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Editor's Note

The contributions to this volume collectively capture a critical juncture in the evolution of policing discourse in Bangladesh. What distinguishes this issue is not merely the thematic diversity of the articles, but the shared intellectual orientation that underpins them: a recognition that policing challenges are deeply embedded within broader socio-political, economic, and institutional contexts rather than being confined to isolated operational concerns. Across the volume, crime and justice emerge as dynamic processes shaped by legitimacy, power relations, gendered structures, and evolving governance paradigms.

A central thread running through several articles is the question of police legitimacy and public trust. One study critically examines the nexus between public criticism, procedural justice, and police legitimacy, revealing how societal expectations, institutional constraints, and historical legacies interact to shape perceptions of policing in Bangladesh. The analysis underscores that legitimacy is not secured through authority alone; rather, it is contingent upon fairness, transparency, and meaningful engagement with the community. The findings suggest that declining public confidence, compounded by politicization and institutional limitations, continues to challenge effective policing outcomes.

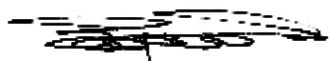
This concern with legitimacy is further extended through the exploration of consent-based policing. By situating Bangladesh within broader global transformations in policing philosophy, the article argues for a shift from coercive, force-oriented approaches toward models grounded in public consent, procedural justice, and community partnership. The discussion highlights that sustainable law enforcement depends not only on institutional capacity but also on public cooperation and moral authority. In doing so, it reframes policing effectiveness as inseparable from democratic accountability and human rights considerations.

Another significant contribution of this issue lies in its attention to gendered violence and migration dynamics. The study on female migrant domestic workers offers a nuanced account of how intimate partner violence intersects with economic survival strategies. By tracing the continuum between domestic abuse and labour exploitation, the article reveals how migration, while providing economic opportunities, often reproduces or transforms existing patterns of patriarchal control. The analysis situates these experiences within broader structural conditions, including economic dependency, informal labour arrangements, and entrenched gender norms, thereby expanding the analytical scope of policing and justice beyond conventional crime frameworks.

What unites these diverse inquiries is an underlying commitment to interdisciplinary analysis. Legal critique exposes institutional and normative limitations; sociological perspectives illuminate patterns of inequality and social perception; gender analysis uncovers hidden dimensions of vulnerability; and organizational insights reveal the complexities of governance and reform. Together, these approaches demonstrate that policing in contemporary Bangladesh cannot be adequately understood through a single analytical lens.

For practitioners, policymakers, and scholars, this issue offers some pragmatic and empirical findings. It provides a conceptual framework for interpreting ongoing transformations in policing and justice systems. The articles collectively suggest that the future of policing in Bangladesh will depend less on the expansion of coercive capacity and more on the enhancement of legitimacy, accountability, community engagement, institutional reflexivity and plural policing perspectives.

In this sense, the significance of the present issue lies not only in the knowledge it generates but in the perspective it advances. By foregrounding legitimacy crises, consent-based approaches, and the lived realities of marginalized populations, it invites a re-examination of fundamental questions concerning the nature of policing, the boundaries of state authority, and the criteria by which justice should be evaluated. While these questions resist simple answers, the contributions gathered here move the discourse forward in ways that are both analytically rigorous and practically relevant.



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Director (Research & Publication)
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People's Criticism, Police Myth, Compliance and Legitimacy of Bangladesh Police

M A Sobhan¹, Ibrahim Kibria², Arief Mainuddin³

Abstract

Police are the last resort for the people. From the beginning of the civilization, police work with the people. In ancient Bengal, there are police but in different name. Bangladesh police come to this modern form from various reform and transformation. At present, police credibility and legitimacy are critical issues in Bangladesh. Thus, the policy makers and stake holders are very much concerned about these issues. This study examines the critical nexus among public expectations, procedural justice and police legitimacy in Bangladesh. This is an endeavour to upgrade police image and bring police legitimacy in every community and across the country.

Key words: Police credibility, endeavour, legitimacy, procedural justice, public

Introduction

At the present time, Bangladesh is facing unemployment problems, inflation, emotional crowd movement and political unrest is observed. Besides, law and order conditions are not under control. Furthermore, general people are losing their tolerance day by day. Aftermaths of the July-24 mass uprising bring forth an unprecedented havoc in social, political and economic aspect in Bangladesh. In particular, the police forces withdrew themselves for a few days and this caused a massive security vacuum before they were redeployed. The confidence, trust, belief, activeness and effectiveness as well as morale of the police forces are still to be built.

Now a day, Bangladesh police as much as many government institutions are facing image crisis and legitimacy problems. There are lots of reason behind this. Someone says Bangladesh police is the reflection of the society. Also, somebody says there are many problems across the country as well as there are huge expectations on Bangladesh police. Criticism comes from these huge expectations. A section of people of this nation believe police can do any thing if they want. Nevertheless, police cannot do everything. They have some

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limitations. If the members of the community cooperate police and actively involved in police works such as decision making, problem solving etc., police could do many tasks.

Moreover, researchers reported that there are criticism of police and culture of violation of laws are seen in our daily life. It is reported that lack of toleration, compliance and widespread criticism are now prevailing in all layers of the society. It was revealed that there is a dynamic relationship among people's criticism, police myth, compliance, and police legitimacy. Additionally, low legitimacy lessens people's help and cooperation like providing information, reporting crimes, arresting offenders, voluntary patrolling etc.

These sorts of non-cooperation make a constraint for sustainable law and order maintain and ultimately reduce police legitimacy (Bottoms and Tankebe, 2012). So, the people have to extend their hands towards police for getting back legitimacy of Bangladesh police.

Methodology

The article has made through review of literature from different booklets, books, journals, dailies, magazines, online resources and seminars. Primary and secondary sources have been used to collect data and related information. Moreover, briefing and discussions with high officials and interview and speeches of high officers of police were also recorded for the study.

Problems and Consequences:

A. Problems:

1. **Arbitrary Criticism:** It has been found that talk show, media, writers and almost all the stakeholders indiscriminately criticize police that are the main causes for declining the moral and acceptance of Bangladesh police.
2. **Police Myth:** It is not wise to believe police myth as well as not campaign for police myth.
3. **Colonial and Authoritarian Legacy:** The police force was raised for colonial interest, not for public service, promoting culture of coercive, oppression and non-transparency.
4. **Pervasive Politicization:** Police are generally considered as a tool for the party in power, undermining impartiality and fairness.
5. **Culture of Impunity:** Blue walls foster misconduct and sometimes get impunity.

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6. Institutional Constraints: Limited resources, insufficient training, and great deal of work inhibit professionalism and service delivery enhancements.

B. Consequences:

1. High expectations cause criticism that a big problem for police acceptance and legitimacy in Bangladesh.
2. The low police legitimacy causes non-cooperation from the community, resulting in declining police effectiveness and efficiency.
3. Low police legitimacy leads to disappointment, discontentment and frustration; and heavy-handed policing reduces again police legitimacy.
4. TIB (2022) ranked frequently Bangladesh police as the topper mistrusted and corrupted institutions in Bangladesh.

Findings and Discussion:

A. Findings

1. Public Criticism of Bangladesh Police

Bangladesh police are being highly criticised by public and emphasis on:

- a. Sub-culture: There are code of silence in Bangladesh police. So, the complains against the police personnel are not properly addressed.
- b. Corruption: Bribery for harassment, remand, interrogation, investigations and services or case manipulation.
- c. Politicization: From the birth of Bangladesh police, they are being used by the ruling party as their tools. Police are utilised for harassing opposition and others by the party in power.
- d. Human Rights Abuses: There are allegations against law enforcement agencies of Bangladesh for extrajudicial activities, forceful disappearances, extrajudicial killings custodial death, custodial torture etc.
- e. Inefficiency and Negligence: Sluggish response, incompetent investigation, and inadequate safeguarding for marginal communities leading to low public confidence and trust.

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- f. Class-based Discrimination: There are perception that police play double standard where the rich are protected and the poor are neglected.

2. Myth of Neutral:

The Myth of neutrality regarding Bangladesh police could be described by the following ways.

- a. Myth of Safety and Security: In general, public safety is officially overseen by police, yet many people fear police misconduct as much as they fear criminal harm.
- b. Myth of Public Service: It reveal that public trust in government functionaries is eroded by the reality of passive bribery where police demand illicit payments for routine duties.
- c. Myth of Legalism: Systemic violations and unlawful actions weaken the concept of procedurally sound policing.

3. Drivers of Compliance

Compliance with police and law in Bangladesh is done mostly by force and fear.

- a. Instrumental Compliance: Threats, violence, or constraints used to force someone into acting against their will.
- b. Normative Compliance (Limited): Willing obedience owing to trust and belief in the legitimacy of law enforcers is weak.
- c. Calculative Compliance: It was revealed that police action is made by bribery and other facilities.

4. Crisis of Legitimacy

Now, Bangladesh police are facing a vital legitimacy crisis.

- a. Procedural Justice Deficit: Police activities are found as unjust, unfair, partial, rude, and non-transparent. This is the main cause behind undermining legitimacy.
- b. Distributive Injustice: Police are noticed to offering service, protection and justice unfairly, aligning with those who have power.

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- c. Performance Issues: It is reported that police legitimacy may enhanced by improving police effectiveness and efficiency, but police have to change their approaches.
 - d. Legitimacy as a Top-Down vs. Bottom-Up Concept: The police might have acceptance from the political leaders, but they have limited acceptance and legitimacy among general-mass.

B. Discussion

Researchers reported that many agencies, institutions as well as layers of people are criticised police, even without knowing or investigating or taking information from the empirical world. Continuously criticism create anxiety, pressure and lose confidence on individual or organisation and they cannot work properly and impact on their performances (Kluger and DeNisi, 1996). Edmondson (1999) said criticism could be compare to punishment. Nonetheless, the constructive, task oriented could provide important information and add value for the development (Hattie and Timperley, 2007). However, specific criticism and expert opinion might act as guide for reform and help to repair the harm (Moynihan, 2008). Therefore, by the constructive criticism, training, mentoring, counselling and ensuring wellbeing the attitudes and approaches of Bangladesh police could be improved.

It is reported that in our society, compliance is a problem. There is a culture of avoiding law, police, social rituals and norms. The juveniles are not honour the seniors and the seniors are not involving in the social activities. For this it is needed to activate informal social control mechanism. If the compliance problem exists, the community people will not report the crime to police. Furthermore, the assistance from community and erosion of cooperation from the public will not be found. So, the legitimacy problem of police will happen.

Moreover, it has been reported that Bangladesh police are facing serious credibility as well as legitimacy problems. It revealed that police are not doing both internal and external fairness, impartiality and pragmatic policing. In Bangladesh, the people's expectations are huge and police cannot fulfil the demands of general people. Nevertheless, there are lots of limitations of Bangladesh police regarding crime prevention, detection and conviction as well as maintaining sustainable law and order.

