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Marital Duration and Sexual Frequency among the Muslim and Santal Couples in Rural Bangladesh: A Cross-Cultural Perspective

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Abstract**—**Age and sex are biological terms that are socio-culturally constructed for marriage and marital sexual behavior in every society. Marriage is a universal norm that makes legitimate sexual behavior between a man and a woman in marital life cycle to gain bio-social purposes. Cross-cultural studies reveal that marital sexual frequency as a part of marital sexual behavior not only varies within the couple's life cycle, but also varies between and among couples in diverse cultures. The purpose of the study was to compare marital sexual frequency in association with age status and length of marital relationship between Muslim and Santal couples in rural Bangladesh. For this we assumed that (1) Santal culture compared to Muslim culture preferred earlier age at marriage for meeting marital sexual purposes in rural Bangladesh; (2) Marital duration among the Muslim couples was higher than that among the Santal couples; (3) Sexual frequency among the younger couples in both the ethnic communities was higher than the older couples; (4) Sexual frequency across the Muslim couples' marital life cycle was higher than that the Santal couples' marital life cycle. In so doing, 288 active couples (145 for Muslim and 143 for Santal) selected by cluster random sampling were interviewed with questionnaire method. The findings of *Independent Samples T Test* on age at marriage, current age, marital duration and sexual frequency independently reveal that there were significant differences in sexual frequency not only across the couples' life cycle but also vary between the Muslim and Santal couples in relation to marital duration. The results of *Pearson's Inter-Correlation Coefficients* reveal that although age at marriage, current age and marital duration for husband and wife were significantly positive correlated with each other between the communities, there were significantly negative correlation between the age at marriage, current age, marital duration and sexual frequency among the selected couples between the communities.

Keywords**—**Bangladesh, Cross-Cultural Perspective, Marital Duration, Muslim, Santal, Marital Sexual Frequency.

I. Introduction

SEX is a bio-psychological drive that is gradually developed among human children and may continue across their life cycle associated with socio-cultural and environmental factors in which they born and live. Researches on human growth and development indicate that puberty in general begins at the average age 12 for female and 1/2 years latter for male from when primary and secondary sex organs for both the male and female gradually develop and at the certain age they both are matured enough to involve in sexual behavior [1-4]. Humanistic philosophers opine that sex is one of the human needs that eligible people meet in social relations [1-5]. In order to meet this need, they indicate, eligible people with homogeneous or heterogeneous sexes involve in diverse patterns of sexual behavior in their life, such as premarital, extramarital, and marital sexuality, depending on the cultural patterns [6-10]. Although eligible people involve in such diverse sexual patterns, it is universally true that only the marital sexuality among the heterosexual couples provides relatively preferred, secured and stable context to encourage meeting their sexual needs, such as to have reciprocal sexual pleasure, to get children and develop them properly, to release aggression, tension and anxiety, to sustain marital and familial bonds through reciprocal love and emotional attachment that are the base of social relationship, and lastly to acquire healthy personality that helps adapt to changing environment, other forms of human sexuality, such as those cannot [5-10]. Actually, marital sexual behavior refers to the behaviors that eligible adults are organized into marital ties according to marriage norms through which they involve in interpersonal sexual feeling, thinking, attraction, kissing that produce sexual arousal and increase the chance of orgasm intended to sexual satisfaction in their marital life [12, 13]. This study focuses on marital sexual frequency associated with marital duration of Muslim and Santal couples in rural Bangladesh.

Age and sex are biological terms that are socio-culturally constructed for marriage and marital sexuality in every society. Although sexual maturity between male and female all over the world are more or less universal in biological sense [1-4], there are wide cultural variations in involving in marriage and marital sexuality intended to fulfill sexual purposes, depending on the societies' cultural patterns, socio-demographic, political, religious status and ecological condition in the world [14, 15]. A great deal of systematic cross-cultural data indicates that developed and highly urbanized societies prefer delayed marriage for marital

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sexuality because of higher education and career build up, while parents in the developing and under developing/backward societies expect more early age at marriage for their siblings to access marriage relationship because of traditional life styles. Most of the studies in this region indicate that there are marked differences in age at marriage between males and females to access in sexual relationship: the men are likely to be older than the women [14-18].

