

# Access to Justice for Women: A Comparative Study between Subarnachar and Begumganj Upazila of Noakhali District

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## Abstract

Access to justice is the first step towards justice in the current legal system and is recognized as a fundamental human right in both the Constitution of Bangladesh and several international conventions. Despite this recognition, many Bangladeshi citizens, particularly women, face significant barriers to accessing justice due to gender and other factors. Access to justice is an important human right, but women in rural areas often face significant challenges in exercising this right. This study compares women's access to justice in two upazilas of Noakhali district: Subarnachar and Begumganj. By examining the sociocultural, economic and institutional elements that influence women's ability to seek and pursue legal remedies, this study highlights the differences between the two regions. Data obtained through interviews, questionnaires and focus group discussions with women, lawyers and community leaders. The study shows that while both upazilas face challenges such as patriarchal norms, lack of legal awareness and limited access to legal representation, the intensity and nature of these challenges differ significantly between Subarnachar and Begumganj. The findings highlight the need for targeted interventions that address the specific barriers faced by women in each upazila and promote equal access to justice. This study contributes to the broader discourse on gender and justice in Bangladesh and provides insights for policymakers, legal practitioners and civil society organizations working to reinforce the legal empowerment of women in rural areas.

*Keywords:* Access to justice, legal empowerment, social constraints, legal awareness, and efficiency.

## 1. Introduction

Access to justice is considered one of the fundamental human rights worldwide. However, due to their gender and other differences, this is far from the case for many people around the world. This situation is also no different for Bangladeshi citizens, especially women, in many cases (Hasle, 2003). However, the term justice refers to the situation in which each person is given what he or she has and is given what he or she is entitled to or is rightfully entitled to (Fanton & Silva, 2023). Access to justice is closely linked to the ability to lodge a complaint in court and the right to a fair trial with an effective remedy. Article 27 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh speaks of quality before the law and equal protection of the law regardless of religion, class, gender, race and place of birth. In addition to the Constitution, there are various laws that guarantee women's access to justice, the Family Court Ordinance 1985, the Repression of Women and Children Act 2000, the Acid Crimes Control Act 2002 and the Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection Act 2010 and the Dowry Prevention Act 2002. To ensure women's access to justice, this law provides various substantive and procedural safeguards. In addition to national recognition, there are various international laws that also enshrine equal access to justice in their articles, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) of 1966 and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), 1966, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 1979. Although all these national and international measures guarantee women's access to justice, there are still various factors that limit access of women to obstruct justice. When discussing the barriers to women's access to justice, the researcher broadly identified two types of barriers: subjective barriers and objective barriers. Subjective barriers include psychological and intellectual barriers such as age, physical and mental disability. The goals of the barrier include purely physical barriers, such as, the geographical dispersion of the court, the cost of obtaining legal remedies, the delay in legal proceedings and the

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structural complexity. Although women are aware of the availability of justice, they are unlikely to be persuaded to take advantage of it for various reasons (Lam, 2006). The country's women, regardless of their age, are systematically denied access to justice due to legal, institutional and political social challenges, which include inadequate legal protection, illiteracy in legal education, political bias, social embarrassment, etc. (Chowdhury, 2020). This study examines the constraints faced by women in general in seeking justice in Subarnachar and Begumganj upazila and through analysis compares the factors affecting justice seeking in rural and urban areas.

The main objective of this study is to examine the status of women's access to justice in Subarnachar and Begumganj upazilas of Noakhali district. The specific objectives are as follows:

- a) To assess the existing conditions of women's access to justice in Subarnachar and Begumganj Upazilas of Noakhali District.
- b) To identify the challenges and obstacles women typically face while seeking justice in these two upazilas.
- c) To Identify effective strategies and action plans that can be implemented by the government, NGOs and legal institutions to improve women's access to justice in Subarnachar and Begumganj.
- d) To Provide policy recommendations to reduce existing barriers to justice for women, with a focus on creating a fairer and more accessible justice system in Noakhali District.

