

The Impact of Gendered Language in Bangladeshi Law and Policy: Critical Analysis

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Abstract: *Gendered language refers to terms, expressions, or other language components that are not included in the Bangladeshi legal system but that either directly or indirectly allude to gender discrimination or distinction. The aim of this study was to investigate the incidents of gendered language used in the Bangladeshi laws and policies and identify the types of gendered language on the objectives of goals for gender equity. This is a qualitative research method by assessing legal documents, policy papers and case studies through the critical discourse analysis. Analysis of the result proves that gender stereotyped language is visible in the variety of legal fields but specifically in family, labor and criminal legal fields. Such problems are commonly reflected in the traditional gender roles for which this linguistic bias is inclined towards hampering the interpretation of laws and application thereof to the detriment of the women and other minority categories. This study finds, among other things, that these continued gendering, despite them being today's official texts, are owing to forces of prevailing patriarchal, religious and colonial influence today. But this prejudice of English language is a bit more than meets the eye as it may have potential to lead to gender imbalance and even justice. Lack of interest in legal protection on part of the women may be a result of the presence of sexism in laws and policies that inflict on their status as inferior right holders within the society. The study recommends creating guidelines for gender sensitive legal drafting, conducting a thorough examination of current laws and regulations to replace gender biased terminology with gender neutral ones and starting public awareness campaigns. Finally, the study concludes that incorporating gender neutral language in the laws and policies is imperative to advocate for gender equality and social justice in the country of Bangladesh. Future research directions include exploring the practical implementation of gender-neutral language in legal contexts and conducting comparative studies with other South Asian countries.*

Keywords: Gendered language; Constitution; Language Components; Social Justice; Rule of law; and Inclusive Development

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Introduction

As a South Asian country rich in culture and a diverse society, a socialist, newly born Bangladesh has embarked on a legal and policy reform path after achieving independence in 1971. Legal systems of Bangladesh are a combination of secular and Islamic laws where the constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh is the highest law of Bangladesh. According to the provision of the constitution of the people's Republic of Bangladesh – Constitution of Bangladesh 1972 article 27 says that “all citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law.” Nevertheless, the effect of this constitution guarantee remains an issue, especially as far as equality between male and female persons is concerned.

Like the rest of the world, the Bangladeshi legal system also unfortunately cannot avoid the problem of gendered language. Gendered language is defined as words, phrases, or other linguistic features of a language that either directly relate or suggest associational gender differentiation or bias (Awal, 2023). Gender affects language acquisition, referring to how young children, boys and girls, adopt and learn their language since childhood. For example, girls are more likely to understand language and communicate earlier than boys. They are also more likely to use language relationally, meaning in an emotional context. When used in law and policy, such language has potential to effect change on how legal provisions in laws and policies are understood and implemented thus placing and locking women into further subordinate positions.

This paper explored the gendered language briefly in Bangladesh where it is observed that language use, social culture, and laws are intertwined in this South Asian country. In this regard, the dominating language of the Bangladeshi population, Bengali, becomes more important. According to Awal (2023) “The Bengali language spoken in Bangladesh can be used by men to oppress women”. This statement inexplicably raises the concern on how language, which is ordinarily considered as a medium of communication, can be a tool in supporting patriarchal structures and gender disparity.

The significance of this research is its contribution to the understanding of one of the mechanisms of gender discrimination in Bangladesh. Thus, studying language in its relation to legal and policy processes might help this research identify and describe some of the factors that hinder the promotion of gender equality in the country. In this

regard, the outcome of this study could be useful in the future legal and policy changes to embrace the policy on gender-sensitive language and consequently, more equitable legal and policy treatments for women.

Literature Review

It has been evident in the past three decades that legal systems as a branch of language have attracted global research interests especially in gendered analysis. Lawyers have researched on how what has been referred to as legal discourse which is standard, formal and technical is actually gendered. Mossman (1991) for instance views the formal legal reasoning and language as male biased since historically law has been made as well as understood by male jurists.

