

## PATHWAYS TO THE STUDIES ON MEN AND MASCULINITIES IN BANGLADESH

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### Abstract

In any society, the analysis of gender must include ‘men and masculinities’. But ‘men and masculinities’ as research attention is relatively underdeveloped in Bangladesh. This article provides an overview of the current studies on ‘men and masculinities’ in Bangladesh. Using Pub Med and Google Scholar databases, 37 closely relevant full-text documents were reviewed. This review uncovers that the ideal/hegemonic version of Bangladeshi masculinity is predominantly constructed/epitomized, amongst others, as being the provider, powerful, physically strong, good sexual performer, and having the ability to control wife. Across studies, the discourses, narratives, and practices of various masculinities in Bangladesh are expressed in the context of religion, migration, sexuality, fatherhood, suicide, violence, women empowerment, sports, and marginality. In some cases, the ideal/hegemonic version of Bangladeshi masculinity encounters serious tensions, ambiguities, resistances, and contestations. Alternative masculine discourses and narratives which reject and resist hegemonic masculine ideals and practices were also noted. This review ends with a call for a future research direction.

**Keywords:** Bangladesh, Masculinity, Men, Review.

### Introduction

Ever since Australian sociologist Raewyn Connell's,<sup>1</sup> most influential, transformative, and leading book *'Masculinities'* was published, ‘men and masculinities’ as a research scholarship has been expanded dramatically across a wide range of academic disciplines.<sup>2</sup> In

*Masculinities*, Connell laid the foundation for the social theory of gender that opened up avenues for theoretical and conceptual arguments on gender, social hierarchy, critical men's studies, male domination,

<sup>1</sup> Raewyn Connell, *'Masculinities'* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> Jeff Hearn, “From Hegemonic Masculinity to the Hegemony of Men,” *Feminist Theory* 5, no. 1 (2004): pp. 49-72, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700104040813>. Nikki

Wedgwood, “Connell's Theory of Masculinity – Its Origins and Influences on the Study of Gender1,” *Journal of Gender Studies* 18, no. 4 (2009): pp. 329-339, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09589230903260001>.

Robert Morrell, “Vehicle for Southern African Knowledge? *Men and Masculinities* and Research from South Africa,” *Men and Masculinities* 22, no. 1 (December 2019): pp. 34-43, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184x18805548>.

femininity as well as feminist theorisation of patriarchy.<sup>3</sup> Until now, Connell is regarded as the most influential theorist/scholar in the field on the global scale for developing a broad framework for social constructionist perspectives of gender relations.<sup>4</sup> The core appeal of Connell's theorisation indicates that masculinity is a socially constructed phenomenon that entails the differences between men.<sup>5</sup> This theory has contributed to shift our attention from the prevailing sex role theory that fails to acknowledge power relationships both between and within genders, and views gender as fixed and inherent characteristics of individuals only.<sup>6</sup>

The concept of hegemonic masculinity occupies the central position of her social theory of gender.<sup>7</sup> Connell framed a hierarchical order of masculinities, with hegemonic masculinity at the top while three

other versions such as *subordinate, complicit, and marginal masculinities* are ranked below the order. Hegemonic masculinity is symbolically the ideal type of masculinity within the framework that emerges within a particular socio-cultural milieu and acts as a benchmark that all men must strive to attain in the wake of maintaining gender order.<sup>8</sup>

Ever since the concept of hegemonic masculinity has not only been extensively used but also sparked several criticisms and debates.<sup>9</sup> For example, scholars have made attempts to place additional models of masculinity such as *inclusive masculinity, mosaic masculinity, hybrid masculinity, and sticky masculinity*, to name a few. Each of the models necessarily provides an explanation regarding men's various involvement with the notion of masculinity and masculine practices based on their experiences relevant to a particular model.<sup>10</sup> Many African scholars, on the other hand, have cast serious doubt about the relevance and implication of Western-centric hegemonic masculinity in the continent as it is associated with complex socio-political processes.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, despite being a powerful model, the implication of the concept of hegemonic masculinity has to

<sup>3</sup> Nikki Wedgwood, "Connell's Theory of Masculinity – Its Origins and Influences on the Study of Gender," *Journal of Gender Studies* 18, no. 4 (2009): pp. 329-339, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09589230903260001>.

Kopano Ratele, *Liberating Masculinities* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2016). Demetrakis Z. Demetriou, "Connell's Concept of Hegemonic Masculinity: A Critique," *Theor Soc* 30, (2001): 337-361. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1017596718715>.

<sup>4</sup> Brittany Everitt-Penhale and Kopano Ratele, "Rethinking 'Traditional Masculinity' as Constructed, Multiple, and ≠ Hegemonic Masculinity," *South African Review of Sociology* 46, no. 2 (March 2015): pp. 4-22, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21528586.2015.1025826>.

<sup>5</sup> Anisur Rahman Khan, "Hegemonic Masculinity in the Marginal Societal Context," *AGATHOS* 12, no. 1 (2021): pp. 223-234.

<sup>6</sup> Brittany Everitt-Penhale and Kopano Ratele, "Rethinking 'Traditional Masculinity' as Constructed, Multiple, and ≠ Hegemonic Masculinity," *South African Review of Sociology* 46, no. 2 (March 2015): pp. 4-22, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21528586.2015.1025826>.

<sup>7</sup> Demetrakis Z. Demetriou, "Connell's Concept of Hegemonic Masculinity: A Critique," *Theor Soc* 30, (2001): 337-361. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1017596718715>.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Howson, *Challenging Hegemonic Masculinity* (London: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>9</sup> Raewyn Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept," *Gender & Society* 19, no. 6 (2005): pp. 829-859, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243205278639>.

<sup>10</sup> Andrea Waling, "Rethinking Masculinity Studies: Feminism, Masculinity, and Post-structural Accounts of Agency and Emotional Reflexivity," *The Journal of Men's Studies* 27, no. 1 (2018): pp. 89-107, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1060826518782980>.

<sup>11</sup> Kopano Ratele, "Currents against Gender Transformation of South African Men: Relocating Marginality to the Centre of Research and Theory of Masculinities," *NORMA* 9, no. 1 (February 2014): pp. 30-44, <https://doi.org/10.1080/18902138.2014.892285>.

be critically assessed in terms of societal, cultural, and transnational contexts.<sup>12</sup>

With regards to the scholarly growth of masculinity studies, Connell<sup>13</sup> assessed the direction of the field as: “it is not a gigantic field but it is a significant interdisciplinary enterprise with a rich knowledge base already. The field is still growing”. Connell<sup>14</sup> elucidated further, “this field is now global, but the consequences of a global field of knowledge are not sufficiently recognised because of the continuing hegemony of the Global North in theory, methodology, and academic networks”. While Jeff Hearn,<sup>15</sup> another influential scholar of ‘masculinity studies’, prefers to term the domain of masculinity studies as ‘*Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities* (CSMM) and finds it as rather messy and fragmented, far from being organised and coherent. The *Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities* (CSMM) are ontologically, epistemologically, and politically diverse and complicated.