## 2. Literature Review

Access to justice means access to both the formal judicial process in the court system and the informal non-judicial process, which includes village shalish, NGO mediation and arbitration. The concept of access to justice is based on the basic principle “*ubi jus ibi remedium*”, which means that when a right is violated, a right to a remedy must be granted. Although this is considered true, it is not equally accessible to everyone given their diversity, including sexual identity. There are various hurdles to accessing justice. Hutchinson (1990) argues that barriers create a difference between the availability and accessibility of justice. Scientists identified two types of barriers: a) subjective barriers and b) objective barriers. Subjective barrier refers to intellectual and psychological barriers, including age, physical and mental disability. The objective barrier refers to the geographical dispersion of the court, the cost of obtaining relief, the availability of claims representatives and lawyers, and the structural complexity of the legal system (Macdonald, 1990). A literature review found that women have little access to the formal justice system due to their more vulnerable situation in society compared to men, the high costs and the long duration of proceedings. Although women are aware of the availability of justice, they are unlikely to be persuaded to take advantage of it for various reasons (Khair, 2001).

Women seeking justice always face a complex landscape of laws, systems and institutions. Module The Theory and Practice of Women's Access to Justice Programming, published by the United Nations Organization for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR, 2018) introduces three reciprocal access points for sustainable women's access to justice. These points include: i) creating an enabling environment for women's access to justice; ii) Creating effective, accountable and gender-responsive justice institutions; and iii) to empower women legally. It also describes the environment for women's access to justice as fundamental conditions that must be present in a state for women's access to justice and for justice actors to respond directly to the needs of women in the justice system. This environment must be shaped by the dominant political, social, economic and cultural interests of a country. The elements that must be in place to create an enabling environment for women's access to justice are: i) application of international standards, ii) links between law, policy and practice and reducing inequality, iii) reform of discriminatory laws and Drafting of new laws, iv) reform of discriminatory laws, informal laws, v) reform of judicial and security sector policies, vi) provision of financial resources, reform of constitutions.

A research mapping and analysis of domestic remedies on issues of violence against women (VAW) conducted by the Women's Legal and Human Rights Bureau (WLB) and conducted by UN Women (then UNIFEM) in 2010 found that only the existence of violence against women (VAW) The number of legal remedies and mechanisms cannot be used to measure women's access to justice when circumstances are influenced not only by factors within the legal system but also from outside it. With the aim of creating a more responsive framework, a framework has been developed, divided into two parts: a) elements of access to justice and b) enabling circumstances necessary for access to justice. Furthermore, access to justice has been defined in such a way that access to justice is not limited to access to the legal system, but also to access to multidisciplinary support services, considering the active participation, agency and empowerment of women in the overall process. It also highlighted certain elements that need to be in place so that

access to justice for women victims of violence is effective and responsive to women's needs and experiences. Elements include i) appropriate remedial action; ii) Acting on their behalf and iii) An effective and accountable legal system, iv) Strengthening legal culture in cases of violence against women, v) Cultural changes in the perception of violence against women, vi) Using the law, vii) Structural contextualization imbalance, viii) recognition of the exacerbated reality, ix) strengthening of collective struggle (WLB, 2010).

A study proposed a holistic approach to access to justice that considers the law from six perspectives: justiciability, availability, accessibility, quality, existence of remedies and accountability. Women's access to justice is limited by two factors. The first refers to the institutional structure, which includes laws, institutions and the system. The second refers to individual characteristics and circumstances of the victim (Naznin, 2021).

In Bangladesh, women face various difficulties in accessing justice due to discriminatory attitudes, legal and institutional barriers, lack of financial efficiency, social norms, and stereotyping (Hossaini & Hossain, 2017). In the justice system, a woman must follow a series of steps that are often interrupted due to poverty, lack of legal awareness and discriminatory attitudes of service providers such as the police and judiciary. There are various limitations on women's access to justice: legal limitations, institutional limitations, economic limitations, social limitations (Ajnin & Saha, 2017).

In Bangladesh, there are generally three barriers to access to justice: i) inadequate legal protection, which includes the gaps in the legal framework and institutional constraints, ii) lack of ability to provide equitable relief, which includes barriers in the court system and the informal justice system, iii) lack of ability to seek redress, including lack of legal awareness (World Bank, 1999).

