

Abstract some
aspects of socio-
economic and gender
inequality



In this paper, I seek to identify which factors affect the Socio-Economic and gender inequality regarding the education of girls and boys, as well as of women and men, across two cohorts of married women in Bangladesh. In particular, I look at the relative importance of an individual woman's own educational background and those of her spouse and other family members in shaping her attitudes toward gender equality in education.

Inequality is like an epidemic for a country which destroys a country's development not only for a generation but also for a long period of time.

Among all kinds of inequalities gender inequality is the extreme one as it affects all other sectors.

As women has contribution in all sectors.

Bringing women into the mainstream economic activities and ensuring equal opportunity is one of the major targets of Millennium Development Goals as pursued by the government of Bangladesh. Introduction I aim to add to this body of work by looking at changes in attitudes regarding some aspects of Socio-Economic and gender inequality due to education in Bangladesh during a period of rapid social transformation. This work is of particular significance for a number of reasons. First while in developed countries with high-quality datasets there have been many analyses of gender norms and attitudes, in developing countries with less high-quality data there have been relatively few studies on gender norms, and those that have been conducted have been restricted to small samples and to topics

such as attitudes regarding reproductive decision-making, sex preferences for children, and violence against women.

In addition, most of the research conducted in developing countries has focused on using attitudes as explanatory variables for a number of outcomes, rather than as outcome variables in their own right. Previous research on education and gender norms has primarily focused on the question of whether education is a liberalizing influence or a constraint on attitudes regarding gender equality. The results of these studies are, to say the least, equivocal (Kane 1995).

I situate my analysis on changing attitudes regarding girl's education within the overall context of educational expansion in Bangladesh, and the definitions of sex roles and expectations in the culture. Because I provide quantitative evidence on the determinants of gender education norms in Bangladesh, my work also complements the related earlier work by Schuler and colleagues, which involved in-depth interviews and group discussions (see, e. g., Schuler et al. 2006 (and the references therein)).

Background Bangladesh provides an interesting context for an analysis of the changes in gender norms regarding education. The growth in access to education, and especially in access to secondary education for girls, may be Bangladesh's most dramatic achievement in the last two decades. In the area of female secondary education, Bangladesh stands out as a shining success story among low-income countries, Bangladesh's progress is especially commendable because the growth in female education took place within a democratic regime, and started from a very low base. Figure 1:

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Enrollment rates in Education Table: 1 Gross enrollment rates of boys and girls by level and region Primary (Grade 1-5) Lower Sec. (Grade 6-8) Secondary (Grade 9-10) Higher Secondary (11-12) Boys Girls Boys Girls Boys Girls Boys Girls Barisal 93. 9 93.

6 55. 4 58. 9 45. 8 58. 1 44. 7 35 Chittagong 83.

5 84. 5 48. 1 58.

2 37. 2 49. 9 34. 6 32.

8 Dhaka 86. 1 84. 5 52. 7 58.

4 62. 2 66. 6 32.

3 33. 3 Khulna 96. 1 99. 5 60.

7 66. 9 58. 3 71.

5 39. 3 36. 2 Rajshahi 85.

5 91. 5 53. 5 70. 3 50.

3 57. 5 38. 2 33. 4 Sylhet 83. 2 85. 7 57.

1 36. 3 39. 7 58 29. 1 28. 5 Source: BANBEIS (Government of Bangladesh), 2015/016 The growth in education and the accompanying social changes have probably been the most important recent developments in Bangladesh, but there are others as well. Starting from a very low base of 9%, female labor force participation picked up to over 22% during the years 1993? 2003.

While, as indicated, the female labor participation has increased, the female-

male gap in labor force participation (LFP) has also increased in relative terms over the past few decades: In 1990 the LFP was 61.7% for females and 88.4% for males, but by 2011 it had decreased to 57.2% for females and 84.3% for males (WDI 2013). Evocative images of hundreds of young girls walking every morning to the garment factories have been etched into the popular imagination as a metaphor for progress.

Infant mortality has declined faster in Bangladesh than in any other country in South Asia. The total fertility rate today is less than one-third of the rate four decades ago, having declined from about 6.9 in 1971 to about 2.2 in 2011 (WDI 2013). Meanwhile, the microcredit revolution sweeping the countryside has given women visibility and greater status. Better water and sanitation facilities have reduced the drudgery experienced by mothers, who now have time for other activities.