*Men and Masculinities*, on the other hand, is considered the most acclaimed or flagship journal on the subject. This journal celebrated its 20th anniversary of publication in 2019. Amongst the scholars who wrote in commemoration of the Anniversary Special Issue of this journal,

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<sup>12</sup> Jeff Hearn and Robert Morrell, “Reviewing Hegemonic Masculinities and Men in Sweden and South Africa,” *Men and Masculinities* 15, no. 1 (2012): pp. 3-10, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184x11432111>.

<sup>13</sup> Raewyn Connell, “The Study of Masculinities,” *Qualitative Research Journal* 14, no. 1 (June 2014): pp. 5-15, <https://doi.org/10.1108/qri-03-2014-0006>, 7.

<sup>14</sup> Raewyn Connell, “The Study of Masculinities,” 5.

<sup>15</sup> Jeff Hearn, “So What Has Been, Is, and Might Be Going on in Studying Men and Masculinities? Some Continuities and Discontinuities,” *Men and Masculinities* 22, no. 1 (December 2019): pp. 53-63, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184x18805550>.

Cserni and Essig<sup>16</sup> mapped the directions of the published articles on men and masculinities including their regional prominence. Most of the articles submitted and published in this journal come from Western countries. For example, among the top 16 countries, the USA represented 42.71% of the total publications followed by the UK with 15.86% representation. Two non-Western countries such as South Africa and India that secured places on the list just maintain a negligible sharing occupying 2.54% and 1.27% respectively. The underrepresentation of publications from outside the Western block was explained in two possible ways, although these arguments seem to be quite simplistic. Firstly, as the Western countries are most interested in challenging gender inequalities, they conducted more research on men and masculinities/gender dynamics. Secondly, scholars from non-Western countries lack in accessing the tools, methods, and research funding despite having interests in the subject.

By taking note of one specific journal despite its strong prominence in the field, it might be too naive to accept the arguments for such underrepresentation of the body of knowledge produced in non-Western countries. For example, our close observation confirms that several leading/specific journals of the field such as *the Journal of Men’s Studies*, *Psychology of Men and Masculinity*, *Norma: International Journal for Masculinity Studies*, *Masculinities: A Journal of Culture and Society*, *American Journal of Men’s Health and Masculinities* and *Social Change* continuously publish scholarly works on

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<sup>16</sup> Robert T. Cserni and Lee W. Essig, “Twenty Years of *Men and Masculinities* by the Numbers: An Analysis of Publications and Article Keywords,” *Men and Masculinities* 22, no. 1 (December 2019): pp. 5-15, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184x18805349>.

men and masculinity not only from both the Western countries but also from other parts of the world.

In fact, in some non-Western countries, such as South Africa, studies on men and masculinities are now well established as well as adequately voluminous.<sup>17</sup> Studies are burgeoning in several East Asian countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam<sup>18</sup>, China<sup>19</sup>, and also in the countries in South Asia.<sup>20</sup> Notably, despite the immersive growth of all areas of gender-related academic and policy works in Bangladesh, a country located in South Asia, there has not been any attempt to follow the trend and directions of the existing scholarship on men and masculinities. Against this backdrop, we attempt to scan and summarise the code body of knowledge on men and masculinities in the context of Bangladesh. It further explores the directions of those studies under several emerging themes. It concludes with a call for further research interventions on men and masculinities in Bangladesh.

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<sup>17</sup> Robert Morrell, “Vehicle for Southern African Knowledge? *Men and Masculinities* and Research from South Africa,” *Men and Masculinities* 22, no. 1 (December 2019): pp. 34-43, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184x18805548>.

<sup>18</sup> Thanh Ly An, Andrea Waling, and Adam Bourne, “Men and Masculinities Studies in Vietnam: A Brief Review,” *Sociology Compass* 16, no. 3 (February 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12965>.

<sup>19</sup> Kam Louie, *Changing Chinese Masculinities: From Imperial Pillars of State to Global Real Men* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2016).

<sup>20</sup> Praseeda Gopinath and Pavitra Sundar, “Introduction: Masculinities,” *South Asian Popular Culture* 18, no. 1 (February 2020): pp. 1-10, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14746689.2020.1736819>. Chandrima Chakraborty, “Mapping South Asian Masculinities: Men and Political Crises,” *South Asian History and Culture* 5, no. 4 (2014): pp. 411-420, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19472498.2014.936211>.

## Method

This review locates the existing scholarship on Bangladeshi men and masculinities studies using Google Scholar and PubMed. These two search engines were deliberately used as they can retrieve the highest number of scholarly works. Keywords used in the review included; “men”, “masculinity”, “masculinities”, “manhood”, “male sex role”, “male sexuality”, “masculinities and violence”, “fatherhood” and “Bangladesh”, and “suicide and men,” amongst others. The reference lists of the published articles were also used to locate additional documents. Three criteria were applied concerning the inclusion and assessment of the documents: (i) explicit presentation of the key essence/dynamics of men and masculinities in Bangladesh; ii) available electronically and (iii) published in English only. All the closely relevant academic articles, book chapters, institutional reports, and postgraduate thesis (excepting the duplicates, quasi-similar papers, newspaper articles, and undergraduate monographs) were reviewed and analysed. No exclusion criterion was imposed in terms of the research approach (empirical or conceptual) and timeframe of publication considering the paucity of the literature. The final search was made in May 2022. All identified publications were initially screened based on abstract and title for relevance by all the authors. Finally, a total of 37 full-text documents were reviewed. In some cases, documents were freely available online. While in other cases, the library access point of East West University, Dhaka, Bangladesh was used to retrieve the articles. Studies were arranged and analysed thematically based on the content and configuration of the topics. One remarkable point is that scholars from both Bangladesh and abroad either independently or jointly

contributed to scholarship on men and masculinities in Bangladesh. Yet, no exclusion criterion was applied concerning the origin of the scholars.

