

# High Rates of Suicide and Violence in the Lives of Girls and Young Women in Bangladesh: Issues for Feminist Intervention.

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## High Rates of Suicide and Violence in the Lives of Girls and Young Women in Bangladesh: Issues for Feminist Intervention

Christopher Adam Bagley \* , Afroze Shahnaz  and Padam Simkhada 

Public Health Institute, Liverpool John Moores University, Liverpool L32ET, UK

\* Author to whom correspondence should be addressed.

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### Abstract

Deaths by suicide in Bangladesh have an atypical sex ratio, with higher rates in females than in males—a characteristic shared with several countries in Southern Asia. Reasons for this are explored in this paper. An examination of the social structure of Bangladesh suggests that girls and women are subjected to higher rates of sexual and physical violence compared with males, especially in rural and urban slum areas. This violence is often linked to the enforced marriage of young girls to older men. A systematic review of 24 studies on suicide and suicidal behaviors in Bangladesh has shown that suicide death rates are exceptionally high in younger women, at a rate of about 20 per 100,000, more than twice the rate in males aged less than 49. In girls aged 15 to 17,

the estimated suicide rate is 14 per 100,000, 50% higher than in males. Because of problems in obtaining systematic data on deaths by suicide, these rates are likely to be underestimates. Extreme poverty and lack of education have been recorded as factors in deaths by suicide, although there are methodological problems in reaching such conclusions. We speculate that some of the “suicides” (especially those using poison) may in fact be cases of murder. A dowry system (not sanctioned by Islam) is thought to be a major cause of family poverty, and violence experienced by young girls. In proposing solutions, we argue the case (as Muslims) for the support of an Islamic feminism which urges better support for girls growing up in extreme poverty. [View Full-Text](#)

**Keywords:** [Bangladesh](#); [adolescent suicide](#); [female suicide](#); [self-poisoning](#); [gender violence](#); [Islam](#); [poverty](#); [Islamic feminism](#)

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