

**Final Paper**

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND COPING STRATEGIES: A  
PERSPECTIVE OF BANGLADESHI HOUSEMAID MIGRANTS IN  
MIDDLE EAST**

**Submitted to**

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## **1. Introduction**

“History of the world is a history of human migration” (Liang 2006:487). Sociologists have long been contribution to migration. One of the founding fathers of Sociology, Durkheim (1893/1964) showed the transition from a traditional to a modern society using the typology of society-“mechanical solidarity” and “organic solidarity”. The process of this transition of modern society is migration. But now the phenomenon migration has taken the place of exploitation. On the basis of historical structural perspective of dependency theory, Cardoso and Faletto (1979) identified capitalists profit making through exploitation of foreign migrant laborers in capitalist societies. There is a link between migration and globalization. This link has created the capitalist societies like UAE and Saudi Arab. To identify the striking feature of globalization, Appadurai identified “unequal economic exchange” that is rooted from the process of migration from less developed to developed countries in modern world (1990). This exploitation is not limited to unequal economic exchange. It has now shaped the position of physical, mental and even sexual. Most of the cases, this exploitation comes from the entertainment of the employer. Female are now considered as a product of entertainment. In developed countries, female workers are forcedly being involved with sex to meet the secret demand of employers, with normal contractual daily household activities (Anthias 2000:27 and Ullah et al. 1999). Overseas domestic workers are almost always unjustly considered “potential prostitutes” by local lay people (Jones 1996:25).

Though Gulf countries has rapidly reshaped their economy and touched the taste of modernization, people have still remained their traditional laws and cultural practices. This affects the overseas migrant’s daily life that is the main argument of “Philosophical Transnationalism” (Khagram and Levitt 2007) in the intellectual foundation of transnational studies. To adjust with the impact of traditional laws and cultural practices of employers, migrants take coping strategies (Khalaf and Alkobaisi 1999). People in Middle East need to take their own creating coping strategies to sustain for long time. For example, Conquergood (1992) identified situational tactics and flexible coping strategies as a long-term survival technique.

This study will focus on returnee housemaids in Bangladesh to explore domestic violence, causes and coping strategies of migrants specifically focusing on Saudi Arab and UAE.

## **1.1. History of Female Migration**

Increased oil production in the beginning of 1970s in Middle East demanded different types of chief labors from less developed countries. When the livelihood of the inhabitants of Middle East countries increased due to the selling of oil in high price, they recruited the workers not only to work for outside but also in households. So, female labors as housemaids from oil importing countries like Bangladesh were sent for households' activities. The demand of labor from Bangladesh is more because of Muslim region also. At present, domestic workers choose Middle East due to earn money to save herself and also her family in Bangladesh (Halabi 2008:43). Refugee and Migratory Movement Research Unit (2008) considered Bangladesh as myriad labor surplus country contributing to the global labor market. This labor migration from Bangladesh was typified in two categories as long- and short-term employment (Siddiqui, 2005). Considering the development from foreign remittance, Bangladesh government in 1976 started to provide institutional support to migrants (Refugee and Migratory Movement Research Unit 2007). Recently, "Probashi Kollayan Bank" has been launched only for migrants so that they can send money very easily. Since 1980s, Bangladesh was considered as major source country of migrant workers and now is playing dominant role sending skilled workers (Mannan, 2001).

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

According to the study mission statement, this proposed study seeks to mitigate violence against Bangladeshi housemaids in Middle East. Bangladeshi female labors go to Middle East countries especially in Saudi Arab and UAE as migrants to have job. Women are involved in different kinds of jobs like doctor, nurse, garments worker, housemaid and so on. A good number of female labors get job as housemaid to work at household in Saudi Arab and UAE. Study shows that the percentage of housemaids is the highest counted 30.28% among the all categories of jobs in Middle East for Bangladeshi women (BMET 2009). The number of female migrants now is increasing than previous years. Female labor earns foreign money from Middle East and they send it to Bangladesh, contributing to the flow of remittance. But, practically, housemaids suffer from domestic violence in Middle East by their employer than other job holders.