## Discussion

### Thematic Overview of the Bangladeshi Literature

#### Constructing Masculinity

Hasan, Aggleton, and Persson<sup>21</sup> explored how three different social generations (old, middle, and young) negotiate and construct different forms of masculinity. Although men of differing social generations understood/viewed masculinity/real men in terms of money, sexual prowess, being a good ‘provider’, and having regular paid work outside the home, their perspectives also differ across generations or even within the rubric of intra-generations. The marked inter-generational (also intra-generational) variations led to the understanding that there is no single or straightforward formulation of Bangladeshi masculinity.

The muscular and strong male body (roughness) has always been idealised as a strong indicator/basis of the powerful and dominating form of masculinity. Can this so-called idealised version of masculinity be redefined with the impact of the growing trend of male beautification consciousness or practices? Sowad<sup>22</sup> scrutinised this critical question by seeking the perception of the young educated urban males. Although men uphold the values associated with traditional

masculine essential characteristics/attributes such as being breadwinners, powerful, decision-makers, and physically strong, they maintain a strong inclination towards male beautification as an important category to demonstrate manhood. Such attitude/perception attests to the fact of the changing nature of social constructs of masculinity in Bangladesh.

Specific to rural Bangladesh, Imtiaz<sup>23</sup> unfolded three discursive constructions of masculinity which included ‘real man’ (hegemonic masculinity), ‘good man’ (subordinated masculinity), and ‘ordinary man’ (marginalised or complicit masculinity). The real man/hegemonic model of masculinity includes some essential features for men such as sole income earner/primary provider to the family, dominant and powerful, having complete authority over family matters, physical and sexual competence, impassive, maintaining family honour, and restricting women’s mobility. The good man/subordinated form of masculinity includes laborious men who try to earn a good income, respectful and helpful to others, responsible to family, never use violence against others, and do not discriminate between sons and daughters. Yet, most of the characteristics of this kind of masculinity are treated as feminine. On the contrary, men falling into the features of marginalised or complicit masculinity refuse to take risks and may usually become the victims of violence and oppression from the powerful men.

<sup>21</sup> Md Kamrul Hasan, Peter Aggleton, and Asha Persson, “The Makings of a Man: Social Generational Masculinities in Bangladesh,” *Journal of Gender Studies* 27, no. 3 (2017): pp. 347-361, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2017.1388773>.

<sup>22</sup> Abu Saleh Sowad, “Influences of Emerging Beauty Industry for Men on Construction of Masculinities of Male Students of Dhaka City,” *Masculinities and Social Change* 6, no. 1 (2017): pp. 1-16, <https://doi.org/10.17583/mcs.2017.2290>.

<sup>23</sup> Sayed Saikh Imtiaz, “Exploration of Construction of Masculinities in Extreme Poor Households of Northeast Bangladesh,” accessed December 14, 2021, [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Masreka-Khan/publication/273136969\\_Ordinary\\_Men's\\_enactment\\_of\\_Masculinity/links/5bbcc2daa6fdcc9552dce957/Ordinary-Mens-enactment-of-Masculinity.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Masreka-Khan/publication/273136969_Ordinary_Men's_enactment_of_Masculinity/links/5bbcc2daa6fdcc9552dce957/Ordinary-Mens-enactment-of-Masculinity.pdf)

Choudhury and Clisby<sup>24</sup> investigated the articulation of masculinity making among and within the households of construction workers in a Bangladesh city. Broadly, masculine identity is largely constructed through men's ability to provide for their dependents/families. In particular, paid employment for men continues to be understood as a major source of masculine character. This study concluded that masculinity in Bangladesh is neither uniform nor even immune to transformations. Men often have to renegotiate their understandings of the boundaries and parameters of their masculinity as per the changing social circumstances and contexts.

Haque and Kusakabe<sup>25</sup> identified public masculinity and household masculinity among the retrenched male workers in Bangladesh. Under the context of household masculinity, men uphold their status and dignity in the family and enjoy authority over family members by perfectly ensuring their breadwinner role. As such, they detach themselves from household chores. While under the context of public masculinity, men maintain strong social relationships with other fellow men outside their homes. The study argues that men at both levels try to maintain their masculine identities. When it became difficult to maintain their masculine identity in both places, men first gave up their public masculinity and heightened their household masculinity.

Before falling into a state of retrenchment, men were explicitly able to practice hegemonic masculinity. Later on, they had to resort to the complicit version of masculinity through several practices in order to retain their hegemonic masculinity. For example, some men discussed with their wives household responsibilities that enabled women to share household burdens. While doing so, men could maintain their superiority in the households. On the other hand, although some men participated in household chores, they thought this is a temporary provision only. Drawing on a large-scale study, Khan and Townsend<sup>26</sup> confirmed that masculinity is perceived as a multidimensional facet of a man's life. The desired attributes of a real man necessarily include a strong physical appearance, honest and strong character, fearless, ability to control a wife and reproduce, maintaining strict discipline in the family, and sexual prowess. Typically, masculinity is viewed in a very gender-unequal perspective with an emphasis on control, authority, and sexuality. This study further confirms that being *'honest and having a strong character'* is a unique feature aligned with positive masculinity.

### Migration and Masculinity

Pande's<sup>27</sup> ethnographic study analysed three phases of migration that Bangladeshi men living and working in Cape Town, South Africa experienced alongside their immediate interface with the process of manhood. For these migrant men, the

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<sup>24</sup>Tanzina Choudhury and Suzanne Clisby, "Masculinity in Transition or Patriarchy Reasserted? A Study of Construction Workers in Sylhet, Bangladesh," *Studies on Home and Community Science* 11, no. 2 (August 2018): pp. 125-139, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09737189.2017.1420406>.

<sup>25</sup> Md. Mozammel Haque and Kyoko Kusakabe, "Retrenched Men Workers in Bangladesh: A Crisis of Masculinities?" *Gender, Technology and Development* 9, no. 2 (2005): pp. 185-208, <https://doi.org/10.1177/097185240500900202>.

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<sup>26</sup> M.E. Khan and John W. Townsend. "Representation of the Masculine Identity in Bangladesh," in *Sexuality, Gender Roles, and Domestic Violence in South Asia*, ed. M.E. Khan, John W. Townsend and Perri J. Pelto (New York: Population Council, 2014)

<sup>27</sup>Amrita Pande, "Mobile Masculinities: Migrant Bangladeshi Men in South Africa," *Gender and Society* 31, no. 3 (October 2017): pp. 383-406, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243217702825>.

decision to migrate (pre-migration phase) is a manhood ritual than an economical solution since it serves as an ultimate signifier of masculinity. During the second phase- Bangladeshi men's journey to South Africa and their interactions with and control of Black African traffickers make a formation of relational masculinity. During the whole process of trafficking, Bangladeshi migrant men remain under the control of the traffickers which severely degrades their own sense of manhood. Finally, these migrant men, upon reaching the destination, recuperated their masculinity through two contrasting strategies-*hyper-masculinity* with an emphasis on violence and sex, and *ummah* masculinity affirmed through celibacy.

