A Social Campaign to Spread Awareness About Domestic Violence: Addressing the Shadow Pandemic

Context

COVID-19 is currently the single most pressing public health concern worldwide. The Government of Bangladesh has declared a national holiday since March 26 and employed law-enforcement agencies to impose strict social distancing across the country. Unlike many developed countries, social distancing and work closures can push millions of people to starvation in countries like Bangladesh – confronting a trade-off between life and livelihood. Unlike any other time, economic and health uncertainties coupled with the shift in the household dynamics (where many men are now staying at home) result in increased domestic violence[1]. In Bangladesh, most cases of violence against women remain unreported[2], affecting their physical, psychological, and economic wellbeing.

Ironically, the public health safety measures – designed to protect people from COVID-19 – are exposing women to a heightened risk of domestic violence[3]. Many developed countries have reported a dramatic spike in violence against women during the time of the pandemic. For instance, countries like Argentina, Canada, France, Germany, Spain, UK, and USA have flagged increasing reports of domestic violence against women during the first two months of the lockdown[4].

Intimate partner violence (IPV) or domestic violence – the shadow pandemic – has physical, emotional, and economic costs that are likely to be exacerbated during the time of the lockdown. Existing research suggests that persuasion through social campaigns could impact the behavior of IPV perpetrators and ability of victims to resist abusive behavior of their partners[5]. Especially, interventions focused on promoting problem-solving behavior and changing self-perception have proven to be beneficial for physical and mental health of women experiencing violence[6].

Unlike the extensive public health campaigns, little to no measures were taken to record or address the extent of domestic violence in Bangladesh during the pandemic. Engaging influential stakeholders (such as celebrities) to endorse healthy behaviors among fe/male social media

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[1] Slabbert, I. (2017). Domestic violence and poverty: Some women's experiences. Research on social work practice, 27(2), 223-230.

[2] Jahid, A. (2020, April 23). COVID-19 and domestic violence. *The Daily New Age*.

[3] Almeron, L (2020, March 27). Domestic violence cases escalating quicker in time of COVID-19. *Mission Local*.

[4] Mohan, M, (2020, March 31). Coronavirus: I'm in lockdown with my abuser. *BBC News*.
Mlambo-Ngcuka, P. (2020, April 6) Violence against women and girls: the shadow. *UN Women*.
pandemichttps://eca.unwomen.org/es/news/stories/2020/4/statement-ed-phumzile-violence-against-women-during-pandemic

[5] Cismaru, M., & Lavack, A. M. (2011). Campaigns Targeting Perpetrators of Intimate Partner Violence. Trauma, Violence, & Abuse, 12(4), 183–197.
Naved, R. T., Samuels, F., Le Masson, V., Talukder, A., Gupta, T., & Yount, K. M. (2017). Understanding intimate partner violence in rural Bangladesh. Overseas Development Institute: London, UK.

[6] Trabold, N., McMahon, J., Alsobrooks, S., Whitney, S., & Mittal, M. (2020). A systematic review of intimate partner violence interventions: state of the field and implications for practitioners. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, *21*(2), 311-325.

users, who in turn can build awareness among their friends, family, and neighbors, is one of the ways forward[7]. Especially, Facebook has between 25 to 30 million users in Bangladesh[8]. It is, therefore, pertinent to design and promote information campaigns over Facebook, a powerful platform to reach and engage a large section of the population, to address domestic violence against women. To complement the current digital initiatives by the government (such as www.corona.gov.bd), this research targets the population with access to Facebook for educating both men and women on domestic violence, a serious public health concern.

Research questions

1. How widespread is domestic violence in Bangladesh during the lockdown?
2. Does an audio-visual information campaign affect knowledge of domestic violence?
3. Does the gender of the message-carrier and respondent matter in terms of knowledge generation and diffusion?

Research design

The research is focused on knowledge acquisition through information sharing on Facebook.

T1:	Video message by a female celebrity on domestic violence followed by a knowledge assessment quiz and a survey.
T2:	Video message by a male celebrity on domestic violence followed by a knowledge assessment quiz and a survey.
Control (C):	knowledge assessment quiz and a survey.

The video messages will focus on (a) what constitutes of domestic violence and its different types; (b) benefits of abstaining from violence, (c) information on behavioral strategies and existing help available to victims of violence (especially for women). All respondents will be encouraged to share the messages with their friends and family members. There will be equal numbers of male and female respondents in each arm. Special attention will be paid to the employment status of both perpetrators and victims of domestic violence.