### 3. Research Method

A mixed research methodology is used, which involves the use of different methods to generate different types of data. The study employs a mixed method approach that utilizes both qualitative and quantitative methods to determine the strength of the qualitative and quantitative data while minimizing the limitations of each approach. Data and evidence were collected from a range of sources using a combination of tools that enabled the generation of both qualitative and quantitative data. Questionnaires were prepared for interviewing 15 women in both upazilas to collect primary data. To achieve the purposes of this study, purposive sampling techniques are used to select respondents. The samples will be selected from women irrespective of age in Begumganj and Subarnachar Upazila. The study is limited to Begumganj and Subarnachar upazila of Noakhali district. Furthermore, a detailed discussion and personal interview was conducted with UN Upazila Parishad, officer-in-charge of police station and a representative of NGOs. Secondary data was collected from Police Station, Nari O Shishu Nirjaton Tribunal, Noakhali Legal Aid Office, BLAST, Upazila Parishad, Directorate of Women Affairs, various NGOs working to ensure women's access to justice, and newspapers and magazines. In addition, relevant circulars, reports and meeting minutes will be collected throughout the study to understand women's access to justice. A thematically descriptive and comparative approach is used to analyze the data obtained from interviews and various reports. Both interview and document analysis approaches were used in this study. Various topics related to access to justice and its impact on women are identified and the data on each topic is analyzed. Simple percentages of respondents are calculated from the survey based on the evidence provided. To interpret both qualitative and quantitative data, the convergent parallel design is followed in this study. This design is done in the following way:

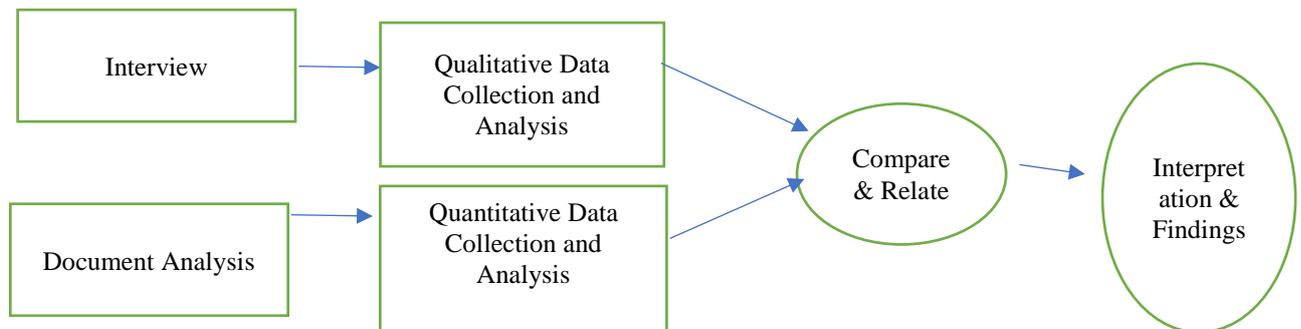


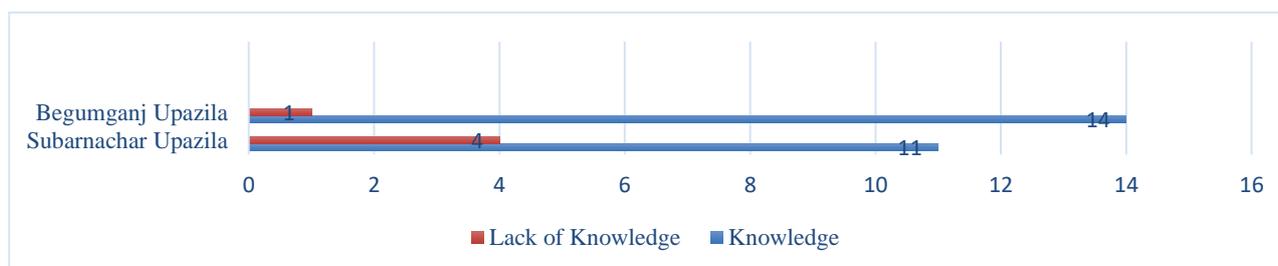
Figure 1. Data Interpretation Design

## 4. Results and Discussions

### 4.1. Situation of Access to Justice for Women in these 2 Upazilla (Sub-District):

#### 4.1.1. Knowledge about the term 'Right'

This study examines that the women of Subarnachar Upazila are less aware of their rights as compared to Begumganj Upazila.