Marital sexual behavior, especially sexual frequency not only depends on couples' values, norms and attitudes toward sexual activity, including their socio-economic and ethnic statuses, but also on their age characteristics and duration of marital life. Actually, how many times a couple in a week or a month or a year will involve in sexual intercourse or coitus depends on couples' biological and marital age cycle, attitude and motivation to sex, physiological fitness, including socio-cultural-environmental conditions favorable to engage in sexual activities [19-48]. Relevant studies [19-48, 85-87] reveal that the couples with lower biological age and lower marital duration and more favorable and endurable socio-economic and marital status are involved in more frequent sexual coitus and in a certain age, such as 20-40 this frequency will be highest and then with the increasing age and duration of marital life cycle their sexual frequency may gradually decrease or decline. In one study Marshall [19] found that at earlier age average sexual frequency of the couples in the Mangaians was higher than that the couples' at their later age (p.123). In another study Nag [22] compared average sexual frequency between U.S. (United States of America) and Indian couples in which she explored similar trends in sexual frequency based on age hierarchy and she also found that average sexual frequency of the U.S. couples was higher than the Indian couples, although Indian fertility rate was higher than the U.S. fertility rate. Based on literatures review Goetz [27] explored that frequency of marital coitus among the Cayapas of Ecuador couples was twice a week, while this among the Polynesian groups in late 20s was 10 to 12 per week and around 40s the frequency had fallen to 3 to 4 and still other, such as in the African Bala, average frequency of sexual intercourse had once or twice per day from young adulthood into the sixth decade of life (p.258). Adams, Gullotta & Markstrom-Adams [49] based on literatures review from 1948 to 1990 explored that in age group 13-15, both male and female adolescents' coital frequency was lower, while their coital frequency in age group 16-19 was relatively higher (p.332). Wikipadia [50] reported that sexual frequency may range from zero to 20 times a week around the world, including married and cohabiting couples. It was evidenced that 43% of married couples' sexual frequency had 3 to 4 times a week compared with 36% of the cohabiting couples.

Marriage and family in Bangladesh are universal and important institutions which perform many functions and play many important roles to meet sexual needs for human development and adjustment across the generations like many other conservative cultures around the world. The main stream of Bangladeshi cultures always prefer marital sexuality and never permit premarital, extramarital and homosexuality, although rare cases secretly exist in those sexual behaviors in both rural and urban communities as well as in different cultural groups [51-56]. The relevant studies [51-56] reveal that marriage as institutions is shaped by patriarchal system through which marital tie between a male and a female is developed based on perception of male and female's biological maturity and psycho-sexual behavior. Without marital tie a man and woman cannot, generally, consume sex and cannot maintain their intimate relation. Although state's legal provision in age at marriage is 18 years for female and 22 years for male, most of the parents in both rural and even urban areas of Bangladesh expect early age at marriage, especially for daughters due to keep her virginity, because men prefer virginity for women. Sexually, women are the object of men's sexual consumption. In a study [53] reported including 1671 samples from various occupational groups in Bangladesh that average number of coitus of married couples was 3.6 under 24 age group, while the average sexual frequency of the married couples was 2.3 above 45 age group a week. They also explored that average sexual frequency varied according to occupations and number of children the couples expected [57-62]. In another cross-cultural study Uddin [56] found that Muslim couples' marital sexual frequency compared to Santal couples were higher in rural Bangladesh. However, cross-cultural studies conducted in abroad suggest that there are wide cultural variations in marital sexual frequency across the couples' life cycle. In Bangladesh there is a paucity of cross-cultural data on marital duration and sexual frequency among the couples in various religious and ethnic communities, especially between Muslim and Santal communities, although marriage and its fertility data across the ethnic community are available. So, the present study examines and compares sexual frequency in association with marital duration between Muslim and Santal couples in rural Bangladesh. These findings may contribute to bio-social sciences.

II. BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

A. Background

Bangladesh is an agrarian economy based rural country where various religious and ethnic communities, such as Muslim and Santal, live in the same geographical conditions, and involve in the historical and social processes for livelihood. The *Muslim* community is the major dominant religious community. Ethnically, Bangladeshi Muslims are *Sunni;* physically they are mixture of different stocks, having common ordinary folks with the long traditions of beliefs and ideas. They speak in *Bengali* language with the mixture of *Arabic-Urdu* preference. Religiously, they believe in Islam which includes the oneness of God or Monotheism *(Tawhid),* Holy Qur'an as His Devine laws and principles, Muhammad (sm) as His nominated last Prophet and his *Hadith (Sunnah*) as practices of sayings. A man who believes in Monotheism,

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Qur'an and Hadith is called Muslim [51-56, 68, 69]. On the other hand, the *Santal* community is the largest tribal group of Aborigines. Racially, they belong to *Proto-Australoid* stocks and speak in *Austric-Mundary*, and sometimes they speak in *Bengali* version with the other *Bengali*-speaking people. They believe in several B*ongas.* A man who believes in several Bongas is called a Santal. The Santal in Bangladesh believe in animism, which includes worships of nature [65-67]. These fundamental belief systems of the communities may influence sexual behavior in their respective marriage relationship in rural Bangladesh context.