[7] Alatas, V., Chandrasekhar, A. G., Mobius, M., Olken, B. A., & Paladines, C. (2019). When Celebrities Speak: A Nationwide Twitter Experiment Promoting Vaccination in Indonesia (No. w25589). National Bureau of Economic Research.
[8] http://digiology.xyz/demographics-facebook-population-bangladesh-april-2018/

Major outcomes:

We will measure the incidence and knowledge of domestic violence. In addition, we will track knowledge diffusion rate.

Comparing the treatment arms (T1 and T2) with C will demonstrate the effects of the audio-visual information campaign on knowledge acquisition and diffusion rate concerning domestic violence. Comparing T1 with T2 will show the gender effect of the message carrier.

(Males in T1 -Males in T2) – (Females in T1 -Females in T2) will show how differently men respond to the gender of the message carrier compared to females.

Implementation

We will boost the campaign's webpage (containing videos and quizzes) via Facebook webpage in different districts of Bangladesh. All 64 districts will be randomly assigned into one of the treatment arms. There will be a total of 30,000 respondents (10,000 in each arm). We will use Facebook to promote our website through their advertising platform, which will allow for the audio-visual message to reach our target audience. The target audience will consist of females and males between the ages of 20-55.

Timeline:

The research will take place in June 2020.

Collaboration:

We will be primarily collaborating with a2i for dissemination of video messages. We will be working with Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) in Bangladesh for support with data collection and cleaning. An information technology (IT) firm will assist with tracking the diffusion of video over Facebook. In addition, a media partner will assist in video making. We will be consulting experts at BRAC and icddr,b, as well as faculty members at Yale University and Harvard University concerning the latest research on domestic violence and related content of the message.

Budget breakdown

Items	***Amount (USD)***
Facebook boosting	7,000
Video making and editing support	5,000
Data management (Innovations for Poverty Ac	5,000
One research assistant	2,000
Total	19,000

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PROFESSIONAL POSITION

Professor of Economics, Yale University, 2015 –
Tenured in the School of Management (2015), and in the Department of Economics, FAS (2017)
Faculty Director and Founder, Yale Research Initiative on Innovation and Scale (Y-RISE) 2018 -

OTHER APPOINTMENTS

Professorial Research Fellow, Dept. of Economics, Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia, 2018-2021
Chair, South Asian Studies Council, Yale University, 2017-
Lead, Bangladesh Research Program, International Growth Centre (IGC) at LSE and Oxford 2009 –
Board Member and Scientific Advisor, Innovations for Poverty Action, 2015 –
Board of Advisors, Evidence Action 2014 –
Executive Committee, Jackson Institute for Global Affairs at Yale, 2016-
Executive Committee, Economic Growth Center, Yale University, 2019- (Affiliate, 2007-)
Editorial Board, *World Bank Economic Review*, 2015 -
Editorial Board, *Asian Development Review*, Asian Development Bank, 2018 -
Consultant, World Bank and IFC 1998-2001 and 2009 –
Advisory Board for Safe Access to Fuel and Energy (SAFE), UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 2015 –
Technical Advisory Group, 'Voices of the Poor', Overseas Development Institute, London 2017-
Technical Advisor Group, World Food Programme, Cash transfers and Gender Impact Evaluations 2019-
University of Maryland Economics Leadership Council, 2018-2021

AFFILIATIONS

Research Affiliate (2009-); Member, Board of Directors (2016-19), Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), MIT
Research Associate, National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), Cambridge, MA, 2014 –
Fellow, The Bureau for Research and Economic Analysis of Development (BREAD), 2015 -
Research Fellow, Development Economics Program, Center for Economic Policy Research (CEPR), 2009 -
Research Affiliate on Cities and on Energy, International Growth Centre, DFID/LSE/Oxford 2009-
Visiting Scientist, International Center for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), Kathmandu 2013-
Research Fellow, IZA, Bonn, Germany 2014 -
Faculty Fellow, Yale China India Consumer Insights Program, Yale School of Management 2011-
Senior Research Fellow in International and Area Studies, Yale Macmillan Center 2011-
Affiliate, Leitner Program in International and Comparative Political Economy, Yale University, 2013-
Research Associate, Institute of Behavioral Science, University of Colorado, May 2003 –
Senior Fellow, Silliman College, Yale University, 2015 -

PAST POSITIONS

Assistant/Associate Professor, School of Management, Yale University, 2007-2012/2012 – 2015
Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Yale University, New Haven, U.S.A., 2006
Assistant Professor of Economics, University of Colorado, Boulder, U.S.A, 2002 – 2007
Economist (summer program), International Monetary Fund, Washington D.C., U.S.A. 2001