Housemaids from Middle East return to Bangladesh in some cases when they cannot tolerate the violence of their employer. They do not have even any scope telling the true cause of their going away to their employer due to fear (Jessup 2010). Even the violence took the death toll of housemaids. People are still practicing the slavery especially in their households to foreign housemaids though it was formally declined above 50 years ago from now in 1962 by King Faisal (Brown and Saunders 2004:1). Housemaids are keeping away from food, proper accommodation and wage. Employers even seize housemaids' valuable passport so that they cannot go to another places or their origin country. Migrants without passport to move feel themselves as captive of employer. According to Jessup (2010), migrant workers face from forced labor and enslavement, to sexual and physical abuse when their movement is curbed. Reported on Bangladeshi female workers, Human Rights Watch (2004) observed that housemaids need to work more than 8 hours per day and sometimes all over the night (P.2). They are not extra paid for their extra working hour. The consequences of the violence are very pathetic. Women suffer from dissatisfaction from work. They face the low working capability. Housemaids even are being involved with HIV/AIDS that are unknown to them.

Though housemaids face multifarious violence, most of them are staying in Saudi Arab and UAE due to earn money. The housemaids, who remain in Saudi Arab and UAE, take different coping strategies to survive in there. Housemaids use both behavioral and emotional efforts to control, reduce and minimize violence. Sometimes housemaids experience negative effects if they cannot manage everything properly. Some women are also using the unfair means to cope with situation like stealing, self blame, drug use that create dysphoria and hopelessness (Clements et al. 2004).

In response to this problem, this study proposes to investigate how housemaids in Middle East experience domestic violence, causes of violence and what types of coping strategies they are taking to control it. It will make association between or among types of domestic violence, causes and coping strategies. Here is planned to carry out a face to face participatory investigation into options for identifying information from returnee housemaids in Bangladesh from Middle East.

The structure of this final paper includes different steps like introduction, review of literatures, research questions, hypotheses, definition of the concepts, conceptual framework, methodology, study significance, limitations and conclusion.

## **2. Review of Literatures**

The study of migration has tradition in Bangladesh. Migration and its new impact on migrants especially housemaids in recipient countries have elicited new, inventive pedagogical responses. MFA (2002) identified women suffer from various forms of mistreatment and abuse including sexual harassment, physical abuse and are denied basic rights by their employers and co-workers. Here is also addressed the female domestic workers are in the worst position, as they are often forced to accept conditions akin to a state of captivity. Similarly, Halabi (2008) presented that female domestic servants are the group most vulnerable to exploitation ranging from rape to slapping, forcibly working in more than one household and the refusal of days off and non-payment of wages in Saudi Arabia and the UAE. His identified violence include both physical and economic refusal. Likewise, using quantitative method on returnee migrants in Bangladesh, Kibria (2004) addressed highly abusive working and living conditions of domestic workers in Middle East resulting illness of female workers and returning to Bangladesh.

Contrary, Priesner (2012) identified both causes of domestic violence and coping strategies. He used mixed methods to collect data from the returnee migrants of Middle East in Bangladesh. He explored the language barrier is the causes of domestic violence. This study also focused on one coping strategy such as food stealing as they did not get enough to eat.

The above studies were conducted on domestic violence of female migrant Bangladeshi workers in Middle East. Here studies are identified using qualitative and quantitative methods. Three (MFA 2002, Halabi 2008 and Kibria 2004) among four studies discussed above emphasized on different types of violence, whereas the causes and coping strategy were observed in the study of Priesner (2012). These studies have similarity with my proposed study to identify the domestic violence and coping strategies. Methodological interpretation gives me direction to conduct study and analyze of data for the proposed study. Moreover, the studies of Priesner (2012) and Kibria (2004) inspired me and showed the path to collect data from returnee migrants in Bangladesh. But above studies have some gaps and limitations. There is found minimal emphasize on specific causes of violence and coping strategies relative to other studies and also the limited work which foreground the views and experiences of housemaids migrants. Though Priesner identified one cause, there was no correlation with specific violence. All studies emphasized on the descriptive analysis of domestic violence. They did not focus on the associations between or among the variables

related to types of domestic violence, causes and coping strategies. My proposed study will try to mitigate these gaps, extend the previous studies and identify the new issues of migration in Bangladesh.

