

Teasing of Girls and its Impact on Education of the Victims in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT: This paper is an attempt to discuss the deep rooted causes of teasing, place of occurrence of teasing, relationship between the victimized girls and the perpetrators and the process of teasing applied by the perpetrators against girls. This paper also discusses the impacts of teasing on education of women in a patriarchal society. To conduct this research, 240 girls were selected using the technique of purposive sampling among the victims of teasing. Survey, observation, FGD, use of key informants and case study methods were applied to collect reliable and authentic information on this personal as well as sensitive subject of the victims. The main objective of this paper is to examine to what extent the teasing against girls affects the education in gender perspective in Bangladesh where 48.5 per cent of the population is female.

INTRODUCTION

The rate of female literacy as well as employment opportunities of women in different sectors is increasing but still significantly lags behind the males because of gender discrimination, power practices by men, social attitudes towards women, lack of opportunities, dependency on men, insecurity, etc. Some unexpected social boundaries and practices have made the road rough for the women from their childhood to adulthood. The culture of teasing is rooted at the very beginning of civilization in many societies across the globe. In many cultures teasing is found as joking in the kinship network system in the form of humour in constructive manner which contributes to make networks and intimate relationships among the individuals for social solidarity as well as community stability. Empirical studies indicate that both boys and girls use teasing to indirectly express affection toward someone of the opposite gender (Thorne, '90, Eder, '93). Both boys and girls are teased

by making an explicit reference to 'liking' the opposite sex (Thorne and Luria, '86). On the other hand, teasing has negative meaning and if it is used in a negative perspective then it has an adverse impact on the personal as well as social life of the individual victims, especially the girls in a patriarchal society.

Teasing girls is a common phenomenon in Bangladesh. Consequently, in every year a significant number of young girls become victims of it. Parents become worried about sending their daughters alone to educational institutions, working places and elsewhere, which creates impediments for their education, employment, self-dependency and self-confidence.

On the other hand, most of the perpetrators were found to be delinquent due to a lack of proper socialization. It has been observed that teasing is one of the hidden causes of drop-out of the girls at the secondary level of their school education and at the same time it enhanced the dependency upon men because they remained unemployed and as a result they did not have the scope of taking part in the

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decision-making process. It has been found that the victims always felt insecure and became the mentally ill and as a result some of them had committed suicide. Teasing girls has been associated with socio-economic conditions and the culture of the people in terms of their customs, beliefs and value systems. The existing rules and regulations against teasing are inadequate and at the same time less effective in practice. The main objective of this paper is to examine to what extent teasing against girls affects the education of women in Bangladesh where 48.5 percent of the population is female.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The concept of teasing is associated with sexual harassment either in public places or elsewhere against girls by boys. Teasing is defined by different scholars in different times in different perspectives. Shapiro, *et al.* ('91) have explained teasing as a personal communication, directed by an agent toward a targeted person, who includes three components: aggression, humor and ambiguity. Alberts ('92) has defined teasing as an aggressive verbalization couched in some situational qualifiers indicating playfulness. Eder ('93) described teasing as any playful remark aimed at another person, which can include mock challenges, commands, and threats as well as imitating and exaggerating someone's behavior in a playful way. While the content of teasing would often be negative or hostile if taken literally, the playful meaning is determined in part by cues from the perpetrators indicating that the remark should be taken in a playful manner Rachel (2001). Warm ('97) pointed out that teasing is a deliberate act designed by the perpetrators to cause tension for the victims. In this paper, teasing girls was conceptualized as an evil attitude, bullying behavior and acts against girls by the perpetrators. On the other hand, the concept of impact of teasing on education means how teasing affects the education of the girl students at the secondary level. More specifically, it shows how teasing induced drop-outs of women from schooling and as a result they were deprived from education.

METHODS AND MATERIAL

This paper is based on the data taken from the research project titled *Teasing against Girls and its*

Impact on Education in Bangladesh which was conducted in 2011-2012. The author was the Research Associate of the project. To conduct this research, 240 girls were selected using the technique of purposive sampling among the victims of teasing. Survey, observation, FGD, use of key informants and case study methods were applied in order to collect reliable and authentic information on this personal as well as sensitive subject. Both qualitative and quantitative techniques were applied to analysis of the data, but the emphasis was on qualitative techniques.