Basically, police cannot solve all the problems. For detection and investigation, it takes time. Sometime, to detect an incident, it requires over years and decades. Egon Bittner (1970) said that the state has given police the authoritative power and police certainly utilised that power with discretion. For this citizen think that police have enormous power in certain conditions. Marx (1988) stated police

have some rare qualities and strategies and police can solve complex issues by using those techniques and qualities. Rios (2011) showed from his research that as police can arrest, search and harass the people, so the youth have perception that police can do anything. It is true that police have some rare qualities and legitimate power. For this public think police can do anything. Nevertheless, police cannot do anything whatever they think. So, each and every body has to be rational and the help, cooperation and support from the community are necessary for this regard.

In addition, researchers reported that political influence, use of force, extrajudicial activities, forceful disappearance, custodial torture, police harassment, corruption and code of silence noticed in Bangladesh. Thus, police could not fulfil the expectations of general mass. These phenomena certainly violate people's voice, humanity, neutrality, honour, respect, trust and ultimately caused severe harm of fairness and legitimacy (Tyler, 2006).

In principle, whenever citizen observe that the police are not fair and procedurally unjust, they will lose trust on police and show non-cooperation to police and go for taking informal justice mechanisms and make worsen the rule of law. To get legitimacy, Bangladesh police have to show good behaviour, fairness, empathy, assurance, responsiveness and tangibility. In this way police have to gain trust and believe, then from the trust and legitimacy, Bangladesh police will achieve legitimacy.

Pathway Forward and Recommendations:

The study indicates that restoration of legitimacy needs a vital shift from a coercive approach to a service-based approach. In addition, police have to work with the community and for this interaction, communication, fairness, impartiality as much as pragmatic training curricula have to be incorporated.

1. Institutional depoliticization for ensuring neutrality.
2. Inclusive training activities in human rights, crowd management, use of force, force continuum, motivation, counselling, communication, and community engagement.
3. Strengthening accountability through robust internal and external oversights.
4. Fostering community policing principles around the country.
5. Practice plural policing.
6. Problem-oriented policing and predictive policing.

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7. Intelligence-led policing and evidence-based policing.
 8. Hotspot policing, CompStat policing and procedural justice policing.
 9. Good behaviour, fairness, integrity, interaction and communication.
 10. Assurance, empathy, responsiveness and tangibility.

Conclusion:

Basically, criticism comes from expectation and this criticism weakens police creditability. Moreover, trust could be achieved through fairness; without trust on police, the acceptance and legitimacy could not be achieved. Furthermore, the police legitimacy of Bangladesh is depending on fulfilling the citizens' expectations and narrowing the hope and aspirations gap through practicing procedural justice in police activities. However, without making real reforms having fairness, accountability, transparency, functional independence, polite and impartial treatment, it is not possible to achieve the public trust, and the police efficiency and democratic policing approach would be in vain.

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Spousal violence: A study on Female Migrant Domestic Workers in Dhaka city

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Abstract

Spousal violence continues to be a critical problem in Bangladesh, disproportionately affecting women who relocate for economic opportunities. This study examines the intersection of spousal violence and women's labour migration in Bangladesh, focusing on female domestic workers in Dhaka. It tries to explore how migration, often pursued as an economic survival strategy, shapes women's exposure to and negotiation of intimate partner violence (IPV). Findings reveal that while migration can provide temporary financial relief, it frequently exacerbates marital tensions, leading to wage theft, coercion, and emotional and physical abuse by spouses. The analysis demonstrates how patriarchal power relations, economic dependency, and the informal nature of domestic work reinforce women's vulnerability to IPV. Using feminist political economy and continuum of violence frameworks, the study highlights the blurred boundaries between workplace exploitation and household violence. The study highlights the urgent need for legal protections for domestic workers, improved coordination between state and non-governmental agencies, and integration of IPV screening and support services into labour and migration policies. This research is an endeavour to contribute for the scholarship on gender, migration, and violence while offering pathways for more inclusive labour and social protection policies in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Spousal violence, female migrants, domestic workers, economic coercion, vulnerability, women's labour protection.

Introduction

In Bangladesh, women's migration to the domestic work sector in Dhaka has emerged as both a crucial support system and a source of vulnerability. Migration supports households, although it frequently occurs amidst pervasive gendered violence that accompanies women from rural residences to urban labour markets (BILS, 2023; Siddiqui, 2021). For many women, migration is a vital yet precarious means of supporting their households. This phenomenon occurs within established gendered vulnerabilities: although women contribute

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monetarily, they frequently remain susceptible to exploitation in both professional environments and personal interactions. Migration never ensures empowerment or protection; rather, patriarchal disparities and marital hierarchies often persist in urban environments, resulting in various manifestations of spousal abuse (Patwary and Esha, 2025). Intimate partner violence is a widespread factor influencing women's life opportunities and mobility in Bangladesh. The latest Violence Against Women Survey (2024) indicates that 54.4% of ever-married women have encountered intimate partner violence during their lifetime, with 16.3% experiencing violence in the preceding year; psychological (44.3%), physical (21.1%), and sexual (27.6%) violence are prevalent, and the majority of survivors do not seek assistance (BBS, 2024).

The Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2022, via its domestic violence module, underscores the intersection of intimate partner violence with fertility, maternal health, and labour market involvement (NIPORT and ICF, 2024; The DHS Program, 2023). These findings emphasise that IPV is not sporadic but fundamentally ingrained, influencing women's migration choices and pathways.

Civil society oversight clarifies this perspective within the home labour sector. Several renowned human rights organizations and NGOs systematically records incidents of abuse, detention, wage theft and fatalities among domestic workers and their research indicate ongoing under-reporting and increased vulnerabilities during crises like COVID-19 (ASK, 2025; BIGD, 2020). Notwithstanding the Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy, 2015, deficiencies in implementation and inadequate enforcement render migrant women workers susceptible to violence both within and beyond the household. (Bangladesh Gazette, 2016).

Although there is considerable research on migration and gender in Bangladesh, limited focus has been directed towards the impact of spousal abuse on the migrant female domestic workers. Current studies highlight economic motivations, labour exploitation, neglecting the personal domain where violent acts act as both a trigger for migration and a persistent condition in metropolitan environments (BBS and UNFPA, 2025; Siddiqui, 2021). This research exhibits the lived experiences of migrant domestic workers in Dhaka who face spousal violence, thereby addressing a significant gap in the literature. Employing qualitative approach, it examines how physical, economic, psychological, and sexual abuse influence both the decision to move and women's survival strategies in the urban environment.

This study enhances feminist studies by illustrating the intersection of spousal violence with women's migration into Dhaka's domestic labour sector, broadening the continuum of violence concept to encompass the interrelated exploitation in both family and employment settings. Supplies evidence to

enhance the enforcement of the Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy, advocate for the incorporation of IPV screening and survivor support services into labour and social protection frameworks, and foster improved state NGO collaboration to combat impunity. This research focuses on the lived experiences of female migrant domestic workers, elevating their voices to shape public discourse, confront patriarchal systems, and advocate for safer, more dignified labour conditions for women in Bangladesh.

However, spousal violence against female migrant domestic workers in Dhaka is the main focus of this study. It explores how physical, economic, and psychological intimate partner abuse affects women's migration and economic engagement. The study also investigates how migration helps and hurts women as well as socioeconomic and household factors affecting female domestic worker abuse.

Literature Review

Studies on migration and gender-based violence in Bangladesh reveal a complicated interaction among patriarchal systems, economic instability, and women's movement. Multiple bodies of literature converge to emphasise how intimate partner violence acts as both a motivator for women's migration and an ongoing obstacle in urban labour markets. Intimate partner violence is extensively recorded in national and international surveys as a significant impediment to women's well-being. The Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey (2022) verify the ongoing prevalence of intimate partner violence, with significant percentages of ever-married women disclosing experiences of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse (NIPORT and ICF, 2024). The Violence Against Women Survey 2024 illustrates that intimate partner violence is widespread in both rural and urban environments, with over fifty percent of women encountering abuse during their lifetime, while the rate of help-seeking remains alarmingly low (BBS, 2024). This corresponds with feminist interpretations that view intimate partner violence as a tool of patriarchal domination rather than as discrete instances of conflict (Becker, Kafonek and Manzer, 2021; Schuler *et al.* 2013).

Civil society organisations in Bangladesh substantiate these findings with additional detailed information. Ain o Salish Kendra has systematically recorded instances of domestic worker maltreatment, encompassing physical assault, detention, and wage appropriation, underscoring the normalisation of economic and psychological domination within households (ASK, 2025). Likewise, research conducted by the BRAC Institute of Governance and Development and BRAC JPGSPH during the COVID-19 pandemic indicates an increase in domestic abuse incidents, demonstrating how crises exacerbate existing vulnerabilities for women. (BIGD, 2020; BRAC JPGSPH, 2020)

Migration literature in South Asia often portrays women's mobility as a response to overlapping vulnerabilities. *Wu et al. (2023)* asserts that female migration in Bangladesh seldom represents solely economic ambition; instead, it is intertwined with push factors including poverty, desertion, and intimate partner violence. Ferdous (2020), conducted a study in Dhaka on domestic workers and illustrates that women frequently describe migration as a final option following abandonment, marital discord, or severe abuse, indicating actions motivated by survival rather than opportunity.

In feminist migration studies, this aligns with the assertion that women's mobility should be contextualised within the spectrum of violence, spanning from the domestic sphere to the labour market (Kofman and Raghuram, 2024; Chant and Radcliffe, 2020). Research stated domestic violence and male abandonment drive women into urban employment, rendering them susceptible to workplace exploitation and retaliatory actions by spouses (Chowdhury and Uddin, 2024).

The study demonstrates that migration does not inherently emancipate women from domestic violence. A study emphasises that economic engagement may incite male backlash, resulting in heightened marital violence against women who assume the role of primary earners. Case monitoring conducted by ASK and qualitative research show that several migrant domestic workers in Dhaka endure pay appropriation by their spouses, limitations on mobility, and ongoing verbal abuse. Consequently, urban migration frequently reconstitutes rather than eradicates gendered violence. (Siddiqui, 2021; Reza and Khan, 2022).

Although there is substantial documentation on intimate partner violence and migration independently, there are very few studies that specifically examine the intersection of marital abuse with women's migration into domestic employment. A significant portion of Bangladeshi literature has concentrated on workplace exploitation by employers or recruiting brokers, whereas the domestic domain of marital relationships remains inadequately examined. Furthermore, the psychological aspects of abuse, humiliation, verbal degradation, and control over finances are inadequately theorised relative to physical violence (ASK, 2025; BIGD, 2022).

Research Methodology

This research utilised a qualitative case study to investigate the lived experiences of spousal violence among female migrant domestic workers in the Dhaka metropolitan. Moreover, qualitative methodology was employed to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of women's narratives, emphasizing the interplay of migration, gender, and violence in ways that are frequently overlooked in extensive surveys. The study was carried out in two areas of Dhaka, Mirpur and Old Dhaka, characterized by high concentrations of female domestic workers

living in rental slums. A total of eight migrant domestic workers were purposively chosen for in-depth interviews. Selection criteria encompassed: (i) female gender, (ii) migrated from a rural area to Dhaka city, (iii) currently employed as a domestic help, and (iv) migrated within one to three years.