An information and communication boom has resulted from the widespread availability of radios, televisions, and mobile phones. The expansion of rural roads and of electrification have enabled many people to find work beyond traditional low-productivity cottage industries. The availability of more secure modes of transport has also given people greater mobility, allowing more women to move out of their villages to take jobs in the city (Hossain and Bose 2004; World Bank 2008). While the progress described above is real, serious problems remain in Bangladesh, and new ones are surfacing. Thus, while women's status has improved dramatically in the last few decades, gender inequalities persist in many areas, such as in access to markets, political forums, and high-tech services. Moreover, there

are sharp disparities based on an individual's place of residence, wealth quintile, and ethnicity.

The practice of dowry payments is on the rise, and is one of the reasons why the average girl is married off by the time she is 15 years old. I described above the extent to which education has expanded in Bangladesh. I also noted that educational opportunities for girls have changed the conservative marriage market, as increasing numbers of women are, in contrast to their mothers' generation, marrying men less educated than them.

Clearly, the demand for education is not only contingent on cultural reasons, but has some important structural correlates. For the past two decades, Bangladesh has pursued a policy of enhancing girl's education through innovative incentive schemes that provide stipends to girls who remain enrolled in secondary school. Over the past decade, NGOs have also contributed substantially to the expansion of educational opportunities for girls and of labor market opportunities for women (World Bank 2008: Ch 1). However, recent qualitative work has shown that perceptions among South Asians of girl's education and gender norms in general are changing rapidly. Today, local populations take great pride in the expansion of girl's education in their towns, and in the impact this expansion has on the community, the well-being of children, and the empowerment of women (World Bank 2008: Ch 3). How and why did this change in perceptions of education come about? At the macro level, I argue that a supply-side push for education tapped the latent demand for education among families of girls, which seems to have existed alongside conservative norms and values.

Once the impact of education on girls and communities became apparent, this fueled further demand. Women's access to new job opportunities in the garment sector and with NGOs showed families that girls can have an economic worth as well. Globally of course, higher returns to education for women have been shown in a number of studies, including Psacharopoulos' (1994) cross-country review, a study by Schultz (1994), and research from such diverse settings as Taiwan (Gindling et al. 1995), the Czech Republic and Slovakia (Chase 1997), and India (Malathy and Duraisamy 1993; Duraisamy 2000).

3. Data and methods This study was conducted based on the data on various secondary sources like, Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES), Labour Force Survey (LFS) and other reports conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), Bangladesh Demographic Health Survey (BDHS), Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS) etc. Using these data, some projections were made by using the simple mathematical equation: $P_t = P_o (1 + r)^t$ Where, P_t = Value of the present year P_o = Value of the previous year t = Time interval between previous and present years r = Growth rate Different statistical reports, relevant research papers, books and many national and international journals have also been reviewed for this study. One of the reasons why there is relatively little empirical literature on changing norms in South Asia is that there are few datasets that allow for such analyses. Individual questions in the Demographic and Health Surveys on attitudes toward violence, fertility, and individual diseases have allowed for some analysis of attitudes in these areas, but very few questions provide the information needed for an analysis

of attitudes toward gender inequality. To conduct my analysis, we were able to use the World Bank Survey on Gender Norms in Bangladesh (WBGNS) 2006, a unique dataset which has a number of questions on attitudes toward gender equality in education. My aim is to understand whether two cohorts of women display differences in terms of gender norms and/or the correlates of these norms, and whether these norms differ with regard to the education of girls versus boys, and of wives versus husbands, respectively.

The WBGNS 2006 is the first comprehensive, nationally representative household survey of gender norms and practices in Bangladesh. It is based on a sample of adults that include married women in the age groups 15-25 and 25-59, married male heads of households in the age group 25-50, and 500 community leaders (such as Union Parishad (UP) members, Imams/Moulvis (religious leaders), primary school teachers, and Madrasah teachers). The samples were drawn in two stages. In the first stage, 91 clusters were selected as a subsample of the 361 clusters included in the Bangladesh.

A cluster is a census-defined village that corresponds roughly to a mouza village in rural areas and a census block (part of a mohallah) in an urban area. Results here have two estimation samples: older women (1,431 initial observations) and younger women (1,543 initial observations). As explanatory variables were found to be missing for some observations, the samples used in the final analyses were slightly smaller. In analyzing the difference in patterns between the two cohorts of women in the sample, I capture intergenerational changes. Of course, it is entirely possible that the difference is simply a function of age and life-cycle, and not of cohort.