a. Socio-Economic Status and Age at Marriage

In rural Bangladesh, about 76% of the peoples irrespective of all communities live in subsistent economy in which most of them are poor. Minority groups such as Santal are the poorest of the poor. One report indicates that 53% of the rural people are poor and there are 55 millions food insecure households and 62% of the adults are illiterate [70, p. 3]. Although main occupation of the rural villagers is agriculture, man-land ratio is very low and many of them are landless or near the landless due to law of inheritance, land fragmentation and over-population. Some reports indicate that about 62% of the rural households are functionally landless [70, 71]. In this subsistent economy, division of labor between men and women, especially adult men and women varies enormously between the Muslim and Santal communities. Both Santal adult men and women take part in agriculture and any other fields and work outside the family from dawn to dusk as manual laborers [65-67]. On the other hand, division of labor between adult men and women in Muslim community is strictly maintained according to sex norms. The Muslims think adult men are only breadwinner of the family. So the Muslim men have to work in agricultural field and other economic sectors. Generally, Muslim women do not work on the agricultural field and do not go outside the family alone. Their main functions are to bear and rear children, maintain family chores, serve family members, although women in the lower class families work outside the family under economic pressure for family maintenance [54, 72, 73] and other reports indicate that the vast majority of Muslim women in Bangladesh are not only poor and are confined in four walls in the household, but also depend on three pillars of their supports: on father, husband and son in their life cycle.

Traditionally, conjugal life in Bangladesh begins at time when respective parents or elder members arrange their marriage according to communities' norms. This relationship between a man and a woman is relatively enduring relationship involving in economic cooperation, and allowing exclusive sexual relationship leading to sexual satisfaction and to child bearing and rearing. Both the Muslim and Santal communities are patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal in nature. Although both cultures permit *polygyny*, permit sororate and levirate, widow or widower' remarriage, they widely practice monogamy or serial monogamy, the Muslims practice more polygyny than the Santal, because Islamic rules or Sunna, guide Muslim males to take up to four wives at a time, depending on the situations [54-56, 68, 69]. Both communities follow *endogamy*, and *exogamy*; the Muslims are religiously endogamous and class, lineage exogamous, but the Santal are tribal endogamous and clan exogamous [65-67]. Although both the communities prefer *contracted marriage*, the Santal widely practice romantic marriage than the Muslim. According to Islamic rules before marriage an adult male and an adult female cannot meet together, because it is sinful [54]. In this respect relevant studies reveal that the Muslims prefer delayed marriage for males and earlier marriage for females to keep chastity and beauty, while the Santal expect more early age at marriage for both males and females due to involve in love relation and economic reasons [51-56].

b. Marital Duration and Sexual behavior

Sexual behavior depends on community cultural norms. In Muslim culture, sexual behavior is confined only in marital tie and other pattern of sexual behavior, such as premarital, extramarital and homosexuality is strictly forbidden [51-56], but in Santal culture it is more or less flexible due to adult male and female's proximity. Some studies reveal that both men and women of the Santal jointly participate in their social, economic and religious activities and interact with each other freely and independently, so the men and women of the Santal involve in oral sex and prefer romantic marriage, although kissing and physical intercourse between them are obligatory [65]. On the other hand, after being puberty, adult men and women in the Muslim culture maintain their life separately; they cannot see each other; they cannot interact with each other; both men and women are expected to be virgins until their wedding [52]. In a cross-cultural study Maloney, Aziz and Sarker [53] found that average sexual frequency at the beginning of marital life of the Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Christian and tribal couples was lower due to maintain rituality in arranged marriage and their coital rate increased at the middle phase of marital life and again it declined with the advancement of couples' age. They also found that Muslim couples' sexual frequency in marital tie was higher than that in other ethnic communities, such as Hindu, Buddhist, Christian and tribal communities. In another study Uddin [56] explored that sexual frequency of the Muslim couples was higher than the Santal couples' sexual frequency due to differences in marital duration, food habit and socio-cultural stability in marriage relationship. Based on relevant literatures review, mentioned- above, the present study assumed that there were significant differences in sexual frequency in relation to marital duration among the Muslim and Santal couples in rural Bangladesh. The specific assumptions drawn in this study are given bellow:

Assumption 1: Santal culture compared to Muslim culture prefers early age at marriage to have sexual need and other marital purposes in rural Bangladesh;

Assumption 2: Marital duration among the Muslim couples is higher than that among the Santal couples;

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Assumption 3: Sexual frequency among the younger couples is higher than the older couples in both the communities;

Assumption 4: Sexual frequency across the Muslim couples' marital life cycle is higher than that the Santal couples' marital life cycle.