**Figure-2: Knowledge about the term 'Right'**

From the figure it is seen that in Subarnachar Upazila 27% of the respondents have lack of knowledge about the law and 73% of the respondents have knowledge. On the other hand, in Bagumganj Upazila, 93% of the respondents have adequate knowledge of the law and 7% of the respondents have lack of knowledge of the law.

#### 4.1.2. Violation of Right by any means

Women in Subarnachar Upazila are more victims of violation of their rights compared to Bagumbang Upazila. In Subarnachar Upazila, 11 respondents had their rights violated, 3 respondents had no such violations, and 1 respondent was silent. On the other hand, in Begumganj Upazila, four respondents said that their right was violated, and 11 respondents said that they did not experience such violation. So, women's rights are more protected in Begumganj Upazila as compared to Subarnachar Upazila.

#### 4.1.3. Situation of sexual abuse

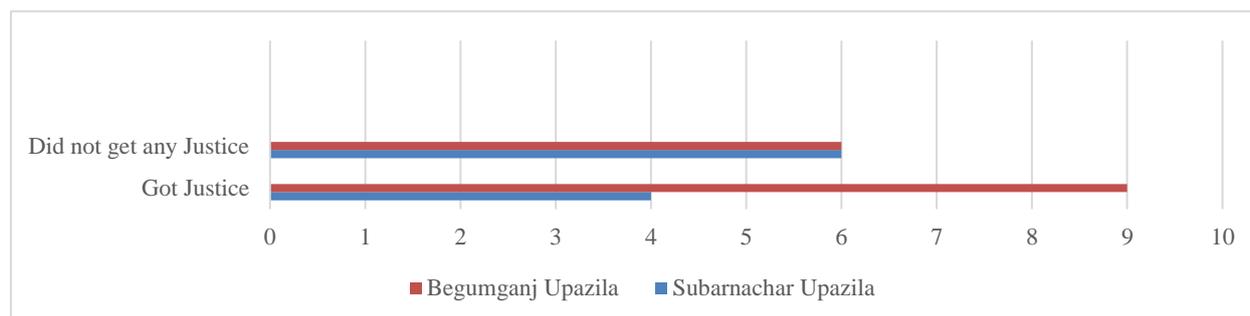
In both upazilas, respondents were asked whether they were victims of sexual abuse. In Bangladesh it is very difficult to talk about crimes related to sexual abuse. Society enforces an outlandish barrier like the "blame the victim" syndrome that forces victims to keep quiet about their misery. Despite all these situations, the respondent answered this question. In both upazilas, 8 out of 15 respondents were victims of teasing the previous evening. Two respondents were victims of violence against women in both upazilas. 1 respondent in Subarnachar Upazila and 5 respondents in Begumganj Upazila were victims of harassment. In Subarnachar Upazila, 1 respondent gave dowry sacrifice, and 3 respondents did not give any answer on the same.

#### 4.1.4. Whether they take any step after being victim:

Respondents were asked whether they would take any action after the sacrifice. Because women in Begumganj Upazila are aware of their rights. The number of protests in Begumganj Upazila is higher than Subarnachar Upazila. In Begumganj Upazila, 9 respondents are protesting and demanding redress after becoming victims while in Subarnachar Upazila there are only 3 respondents. In Subarnachar Upazila 9 respondents remain silent after becoming victims while in Begumganj the number of respondents is 6 3 respondents did not give any answer.

#### 4.1.5. Number of respondents who get Justice

The situation of getting justice is better in Begumganj Upazila than in Subarnachar Upazila.



**Figure 3.** Number of respondents gets justice

In Subarnachar Upazila, out of 15 respondents, 6 did not receive justice, 4 respondents received justice. Three of the respondents said that they had not been a victim of any of the above crimes and therefore it was not about getting justice. One respondent tried to seek justice through elders, but unfortunately, they did not receive justice. While in Begumganj Upazila, out of 15 respondents, 9 respondents received justice either through their own protest or through family help, 6 respondents did not receive justice. Out of fear, they didn't even dare to share their experiences with friends and family members. Therefore, justice was not done to them.

#### 4.2. Constraints which women generally face while accessing to justice

Women in Begumganj Upazila have better access to justice than Subarnachar Upazila. However, in both upazilas, women face some restrictions in accessing justice. Below are the restrictions on women's access to justice.

