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ROLE OF RURAL SELF-GOVERNANCE IN JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS: A STUDY ON A VILLAGE OF NATORE DISTRICT, BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

The journey of the present research study started bearing the objectives to explore the role of rural self-governance in justice system and to identify the role of rural self-governance in human rights in a village of Bangladesh. This study is also working toward to know the interrelationship among the role of rural self-governance, rural justice system and human rights. For the fulfillment of the objectives of this study, qualitative research design was used. The primary research was a case study and several supplementary methods have been used such as qualitative survey, narrative discussions and observation. Qualitative data was primarily collected through the use of semi-structured interviews (SSI) and focus group discussion (FGD). In addition, in-depth data was collected by using key informant interviews (KIIs). Data analysis portion of the study was done through the use of thematic and descriptive process and verbatim quotation as well. Moreover, numerical as well as narrative process of data analysis were also used in this study. For presenting the data collected from the study village, graphical presentations were used respectively. The findings of the study exposed that commitment to ensuring proper justice and including the human rights in a model village is possible by the will of people. But women's less participation, ageing issues, natural disasters and controlled freedom of people can develop questions in justice and human rights for the wellbeing of the people. Moreover, the village government is trying their best to condense the gap between needs and fulfilment of needs for upholding the values of justice and human rights.

KEYWORDS

human rights, justice system, model village, people's participation, self-governance.

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INTRODUCTION

The beginning of the 21st century is remarkable for the spreading of decentralized governance around the world. It is a philosophy and a strategy for bringing about advances and changes in democracies (Kumar & Mahesh, 2013). Rural local self-government is well known and recognized as one of the major players for reshaping local governance as well as community development initiatives in Bangladesh. Diverse roles are played by local self-government for the people of grassroots level such as executing development programs; resolution of disputes or providing judicial compensations through the village courts (Islam, 2015). Community people's 'involvement' in governance system was introduced in 1970s. Later in 1980s, community participation became popular in decision making and maintenance. The neoliberal governance was fortified under 'the new classical counter-revolution development theory' and it turned community participation approach into community supervision and management in 1980s and 1990s (Lopa, 2013). From the initiation to the present, the practice of the local justice system and community development initiatives have attained a new meaning in Bangladesh. Furthermore, diverse forms of collectivist activities, initiatives and organizational practices created amidst eccentricity, hierarchy, less privileged and severe deprivation in the rural community. Various types of approaches of different elected governments as "providers", "possessors" and "managers of rural development" have stemmed in the nurturing and prolonging of a dependency syndrome, which efficiently excluded the rural community being developed as a valued human resource (Wijayaratna, 2004, p. 39).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Obaidullah (2009) as cited by Hasan (2013) local government is relatively a longstanding concept in the context of Bangladesh. It has an elongated past, a resilient existent and a projected future. Traditionally, the people of Bangladesh accepted the people's participation through local governance in the administration of rural concerns. After the independence in 1971, opportunity of participation was limited and constricted in nature. Then the consecutive governments have trailed decentralization as a vital policy framework (p. 2).

According to the country profile of 'Commonwealth Local Government Forum' entitled 'The local government system in India' 'the 73th Constitutional Amendment Act provided for the three types of rural council – known as panchayati raj institutions (PRIs). There are 653 panchayati samiti in zila parishad at the district level, 6,635 panchayat samaiti at the block level, and 255,546 gram panchayat at the village level. In 23 states there are three tiers of panchayati system, in Goa there are two tiers, and in Jammu and Kashmir, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland there is a single tier'(Commonwealth Local Government Forum, 2019, p.88). In Bangladesh, Local Government Ordinance was amended and the Swanirvar Gram Sarkar (self-dependent village government) was familiarized at the rural village level. In July, 1982, the policy was wrapped up by a Martial Law Order (Khan, 2015).

In the study of Kuusi (2009) "Aspects of Local Self-Government: Tanzania, Kenya, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland and Ghana" five principles were in concentration. 'The principles are as follows: (a) constitutional and lawful basis of local self-government, (b) the notion of local self-government, (c) the opportunity of local self-government, (d) conditions of ensuring responsibilities at the local level, and (5) financial capitals of local authorities' (p. 4). According to Singh (2003) as cited by Islam & Fujita (2012), the system of local government in Bangladesh is relatively different from other countries. Bangladesh inbred the concept of local government system from Britain but it is relatively different from the existing system of Britain. In Britain, local government authorities are totally elected by the vote of the people but in Bangladesh, local government bodies are formed by election, selection or sometimes by official bureaucrats.