In another ethnographic study on Bangladeshi migrant men in South Africa, Munshi<sup>28</sup> argued that the economy is not the primary reason for Bangladeshi men to migrate to South Africa as they are neither poor nor destitute. The prime reason for their migration is the perceived better opportunities and better lifestyles. South Africa has provided Bangladeshi men with a viable means of economic opportunities through the grocery business and a sense of ownership. Yet, among the Bangladeshi community, there is a class distinction between owners and managers of the shop. Understandably, both groups perform their manhood through continued economic connection with Bangladesh by sending remittances back home.

Based on the assumption that sending remittances to the family members preserves the traditional masculine breadwinner ideal,

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<sup>28</sup>Naadria Munshi, "Lived Experiences and Local Spaces: Bangladeshi Migrants in Post-Apartheid South Africa," *New Contree* 67, Special Edition (November 2013): pp. 119-137.

Stevanovic-Fenn's<sup>29</sup> narrative study confirms that remitting allows Bangladeshi men living in the USA to preserve their masculine role as providers. It also allows them to maintain status and honour as respectable men both in their own eyes and those of their families. Yet, maintaining honour through fulfilling masculine duties can be seriously jeopardised if the male migrants find it difficult to remit money home. This eventually puts a tremendous strain on their male identity. This study further explicates times when migrant men were out of a job but still had to send money home to maintain their role as providers. For them, sending remittances is a moral obligation. It must not be questioned but executed.

Sowad<sup>30</sup> analysed the patterns of role changes among migrant Bangladeshi men in the UK. Findings confirm those migrant men while they were in Bangladesh enjoyed the dominating position as men in their family. However, after the migration to the UK, they have to undergo some marked role changes. Majority of the migrant Bangladeshi men have to adopt new attributes of masculine characteristics. They are forced to take part in domestic responsibilities once their partners start working outside to financially support the families. Economic hardship

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<sup>29</sup>Natacha Stevanovic-Fenn, "Gendering Remittances: Contested Masculinities among Bangladeshi Male Immigrants in New York City," in *Migrant Remittances in South Asia*, ed. Md. Mizanur Rahman, Tan Tai Young and A. K. M. Ahsan Ullah (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

<sup>30</sup>Abu Saleh Mohammad Sowad "Migration affecting Masculinities: The Consequences of Migration on the Construction of Masculinities of Migrant Bangladeshi Men Living in the United Kingdom," in *Discourse Analysis as a Tool for Understanding Gender Identity, Representation, and Equality*, ed. Nazmunnessa Mahtab, Sara Parker, Farah Kabir, Tania Haque, Aditi Sabur and Abu Saleh Mohammad Sowad (Pennsylvania: IGI Global, 2016).

stands as a cruel reality for the migrant men that obliges them to share or even leave their hierarchical position in the family. The findings confirm that these men develop a kind of hybrid model of masculinity. Some of them accept changes positively regarding their masculine attributes and do not find current practices damaging while some of them could find new roles threatening to their traditional/hegemonic model of masculinity.

Using Bourdieu's notions of class, Ye<sup>31</sup> examined how Bangladeshi migrant men from Singapore make sense of their migration and masculinity, particularly after they fall out of work. The economic lives of Bangladeshi male labour migrants in Singapore reflect intense structural discrepancies, and they are the victims of economic exploitation and subordination. Despite intricacies, they make powerful meanings of men and masculinities in the context of globalised labour market. Engaging in wage work is the highest symbol of masculinity. They have taken overseas work as they are men and have complex social goals and cultural obligations.

### Violence and Masculinity

One of the early studies on masculinity in the context of Bangladesh was conducted by Blanchet<sup>32</sup> which examined how masculinities are constructed through different practices of violence against women in rural areas. Different constructions of hegemonic masculinities such as a husband's right to teach or

discipline his wife, right to release anger through abuse, the husband as the absolute master who provides shade and protection, and so on are not only some forms of usual practices and expectations but also help to institutionalise violence against women.

Anwary<sup>33</sup> confirms that the hegemonic form of masculinity is often achieved through intimate partner violence. Based on content analysis, this study finds that perpetrators, through acts of violence, use Bangladeshi cultural norms to uphold and reproduce hegemonic norms. In this sense, violence against an intimate partner is considered a performance by which violent men present or validate/legitimate their masculine identities by controlling and instructing women. Hence, violence stands as an essential component of masculinity.

Acid violence is an exceptional form of violence that is intentionally used to destroy the self and subjectivity of women by permanently disfiguring their bodies. Chowdhury's<sup>34</sup> content analysis on acid violence reports that undereducated, under/un-employed men practice such cruelty as a means to assert power and domination to reinstate their experiences of inadequate form masculinity, if any. Men are socialised to enact hegemonic masculinity in the typical Bangladesh patriarchal society by inflicting such harmful practices on women.

Doneys and others<sup>35</sup> also found that men tend to perpetrate violence to re-

<sup>31</sup> Junjia Ye, "Migrant Masculinities: Bangladeshi Men in Singapore's Labour Force," *Gender, Place and Culture* 21, no. 8 (May 2013): pp. 1012-1028, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369x.2013.817966>.

<sup>32</sup> Therese Blanchet. *Constructions of Masculinities and Violence against Women* (Dhaka: Care Bangladesh, 2001).

<sup>33</sup> Afroza Anwary, "Construction of Hegemonic Masculinity: Violence against Wives in Bangladesh," *Women's Studies International Forum* 50 (2015): pp. 37-46, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2015.02.011>.

<sup>34</sup> Elora Halim Chowdhury, "Rethinking Patriarchy, Culture and Masculinity: Transnational Narratives of Gender Violence and Human Rights Advocacy," *Hanwa* 12, no. 1 (February 2014): pp. 79-100, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15692086-12341253>.

<sup>35</sup> Doneys et al., "Doneys, Philippe, Shalini Mitra, Abdul Kader Nazmul, and Helal Mohiuddin,



establish a gender order/masculinity in which they earn respect as breadwinners and authority figures. The interruption of this gender order is an indication of a crisis in masculinity that places them in a state of loss of respect and honour from their family and peers. The perceived state of vulnerability or fear of having one's masculinity motivates men to be involved in harmful masculine practices by inflicting violence in the process.