Data were collected between September and December 2024 via semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted in Bangla. Each interview spanned 60 to 90 minutes and was held in secure, private environments to maintain confidentiality. The interviews examined women's migration histories, marital relationships, experiences of violence, coping mechanisms, and the influence of income and employment on family dynamics. With the participants' prior consent, all interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed as accurately as possible. Given the sensitivity of the subject, particular care was taken to ensure strict adherence to established ethical norms. The informed consent was read out to the respondents which was secured, with participants guaranteed anonymity and the freedom to withdraw at any time. Pseudonyms were employed in all accounts (e.g., Rebeka, Keya, Sharmin) to safeguard identities.

Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the data (Braun and Clarke, 2021). Transcripts were manually transcribed, with codes categorised into overarching classifications of spousal violence: (i) physical abuse, (ii) economic control and financial violence, (iii) emotional and psychological abuse, and (iv) social isolation and compulsion. By means of iterative reading and comparison, consistent patterns were found, with a focus on case variations.

Findings

This research examines the experiences of eight female migrant domestic workers in Dhaka, emphasising the relationship between migration and intimate partner violence. The participants, aged 22 to 40, encompassed various marital statuses such as, married, separated, and abandoned women illustrating the many ways in which gendered violence influences migratory choices. The findings indicate that migration is seldom a voluntary quest for opportunity; instead, it arises as a survival strategy in reaction to physical, sexual, economic, and psychological abuse.

The analysis of respondents' narratives reveals that spousal abuse acts as both a stimulus for migration and a persistent factor in metropolitan environments, frequently intertwining with economic dependency and labour exploitation. Women's domestic labour in Dhaka, albeit offering transient financial support, fails to ensure protection from patriarchal subjugation. Instead, migration often alters the expressions of abuse, sustaining cycles of coercion and control. The results are categorised into four interconnected themes: (i) violence as a catalyst for migration, (ii) violence amid migration and employment, (iii) economic

control and financial violence, and (iv) emotional and psychological abuse. Each theme elucidates unique yet interconnected aspects of how patriarchal systems, intimate partner abuse, and urban labour converge to influence women's experiences. This thematic framework highlights the intricate realities of migration as a survival strategy and a limited expression of agency within restrictive marital and socio-economic circumstances.

Respondent Profile of Female Migrant Domestic Workers

Table-1 exhibits the socio-demographic characteristics of the eight respondents, demonstrating how differences in age, marital status, and household conditions correlate with experiences of spousal violence, and emphasising migration to Dhaka as a vital survival strategy rather than a deliberate choice.

The features of Table-1 establish a basis for comprehending the many aspects affecting mobility among female domestic workers. Although each woman's situation is distinct, recurring themes arise, such as abusive family settings, economic hardship, and gender-specific limitations on mobility. The contextual elements establish the foundation for the thematic analysis, which investigates the role of violence as both a trigger for migration and a persistent influence in urban employment settings. The approach connects individual narratives to overarching structural patterns, emphasising the relationship between intimate partner violence, economic dependency, and patriarchal control, while portraying migration as a survival strategy and a limited expression of autonomy.

Table-1: *Respondent profile of female migrant domestic workers*

Respondent	Age	Marital Status	Key Trigger for Migration	Current Work in Dhaka	Notable Context
Rozina	28	Abandoned (husband remarried)	Physical abuse + desertion	Domestic worker	Migration framed as survival, not aspiration
Kakoli	26	Married	Severe mobility restriction + confinement	Domestic worker	Escaped with help of cousin (kinship support)
Helena	38	Married	Husband's debts and gambling → abuse	Domestic worker	Left to escape economic insecurity and violence
Sonia	35	Married	Continued abuse tied to husband's irregular income	Domestic worker	Violence persisted even after migration
Morjina	40	Married	Marital rape + backlash against her income	Domestic worker	Violence escalated after becoming bread winner
Rebeka	22	Married (young bride)	Husband confiscated wages	Domestic worker	Experienced financial + psychological abuse
Keya	30	Deserted	Wage confiscation + violence; desertion	Domestic worker	Became sole provider after abandonment
Sharmin	32	Married	Persistent humiliation and emotional abuse	Domestic worker	Psychological abuse despite financial contribution

Thematic Categorization of Experiences

The findings of the study have been analysed under four themes. It has been demonstrated in the following table:

Table- 2: *Thematic categorization of experiences*

Theme	Description	Representative Cases	Forms of Violence
1. Violence as a Catalyst for Migration	Migration triggered by domestic abuse, desertion, and economic crises	Rozina, Kakoli, Helena	Physical abuse, confinement, financial stress-driven violence
2. Violence Amid Migration and Employment	Violence persisted or intensified in urban settings, often linked to men’s frustrations and shifting gender roles	Sonia, Morjina	Physical violence, marital rape, backlash against female earning
3. Economic Control and Financial Violence	Husbands confiscated women’s wages, denied financial autonomy, or abandoned them when resisted	Rebeka, Keya	Economic coercion, financial exploitation, abandonment
4. Emotional and Psychological Abuse	Verbal humiliation, demeaning of women’s work, emotional degradation	Sharmin	Psychological abuse, verbal insults

Table 2 presents the respondents' narratives into four principal themes, indicating that spousal violence served both as a catalyst for relocation and as a continual influence on urban lifestyles. Violence manifests in various forms, such as physical, sexual, economic, and psychological, underscoring its transversal character.

Theme 1: Violence as a Catalyst for Migration

This theme examines how experiences of physical abuse, abandonment, and economic exploitation at home pushed women to relocate to Dhaka, presenting relocation as a needed survival strategy rather than a deliberate quest for opportunity.

Findings illustrate; migration is not a voluntary choice but an escape from violence and abandonment. Some of the respondents expressed that migration

manifests as an act of necessity rather than volition, directly precipitated by domestic violence and desertion. Rozina, a 28-year-old woman, recounted:

“My husband physically assaulted me for years. Subsequently, he departed and wed another woman. I lacked both nourishment and shelter. Relocating to Dhaka was the sole means of survival” (Rozina, Age: 28; Domestic Worker).

Rozina’s statements demonstrate that extended domestic abuse and subsequent abandonment compelled her to migrate, not in search of opportunities, but as a critical survival tactic. Rozina’s tale illustrates the gendered vulnerability arising from the intersection of intimate partner abuse and abandonment, resulting in women’s social stigmatisation and economic destitution.

Her instance analytically suggests that violence functions as a catalyst driving women’s migration. Migration serves as a reaction to patriarchal dominance and exclusion, wherein existence and dignity may solely be restored beyond the confines of the marital residence. Simultaneously, her testimony confirms that even under coercive frameworks, women assert agency by selecting migration as a means of fleeing violence. However, migration is sometimes attributed to economic need; yet, for numerous women, it is fundamentally linked to profound gendered experiences of domestic violence. In rural Bangladesh, intimate partner violence encompasses not only physical abuse but also stringent limitations on women’s mobility and the obstruction of economic prospects, thereby converting the house from a place of intended safety into one of imprisonment. For women in these situations, migration is seldom a voluntary choice but rather a desperate measure for survival. Kakoli’s narrative exemplifies the convergence of marital violence, territorial restriction, and female solidarity, demonstrating how migration can serve as both a compelled reaction to patriarchal oppression and a tenuous pathway to regaining constrained autonomy.

Kakoli’s narrative illustrates how intimate partner violence and the regulation of women’s mobility serve as significant catalysts for migration. At 26, she articulated the perpetual constraints her husband enforced on her daily existence:

"He never permitted me to pursue employment. Upon my attempt, he assaulted me and secured the door. I perceived myself as a captive within my own residence. At times, I believed I would perish within those confines. Ultimately, my cousin assisted my escape and transported me to Dhaka" (Kakoli, Age: 26; Domestic Worker).

Kakoli’s evidence demonstrates that violence encompassed not just physical assault but also imprisonment and the deprivation of economic opportunity. The regulation of her mobility indicates patriarchal oppression, as the home serves as

a locus of violence and confinement. Consequently, migration was not a voluntary endeavour but a desperate measure, facilitated solely by the intervention of female family networks that offered the means of escape.

Kakoli's example suggests the intersection of spousal violence and constraints on women's mobility, resulting in situations conducive to forced migration. The city provided her not just with economic sustenance but also with a degree of autonomy, demonstrating that migration may serve as both a reaction to violence and a means to regain constrained agency. The findings indicate that recurrent mistreatment associated with her husband's financial obligations and gambling compelled her to emigrate. Helena, a 38-year-old lady, migrated as a reaction to the cycle of debt-induced conflict and domestic violence in her home. She remembered:

"My husband squandered all his possessions through gambling. He would physically assault me to vent his frustration whenever creditors arrived. I experienced no tranquilly, only violence and verbal abuse. I laboured in the fields, although the remuneration was consistently insufficient. Following an altercation one evening, I resolved to go for Dhaka before he utterly devastated me" (Helena, Age: 38; Domestic Worker).

Helena's statements indicate how men's financial irresponsibility, especially through gambling and debt, serves as a catalyst for domestic violence, with women suffering the consequences of frustration and embarrassment. Her decision to migrate was motivated not just by the desire to escape physical abuse but also by the need to break free from the perpetual cycle of economic instability caused by her husband's conduct. Her case shows how household financial crises, frequently instigated by male conduct, result in spousal violence, compelling women to pursue opportunities in urban labour markets. Migration signifies both an evasion of violence and a survival tactic, illustrating women's resilience in environments where patriarchal oppression and economic instability intersect. However, violence served as both a catalyst for migration and a means of survival, rendering mobility the sole feasible route to safety and nutrition.

Theme 2: Violence Amid Migration and Employment

This theme explores the persistence or escalation of spousal violence post-migration, suggesting that urban relocation did not inherently mitigate patriarchal dominance and frequently coincided with men's dissatisfaction with evolving economic and gender roles. Interestingly, relocation to Dhaka did not consistently ensure respite from domestic violence. For certain women, the transition to urban environments just altered the manifestations and severity of abuse, frequently linked to male resentment stemming from economic reliance

and evolving gender dynamics. Sonia, a 35-year-old mother of two children, elucidated how her husband's inconsistent income perpetuated ongoing violence despite their relocation to Dhaka:

"His irregular earnings result in physical abuse when financial resources are lacking. He claims I am a liability to him. I began working in households; however, he continues to find justifications for assaulting me. In this city, I labour diligently yet remain unable to evade his wrath" (Sonia, Age: 35; Domestic Worker).

Sonia's statements indicate that migration, instead of alleviating domestic conflicts, just relocated patterns of abuse to an urban environment. Notwithstanding her contributions via domestic labour, she continued to endure physical assault, exemplifying how men's precarious economic conditions in urban areas perpetuate patterns of gendered aggression. Morjina, a 40-year-old survivor of marital rape, recounted the escalation of violence following her emergence as the primary money provider:

"When I began to earn more, he could not endure it. He imposed himself upon me, despite my refusal. He struck me, asserting that I had neglected my position. My salary incited his fury, as though my employment undermined his honour" (Morjina, Age: 40; Domestic Worker).

Morjina's narrative highlights the reaction faced by women who contest conventional male norms by taking on the role of primary provider. Sexual coercion and physical assault served as mechanisms for her husband to re-establish patriarchal supremacy, illustrating the profound interconnection between masculinity, economic power, and control over women's bodies. Both stories demonstrate that migration does not eradicate patriarchal systems; instead, urban poverty and gendered economic shifts frequently exacerbate violence.