Rahman & Solongo (2002) in their book 'Human Security in Bangladesh: In Search of Justice and Dignity' revised the activities of the courts, their relations with law enforcement agencies, people's consciousness of the courts, and the means in which they could be made more well-organized. One of the significant outcomes of the research was 'there exists a high level of awareness among villagers as to the existence of village courts, although most villagers still prefer to settle their disputes through local arbitration (Salish)' (p. 98).

According to Rahman & Solongo (2002), a published report by United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP) as cited in (Sarker, 2013) 'pressed the view that about two-thirds of disputes do not enter the formal court process; instead, they are either settled at the local level, through informal settlement by local leaders or a village court or remain unsettled.' Throughout the study, they observed that all of their 49 respondents (selected randomly from the various Union Parishad areas) discerned the existence of village courts. The finding showed that there is a high level of awareness among the villagers about the village courts. They also found that concerning the preference of institution, the Village Court is fared better than the formal police or courts of justice (pp.8-9)

Faruque & Khaled (2010) in their article 'Local Level Justice System in Bangladesh: Challenges and Search for Way-out' emphasized on the relations between local justice and legal enablement; official and unofficial apparatuses of access to justice; challenges of access to prescribed justice and necessity of local justice system. This study also focused on achievements of native justice delivery in Bangladesh, justice institutions (Salish, village court, arbitration council), achievements of local justice in formal justice system.

UNDERSTANDING OF RURAL SELF-GOVERNANCE

Local self-government is well-defined in the Encyclopedia of Social Sciences as "the government, which has a territorial non sovereign community having / possessing the legal right and the necessary origination to regulate its own affairs" (Siddiqui, 2005, p. 285; Islam, 2015, p. 30). Local government is the administration and monitoring of local concerns by the locally elected individuals. When the government officials or their fellow men operate the local bodies, nothing is present there as local government bodies (Khan, 2015). Moreover, the concept of local self-government refers to "an intra – sovereign governmental unit within the sovereign state dealing mainly with local affairs, administered by local authorities, composed of persons elected in accordance with law and subordinate to the state government" (Hossienie, et al., 2012, p. 82; Islam, 2015, p. 30). According to United Nations (UN), "the term local self-government refers to a political subdivision of a nation or state which is constituted by law and has substantial control of local affairs, including the power to impose taxes or exact labor for prescribed purposes" (Siddiqui, 2005, p. 40; Hasina & Hasan, 2015, p. 92).

Kumar & Mahesh (2013) explained the meaning of decentralized governance as 'local governance', 'local self-governance', 'panchayat administration', 'decentralization panchayat governance'. These meanings are used interchangeably and all these infer the identical sensation of 'decentralization as a political reform process aimed at further democratizing of the state' (p.7). In addition, Wijayaratna (2004) stated that governance nearer to the community people are more responsible to the downstream. On the contrary, communities can enjoy the improved chances to partake in design, plan, application of design and monitoring of the development attempts.

Rural (village) self-governance means a system of governing the rural (village) affairs by their own designed and customary way by obeying the rules of the state for ensuring peace, development, rule of law and preserving the customs of the community people. In the present study, rural (village) self-governance means the elected body and authority of the village community consisting of an elected President, an elected Vice-President, and 21 selected members of 'Hulhulia Samajik Unnayan Parishad-HSUP' that means 'Hulhulia Community Development Council' by the direct vote of the people of the village for a fixed period according to the constitution of the HSUP. The goals of HSUP are to ensure the peace, justice, human rights, community development efforts and wellbeing of the people for establishing the village as a 'Model Village Hulhulia' in the country.

