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**WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT AND BEIJING
DECLARATION : DOWRY RELATED VIOLENCE
AGAINST WOMEN IN RURAL AND URBAN
AREAS OF DHAKA**

Project Director : *Ayesha Azim*
Research Associate : *Rizwan Khair*
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Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre
Savar, Dhaka

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page Numbers

Abstract

Acknowledgement

CHAPTER-I :

1-17

- Introduction
- Beijing Declaration 1995
- Violence against women in Bangladesh
- National Action Plan for the implementation of platform for action
- Legal measures adopted by the government
- Dowry and dowry related problems *
- Dowry in the light of Islamic law

CHAPTER-II :

18-21

- Rationale of the study
- Objectives of the study
- Scope of the study
- Methodology
- Data Collection and Processing
- Report Plan
- Limitations of the study

CHAPTER-III : Findings and Analysis of the Empirical Study **22-32**

CHAPTER-IV : Conclusion and Recommendations **33-36**

BIBLIOGRAPHY **37**

ANNEXURES **1-6**

ABSTRACT

As the next millennium draws near, the drive for women's rights has gained considerable momentum since the first UN Conference on Women was held in Mexico City in 1975. The latest UN Conference on Women, which was held in Beijing in 1995, adopted a "Platform of Action" as an agenda for women's improvement and removing all obstacles in their achieving equality and active participation in all spheres of life. As such, violence against women was identified as a major impediment to their progress. Bangladesh as an active participant of the Beijing Conference fully endorsed the "Platform of Action" and initiated a *National Action Plan* to implement the "Platform of Action". This study is, therefore, an endeavour to examine dowry related violence amongst the lower income groups in Bangladesh in the light of the Beijing Declaration. Towards this end, the urban metropolitan area and a rural area (Savar Thana) of Dhaka district were chosen as the study area.

If the sample areas of rural Savar and urban Dhaka city are taken as indicators of the situation prevailing all over the country, then the following data from the study clearly demonstrates the existence of dowry practices and dowry related violence in Bangladesh:

- There is an overwhelming evidence that dowry system prevails in our country (especially amongst the lower income groups)- a fact which has been reported by almost 80% of the female and 35% of the male respondents of our survey of 100 respondents of lower income individuals in both urban and rural areas of Dhaka district.
- About 56.67% of the female respondents in the rural survey area and 50% of them from urban Dhaka city reported dowry related violence.
- Mental torture was the most prevalent form of oppression, while an average of 41% of the female respondents reported both physical and mental tortures.
- Husbands were the principal accused of dowry related oppression on women and they along with the society were held most responsible by the female respondents for such oppression.

- The incidence of dowry and dowry related violence was more prevalent in urban Dhaka city compared to rural Savar area.
- A great number of the females(40%) were found to be silent after suffering dowry related oppression.
- Though many of the respondents both in urban and rural areas were more or less aware of the governmental action regarding dowry, it was certainly not acting as a deterrent to dowry related violence.

The above findings illustrate that regardless of the stated good intentions of the government, the **National Action Plan** of the government of Bangladesh has failed to effectively check dowry related violence. In fact, one of the goals of the Beijing Declaration on ensuring women's rights through reduction of violence against women has remained a rhetoric in the case of Bangladesh. Therefore, questions can be raised about the adequacy of governmental actions in this area and the logic of fully endorsing international conventions on ensuring women's rights in this country.

Acknowledgement

The Research Study on "WID and Beijing declaration : Dowry related violence against women in rural and urban areas of Dhaka City, Bangladesh" has been undertaken by Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre as a part of its research programme. Violence against women is a manifestation of the historical unequal power relation between man and women, which have led to the domination over and discrimination against women by men.

This particular study ponders on dowry related violences and provides data that may help to formulate National Programme for combating dowry related violence against women to lower income sector of women of Bangladesh. It also attempted to assess the socio-economic condition of women who live in vulnerable position due to dowry related violences.

The study was made possible as I am working on WID and with active encouragement of our Rector Dr. Ekram Hossain to whom I am grateful. My thanks to Rizwan Khair and Md. Zahirul Islam who helped me in gathering various data and information from both urban and rural area, and in finalising the report.

My thanks to Mr. Md. Helal Uddin and Mr. Hasinur Rahman for their contribution.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION :

Twenty first century is ushering in an era of new hopes and aspirations for the women-folk, as the women of the world can now look forward with pride and hope for having some out-standing and significant movements that have taken place in the last two decades for their all out development. In this period, the drive for women's rights has accelerated and taken on powerful and global momentum. In the 22 years since the first UN conference on women, the campaign for equality between women and men has witnessed momentous changes and remarkable advances.

1. There have been four United Nation's conferences on women over the past two decades. The first one held in 1975 in Mexico City was based on three main themes **peace, development and equality** which has led to the declaration by the UN General Assembly for UN Decade for Women from 1976 to 1985. Later on in 1980 the UN organised the second conference on women in Copenhagen. In this conference, three subthemes were included in the agenda : **education, employment and health**. The participants of the conference adopted the documents as a "Programme of Action" for the second half of the decade for women. At the end of UN women's decade, the Third Conference was held in Nairobi in 1985. After reviewing the achievements of the decade the conference identified "The Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies for the advancement of women to the year 2000 (NFLS). NFLS was based on three themes mentioned previously i.e. **equality, peace and development** of the decade for women and provided a frame-work of action at the national, regional and international levels to promote gender equality by the year 2000.

In September 1995, thousands of women and men from around the world met at Beijing for the Fourth World Conference on women to evaluate the progress and drawbacks on the implementation of NFLS especially as to how the women have been involved in areas like health, education, employment, family life and human rights. The conference also sought ways to eliminate gender discrimination and develop new partnership between women and men in the 21st Century.

Beijing Conference determined the priorities which are to be implemented through NFLS by 1996-2000. Accordingly it adopted a "Platform of Action" concentrating on key issues that had been identified as fundamental obstacles in the advancement of majority of women. Now to identify critical areas of concern for

the advancement of women, it is essential to know what embodied the "Platform for Action".

"Platform for Action" is an agenda for women's improvement. It aims at accelerating the implementation of the **Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies** (NFLS) for the advancement of women and at removing all the obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and matter of human rights. It is a condition for social justice and is also an essential fundamental prerequisite for Equality, Development and Peace. A sustained and long term commitment is essential for this Platform., so that women and men can work together for themselves, for their children and for society to meet the challenges of the twenty first century.

The "Platform for Action" reaffirms the fundamental principle set-forth in the "Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action" adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights. It stresses that the human rights of women and of the girl child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. As an agenda for action, the Platform seeks to promote and protect the enjoyment of all human rights and the fundamental freedom of all women throughout their life cycle.

The "Platform for Action" emphasises that women share common concerns that can be addressed only by working together and in partnership with men towards the common goal of gender equality centred around the full diversity of women's situations and conditions and recognises that some women face particular barriers to their empowerment.

The "Platform for Action" requires immediate and concerted action by all to create a peaceful, just and humane world based on human rights and fundamental freedom, including the principle of equality for all people of all ages and from all works of life. And to this end, recognises that broad-based and sustained economic growth in the context of sustainable development is necessary to sustain social development and social justice.

The success of the "Platform of Action" will require a strong commitment on the part of governments, international organisations and institutions at all levels. It will also require adequate mobilisation of resources at the national and international levels as well as new and additional resources to the developing countries from all available funding mechanisms, including multi-lateral, bilateral and private sources

for the advancement of women as commitment to equal rights, equal responsibilities and equal opportunities and to the equal participation of women and men in all national, regional and international bodies and policy making processes and the establishment or strengthening of mechanisms at all levels for accountability to the world's women.

1.1 CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN POINTED OUT BY BEIJING CONFERENCE, 1995

"The Platform for Action" listed around 12 Critical Areas of Concern. These areas were identified as main bottle-necks to the advancement of women. To this end, governments, the international committees and civil society including NGOs and the private sector were called upon to take strategic action in the following critical areas of concern:

1.1.1 The persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women.

Governments with the full and equal participation of women, are to review and modify macroeconomics and social policies to ensure women's advancement. Multilateral financial institutions are to seek durable solutions to problems of external debt.

1.1.2 Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to education and Training.

Governments are to commit themselves by the year 2000, to universal access to basic education and completion of primary education by at least 80% of primary school age children; to closing the gender gap in primary and secondary school education by the year 2005 and to universal primary education in all countries before the year 2015. Multilateral international, non-govt. and grass roots organisations are urged to make these goals a special priority.

1.1.3 Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to health care and related services.

Governments are to provide women more accessible and affordable health care services, including family planning information and services. They agree to reduce maternal mortality by at least 50% of the 1990 levels by the year 2000 and a further

one half by the year 2015. They will also allow women access to social security systems. On the basis of equality with men throughout the whole life cycle, they will involve women in all HIV/AIDS related decision making and enact laws to protect women and young girls from discrimination related to HIV/AIDS.

1.1.4 Violence Against Women

Governments are to adopt and implement legislation to end violence against women and work actively to ratify and implement all international agreements that relate to violence against women. They also agree that there should be shelters, legal aid and other services for girls and women at risk, counselling and rehabilitation for the perpetrators.

1.1.5 The effects of armed and other kinds of conflict on women including those living under foreign occupation.

Governments are to convert military resources to peaceful purposes to reduce the impact of armed conflict on women. They recognise that women and children are particularly affected by the indiscriminate use of land mines and agree to ratification of international instruments that prohibit or restrict their use.

1.1.6 Inequality in economic structures, policies in all forms of productive activities and in access to resources.

Governments are asked to guarantee the rights of women to equal pay for equal work and to integrate a gender perspective into all economic restructuring and structural adjustment practices. Sexual harassment, lack of affordable child care and inflexible working hours also need to be rectified.

1.1.7 Inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision making at all levels.

States are to commit to the goal of gender balance in governmental bodies and political parties in order to eliminate discrimination. They are to ensure gender balance in the composition of delegations to the UN and other international forums.

1.1.8 Insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women.

Governments are to install mechanisms to promote the advancement of women, including gender oriented policy analyses and compilation of statistics.

1.1.9 Lack of respect for and inadequate promotion and protection of the human rights of women.

Governments need to promote the human rights of women by advocating equality and non-discrimination under the law and promoting women's legal literacy. They are asked to limit reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and to withdraw reservations that are contrary to the purpose of the Convention.