##### 4.2.1. Geographical Distance of Court and other Informal Institution

There are several aspects of access to justice, one of the most important aspects being geographical aspects. Geographical aspects mean that the judicial institution should be located where it is not beyond the reach of the common people. But in Begumganj Upazila and Subarnachar Upazila, courts and legal aid services are mainly urban-centric. People living in rural areas have difficulty accessing justice, especially women. In Subarnachar Upazila, 11 of the 15 respondents agreed that the geographical distance between the court and other informal institutions was a limitation in access to justice. 4 respondents did not agree with this statement. In Begumganj Upazila, out of 15 respondents, 15 respondents agreed that geographical distance between court and other informal institutions was a barrier.

##### 4.2.2. Unavailability of NGO Mediation

Although there are several NGOs working for women in both upazilas, apart from BLAST and Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA), no other NGOs or organizations are active. These two associations advocate for women's rights and offer them legal assistance and legal advice. However, many women do not know that BNWLA exists. In 2022, only one woman in Subarnachar Upazila is receiving help from BNWLA. In Subarnachar Upazila, 15 out of 15 respondents agreed that unavailability of NGO mediation is a limitation in access to justice. In Begumganj Upazila, 11 out of 15 respondents answered yes and 4 respondents answered no. In 2022, BLAST received a total of 25 applications from women in Begumgang Upazila and 14 applications from Subarnachar Upazila. BLAST Noakhali Office Coordination informed that we received more applications from Begumganj Upazila than from Subarnachar Upazila. This does not mean that women in Begumganj Upazila are victims of violence more often than in Subarnachar Upazila. It means that women in Begumganj Upazila are aware of their rights and know how to get justice.

##### 4.2.3. Structural complexity of Legal System

Bangladesh's legal system is a strange mix of colonial law, private law and parliamentary ordinances. A legal framework alone is not enough to protect women. Furthermore, the contents of the law are inherently and substantively mismatched to the needs of the poor and common women (Sumaiya Khair, 2007). The lack of updated laws, complex procedures and frequent adjournments force litigants to abandon their cases to avoid physical, psychological and financial harm. Bangladesh's legal system has complex structural procedures that are

incomprehensible to disadvantaged people, especially illiterate people. In Subarnachar Upazila, 15 out of 15 respondents agreed that structural complexity acts as a constraint. Similarly, in Begumganj Upazila, 15 out of 15 respondents agreed with the statement.

#### *4.2.4. Delay in Disposal of Dispute:*

The main problem of Bangladesh is the delay in resolving disputes. We have reached a point where people are afraid to file a lawsuit even though their rights are being violated. Cases that should take a maximum of 1 to 2 years to process take more than 10 to 15 years. In litigation, the parties are part of a long, drawn out and cumbersome process that they do not know when it will end. Due to delays in dispute resolution, people have lost confidence in the court system. In Subarnachar Upazila, 13 of the 15 respondents answered yes and 2 respondents answered no. On the other hand, in Begumganj Upazila, 12 respondents agreed and 3 respondents remained neutral.

#### *4.2.5. Financial Inefficiency*

Women's lack of economic independence is another major barrier to access to justice. Bangladesh's legal system is resource-based and involves significant financial expenditure in the form of travel expenses, processing costs, legal fees, witness procurement, document procurement and other related costs. High costs associated with the justice system, including for services, fines and transportation, make the formal justice system inaccessible to most people in Bangladesh, let alone women. These high costs are exacerbated by corruption, as corruption within the judiciary and police can further limit access to the justice system for women who do not have the means to pay bribes. One of the biggest hurdles for women is the cost of initiating and continuing legal proceedings. In Subarnachar Upazila, 10 out of 15 respondents answered yes while 5 respondents answered no. In Begumganj Upazila, 6 respondents answered yes, 7 respondents answered no and 2 respondents remained neutral.

#### *4.2.6. Political Influence*

Political influence always hinders access to justice. Due to the political influence of the opponent, the victims are always afraid to file a complaint against the opponent. Wherever they dare to lodge a complaint due to political influence, the results are always against them. So, they remain silent after becoming victims. In Subarnachar Upazila, 13 of the 15 respondents answered yes. 2 respondents completely reject this statement. While in Begumganj Upazila, 9 respondents answered "Yes", 2 respondents answered "No" and 4 respondents remained neutral.