### **3. Research Questions**

The main research question: How are Bangladeshi housemaid migrants being violated by their employers in Middle East?

Supportive questions:

- 1) What types of domestic violence housemaids face in Middle East?
- 2) What are the causes of domestic violence?
- 3) How do housemaids take coping strategies to sustain with violence?

### **4. Hypotheses**

Here hypotheses are following:

1. Limitation of Arabic language of housemaids enhances the tendency of domestic violence;
2. Paying low by employer makes housemaids hopeless;
3. Forced sexual violence insists the tendency of pregnancy;
4. Physical torture increases the physical abnormality;
5. Facing more physical torture increases to the tendency of returning home; and
6. Insufficient daily meal supply insists housemaids to involve with unfair means.

### **5. Definition of the Concepts**

*Domestic violence*: The concept domestic violence includes different types of violence like physical, sexual, economical, livelihood and mental and so on. Basically, Bangladeshi female migrant labor work as housemaid at household in Middle East. They face different exploitation from their employer those are violation of human rights.

The Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence states that:

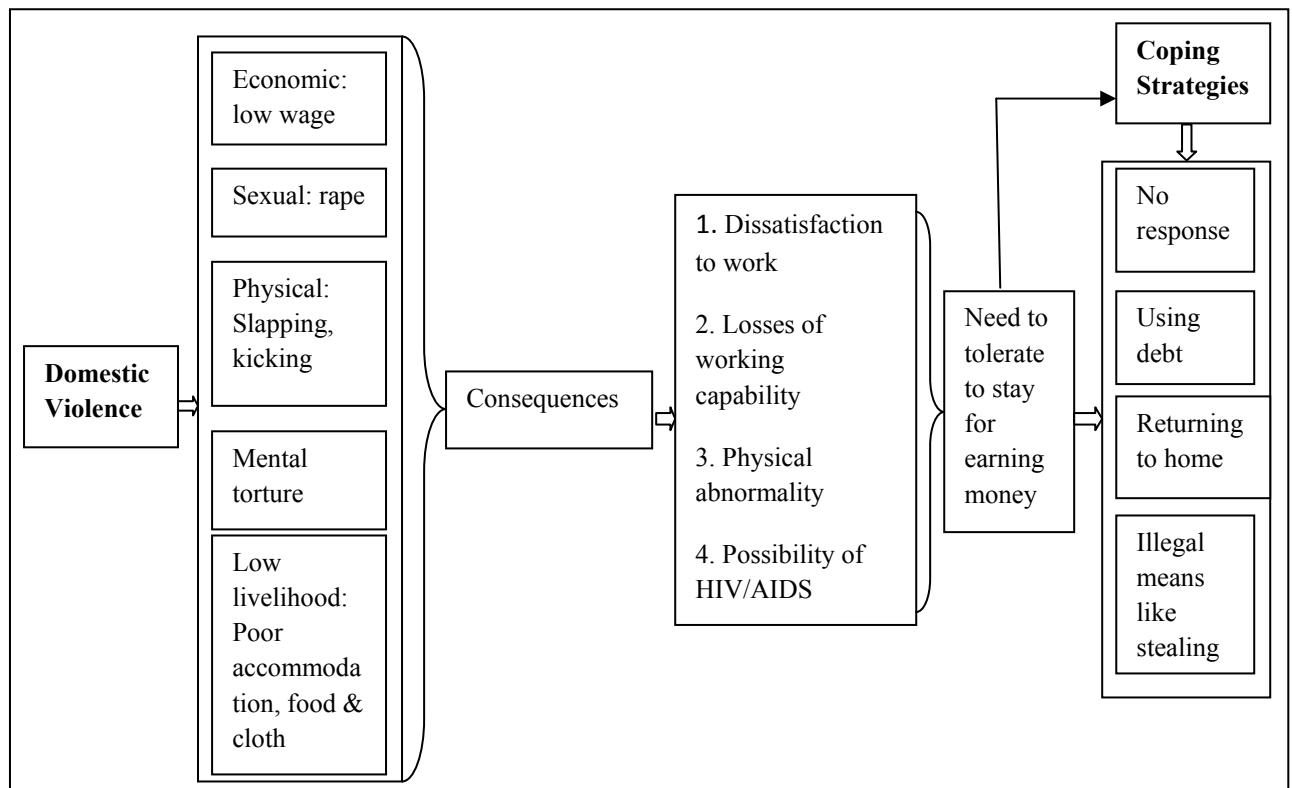
" "domestic violence" shall mean all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim" (Council of Europe 2011).