1.1.10 Stereotyping of women and inequality in women's access to and participation in all communication systems especially in the media.

To the extent consistent with freedom of expression, the media are encouraged to create non stereotyped, balanced and diverse images of women. They will develop self regulatory guidelines to address violent, degrading pornographic materials.

1.1.11 Gender inequalities in the management of natural resources and in the safe-guarding of the environment.

Rural women's traditional knowledge and practices are to be integrated in the development of management programmes. Women are to be given full and equal participation in control over resources.

1.1.12 Persistent discrimination against and violation of the right of the girl child.

Govt. are to enact laws to ensure that marriage is entered into only with free and full consent. Steps will be taken to abolish traditional practices harmful to girls, including female genital mutilation, female infanticide, prenatal sex selection, early marriage, sexual exploitation and discrimination against girls in the field of human

rights particularly in the form of genocide, ethnic cleansing as a strategy of war and rape and its consequences are also condemned.

1.2 VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Of all the critical areas of concern that had been highlighted in the "**Platform of Action**", the most talk-about issue was violence against women; which has been considered as the most outstanding stumbling block on the way for development of women. Infact, "**violence against women**" is an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of **equality, development and peace**.

The term "**violence against women**" means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, either in public or private life.

Violence against women is a global phenomenon varying in its nature and degree from country to country. It includes physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse of female children, **dowry-related violence**, marital rape, sexual harassment, intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women, forced prostitution, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation. Other acts of violence against women include violation of the human rights of women in situations of armed conflicts, in particular systematic murder and gang rape, sexual slavery and forced pregnancy. Acts of violence against women also include forced sterilisation and forced abortion, coercive forced use of contraceptive. Violence is also perpetrated on different categories of women such as women belonging to minority groups, indigenous women, refugee women, women immigrant, workers, women in poverty living in rural or remote communities, destitute women, women in detention, women with disabilities, displaced women, repatriated women, and women living in foreign occupation and wars are particularly vulnerable to violence. The fear of violence, including harassment is a permanent constraint on the mobility of women and limit **their access to resources and basic activities**. It is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate positions compared with men. The worst part of it is that most often perpetrators of violence on women go unpunished and victims remain unprotected.

Violence against women is a manifestation of the historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of women's full advancement. Violence against women throughout their life cycles derive essentially from cultural patterns, in particular the harmful effects of certain traditional or customary practices and all acts of extremism linked to race, sex, language or religion that perpetuate the lower status accorded to women in the family, the workplaces the community and society. Women's lack of access to legal information, aid or protection, failure to reform, existing laws inadequate efforts on the part of public authorities to promote awareness of and enforcing existing laws and the absence of educational and other means to address the causes and consequences of violence. Images in the media, particularly those that depict rape or sexual slavery as well as the use of women and girl as sex objects, including pornography, are factors contributing to the continued prevalence of such violence, adversely influencing the community at large, in particular children and young people.

1.3 Violence against Women in Bangladesh Perspective

Standing on the threshold of a new era, Bangladesh has seen the issue of violence against women become increasingly a matter of public concern. Women being victims of violence is not a new phenomenon in our country. But in recent years, the newness of this matter stems from the fact that increasingly the issue is becoming a matter of public concern. Although it is recognised that only a fraction of the cases of violence committed against women even get a chance to be published in the news media; it is apparent that the issue of violence against women has recently been the point of grave concern and become an important social issue in the country. The coverage of mass media, despite its limitations, has successfully highlighted the vulnerability of women and are increasingly drawing attention of the public, especially the educated women of the country. Concerns expressed by women's organisations and their active role in creating pressure in matters of violence against women, have also sharpened public attention to the issue with the resulting impact of considerable appreciation of the situation and calls for positive and increased action to be undertaken by the government. Violence against women in our country remain basically an unrecognised, unreported and under-reported phenomenon and make women the silent recipients of the violence acts.

So one of the most burning social problems that the country (Bangladesh) is presently encountering and which is greatly threatening the social fabric of the nation is **violence against women**. Various kinds of violence against women are perpetrated in our country and they are : teasing, molestation, rape, prostitution, fraudulent marriage, adultery, trafficking, enticement of married women, abduction and kidnapping, harassment to women at working place, wife beating, dowry death, female child abuse and alluring of elderly females etc. The common dominating factors responsible for violence against women are their unequal status in the family and society, and inadequate access to resources and information.

Forms of violence against women can range from mental torture to physical violence, i.e. rape, kidnapping, wife battering are some alarming forms of such tortures. All the above forms of violence may take place in private and public areas, committed by the members of the family or strangers. The following forms of violence are areas of critical concern regarding women in Bangladesh :

- Dowry related violence
- Violence against women at the work place
- Trafficking in women and forced prostitution
- Rape, molestation and sexual harassment.

Women, specially those in the rural areas of Bangladesh are victims of torture, abuse and violence. "violence against women" remains the most pervasive human rights problem in Bangladesh. They are often subjected to rape, murder, prolonged beating, injury by sharp weapons, and these are also the common causes of women's death. Moreover, wife battering is also an usually manifested masculine behaviour. As such, Suicides by women are caused by sheer desperation through torture, both physical and mental. So, the most burning topic which the nation is presently encountering and which is greatly threatening the social fabric of the nation is **violence against women** in the country. Dowry related domestic violence, trafficking, forced prostitution, rape, molesting and open physical tortures are increasing at an alarming rate. This indicates that gender inequality and discrimination is rooted in our socio-economic structure. The rapid depreciation of social values during the last few decades has also led to a marked rise in the cases of violence against women both in urban and rural areas.

Statistics of violence against women in a single year of 1995 provided by Bangladesh **Manabadhikar Somonnoy Parishad** gives a clear picture of the

seriousness of the subject itself. According to the Parishad, in the said year 16 women were raped by the law enforcing authorities and 27 unnatural deaths occurred due to forced rape. In the same period, 181 cases of acid burn and 884 suicide cases occurred due to dowry and religious sermons. During the same period, 226 rape cases by the musclemen(social miscreants) were registered throughout the country.

During the period 1994-96, suicide appeared to be the number one violence regarding women followed by physical torture, rape and dowry related oppression. It can be seen from Table -I below that the incidence of dowry, suicide, rape, physical torture have increased significantly. The following table specially shows that suicides, physical tortures and dowry related violence totally constitute 69.1% of the crimes that are directly and indirectly related to violence against women.

Table-I : Number and Percentage of Violence Against Women According to Nature of Violence, 1994-96.

Nature of Violence	1994		1995		1996	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Acid Throwing	19	1.1	59	1.6	83	1.4
Rape	285	16.3	659	17.9	1415	23.8
Physical torture	469	26.8	808	21.9	1664	28.1
Trafficking	19	1.1	49	1.3	138	2.3
Illegal Women Prostitution	28	1.6	55	1.5	85	1.4
Dowry	122	6.9	267	7.2	594	10.0
Maintenance	1	0.1	5	0.1	115	2.0
Suicide	806	46.1	1787	48.5	1839	31.0
Total =	1749	100.0	3689	100.0	5933	100.0

Source : Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, 1997.

Table - II : Motive of violence against women, 1985-91

Motives	Year		
	1995	1990	1991(upto June)
Dowry	10%	11%	9%
Domestic quarrel	14%	19%	17%
Property dispute	2%	5%	7%
Lust	28%	9%	11%
Illicit relationship	5%	7%	6%
Mental oppression	-	1%	1%
Social conflict	-	4%	8%
No information	40	43%	38%

Source : BIDS, Analysis of Poverty Trends Study (62 village survey) Based on survey of newspaper reports of three leading national dailies.

The above two tables i.e. Table-1 and Table-11 depict the situation as regard to the position of women in our society. Table -II shows that about 10% of the motive for violence against women are due to dowry, 17% domestic quarrels tend to violence against women and of this percentage it can be said that the root cause to also due to dowry problems in the family. The system of dowry drags women and their families into a vulnerable stage. Undoubtedly, it is a pre-dominant factor for violence which reflects miseries in families. Moreover, politics and economics perpetuate women's sub-ordination. Consequently, a large number of rural/urban women are victim of emotional disorders such as anxiety and depressions. Moreover, poverty drags our women down the rungs of the society and patriarchy sabotages them so that they cannot climate up the ladder.

Table-III : Violence : Men and Women, July-September 1993

Month	Suicide		Dowry		Rape		Abduction		Acid thrown	Maid servant		Betra- yed	Other
	Boys	Girls	Mur- der	Distr ess	Rape	Rapist	Boys	Girls	Girls	Mur- der	Opp ress	Wom en	Women
1993													
July	28	29	15	01	11	40+	01	19	5	1	0	3	21
Aug.	17	35	5	01	0	29	03	05	3	1	1	72	23
Sep.	17	34	2	03	08	22+	12	04	3	0	1	0	32
Total	62	98	22	05	29	91+	16	28	11	2	2	10	76

Source : Daily Sangbad, 1994 (August 13)

The above table shows that during the period July to September 1993, majority of the violence related cases belong to suicide and dowry related problems.

1.4 NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLATFORM FOR ACTION

The Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 with the themes, Equality, Development and Peace. Bangladesh endorsed the "Platform for Action" (PFA) with its 12 critical areas of concern without any reservation and has committed to ensuring its implementation at national level.

1.5 NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

On the basis of synthesis prepared by pre-Beijing consultations carried out by various women's organisations, NGOs and the NGO preparatory committee of the NGO Forum, and the sectoral reviews and actions plans as well as the review of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs as covered by the institutional review of the WID capacity of the Government of Bangladesh, the "National Action Plan" was formulated. It operationalizes the recommendations made in the sectoral needs assessment exercises, identifying the steps required. It brings out the needs and mechanisms for inter-sectoral actions, linkages and co-ordination as well as mechanism and strategies for the monitoring benchmarks identified and resource requirements indicated.

Final consultations with various ministries took place in February 1997. The National Action Plan being approved by the Inter-ministerial Task Force for Beijing Follow-up has already been circulated to all line ministries and Planning Commission for implementation and follow-up, as per Government process and policy. As such, various categories of actors need to be involved in the follow-up guidelines and monitoring of the "National Action Plan".