B. Methodology

a. Sample

Field work for this study was conducted from January to June, 2006. In so doing the village *Kalna*, situated in the *Talonda* union of *Tanore Upazila, Rajshahi* district, Bangladesh, was purposefully selected where two distinct cultural communities: Muslim and Santal were living as neighbors in the same geographical setting. In this study village there were about 380 eligible couples: 200 couples were Muslim's and the rest of them were Santal's. In order to compare sexual behavior, especially sexual frequency in marriage relationship associated with marital duration between Muslim and Santal communities, two separate sampling units of the communities' couples were developed: one for Muslim and another for Santal. Each community was considered as a cluster and each couple of both the cluster communities was accounted for as a study unit and then 288 sexually active couples (145 couples or 72.5% from the Muslim and 143 couples or 79.44% from the Santal) were randomly selected through cluster random sampling, in which both husband and wife of both the sample couples actively participated in the study. The couples from both the communities were actively participated in the study, whose age ranged from 16 to 60 years for husband and from 11 to 50 years for wife in which most of them were in middle ages.

b. Variable and Measure

In defining and measurement of marital duration and sexual frequency, most of the researchers defined the terms based on self-report, diagnostic interview and survey method used to collect reliable and valid data [10, 50, 74-83]. The present study defined and measured the relevant terms in the following way:

Muslim and Santal community's couples and their socio-economic status were background factors in which the relationship of selected couples' age at marriage, current age, marital duration and sexual frequency were inter-acted. In measurement of background factors *Community* was nominally measured and coded as 1= Muslim, and 2= Santal. *Family type* was nominally measured and coded as 1= Nuclear Family and 2= Joint (Extended) Family. *Education* was numerically measured in years. *Occupation* was nominally measured and coded as 1= Farming, 2= Small business, 3= Day laboring and 4= Van pulling. *Yearly total income* was numerically measured in Taka (1 US$ = 68 Bangladesh Taka in currency exchange). *Age at Marriage* was defined as the timing of marriage for both husband and wife and assessed in years. *Current age* for husband and wife was also assessed in year. *Duration of Marriage was* defined as the timing of marriage cycle between husband and wife and assessed in years [13, 14].

According to Mcanulty & Burnette [10] sexual intercourse refers to penile-vaginal coitus between heterosexual men and women to have sexual pleasure, to make love with each other, to have a child and to release tension/ anxiety etc. (p.8). According to Wikipadia [50], sexual intercourse, in biological sense, is the act in which male reproductive organ enters the female reproductive tract: the two entities may be opposite sexes that have been viewed as the natural endpoint of all sexual contact between them. Recently the term, sexual intercourse has been broadened and labels at least three different sex acts: *vaginal intercourse* in which male's penis penetrates into female's vaginal tract; *oral intercourse*, involving oral caress of the sex organs (male or female); and *anal intercourse* in which male's penis inserts into his partner's anus. Based on the definition, however, *sexual intercourse* in this study was defined as vaginal coitus between husband and wife across the marital life cycle and *sexual frequency* was assessed as the number of sexual intercourse or coitus between husband and wife in a last month.

c. Instrument and Procedure

Study design used in this study was cross-cultural one which explored and compared quantitative (objective) aspects of marital duration (also age at marriage, current age for both husband and wife and sexual intercourse for valid comparison. For this 288 sexually active couples from both the communities were jointly interviewed with questionnaire schedule that was designed with both open-ended and close-ended questions, following *Family Measurement in India* edited by S. Bharat [84] and other researches [77-83] to collect raw data on the indicators of age at marriage, current age, duration of marital life, and sexual frequency for both the communities' couples, including their socio-economic status. These aspects of marital sexuality were measured at the ordinal and ratio scales. In addition, case study technique was singly applied for per partner side by side questionnaire method to collect in-depth data on the variables selected, especially on marital duration and sexual frequency between husband and wife's sexual relation across their marital life cycle.

In order to collect real and valid data through questionnaire and case study method on sexual behavior frequency in culturally restricted society or community, as was in the Muslim and Santal community in Bangladesh, several strategies were followed (1) the author built up rapport with the respondents of the communities' samples to create consciousness about the research purposes and objectives and it continued until the completion of data collection in order to establish research reliability and validity, (2) As sexuality was sensitive issue in this country, one female interviewer worked with female respondents and male interviewer (author) collected data from the male respondents. Up to 1 month of the data collection period were used to build up rapport with

the respondents and 5 months were used for data collection with the questionnaire and case study methods.

d. Data Analysis

According to our central research objective, including 4 assumptions, the collected data were analyzed by descriptive statistics and significance tests, focusing frequency distribution on the variables of age at marriage, current age, marital duration and sexual intercourse/coitus among the selected couples between the Muslim and Santal communities and then *Independent Sample T Test* was applied to explore differences and *Pearson's Inter-Correlation test* was applied to measure the relationship between age at marriage, current age, marital duration and sexual intercourse/coitus among the selected couples between the communities. Results of the analyses were presented by cross-tabulation.