*Coping strategies:* Here coping strategies refer to the mechanisms that Bangladeshi female housemaids take to sustain against violence in Middle East to earn money.

*Housemaid Migrants:* In this study, housemaid migrants, who work at household of Middle East countries to earn money, are female person from Bangladesh. They are also called domestic servant or labor.

## 6. Conceptual Framework

Figure 1: Domestic violence and coping strategies





This conceptual framework is drawn from the basis of assumption of previous studies about domestic violence and coping strategies patterns of housemaid migrants. Here domestic violence includes different types of violence like economic, sexual, physical, mental and low livelihood. All violence have aftermath on the housemaids. When they face that exploitation without any cause, they feel dissatisfaction to work, losing working capability, physical abnormality and the possibility of sexual transmitted diseases. But housemaid migrants need to stay in pressure as they need to earn for their bread for surviving. To survive in hostile environment, housemaids take coping strategies using their techniques and supports. So this above conceptual framework shows the link of violence and necessity of coping strategies.

## **7. Methodology**

### *a. Study Design*

This is a quantitative study and explanatory in nature. Ontologically this quantitative study will permit to measure association between groups and subgroups of variables. In the epistemological sense, this study will show how the variables are statistically associated with each other. This quantitative study will provide opportunity to measure variable through measuring scale to maintain validity and reliability, to test hypotheses and to make generalization. In this phase, the study will be conducted through the use of survey method. Here survey method is chosen as it will connect the information of more variables to answer research questions. Then the opportunity will come to show association between variables, making inference from sample to population and testing hypotheses. Besides, direct contact with informants will help to realize the perceptions of informants behind the responses given in a way that questionnaire completion cannot capture. So this will contribute more accurate and extra important information. To answer research questions, data will be collected from returnee housemaids in Bangladesh. Moreover, data about respective concepts will be collected through incorporating relevant items (variables) in the interview schedule and analyzed and interpreted using descriptive and inferential statistics to comprehend the objectives of the study.

### *b. Selection of Study Area and Unit of Analysis*

Dhaka of Bangladesh will be selected as study area as there are relatively heavy outflows of international labor migrants. The unit of analysis of this study will be returnee housemaids

from Saudi Arab and UAE in Bangladesh. Here returnee housemaids may include both who completed their full job tenure and not completing full time job. They are selected as they will be able to correctly address the violence and coping strategies during work. Another, Saudi Arab and UAE in Middle East countries will be selected to focus on important region as more than half of the total female migrants from Bangladesh go there and contribute to increase GDP.

#### *c. Sampling Procedure and Sample size Determination*

To identify the sample, the help of migrants sending agencies in Bangladesh will be contacted. For this study, respondents will be recruited and identified with the assistance of Government and private agencies. Government agency includes Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET). BMET is the executing agency of Ministry Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment in respect to processing labor migration. Another, private agency includes the recruiting agencies became organized under the Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA). The sampling method will be thus a convenience one, producing a non-random sample of returned migrant workers. Data will be collected from the informants those who have come back not before than one year. Here is chosen not before than one year as returnee migrants may forget the information if their return exceeds one year. The required sample size will be 50. Here, 50 samples are chosen on the basis of the number of female migrants came back in Bangladesh in previous years.