The operationalization of the NAP involves major categories of actors which are as follows :

- a) National Machinery for Women's Advancement; Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MWCA), Women in Development (WID), Focal Point & National Council for Women Development (NCWD).

- b) Servicing Ministries, Ministries of Establishment, Planning, Finance and Cabinet Division.
- c) Sectoral Line Ministries, Ministries of Agriculture, LGRDC, Industry, Information, Education, Environment and Forestry, Health and Family Welfare, Social Welfare.
- d) NGOs, Women's Groups Research Organisations/Institutions, Human Rights Organisations, Legal Aid Organisations.
- e) Elected Bodies, Parliament and its Members, Local Govt. Bodies etc.

Concerted efforts of all actors with a comprehensive multi-sectoral approach is required for effective implementation and Monitoring of the NAP.

1.6 GOALS OF THE NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

Recognising women's present socio-economic contribution in all spheres and gender discrimination in terms of programmes, resources and facilities, the National Action Plans sets the following goals :

- To make Women's Development an integral part of the National Development programme.
- To establish women as equal partners in development with equal roles in policy and decision making in the family, community and nation at large.
- To remove legal, economic, political or cultural barriers that prevent the exercise of equal rights by undertaking policy reforms and strong affirmative actions.
- To raise/create public awareness about women's differential needs, interest and priorities and increase, commitment to bring about improvements in women's position and conditions.

1.7 STRATEGIES

The plan emphasises the strategy of mainstreaming of women's development into Govt. policies and programmes. The underlying premise of the plan is that all sectoral ministries and agencies of the Govt. have responsibilities for women's

development, because women are a major portion of the population that each agency exists to serve.

The role of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MOWCA) as the national machinery is presented as a support organisation to facilitate system wise mainstreaming of a gender equality perspective in all policy areas. The NAP envisages strengthening of MOWCA as well as other components of the national machinery of women's development i.e. The National Council for Women's Development (NCWD) and WID Focal Point. The shared responsibilities for women's development by all partners in development including Govt. machinery, local Govt. bodies, NGOs, women's organisations, research and training agencies etc. is strongly emphasised in the action plan. The NAP strongly emphasises the need for inter-sectoral linkages, co-ordination and collaboration.

The various other important strategies that have been incorporated within the NAP are the following :

- Policy formulation/revision and incorporation of women's issues.
- Women's representation in policy making bodies.
- Increasing numbers and proportion of female officers at all levels.
- Improving the working conditions for women.
- Strengthening capacity of WID Focal Points.
- Gender Training of Staff and Programme
- Management Training of the Women Managers.
- Incorporation of gender specific indicators and sex-desegregated data in monitoring formats.
- Revision of Planning Process, Formats etc.
- Linkage and Co-ordination.

The following are some of the legal measures adopted by the Government to prevent violence against women :

- (i) Dowry Prohibition Act of 1980 which provides punishment for giving or taking dowry;
- (ii) Cruelty to Women (Deterrent Punishment Act. of 1983) which provides punishment by death, or life imprisonment for kidnapping or abduction of

women for unlawful purposes, trafficking in women and for causing death or attempting to cause death or cause grievous injuries to wives for dowry.

- (iii) Child Marriage Restraint Act (Amended Ordinance 1984) which raises the marriage age of women from 16 to 18 years and of men from 18 to 21 years. It also provides punishment for marrying a girl child.
- (iv) The Penal Code (Second Amendment Ordinance) which provides for capital punishment for causing grievous injuries to victims of acid throwing.
- (v) Family Court Ordinance, 1985 which deals with cases of marriages, divorce, maintenance, guardianship and custody of children. It has also provided opportunity for speedy disposal of such cases at a much lesser expense which benefits women.
- (vi) Anti-Terrorism Ordinance, 1992 which was promulgated in Sept. 1992 provided punishment for all sorts of terrorism including teasing women or abducting children and women. Special tribunals were set up in each district so that disposal of cases could be completed within short period of time. This ordinance provided for death sentence, life imprisonment and jail terms of maximum 20 years for some offences.

Among other measures to eliminate violence against women, the Government of Bangladesh established a Central Cell in the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs in 1990. There are similar cells in the Dept. of Women's Affairs and Bangladesh Jatiyo Mohila Sangstha. The Government also established committees at district, sub-district (Thana) and union levels for the same purpose.

The Government also set-up a 15 member Inter-ministerial Co-ordination Committee, headed by the Minister of State for Women and Children Affairs in 1994. The responsibilities of the Committee is to monitor and review the activities of the Central Cell and take remedial measures. The Committee submits periodical reports to the Prime Minister. Moreover legal rights and human rights organisations also render legal assistance to the oppressed poor women.

1.8 DOWRY AND DOWRY RELATED PROBLEMS

Women are the worst sufferers in the hands of man throughout the world. They are treated as inferior without any reason. Women also have been accepting it

r long time. As God has made man physically stronger, they take the advantage rich makes women timid socially and culturally. During medieval age, untold cruelty had been perpetrated to women. History shows infanticide, child marriage, dowry, abduction that were existent in our society. Many religious and social scripts advised that women are to be submissive if she wants to be happy with husbands. Women were sacrificed as per man's wishes throughout the ages. They started to worship husbands as deities at home and had always secured the second class position at home. Historians have given the following reasons for the sub-ordination of women :

- Since the discovery of fire women were confined to kitchen;
- Women needed protection from foreign invasions;
- Patriarchal system where women as a girl used to leave parental home to have a previously unknown life and become a victim of various atrocities;
- Arranged marriages were replaced by the demand of or custom of dowry which was the steel frame of marriages;
- Parents needed sons to bring in money. In contrast they never wished or welcomed to have daughters who always have been neglected and considered as burden.
- Moreover, the existing social laws were biased against women

The above observations shows that women used to occupy an inferior position in the society compared to man.

In our male dominated society, women's position is worse than their male counterparts because of the socio-economic situation and cultural tradition of the society. Poverty and social taboos also impede women's development. Therefore exploitation of women is predominant as a continuing social reality "The social position of women" were determined socially, culturally and politically. Women of our country have poor communication skills and even poor contact with their own males whose patriarchal attitudes indicate an adverse socio-economic condition where women are unable or not allowed to their opinions or options.

Mahatma Gandhi once said that "any young man who makes dowry a condition for marriage discredits his education and his country and **dishonour** himself". But in practice we find opposite version of the above saying. Dowry is the wealth given with the daughter at her marriage for the couple to use at their conjugal estate. It is given by the bride and her kin to the groom and his kin. Dowry is a part of a familial or conjugal fund which passes down from the holder to heir

and usually from the parents to the daughter. It is then a part and parcel of the transfer of familial property, but a process of transfer that includes women as well as men, i.e. male property is transmitted to women as full heirs, or semi-heirs. Dowry does not involve any kind of rationing of women. Women and property appear to be transferred in the same direction, so that they became more the wealthier. Dowry transactions take place a premium on the matching contributions of the spouses. What women and men bring either in concrete dowry or in inheritance vary, although among conjugal pairs these tend to match. The actual working of the type of marriage depends upon the social strata of the bride and groom. The higher the strata the more elaborate the match. For a stratified system, lies the difference that may occur between the marriage transactions of rich and poor. Dowry is often associated with high status. In our societies, since the girl after getting married does not belong to her father's house any longer, so she is given her inheritance at the time of marriage which is known as dowry.

Dowry is of not very ancient origins. It mostly existed among Hindu community of the sub-continent. The customs of presents by parents at the time of marriage is an universal phenomenon. The rationale behind these presentation of gifts is the affection of the parents towards their children. But in course of time the system has grown as a custom and associated with social status which has turned into a great social evil. It is indeed an evil which shows the inequality between sexes: A woman who brings sufficient dowry, is honoured and treated well, on the other hand women with meagre dowry is treated indifferently. Dowry is considered the just due of the man which indicates his higher position in the society.

Women although being that productive member of the society is yet accepted only as a bonus along with more "**valuable material assets**". This system has no religious significance. Only a section of society has reduced women's position. It is a recent addition. Although this system has spread through out the world. In India it is specially more prominent. In the 19th century a British husband had the sole rights over his wife's property and their children. He could chastise her out without a penny. In fact, dowry is another manifestation at the age of opportunism. It is a better way of making easy money. Aggressive behaviour on the part of the husband towards his wife is largely overlooked resulting traditional and patriarchal family structure that leads to violence in the family and especially directed against the women-folk.

1.8.1 DOWRY DEATHS

Dowry deaths are caused due to ill-treatment by husbands and in-laws. Women are downtrodden and humiliated by the oppressors which, are hardly brought into the notice of the public and police. Hundreds of women bear the pain, humiliation, and frustration and are living with dowry related oppression. Usually these women reconcile themselves to living without any hope. Dowry is a part of all humiliation and subjugation of women which is sanctioned by our society under the guise of social customs.

1.9 DOWRY IN THE LIGHT OF ISLAMIC LAW

According to the marriage contract the groom should pay "dower" to the bride following the Islamic "Shariah". Marriage usually involves a settlement from the groom to the bride the amount of which is determined at the time of marriage. Marriage is a contract in Islam. This is the opposite of dowry which involves a transfer from the bride or her family to the groom and his family. This provision of dower is intended to protect the wife since the "Shariah" does not envisage any provisions for maintenance upon divorce. In Bangladesh, the amount of dower is payable to the wife before divorce or at the death of her husband. After a husband's death the wife is entitled to a living allowance, and only after having met this requirement can the deceased husband's property be divided among his heirs of which his wife receives one-eighth of his estate.

Dowry is the payment of a settlement from the family of the bride to the groom. This practice has grown in the near past in our society even though it is not a part of the Muslim marriage contract. Traditionally among the Muslims dowry was a voluntary gift given to a bride by her father out of affection, but it has now become a fashion. According to Muslim Law, dower is the sum of money given to wife which the wife is entitled. Dower is the is an obligation imposed upon the husband as a mark of respect to his wife. On the contrary dowry is the demand of the groom from his wife or her family, - which can be called the equivalent of "husband-price" i.e. the cost given to the groom for marrying. In this sense, the concept of dowry can be seen as contrary to the Islamic values & customs.