III. RESULTS

Most of the couples lived in nuclear family (95% for Muslim and 80% for Santal respectively) and the rest of them were in extended family. Although main occupation of the respondents was cultivation, most of them had no land property (30% for Muslim and 86% for Santal respectively) and the rest of them were marginal farmers. Although master occupation of the respondents was agriculture, 66% of the Muslim husbands and 14% of the Santal husbands engaged in farming. The rest of them adopted other occupations, such as petty trade, day laboring (7% for Muslim and 85% for Santal). On the other hand, cent percent wives of the Muslim were housewives and wives of the Santal were both housewives and day laborers. In education most of the respondents were totally illiterate, although some of them completed primary and secondary education. In yearly family income, most of the families earned from10 to TK. 20 thousands. (31% for Muslim and 80% for Santal); 27% of the Muslim and 16% of the Santal earned TK.21-30 thousands, and about 40% of the Muslim and 3% of the Santal families were 31-50 and above thousands. However, family income of the Muslim families, however, was higher than that of the Santal families. In this socio-economic background for both the communities, explored data on the relationship between couples' age characteristics and their sexual frequency are given bellow.

A. Marital Duration

Tables 1, 2 and 3 present data on couples' marital age characteristics for both the communities' samples, especially age at marriage, current age for both husband and wife and duration of marital life. Table 1 shows average age at marriage in access to marital sexual behavior of the Muslim couples was 23.05 years for husbands and 15.11 years for wives, while average age at marriage of the Santal couples was 20.71 years for husbands and 14.34 years for wives [*Mean=23.05 and SD=6.96 for Muslim, Mean=20.71 and SD=5.81 for Santal (F=0.39, P-value=0.53, t=3.08, df=286, P-value=0.00) *P<0.05 level; ** Mean=15.11 and SD=3.55 for Muslim, Mean=14.34 and SD=4.10 for Santal (F=6.87, P-value=0.01, t=1.69, df=286, P-value=0.09), P>0.05].

TABLE I
FREQUENCY OF AGE AT MARRIAGE FOR HUSBAND AND WIFE BY MUSLIM (N=145) AND SANTAL (N=143), KALNA VILLAGE, BANGLADESH, 2006

Age at Marriage in Year	Muslim		Santal	
	Husband*	Wife**	Husband*	Wife**
>15	-	86	24	90
16-20	61	50	52	44
21-25	52	6	43	9
26-30	20	3	10	-
30<	12	-	14	-
Total	145	145	143	143

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate cell frequency, *p<0.05, **p<0.05

Table 2 shows data on current age of both the communities samples in which we will see that average current age of the Muslim couples (36.59 years for husbands and 28.85 years for wife was higher than that of the Santal couples (31.74 years for husband and 25.21 years for wife). The results of Independent Sample t test reveal that there are significant differences in age at marriage in access to marital sexual behavior between the Muslim and Santal communities [*Mean=36.59 and SD=9.58 for Muslim, Mean=31.74 and SD=10.89 for Santal (F=3.68, P-value=0.05, t=4.01, df=286, P-value=0.00) *P<0.05 level; **Mean=28.85 and SD=8.37 for Muslim, Mean=25.21 and SD=9.031 for Santal (F=0.13, P-value=0.71, t=3.54, df=286, P-value=0.00), P<0.05].

In addition, table 3 shows that average years of duration of marital life of the Muslim couples were higher than that the Santal couples (Mean=14.28, SD=8.97 for Muslim and Mean=11.89, SD=8.85 for Santal respectively). However, the results of Independent Sample t test suggest that there are significant differences in duration of marital life between the communities' couples [Mean=14.28 and SD=8.97 for Muslim, Mean=11.89 and SD=8.85 for Santal (F=0.66, P-value=0.41, t=2.27, df=286, P-value=0.02, P<0.05]. One couple of the Muslim aged 40 for husband and 35 for wife whose age at marriage 25 for husband and 20 for wife, 5 for duration of marital life said....