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I believe, however, that after controlling for a number of demographic characteristics, we are able to capture most of the effects of changes over time. Bringing women into the mainstream economic activities and ensuring equal opportunity is one of the major targets of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as pursued by the government of Bangladesh. However, women in Bangladesh are dominated by a matrilineal and patriarchal kinship system, which enforces the social and economic dependence of women on men and prescribes the relative lower status of women. Although, there has been steady progress in reducing gender inequality in different sectors like education employment etc. but there exists a huge inequality in these sectors of Bangladesh and participation of women is very low compared to their male counterpart. Gender inequality has appeared as the major stumbling barrier in achieving the development targets.

Changes Socio-Economic Gender Inequality in Education Numerous

affirmative actions were also introduced to enhance the female literacy.

However, there remains a considerable gap in enrollment. Literacy as well as the significantly higher proportion of female dropout from the system is still a major concern. The literacy of male children was 49.5 percent in 2000 at the national level, which has increased to 61.12 percent in 2010 with an annual average increasing rate of 1.16 percent.

Continuation of this rate indicates that the literacy rate of the male children may increase to 65.77 percent in the national level by 2014 which is 34.23 percent lower than the National Education Policy (NEP, 2010) target of 100 percent. Whereas, the literacy rate of female children in the national level

was 40.1 percent in 2000, which has increased to 54.8 percent in 2010 with an annual average increasing rate of 1.47 percent.

Under the business as usual scenario, the literacy rate of the female might be 60.68 percent at the national level in 2014, which is 39.32 percent lower than the National Education Policy (NEP, 2010) target of 100 percent. There are also high rural-urban variations in case of the literacy rate by sex where the rural women are far behind than their urban counterparts and male counterparts as well. Gender disparity is significantly high in higher education (university level).

In 2001, among the total students in the public universities, only 24.3 percent were female students whereas the male enrollment comprises almost three times higher (75.7 percent) than that of the female. It is also observed that over the years, both male and female enrollment in the university level is increasing with a slower rate.

In the recent time, the rate at which the female enrollment in the primary level is increasing, the enrollment in higher education is not increasing at the same pace. There exists an immense inequality between the male and female in Bangladesh as far as employment status is concerned. However, although there are some progresses in the recent years but it is still low than that of expected. In 1993-94, employed male population was 57.5 percent and it was 10.

6 percent for female at the national level. The percentage of employed population for both male and female has decreased to 44.2 percent and 9.

7 percent respectively in 1999-2000. Again, the percentage of employed male and female has increased to 68.3 percent and 22.9 percent in 2007 from 67.5 percent and 15.2 percent in 2004 respectively at the national level. Furthermore, it is also observed that the increasing rate in the percentage of employed population has occurred with a higher rate for female than that of male. Although there is little progress in the percentage of economically active population, the number of population who are unemployed are still increasing.

Unemployed population has increased from 1.3 million in 1995-96 to 2.7 million in 2009 with an average of 0.13 million per year.

In case of male, it has increased with an annual average of 0.06 million and for female it was 0.05 million at the same period (1995-96 to 2009). Global research has provided evidence on the critical linkage of educational status and it is being one of the key factors that deters women from equal participation in socio-economic activities with men and strengthens inequality between sexes. In Bangladesh, women are still restricted within their home from the birth with the perception that they will go away to other home after their marriage. Hence, they do not need education. Traditionally, female education has been accorded a low priority in Bangladesh due to poverty, social directives for female seclusion and the low value of girls.

However, the situation is changing in recent time. Since the World Declaration for All (1990), the government introduced various measures to intensify basic education for all with particular focus on female education. Numerous affirmative actions were also introduced to enhance

female literacy. However, there remains a considerable gap in enrollment literacy as well as the significantly higher proportion of female dropout from the system is still a major concern. The percentage of literate children also varies according to the sex.

The literacy of male children was 49.5 percent in 2000 at national level which has increased to 61.12 percent in 2010 with an annual average increasing rate of 1.16 percent. Continuation of this rate indicates that the literacy rate of male children might be increased to 65.77 percent at national level by 2014, which is 34.

23 percent lower than the National Education Policy (NEP, 2010) target of 100 percent. Whereas, literacy rate of female children at national level was 40.1 percent in 2000 which has increased to 54.8 percent in 2010 with an annual average increasing rate of 1.47 percent. Under the business as usual scenario, literacy rate of female might be 60.68 percent at national level in 2014, which is 39.32 percent lower than the National Education Policy (NEP, 2010) target of 100 percent.