THE VICTIMS OF TEASING

This section deals with the age structure and level of education of the girls who were the victims of teasing by the perpetrators. Age structure means at what age the girls were victimized by their perpetrators. More specifically, their age structure indicates the age-specificity of the victims of teasing. On the other hand, the level of education means class-specificity of the education, i.e., in what class the girls were students at the time of being teased. A clear idea about the age structure of the girls along with their level of education is given below.

It is found in Table 1 that about 14.6 per cent girls were victims of teasing when they were the students of Grade V and VI. It is interesting to note that the minor girls were not free from teasing. Similarly, about 25 per cent girl students were victims of teasing when they were the students of Grade VII and VIII. On the other hand, about 35.8 per cent girls were the victims of teasing when they were students of Grade VII, VIII, IX and X, respectively. About 10.4 per cent students were victims when they were college students.

It was also found (see Table 1) that about 35.8 per cent girl students were victims of teasing when their age was 14-16 years and they were the students of Grades VII to X. The second highest victim of teasing was 25 per cent and they belonged to the age-group of 12 to 14 years. A similar percent of victims are found when they were students of Grades X and X+ and they belonged to the age-group of 16 to 18 years. It was interesting to note that only 10.4 per cent girls were victims of teasing because of the fact that they were matured as compared to the other

TABLE 1
Age structure and level of education of the victims of teasing

Age-groups (in years)	Level of education							Total
	Grade V	Grade VI	Grade VII	Grade VIII	Grade IX	Grade X	Grade X+	
10-12	20 (8.3)*	15 (6.3)	—	—	—	—	—	35 (14.6)
12-14	—	15 (6.3)	25 (10.4)	20 (8.3)	—	—	—	60 (25.0)
14-16	—	—	15 (6.3)	20 (8.3)	25 (10.4)	26 (10.8)	—	90 (35.8)
16-18	—	—	—	—	—	4 (01.7)	30 (12.5)	30 (14.2)
18 +	—	—	—	—	—	—	25 (10.4)	25 (10.4)
Total	20 (8.3)	30 (12.6)	40 (16.7)	40 (16.6)	25 (10.4)	30 (12.5)	55 (22.9)	240 (100.0)

* Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages

students. On the other hand, about one-third of the students were victims of teasing when they were the students of Grades VII and VIII.

Reasons of Teasing

Teasing of girls is associated with economic, socio-cultural, political, psychological and geographical factors. It is the product of the economic system, social structure, as well as the law and order

of the area of the country. Infant ('87) distinguished two different types of teasing, one is constructive and the other destructive. Pawluk ('89) argued that teasing varied dramatically according to the social context in which it took place. The identified causes of teasing are given below in Table 2.

It is evident from Table 2 that about 10.5 per cent girl students of Grades V-VI reported that one of the main causes of teasing was the ineffective law and

TABLE 2
Teasing in relation to level of education of the victims

Causes of teasing	Level of education of the victims							Total
	Class V	Class VI	Class VII	Class VIII	Class IX	Class X	Class X+	
Ineffective law and order	15 (6.3)*	10 (4.2)	—	—	—	—	—	25 (10.5)
Lack of socialization	—	15 (6.3)	20 (8.4)	20 (8.4)	—	—	—	55 (23.1)
Did not protest against the perpetrators	—	—	15 (6.3)	17 (7.0)	21 (8.7)	18 (7.5)	—	71 (29.7)
Patriarchal society	—	—	—	—	—	4 (1.6)	22 (9.1)	26 (10.9)
Political power practice	2 (0.8)	5 (2.0)	—	—	—	6 (2.6)	25 (10.4)	38 (15.9)
Recreation	—	—	—	—	4 (1.7)	—	—	4 (1.7)
Wearing unconventional dress	—	—	—	3 (1.3)	—	—	8 (3.3)	11 (4.6)
Pressure of peer group	3 (1.3)	—	5 (2.0)	—	—	2 (0.8)	—	10 (4.2)
Total	20 (8.4)	30 (12.5)	40 (16.7)	40 (16.7)	25 (10.4)	30 (12.5)	55 (22.8)	240 (100.0)

* Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages

order of the country. About 23.1 per cent students reported that the main cause of teasing was the lack of proper socialization of the perpetrators. According to them, if they were properly socialized, then the perpetrators would not keep themselves involved in teasing. On the other hand, 29.7 per cent girls reported that the main cause of teasing was the lack of protest against the perpetrators. On the other hand, about 15.9 per cent girls reported that the incidence of teasing was rooted in the instinct of political power either directly or indirectly. If the father of the perpetrators was involved in the power structure, then the perpetrators are emboldened to be involved in teasing.