We think every adult male and female should marry an ideal age at which we can enjoy our life. If we marry earlier or latter in, we face many problems, such as sex, child rearing etc. so we have done better to marry at age as we did. On the other hand, one Santal couple aged 38 for husband and 30 for wife said ....our parents married us 20 years ago. We live in hardship with our six siblings: two sons and four daughters due to early age at marriage. Now we think we should marry at reasonable age, such as 25 for male and 20 for female.

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TABLE II
FREQUENCY OF CURRENT AGE FOR HUSBAND AND WIFE BY MUSLIM (N=145) AND SANTAL (N=143), KALNA VILLAGE, BANGLADESH, 2006

Current Age in Year	Muslim		Santal	
	Husband*	Wife**	Husband*	Wife**
>15	-	-	-	14
16-20	2	21	10	52
21-25	8	52	55	21
26-30	37	25	6	29
31-35	39	19	31	8
36-40	23	14	5	9
41-45	12	8	26	5
46+	24	6	10	5
Total	145	145	143	143

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate cell frequency, *p<0.05, **p<0.05

TABLE III
FREQUENCY OF MARITAL DURATION BETWEEN HUSBAND AND WIFE BY MUSLIM (N=145) AND SANTAL (N=143), KALNA VILLAGE, BANGLADESH, 2006

Marital Duration (in year)	Muslim		Santal	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1-5	15	10.34	38	26.57
6-10	47	32.41	56	39.16
11-15	33	22.76	1	0.71
16-20	15	10.34	24	16.78
21+	35	24.15	24	16.78
Total	145	100	143	100

Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.05

B. Differences in Marital Duration and Marital Sexual Frequency

Actually, number of sexual intercourse between husband and wife depends on how many years they maintain marital life. At the beginning of marital life intercourse rate may be low. After increasing age of marital life it gradually increases and it declines in old age (See, figure.1.1). Table 4 presents data on frequency of sexual intercourse in relation to duration of marital life of the communities' couples studied. At the beginning of marital life, especially in 1-5 and 6-10 years of duration of marital life, Muslim couples' sexual frequency was lower than the sexual frequency of the Santal couples, but with the advancement of couples' age, sexual frequency of the Muslim couples was higher than that of the Santal couples. In addition, average sexual intercourse of the Muslim couples' marital life cycle was more frequent and higher than that the Santal couples' marital life cycle (Mean=11.42, SD=5.44 for Muslim and Mean=8.59, SD=3.33 for Santal). The results of Independent Sample t test show that there were significant differences in frequency of sexual intercourse ((F=6.67, P-value=0.01, t=2.50, df=286, P-value=0.01) at P<0.05 level in relation to duration of marital life between the Muslim and Santal couples. One Muslim couple, aged 59 for husband and 48 for wife, said.....

at the beginning and middle phase of our marital life sexual frequency was high due to high physical capacity and more desire to sex, but now a day that frequency had fallen due to old age, while in this regard one Santal couple, aged 45 for husband and 40 for wife, reported ..... we married at early age when our sexual frequency was higher than that the present age because of increasing life stress, tension and anxiety, low sexual motivation, ill health.

TABLE IV
FREQUENCY OF SEXUAL INTERCOURSE OF MUSLIM (N=145) AND SANTAL (N=143) COUPLES BY THEIR MARITAL DURATION, KALNA VILLAGE, BANGLADESH, 2006

Marital Duration (in Year)	Number of Sexual Intercourse*			
	Muslim		Santal	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1-5	15	10.34	38	26.57
6-10	47	32.41	56	39.16
11-15	33	22.76	1	0.7
16-20	15	10.34	24	16.78
21-25	21	14.49	5	3.5
26-30	8	5.52	15	10.49
31-35	-	-	4	2.8
36-40	4	2.76	-	-
41+	2	1.38	-	-
Total	145	100	143	100

Note: Sexual intercourse was assessed as the number of intercourse in the last month. * p<0.05

Table 5 shows data of inter-correlation coefficients on the relationship between age at marriage, current age, marital duration and sexual frequency for both the communities' samples. Although findings of Independent Sample T Test suggest that there were significant differences in sexual frequency associated with marital duration between the communities' couples, results of Pearson's Inter-Correlation Coefficients reveal that there were significantly inverse relationships (see also figure 1) between the age at marriage for husband (r= -.165) and wife (r= -.079), current age for husband (r= -.553) and wife (r= -.579), marital duration (r= -.525) and sexual frequency at p<0.01 level.