Many of the legal systems where people have complained about the inequalities are characterized by the use of masculine generics including the use of the word ‘he’ to refer to any person. The proponents of such practice claim that this is a mere use of a figure of speech, but the opponents say that this puts a seal on the domination of the male gender in the aspect of law (Petersson, 2011). This has however not been the case in some jurisdictions as the following tries to explain. For instance, Canada has used civil changes in its legislation by changing numerous masculine generics to gender neutral ones (Government of Canada, 2015).

In addition to direct gender encoding of legal terms, other authors have also looked at how what on the surface is gender-neutral language does contain gendered suggestions. For instance, Hunter (2006) reviewing compliance of common law, isolates how the reasonable person standard standardizes male cognizance and bears possible biases against women in legal cases.

In the South Asian context specifically, the combinative of gender and law has been studied extensively. Due to the region’s legal pluralism, where both secular laws, personal laws based on religion, and customs intersect and work concurrently, there exists a diverse context for studying gendered legal matters.

The historical analysis that Agnes (2001) offers on gender and law in India outlines how laws constructed the Indian woman in colonial India and how post-colonial legal reform shaped women’s legal site. They put it that even though there is provision for equality in the text of the constitution, personal laws inherited from religion do not offer women equal opportunities in areas such as marriage, divorce or inheritance.

In Pakistan, whereas Ali (2021) explicates women's legal status as being located at the intersection of Islamic law, indigenous customs, and the laws enacted by the state. She says that although the Sharia Law offers some rights to women, these are often violated by male-centered rendition and by customary practices that prejudice women.

Linguistic gender bias in policies have achieved attention and several scholars are researching how language of policies contain stereotyped and gender biased information. Lazar (2005) affirms that, while presenting policy, there appears to be no biased language used despite the fact that there are bias language features used to maintain the biased features of gender opinion.

To show this Kabeer (1994) examines how, in the discourse of development policies, women's roles and needs are reinscribed in ways that perpetuates their subordination. She also complains of the cultures dominant in the discourses on development whereby women are mainly depicted as mothers and caregivers, a stereotype that hampers the domain of women's power policies.

During the last two decades, there has been a gradual upsurge in scholarship in gender and law both in South Asian context in general and in Bangladesh in particular. The studies existing to date are generally more concerned with general characteristics of women's legal position and their rights, especially without attempt to examine language used in legal acts and regulations. Huda's (1998) analysis of legal rights and the equality of women in Bangladesh is good for understanding the general legal status, the positive role of Bangladesh for women, and their legal protection, but it does not address itself to the language of laws and regulations. Likewise, in Sobhan's study to examine the legal condition of women in Bangladesh, he provides discussion on legal provisions affecting women but not on the gendered language issue. However, Awal's (2023) recent research on language and gender in Bangladesh helps in this regard by depicting how Bengali language can debases for women oppression. Still, this research is more concerned with common language uses rather than legal and policy language, although they are not mutually exclusive.

There is a discernible research gap as to how gendered language is used in Bangladeshi legal texts and policies and how such language impacts the interpretation and implementation of laws. Also, there are limited studies on how the forms of gendered

language that appeared in the legal and policy discourses are aligned with other societal and cultural practices in Bangladesh. That is why this study was designed to fill these gaps by conducting a detailed analysis of gendered language in Bangladeshi laws and policies through the prism of feminist legal theory, critical discourse analysis, and intersectionality. As such, it endeavors to further the scholarship on the linguistic aspects of gender injustice in legal and policy frameworks of Bangladesh.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in three interrelated theoretical perspectives: The three concepts that cuts across are feminist legal theory, critical discourse analysis and intersectionality. Thus, these frameworks have a more solid ground in order to dissect the relations between language, law and gender in the context of Bangladesh.