CHAPTER-II

2.0 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Nowadays, among the different forms of violence against women, dowry related violence is a major area of concern in Bangladesh. The system of dowry though not endorsed by the major religion of the country (Islam), have grown into a social practice due to cultural and socio-economic factors. And now due to the economic realities tied up with the system, the existing practices in marriages have little to counter dowry related violence in the society. Extensive research need to be undertaken in order to generate data and information, so as to prevent dowry related violence. This study is therefore, a small effort in that direction. It endeavours to throw some light on the scope, extent and mechanism of dowry related violence in Bangladesh. Thus, this study on “ Women in Development and Beijing Declaration: Dowry Related Violence Against Women in the Rural and Urban Areas in Bangladesh” is a small effort to know more about dowry related violence. This study will strive to provide more data on dowry related violence that may help to formulate programmes to combat such violence and aid national strategies. Moreover, this might also invoke more interest in this burning issue and can be used as a starting point for further research in this area.

Since Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre(BPATC) is the apex training institute in Public Administration and Development Management in Bangladesh. As such, the findings of this report shall create future opportunities for the Centre to disseminate the issues amongst policy makers, administrative management practitioners, trainers and researchers of the country.

2.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are :

1. Determine the proportion of marriages ending in dowry related violence in the lower income (urban and rural) group of the society.
2. Determine the factors responsible for such violence against women in the lower income (urban and rural) group of the study.
3. Examine the immediate consequences of such violence against women.
4. Find out the whether the National Action Plan of Bangladesh for the implementation of the ‘Platform of Action’ of the Beijing Declaration is showing results in curbing dowry related violence in the society.

5. Recommend certain actions in the light of the 'Platform of Action' of the Beijing Declaration which can help to curb dowry related violence in this country.

2.2 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study is confined to two areas of Dhaka District for data collection (i) rural area of Savar Thana, (ii) Urban slums of Kalayanpur & High Court Area of metropolitan Dhaka city. The study focused on the following points during its investigation :

- Prevalence of dowry system
- Broken marriages, due to inability of settling dowry
- How is dowry provided in this society.
- Relationships in conjugal life due to dowry system.
- Does dowry lead to better conjugal life?
- Dowry related oppression.
- Nature of dowry related tortures.
- Identification of persons responsible for dowry related violence.
- Steps taken by the affected persons after dowry related oppression.
- Steps to be adopted to reduce dowry.

2.3 METHODOLOGY

This is a research study which focuses on the unequal position of women in the society, especially regarding their marriages. Data and information for the study have been collected from both (a) primary and (b) secondary sources.

As the primary source of information, data has been collected through prepared questionnaires which were administered to respondents in two urban and rural areas of Dhaka district namely the urban slums of High Court area & Kalyanpur & the rural area of Savar. The women and men of the above mentioned areas were the target group of the research study and have been subjected to two sets of questionnaires (one for the women respondents and the other for the male *please see Annexures 1 and 2 for details*).

2.4 RESPONDENTS

<u>Category of Sample</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>Nos. of Respondents</u>
Women	Savar	30
Women	Kalyanpur and High Court	30
Male	Savar	20
Male	Kalyanpur	20
Total no of Respondents :		100

Secondary data have also been also used for the study which included different books, journals, reports, periodicals and National Reports etc. Moreover, documents on Nairobi Forwarding Looking Strategies (NFLS) and UN reports have also been consulted in writing the report.

2.5 DATA COLLECTION AND PROCESSING

Two sets of questionnaires were used for the purpose of collecting data, and observation methods were also followed. The researchers had several sessions with the respondents during data collection. The researchers along with data collectors frequently visited the study areas. Simple statistical methods have been used and graphs, charts have been prepared to correlate the relationship of different variables during processing and interpretation of data.

2.6 REPORT PLAN

Chapter-I includes the general introduction and background information on the National Programmes on Beijing Declaration i.e. "Platform of Action" and "Critical Areas of Concern." This chapter also includes information on the general scenario of the violence against women in Bangladesh and in particular focuses on the issues of dowry related violence. It examines the concept of dowry in the light of religious, social and cultural viewpoints and sets the stage for this study of examining dowry related violence in Bangladesh against the backdrop of the Beijing Declaration.

Chapter II (this chapter) deals, with the rationale, methodology and limitations of the study. Chapter III includes the analysis part of the empirical study covering areas of urban Dhaka city and the rural area of Savar Thana. This chapter presents the information extracted from the respondents and analyses the data on

various issues such as the existing dowry systems, broken marriages, oppression due to non payment of dowry, ill-treatment of in-laws and steps to be taken to reduce dowry system.

Chapter IV wraps up the study by presenting its findings and recommendations on dowry related violence against women in Bangladesh in light of the Beijing Declaration.

2.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Paucity of data and time limitation were the constraints for the study. Due to financial constraints extensive data could not be collected. As such, the questionnaire could not be fully pre-tested to ensure extensive data which would given a more shaper picture of the dowry related violence in Bangladesh. As opinion of the respondents was the main source of information, there are chances that certain biases might have crept in the findings because the data collector had to depend on the moods and views of the respondents. However, the study did achieve some success in throwing light on the situation of dowry related violence against women in Bangladesh in the background of the endorsement of the Beijing Declaration by the Government of Bangladesh.

CHAPTER-III

3.0 FINDINGS FROM THE EMPIRICAL SURVEY

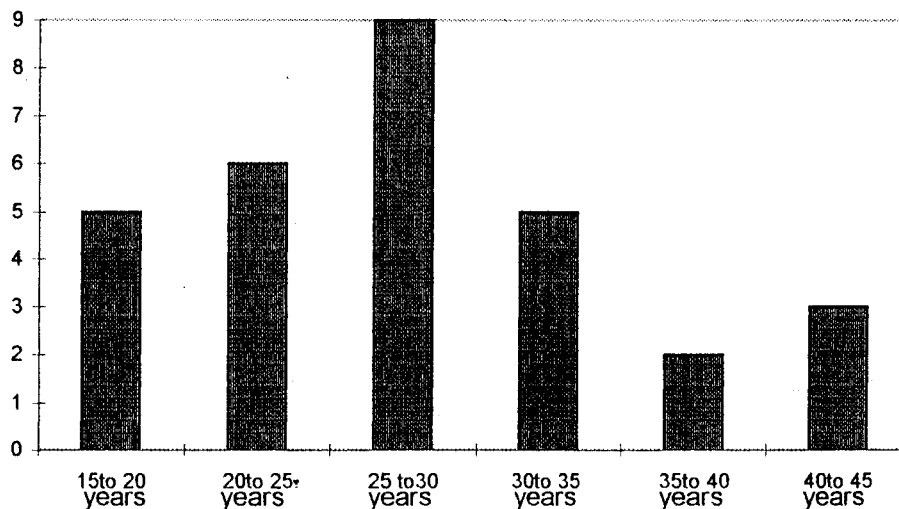
In the survey carried out in Savar which was chosen to represent rural area, the number of female respondents were 30 and the number of males were 20. The two groups were given separate questionnaires. Similarly, samples were taken from the High Court area and Kalyanpur in urban Dhaka city. In this case, the number of female respondents were 18 and 12 respectively, while the male respondents, numbering 20, were only from Kalyanpur area. This had to be done as male respondents were not easily available in the High Court area (Please see annexures 3, 4, 5 & 6 for a detailed portrayal of the administered questionnaires).

3.1 RESPONSES OF THE FEMALES

3.1.1 Feedback from the female respondents in Savar area (Union Number-1)

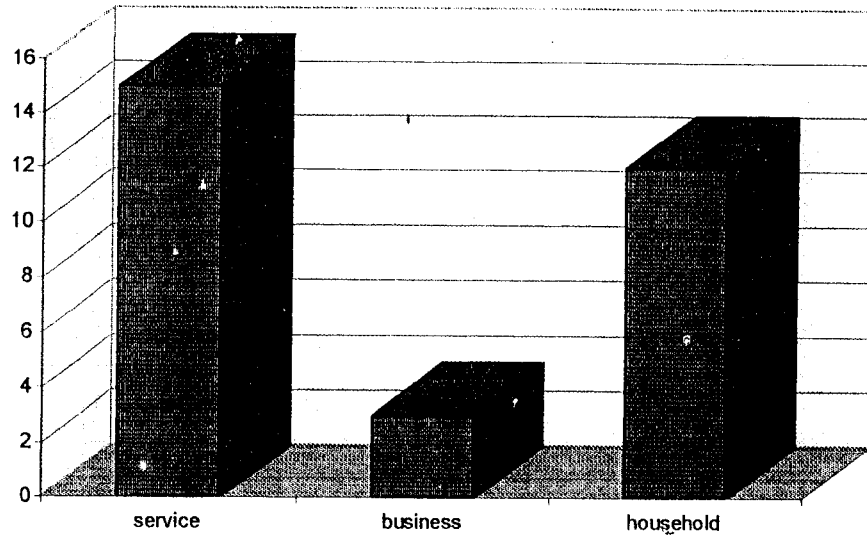
The majority of the female respondents (30%) from Savar area ranged from the age group 25-30 years, followed by the group 20-25 years which accounted for 20% of the respondents. (See figure-1 below for details).

1. Classification of age of respondents



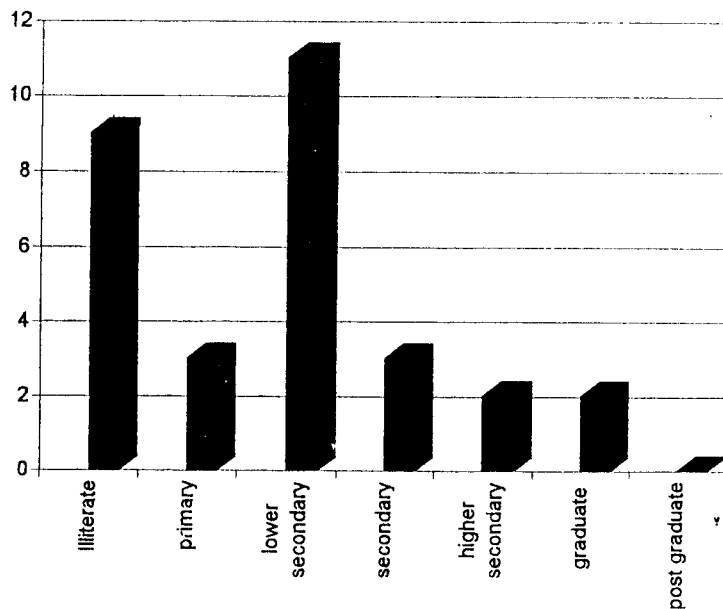
About 50% of the interviewed were working women, while housewives accounted for 40% and business 10%.(fig-2)

2. Clasification of respondents by occupation



Of them 36.17% had gone through lower secondary stages of education, while about 30% of them were illiterate. Only about 10% of the sample population had experienced secondary schooling, while 6.67% reached higher secondary and graduation levels(see figure 3).