There are also high rural-urban variations in case of literacy rate by sex. This percentage of literacy was 45.5 percent and 64.9 percent in rural and urban area for male children in 2000 which has increased to 56.67 percent and 73.1 percent in 2010 with an annual average increasing rate of 1.1 percent and 0.

82 percent respectively. On the other hand, in 2000 literacy rate of female was 36.1 percent and 55.3 percent for rural and urban areas which has

increased to 50. 21 percent and 67. 67 percent in 2010 with an annual average increase rate of 1. 41 percent and 1.

24 percent respectively (Table 2). The annual average rate of increase in the percentage of female literacy at national, rural and urban level is comparatively higher than that of male. This might be due to the various education enhancing activities by governments and various NGOs. Table 2: Current situation and future projection of literacy rate (<7 years of age) by sex Female Male Year National Rural Urban National Rural Urban 2000 40.

1 36. 1 55. 3 49.

5 45. 5 64. 9 2005 48.

1 42. 9 63. 2 55.

8 50. 4 72. 1 2010 54. 8 50. 21 67. 67 61. 12 56. 67 73.

1 2015 60. 68 55. 85 72.

61 65. 77 61. 14 76. 38 Source: based on BBS data of different years Despite considerable progress in the percentage of literacy rate, still it is lower than the expected. However, the percentage of the literacy rate both for male and female are increasing but it is occurring at a slower rate than that of the previous year. It is observed that the annual rate of increase in the percentage of female literacy was 3. 99 between 2000 and 2005 whereas it was 2. 79 percent during 2005-2010.

On the other hand, this increase rate female was 2.55 percent per year during 2000-2005 and 1.91 percent during 2005-2010.

Additionally, the annual rate of increase in the female literacy was 3.67, 3.91 and 2.24 percent at the national, rural and urban level respectively between 2000 and 2010. At the same time (i.

e. 2000-2010) the male literacy was increase with an annual rate of 2.35, 2.45 and 1.26 percent at national, rural and urban level respectively. Figure 2: Annual growth rate in the percentage of literacy between 2000 and 2010 by sex Source: based on BBS data of different years In the recent years, the rate at which female enrollment at the primary level of education has increased is unlike the enrollment at higher education which has not been increased at the same pace. Various positive initiatives for female education (especially at primary level), taken by the government, might be responsible for that. But, their continuation with education is breaking down due to various socio-economic and cultural reasons.

Socio-cultural attitudes in the form of growing fundamentalism, increasing incidence of sexual violence and harassment against girls are also identified as contributing factors behind girl's dropout of the school system. Gender disparity is significantly high in higher education (university level). In 2001, among the total student at public universities, only 24.3 percent were female students whereas, male enrollment comprises almost 3 times higher (75.

7 percent) than that of the female. It is also observed that, over the years, both male and female enrollment at university level is increasing with a

slower rate. Figure 3: Percentage of the enrolled students at university level <https://assignbuster.com/abstract-some-aspects-of-socio-economic-and-gender-inequality/>

(public university) by sexSource: BANBEIS, 2011 Strengths and Limitations

In the present research, due to time and budgetary constraints, fifty participants were selected purposively which may not seem to be sufficient. Female students who participated in the interview sessions, majority of them were at the teenage stage that might affect the research outcomes.

Despite varieties of limitations, our research findings have some implications for gender sensitive education policy and interventions in the context of rural Bangladesh. **Conclusions** It is universal that participation of women in education is imperative for balanced socio-economic development as well as empowerment of women. Present study findings indicate that socio-cultural prejudices concerning girls' educational attainment are highly prevalent in the study area. In traditional rural Bangladesh, subordinated position of women made them vulnerable within the family and everywhere because it is well known that a large number of them (women) are less educated or having no education. Therefore, program addressing men's attitudes toward women is needed to be introduced. Similarly, present research findings also suggest that there are some basic socio-cultural problems embedded in social system which is detrimental for girls' educational achievement. Thus, effective consciousness programs (e. g.

gender neutral teaching environment, interaction patterns between teacher and female student, gender role education) are also needed to improve the situation (Good et al., 1973; Delamont, 1980; Graneheim, 2004). Faulty socialization process leads gender differences in learning ability between boys and girls (Kelly, 1981). At the same time, social learning process is an important factor that leads differences in learning behaviors of boys and girls, <https://assignbuster.com/abstract-some-aspects-of-socio-economic-and-gender-inequality/>

because children learn all new behaviors by imitating both adults and other children (Bandura, 1971). Hence, for ensuring girls' education of marginal households, door to door awareness program on children's proper socialization and learning behaviors is required widely