About 1.7 per cent of the students reported that the young people did not have any recreational facility and as a result many of them considered teasing as recreation. About 4.6 per cent thought that wearing unconventional dress by the girls sometimes stimulates the perpetrators to be involved in teasing. On the other hand, 4.2 girls reported that peer group pressure was one of the reasons of teasing of girls.

Place of Teasing

The place of teasing of girls means the spot where the actual teasing occurs. The identified places were natal residence, beside the road, recreation center, shopping mall, on the transport and on campus of the education institutions, i.e., schools, colleges, etc.

Table 3 here provides a clear picture about the place of teasing of girls by the perpetrators.

It has been reported that about 17.7 per cent girls were victims of teasing by the perpetrators at their natal residence. Under the circumstances, the perpetrators were the invited guests and relatives. About 27.1 per cent victims reported that they were the subject of teasing beside the road when they were walking to go somewhere. On the other hand, 13.6 per cent were victims of teasing at recreational centers, viz. parks, cinema halls and playgrounds when they were watching outdoor games like football, cricket, etc. About 12 per cent girls were the victims of teasing at shopping malls. Similarly, 18.8 per cent and 10.8 per cent girls were the victims on public transport and on the premises of their schools, respectively.

Relationship between Victims and Perpetrators

This section deals with the relationship between the victimized girls and the perpetrators. Table 4 is given below to explain this context. It is found in Table 4 that about 17.2 per cent victims reported that they had relationships with the perpetrators, either consanguinal or affinal or fictive. On the other hand, about 19.1 per cent victims reported that they had fictive kin relationships with the perpetrators. Similarly, 19.8 per cent reported that the perpetrators were the friends of the victims.

TABLE 3
Age structure and place of teasing of girls by the perpetrators

Age-groups (in years)	Place of teasing						Total
	House	Road	Recreation centre	Shopping mall	Transportation area (bus stand / rickshaw stand)	School	
10-12	15 (6.3)*	5 (2.0)	5 (2.0)	1 (0.4)	4 (1.6)	5 (2.0)	35 (14.3)
12-14	10 (4.2)	21 (8.8)	5 (2.0)	10 (4.2)	10 (4.2)	4 (1.6)	60 (25.0)
14-16	12 (5.0)	20 (8.3)	11 (4.6)	10 (4.2)	22 (9.2)	15 (6.3)	90 (37.6)
16-18	3 (1.3)	11 (4.6)	4 (1.6)	4 (1.6)	6 (2.5)	2 (0.9)	30 (12.6)
18 +	2 (0.9)	8 (3.4)	8 (3.4)	4 (1.6)	3 (1.3)	—	25 (10.5)
Total	42 (17.7)	65 (27.1)	33 (13.6)	29 (12.0)	45 (18.8)	26 (10.8)	240 (100.0)

* Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage

TABLE 4
Relationship between the victims of teasing and the perpetrators

Age-groups in years	Relatives	Neighbours	Relations Friend	Unknown Person	Others	Total
10-12	10 (4.2)*	8 (3.3)	5 (2.0)	7 (2.9)	5 (2.0)	35 (14.4)
12-14	15 (6.3)	12 (5.0)	10 (4.16)	15 (6.3)	8 (3.3)	60 (25.0)
14-16	12 (5.0)	15 (6.3)	20 (8.3)	30 (12.5)	13 (5.4)	90 (37.5)
16-18	3 (1.3)	5 (2.0)	8 (3.3)	10 (4.2)	4 (1.7)	30 (12.5)
18 +	1 (0.4)	6 (2.5)	5 (2.0)	11 (4.6)	2 (0.9)	25 (10.4)
Total	41 (17.2)	46 (19.1)	48 (19.8)	73 (30.5)	32 (13.3)	240 (100.00)

* Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage

It was interesting to note that when the perpetrators were not able to reach their goal with the targeted girls then they found out a way of teasing them to put them into trouble. About 30.5 per cent of the perpetrators were found to be unknown to the victim. They were involved in teasing as a kind of fun or as a joke. About 13.3 per cent of the perpetrators were found to be involved in teasing for other reasons.