Feminist legal theory or feminist jurisprudence is a theorization that allows one to view the interaction between law and gender. This theoretical approach holds the view that conventional legal frameworks and legal theories have been formed and acted in the manner consistent with patriarchal culture and traditions and, therefore, tend to overlook women's rights and needs (Bartlett, 2018). Inasmuch as this study is concerned, the scholarship belonging to the feminist legal theory entails two components: Closely scrutinizing gender biases that are inherent to legal discourse; Proactively seeking gender biases that persist in legal language and how they might facilitate gender discrimination.

An important idea within the framework of the feminism in the legal discourse is the idea of such institutions as 'gendered'. This concept proposes that the legal systems such as the courts, the parliament and other law making and implementing bodies are intrinsically sexist. When applied to the Bangladeshi realm it implies understanding how the use of gendered language in legal laws and policies contributes to constructing gendered features of its institutions.

The theoretical framework that complements the present research is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which provides a framework for understanding language and power interactions on social practices. Thus, CDA sees language, for instance in legal and policy texts, as both a product and as a producer of social realities (Fairclough, 2013). This approach is especially important for analysis of gendered language in Bangladeshi

law and policy because it is the possibility to consider how options in the choice of language in legal texts reflect and/or overcome gender power relations.

In the context of Bangladesh, CDA can be used to identify if the language sexually discriminates and thus, echo the societal attitude on gender in legal and policy documents. For example, Sultana (2021) mouthed it rightly that ‘language is one of the most effective ways to help elevate someone or to keep them down’, and hence the legal language in the context of gendered laws and policies keep on negotiating in favor and against the gender discriminations.

The idea of intersectionality provided by Kimberlé Crenshaw (2013) offers a proof of one of the ways in which those forms of division interact to influence people’s lives. Specifically in relation to this research, intersectionality provides a way to understand how the process of gendering Bangladeshi law and policies is likely to have varying effects on Bangladeshi women depending on class, religion, ethnicity or education.

Given its social structure based on religion, ethnic group, and socioeconomic statuses, it has been seen that the women of Bangladesh have to bear gendered language in laws and policies, so; while analyzing the overall dimensions of gender in this country, intersectional approach should be adopted. According to Huda (1998), Bangladesh is a country where civil, religious and customary laws are equally applied to the people of different religion, which makes the social setting different for various categories of women.

Study Method

By analyzing the existing literature, this qualitative research aims to explore in which ways gendered language influences Bangladeshi law and policy documents. Documents and case studies are the key instruments of primary data collection. Document analysis entails the following: constitutional provisions, statutory regulations, policies and plans, judicial decisions and opinions and legal databases. It gives real-life scenarios which may help in detailing how gendered language affects the subject matters of different laws or policies ailing society and the world.

The selection of the laws and policies on sampling is purposive for subfields that have numerous debates on gender issues which include the family law, the labor law, and the criminal law. The main method of analysis is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA),

which permits both, the identification of the text's manifest content and the analysis of the presuppositions contained in legal and policy texts.

To conduct the analysis, the researcher focuses on reading the chosen documents more thoroughly, identifying gendered words and expressions, assessing their context and potential consequences, comparing these terms/phrases with their non-gendered equivalents, synchronizing the search with other prejudices. In order to make the study more credible and cogent, this research uses method of triangulation and peer debriefing with legal and linguistics specialists. This is a very useful approach to gather information on gender stereotyping in Bangladeshi laws and policies to know more about the extent of sexism, its form, and impacts on gender equality in the country.

Study Findings and Critical Analysis Overview of Gendered Language in Bangladeshi Legal Framework

This study shows that Bangladeshi laws contain a large proportion of gendered language, and these are especially evident in female juridical system laws and in laws passed a long time ago with special emphasis on laws related to the family and individual rights. The above gender biases present themselves in views associated with language, which are use of generic masculine, gender-specific nouns and titles, asymmetrical terms for males and females, and stereotype descriptions of gender roles. Such an alarming instance can be observed in the constitution of Bangladesh even today. However, even as an equal opportunities employer the Constitution engages in the systematic use of the masculine pronoun as a general term. For instance, Article 48(1) states: This is because in the formation of the law the use of "he" when referring to the President, who can be of any gender since the Head of State is a female, Mayor to the more Archetypal imagery of male dominance (Constitution of Bangladesh, 1972).