3. Classification of respondents by education



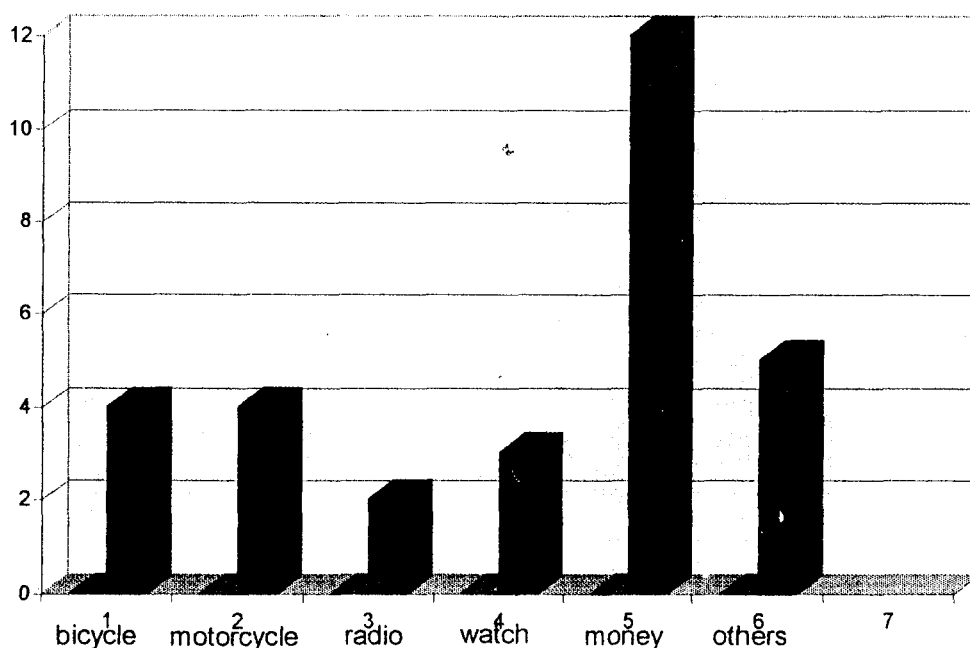
About 86.67% of the sample population were married, while 13.33% were divorced. Interestingly, 36.67% of them were married off between the ages of 15-20, followed by 33.33% of them at the ages 10-15,

and 30% between 20-25 years.

A great majority (66.67%) of the respondents in Savar area reported that dowry was given at the time of their marriages, while 33.33% reported that dowry was demanded. . Of them, 40% reported breakdown of their marriages due to non-fulfilment of dowry demands, while 43.33% replied in the negative and 16.67% refrained from commenting.

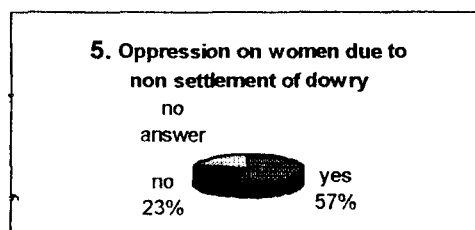
An overwhelming majority of the respondents (40%) reported that money was given as dowry(see fig-4).

4. Different items of dowry

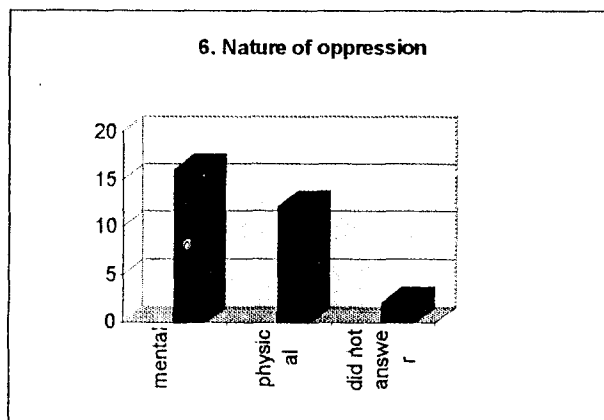


This was followed by motor cycle and bicycle (13.33%), watches (10%), while 10% accounted for other items. 11% of the respondents reported that dowry was collected by borrowing. About 60% of the respondents were of the opinion that their marriages were eased by settling demands for dowry.

About 56.67% of the sample population reported dowry related, oppression , while 20 % declined to comment and 23.33% replied in the negative (Fig-5).



Therefore, it can be assumed that the group which declined to comment were also subjected to oppression and they had declined out of fear of reprisals or were not ready to report shameful family secrets! About 53.33% of the sample population reported mental torture as the main method of oppression while 16.67% reported physical torture, and 30% reported both forms of oppression(Fig-6).



The respondents (53.33% of them) mainly blamed their husbands as most prominent in the oppression, (Fig-7), while 26.67% blamed mothers-in-law and 13.33% blamed sisters-in law.



When asked about their response to oppression, about 50% reported that they suffered in silence, while 16.67% informed their own families or the local community(samaj). Of the respondents about 56.67% reported that they knew about governmental

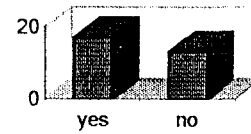
measures against dowry related oppression, while 26.66% were still ignorant. Most of them opted for more female education for curbing dowry related offences.

3.1.2 Responses of the females in Dhaka city

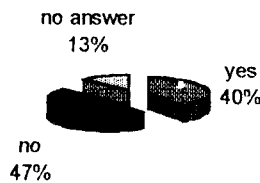
70% of the female respondents of Dhaka city were married while 30% were divorced. Most of them(40%) were from the age-group 25-30 years, followed by 30% in the age bracket 30-35 years and 10% in between 20-25 years. The educational qualifications of the respondents were predominantly illiterate(60%), followed by respondents having only primary education (26.67%) and lower secondary education 13.33%.

Of the respondents in Dhaka city, a great majority of them, i.e. 56.67%, reported giving dowry during their marriages while 43.33% replied in the negative (Fig-8). Of them, 46.67% (Fig-9) reported that their marriage did not break down due to the non-fulfilment of the demands for dowry, while 40% replied in the affirmative. Interestingly, the same percentage for broken marriages was found in rural Saver area.

8. Marriage in exchange of dowry



9. Dowry related broken marriages



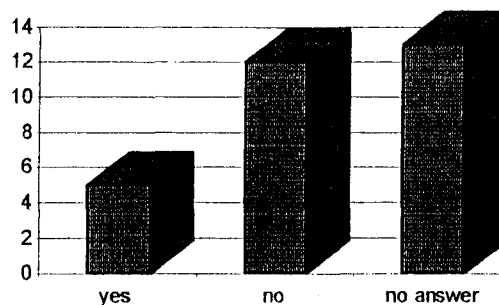
Most of the sample population in Dhaka city reported that money was the main item demanded as dowry followed by other items, radio, watch, etc. (for details please see annexure no.5). About 23.33% reported that dowry was managed by taking loans, 13.33% reported sale of lands, while 26.67% reported

other means of procuring dowry. Compared to Savar area, it seems that the incidence of borrowing for dowry was higher (23.33% compared to only 11%) in Dhaka city.

About 50% of the sample population were of the opinion that there were oppression due to non-fulfilment of demands for dowry, followed by 33.33% replying in the negative. This percentage was slightly lower than in the savar area-which showed 56.67% positive and 23.33% negative responses. 60% of the respondents replied that marriages broke down due to demands for dowry while 16.67% replied that their marriages were successful due to fulfilment of dowry demands (Fig-10).

About 36.67% of the sample reported good behaviour from in-laws after dowry was settled, 23.33% replied in the negative and 40% reported that it was not applicable.

10. Stability of marriages due to settlement of dowry

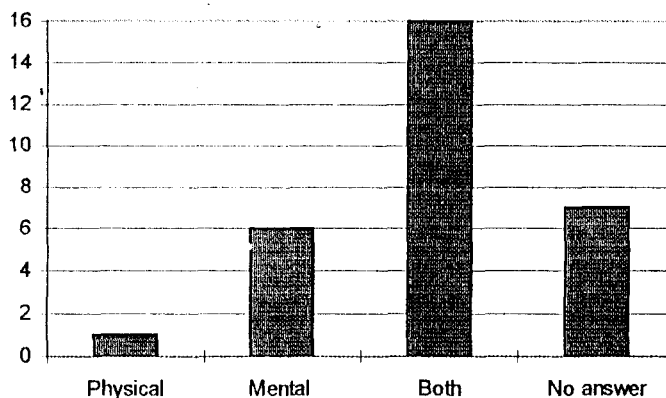


About 53.33% of the respondents in Dhaka city reported both physical and mental oppression, while 3.33% reported physical abuse and 23.34% declined to report anything (Fig-11). Compared to Savar area, which reported only 30% of both physical and mental oppression, it seems that dowry related oppression is more predominant in Dhaka city.

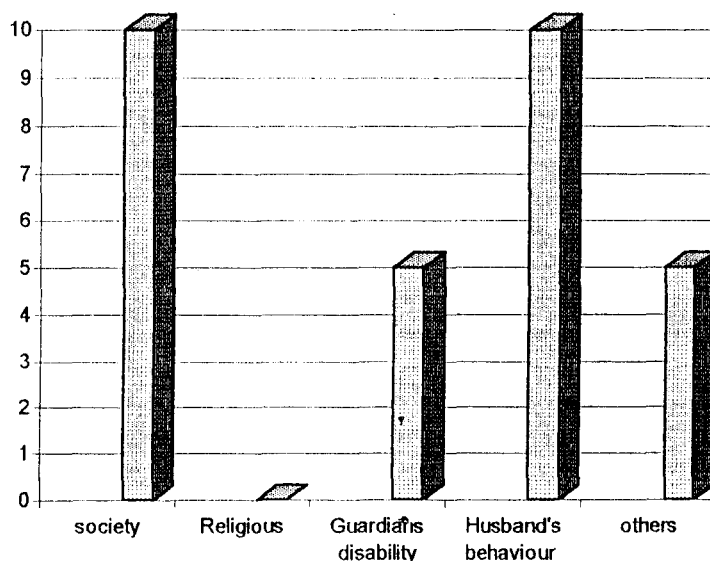
A majority of the oppressed women (30%) suffered in silence, only 13.33% informed their own families, while 26.67% complained to the community (Sarnaj). In contrast, about 50% of the oppressed women in Savar area suffered in silence. As regards persons most responsible for oppression, most of the respondents in Dhaka city reported husbands and mothers -in-law. This trend was similar to that found in Savar area.