Process of Teasing

The process of teasing means the way in which the perpetrators teased the girls. The process of teasing is confined in this research the place of teasing, relationship between the girls and the perpetrators and the way in which the perpetrators tease the girls. Besides, teasing can occur in many ways such as verbal teasing which includes bullying, saying sexual words, passing comments on physical structure of the targeted, and so on. On basis of analyzing FGD information and opinions from different key informants, different ways of teasing of girls was identified, viz., using the eyes, trying to touch, pulling clothes, creating a barrier as they walk, making different odd sounds, throwing objects, bullying, throwing rebuke related to sex, throwing flowers, taking pictures through their mobile phone, gathering in front of girls' schools, shouting, laughing behind them, singing songs, throwing love letters, physical harassment, throwing flying kisses, giving threats, etc.

Impacts of Teasing

Impact of teasing on education was found to be associated with lesser interest in education, irregularity in attending classes, lower grade of academic performance, dropping out, loneliness, isolation, stress, depression, suicidal thoughts and feelings of insecurity among the victims of teasing (Perry, *et al.*, '88; Nansel *et al.*, 2001; and Veenstra *et al.*, 2005). It has been found in other studies that the girls who were victimized by teasing had been less interested in their education, irregular in attending classes, felt insecurity, low performances, led to discontinuation of education, stress and trauma (Hawker and Boulton, 2000). Besides, indirect impacts of teasing have already been identified in relation to low self-esteem, early age at marriage, teen age pregnancy and early motherhood, migration, dowry and suicide (Klomek *et al.*, 2008). Table 5 is given below to get a clear knowledge about the impacts of teasing.

It may be seen from Table 5 that 9.9 per cent of the students were less interested about their education after the incidence of teasing. On the other hand, about 15.8 per cent were found irregular in attending their classes. About 8.7 per cent students said that their class room performance and the results of the examinations were not satisfactory because they could not provide enough attention because of stress due to teasing. About 22.6 per cent students reported that they felt insecure, especially on the way to school. About 16.3 per cent girls reported that they

TABLE 5
Impact of teasing on education of the victims

Age-groups (in year)	Impact of teasing on education							Total
	Less interest in education	Irregular in attending classes	Low performance	Discontinuation of education	Felt insecurity	Stress and trauma	Other	
10-12	5 (2.0)*	4 (1.7)	5 (2.0)	3 (1.25)	4 (1.7)	6 (2.5)	8 (3.3)	35 (14.45)
12-14	7 (2.9)	7 (2.9)	2 (0.83)	16 (6.7)	11 (4.6)	11 (4.6)	6 (2.5)	60 (25.0)
14-16	10 (4.16)	12 (5.0)	10 (4.16)	13 (5.4)	23 (9.6)	12 (5.0)	10 (4.16)	90 (38.0)
16-18	2 (0.83)	7 (2.9)	1 (0.41)	3 (1.25)	9 (3.75)	4 (1.7)	4 (1.7)	30 (12.5)
18 +	—	8 (3.3)	3 (1.25)	4 (1.7)	7 (2.9)	1 (0.41)	2 (0.83)	25 (10.4)
Total	24 (9.9)	38 (15.8)	21 (8.7)	39 (16.3)	54 (22.6)	34 (14.2)	30 (12.5)	240

* Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage

discontinued their education due to insecurity and at the same time their guardians did not want to send them to school because of teasing by the perpetrators. It was reported that about 14.2 per cent students were suffering from stress and trauma because they were deprived from the opportunity of education to develop their future career.