This is even truer in the field of family law because women populate large portions of the relevant legal profession and continue to propagate traditions from before this change in language. This is the Muslim Family Laws Ordinance of 1961 that, even today, as the primary legal code on family issues for the majority Muslim population of Bangladesh, employs masculine language. For example, Section 6 of the Ordinance, which deals with polygamy, states: A man during his lifetime cannot legally marry another woman without the permission in writing of that council as provided in Muslim

Family Laws Ordinance, 1961. This provision is intended to prohibit polygamy but its language legitimizes the concept of the polygamous marriage where a man employs polygamy by having how many wives he wants.

Manifestations in Different Legal Fields

What is important to understand that these manifestations of gendered language are not limited to the family law but inclusive of other legal fields. For example, in labor law, Labor law of Bangladesh, enacted in 2006, has provisions that on one hand are said to be protective of women workers yet are couched in gender stereotyped language. Section 45 of the Act states: The stated provisions in the Act are: “No woman shall be required or allowed to work in any establishment between 10. 00 p. m. and 6. 00 a. m. without her consent” (Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006). Although the purpose of this provision is to shield women from exploitation, it assumes that the workplace is dominated mostly by males; it thus restricts women’s chances of getting employment during the night.

Statistical analysis of fundamental legal documents shows a wide spread occurrence of gender-specific wording. Muslim Family Laws Ordinance (1961) includes Section 7(1) that continues being enforceable which demands that men must provide written notice to the Chairman immediately following any divorce pronouncement regardless of verbalization form. Section 7(1) of the Muslim Family Laws Ordinance (1961) preserves patriarchal ideology by assuming men are the main actors in divorce and by consistently using male pronouns and by formalizing religious procedures which grant men absolute control in family decisions.

A statistical review demonstrates a substantial linguistic gender gap found in the Bangladesh (1972) Constitution. Throughout 153 articles of the text there are frequent generic mentions of roles as President, Prime Minister, and Speaker involving masculine pronouns ("he," "his," "him") rather than gender-neutral terms. The legal system developed a masculine viewpoint through its language default due to men historically controlling law creation as described by Mossman (1991).

The comparison between existing and new laws supports a gradual advancement in language usage patterns. The Evidence Act of 1872 established through its Section 118 that "All persons shall be competent to testify unless the Court considers that they are

prevented from understanding the questions put to them." The Penal Code (1860) establishes rape as an offense that males alone can commit against females but the Evidence Act (1872) displays gender equality through its inclusive language framework.

The analysis of this legal sphere also indicates that the most pronounced use of gendered speech can be observed in the sphere of family law. For instance, the Hindu Marriage Registration Act, enacted in 2012, remains saturated with such terms as "bride" and "bridegroom" instead of gender-neutral terms such as "spouse" or "partner" (Hindu Marriage Registration Act, 2012). This language not only preserves traditional gender roles of husband and wife in marriage, but it does not consider that there could be same-sex marriages, and thus, does not allow LGBTQ+ marriage.

This is especially the case with criminal law where the choice of words tends to mirror the general approach to GBV. The Penal Code (1860), which remains in effect in Bangladesh with amendments, defines rape in Section 375 exclusively in terms of male perpetrators and female victims: Section 375, Penal Code: 'Rape' means a man is said to commit rape who except in the case hereinafter excepted, has sexual intercourse with a woman under circumstances falling under any of the five following descriptions. This definition is also quite specific in asserting male on female rape but does not contemplate male rape or female offenders in any way, which could legally leave these victims without proper protection.