CONCEPT OF RURAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

The Village Courts Act, 2006 was a replaced and an updated version of the Village Courts Act, 1976 of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh. It makes the opportunity for the formation of a village court (VC) in every Union Parishad (UP) of the country (Faruque & Khaled, 2010). In the context of India, headman and panchayat (village council) system was existed since the ancient periods. The most significant chore of the panchayat in India was to maintain public order and harmony. It executed both police and judicial duties as well. The village panchayat settled disagreements and quarrels. The panchayat system in Dhaka has its existence among the Muslim population from the commencement of the Mughal period. It has continued its role until the beginning of the 20th century (Rahman & Solongo, 2002). The derivation and origin of the Village Court (VC) can be rooted in Panchayat system of ancient times. The system is the body of heads and seniors that was accountable for running village affairs including the settlement and mediation of clashes and disputes. The Village Court (VC) deals with the disputes of both civil and criminal in nature although this court is not a part of regular judiciary system. It is comprised of a panel of five individuals: The Union Parishad Chairman, two other UP members (one is chosen by each party) and two other citizens (one is chosen by each party). This court has an authority over civil disputes valuing more than 25,000 Taka (Bangladesh currency) and it also deals with some criminal offences (Faruque & Khaled, 2010).

In the context of Hulhulia village, the village court refers to the body that is originated in the British period as Gram Panchayat (Village Council) and with the time being the court has been taken a formal shape by the enforcement of the constitution of 'Hulhulia Samajik Unnayan Parishad-HSUP' for ensuring the justice of any type of felonies or misdemeanors or any type of local arbitrations. This village court is headed by the chairman of HSUP and the other members deal equally for both parties. The court mainly does the work of conflict resolution, mediation and ensures justice. If anybody wants to go to the formal or higher court of the nation, he has the full right to go within one month.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

In the world of the scholars, many researchers have been conducted a large number of valuable research studies on local self-governance, rural local governance, decentralized local governance etc. The human rights concerns, justice system, village court system was also given priority in some scholarly articles. In the context of Bangladesh, a very few research studies were conducted on a specific village focusing on the roles of rural self-governance in justice and human rights of the villagers. Many research articles were reviewed relevant to the current research study, but no reviewed research could not fulfill the objectives of this study. Moreover, all the relevant studies could not be reviewed for a very little scope. The researchers have a knack in finding out the research gaps between the previous researches and the existing research.

STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

In the context of Bangladesh, rural and urban local government system exists. The rural local government system includes Gram Sarkar (Village Government), Union Parishad, Upazilla Parishad and Zilla Parishad. The urban local government system includes the Pourashavas and City Corporation. There are three types of Pourashavas namely class-1, class-2 and class-3. On the contrary, City corporations are established in the divisional headquarters (Bhuiyan, 2011). The study accomplished by Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) and others in their concluding remarks claimed that the application of Gram Sarkars created a great deal of debates and disagreements. One part of critics think that it was a partisan initiative by the ruling party that increases the tensions in the rural area. The rest of the critics point to the mission objectives of the initiatives fulfilled and how well the electorate prepare for the initiative (Majumdar, 2005). There are huge debated issues, accusations, deceptive concepts against the village government over the years.

Then focusing on a specific village named Hulhulia, twelve (12) kilometers away from the Singra Upazilla of Natore District and studied through the Internet about the village. Primarily, some specific initiatives of the villagers snatched the eye. By watching reports on Television and Internet the unique village government system was introduced to us. People of the village have made their constitution for the local governance. In this village, a president, a vice-president and 21 members of the village parliament are elected in a democratic way by the people of the village. They also take part in the union parishad election and national election process. Traditionally the village community maintains the peace and order of the village. They never go to the police stations and formal courts for the human rights violations. It was noticed that police never came to this village for any criminal case in hundreds of years. There is a court in this village and this court mediates all the local conflicts. The people are highly educated and nearly 100% of people are educated and it is compulsory for everyone to pass secondary school certificate (SSC) examination. There is no child marriage, dowry, illegal activities, and drug addiction in this village. The village is mostly self-sufficient and they

organize all sorts of community development activities by themselves. This village can be a role model for other villages of Bangladesh and therefore, the researchers got interested in studying the village prioritizing the village self-governance system, local justice system and human rights issues. Consequently, the researchers have selected 'Role of rural self-governance in justice and human rights: a study on a village of Natore district, Bangladesh.'

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To explore the role of rural self-governance in justice system in a village of Bangladesh.
2. To identify the role of rural self-governance in human rights in a village of Bangladesh.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

As the present study is qualitative in nature, a qualitative research design was used as the principal research approach. According to W. Creswell, qualitative researchers choose from among five possibilities, including narrative, phenomenology, ethnography, case study, and grounded theory (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The study is mainly based on a case study, a qualitative form of research. 'Qualitative case study research, as already noted, appeals to subjective ways of knowing and to a primarily qualitative methodology that captures experiential understanding' (Stake, 2010). In this research study, the case study design was used as the primary research approach to explore the causes, events and processes of rural self-governance, justice system and human rights issues. As supplementary methods, qualitative surveys and narrative discussions were also used.