#### *4.2.7. Discriminatory attitude regarding Gender*

The physical environment of the courts, which are predominantly male dominated, can create an atmosphere of exclusion, alienation or disempowerment for women. Court facilities and procedures do not help women feel comfortable with the process. In Bangladesh, most judges, lawyers, magistrates, prosecutors and office workers (whom women encounter) are men. This has a detrimental effect on women's access to justice in two ways: there are fewer people in the system responsive to women's needs, and institutions are arguably less likely to actively represent women's interests because only few women were involved in shaping and enforcing national laws. In Subarnachar Upazila, 13 of the 15 respondents answered yes and 2 respondents answered no. In Begumganj Upazila, 12 respondents answered yes, and 3 respondents answered no.

#### *4.2.8. Lack of Legal Knowledge*

Women have difficulty accessing justice because they are unaware of their rights and the justice system. Lack of legal knowledge means that individuals are more vulnerable to abuse or exploitation in the justice system and have less chance of receiving a fair trial (Begum, 2017). The enforcement of rights always depends on knowledge of legal rights and obligations as well as legal remedies. Poor women, who are less familiar with their rights and less likely to use the formal system, are unaware that their problem may be addressed by law and that redress can be sought through the legal system. Even if they have such information, inadequate understanding of the law and associated rights and responsibilities poses a limitation to women's access to justice. In Subarnachar Upazila, 11 of the 15 respondents say "yes" while 4 respondents remain neutral. In Begumganj Upazila, 5 respondents answered yes, 8 respondents answered no, and 2 respondents remained neutral.

#### 4.2.9. Social stereotypes

Social stereotypes are the biggest hurdle in accessing justice. There is a saying in the village: If a woman is beaten by her husband, the affected area of her body goes straight to heaven. Society enforces an outlandish barrier like the “blame the victim” syndrome that forces victims to keep quiet about their misery. When they talk about it, society blames them. That's why she endures in silence, even after becoming a victim. Questions are often asked that attack a woman's character, particularly her loyalty or chastity. Such public questioning can be extremely humiliating for a woman. In Subarnachar Upazila, 15 out of 15 respondents strongly agreed that social stereotypes act as a hindrance in seeking justice. In Begumganj Upazila, 13 respondents answered “Yes” and 2 respondents answered “NO”.

#### 4.2.10. Lack of Family Support

Due to a lack of family support, it is not possible for victim women to access justice. The family member blames her for the incident, forces her to remain silent and marries her. They felt it would be very shameful to talk about the incident. After the forced marriage, the girl became a victim of sexual abuse again. A lack of family support makes access to justice more difficult. Out of 15 respondents, 10 answered yes, 2 respondents said that work is never a limitation as our family member is always by our side. On the other hand, 3 respondents remained neutral. In Begumganj Upazila, 5 respondents answered yes, 6 respondents answered no and 4 respondents remained neutral.