Using Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity, Kamal<sup>36</sup> explored young university students' dominant gender practices in relation to their construction of hegemonic masculinity. By enacting various social practices, young men find themselves attaining hegemonic masculinity and positioning themselves in a dominant position in the gender order. Many acts/discourses considered to be gender-based violence are embedded in the daily life practices of young men. For example, young men's practices/discourses like *valo meye/baje meye* (Good girl/Bad girl), *moja kora* (Having fun), *piche laga* (Following/stalking), *shikkha deva* (Revenge and punishment), *kotha shuna* (a controlling mechanism) linked to the dominant enactment of violence against women and girls.

A study conducted by Chowdhury<sup>37</sup> has gone beyond the conventional research

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*The Male Entity of the Self Never Dies, It Just Leaps Like a Tiger: Masculinity and Gender-Based Violence in Bangladesh* (Bangkok: Partners for Prevention, 2013).

<sup>36</sup> Shashish Shami Kamal, "Masculinity and Violence against Women: Exploring the Practices of Young Men in Bangladesh," in *Global Masculinities: Interrogations and Reconstructions*, ed. Mangesh Kulkarni, and Rimjhim Jain (New York: Routledge, 2019).

<sup>37</sup> Debdatta Chowdhury, "Masculinity at Work, Masculinity at Stake: Male Negotiations along the West Bengal-Bangladesh Border," in *Popular Masculine Cultures in India: Critical Essays*, ed. by Rohit K. Dasgupta, and Steven Baker (Delhi: Setu Prakashani, 2012).

focus of capturing the issue of violence against women and masculinity but included the complex dynamics of violence against Bangladeshi men perpetrated along the India (West Bengal)-Bangladesh cross-border. This study paid a critical look at violence against Bangladeshi men involved in illegal cross-border activities. While physical abuse, firing, and offensive speech are the manifestations of some of the patterns of hegemonic/dominant masculinities along with the border guards, subjugated and marginal masculinities are attached to male civilians whose minds and bodies have been the spots for practicing hegemonic/dominant masculinity by the guards. This study tries to understand the performance of masculinity in terms of domination, subjugation, marginalisation, and resistance by male figures (broader guards) on the bodies and minds of other men. The performance of masculine physicality and ideology on the cross-border line opens up avenues for the rethinking of law, sovereignty, politics, and the questions of rights.

Another research focus also goes against typical currents of masculinity and violence carried out by Khan and Arendse.<sup>38</sup> This research captures the aspects of domestic violence perpetrated by women against men in Bangladesh. They argued the dominant societal notion portrays women as the natural victims while men as the perpetrators. Such a notion makes it particularly difficult to contextualise men's experiences of domestic violence. Drawing on pertinent evidence, this research confirms men are often victimised at the domestic

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<sup>38</sup> Anisur Rahman Khan and Najwa Arendse, "Female Perpetrated Domestic Violence against Men and the Case for Bangladesh," *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 32, no. 4 (December 2021): pp. 519-533, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10911359.2021.1927281>.

level. In the context of Bangladesh, men's natural tendency of non-reporting, absence of agency or legal support, and a growing gender-blind focus on women's issues have undermined and sidelined the problem of domestic violence against men.

### **Sexuality and Masculinity**

Khan and others<sup>39</sup>, for example, highlighted the inconsistencies associated with gender-biased socialisation in Bangladesh that creates an essentialist framework of male sexuality where phallus, performance, and power are at the core of men's sexual health-related masculine threats. In this sense, real men must be sexually 'potent' to demonstrate 'sexual power' through sustained penile erections, penetration, and prolonged sexual intercourse. Both rural and urban men in this study deem 'sex' as an agency of power, dominance, and governance. Sexual performance with a large-sized penis symbolises masculine power to control women. Even monetary achievements become valueless if men are sexually incapable. The study concluded that discrepancies between expectations of masculine sexuality and compromised performance in their sexual lives could silently endanger men's sexual health and relationships with women.

Earlier, Khan<sup>40</sup> also noted that the crisis of masculinity is reflected in exaggerated notions of male sexual prowess which are often hard to achieve, resulting in

much frustration among men in the wake of the dominant construction of masculine sexuality. Men's ongoing tensions about sexual performance or the struggle to become sexually powerful negatively affect men's sexual health and relationships with women. The accounts of men in the study reveal that the ability to perform prolonged intercourse and satisfy their partners ensure success in masculinity. Failure to offer 'satisfactory' sex is considered shameful by men, threatening their masculine sexuality and ability to acquire women. For many men, sexual potency is seen as critical to maintaining a man's power. The complexities, conflicts, concerns, and contradictions often repress them disturbingly when they find the essential components of masculine sexual prowess unachievable. Such achievement is similar to other indicators of manly success.

In another study, Khan and Aeron<sup>41</sup> highlighted the worries and beliefs of men regarding sexual performance and physiology, size and shape of the penis, and quality of semen. Their concerns are strongly affected by the perceptions of sexuality within the framework of societal and normative values associated with the image of real masculinity. Men living with anxieties about sexual performance hold the idea that they cannot align with the concept of real masculinity. However, many of their worries reflect misinformation about male physiology and sexual health.

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<sup>39</sup> Sharful Islam Khan et al., "Phallus, Performance and Power: Crisis of Masculinity," *Sexual and Relationship Therapy* 23, no. 1 (January 2008): pp. 37-49, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681990701790635>.

<sup>40</sup> Sharful I. Khan, "Male Sexuality and Masculinity: Implications for STIs/HIV and Sexual Health Interventions in Bangladesh," Research Online, accessed September 1, 2021, <https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses/815>.

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<sup>41</sup> M.E. Khan, and Aditi Aeron. "Sexual Worries and Risk-Taking Behaviors of Men in the Urban Slums of Bangladesh," in *Sexuality, Gender Roles, and Domestic Violence in South Asia*, ed. M.E. Khan, John W. Townsend, and Perti J. Pelto (New York: Population Council, 2014).

On the other hand, Kabir<sup>42</sup> explored that male students at tertiary-level institutions willfully endorse hegemonic masculine ideals which are most likely to be engaged in risky sexual practices such as having sex without contraceptives. The non-use of contraceptives is premised on certain discourses such as ‘males are powerful and stronger as they have a penis’, ‘females are considered as a commodity for sexual urge’, and ‘tendency to impose decision over females’. All these discourses turn into a state of reluctance for men not to use a contraceptive to demonstrate manhood.