AREA OF THE STUDY

Hulhulia is a small village situated on the North Western part of Chalan Beel, the largest Beel of Bangladesh comprises a series of depressions interconnected by various channels. It is situated in the Chougram Union of Singra Upazila that is 15-kilometer North from the Singra Upazilla Zero Point of Natore District, Bangladesh.

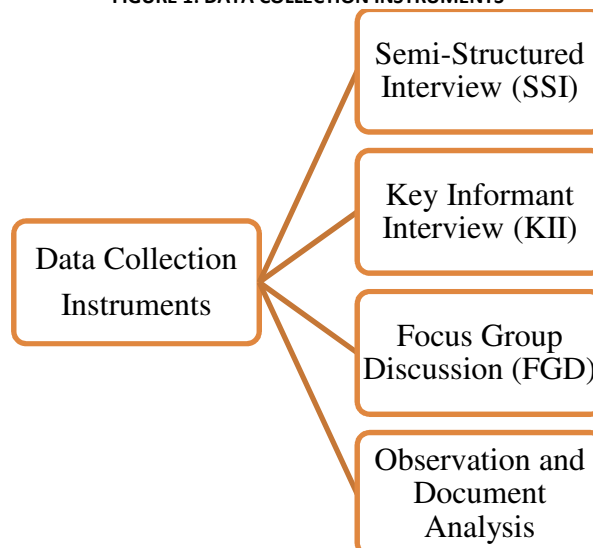
POPULATION AND SAMPLE

There are about 3500 people/ villagers living in and outside of Hulhulia village. About 50% of people are living in the towns, cities and abroad. So, 50% people were not accessible for this study. On the contrary, as the village is situated in a remote area, researchers have had a limited scope to access to the female population for the cultural and traditional causes. The population of the study were those males who are found in the 12 paras (small area of the village community) of the village area during the study. The sampled population of this study were 60 villagers, 15 key informants who are also villagers and 12 participants from among the villagers for focus group discussion (FGD). So, the total number of respondents for this study were 87 in number.

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

In this research, several qualitative data collection techniques have been used. These are presented below:

FIGURE 1: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS



[Source: Developed by the Researchers]

DATA ANALYSIS

According to World Health Organization, (2014), "The analysis plan contains a description of the research question and the various steps carried out in a systematic process" (p. 25). A data analysis plan is "a detailed document outlining procedures for conducting an analysis on data" (Jablonski & Guagliardo, 2016, p. 87). In the present study, quantitative survey data was analyzed by using two ways such as numerical distribution along with graphical presentation of data. On the contrary, qualitative data was analyzed with the help of thematic analysis, descriptive analysis and verbatim quotations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

JUSTICE FROM VILLAGE COURT

There is a village court in Hulhulia village. The chairman of Hulhulia Samajik Unnayan Parishad (HSUP) is the chief justice of the village. Besides, there are five members in the advisory board. The members of the village assembly work as the mediator and advocate for the both parties during a justice. Both Civil and Criminal cases are handled by the village court by taking a small amount of registration fee. If the neighbors fail in a mediation process, then the para (small community) committee tries to mediate. If the para committee fails to mediate, finally a victim goes to village court. If any party is not agreed with the decision of the village court, he/she can go to formal court (district courts and others) within 30 days. Otherwise, the decision is granted as final. It is observed that in most of the cases people are very much agreed and pleased by the judgment of the village court. If necessary, in the sensitive cases advocates are hired from the formal court for three parties, one for offender, one for the victim and one on behalf of the village court for ensuring justice according to the country laws.

In Hulhulia village, punishment is humane in nature. No harmful decisions of punishment are taken in a justice process against the offenders. For civil cases, the village court mediates the conflicting issues and ensures justice by providing the real part to the owners, ensures repairment of losses. For the criminal cases, the village court ensures full treatment cost, cost of repairment, and rehabilitation of the victims by providing a large amount of properties to the future generation of the victims. No harsh punishments are practiced now, but 30 or 40 years ago punishment was sometimes inhumane. Some selected comments from the fifteen key informants about the village justice system are as follows:

According to a key informant, "Once upon a time, hard actions were taken. But now in Hulhulia, village justice system is moderate and humane actions are taken. We try to mediate in a humanistic way. Now for electronic and print media, conflict mediation is empathetic in nature. More than 30-40 years ago, I have bitten the thieves, but now I do not do that. If I do that police will arrest me. Two types of Salish (mediation) are ensued here. Both types of cases criminal and civil cases are handled carefully. We have no culture of biting by sandals or slapping to the offenders."