Respondents in Dhaka city were of the opinion that society and husbands behaviour were most responsible for dowry related violence (Fig-12). Surprisingly only 20% of the respondents reported knowing about governmental actions against dowry demands and related offences. 50% reported knowing a little, while 30% said that they did not know any thing. In contrast, about 56% of the respondents in Savar were informed about governmental action and 16.65

11. Nature of dowry related oppression



12. Responsibility for dowry related oppression



reported knowing a little. This finding is indeed an eye opener, when one would have expected the reversed results.

An overwhelming majority of the sample (50%) were in favour of banning dowry, followed by creation of social movements (7%), increasing female education and police activities(5% each). In Savar, a majority of the participants opted for increasing female education.

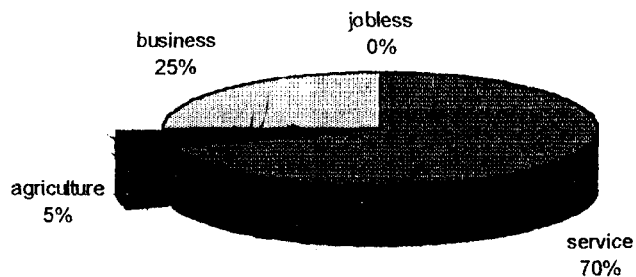
3.2 RESPONSES OF THE MALES

20 male respondents each from Savar and Kalyanpur in Dhaka city were subjected to Questionnaire No 2 (please see annexure no-2 for details).

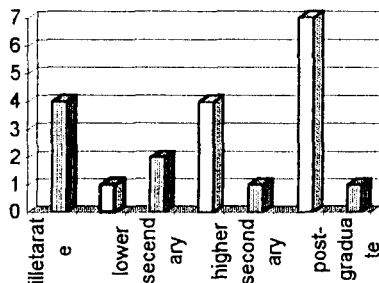
3.2.1 Responses of the Males from Savar Area

Most of the respondents (70%) in Savar area reported their occupation as service, followed 25% as engaged in business and only 5% reported working in the agricultural sector (Fig-13). This was probably due to the

13. Occupational distribution of respondents (male)



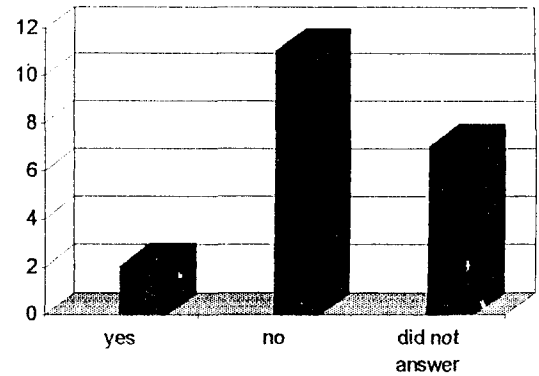
14. Educational qualification of the respondents



location of many industries and other business concerns in Savar area. Their educational qualifications ranged from the graduates 35% to 20% illiterates. In between, secondary level was 20%, lower secondary level 10%, and primary level was only 5% (Fig-14). A majority (75%) of the respondents were married with none divorced or separated.

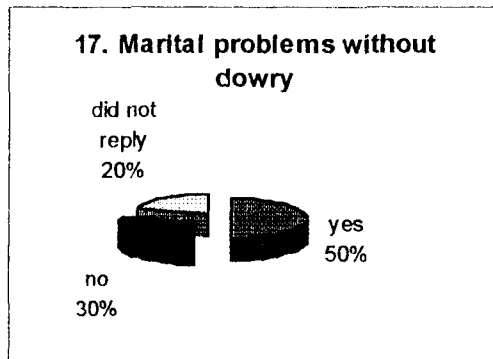
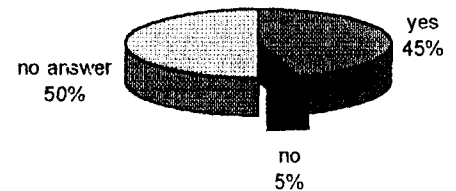
55% of the male respondents in Savar reported that they did not marry in exchange of dowry while a paltry 10% reported that they did (*Fig-15*). Most of the respondents (70%) of reported that they were not dismayed on not getting dowry, 5% replied that they were, while 25 % did not respond to the question. Their non-response may be construed as a shift towards a positive answer and that they were withholding their actual response for unknown reasons.

15. Marriage in exchange of dowry (male)



About 45% of the respondents of the respondents reported happiness in their marriages after receiving dowry, while 50% did not reply (*Fig-16*). At the same time 50% of the sample reported that problems in marriages when dowry is not given, 30% reported no problems and 20% declined to reply. This 20% may be interpreted as having voiced their response in the affirmative (*Fig-17*).

16. Marital happiness due to dowry



About 70% of the male respondents in Savar replied in the negative when asked whether they oppressed their wives on grounds of dowry, 10% responded positively and 20% did not reply. 90% of the respondents said that they had knowledge of the governmental action against dowry related offences, while only 10% replied in the negative.

3.2.2 Responses of the Males in Dhaka City

The age group of the male respondents in Dhaka City were more(50%) between the ages 30-35 years, followed by 25-30 years(15%) and then by 15-20 and 35-40 age groups(10%). Their occupations ranged from rickshaw/van driver(35%) to unemployed(15%%). In between lay business(25%) and service(25%). 70% of the respondents were married while 30% of them were unmarried. Most of the respondents in Dhaka city were illiterate (50%), while 30% had primary schooling and 20% had lower secondary schooling.

Compared to Savar where most of the respondents were from the service sector, it seems that rickshaw/van drivers predominated as respondents in Dhaka city and here there were more unemployed people compared to Savar where none could be found. Moreover, the rate of illiteracy was more in Dhaka city in case of male respondents, 50% compared to 20% in Savar. In Savar area, the respondents had spread out education even upto the graduate level, while it was concentrated at the primary and lower secondary levels in Dhaka.

In Dhaka city, 60% of the sample group reported that they had married in exchange of dowry while 40% replied in the negative. In contrast 55% of the Savar respondents had replied in the negative! It seems that there is greater incidence of dowry receiving in Dhaka city in case of males. The sample population in Dhaka city listed money as the top item received as dowry(60%) followed by watch and dress(15% each) and cycle/motor cycle(10%).

A majority of the respondents in Dhaka (55%) expressed their displeasure when they did not receive dowry, while 45% replied in the negative. In Savar 70% of the respondents had replied in the negative. 65% of the males in Dhaka reported marital happiness after receiving dowry, 35% replied negatively. In Savar, similarly 45% expressed that there was marital happiness. 60% of the respondents in Dhaka reported problems in marriages when dowry was not given and 40% replied negatively. Similar responses were received from Savar.

A great majority of the respondents (65%) replied negatively when asked whether they oppressed their wives for dowry while 65% of them professed knowledge about governmental action on dowry related offences while surprisingly 35% replied in the negative. It seems that males in Savar are more aware(90%) of the governmental action.

3.3 THE FINDINGS : A SUMMARY

The above findings go on to illustrate the continuing prevalence of dowry system in Bangladeshi society and the violence related to it (please see Tables II and III in Chapter I). About 66% of the female rural respondents and 100% of the urban female respondents reported giving of dowry during their marriages. The evidence from the primary data collected from the respondents both from rural and urban areas of Dhaka correlate the findings in other previous surveys like Tables II and III. The data from the responses of the administered questionnaires portray the prevailing existence of dowry related violence. It was found that an average of 40% of the women suffering from oppression remained silent about their plight! This was more evident in rural area of Savar. May be, the activities of the NGOs and other governmental organisations are more felt in Dhaka city or may be the women in Dhaka city were more independent and able to come out of the patriarchal grasp of the society. Surprisingly more males in the urban city(60%) compared to rural Savar(only 10%) reported marriages in exchange of dowry. However, an average 55% of the sample male population in Dhaka as well as Savar said that there were problems in marriages if no dowry was given. At the same time more male respondents (35% compared to only 10% in Savar) in urban Dhaka acknowledged oppressing their wives for dowry.

The female respondents overwhelmingly accused their husbands as the principal oppressor on dowry issues and they identified husbands' behaviour and the society as mainly responsible for dowry related violence. The study also found that mental torture(average 31%) was the more prevalent of dowry related oppression, while an average 41% of the female respondents reported both physical and mental forms of oppression.

It was found that there was existence of sufficient knowledge (varying from substantial to little) regarding governmental action regarding dowry both among the female and male respondents of the study, but it has not acted as a deterrent to practice of dowry or resultant violence when its demands are not fulfilled. It therefore raises questions about the adequacy of governmental actions regarding dowry related violence and the logic of agreeing to international conventions and plans of action regarding ensuring women's rights in this country.

All said and done, if the sample areas of rural Savar and urban Dhaka city are indicative of the situation prevailing all over the country, the data gained from this empirical survey clearly demonstrates the existence of dowry practices and considerable dowry related violence in Bangladesh.

CHAPTER-IV

4.0 CONCLUSION

The 'Platform of Action' of the Beijing Declaration of the Fourth World Conference on Women *identified violence against women and inadequate promotion and protection of the human rights of women* as critical areas of concern which needed acting upon by governments, NGOs, civil societies and international organisations. In keeping with that spirit, the Bangladesh government subsequently endorsed the 'Platform of Action' without any reservations. By doing so, the government had committed itself in striving to remove the bottle-necks to the advancement of women. Moreover, a **National Action Plan** was formulated to operationalise the various recommendations regarding development of women in Bangladesh.