#### 4.3. Discussion

The study reveals significant differences in women's access to justice between Subarnachar and Begumganj upazilas in Noakhali district, with women in Subarnachar facing greater challenges. These findings highlight the complex interplay of legal, social, economic and institutional barriers that disproportionately affect women, particularly in rural areas. Legal awareness proved to be a key differentiator between the two upazilas, with women in Subarnachar being significantly less informed about their rights than women in Begumganj. In Subarnachar, only 27% of respondents had sufficient legal knowledge, while in Begumganj, 93% were well informed. This gap in legal awareness represents a fundamental barrier that prevents women from recognizing when their rights are being violated and from seeking appropriate redress. The data also suggests a higher incidence of rights violations in Subarnachar, where 11 respondents reported such experiences, compared to just four in Begumganj. This suggests a more hostile environment for women's rights in Subarnachar, where the protection and enforcement of these rights is comparatively weaker. Furthermore, the study shows a significant prevalence of sexual abuse in both upazilas, despite the social stigma and challenges in reporting such incidents. While there were similar numbers of respondents experiencing harassment in both areas, the general environment in Subarnachar appears to be more repressive, as indicated by higher rates of silence among victims. A crucial aspect of access to justice is the willingness and ability of victims to act upon the experience of victimization. The study found that women in Begumganj were more likely to protest and demand redress after being victimized: 9 out of 15 respondents acted, compared to just 3 in Subarnachar. This suggests that women in Begumganj have more power, perhaps due to better legal awareness and support systems. In contrast, the higher rates of silence among women in Subarnachar reflect a deeper sense of powerlessness and fear. The effectiveness of the justice system is also illustrated by the different outcomes between the two upazilas. Women in Begumganj were more successful in obtaining justice: 9 out of 15 respondents received some form of redress. However, in Subarnachar, only 4 out of 15 respondents were able to get justice. This inequality suggests that the legal and social structures in Begumganj are more supportive of women's rights and address grievances more effectively. Several pervasive restrictions were identified as barriers to women's access to justice in both upazilas, although these were more pronounced in Subarnachar. Geographical distance proved to be a significant barrier, particularly in rural areas where courts and legal institutions are often far from the people who need them most. This problem was widely acknowledged by the respondents in Begumganj and by the majority in Subarnachar. The lack of NGO mediation further exacerbates women's difficulties in accessing justice. Although organizations like BLAST and BNWLA are active, their reach is inadequate, especially in Subarnachar where awareness and access to these resources is limited. The study also highlights the structural complexity of Bangladesh's legal system, which is often intimidating and difficult for women, especially the disadvantaged, to navigate. Respondents' unanimous agreement that this complexity is a barrier highlights the need for legislative reform to make the system more accessible and user-friendly. Delays in resolving cases were also identified as a significant barrier to seeking justice, with respondents expressing frustration at the lengthy and uncertain legal process. This delay not only prolongs the suffering of victims but also reduces trust in the justice system. Financial constraints represent another major barrier to access to justice, particularly for women who lack economic independence. The high costs of legal proceedings, including travel, processing costs and legal fees, make the formal justice system inaccessible to many. This problem

was more pronounced in Subarnachar, where a larger proportion of respondents cited financial inefficiency as a constraint compared to Begumganj. Political influence was also found to obstruct justice, with many respondents expressing fear of retaliation or bias due to their opponents' political power. This problem was even more acute in Subarnachar, reflecting entrenched power dynamics that disadvantage women in their quest for fair treatment. Gender discrimination and social stereotypes make it even more difficult for women to access justice. The male-dominated court environment and pervasive societal prejudices contribute to an atmosphere in which women feel alienated and disempowered. This was particularly evident in Subarnachar, where all respondents agreed that social stereotypes were a significant barrier. Finally, lack of family support has been identified as a key barrier, with many women discouraged from seeking justice by their families due to fear of social stigma or further victimization. This problem was more pronounced in Subarnachar, where traditional family dynamics often discourage women from taking legal action.

## 5. Conclusion

The comparative study of women's access to justice in Subarnachar and Begumganj Upazilas in Noakhali District reveals substantial differences in how justice is viewed, pursued, and realized in these areas. Despite the identical legal framework that governs both places, local variations in social norms, economic situations, and the efficiency of law enforcement play a pivotal role in shaping women's access to justice. In Subarnachar, while there have been efforts to improve legal awareness and accessibility, deep-rooted cultural taboos and patriarchal attitudes continue to hinder women's ability to seek justice. The study found that victims of violence often face significant societal pressure to remain silent or resort to informal dispute resolution methods, which frequently result in compromised justice. Begumganj, on the other hand, exhibits a somewhat different scenario where there is relatively greater awareness of legal rights among women. However, challenges such as delays in legal processes, fear of retribution, and the influence of powerful local actors still impede the realization of justice. The presence of more active local government bodies in Begumganj has led to better support mechanisms, but these are not always uniformly applied or accessible to all women.

The study highlights that access to justice for women is not merely a legal issue but is deeply intertwined with social, economic, and cultural factors. Addressing these disparities requires a multifaceted approach that goes beyond legal reforms to include community engagement, education, and the empowerment of women at the grassroots level.

Ultimately, achieving meaningful access to justice for women in these regions demands sustained efforts from all stakeholders, including the government, civil society, and local communities. By addressing the systemic barriers that prevent women from seeking and obtaining justice, it is possible to create a more equitable environment where the rights of all individuals, regardless of gender, are respected and upheld.

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