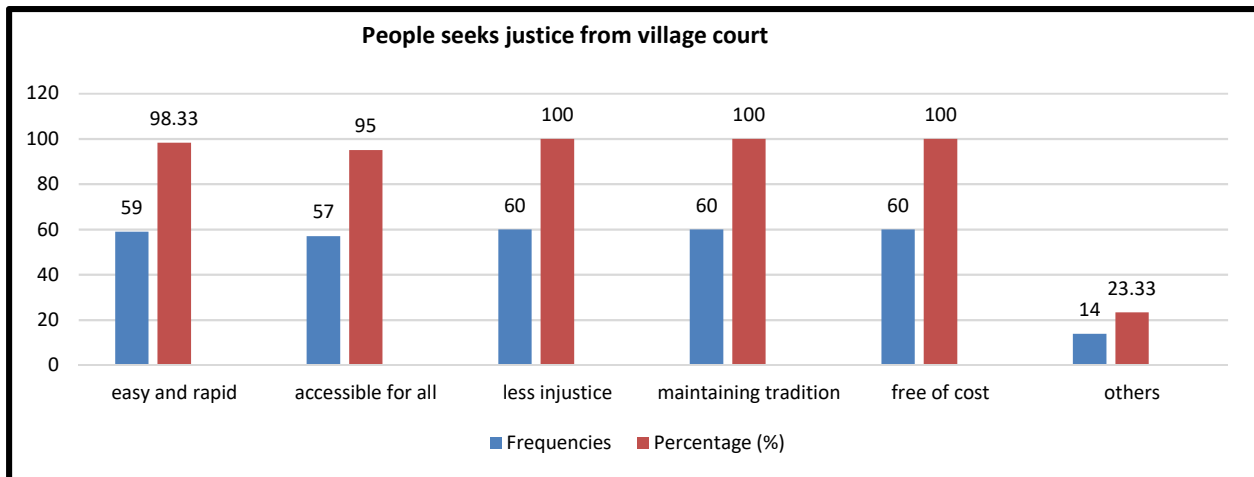
According to a village chairman, “Both civil and criminal cases are handled in our judiciary process. We call both parties and mediate carefully. We collect repair costs and we do not exercise any prejudice like inhuman torture, hamper the honor of the parties. We do not use chain of shoes and other cruel punishment. If any party is not happy with the mediation, then he can go to formal court within 29 days.”

On the contrary, a senior citizen claimed, “Civil and Criminal both type of crimes are the objects of our judiciary system. Seventy (70) years ago, a murder was committed in a family conflict. In our village, crimes are not so severe. In any severe case, we contact and mediate with police station. Mediation is our main practice of justice. We give priority in repayment of losses, fine, supportive treatment, and livelihood options are in this judiciary system.”

From Focus Group Discussion (FGD) it was known that ensuring human rights in justice system was their primary goal. According to the FGD, “There is no contradictory punishment rather ensuring proper mediation. We are always concern about the people and try to restore the human rights of the people”.

An interesting finding of the study is that people of Hulhulia village generally don’t go to formal court rather they seek judgment from the Hulhulia Samajik Unnayan Parishad-HSUP. From the analysis of surveyed data, it was noticed that 100% of respondents seek justice from the village court for three reasons such as (a) scope of less injustice, (b) mediation is free of cost, and (c) for maintaining their tradition.

FIGURE 2: PEOPLE SEEK JUSTICE FROM VILLAGE COURT



[Source: Developed by the Researchers]

About 98.33 % of the respondents want justice from village court as the justice system is easy and rapid. Another 95% of respondents think that this justice is accessible for all. A 23.33% of respondents seek justice from the village court for several reasons such as: (a) for following tradition of the past generations, (b) for keeping the villagers united, (c) for facing a very few difficulties in the village judiciary system, (d) for fulfilling the demands of the people. They also feel that in village court access to justice is easy and comfortable, easy to get mental peace, there is no scope of injustice and full package of justice.