Bias by sex is also commonly observed in the national policies and is a result of the existing gender stereotype. The National Women Development Policy 2011 designed to bring change and ensure gender parity in the country is not exempt from this issue either, as some of the statements in the policy are still somewhat sexist. For instance, the policy speaks of women in terms of 'family welfare' and 'child rearing', which in effect may help perpetuate the idea that these are gender specific responsibilities of women (Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, 2011). In the best traditions of progressiveness and despite the intentions declared by the given policy it yet possesses rather weak qualities from the viewpoint of not only subverting the stereotyped view of gender but also of using language terms which could perform the task.

Case Law Analysis and Judicial Interpretations

Now if we demonstrate how gendered language is presently in casted in the Bangladeshi law and policy, it could be explained considering few relevant instances. An example of such case is the BNWLA v Government of Bangladesh and Others, which contended with the legal consideration of fatwas which mostly have anti-women sentiments. While giving its judgment, the High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh also did not encumber in carving any gender bias or discrimination; instead of saying ‘males’ it said ‘persons’ while explaining the constitutional right of any individual to have protection against extra-judicial punishments the provision of freedom (Supreme Court of Bangladesh, 2001). Chief Justice Tanaka noted that this approach of avoiding gender-related words in the court’s decision also indicated a practice that would be recommended suitable for the future discussion in legal terms. However, not all case studies depict strings of progress. However, in a case of women’s right to maintenance after divorce that was determined in 2010 the language used was highly a sexist language that reenacted the traditional roles of women as subordinate to men. The judgment stated: “A Muslim husband is entitled to have his wife supported if she is the earning type of wife or if she herself is capable of earning” (Hefzur Rahman vs Shamsun Nahar Begum, 1999). Thus, even though this decision preserved women’s right to maintenance it phrased the issue in terms that supposedly placed women as dependents and men as breadwinners thus possibly restricting the construct of women’s economic independence.

A parallel comparison with synonyms which are gender neutral shows that inclusion of more gender-neutral terms in legal language can be done. For example, instead of specifying ‘he’ when referring to a general indicator in the Constitution, it is possible to use the gender-neutral language like ‘The President’ or ‘they’. In family law the use of terms like the “partner” instead of “husband” or “spouse” instead of “wife” could be used and really turning phrases as such around may mean a lot when it comes to the implementation of the provisions of the laws.

It goes beyond semantics where gender is incorporated in both law and policy in Bangladesh as the following discussion will illustrate. Thus, it defines the perception that legal practitioners, policy makers, judiciary and the society at large bear towards the law. As pointed out by legal scholar Salma Sobhan, the language of the law cannot be separated from the carrier where the language used is much more than just a form

of communication but is a tool that forms and remolds the legal ideas as well as the social relations. By including specific sexism or by endorsing stereotyping in the legislations, even though such legislations are intended to counter the gender issues at hand, they help in the perpetuation of gender injustices.

Furthermore, conceptualization of gender in law and policies implies a reality in which gender impacts the justice system and the experiences of citizens interacting with the state. For instance, when referring to criminal laws, that explain sexual offenses in a gendered manner, it becomes hard for the male victims of sexual violence to seek legal redress. In the same way, when words are used to give the impression that certain employment, jobs or working conditions are suitable for either female or male, labor laws support the type of occupational segregation and employment opportunities.

The following explorations seek to unveil different facets as to why gendered language subsists in Bangladeshi law and policy codification. In the first instance, there are several laws that were inherited from colonial settings or developed at the initial stage of most countries' freedom struggle when there was no concept of gender equality in legal framing. Secondly, the impact of religion and customary laws that are characterized by the patriarchal language and ideas is still vivid especially in the family law of Bangladesh. Thirdly, there is little knowledge among the lawmakers and most of the legal personnel on the need to avoid using gendered language in laws as a way of preventing discrimination.