Keeping the above official position in our minds, does not the findings of the previous chapter seem contradictory to our stated official position? Moreover, does not the actual scenario of our society as depicted by the statistics of the empirical survey of this study regarding prevalence of dowry and dowry related violence run contrary to our good intentions regarding almost fifty percent of our population ?

In fact, if we tie up the various strands of information as depicted in the preceding chapter, we come up with the following scenario :

- There is an overwhelming evidence that dowry system still prevails in our country (especially amongst the lower income groups)- a fact which has been reported by almost 80% of the female and 35% of the male respondents of our survey of 100 respondents of lower income individuals in both urban and rural areas of Dhaka district.
- About 56.67% of the female respondents in the rural survey area and 50% of them from urban Dhaka city reported dowry related violence. To support this information even some of the male respondents admitted oppressing their wives for dowry.
- It was found that dowry was mostly in the form of cash money, followed by watches, bicycles, etc., and was collected by taking loans, selling off property, etc.

- It was also found that mental torture was the most prevalent form of oppression, while an average of 41% of the female respondents reported both physical and mental tortures.
- Husbands figured as the principal perpetrator of dowry related oppression on women and they alongwith the society were held most responsible by the female respondents for such oppression.
- It was also found that incidence of dowry and dowry related violence was more prevalent in urban Dhaka city. This was probably due to the fact that most of the respondents were illiterate and unemployed in the city. The very fact that they were living in slums attested that they were poverty driven migrants to city from the rural areas. Therefore, it could be surmised that dowry was perceived by most of them as an economic benefit.
- Surprisingly, an average of 40% of the females were found to be silent after suffering dowry related oppression.
- Though many of the respondents both in urban and rural areas were more or less aware of the governmental action regarding dowry, it was certainly not acting as a deterrent to dowry related violence.

The above scenario clearly illustrates that inspite of the stated good intentions of the government, the “National Action Plan” of the government of Bangladesh has hardly made any dent against the prevailing culture of dowry and has failed to effectively check violence resulting from it. In fact, the essence of the Beijing Declaration on ensuring women’s rights has remained a rhetoric in the case of Bangladesh! Violence on women has not been curbed but has increased manifold. And the situation in the case of dowry related violence has remained unchanged inspite of government legislations and regulations in this regard.

As such, women are being denied their human rights and subjected to violence on account of dowry. If such is the case, then what is the utility of the government confirming the declared ‘Platform of Action’ of the Beijing Declaration on the development of women if it cannot be implemented properly ?

At this point, let us recapitulate some of the goals of the 'National Action Plan' of the government of Bangladesh which was designed to implement the 'Platform of Action' of the Beijing Declaration. The goals are :

- To raise/create public awareness about women's different needs, interests and priorities and increase commitment to bring out improvements in women's position and conditions.
- To remove legal, economic, political and cultural barriers that prevent the exercise of equal rights .

Needless to say, a cursory glance at the results of our empirical study portray that none of the above goals have made any significant impression on the status of women in our society, particularly the lower income groups. Those groups are still untouched by the objectives of the "National Action Plan", not to speak of the lofty ideals of international forums on the development of women. In view of the prevalence of dowry customs, as indicated by our study, has not the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1980 utterly failed its objectives ? Need we say any more of "The National Action Plan ?

The harsh reality is indeed different from the rhetoric of the international forums and national actions taken in light of those international goals. As the results of this study indicate the Beijing Declaration is yet to have any tangible effect on the condition of women in Bangladesh, especially regarding violence related to dowry. There is little doubt that in case of lower-income groups, the whole question of dowry is intrinsically economic in nature and is made even more persistent by the patriarchal nature of our society.

4.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the above scenario, a way must therefore be found to come out this quagmire. The following steps can be taken to mitigate the existing situation :

- Female Education must be enhanced. This will ensure that women became more empowered and seek their rights.
- The community must be mobilised to be more aware of women's rights so that it can act on its own to curb violence against 50% of its population. The community must be made aware of the social ills of dowry and then they can act to prevent it in the long run.

- The NGOs, the local bodies and the civil society must be more sensitised about the effects of dowry. Only then violence can be tackled in an organised fashion.
- Although there are laws regarding dowry and dowry related violence, they are not being properly implemented. Therefore, steps must be taken to ensure proper implementation of laws. Alongwith that the law enforcing institutions/personnel must be held accountable regarding their activities on violence on women and dowry related crimes.
- Govt. has to adopt all appropriate measures, particularly in the field of education, to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, and to eliminate prejudices, practices based on the idea of the inferiority or superiority of either of the sexes and on stereotyped roles of men and women.
- Create or strengthen institutional mechanisms so that women and girls can reports acts of violence against them in a safe and confidential environment.
- Support initiatives of NGOs and various women's organisation to raise awareness on the issues of violence against women and to contribute to its elimination.
- Disseminate information on the assistance available to women and families who are victims of dowry related violence.
- Take appropriate measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making and leadership.
- Promote and protect the human rights of women through the full implementation of all human rights instruments, especially the convention on the elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women.
- Last but not the least, the male population must be made aware of the rights of women and their attitudes must be altered to enable women to become equal and complementary partners in development.

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যৌতুক ও নারী নির্যাতনের সমীক্ষার উপর প্রশ্নমালা-১

- ১। ক) নাম :
 খ) বয়স :
 গ) গ্রাম :
 ঘ) পেশা :
 ঙ) শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা :
 চ) বৈবাহিক অবস্থা : বিবাহিত/অবিবাহিত/তালাকপ্রাপ্ত
- ২। বিয়ের সময় আপনার বয়স :
- ৩। আপনার বিয়েতে কি যৌতুক দিতে হয়েছিল ? হ্যাঁ না
- ৪। যৌতুক দানে অক্ষমতাহেতু আপনার বিয়ে কি কখনও ভেঙ্গে গিয়েছিল ? হ্যাঁ না
- ৫। বিয়ের সময় যৌতুক হিসেবে কি কি দিতে হয়েছিল ?
 বাইসাইকেল মটরসাইকেল রেডিও ঘড়ি অর্থ অন্যান্য
- ৬। যৌতুকের জন্য আপনার পিতা-মাতা কিভাবে অর্থ জোগাড় করেছিলেন ?
 জমি বিক্রি করে ঋণ গ্রহণ অন্যান্য
- ৭। যৌতুক দেয়ায় বিয়ে কি সহজে হয় ? হ্যাঁ না
- ৮। যৌতুক না দেয়ার কারণে আপনার উপরে কোন নির্যাতন করা হয়েছে কিনা ? হ্যাঁ না
- ৯। যৌতুক না দেয়ার জন্য কি কি ধরনের নির্যাতন করা হয় ?
- ১০। এ এলাকায় যৌতুক ছাড়া কি বিয়ে হয় না ? হ্যাঁ না
- ১১। যৌতুকের জন্য কি আপনার বিবাহ টিকে আছে ? হ্যাঁ না
- ১২। যৌতুক দেয়ার পর কি আপনার প্রতি ভাল ব্যবহার করা হয়েছে ? হ্যাঁ না
- ১৩। পরিবারে আপনাকে কে বেশী নির্যাতন করে থাকে ?

১৪। আপনাকে কি ধরণের নির্যাতন করা হয় বা হতো ?

দৈহিক মানসিক উভয়ই

১৫। আপনার মতে এ ধরণের নির্যাতনের জন্য দায়ী কে ?

সমাজ ধর্ম অভিভাবকের অক্ষমতা স্বামীর অসদাচরণ

পরিবারিক অসদাচরণ দারিদ্রতা/অন্যান্য

১৬। এ ধরণের দৈহিক নির্যাতনের পর আপনি কি করেছেন ?

বাবার বাড়ীতে খবর দিয়েছি মুখবুঝে সহ্য করেছি

সমাজের লোকদের জানিয়েছি কিছুই করিনি অন্যান্য

১৭। আপনি কি জানেন, সরকার যৌতুক রোধের জন্য বিভিন্ন সময় বিভিন্ন পদক্ষেপ নিয়েছে ?

হ্যাঁ না কিছু কিছু জানি

১৮। নারীদের প্রতি এ ধরণের নির্যাতন কিভাবে কমানো যায় ?

নারী শিক্ষা বৃদ্ধি যৌতুক প্রথা বন্ধ পুলিশি তৎপরতা বৃদ্ধি

আইন প্রয়োগকারী সংস্থার তৎপরতা বৃদ্ধি সামাজিক আন্দোলন করে

অন্যান্য

১৯। যৌতুক দেয়ার অক্ষমতায় গৃহ বধুদের উপর নির্যাতন কি আপনাদের অঞ্চলে বেশী হয়ে থাকে ?

হ্যাঁ না

২০। যৌতুক বন্ধ করার জন্য আপনার মতামত কি ?

যৌতুক ও নারী নির্যাতনের উপর প্রশ্নমালা (পুরুষ)

- ১। ক) নাম :
 খ) বয়স :
 গ) গ্রাম :
 ঘ) পেশা :
 ঙ) শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা :
 চ) বৈবাহিক অবস্থা : বিবাহিত/অবিবাহিত/তালাকপ্রাপ্ত/আলাদা বসবাস ।
- ২। বিয়ের সময় আপনার বয়স :
- ৩। বিয়েতে যৌতুক হিসেবে কি কি পেয়েছেন ? ১। টাকা ২। ৩।
- ৪। আপনি কি যৌতুকের জন্য বিয়ে করেছেন ? হ্যাঁ না
- ৫। যৌতুক হিসেবে আপনি কি আশা করেছিলেন ?
- ৬। পর্যাপ্ত যৌতুক না পাওয়াতে আপনি ও আপনার পরিবার কি অসন্তোষ্ট ছিল ?
- ৭। যৌতুক দিয়ে বিয়ে হওয়াতে আপনি কি খুব সুখী দাম্পত্য জীবন কাটাচ্ছেন ? হ্যাঁ না
- ৮। যৌতুক বিহীন বিয়ে হওয়াতে কি সমস্যা দেখা দেয় ? হ্যাঁ না
- ৯। আপনি কি যৌতুকের জন্য স্ত্রীকে নির্যাতন করেছেন ? হ্যাঁ না
- ১০। নারী নির্যাতনে পুলিশের ভূমিকা কিরূপ হওয়া উচিত ? হ্যাঁ না
- ১১। আপনি জানেন কি নারী নির্যাতন বন্ধ করার জন্য সরকার বিভিন্ন পদক্ষেপ নিচ্ছে ? হ্যাঁ না