A five among the fifteen key informants (KIs) told, “As people get justice here, they do not go to formal court.” One informant claimed that they do not need the formal court. Another key informant told, “We have strict justice system.” A key informant from southern part of the village told, “In formal court both parties will lose their wealth and time. But here we are doing better judgment far-sighting the social and familial condition of both parties. It saves time and the court delivers opinions to the both parties.”

An official of the village government explained, “People do not go to formal court because they get justice here, there are less expenses, it is rapid and there is no scope of harassment”. A school teacher narrated in such a way “In formal court there are a lot of problems. People face monetary loss, loss of dignity. Hence, our people do not like to go to police station and formal court.” A senior citizen of the village told, “In our constitution there is a provision - one can go to formal court, but village will be informed first. People sometimes go to formal court, but they come back to the village court again.” Finally, a former chairman and farmer commented, “People are very much obedient to the village. This is a custom and generally people get justice here. So, they do not go to formal court.”

HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE VILLAGE

The authority of HSUP and the people of the village are very much concerned about the protection of human rights violation. Furthermore, findings from the analyzed data reveal that 97% of respondents are literate and 3% are illiterate. About fifty-eight (58%) respondents have studied at the secondary level or passed the secondary level. Analyzed data from KIIs reveal that the literacy rate in Hulhulia village ranges from 95% to 100%. Among the new generation, 100% people are primary educated and Secondary School Certificate (SSC) passed population of this village ranges from 55 to 80%. But FGD data reveals that SSC passed population is 70-75%.

It was found from the focus group discussion (FGD) that poverty ratio in Hulhulia is 10:2 that means- among ten people two of them are living under the poverty line in the context of Hulhulia. In Hulhulia, a man is called a poor if he has the land below 5 Bighas (1.66 Acres). On the basis of income, a person having monthly income below BDT15,000 is called a poor. It was also found that 62% of respondent have tin shed roof and brick-built wall. The rest of 38% have tin shed roof and mud wall. Almost 97% of people drink water from tube-well and the rest from submersible pump.

It was revealed from the key informant interviews (KIIs), semi-structured interviews, and FGD that 100% of people are using sanitary latrine in Hulhulia. There is no hanging toilet in this village. As a person described, “more than 20 years ago there were few open toilets.” Another person commented, “forty years ago there were hanging toilets in Hulhulia village.” It was known about the health facilities of Hulhulia that almost 92 % people go to village doctor, and another 92% of respondents go to Upazilla Hospital, almost 88% go to District General Hospital. About half of the population living in the village goes to the traditional and religious healers (Imam, Oja, Kabiraj, Sapure) in cases of snake bites, dog bites, hand broken etc. They also abide by the tradition of telpora (healed oil), pani pora (healed water), manot (sacrifice something to God or religious shrines for cure) etc. During medical emergency they go to the hospitals of Dhaka, Rajshahi and Bogura. Another interesting finding is that about 90% of respondents have internet access.

TABLE 1: ANALYSIS OF CRIME AND HUMAN RIGHTS RELATED VARIABLES
(Crime and Rights Related Variables, N=60)

Variables		Responses	Percentage (%)
Crime Rate	Very Low	42	70
	Low	18	30
Child Marriage	Yes	1	1.67
	No	59	98.33
Dowry Practice in Marriage	Yes	2	3.33
	No	58	96.67
Drug Addiction	Yes	2	3.33
	No	58	96.67
Torture to the Women	Yes	2	3.33
	No	58	96.67
Happiness in Social Life	Happy	23	38.33
	Very Happy	37	61.67
Voting Rights in Village Government (Men)	Yes	60	100
	No	0	0
Voting Rights in National Election	Yes	60	100
	No	0	0

[Source: Developed by the Researchers]

Table-1 shows that crime rate in Hulhulia village is ranging from very low (70%) to low (30%). An informant thinks that “among the incidents only 1 or 2 % are crimes and crime is very rare in Hulhulia, but land-related conflicts are present at a limited rate.” It was also found that 98.33% of respondents rejected the presence of child marriage. Only 1.67% of them agreed that the rate of child marriage is very low. A 90-years old man claimed about child marriage “without passing the honors level, our daughters are not getting married.” A bold statement has given by a woman that “child marriage has disappeared from the society.” On the contrary, data from the interviews revealed that 96.67% of respondents do not give or take dowry during the marriages in their family. Only 3.33 % of them accepted the presence of dowry in different names. Two decades ago, dowry was practiced in Hulhulia and now it is totally prohibited. In addition, the the analysis of semi structured interview and KII data it was found that about 96.67% of respondents think there are no torture to women, but 3.33% accept the presence of torture to women at a very low rate. A retired school teacher told, “in Hulhulia there are very few cases of torture to women. We have strong legal and mediation system to stop torture.” A farmer evaluated the issue as “reported cases of torture are mediated carefully, but filing a case in the law court (formal court) is very rare.”

