

Fear of Gender-Based Crime and Women Empowerment: An Empirical Study among the Urban Residents of Bangladesh

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Abstract : Fear of gender-based crime and fear of crime victimization for women is a major concern in the urban areas of Bangladesh. Based on the recent data from various human rights organizations and international literature the study found that gender-based crime especially sexual assault and rape are increasing in Bangladesh at a significant rate in comparison to other countries. The major focus of the study was to identify the relationship between fear of gender-based crime and women empowerment. To explore the fact the study followed the mixed methodological approach comprising with quantitative and qualitative methods and used secondary information from national and international sources. Corresponding global pictures the present study found that gender, age, complexion, social position, and ethnicity were more common factors of sexual assault and victimization in Bangladesh which lead to women become more fearful about crime victimization than men. Fear of gender-based crime traumatizes women which leads to withdrawal of their non-essential everyday works and some time from the essential works based on their social position, financial status, and social honor in the society. The increasing crime rate also increases the propensity to fear of criminal victimization, traumatization, and feeling of helplessness which make them vulnerable. The patriarchal culture and practices in Bangladesh based on religious culture and established social norms women always feel defenseless therefore they withdraw themselves from various social activities and own interest. Women who have already victimized feel more fear and become traumatized, and who do not victimize yet but know the severity of victimization from the media and others' have the feeling of fear of crime. Women who find themselves as weak bonding and low networks with their neighbors and living for a short duration have a feeling of more fear and avoid visiting a certain place in a certain time and avoid some social activities. The study found the young women have more possibilities to become victimized through the feeling of fear of crime is higher among elderly women than young. Though women feel fear of all kinds of crime but usually all aged women are more fearful of sexual assault and rape than other violent crimes. Therefore, elderly women and another person in the family does not allow younger girls to go and involve outside activities to secure their family status. On the other hand, fear of crime in public transport is more common to all aged women at a higher level and sometimes they compromise their freedom, independence, financial opportunities, the job only to avoid the perceived threat, and save their social and cultural honor. The study also explores that fear of crime does not always depend on crime rate but the crime news, the severity of the crime, delay justice, the ineffectiveness of police, bail of criminals, corruption and political favoritism, etc. Finally, the study shows that the fear of gender-based crime and violence is working as a potential barrier to ensuring women's empowerment in Bangladesh.

Keywords : compromise personal freedom, fear of crime, fear of gender-based crime, fear of violent crime victimization, rape, sexual assaults, withdrawal from regular activities, women empowerment

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