Street healing in Bangladesh has an enormous impact on male sexual health in Bangladesh. *Majma* (street canvassing) is a popular means of selling medicines in Bangladesh. While street healers sell different types of medicines, those that offer or guarantee male sexual prowess while speaking of the loss of semen, premature ejaculation, and penis size receive significant attractions as buying products. Anam’s<sup>43</sup>(2010) ethnographic study confirms that street healers combine different local cultural ideas in their street canvassing to represent real men and serve the cultural purpose as means of the manhood-making process in Bangladesh. Street healing through canvassing, thus, acts as a unique resource to build the emic model of male sexuality/masculinity.

Hasan and Aggleton<sup>44</sup> explored the narratives of three distinct social generations

of men in Bangladesh about gender and masculinity, and sexual health-seeking practices. For the older generation, men's health care seeking for sexual health problems was the exception rather than the norm. They had never sought professional or other types of help for sexual health problems. Most men of the older social generation saw themselves as sexually healthy and believed that they did not have problems requiring help when they were young. Middle social generation said that they had not sought support for sexual health either because they saw themselves as not needing to do so or they felt *lojja* (shame) in doing so. Younger social generation men's accounts suggested that they had sought relatively little help for sexual health issues and problems. The authors found clear evidence of the relevance of masculinity to men's help-seeking for sexual health. In such a context, cultural notions associated with the ideals of good hegemonic masculine performers, for example, prevented men from seeking sexual health.

Hasan,<sup>45</sup> based on personal experiences, provided an overview of the critical methodological issues and of challenges in studying men and masculinities in relation to men's sexual health in Bangladesh. As a predominantly Muslim country, discussing sexuality is largely considered a taboo subject. The researchers faced challenges in gaining access and in discussing sex and sexuality issues. It is suggested that careful planning, innovative strategies, and preparation are required when

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<sup>42</sup> Humayun Kabir, “Hegemonic Masculinity and Contraceptive Use among the Males of Bangladesh: A Study on Dhaka City,” *Social Science Review* 32, no. 2 (2015): pp. 55-66.

<sup>43</sup> Mujibul Anam, “Masculinity in Majma: An Ethnography of Street Healing in Bangladesh,” Repository, 30 August 2010, <https://fid4sa-repository.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/1402>

<sup>44</sup> Kamrul Hasan and Peter Aggleton, “Rethinking Gender and Health,” *International Journal*

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*of Men's Social and Community Health* 3, no. 1 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.22374/ijmsch.v3i1.25>.

<sup>45</sup> Kamrul Hasan, “Researching Masculinity and Men's Sexual Health in Bangladesh: Methodological Reflections,” *Qualitative Sociology Review* 17, no. 4 (2021): pp. 44-57, <https://doi.org/10.18778/1733-8077.17.4.03>.

studying sex, sexuality, and masculinity within such contexts.

### Women in Development/Women Empowerment and Masculinity

Karim and others<sup>46</sup> attempted to explore rural men's multiple views on female participation in socio-economic and healthcare initiatives. The views and reactions of men on married women's participation in development generally conform to dominant views of masculinity prevalent in rural Bangladesh. This study further reveals that men's views on women's participation are gradually changing from fear of losing the male authority to a realisation of women's positive contribution to family welfare. In the context of the dominant patriarchal traditions of rural Bangladesh, these findings provide a new understanding of the dynamics and variations among men as well as the variability of the concept of masculinity encompassing different intersectional groups.

Schular and others<sup>47</sup> examined men's views of various manifestations of women's empowerment, gender and the legitimacy of men's perpetration of intimate partner violence (IPV) in the context of changing gender norms. With a few exceptions, rural men described improvements in female education and changes in women's work and economic contribution had brought positive consequences to society. Men with a growing acceptance of egalitarian gender norms and

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<sup>46</sup> Rabiul Karim et al., "Men's Perceptions of Women's Participation in Development Initiatives in Rural Bangladesh," *American Journal of Men's Health* 12, no. 2 (2017): pp. 398-410, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1557988317735394>.

<sup>47</sup> Sidney Ruth Schuler et al., "Men's Perspectives on Women's Empowerment and Intimate Partner Violence in Rural Bangladesh," *Culture, Health and Amp; Sexuality* 20, no. 1 (August 2017): pp. 113-127, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2017.1332391>.

their self-reported decreasing propensity to engage in IPV seem to have been driven largely by their desire to improve their economic status through their wives' labour and resource management. On the contrary, men's disliking of women's empowerment was more symbolic than pragmatic. They felt that due to women's empowerment their hegemony and natural superiority as men were being challenged. They also expressed their concerns that empowered women violate social norms and saw this as an insult to men. For them, it is a sign of malaise and disorder in society. Eventually, they equated 'gender equality' as a threat to their masculinity. This study found some unevenness and contradictory notions of masculinity regarding women's empowerment.

The impact of masculinity is unusually absent in the vast literature on microcredit, the cornerstone of gender/women's empowerment programs in Bangladesh. Ahmed's<sup>48</sup> study is the only available example that included male relatives/husbands of microcredit borrowers who identified four different categories of abusive, high-minded, mixed, and *habla* (lacking in common sense) husbands exemplifying/equating four different types of masculinities. As the first step of a poverty alleviation strategy that uses men to change men, high-minded masculinity needs to be rewarded and abusive masculinity needs to be transformed. The article concludes if high-minded men can be identified, supported and rewarded, they can act as social change agents within the household and in the community for greater access for women to microcredit programs.

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<sup>48</sup> Fauzia Erfan Ahmed, "Microcredit, Men, and Masculinity," *NWSA Journal* 20, no. 2 (2008): pp.122–155. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40071279>.

### Fatherhood and Masculinity

Despite having a traditional image of fathers as distant authority figures and breadwinners in Bangladesh, Ball and Wahedi's<sup>49</sup> analytical note observed that many fathers are involved with their children in a wide range of situations and provide for a variety of children's needs. While mothers are children's primary caregivers, fathers make the major decisions concerning children's health care, education and social life. The authors, therefore, said fatherhood stands as an important element in the construction of Bangladeshi masculinity. They identified several forms of fatherhood in Bangladesh such as; family fathering, isolated fathering, sibling fathering and lone fathering serving the purpose of distinctive needs and goals. For example, family fathering involves men who provide basic care and support, often spend time with the children, play with them and pass on knowledge and skills in their respective areas of interest or capability. Isolated fathering occurs when fathers live away from their children for work. Sibling fathering involves when both parents work elder siblings/boys are assigned to take the role of supervising younger children. Finally, lone fathering happens for men when mothers are absent from their children for a long time for the purpose of work or even they are dead. This study suggests that understanding fatherhood in Bangladesh and explicating ways to encourage fathers' positive involvement would yield insights to attain culturally defined goals for children and families.