Annexure-3
Questionnaire No. 1
Sex : Female
Savar Area
No. of Respondents 30

1(a). Age distribution of the respondents :

	Frequency	%
15 - 20	5	16.67%
20 - 25	6	20%
25 - 30	9	30%
30 - 35	5	16.67%
35 - 40	2	6.66%
40 - 45	3	10%
Total	30	100

1(b). Profession of the respondents :

Occupation	Frequency	%
Service	15	50%
Business	3	10%
House life	12	40%
Total	30	100

1(c). Educational qualification of the respondents :

Degree	Frequency	%
Illerate	9	30%
Primary	3	10%
Lower Secondary	11	36.67%
Secondary	3	10%
Higher Secondary	2	6.67%
Graduate	2	6.67%
Post-graduate	0	-
Total	30	100

1(d). Marital status of the respondents :

Marital Status	Frequency	%
Married	26	86.67%
Unmarried	-	-
Divorced/Separated	4	13.33%
Total	30	100

2. Classification of age :

Age group	Frequency	%
10 - 15	10	33.33%
15 - 20	11	36.67%
20 - 25	9	30%
25 - 30	-	-
30 - 35	-	-
Total	30	100

3. Provision of dowry during marriage :

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	20	66.67%
No	10	33.33%
Total	30	100

4. Broken marriage when dowry was not given :

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	12	40%
No	13	43.33%
No answer	5	16.67%
Total	30	100

5. Items of Dowry :

Items	Frequency	%
By-cycle	4	13.33%
Motor cycle	4	13.33%
Radio	2	6.67%
Watch	3	10%
Taka	12	40%
Others	5	16.67%
Total	30	100

6. Ways of managing dowry :

Process	Frequency	%
Land sale	5	16.67%
Loan	11	36.67%
Others	7	23.33%
Not applicable	7	23.33%
Total	30	100

7. Workability of marriages to when dowry was given :

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	28	93.33%
No	2	6.67%
Total	30	100

8. Incidence of dowry related oppression :

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	17	56.67%
No	7	23.33%
No response	6	20%
Total	30	100

9. Types of dowry related oppression :

Type	Frequency	%
Mental	16	53.33%
Physical	12	40%
Both	2	6.67%
Total	30	100

10. Incidence of Marriages which dowry in our area :

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	13	43.33%
No	17	56.67%
Total	30	100

11. Workability of marriages due to Dowry :

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	18	60%
No	8	26.67%
Not applicable	4	3.33%
Total	30	100

12. Good behaviour after giving dowry :

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	8	26.67%
No	14	46.67%
Not applicable	8	26.66%
Total	30	100

13. Persons most responsible for dowry related oppression :

Persons	Frequency	%
Mother-in-law	8	26.67%
Sister-in-law	4	13.33%
Husband	16	53.33%
Brother-in-law	2	6.67%
Not applicable	-	-
Total	30	100

14. Types of dowry related oppression :

Type	Frequency	%
Physical	5	16.67%
Mental	13	43.33%
Both Physical & Mental	9	30.00%
Not applicable	3	10.00%
Total	30	100

15. Responsibility of dowry related oppression :

Who is Responsible ?	Frequency	%
Society	16	35.33%
Religion	-	-
Guardian's ineptitude	3	10%
Husbands behaviour	7	23.39%
Family behaviour	2	6.67%
Poverty	8	
Others	6	

16. Measures taken after oppression related to dowry :

Measures Taken	Frequency	%
Informed family	5	16.67%
Suffered in silence	15	50.00%
Informed members of the society(Samaj)	5	16.67%
Did not do anything	2	6.67%
Others	3	10%
Total	30	100

17. Knowledge about governmental action against Dowry related oppression :

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	17	56.67%
No	8	26.66%
	5	16.67%
Total	30	100

18. Ways of checking dowry related oppression :

Suggested ways	Frequency
Increase in Female education	21
Banning custom of dowry giving	9
Stepping up power activities	3
Increasing activities of law enforcement agencies	3
Social movement	3
Others	1
Total	30

19. Incidence of dowry related oppression in the respondents area :

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	20	66.67%
No	8	26.67%
Not applicable	2	6.66%
Total	30	100

20. Personal Views of Dowry :

Response	Frequency	%
Debting up of law entercent	13	43.33%
Organising Social Movement	10	33.33%
Increase female education	7	23.34%
Total	30	100

Annexure-4

Questionnaire No.2

Sex : Male

Area Savar

No. of Respondents : 20

1. Occupation :

Occupation	Frequency	%
Service	14	70%
Agriculture	1	5%
Business	5	25%
Unemployed	0	-
Total	20	100

2. Educational Qualification :

Educational qualification	Frequency	%
Illiterate	4	20%
Primary	1	5%
Lower Secondary	2	10%
Secondary	4	20%
Higher Secondary	1	5%
Graduate	7	35%
Post-graduate	1	5%
Total	20	100

3. Marital Status :

Marital Status	Frequency	%
Married	15	75%
Unmarried	5	25%
Divorced	-	-
Separated	-	-
Total	20	100

	Frequency	%
	2	10%
	11	55%
	7	35%
	20	100%

on availability of dowry :

	Frequency	%
	1	5%
	14	70%
	5	25%
	20	100

when dowry was given :

	Frequency	%
	9	45%
	1	5%
	10	50%
	20	100

cases when dowry were not given :

	Frequency	%
	10	50%
	6	30%
	4	20%
	20	100

8. Incidence of dowry related oppression on wife :

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	2	10%
No	14	70%
Did not answer	4	20%
Total	20	100

9. Knowledge of governmental action regarding oppression against women :

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	18	90%
No	2	10%
Did not answer	0	-
Total	20	100

Annexure-5
 Questionnaire No.
 Sex : Female
 High Court Area 18
 Kalyanpur Area 12
 No. of Respondents 30

3. Marital Status of Respondents :

Marital Status	Frequency	%
Married	21	70%
Unmarried	-	-
Divorced	9	30%
Total	30	100

4. Incidence of giving dowry :

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	17	56.67%
No	13	43.33%
Not applicable	-	-
Total	30	100

5. Marriage broken down due to non-fulfilment of the demand for dowry:

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	12	40.00%
No	14	46.67%
Not applicable	4	13.33%
Total	30	100

6. Items given as dowry :

Items	No. of Persons
By-cycle	1
Motor Cycle	0
Radio	2
Watch	4
Money	10
Others	8
Not applicable ^	8

7. How dowry was managed :

Management of dowry	Frequency	%
Land sale	4	13.33%
Loan	7	23.33%
Other means	8	26.67%
Not applicable	11	36.67%
Total	30	100

8. Incidence of marriages by giving dowry

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	30	100%
No	0	-
Total	30	100

9. Incidence of oppression due to non-fulfilment of the demand for dowry :

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	15	50%
No	10	33.33%
Not applicable	5	16.67%
Total	30	100

10. Incidence of failed marriage due to non-fulfilment of dowry :

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	18	60%
No	12	40%
Total	30	100

11. Incidence of successful marriages on account of fulfilment of demands for dowry :

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	5	16.67%
No	12	40.00%
Not applicable	13	43.33%
Total	30	100

12. Whether there was good behaviour after settlement of dowry :

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	11	36.67%
No	7	23.33%
Not applicable	12	40%
Total	30	100

13. Types of dowry related oppression :

Types of oppression	Frequency	%
Physical	1	3.33%
Mental	6	20%
Both physical and Mental	16	53.33%
No reply	7	23.34%
Total	30	100

14. Who responsibility for dowry related oppression ?

Responsibility	Frequency
Society	10
Religion	-
Guardian's ineptitude	5
Husband's behaviour	10
Others	5
Total	30

15. Action taken after oppression for dowry :

Action taken	Frequency	%
Informed own family	4	13.33%
Suffered in silence	9	30%
Informed People in the 'Samaj'	8	26.67%
Did not do anything	-	-
Others	-	-
Total	30	100

16. Awareness of governmental action against dowry related oppression :

Aware	Frequency	%
Yes	6	20%
No	9	30%
A little	15	50%
Total	30	100

17. Steps to be taken to stop dowry related oppression :

Steps	Frequency	%
Increase Female education	5	16.67%
Ban Dowry	15	50.00%
Increase Police activity	5	16.67%
Increase activity of law enforcement agencies	3	10.00%
Create social movement	7	23.34%
Total	30	100

18. House wives tortured for dowry :

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	23	76.67%
No	7	23.33%
Total	30	100

Annexure-6

DETAILS OF THE RESPONSES OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES

Sex : Male
Dhaka City (Kalyanpur)
No. of Respondents 20

1. Age distribution of the respondents :

Age group	Frequency	%
15 - 20	2	10%
25 - 30	3	15%
30 - 35	10	50%
35 - 40	2	10%
40 - 45	1	5%
45 - 50	2	10%
Total	20	100

2. Occupation distribution :

Occupation	Frequency	%
Service	5	25%
Business	5	25%
Agriculture	-	-
Rickshaw/Van Driver	7	35%
Unemployed	3	15%
Total	20	100

3. Educational Qualifications :

Educational Qualifications	Frequency	%
Illiterate	10	50%
Primary	6	30%
Learn academy	4	20%
Secondary	-	-
Higher Secondary	-	-
Graduate	-	-
Post graduate	-	-
Total	-	-

4. Marital Status :

Marital status	Frequency	%
Marricd	14	70%
Unmarried	6	30%
Divorced	-	-
Separate	-	-
Total	20	100

5. Marriage in Exchange of dowry :

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	12	60%
No	8	40%
Total	12	100

6. Items given as Dowry :

Items	Frequency	%
Taka	12	60%
Watch	3	15%
Cycle/Motor cycle	2	10%
Dress/Cloth	3	15%
Total	20	100

7. Diplesive due to non-availability of dowry :

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	11	55%
No	9	45%
Total	20	100

8. Marital happiness due to giving of dowry :

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	13	65%
No	7	35%
Total	20	100

9. H..... in marriages when dowry was not given :

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	12	60%
No	8	40%
Total	20	100

10. Incidence of dowry related oppression on wives :

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	7	35%
No	13	65%
Total	20	100

11. Knowledge of governmental action regarding oppression against women :

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	13	65%
No	7	35%
Total	20	100