The labour of women, essential for family sustenance, is often undervalued or penalised when it disrupts male dominance, highlighting the ongoing prevalence of intimate partner violence in both rural and urban environments. Here, the main observation is that migration did not eradicate violence; rather, urban poverty and evolving gender roles frequently intensified it.

Theme 3: Economic Control and Financial Violence

This theme underscores the systematic appropriation of women's earnings, wage confiscation, and economic coercion, indicating how financial abuse functions as a strategy of patriarchal power, especially in the context of women's participation in urban labour. The study reveals economic control has arisen as a prominent form of spousal violence experienced by migrant domestic workers in Dhaka. A substantial portion of women's earnings, derived from extensive hours of

unstable domestic labour, was systematically appropriated or controlled by their husbands. This financial exploitation deprived women of control over their money and perpetuated patriarchal hierarchies, allowing male power to permeate the economic sphere. These traditions present that migration, although facilitating revenue generation for women, did not inherently result in empowerment within the household. Their effort transformed into an additional locus of control. Rebeka's account exemplifies this coercive dynamic:

"Each month, upon receiving my salary, he appropriates it from me. I am unable to retain even a single taka for my personal use. When I speak, he often screams and occasionally resorts to physical violence. I perceive that I am labouring solely for him, rather than for my own existence" (Rebeka, Age: 22; Domestic Worker).

Rebeka's account focuses the intersection of financial violence with psychological and physical abuse, rendering women's migration a contradictory experience providing economic opportunity while concurrently exacerbating vulnerabilities.

Economic coercion frequently occurred among female migrant domestic workers, as spouses exerted control over their earnings and often resorted to violence when women opposed this control. The restriction of women's financial autonomy perpetuated a cycle of reliance and oppression, transforming their earnings into a source of conflict rather than empowerment.

Consequently, migration did not inherently protect them from patriarchal oppression; rather, it offered new opportunities for exploitation within conjugal dynamics. Keya's experience illustrates that her efforts to preserve a portion of her income for her children incited increasing violence. Ultimately, her spouse deserted her, compelling her to bear the burden of survival independently. She stated:

"When I reserved funds for my sons' education and sustenance, he assaulted me severely. He asserted, 'Your money belongs to me; you have no right to conceal it.' One day he departed, and since then I have been solitary, nurturing my children with my earnings" (Keya, Age: 30; Domestic Worker).

Keya's account shows how economic violence not only deprives women of agency but can also disrupt familial relationships, compelling female migrants to engage in solitary battles for survival. None the less, dominance over women's financial resources emphasises male entitlement and economic aggression as manifestations of marital abuse.

Theme 4: Emotional and Psychological Abuse

This theme encapsulates verbal humiliation, emotional degradation, and the devaluation of women's labour, highlighting that psychological violence operates both independently and in conjunction with physical and economic abuse, hence maintaining gendered discrimination in domestic and urban environments. The findings demonstrate violence faced by migrant domestic helps was not solely physical; some women underwent prolonged verbal degradation and psychological manipulation that significantly eroded their self-esteem. This type of violence operated either as an extension of physical aggressiveness or as a standalone method of asserting male control. Emotional abuse exemplifies the perpetuation of patriarchal control not solely via physical violence but also by assaults on women's dignity, resulting in invisible yet deeply harmful scars. Sharmin's experience exemplifies this aspect. Although she provided financial support through domestic labour, her efforts were belittled and mocked by her husband, exacerbating her marginalisation within the household. She recounted:

“He consistently derides me, stating, ‘You merely clean others’ floors; that is your sole capability. Despite my purchasing food for the household, he asserts that it is insignificant and that I remain valueless. At times, his comments inflict greater pain than his physical assaults” (Sharmin, Age: 32; Domestic Worker).

Sharmin's statement underscores how psychological violence undermines women's self-perception and perpetuates their subordinate status, illustrating that migration does not protect women from the emotional repercussions of patriarchal dominance. However, psychological abuse functions concurrently or independently of physical violence, indicating that migrating experiences are influenced not solely by physical trauma but also by profound emotional transgressions.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study's findings substantiate the assertion that marital abuse against female migrant domestic workers in Dhaka is fundamentally entrenched in patriarchal dominance over women's bodies, labour, and income. Although migration offers women economic prospects, it concurrently creates new vulnerabilities. Reflecting Kabeer's (2024) observation, the instances of Rebeka and Keya exhibit how women's earnings are subsumed by patriarchal household authority, perpetuating economic subjugation instead of empowerment.

The evidence further presents that violence is multifaceted encompassing not just physical aggression but also psychological humiliation and emotional abuse, as exemplified in Sharmin's case. This corresponds with Kofman and Raghuram

(2024) findings that verbal and emotional violence are frequently normalised in Bangladeshi households, perpetuating women's subordination. The findings align with Nazneen and Araujo's (2021) feminist analysis of Bangladeshi women's labour, illustrating how cultural narratives of shame and dishonour systematically discount women's economic efforts.

The study indicates that migration, instead of diminishing vulnerability, frequently redistributes and transforms violence. Domestic workers experience dual marginalisation: initially, in the job market via unstable, underpaid positions, and subsequently, within the household through spousal abuse and economic exploitation.

The BDHS (2022) data substantiates this, highlighting that intimate partner violence persists at an alarming rate, with nearly fifty percent of ever-married women reporting lifetime episodes of abuse. The alignment of survey data and case studies underscores that the challenges faced by female migrants are fundamentally rooted in the socio-economic and patriarchal frameworks of Bangladesh.

The findings suggest multi-level interventions that combine legal protection, social support, and economic safeguards for female migrant domestic workers, such as stricter enforcement of domestic violence laws like the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2010. Together with NGOs like Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), migratory women can learn legal literacy and seek remedies without fear of retaliation. Community-based support services, such as BRAC's urban initiatives, include emotional therapy, shelter, and financial literacy training. Expanding such programs in migrant-concentrated regions such as Mirpur and Old Dhaka could reduce women's isolation and provide rapid assistance. Domestic worker economic protections may be improved. Formal registration and control of domestic labour under labour law would decrease economic coercion by providing minimum earnings, payment security, and savings methods that husbands cannot take.

In addition, awareness and behaviour modification efforts may change patriarchal attitudes about women's labour, which involves targeted initiatives including men, religious leaders, and community influencers. Programs should address the stigma associated with domestic work and promote women's economic contributions. Most crucially, national data and policy integration by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) and BDHS should monitor spousal abuse against migrants to ensure evidence-based policy responses that reflect women workers' experiences.

This study demonstrates that spousal violence against female migrant domestic workers in Dhaka city is not confined to physical harm but extends to economic

control, psychological abuse, and emotional humiliation, deeply undermining women's liberty and well-being. The narratives of Rebeka, Keya, and Sharmin reveal how patriarchal structures adapt to women's migration, producing new forms of control that exploit both their bodies and their earnings. The findings align with broader scholarship (Kabeer, 2024; Nazneen, 2021) that suggest women's entry into paid work does not automatically dismantle gendered hierarchies; instead, it may trigger backlash within households. As BDHS (2022) highlights, the persistence of intimate partner violence across the country underscores the urgency of situating migration within the continuum of gendered violence.

Policy interventions must therefore address both the structural conditions of domestic work and the intimate dynamics of spousal abuse. Without tackling these intersecting vulnerabilities, women's migration will remain a survival strategy rather than a pathway to empowerment. This research underscores the need for a feminist and rights-based approach that recognizes women domestic workers not merely as economic actors but as full citizens entitled to dignity, security, and justice.

The results reflect existing literature (Kabeer, 2024; Ameen and Hadi, 2022; Nazneen and Arauj, 2021), suggesting that women's participation in paid employment does not inherently eradicate gendered hierarchies; rather, it may provoke a reaction within domestic settings. BDHS (2022) emphasises that the prevalence of intimate partner violence nationwide necessitates the integration of migration into the continuum of gendered violence.

Policy measures must consequently tackle both the structural conditions of domestic labour and the personal dynamics of spousal violence. Unless these interconnected vulnerabilities are addressed, women's migration will persist as a survival tactic rather as a means of empowerment. This research emphasises the necessity of a feminist and rights-based framework that acknowledges women domestic workers not solely as economic participants but as complete citizens deserving of dignity, security, and justice.

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The Imperative of Consent-Based Policing in Bangladesh: Pathways to Police Legitimacy

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Abstract

Bangladesh Police have passed through several critical phases since its inception. The July uprising challenged the perceived dominance of the police in maintaining law and order and revived public demands for greater accountability and civil oversight. As a result of the July uprising, law enforcement agencies particularly the police faced a significant challenge to their authority, institutional legitimacy and public credibility. Both before and after the July uprising and particularly following the formation of interim government, Bangladesh Police confronted widespread public unrest, mass demonstrations and student-led movements. This study analyses these developments from a legal and institutional perspective. The article also examines the legal limitations and legitimacy of police actions while attempting to uphold public interest and maintain public order. The study aims to assess the extent to which policing responses to political and public unrest rely on coercive authority or public consent. The study explores the potential of a consent-based policing approach as a pathway for restoring public trust maintain law and order in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Transformation, Consent-based policing, Police legitimacy, Democratic policing

Introduction

Contemporary policing across the world is undergoing a process of transformation. Scholars and practitioners increasingly emphasize a shift from forced-based policing toward consent-based and community-oriented policing models. While traditional policing emphasized authority and control, modern policing increasingly prioritizes legitimacy, procedural justice and community cooperation. Instead of coercive policy, consent-based policy is appreciated around the planet. In addition to that, new socio-political perspectives due to July uprising in Bangladesh demands transformative and consent-based approach rather than absolute domination of the police in ensuring and restoration of law-

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and-order situation in Bangladesh. Transformative and consent-based approach are pragmatic approaches followed and applied in the police department all over the world for a long time which is almost absent in the policing activities in Bangladesh. Besides, this approach is not only a theoretical concept but also essential for the protection of human rights, showing respect for diversity and sustainable law and order development.

However, the principles of consent-based policing are derived from the "Peelian Principles". Whereas acceptance, effectiveness and legitimacy of the police authority can be extracted from the help, cooperation and approval of the people.

Bangladesh Police Ordinance (2007) also emphasised on the cooperation of the public. The crime and disorders of the community should be prevented through the cooperation and active involvement of community people (Brain, 2013; Lentz and Chaires, 2007).

In many countries of the world, police are using coercive methods in interrogation, arrest, search, crowd control and conducting crime prevention processes. Now, Bangladesh police are facing severe image and legitimacy crisis. These are the consequences of long-term colonial reign, colonial mindset, politicization, unprofessional activities and practicing coercive models. These sorts of improper and lack of evidence-based approaches have eroded the image of the police and have corroded public trust and confidence on the police community to a great extent (HRW, 2021; ASK Annual Report, 2022).

In addition, it is essential to focus on fundamental human rights violations as well as addressing police accountability, police discretion, legitimacy of the police to improve the effectiveness of the police and policing activities. In case of addressing the accountability of the police, following the code of silence must not be regarded as the weakness of the police and policing activities. Rather, these are the strength in correcting, improving and ensuring quality service of the Bangladesh police in serving and upholding the civic interest. For this, it is necessary to interact with the people of all layers of community as much as with all sorts of agencies and stake holders of the society.

Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative approach based on literature review, consultations with police officials and analysis of relevant policing documents. In addition, literature from different booklets, books, journals, dailies, magazines, online resources and seminal works were analysed. Primary and secondary sources have been used to collect data and related information. Moreover, Key Informant Interviews were conducted with selected senior police officials and policy

experts. Furthermore, the case studies and observations have been used to conduct the study. Besides, briefing and discussions with high officials and speeches of higher authorities of the police have also been recorded for the study.

Issues behind Police Legitimacy

There are many problems behind the police legitimacy issues in Bangladesh. However, the problems are discussed as the followings.

1. Legitimacy Deficit and Public Trust:

It was revealed that police have very low public confidence and general mass think that police do not maintain fairness. Police do not demonstrate internal and external fairness. They are utilized as the tool of political leaders and work for their personal gain.

General perceptions of the people regarding the police which are prevailing imply that the police are corrupted, inefficient, biased and not empathetic and sympathetic to the public as well as unwilling to serve and ensure the greater interest of the public. A recent survey revealed that due to corruption, inefficiency and lack of fairness, the police have lost their acceptance and support from the general mass (TIB, 2023).

2. Instrumentalization and Politicization:

The instrumentalization and politicization of policing have long been identified as significant challenges to democratic governance and professional law enforcement in Bangladesh. Scholars argue that law enforcement agencies have, at times, been perceived as being influenced by political considerations in matters relating to opposition activities and maintenance of public order, which has adversely affected institutional neutrality and professional independence. Such perceptions have contributed to a decline in public confidence and trust in the police among sections of the civilian population, thereby influencing the legitimacy and effectiveness of policing in a democratic society (Hasan, 2015).

3. Human Rights Concerns and Accountability in Policing:

Policing practices in Bangladesh, particularly during arrest, detention, remand, and interrogation, continue to raise concerns regarding the exercise of authority and compliance with constitutional and human rights standards. Strengthening professionalism, transparency, accountability, and ethical policing practices remains essential for enhancing public confidence and ensuring effective law enforcement. Institutional factors, including police subculture, the “blue curtain”

of silence, evolving accountability mechanisms, and organizational challenges, are considered to influence policing practices and public perceptions of the criminal justice system and the rule of law (Human Rights Watch, 2021; Ain o Salish Kendra, 2022).

4. Ineffective Crime Control and Community Alienation:

It is reported that poor trust cause legitimacy problem that eventually impede overall policing and effective performance of the police. Traumatized and alienated individual or community do not help the police voluntarily. Therefore, information and intelligence, community reporting, help and cooperation from the public would not be found which ultimately hamper the police and the public relationship. Furthermore, this erodes police-public partnership and decline trust in building a healthy society.

Moreover, limited works have been conducted in these issues. Some researches of community policing have been conducted. However, the exact legitimacy issue and consent related research have not been conducted. Nevertheless, the structured studies did not perform yet. Additionally, there are a gap between the researchers and professionals. It has been reported that the gap is not in policy but in consistent and depoliticized implementation.

Consent based Policing in Global and Bangladesh Aspect

1. Theoretical and Global Framework

Consent-based policing is based on the concept that the police are the public and the public are the police. The philosophy of consent-based policing emerges from the concept that policing should be done by consent, not by utilizing force. Furthermore, the primary goal of this approach is to prevent crime and disorder and to ensure that public approval and consent are essential for police activities such as police operations, exerting authority and legitimacy. In this approach, use of physical force is the last resort for this policing approach (Use of force-UN principle, 1990).

2. The Necessity in the Bangladeshi Context

A. To Address a Legacy of Distrust and Political Instrumentalization

From the British colonial reign, the police of Bangladesh were used as the instruments of party in power instead of serving the victim and general public.

These unfair activities damaged image and trust of the public on the police. Hence, consent-based policing could help to depoliticize the police as much as to

save both the public and the police from this menace. Adopting this phenomenon and implementing this policy in policing activities will ultimately promote rebuilding public trust on the police (ASK and TIB, 2023).

B. To Improve Crime Prevention and Investigation

Responsive policing depends on community help, cooperation, support and intelligence. The outcome of alienation from the people is failure of procurement of information, coordination and essential support from the public. Therefore, effective crime prevention, detection and investigation often become impossible. It is reported that because of police phobia prevailing among the public, community reporting regarding dowry, sexual exploitations, sexual harassment, robbery, terrorism, theft and extortion cannot effectively take place. In this regard, consent-based processes could create a congenial atmosphere for making the Bangladesh police more efficient in rendering quality service to the public ensuring their interest as well as restoring human rights issues (Gurinskaya and Nalla, 2025).

C. To Counter Extremism and Radicalization

After 9/11 incidents, US took War model (National Security Perspective) as the core strategies to combat extremism and radicalization. It has been reported that use of this hard power model failed whereas soft power model like deradicalization, counselling (religious counselling, psychological counselling, cultural counselling, legal counselling, educational counselling), counter narratives, rehabilitation and social reintegration proved successful in addressing terrorism. So, soft power approaches with consent and community engagement as well as community partnership could help the police for prevention, detection and sustainable management of terrorism (UNDP's report, 2017).

D. To Uphold Human Rights and Reduce Extra-Judicial Incidents

It revealed that Bangladesh police have tended to undergo constant criticism around the world about extra-judicial activities, enforced disappearances, torture in custody, excessive use of force and violation of human rights. Incorporation of Use of force principles of the UN and Force Continuum phenomena in curriculum design at all stage in all police training and practice for establishing accountability as much as following Articles 31, 32, 35 of the Bangladesh Constitution can ensure human rights and reduce extra-judicial activities (HRW, 2021 and Amnesty International, 2018).

3. Existing Legal and Policy Foundations in Bangladesh

In accordance with different strategies, ordinances and SDG 16 the public's consent are recognized for policing in Bangladesh.

Strategic Plan, 2018-2020, Bangladesh Police: This strategy focuses on “community partnership”, “people friendly policing” and “service-oriented policing.”

SDG 16: The SDG 16 clarify that the national development goals fostering peace, justice, and strong institutions coincide perfectly with consent-based approaches.

The Bangladesh Police Ordinance, 2007: Section 4 of “The Bangladesh Police Ordinance, 2007” includes “assisting and cooperating with the public” as the main police function.

Findings and Discussion

A. Key Findings

1. Challenges to Police Legitimacy: Institutional Trust Deficit:

The study identifies a marked deficit in public confidence in the Bangladesh police, reflecting broader concerns regarding institutional legitimacy. Perceived political influence over law enforcement further undermines perceptions of neutrality and professionalism. Findings from Transparency International Bangladesh (2022) show that the police are viewed as the second most corrupt public institution in the country.

2. Pervasive Politicization Undermines Neutrality and Rule of Law:

It was revealed that police operations are controlled by political personnel as well as by power lords. Furthermore, Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) and Human Rights Watch reported that arrest, detention, confinement, remand, investigations are guided and aligned with political cycles. As for instance, the enactment and execution of the Digital Security Act (DSA) have denied the freedom of speech for people and media. This transformation and using police as tool for oppression reduced fairness and impartial service of police (ASK, 2022; HRW, 2021).

3. Systemic Human Rights Violations as Standard Operational Practice:

Public trust in policing has declined due to recurring allegations of excessive use of force and human-rights violations. The study observes that extracting confessions by applying force and extrajudicial activities are done by a section of police personnel and some units. Human Rights Watch’s reported the few incidents of Bangladesh are done systematically and those have been addressed leniently (HRW, 2021). These systematic human rights violations suggest that the Bangladesh police require reformation and adopt transformative approaches like consent-based policing.

4. A Paradox of Policy Adoption vs. Implementation:

National Police Strategy (2016-2021) advocates for "community engagement", community partnership" and "service-oriented policing." Nonetheless, the lack of political will for realistic depoliticization, limited resource allocations for community-based policing activities, coercive attitudes and use of limited forensic technology in investigations discourage fairness, good behavior, professionalism and legitimacy of police (Khan, 2019).

5. Community Alienation Actively Hinders Crime Management:

The research suggests that the legitimacy deficit most often shows direct operational failure and poor law and order performance. Moreover, community policing initiatives in Bangladesh have produced mixed results and have yet to achieve their full institutional potential.

Therefore, community people do not report about the crime and disorder to the police. Furthermore, the vulnerable communities do not get the chance to attend functions and programs like Open House Day, community policing meetings and cannot become a part in the committees of community policing. Furthermore, they have fear of police harassment. For this, the police fail to collect the actual report and information of crime and criminals making preventive policing impossible. So, they rely on coercive policing that leads to loss of trust on and believing in the police.

B. Discussion

1. Assurance, empathy, fairness issues and needs of consent:

A study was launched on the police assurance, empathy, fairness, responsiveness and tangibility problems of Bangladesh police. The research, exhibited that responsiveness and tangibility of Bangladesh police are positively significant where they do not get positive opinions from the public in case of assurance, empathy and fairness. Moreover, a gradual transition from a predominantly coercive policing model toward a consent-based policing framework is necessary for strengthening institutional legitimacy. Building public trust requires greater transparency, accountability and citizen engagement in policing practices. However, whenever citizen observe that the police lack integrity, morality, and fail maintaining fairness and procedurally they are unjust, they will naturally lose trust on the police and will develop a non-cooperation attitude to the police. It worsens the rule of law. Therefore, lack of assurance, empathy and fairness issues of the Bangladesh police is declining the publics believe and trust. It consequently results in the loss of the legitimacy of the Bangladesh police (Tyler, 2006). So, the consent-based policing is an essential approach in ensuring effective policing.

2. The Core Dilemma: Authoritarian Efficiency vs. Democratic Legitimacy

The ongoing police actions and activities incur long-term loss of acceptance, democratic legitimacy and public safety. Since, the police served the political purposes of the vested corner, they tended to utilize coercive processes in their actions. Thus, they ignored and denied people's opinions and idea in problem solving and decision making. For this reason, they lost their credibility and legitimacy (Bottoms and Tankebe, 2012).

3. The Instrumentalization of Community Policing as a Symbolic Framework

Community policing in Bangladesh has not achieved its intended objectives and continues to face substantial implementation challenges. A persistent bureaucratic and colonial legacy within segments of the police restricts meaningful power-sharing with community members. Public participation remains limited, reflecting uneven engagement in collaborative policing initiatives. The initiative was introduced without adequate pilot testing or necessary structural reforms, thereby constraining its institutional effectiveness. In addition, committee composition is often politically influenced, resulting in the underrepresentation of vulnerable and marginalized groups.

4. Human Rights as a Practical Necessity, not a Foreign Ideal

The practice of democratic policing especially emphasizing the rights of accused and maintaining due process should be in all policing actions and activities.

All extrajudicial activities have to be brought under accountability and control. Moreover, police harassment and police fear have to be eliminated. Police subculture and coercive policing approaches have to be changed. Because awful culture cannot bring trust and legitimacy of policing.