Associate Editor, *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, University of Chicago Press, 2014 - 2018
Co-Editor, *Development Engineering*, Elsevier Journals, 2015 - 2018
Global Future Council Fellow, World Economic Forum, 2016-17 (Council on the Future of Migration)
Co-Chair, Urban Services Initiative; Energy & Environment, Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) at MIT 2011-2018
InterAction Council, High Level Expert Group on Refugees and Migrants, 2019

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Curriculum Vitae

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Education

Ph.D. Interdisciplinary Studies in Human Development. Concentration: International Education and Development, Department of Human Development and Quantitative Methods,
Graduate School of Education, University of Pennsylvania
Graduated with Honors (May 2018)
Dissertation Title: Educating farmers to be environmentally sustainable: Knowledge, skills and productivity in rural Bangladesh
Dissertation Committee: Daniel Wagner (Chair), Nancy H. Hornberger, Robert Boruch

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Current Positions

2020-Present *Postdoctoral Research Associate,*
Harvard Business School

2019-Present *Fellow*,
The Lakshmi Mittal and Family South Asia Institute, Harvard University

Research Projects: Design, Evaluation and Management

2019- Present Co-PI, "Coping with the Loss of Home: Improving Adolescent Mental Health with Education" (with Reshma Hussam, Erin Kelly and Gregory Lane)

2018- Present Co-PI, "Health Systems Evaluation to Improve Financial and Health Outcomes in Indonesia: Designing the Next Steps to Achieve Universal Health Care" (with Peter Berman)

2018- Present Co-PI, "Psychosocial and Cognitive Impacts of Forced Idleness: Evidence from a Randomized Controlled Trial in the Rohingya Refugee Camps" (with Reshmaan Hussam, Erin Kelley and Greg Lane)

Select Publications (In preparation)

Zahra, F., Hussam, Reshmaan, Lane, G. & Kelley, E. The psychosocial impacts of forced idleness: Evidence from the Rohingya Refugee Camps in Bangladesh. *Review of Economic Studies.*

Zahra, F., Hussam, Reshmaan, Lane, G. & Kelley, E. Coping with the Loss of Home: Improving Adolescent Mental Health with Education. *Economics of Education Review.*

Zahra, F. & Berman, P. Health systems evaluation, reforms, and finance in Indonesia: An economic evaluation of universal health care coverage, *The Lancet Global Health.*

Research Grants

2019 Weiss Family Foundation Grant ($75,000)
2019 IPA Peace and Recovery Grant ($139,299)
2019 World Bank Grant ($200,000)

In the News
Mittal Newsletter (2020, February 27). Improving the Wellbeing of Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh [Blog post]. Retrieved from https://mittalsouthasiainstitute.harvard.edu/2020/02/fatima-zahra-improving-the-wellbeing-of-rohingya-refugees-in-bangladesh/

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Education

Ph.D. Food and Resource Economics, University of Florida — May 2019
M.S. Economics, University of Dhaka — 2011
B.S. Economics, University of Dhaka — 2010

Work experience

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)
- Post-Doctoral Researcher — January 2019-present

Food and Resource Economics Department, University of Florida
- Instructor — May 2018-December 2018
- Graduate Assistant — August 2014-December 2018

BRAC, Bangladesh
- Senior Research Associate — 2012-2014

Peer-Reviewed Publications

1. **Hossain, M.**, Malek, M. A., Hossain, A. M., Reza, M., and Ahmed, M. (2019). Agricultural Microcredit for Tenant Farmers : Evidence from a Field Experiment in Bangladesh. *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 101 (692-709), DOI : 10.1093/ajae/aay070.
2. **Hossain, M.**, Mullally, C., and Asadullah, M. N. (2019). Alternatives to Calorie-based Indicators of Food Security : An Application of Machine Learning Methods. *Food Policy*, 84 (77-91). DOI : j.foodpol.2019.03.001.

Working Papers

1. **Hossain, M.**, Mabiso, A., and Garbero, A. Matching Grants to Boost Horticulture in Rwanda: Targeting, Input use, and Income. Available here
2. **Hossain, M.**, Mullally, C., and Onel, G. Migration, Remittances, and Economic Activity Among Origin Households: the Role of Female Household Headship. (submitted). Available here
3. **Hossain, M.** and Mullally, C. Asset Transfer Leading to Microcredit: Self-selection, Screening, and Outcomes. Available here

Work in Progress

1. Spatial, temporal, and spatio-temporal poverty dynamics in Africa (with Lisa Jäckering)
2. Input specific efficiency of modern irrigation technologies in Ethiopia (with Maria Vrachioli)

Ongoing Projects

1. Smallholder Agriculture Development Project in Lesotho
2. Post-Tsunami Sustainable Livelihoods Program for the Coastal Communities of Tamil Nadu, India