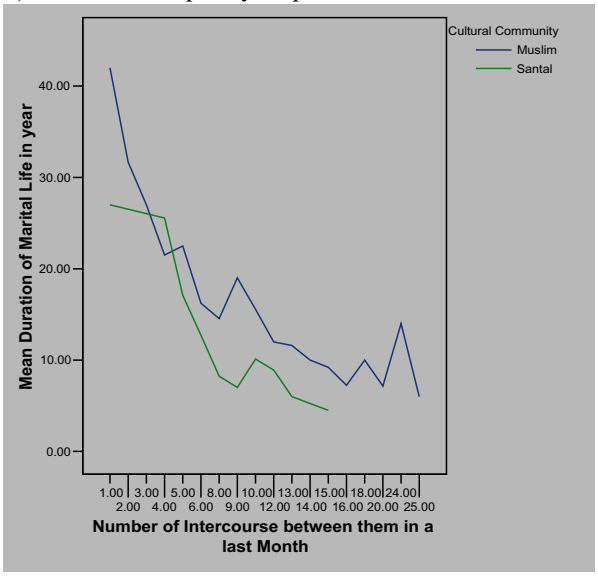


Fig. 1 Marital sexual frequency by marital duration by Muslim (n=145) and Santal (n=143) couples, Kalna village, Bangladesh, 2006

TABLE V
RESULTS OF PEARSON'S INTER-CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS BETWEEN AGE AT MARRIAGE, CURRENT AGE, MARITAL DURATION AND SEXUAL FREQUENCY AMONG MUSLIM AND SANTAL COUPLES (N= 288), KALNA VILLAGE, BANGLADESH, 2006

Dependent/ Independent Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Husband Age at Marriage	1				
2. Wife Age at Marriage	.698* .000	1			
3. Current Age of Husband	.490* .000	.223* .000	1		
4. Current Age of Wife	.252* .000	.215* .000	.918* .000	1	
5. Duration of Marital Life	.081 .172	-.199* .001	.845* .000	.860* .000	1
6.Number of Sexual Intercourse in the Last Month	-.165* .005	-.079 .179	-.553* .000	-.579* .000	-.525* .000

Note: *p<0.01

IV. DISCUSSION

Purpose of the study was to compare sexual frequency in relation to marital duration among the Muslim and Santal couples in rural Bangladesh. For the research goal, we assumed (1) Santal culture compared to Muslim culture prefers early age at marriage to have sexual need and other marital purposes in rural Bangladesh, (2) marital duration among the Muslim couples is higher than that among the Santal couples, (3) sexual frequency among the younger couples is higher than the older couples in both the communities, and (4) sexual frequency across the Muslim couples' marital life cycle is higher than that the Santal couples' marital life cycle. In order to examine and compare the assumptions 288 sexually active couples (145 couples or 72.5% from the Muslim and 143 couples or 79.44% from the Santal) from the village *Kalna* of *Talonda* union of *Tanore Upazila, Rajshahi* district, Bangladesh, were randomly selected through cluster random sampling, whose age ranged from 16 to 60 years for husband and from 11 to 50 years for wife in which most of them were in middle ages. The selected couples were interviewed with questionnaire method by the author, including his wife. The findings of *Independent Samples T Test* on age at marriage, current age, marital duration and sexual frequency independently reveal that there were significant differences in sexual frequency not only across the couples' life cycle but also vary between the Muslim and Santal couples in relation to marital duration. The results of *Pearson's Inter-Correlation Coefficients* reveal that although age at marriage, current age and marital duration for husband and wife were significantly positive correlated with each other between the communities, there were significantly negative correlation between the age at marriage, current age, marital duration and sexual frequency among the selected couples between the communities. However, the findings of the present study confirm the assumptions determined that there are significantly negative relationships between marital duration and sexual frequency between Muslim and Santal couples in rural Bangladesh.

A. Marital Duration

Duration of marital life was an important factor that influences sexual frequency in marriage life cycle between the Muslim and Santal communities in rural Bangladesh. In examining marital duration, the study included age at marriage and current age for both husbands and wives of both the communities and from age at marriage to current age duration of marital life was determined between husband and wife. The results of the study suggest that age at marriage of both husband and wife of the Santal culture was earlier than that the couples of the Muslim culture and the men in both the communities were likely to be older than the women. In addition, duration of marital life among the Muslim couples was higher than the duration of marital life cycle of the Santal couples. The findings of the study are supported by United Nations' [14, 15], Buss's [16, 17], Harpending's findings [18], and many other studies conducted in Bangladesh [57-64]. Based on socio-cultural perspective United Nations [14, 15] studies revealed that the societies were socio-culturally more developed, where both male and female married later due to involve in higher education and career development to get valuable jobs, while both the male and female in the developing and under-developing societies married more earlier due to illiteracy and early involvement in livelihood for family maintenance. Based on evolutionary perspective, specially, Buss [16, 17] suggests that natural selection has produced males and females who attract each other for reproductive success and resource distribution to protect them and their offspring. According to the Buss, the females who are young are attracted by males, whereas the males who possess sufficient resource to protect them are attracted by the females. These different strategies used by our distance ancestors may explain today's sex differences in mate selection. In cross-cultural perspective Buss [17] also found that females place the highest value on cues that indicate a males' resource acquisition (earning, capacity, industriousness, maturity etc.), while males most value on females' reproductive capacity (youth, health and attractiveness). Social psychologists also explain it based on equity theory and feminist perspective. According to them, potential partners seek an equitable "bargain" when they form a relationship. As most societies today are patriarchal, males (especially older males) most likely hold authority to control monetary resources that are traded in the market place to utilizing females' youth and beauty. From this perspective the findings of across cultures and times simply reflect the ability of relatively wealthy males to attract young, attractive and relatively less wealthy female partners. If these same sex differences in age preferences are also found in the matriarchal cultures where women hold economic and political power, evolutionary theory would be strongly supported; reverse findings would be consistent with equity theory and feminist perspective.