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<sup>49</sup> Jessica Ball and Muhammad Obaidullah Wahedi, "Exploring Fatherhood in Bangladesh," *Childhood Education* 86, no. 6 (2010): pp. 366-370, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00094056.2010.10523171>.

### Religion and Masculinity

Samuel<sup>50</sup> was interested to explore the patterns of a contemporary version of Islam reflected through Islamic movement of pietist inclinations such as the *Tabligh-i Jama'at* might impact on young the masculine ideas of young men who are living in both UK and Bangladesh. Interestingly, inclinations to *Tabligh-i Jama'at*, acted to produce a gentler, less patriarchal and more feminised/gender-tolerant masculine Bangladeshi Muslim identity among its adherents. The article suggests the presence of different forms of masculinity. In particular, the *Tablighi Jama'at's* pietism maintains strong *Sufi* connections. *Sufi* ideas of personal purification and self-abnegation (*fana'*) in relation to the Divine provide the basis for a downplaying of male assertiveness and masculine authority.

### Suicidal Behaviour and Masculinity

Of late, Khan, Ratele, Helman, DiAmami and Makama<sup>51</sup> and Khan, Dery and Helman<sup>52</sup> explored the connection between hegemonic formation of masculinity and men's suicide and suicide attempt respectively. These two qualitative studies conducted in one of the suicide prone areas of the country found men's motivation of taking their own lives is strongly associated with the diverse manifestations of crises of hegemonic masculinity. For example, failure to provide for the family, relationship trouble, no control over the wife, physical

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<sup>50</sup> Geoffrey Samuel, "Islamic Piety and Masculinity," *Contemporary Islam* 5, no. 3 (2011): pp. 309-322, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-011-0163-x>.

<sup>51</sup> Anisur Rahman Khan et al., "Masculinity and Suicide in Bangladesh," *OMEGA - Journal of Death and Dying*, 2020, p. 003022282096623, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0030222820966239>.

<sup>52</sup> Anisur Rahman Khan, Isaac Dery, and Rebecca Helman, "Masculinity and Men's Suicide Attempts in Bangladesh," *Journal of Loss and Trauma* 27, no. 4 (2021): pp. 367-385, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15325024.2021.1987037>.

and mental illness, loss of status, difficulties in demonstrating material success, and so on stood as the most triggering factors for men's suicidal behaviour (suicide and suicide attempt). In short, the gap between the ideal version of hegemonic masculinity and the real-life situation leads to suicidal behaviour.

In a slightly different vein, Khan, Ratele and Arendse<sup>53</sup> explored the post-suicide attempt events of men. In particular, society's attitude conveys critical messages to men about their suicide attempts and constructions of masculinity. In this study, suicide survivors encountered severe cultural stigma about their masculinity. Society broadly stigmatised suicide attempts as a cowardly and feminine act. As per the perception of society, men must adhere to masculine norms and be prepared to encounter the challenges of life.

In another publication, Khan, Arendse, and Ratele<sup>54</sup> provided a subjective understanding of the way men's suicide and suicide attempt were triggered by the complexities and contestations associated with intimate relationships in the rural context. Their experiences conflicted with the Bangladeshi norms of hegemonic/ideal masculinity. Men confronted difficulties in complex ways in maintaining or reinforcing the cultural mandate of hegemonic/ideal manhood status within intimate partnerships. Maintaining the hegemonic masculine ideals or socially prescribed perfectionism in intimate relationship contexts was extremely

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<sup>53</sup> Anisur Rahman Khan, Kopano Ratele, and Najuwa Arendse, "Men's Reflections on Post-suicide Attempt Episode in Bangladesh," *OMEGA - Journal of Death and Dying* 84, no. 2 (December 2020): pp. 582-595, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0030222820904878>.

<sup>54</sup> Anisur Rahman Khan, Najuwa Arendse, and Kopano Ratele, "Intimate Relationships and Suicidal Behaviour of Men in Bangladesh," *Mortality*, March 2021, pp. 1-20, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13576275.2021.1879755>.

problematic for them. Suicide was viewed by these men as a counteraction to the perceived threat or a way out for not being able to live up to the demands of hegemonic masculinity.

### **Sport and Masculinity**

Hossain<sup>55</sup> highlighted the ways cricket has become a site of new nationalist masculinity in Bangladesh by examining an issue of controversy about a Bangladeshi cricketer's sexual entanglement with a movie actress just before the world cup. Bangladeshi cricket supporters widely viewed this athlete's sexual aggression, despite charges of rape and sexual harassment, as an expression of Bangladeshi masculinity. The author concludes that such heterosexual and masculinist politics relegated women to a commodity in the formation of a cricket-based nationalism.

### **Marginally and Masculinity**

The discursive notion of the Western model of hegemonic masculinity falls short apart to deliver extensive conceptual and practical implications in the complicated context of marginal society. From that contextual praxis, Khan<sup>56</sup> expressed concern about the implication of the Western model of hegemonic masculinity in Bangladesh. Unlike the Western context, men in marginal society are in constant negotiations with their livelihood means and practicalities in some critical and disturbing ways. Bringing examples from various pressing socially troubling issues such as poverty, unemployment, migration and so on, the author concludes that the conceptual version

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<sup>55</sup> Adnan Hossain, "Sexual Nationalism, Masculinity and the Cultural Politics of Cricket in Bangladesh," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 42, no. 4 (2019): pp. 638-653, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2019.1607153>.

<sup>56</sup> Anisur Rahman Khan, "Hegemonic Masculinity in the Marginal Societal Context," *AGATHOS* 12, no. 1 (2021): pp. 223-234.

of Western hegemonic masculinity seems unpersuasive to express men's real-world situations. Thus, studies on men and masculinities must embrace the local context and cultural realities.

In a recent study, Khan and others<sup>57</sup> highlighted that climate change is a major consideration to express marginal masculinities. Climate change has a gender face, showing differential hazards for men and women linked to the structures of gender in society. They draw attention to issues related to masculinities in the context of climate change discussions in Bangladesh (also South Africa) and point out that climate-induced impediments such as drought, floods, salinity, lightning, and high temperatures put enormous challenges to the fulfillment of men's socially prescribed roles and responsibilities as men.

### **Conclusion and imperatives for future research directions**

In recent years, increasing attention has been paid to varied understandings of gender relations including the multiple dimensions of men and masculinities.<sup>58</sup> Bangladesh is no exception. Gender analysis continues to be regarded as a forefront issue in academic and policy discourses in Bangladesh. Under this context, this review tends to specifically offer some broader reflections on the trends and dimensions of men and masculinity studies in Bangladesh. Research on men and masculinities in Bangladesh is a relatively new initiative, apparently a post-2000 phenomenon.