Practical Obstacles to Language Reform

Despite recognition of the need for gender-neutral language in Bangladeshi law, several practical obstacles impede progress. The traditional legal practice sector strongly opposes moves toward gender-neutral language. According to Awal (2023) the Bengali language contains structural elements which male professionals can unintentionally use to marginalize women. The bilingual legal framework of Bangladesh presents special obstacles to the legal system. English to Bengali translations fail to maintain the sensitive gender perspectives because the gendering methods of Bengali differ substantially from English linguistic patterns.

The third blockade is the absence of official drafting guideline requirements which focus on gender sensitivity. Bangladesh remains without gender-neutral drafting

standards adopted by countries referenced by Petersson (2011) though these guidelines exist in other countries. The pursuit of substantive reforms during legal transformations leads to sidelining linguistic considerations because language revision is viewed as superficial rather than essential for equality achievement according to Agnes (2001) in his research on South Asia.

Progress and Challenges in Language Reform

But there are indicators of the improvement. While over the past few years, relatively recent legislation and policies have attempted to introduce less masculine words. For example, the principal act on domestic violence is enshrined in the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act of 2010; under which, the definition given for victims and the perpetrators of domestic violence do not mention any specific gender, rather use the general term ‘person’ (Domestic Violence Act, 2010). Indeed, this approach is more sensitive to the phenomenon under study, and it does not prejudice the victims or the perpetrators as often the conventional typescripts of patriarchal notions of masculinity or femininity as the case maybe.

International conventions and treaties signed and ratified by Bangladesh has also put a positive influence towards formulation of more gender sensitive legal terminologies. CODAW is globally available to encourage the modification of social and cultural patterns of behaviors that discriminates women and the government of Bangladesh ratified the convention in 1984. This includes prevention of discrimination in laws and policies Through the use of discriminant language (United Nations, 1979). Nevertheless, the development of these commitments into the domestic law is still incomprehensive.

Consequently, gender-sensitive language is pertinent in a country like Bangladesh, which still endemic in various forms of gender discriminations in law and policies. As pointed out by sociologist Elora Halim Chowdhury, “Legal language is the mirror and the maker of social attitudes toward sex/gender; When laws are written in gendered and/or male only and stereotypical language in a cultural context, the laws are constitutive of the very inequalities they aspire to eliminate” (Chowdhury, 2018:3). Thus, the given observation calls for a more careful reflection on and change of language in legal and policy texts.

The analysis also brings out the fact that the manifestations of gendered language in Bangladeshi law and policy are linked with other forms of differentiation, which makes use of the intersectionality. For instance, legal provisions concerning indigenous peoples reflect not only sexist wording but also colonial discourses on tribal peoples' identity. For instance, the Chittagong Hill Tracts Land Dispute Resolution Commission Act of 2001 relies on male-oriented language when referring to property rights and conflict settlement, thus disadvantaging indigenous women, and maybe even doubly so (CHT Land Dispute Resolution Commission Act, 2001).

Yet, it is essential to emphasize that exclusive alteration of the gendered terms with the gender-neutral ones is not always sufficient to institute genuine gender profound and lasting equality in policy laws. As Carol Gilligan and Catharine MacKinnon arguing on women's rights, "Harmless standards tend to reinforce the existing structure of male domination" (MacKinnon, 1989). This insight hints at the fact that in addition to transformations within language usage, there must be a critical engagement with such apparatuses' epistemological foundations and political economics.

Discussion: Gendered Language, Legal Narratives, and Pathways to Equality in Bangladesh

The use of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in revealing how language choice in legal texts contribute to uphold power relations has been proven useful. It is especially visible in the labor laws, with what used to be seen as protective provisions for the female workers actually reinforcing gender stereotypes and limit the possibilities for these workers. For the analysis, the study argues how appropriate linguistic choices in legal discourse render them neutral but affect their social realities in a way that carries a lot of gender implications.

It has shown that gendered language is intersected with other forms of discrimination. The particularity of indigenous women is on display most strongly through laws pertaining to indigenous peoples, where colonial discourse is compounded with older gender bias to multiply indigeneity and women's disadvantage. The findings support Crenshaw's theory that forms of discrimination work together and synergistically hit marginalized groups.