Conclusions

Consent-based policing represents a promising pathway for enhancing police legitimacy and democratic accountability in Bangladesh. Without sustained public support and cooperation, effective law enforcement and maintenance of public order become extremely difficult. This research argues that the adoption of a real consent-based policing approach is an essential and vitally important for Bangladesh. The study indicates that the current policing activities heavily reliant on politicization, systemic human rights violations, abuses of authority, torture on custody, extrajudicial activities. The outcome of such dealings is huge legitimacy deficiency. Only compatibility with the principles of good governance, democratic governance, effective law and order, and the international and domestic standard of use of force and maintaining human rights principles could ensure healthy police-public relationship.

On the other hand, use of excessive force and coercive police activities erode public trust and eventually leads to loss of legitimacy and image of the police department. Without public help and consent, police actions like investigations, crowd management, information collection, surveillance and control are not performed precisely and fruitfully. There is a great link between police legitimacy and operational effectiveness. If the police force achieve legitimacy through maintain procedural justice, interaction, communication, accountability, community engagement and community partnership, police operations and activities become more effective and efficient. Consent-based policing is more necessary for promoting a welfare society and ideal nation.

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Policing the Planet: Anthropocene Criminology, Transnational Environmental Crime, and Climate Justice in the Global South

Sarker Omar Faroque

Abstract

This article examines the governance dynamics of transnational environmental crime and climate justice in the Global South, introducing Anthropocene Criminology as a conceptual framework for understanding environmental policing in the context of planetary change. Drawing on multi-scalar qualitative analysis of three case studies Bangladesh's southwestern coastal region, the Niger Delta in Nigeria, and the Brazilian Amazon the study interrogates the intersections of ecological harm, structural inequality, and governance failure. Documentary analysis of government reports, NGO assessments, and peer-reviewed literature provides empirical depth, enabling examination of both local and transnational drivers of environmental harm. Findings reveal that conventional policing frameworks, which prioritise anthropocentric legal compliance, are inadequate for addressing cumulative and systemic environmental damage. Structural inequalities exacerbate vulnerability, while weak or complicit governance mechanisms allow environmental crimes to persist. Community-led adaptive strategies, including saline-tolerant agriculture, participatory monitoring, and indigenous conservation practices, illustrate the critical role of Southern epistemologies in informing ethical and effective governance. The article argues that environmental policing must be reconceptualised as planetary governance, integrating multi-scalar, preventive, and ethically grounded approaches that consider ecological, intergenerational, and cross-species justice. By linking structural harm, slow violence, and transnational economic pressures to governance outcomes, this study advances theoretical innovation and provides empirical insights for policymakers, law enforcement, and scholars. The research demonstrates that Anthropocene Criminology offers a unique lens to operationalise justice in the Anthropocene, bridging Southern knowledge, planetary ethics, and multi-scalar governance to address the complexities of environmental crime in vulnerable regions.

Keywords: Anthropocene criminology, environmental crime, climate justice, global south, transnational crime.

1. Introduction

The Anthropocene, increasingly recognised as a new geological epoch defined by human-induced planetary change, challenges traditional frameworks of

criminology, policing, and governance. Human activities, including industrialisation, deforestation, and unsustainable resource extraction, have produced cumulative ecological harm that transcends borders and affects both human and non-human communities (Crutzen, 2002; Steffen et al., 2015). In this context, conventional anthropocentric approaches to policing focusing primarily on law enforcement and compliance are insufficient for addressing environmental crimes that are structural, transnational, and temporally diffuse (White, 2011; South, 2014).

This study examines the governance dynamics of transnational environmental crime in the Global South and introduces Anthropocene Criminology as a theoretical framework that reconceptualises policing as a form of planetary governance.

Environmental degradation in the Global South is often mediated by structural inequality, weak regulatory institutions, and global economic pressures. In Bangladesh's southwestern coastal districts, for instance, shrimp cultivation has been associated with salinity intrusion, loss of arable land, and diminished food security (Islam, 2008; Rahman and Rahman, 2017). Similarly, in Nigeria's Niger Delta, decades of oil extraction have resulted in severe ecological contamination, threatening livelihoods and human health, while regulatory enforcement remains weak due to corporate-state collusion and legal loopholes (Watts, 2008; Lynch et al., 2017). In the Brazilian Amazon, deforestation driven by agribusiness and global commodity cause the disrupts of ecosystems which alters hydrological cycles, and jeopardises indigenous land rights (Fearnside, 2017; Ferrante and Fearnside, 2019). These phenomena illustrate that environmental harm in the Global South cannot be effectively addressed through traditional crime-focused frameworks, as the harm is systemic, slow-moving, and multi-scalar.

The notion of slow violence offers critical insight into these dynamics. Nixon (2011) conceptualises slow violence as incremental, often invisible harm inflicted over extended temporal scales, producing ecological and social consequences that are frequently overlooked by conventional law enforcement. In Bangladesh, salinity intrusion gradually reduces agricultural productivity, threatening food security and community resilience. In the Niger Delta, oil spills accumulate over decades, contaminating water and soil and undermining public health (Obida et al., 2018). In the Amazon, deforestation erodes biodiversity and increases climate vulnerability over extended periods (Gibbs et al., 2015). These cumulative harms are largely invisible to episodic enforcement mechanisms, highlighting the inadequacy of conventional policing frameworks for addressing environmental crime.

Anthropocene Criminology provides a theoretical framework to address these gaps by reconceptualising policing as a planetary practice. Building on green

criminology, postcolonial theory, political ecology, and environmental justice scholarship, Anthropocene Criminology views environmental crime as a multi-scalar, ethically mediated phenomenon that requires proactive governance, structural analysis, and ethical responsibility (White, 2011; Gardiner, 2011; Schlosberg, 2007). This approach moves beyond anthropocentric law enforcement to incorporate ecological, intergenerational, and interspecies considerations, advocating for justice that extends beyond human actors to planetary well-being.

A critical component of this framework is the decolonisation of environmental knowledge. Southern epistemologies, grounded in local and Indigenous knowledge systems, offer context-sensitive strategies for adaptation and mitigation. In Bangladesh, smallholder farmers employ saline-tolerant crops and micro-embankment strategies to counter salinity intrusion (Chen and Mueller, 2018). In the Niger Delta, communities have developed participatory monitoring systems to hold corporations accountable for environmental harm (Lynch et al., 2017). In the Amazon, Indigenous communities combine traditional ecological knowledge with satellite monitoring to manage forests sustainably (Ferrante and Fearnside, 2019). By foregrounding these epistemologies, Anthropocene Criminology challenges Northern-centric narratives that portray the Global South as a site of deficit and positions local knowledge as central to planetary governance (Chakrabarty, 2009; Nellemann, 2016).

Environmental harm in the Global South is further mediated by structural inequalities, which amplify vulnerability. Marginalised populations, including smallholder farmers, fishers, and Indigenous communities, experience disproportionate exposure to ecological risk (Islam and Hasan, 2016; Ferrante and Fearnside, 2019).

Governance structures may exist on paper but fail to protect these communities due to institutional weakness, political bias, or resource constraints. Postcolonial theory offers insight into how historical and structural power imbalances shape exposure to environmental harm and the distribution of risk, reinforcing the need for governance mechanisms that are socially and ecologically just (Watts, 2008; Nellemann et al., 2016).

Environmental harm is inherently transnational and multi-scalar. Local ecological disruptions, such as crop loss, air pollution and water contamination, are linked to global commodity chains, climate change, and international economic policies (Robbins, 2012; Gibbs et al., 2015). Salinity intrusion in Bangladesh is exacerbated by upstream water management in India and coastal shrimp cultivation in Bangladesh. Oil spills in the Niger Delta are driven by transnational petroleum markets, while deforestation in the Amazon is influenced by global demand for soy and beef. Anthropocene Criminology emphasises the

importance of multi-scalar governance frameworks that integrate local, national, and transnational interventions, recognising the complex causal networks that drive environmental harm.

The present study employs multi-scalar qualitative methodology, drawing on documentary analysis of government reports, NGO assessments, and peer-reviewed literature to examine governance mechanisms, regulatory failures, and community adaptation strategies. Case studies were selected for their illustrative value in representing diverse socio-ecological and political contexts across the Global South. This methodological approach allows for a nuanced analysis of environmental crime as both a structural and ethical phenomenon, linking empirical observation with theoretical insight (Bowen, 2009; Braun and Clarke, 2021).

By integrating empirical evidence from Bangladesh, the Niger Delta, and the Brazilian Amazon with Anthropocene Criminology, this study contributes to scholarship and policy in several ways. It expands the conceptualisation of environmental crime to include structural, transnational, and temporal dimensions, highlights the ethical and practical significance of Southern epistemologies, and advances multi-scalar governance strategies that operationalise planetary justice. The study's findings have implications for policymakers, law enforcement, and environmental regulators seeking to address environmental crime in a manner that is both effective and ethically responsible.

2. Background: Environmental Crime and Governance in the Global South

2.1 Bangladesh: Coastal Vulnerability and Salinity Intrusion

Bangladesh is widely recognised as one of the most climate-vulnerable countries in the world. The southwestern coastal belt, encompassing districts such as Khulna, Satkhira, and Bagerhat, experiences salinity intrusion from both anthropogenic and climatic drivers. Sea-level rise, embankment breaches, and altered river flows have caused saline water to infiltrate agricultural lands, reducing the cultivable area for rice and other staple crops (Islam and Hasan, 2016). The impact on rural livelihoods is severe: salinity intrusion reduces agricultural yields, compromises freshwater access, and exacerbates health challenges, including hypertension, skin diseases, and chronic kidney conditions (Chen and Mueller, 2018).

Shrimp cultivation, often promoted as an export-oriented economic development strategy, has contributed directly to the problem. Conversion of arable land into shrimp ponds incorporate concentrated brine into soils and canals, further escalating salinity levels and disrupting ecological balance (Islam, 2008). While these activities are technically legal, they exemplify structural environmental crime, in which regulatory frameworks fail to prevent widespread ecological and social harm (White, 2011). Communities experience cumulative disadvantages: reduced livelihood options, migration pressures, and vulnerability to extreme weather events, highlighting the intersection of environmental and social injustice.

Governmental responses have been limited. Regulatory enforcement is inconsistent, and adaptation initiatives, such as saline-tolerant crops or embankment improvements, are patchy and poorly resourced (Rahman and Rahman, 2017). Moreover, policy frameworks often privilege commercial interests over the needs of local communities, illustrating how governance asymmetries exacerbate vulnerability in the Anthropocene.

2.2 Nigeria: Oil Pollution and Structural Environmental Harm

The Niger Delta in Nigeria provides a contrasting, yet equally instructive, example of environmental harm compounded by governance failure. Since the discovery of oil in the 1950s, the region has been subjected to extensive exploration, extraction, and pipeline transportation. Despite environmental legislation, oil spills, gas flaring, and pipeline vandalism continue to produce chronic ecological damage, polluting soils, groundwater, and mangrove ecosystems (UNEP, 2011; Watts, 2008).

Empirical studies reveal that concentrations of toxic hydrocarbons in soils and water exceed safety thresholds by hundreds of times, directly affecting human health and livelihoods dependent on agriculture and fishing (Obida et al., 2018). The environmental impact is compounded by corporate-state collusion, weak enforcement, and the politicisation of local resource governance, representing a state-corporate environmental crime dynamic (Lynch et al., 2017).