To quote a student of Grade X: My name is Salma. I was a 16 year aged student of Grade X of Laxmipur Girls' High School. It was situated nearby Rajshahi Medical College Hospital. I was living in Hetem Khan with my parents along with one younger brother and sister. They were also primary school students. The distance to my school is about one km. It should be noted that most of the time I availed of a rickshaw. Sometimes I had to walk when rickshaws were not available. One day I could not find rickshaw after school and as a result I decided to walk and at about the middle of my walk to my house from school I found that two boys had proposed to me for friendship. I refused and they again proposed to me. Once I was threatened by them. After a few weeks again I was walking on the road and they followed and proposed to me on the way to my home from school. I told them if you do the same thing again I shall inform the police. They became aggressive and pulled out my *orna* (clothes). I could not express my problem to my teachers and parents and as a result I always felt insecure in walking on the road. Sometimes I felt stress and became traumatized after the experience of teasing. I could not sleep well. I could not even study as before. Consequently, I did not do well in the last examinations.

Thus it was found from the statement of Salma that teasing caused stress and trauma and that affected her education. She felt insecure and lived in anxiety which exhibited a high rate of depression (Olweus, 1978, Hawker and Boulton, 2000). It not only affected the right of education of the girl but also affected indirectly the employment opportunities, and income.

In another interesting case study, Rahima, a student of Grade 1X of Vivekananda Girls School of Cox Bazar had said:

When I was a student of Grade IX of Vivekananda Girls School, I was disturbed by a boy on the way to school. This boy was working in a studio which was situated besides the road. I requested him several times not to disturb me but he did not stop. Finally, I had to inform my parents. My father met the boy with a local political leader and he threatened him not to do the same things against me again. It stopped for about six months but after a political change, the boy started to disturb me again with his friends and they wanted to kidnap me. My father was working in the Social Service Department and finally he requested the Directorate of Social Services to transfer him from Cox Bazar to Comilla. Ultimately, we migrated to Comilla for my security. I could not get chance for admission there in any school and as a result I had no education and waited for marriage according to the decision of my parents. My parents were in anxiety for my future because their dream was for me to complete higher education. I became a mental patient and I lost confidence in myself and I thought that

suicide was the best way to get rid of my mental anxiety. One late night I hanged myself with a ceiling fan in my bed room. My parents came to know and they saved me. Finally, my parents arranged a marriage for me.

This case indicates that teasing girls was one of the causes for drop outs from education which not only affected the right to education but also affected mental health. It was not only confined to drop outs. Rather, it encouraged early age at marriage and at the same time early motherhood which affected the maternal and child health. Moreover, it encouraged high fertility and a population explosion which was a big problem in Bangladesh.

CONCLUSIONS

The total population of Bangladesh is about 160 million, among them 48.5 per cent are female (Sarker, 2010). Teasing of girls was an emerging issue across the East as well as the West (Charach *et al.* '95). In an anthropological perspective, the concept of teasing of girls is rooted within the family level in the kinship network through joking relationships. This joking relationship has shifted from family to the community as well as to societal level in the form of teasing. Teasing is a word with many meanings. In human interactions, teasing comes in two major forms, playful and hurtful. In mild cases, and especially when it is reciprocal, teasing can be viewed as playful and friendly. Sometimes, people tease each other as a joke while using the kinship terminology. This view of teasing contributes to bring people closer and increase intimacy. It is a part of the culture of many societies and it may help in social solidarity as well as in community stability. On the other hand, teasing is often unwelcome in many cultures and then it takes the form of harassment. Teasing of girls is basically an insult with a smile. It is a bullying behavior imposed on the girls for others' enjoyment. Under the circumstances, the girls feel insecure to go outside their homes alone. Consequently, parents have become afraid to send their daughters to school which creates impediments in educating girls. The existing rules and regulations against teasing are inadequate and less effective in practice. Teasing is an euphemism used in Bangladesh mainly for the sexual harassment of the girls as well as women.

Recently, the government of Bangladesh has made some efforts to prevent teasing of girls due to increasing stress and traumatic patients which led to increase in the suicide rate among the victims (Hanish and Guerra, 2002). It should be noted that the incidence of teasing is many times unreported, for fear of reprisals and exposure to public shame. It is particularly important to understand that women are put under stress by archaic rules concerning so-called chastity and nobility. Therefore, long-term solutions are not possible without fundamental changes in societal attitudes of the people of this male-dominated society. There should a joint effort in order to prevent teasing of girls involving people from different sectors. It should be kept in mind that the girls and women are daughters or sisters or wives, or mothers or grandmothers of someone. Under the circumstances, there should be a collective responsibility to honour them as human beings, not just as women.

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