Table-1 also shows that 100% people (both male and female) have the right to vote in national election. On the contrary, 100% respondents have the right to vote in village government election. But women have no right to vote in village government election.

Seven of the key informants have ensured that their living standard is good, very good, high and up to the mark. Some think that standard of their living is average or more than average. A key informant has narrated the scenario by the following judgement, “Our 50% of people are living outside of the village, even in damage of crops for flash flood or storms people live happily because the outsider of the village sent them remittance and money that fuels for preserving the living standard.” About 62 % of respondents in Hulhulia think they are very happy and 38% think of them as happy. The nature of happiness of the villagers was narrated by an informant as such way, “People are very happy in Hulhulia. But many children who are economically established do not take care of their parents or do not look after them as a responsible son or daughter. Some parents feel very lonely because they have no caregivers. Although they have spent much of their resources for the development of career of their children, children who are living advanced countries are not coming to the country. Despite the fact, they are happy. But it is a matter of sadness that women cannot take part in HSUP elections although they can cast vote in national elections.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

The people of Hulhulia relatively happy with their village self-governance, justice system and the policies of protecting human rights of the people. But some downsides are putting challenge toward their achievements. Some policy recommendations are as follows: Firstly, women’s active participation and voting rights in village government election should be ensured. Secondly, ageing should be taken as a serious issue, the rights of older people should be upheld and proper care giving facilities are needed to be improved. Thirdly, existing safety net programme should be reshaped and reformed. Fourthly, freedom of speech of the people should be included in the constitution of Hulhulia village. Finally, effective measures should be undertaken by the Government and Non- Government Organizations with the fullest cooperation of the people of the village to protect the damage of crops during the natural disasters.

CONCLUSIONS

From the research findings resulted from field observations, conversations with the respondents, it can be concluded that rural (village) self-governance system plays an active role in ensuring a welfare-based justice system, promoting human rights issues in community life. The key findings of the study are (a) half of the population are living outside the village and contributing to the village economy, (b) most of the young people have completed their primary education and almost 75% people have completed their secondary level of education, (c) about 63% people are involved in agriculture and 92% families are directly depending on agriculture. People of the village can yield rice once in a year and the poverty ratio of this village is 10:2. In Hulhulia 100% people have the access to full sanitation and pure drinking water. The rate of crimes such as dowry, child marriage, drug addictions, torture to women and other are very low and rare in Hulhulia. In Hulhulia, village government is directly elected by the male population. The villagers have their own constitution and judiciary system. There is no women’s participation in village government, but women can cast their vote in national elections. The village government provides maximum facilities of education, health, infrastructure development, communication development, local conflict mediation, cultural activities with the help of 12 affiliated committees. Although the people’s living standard is high enough and they live in peace and happiness natural disasters such as flash floods or cyclones create a large number of losses of crops in the village located in the midst of Chalan Beel (a large canal covering huge volume of watery land).

LIMITATIONS

Though the researchers have tried to conduct the study effectively and accurately there could be some sorts of limitations. There could be major limitations in the proper use of research methodology. During the study, as sample size was small avoiding biasness in data collection was a real challenge. This small sample was not enough to make sense in terms of validity and reliability of data. It should be mentioned that the analysis of the data may have caused some sort of biasness due to the small number of samples and constraint of time. Yet, a survey of larger sample size might give a more accurate representation of the studied village.

SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In the current study, although maximum efforts have been provided to generate a baseline detailed knowledge and thoughts regarding the role of rural self-governance, justice system and human rights of the villagers, there are huge scopes of further research. There are still many things to be searched. There are enormous scopes of study on the issue of rural self-governance, rural justice system, human rights issues, cultural barriers of women’s participation in governance

system, environmental vulnerabilities of the people, coping capacity of the people in the disaster-prone villages in the selected rural settings. There is huge scope of comparative study with other villages within or outside of Bangladesh on the selected issues.

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