#### *d. Techniques of Data Collection*

An interview schedule will be developed and finalized through pilot study and used for data collection. A pilot study will be done conducting interview on five samples before one week ago of the final interview starts. Then if it is observed that responses do not come to response research questions, interview schedule will be reshaped. Interview schedule will be used to write down the answers to the questions posed during an interview to the informants through face to face connection. Five interviewers will collect data from field. The ethics that will be maintained during data collecting are voluntary participation, no physical or psychological harm to subjects, maintaining integrity and PAC (Privacy, Anonymity and Confidentiality).

#### *e. Methods of Analysis*

Data will be firstly scrutinized and eliminated the irrelevant data following coded by giving the specific name of every variable. Then data will be analyzed using univariate, bivariate

and multivariate analysis. Univariate analysis will be used for descriptive cases of one variable. To analyze the correlation between two variables bivariate analysis will be used. Finally multivariate analysis will be used if extraneous influence is observed in variables.

#### *f. Data Dissemination*

Finally data will be disseminated publishing paper in any international recognized journals which especially focus on migration. Besides, it will be presented to the government of both recipient and origin countries of migrant and migrants sending authority to control violence.

### **8. Significance of the Study**

This study has significance in both practical and theoretical levels. In practical level, this study will address the problems of housemaids to the governments of recipient and origin countries of migrant, migrants sending authorities and NGOs so that they can take action to mitigate problems immediately. Besides, the study plan includes disseminating the gained knowledge to the prospective migrants to be informed to tackle domestic violence from employer. Theoretically, this study will show the path of approach to search migrant research focusing on Bangladesh. It will create a new dimension of association between types of violence, causes and coping strategies. It will also spread the scope of first intellectual foundation of transnational studies include "Empirical Transnationalism" (Khagram and Levitt 2007) as this study will describe, map and quantifying housemaid migrants and their characteristics. Moreover this study will supply the ideas of new researcher to go for explanatory research in future.

### **9. Limitations of the Study**

Limitation of this study related to gathering true information. Informants might forget the exact information what they practiced. Another, as it is not experimental study; it will be difficult to control the extraneous variables contributing to create especially coping strategies as housemaids take coping strategy beyond domestic violence. As a quantitative research, it will be difficult to find the detail information that will lessen to measure people's unique ability to interpret their experiences, construct their own meanings and act on these. The development of questions and hypotheses of this study can lead to "structural bias" and false

representation, where the data may reflect the view of the researcher instead of the participating subject (Babbie 2010) in Bangladesh.

## **10. Conclusion**

This final paper has been written as research proposal to identify the domestic violence facing Bangladeshi housemaids in Middle East. It has been discussed that housemaids face physical, sexual, economic and mental domestic violence in Middle East by their employer. Such violence is making housemaids helpless and they are taking some illegal strategies to face that violence. The challenge is to mitigate violence and illegal coping strategies so that housemaids can work in Middle East convincingly. To obtain the aim of this study to mitigate violence, this research paper consists three specific research questions include types of domestic violence, causes and coping strategies are designed to find out the actual problems in Middle East that housemaids face. Besides, six hypotheses based on different arguments are identified to test in this study. The important items of research questions and hypotheses are also explained in operational way through definition of the concepts. To make research questions and hypotheses logical in this study, conceptual framework is drawn to present the relations of variables to each other logical way taking knowledge of previous related studies. Here the literature review of this study shows the path of methodological procedure and gaps of previous studies where my study will focus. The study is designed as quantitative analysis as it will try to make association between types of violence, causes of violence and coping strategies and have possibility of generalization. The unit of analysis is focused on returnee housemaids in Bangladesh. Survey method is designed to collect data using interview schedule so that data of different items may come. As a significance, it is shown that the findings will be provided to the supreme authority include the governments of both recipient and origin countries so that they can be informed about violence and take action to mitigate it as soon as possible practically. Additionally, it will have theoretical contribution to spread the meaning of “empirical transnationalism” mapping the situation of violence to housemaids in Middle East. With other things, this study also carries some possibility of shortcomings include no guarantee of gathering true information, not possibility of having in details fact and also involving biasness in interview. Finally, to mitigate domestic violence in future in Middle East, this paper gives direction how to find out specific domestic violence, its causes and coping strategies.

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