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B. Marital Duration and Sexual Frequency

Sexual frequency in relation to marital duration was an important aspect of comparison areas between Muslim and Santal communities in rural Bangladesh. The couples of both the cultures prefer marital sexual behavior. In comparison sexual frequency in relation to duration of marital life cycle, the study examined relationship between age at marriage, current age, duration of marital life and the number of sexual intercourse between husband and wife of the communities with the Pearson's bivariate correlation and Independent Samples T Test. The results of Independent sample t test suggest that number of sexual intercourse between husband and wife of the Muslim community in marital life cycle was higher than that of Santal couples that was significantly different with each other. In addition, the results of Person's bivariate correlation coefficients show that age at marriage and current age of both husband and wife, and duration of marital life significantly negatively influence sexual frequency among the couples between the two cultures at $p<0.01$ level in 2-tailed test (See, table 5). These findings of the study are consistent with the findings of several studies [19, 22, 23, 26, 27, 34, 49, 53, 56] and many other studies. In this respect Mike W.-L. Cheung et al. [47] indicate that in Western cultures age has been found to be negatively correlated with marital sexual frequency and sexual satisfaction. In Bangladesh Uddin [64] argue that Muslim couples consumed more valuable food due to their higher socio-economic status and felt less tension and anxiety in their social life and motivated and involved more in marital sexuality compared to the Santal couples who felt more stress and tension in socio-economic life and took low food value.

Based on Evolutionary and life cycle perspectives several researchers [16-18, 23, 26, 30-34] argue that when the couples are relatively young, their biological capacity and psychological motivation to sex remain more high due to secrete more amount of sex hormones and desire more frequent sex than that the older age couples and this tendency of the relatively older couples gradually decreases due to increase their biological age and responsibilities in social life, such as child rearing and caring and earning for livelihood [38]. Social and biological theories suggest that sex is an essential human need. Without meeting it human beings cannot survive. So, the goal of sexual behavior between husband and wife is to release tension, maintain deeply emotional contact with each other and continue human generation.

V. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Marriage is a universal institution to meet and control sexual drive in Bangladesh, as are in many other restrictive cultures around the world. The purpose of marital sexuality is to have children and to get sexual pleasure strengthening marital bond, increasing work performance and being mentally and physically healthy across the life cycle through which respective couples can successfully adapt from one generation to another. In order that marital sexual purposes, the main stream of Bangladesh culture prefers marital sexuality; some subcultures, such as rural community, prefer more early age at marriage and desire more marital sexual frequency, while other subcultures, such as urban community, support delayed marriage and demand relatively less sexual act for both males and females. The present study explored that age at marriage for both males and females in the Santal culture to achieve marital sexual purposes was earlier than that the Muslim culture; men in both cultures were older than women; duration of marital life and marital sexual frequency across the life cycle of the Muslim couples were higher than that the Santal couples. The study also explored that at the beginning of marital life, sexual frequency of both the cultures' couples was low, but this frequency gradually increased up to the couples' biological and marital age and in turn, it declined due to old age influenced by socio-cultural factors, that may add and contribute to the literatures of marital sexual behavior in bio-social sciences in cross-cultural perspective. Although other factors, such as marital rituals, pregnancy and menstruation periods, socio-economic status, mental security and free from sexual problems, attitudes toward sexual behavior, lactation, social taboo, death rituals, marital conflict and separation, husband's migration etc. may interrupt number of couples' sexual frequency monthly. Based on these factors further cross-cultural study should be conducted to analyze and explain variations in marital sexual behavior and sexual satisfaction between the two communities in Bangladesh.

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