It is also evident that Bangladeshi laws and policies are highly latent with gender biased language especially in the field of Family laws, Criminal laws and Labour laws. This has been in the form of use of masculine generalization that is several examples of such use include the use of 'he' and/or 'his' when referring to an unspecified person instead of 'he or she' and/or 'his or hers'. Despite the changes, whether legislative or in court judgments, the area remains characterized by strenuous gender bias. These ramifications of gendered language hold several powerful consequences that perpetrate gender disparities and culture even though regulation and policies established within this culture advocate for equality.

There is a clear message of the necessity of an attempt to coordinate further trying to remove the now largely recognized as obsolete gendered language in laws and, at the same time, launching more comprehensive campaigns aimed at changing gendered approaches in legislation and policies. They could make a huge difference toward improving the status of gender equality in Bangladesh by translating into legal language the country's constitutional as well as its international legal requirements.

Gendered language produces effects which transcend semantic meanings. The use of masculine generics generates mental obstacles which prevent women from accessing justice especially when it involves family law because religious personal laws still affect judicial interpretation according to Huda (1998). Traditional gender roles appear when gender-biased language affects judicial interpretation in court proceedings as demonstrated by Hefzur Rahman vs Shamsun Nahar Begum (1999). Chowdhury (2018) established that law language acts as both social reflection and creator regarding gender biases although this process may hurt constitutional promise of equality according to Article 27 of the Bangladesh Constitution.

The findings of this study have various policy implications regarding gender equality and legal changes in Bangladesh. The continued manifestation of the gendered words in laws and policies validates socio-cultural norms that have influenced the formulation of legal frameworks from a masculine perspective. This linguistic bias is not only on language but is manifested in formulating laws and lays the foundation for interpreting and implementing laws which fails to empower women and may even lead to further oppressions of women.

In general context of Bangladesh where secular law interacts with religious law in a number of ways; application of gender connected terminologies in legal instruments imprints the traditional and/or stereotypical feminine or masculine roles. The unequal relationship between men and women in society, the Islamic influence on the topic, as well as colonization by the British are still instrumental in perpetuating the use of biased language in official documents in the country. Further, the lawmakers or the legal professionals do not have sufficient knowledge regarding the usage of gender-neutral language which prolongs this problem.

There are severe legal and policy implications in using gender-biased language. Such language may bring about scant legal constructions of laws in a way that can wind up ejected or leaving out members of one or the other class out of the scope of the law or its benefits. For example, male pronouns as generics in constitution could be understood as preventing women from entering top leadership in the government even if there is no direct ban on that. The envisaged effects on gender equality and justice are also negative impacts. Sexist language in laws and policies decreases the chances of women reporting such issues to the legal channel which is very vital in cases of violence against women such as domestic violence or sexual harassment. In this case, the legal language primes women into being subordinate or passive in some way, which may indeed socially condition people into accepting the fact that women are not equal rights-bearers.

Conclusion

This study has pointed out several issues regarding gendered language used in the laws and policies of Bangladesh. The results speak of the necessity to focus on the legal language in general and on women's rights in particular as part of the greater struggle to address gender equality. The sources of this study are written laws and policies; however, the practice might not entirely reflect the findings found in written documents. As for the further research, a qualitative study can be designed that investigates how society acts in accordance with laws and policies to determine whether adopting gender-neutral language results in better gender representation. Further, there existed a scope of employing more current comparative data of the South Asian countries to study the regional trends and benchmarks. If this fight entails the eradication of gendered language in laws and policies, then eradicating the gendered

language in those laws and policies is not about semantics, but it is very much about social justice. To sum up the situation of Bangladesh in the process of pursuing gender equality, changing legal language can be an instrumental approach to interrupting the hegemonic constructions of gender and the formation of a more emancipative society

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