Marginalised communities bear the brunt of this slow violence. Health risks, loss of agricultural productivity, and disrupted food security are concentrated among those with the least political leverage. Postcolonial theory highlights how historical marginalisation and contemporary global economic dependencies reproduce inequalities in exposure to environmental harm (Chakrabarty, 2009). Anthropocene Criminology frames these dynamics as planetary in scope: harm extends beyond national borders, connects to global energy consumption patterns, and reveals systemic injustice that conventional policing cannot address.

2.3 Brazil: Amazonian Deforestation and Global Commodity Pressures

The Brazilian Amazon exhibits environmental crime at the intersection of local governance failure and transnational commodity markets. Deforestation occurs for cattle ranching, soy cultivation, and illegal logging, often facilitated by weak execution of environmental laws and corruption (Fearnside, 2017; Ferrante and Fearnside, 2019). Satellite monitoring shows that deforestation rates, while temporarily reduced in the 2000s, have surged in recent years due to policy shifts and the expansion of global agribusiness.

Deforestation produces multiple harms: greenhouse gas emissions, biodiversity loss, disruption of hydrological cycles, and the displacement of indigenous and local communities. Indigenous populations face encroachment, marginalisation, and restricted access to traditional lands, demonstrating how environmental crime intersects with social injustice (Gibbs et al., 2015). Regulatory mechanisms are often insufficient, partly because deforestation is sometimes carried out under semi-legal frameworks or through government-sanctioned concessions, suggesting the complicity of formal governance structures in environmental degradation. The Amazon case exemplifies how local ecological decisions are inseparable from global systems. International commodity markets, financial incentives, and transnational trade networks amplify environmental harm, showing that environmental policing and governance must operate at planetary scales.

While environmental harm across the three cases is often framed as a consequence of illegal activity, a more critical distinction emerges between regulatory failure in both legal and illegal domains. In Bangladesh, shrimp cultivation operates largely within legal frameworks, yet regulatory loopholes and weak enforcement promote environmentally destructive practices to persist unchecked (Islam, 2008; Rahman and Rahman, 2017). In contrast, the Niger Delta presents a hybrid scenario where illegal activities such as pipeline vandalism coexist with legally sanctioned extraction that produces comparable ecological harm owing to inadequate oversight and corporate state collusion (Watts, 2008; Lynch et al., 2017; UNEP, 2011). Similarly, in the Brazilian Amazon, deforestation occurs through both illegal logging and semi-legal or state-sanctioned agribusiness expansion, blurring the boundary between legality and harm (Fearnside, 2017; Ferrante and Fearnside, 2019). This comparative pattern demonstrates that governance failure is not limited to the inability to control illegality but extends to the systemic authorisation and normalisation of ecologically harmful practices within legal-economic systems (White, 2011; Robbins, 2012).

3. Beyond Judicialisation: The Limits of International Environmental Courts in Planetary Governance

Across these three cases, several recurring patterns become analytically visible when situated within contemporary criminological and socio-legal scholarship. First, environmental harm appears as structural and cumulative rather than episodic. It is frequently embedded within legal economic activity and, in many instances, formally authorised by regulatory frameworks that prioritise growth over ecological integrity. As Lynch and Stretesky (2003) argue, environmental harm often reflects the normal functioning of political–economic systems rather than deviant exceptions to them. Similarly, White (2011) demonstrates that many environmentally destructive practices are legally permitted yet socially injurious, exposing the limits of a narrow, law-bound definition of crime. This structural quality renders harm diffuse, temporally extended, and difficult to attribute to individual culpability, thereby challenging conventional policing and prosecutorial paradigms.

Secondly, vulnerability is socially differentiated. Environmental harms do not fall evenly across populations; instead, they are disproportionately borne by marginalised communities structured by class, race, geography, and colonial legacies. The environmental justice literature has long established that disadvantaged groups are more likely to experience exposure to pollution, toxic waste, and climate-related risks (Bullard, 1990; Schlosberg, 2007).

From a global perspective, postcolonial analyses further show that communities in the Global South frequently absorb ecological externalities generated by transnational production and consumption patterns (Nixon, 2011). Such differentiation underscores that environmental crime is inseparable from broader questions of distributive and recognitional justice, reinforcing the argument that harm must be assessed not only in legal but also in socio-structural terms.

Thirdly, governance systems are frequently weak, fragmented, or complicit, producing regulatory conditions in which environmental crime thrives. The concept of regulatory capture and the structural interdependence between state and corporate actors help explain how environmental enforcement may be diluted or selectively applied (Snider, 1993). Green criminologists have shown that environmental governance often suffers from institutional fragmentation, limited enforcement capacity, and political interference, particularly in jurisdictions where economic development imperatives overshadow ecological protection (White, 2013). These weaknesses are not merely administrative failures but are embedded in broader political–economic arrangements that privilege capital accumulation over ecological sustainability.

Finally, the cases reveal that environmental crime operates at the intersection of local practices and transnational or planetary processes. Global markets drive resource extraction; climate dynamics intensify ecological vulnerability; and international policy regimes shape domestic regulatory responses. Beck's (2009) conception of the "world risk society" highlights how contemporary risks transcend territorial boundaries, while Brisman and South (2014) emphasise that environmental harms are frequently transnational in origin and consequence. The territorial logic of traditional policing anchored in jurisdictional boundaries proves inadequate in the face of ecological processes and supply chains that operate across scales. Environmental policing, therefore, cannot remain strictly territorial; it must engage with transnational governance mechanisms, cross-border cooperation, and planetary risk structures.

Recent (2024–2026) scholarship has increasingly interrogated the effectiveness of international environmental courts and tribunals as mechanisms for governing transnational ecological harm. A central strand of this literature revisits proposals for a dedicated International Environmental Court, suggesting that while such an institution could enhance coherence in environmental adjudication, its feasibility remains constrained by entrenched sovereignty concerns, fragmented jurisdictional arrangements, and uneven political commitment to supranational authority (Sobenes, Mead and Samson, 2022; Angstadt, 2023). Empirical studies of environmental courts further indicate that although judicialisation can strengthen norm development, its impact on compliance is limited by weak enforcement structures and dependence on domestic implementation pathways (Liu et al., 2024).

Recent developments, particularly the International Court of Justice's 2025 Advisory Opinion on climate change, have been interpreted as expanding normative expectations regarding state responsibility in environmental protection. However, critical scholarship underscores its non-binding nature and inability to address structural enforcement deficits in global environmental governance (Ekardt, 2026; Harrison, 2024). Broader analyses similarly highlight persistent fragmentation across courts, tribunals, and treaty-based dispute mechanisms, which undermines coherence, access to justice, and equitable participation, particularly for Global South actors (Oral, 2024).

Contemporary debates further problematise the assumption that judicialisation alone can resolve planetary ecological crises. Instead, enforcement outcomes are shown to be embedded within a global political economy shaped by asymmetries of power, economic dependency, and geopolitical interest (Hafezi et al., 2024). Even as climate litigation expands, its transformative capacity remains constrained by the absence of coercive enforcement at the international level (Gillett, 2024). Collectively, these debates demonstrate that while international environmental courts and tribunals are normatively significant, they remain

insufficient as standalone governance instruments, necessitating multi-scalar, justice-oriented governance frameworks grounded in planetary justice and Southern epistemologies.

These observations collectively underscore the need for a theoretical framework capable of recognising the planetary dimensions of policing, governance, and justice. Anthropocene criminology responds to this challenge by situating environmental crime within systemic, structural, and ethical contexts shaped by human-induced planetary transformation. Drawing upon green criminology's harm-based approach (White, 2011), postcolonial critiques of uneven ecological burdens (Nixon, 2011), political ecology's analysis of power and resource distribution (Robbins, 2012), and emerging theories of planetary justice (Biermann and Lövbrand, 2019), this framework reconceptualises environmental crime as embedded within interconnected socio-ecological systems. In doing so, it moves beyond narrow legalism and territoriality, offering a criminological lens attuned to cumulative harm, differentiated vulnerability, governance complicity, and the transboundary nature of ecological risk.

4. Framing Planetary Harm: A Theoretical Framework for Environmental Governance and Justice

4.1 Anthropocene Criminology: Conceptual Foundations

The Anthropocene epoch challenges conventional criminological paradigms by highlighting the planetary scale of human-induced harm. Traditional criminology focuses primarily on discrete, human-centered offences, often overlooking environmental and ecological harm that accumulates slowly, spans borders, and disproportionately affects marginalized populations (White, 2008; South, 2014). Anthropocene Criminology emerges as a response to this lacuna, integrating insights from green criminology, postcolonial theory, political ecology, and planetary justice to reconceptualise policing, governance, and justice as planetary acts (Nixon, 2011; Gardiner, 2011).

At its core, Anthropocene Criminology recognises that ecological harm is both structural and systemic, often facilitated by legal, political, and economic systems. For example, the expansion of shrimp aquaculture in Bangladesh, though legal and export-driven, increase salinization and biodiversity loss that cumulatively undermine local livelihoods (Islam, 2008). Similarly, oil extraction in Nigeria and Amazonian deforestation illustrate that legality is insufficient to define ecological harm, underscoring the importance of recognising slow violence (Nixon, 2011) as a central analytical lens.

This framework extends criminology beyond the human-centric lens, acknowledging intergenerational, interspecies, and planetary responsibilities.

Policing, in this sense, is not restricted to law enforcement agencies but encompasses the broader governance mechanisms that regulate environmental harm, manage risk, and mitigate ecological injustice.

This reconceptualisation aligns with philosophical approaches to planetary justice, which demand accountability across temporal, spatial, and species boundaries (Schlosberg, 2007; Gardiner, 2011).

4.2 Green Criminology and Environmental Harm

Green criminology provides a foundational pillar for Anthropocene Criminology. It studies environmental harms, legal and illegal, and challenges the narrow boundaries of crime (White, 2008; South, 2014). The framework distinguishes between primary environmental harms, such as deforestation, pollution, and habitat destruction, and secondary harms, including social displacement, economic loss, and health consequences (White, 2011).

For instance, in Bangladesh, primary environmental harm arises from the industrialisation of coastal ecosystems for shrimp farming, while secondary harms manifest as migration pressures, reduced food security, and health vulnerabilities (Chen and Mueller, 2018). In the Niger Delta, oil spills and gas flaring constitute primary harm, whereas increased disease burden, contaminated fisheries, and social disruption represent secondary harms (Watts, 2008; UNEP, 2011). By recognising the multi-layered and often delayed impacts of environmental damage, green criminology shifts attention from individual actors to structural processes and regulatory systems. Moreover, green criminology challenges the assumption that legality equates to justice. Legal frameworks may permit industrial practices that generate profound ecological and social harm, as seen in Brazilian Amazon deforestation facilitated by agribusiness concessions (Fearnside, 2017). Anthropocene Criminology builds on this insight, arguing that planetary policing must account for the ecological consequences of both legal and illegal activities, recognising that harm is often embedded in economic and political structures.

4.3 Postcolonial Theory and Governance Inequalities

Postcolonial theory contributes a critical lens by situating environmental harm within historical and global power structures. The Global South, shaped by centuries of colonial exploitation and contemporary economic marginalisation, disproportionately bears the consequences of ecological degradation (Chakrabarty, 2009). Colonial legacies, including extractive economic models and centralised governance, have entrenched inequalities in resource access and environmental vulnerability.

