore the role of media in addressing gender inequality.

Recommendation of Gender inequality

In view of the above discussion it is obviously evident that, gender inequality is even a problem of development. To reduce the gender inequality some recommendation is given below:

1. Government authorities as well as the common people should understand the negative aspect

of the gender inequality practices. This understanding will help in spreading the message of equality for all within the organizations or in different sectors.

2. Ensure gender equality in education by revising education stipends, and adapt these to age and sex of children. Including adolescent girls, with non-formal basic education and relevant vocational training.
3. Increased training facilities for women and providing same wage to women can reduce gender inequality in rural Bangladesh.
4. The management team of a particular organization should implement necessary strategies in order to improve the effectiveness of their organization by promoting the equality practices. The equality practices are the best solutions for the gender inequality.
5. To reduce domestic violence, physical and mental harassment in the working place were the possible solutions of gender inequality in rural Bangladesh.

CONCLUSION

Gender inequalities exist in rural areas. Women face inequalities in almost all aspects of life but it is the least in education and healthcare whereas it is at peak in social behaviour. According to findings basically there are two mindsets in Bangladesh, the illiterate and the literate. The illiterate group believes that only boys should pursue education as they will grow up to be bread earners. People still believe that investing in the education of women is a waste of resources. The literate believe that women should be educated and that they are entitled to better healthcare facilities. However when it comes to decision making, both groups are of the opinion that women are incapable of making decision. This shows that education has not completely changed the patriarchal mindset of the people in Bangladesh. Male members of the family are given more importance in every aspect, even in basic things like food. Both males and females need approximately the same amount of nutrition but males get to eat better food than females. Both literate and illiterate male respondents believe that women should observe purdah and should not go out alone. Very few people are in favor of women pursuing a career. Gender inequalities could have both short and long-term consequences not only for women but the entire society. Reducing gender inequalities implies benefits not only for women but also for all vulnerable persons and groups. The respondents were found to be able to realize their problems and suggested probable solutions. It is important for government to understand and find out the extent to which this problem is prevailing.

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