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<sup>57</sup> Anisur Rahman Khan et al., "Men and Climate Change: Some Thoughts on South Africa and Bangladesh," *NORMA*, 2022, pp. 1-17, <https://doi.org/10.1080/18902138.2022.2077082>.

<sup>58</sup> Jeff Hearn and David Collinson, "Men, Masculinities, and Gender Relations," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Business and Management*, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190224851.013.55>.

Although studies in this area have not been extended significantly in terms of numbers (but growing), they seem to have covered some basic, important and critical areas. Stated differently, Bangladeshi scholars have made some important contributions toward advancing the field of study. The current review was arranged thematically based on some emerging topics such as constructions, violence, sexuality, migration, religion, fatherhood, suicidal behaviour, marginalisation, sport and women empowerment/women in development. Themes that have emerged out of this review portray a dynamic interplay of how masculinities are contextualised, constituted and diffused into different intersections in Bangladesh. The key findings of the studies summarised in the following.

The first theme, *constructing masculinity*, made an impression on the essential characteristics of Bangladeshi masculinity despite the obvious fact that masculinity as a concept is difficult to define because of its diverse practices, variations, configurations, processes and orientations. At least, there is now some level of understanding about the formation of masculinity in the context of Bangladesh. Across studies, the ideal image of Bangladeshi masculinity, irrespective of rural and urban differences, entails some typical hegemonic notions such as primary family provider, powerful, control over family members, sexual prowess, and physically strong, among others. However, there is some evidence of other forms of masculinity as well. Bangladeshi masculinities tend to embrace some changing nodes in response to socio-economic perspectives.

The second theme *'migration and masculinity'* confirmed that the migration of men is essentially a masculine intervention in which men opt out of moral and economic obligations. The notion of masculinity may take several shapes depending on the context

of migration and also the destination country. The obligation of migrant men to perform the economic role is often challenging, and sometimes men need to negotiate with the hegemonic model of masculinity.

The third theme '*violence and masculinity*' informs that violence against women is often perpetrated by men as a means to uphold or reinstate men's hegemonic masculine honour and status. Violence acts as a social norm that confirms male domination over women. While much has been researched on the practices of masculinities in the context of violence against women, one study captured various manifestations of masculinities that emerged in the context of violence against men by other men and another study on violence against men by women at the domestic level. These studies confirm that masculinities can also be powerfully framed beyond conventional male-female relations.

Several studies capture the connectedness between '*sexuality and masculinity*' under the fourth theme. Sexual prowess or potency provides the symbolic meaning of hegemonic masculinity in Bangladesh. Therefore, popular cultural practice such as selling medicines through street canvassing that improve sexual power serves an important purpose for demonstrating masculinity. It is also interesting to note that men tend not to use contraceptives as it degrades the image of manhood. This theme also confirms that it is considered unmasculine to seek help in the event of sexual health-related problems and tensions.

Without considering the implication of masculinity into account, women's increased participation in development initiatives might not end up with a positive outcome. The fifth theme '*women in development/women empowerment and masculinity*' plays a critical role in the several notions

and practices of masculinity in relation to women in development/women empowerment. There are mixed reactions amongst men concerning women's engagement in productive activities. In some cases, men see it as a threat to their hegemony, but in other cases, it is not a threat. Suggestions have also been put in place to change men's perceptions concerning women's greater access to productive interventions.

The sixth theme '*fatherhood and masculinity*' captures one study only which identifies several forms of fatherhood in Bangladesh. Beyond the traditional image of being a distant/dominant figure, fathers in Bangladesh play different important positive roles based on the situation.

The seventh theme '*religion and masculinity*' confirms that the hegemonic image of masculinity is compromised when men get involved in *Tabligh-i Jama'at* as the philosophy of this religious path teaches how to become modest and sublime.

The next theme '*suicidal behavior and masculinity*' explores the ways crises in masculinity lead men to commit suicide. In fact, when men find several ideal embodiments of hegemonic masculinity are in crisis they find no better solution but to kill themselves. It is such a disturbing situation for men that ends up with a huge compromise with their hegemonic masculine norms.

The ninth theme '*sport and masculinity*' entails the notion that sport is a symbol of hegemonic masculine virtue. A sportsman is broadly supported by broader society despite the fact of his engagement in sexually coercive behaviour.

The final theme '*marginality and masculinity*' gives a message that being a marginal country in terms of socio-economic conditions, it is impossible for men to practice Western-centric hegemonic



masculinity in the context of Bangladesh. So suggestions have been put in place to get away from the conceptual/epistemic imperialism of hegemonic masculinity. Under the context of marginality, a specific study highlighted the impact of climate change on men in Bangladesh. It expresses how gender norms and relations are connected to climate change vulnerability.

**Several suggestions/directions are placed with regard to future research interventions.**

Future empirical works should touch upon Bangladeshi masculinities available both within and outside the country. For example, critical interventions are needed to explore the complex intersections between masculinity and different levels of social inequalities/powerlessness, masculinity and men's health behaviours, masculinity and violence against men and children, masculinity and disability, nature and dynamics of transformative masculinities, youth masculinities and so on. It is noted that masculinity is conventionally regarded as heterosexual, but this is not always the case represented by sexuality studies. What are the dynamics of masculinities within intersectional social relations such as the LGBTIQ+ in the context of Bangladesh?

What seems to be an urgent need is to adequately and inclusively study Connell's<sup>59</sup> integrated theorisation comprising four hierarchical arrangements of masculinities: 'hegemony, subordination, complicity, and marginalisation', and their implications in the social and cultural context of Bangladesh. In particular, conducting more work on fatherhood is suggested considering its growing importance in gender relations.

From the critical men and masculinity perspective, methods and methodology

<sup>59</sup> Raewyn Connell, "*Masculinities*" (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

employed in the studies are important for assessment. Men and masculinity studies adopt many different research methods such as quantitative, qualitative, or even mixed research approach consistently<sup>60</sup>. It has been noted in the review that the qualitative research approach is preferable by scholars. Therefore, future researchers in Bangladesh may consider applying a quantitative approach.

Most of the current literature on men and masculinities in Bangladesh is framed through Western frameworks and theories. Therefore, it is suggested scholars should engage with an explicit approach that appropriately contextualises the epistemic version of Bangladeshi masculinity.

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<sup>60</sup> Jeff Hearn. "Methods and Methodologies in Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities," in *Men, Masculinities and Methodologies*, ed. by Barbara Pini and Bob Pease (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

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