In Bangladesh, historical land management practices, combined with postcolonial development policies privileging export-oriented shrimp aquaculture, exacerbate the exposure of local communities to climate-induced salinity intrusion (Rahman and Rahman, 2017). In Nigeria, the Niger Delta's oil wealth is concentrated among state and corporate actors, while local populations are left to endure the ecological consequences (Lynch et al., 2017). Similarly, in Brazil, Indigenous communities in the Amazon are marginalised in decision-making, and their land rights are undermined by global commodity pressures (Ferrante and Fearnside, 2019).

Postcolonial theory also underscores the epistemic dimension of environmental governance, highlighting how Northern-centric knowledge systems dominate climate policy and environmental management.

Southern epistemologies indigenous knowledge, local practices, and community adaptation strategies are often devalued or ignored, reducing the effectiveness of governance interventions and marginalising those most affected (Chakrabarty, 2009; Nelles, 2016). Anthropocene Criminology incorporates these insights by privileging Southern voices, recognising local knowledge as essential for effective planetary policing.

4.4 Political Ecology: Power, Environment, and Policy

Political ecology provides the analytical bridge between environmental harm and governance. It examines how environmental degradation is linked to power relations, economic structures, and institutional capacities (Robbins, 2012). Environmental harm is rarely a natural phenomenon; it is socially produced, shaped by state policies, corporate practices, and global market dynamics.

In Bangladesh, the interplay between state agricultural policy, global shrimp demand, and local resource access illustrates how political decisions amplify vulnerability (Islam, 2008). In the Niger Delta, the combination of corporate profit motives, state complicity, and weak regulatory enforcement creates conditions in which oil pollution persists despite legislative frameworks (UNEP, 2011). Brazilian deforestation similarly demonstrates how local land-use policies intersect with global commodity chains to produce environmental harm, reflecting power asymmetries between state actors, agribusiness, and Indigenous populations (Gibbs et al., 2015).

Political ecology also emphasizes scale: environmental crime cannot be fully understood at a local or national level alone. Transnational flows of capital, energy, and commodities drive environmental degradation in ways that local policing structures cannot address. Anthropocene Criminology incorporates this

multi-scalar perspective, arguing that planetary policing must account for both local ecological impacts and global systemic drivers.

The analytical insights of political ecology naturally extend into the normative concerns of planetary justice. While political ecology explains how power, policy, and economic systems produce environmental harm (Robbins, 2012), planetary justice addresses the ethical implications of these processes by foregrounding questions of responsibility, equity, and sustainability across human and non-human systems (Schlosberg, 2007; Gardiner, 2011). In this sense, planetary justice provides the moral framework through which the structural inequalities identified by political ecology can be evaluated and addressed. The transition between these perspectives is therefore not conceptual but sequential: understanding power relations in environmental governance necessitates an ethical framework capable of addressing their consequences across temporal, spatial, and interspecies dimensions (Biermann and Lövbrand, 2019; Schlosberg, 2007).

4.5 Philosophy of Planetary Justice

Anthropocene Criminology draws on the philosophy of planetary justice to extend ethical responsibility beyond human communities. Traditional notions of justice primarily distributive, procedural, and retributive focus on intra-human relationships. Planetary justice expands this to include intergenerational equity, interspecies well-being, and transboundary ecological responsibility (Schlosberg, 2007; Gardiner, 2011).

Planetary justice addresses questions such as: How should harm be distributed when climate change disproportionately affects future generations? How should species and ecosystems be considered within frameworks of accountability? How can the Global South, often most affected, exercise agency in transnational governance? These ethical questions challenge conventional policing, suggesting that law enforcement must evolve into governance capable of mediating ecological risk, distributing responsibility, and integrating diverse knowledge systems. For example, adaptation policies in Bangladesh that prioritise saline-tolerant crops and embankment reinforcement reflect a partial form of planetary justice by attempting to mitigate long-term harm to human and ecological communities (Chen and Mueller, 2018). In Nigeria, legal reforms to strengthen corporate accountability for oil spills represent an effort to align regulatory enforcement with ethical responsibility toward affected communities and ecosystems (Lynch et al., 2017). In the Amazon, Indigenous-led conservation initiatives demonstrate the ethical imperative of recognising non-human and intergenerational rights in environmental governance (Ferrante and Fearnside, 2019).

5. Integration: Towards a Planetary Policing Paradigm

Anthropocene Criminology synthesises green criminology, postcolonial theory, political ecology and planetary justice into a coherent analytical framework for understanding environmental harm as a planetary policing challenge. Rather than treating environmental offences as isolated regulatory breaches, this integrated perspective conceptualises harm as systemic, historically embedded and globally interconnected.

From green criminology, the framework adopts the proposition that environmental crime encompasses both legal and illegal acts, and that harm is frequently cumulative, diffuse and structurally produced (White, 2011). This moves the focus of policing beyond narrow statutory violations towards broader patterns of ecological degradation and social harm.

Drawing on postcolonial theory, it recognises that vulnerability to environmental harm is shaped by historical and structural inequalities rooted in colonial extraction, uneven development and epistemic marginalisation (Chakrabarty, 2009). Effective governance therefore requires the inclusion of Southern epistemologies and the lived experiences of historically subordinated communities within regulatory and policing strategies.

From political ecology, the framework incorporates the insight that environmental harm is mediated by power relations, policy choices and global economic structures (Robbins, 2012). A multi-scalar analysis is essential, linking local environmental degradation to national governance regimes and transnational political economy. This ensures that policing responses address not only proximate offenders but also the structural conditions that enable harm.

Finally, from theories of planetary justice, the framework embraces the argument that ethical responsibility extends across generations, species and borders (Gardiner, 2011; Schlosberg, 2007). Governance must therefore integrate principles of equity, sustainability and interdependence, recognising that environmental harm raises moral as well as legal and political questions. In practical terms, this synthesis translates into a policing paradigm grounded in collaboration and anticipatory governance. Law enforcement agencies, regulatory authorities, community actors and international institutions must work together to monitor and prevent environmental harm systematically rather than relying solely on reactive enforcement mechanisms.

Planning and policy development should embed local and indigenous knowledge systems to enhance legitimacy and contextual sensitivity. Legal frameworks must be aligned with broader ethical imperatives of planetary justice, ensuring that enforcement practices reflect commitments to intergenerational equity and

ecological sustainability (Gardiner, 2011; Schlosberg, 2007). At the same time, policing strategies should address the structural inequalities that intensify exposure to environmental and social harm, consistent with insights from postcolonial and political ecological scholarship (Chakrabarty, 2009; Robbins, 2012).

This integrated approach positions policing as a form of planetary governance: a multidimensional practice concerned simultaneously with ecological integrity, social justice and transnational accountability. By linking theoretical insights to empirical realities, Anthropocene Criminology offers a normatively grounded and operationally relevant framework for environmental law enforcement, policy reform and academic scholarship (White, 2011; Robbins, 2012).

6. Methodology

This study employs a multi-scalar qualitative research design to examine the governance dynamics of transnational environmental crime and climate justice in the Global South, with particular focus on Bangladesh, the Niger Delta in Nigeria, and the Brazilian Amazon. The overarching research aim is to explore how Anthropocene Criminology can reconceptualise policing and governance in contexts where environmental harm intersects with structural inequality, transnational economic pressures, and ecological vulnerability. The methodological approach prioritises empirical richness, theoretical integration, and reflexive engagement with Southern epistemologies, situating knowledge production as both socially and ethically embedded.

6.1 Research Design

The research design is qualitative, interpretive, and multi-scalar, spanning local, national, and transnational dimensions of environmental harm. A qualitative approach is appropriate because environmental crime and climate justice are complex, context-specific phenomena often absent from conventional datasets and embedded in broader socio-political and economic structures (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). In contrast to positivist approaches focused on measurable incidents, qualitative methods enable deeper analysis of lived experiences, institutional responses, and structural drivers of harm.

Multi-scalar analysis is central. At the local scale, the study examines communities in Bangladesh's southwestern coast, the Niger Delta, and the Brazilian Amazon, highlighting ecological harm as lived inequality, such as salinity intrusion and oil contamination (Chen and Mueller, 2018; Watts, 2008). At the national scale, it examines regulatory regimes, enforcement practices, and state–corporate relations shaping environmental outcomes (Fearnside, 2017; UNEP, 2011). At the transnational scale, it situates these harms within global

commodity chains, climate governance, and international regimes, consistent with Anthropocene Criminology (Gardiner, 2011; Schlosberg, 2007).

6.2 Case Selection

Cases were purposively selected based on severity of environmental harm, governance complexity, and relevance to Southern vulnerability. Bangladesh's coastal belt illustrates climate-induced salinity intrusion intensified by industrial shrimp cultivation, reflecting slow violence (Islam, 2008). The Niger Delta is selected for systemic oil pollution, regulatory failure, and state corporate complicity (Lynch et al., 2017). The Brazilian Amazon represents deforestation driven by global commodity demand and weak enforcement affecting Indigenous populations (Ferrante and Fearnside, 2019). The selection is theoretically driven rather than statistically representative, designed to advance Anthropocene Criminology through comparison of structural harm, planetary justice, and decolonial environmental knowledge.

6.3 Data Collection

Data collection is based on documentary analysis supported by secondary qualitative sources. Documentary analysis is appropriate for environmental governance research as it captures policy frameworks, legal texts, NGO reports, and scientific evidence shaping environmental knowledge and regulation (Bowen, 2009). In Bangladesh, sources include Department of Environment reports and BCCSAP documents. In Nigeria, UNEP Ogoniland reports, oil governance laws, corporate disclosures, and investigative media were analysed. In Brazil, deforestation monitoring data, Indigenous documentation, and satellite-based assessments were examined (Gibbs et al., 2015; Ferrante and Fearnside, 2019). Secondary literature, including peer-reviewed studies and policy reports, was used to triangulate findings and strengthen contextual validity (Chen and Mueller, 2018; Obida et al., 2018).

6.4 Analytical Approach

Thematic analysis followed a combined deductive–inductive strategy. Deductive coding was derived from Anthropocene Criminology and included: Structural Environmental Harm, Governance Failure, Planetary Justice, Southern Epistemologies, and Transnational Drivers. These were operationalised into sub-codes such as regulatory gaps, corporate state collusion, intergenerational justice, and ethical governance. Inductive coding allowed emergent themes such as salinity intrusion, oil contamination, deforestation dynamics, and community adaptation. Analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2021) six-phase framework, ensuring systematic and transparent theme development.

6.5 Data Triangulation and Validity

Validity is ensured through triangulation of multiple data sources. Documentary evidence is cross-checked against peer-reviewed studies, NGO reports, and legal texts to identify governance gaps. Satellite data and global environmental indicators contextualise local findings within planetary processes (Steffen et al., 2011; Gibbs et al., 2015). The study also adopts reflexivity, recognising the situated nature of environmental knowledge. This is particularly important in avoiding epistemic bias and foregrounding Southern experiences (Chakrabarty, 2009).

6.7 Ethical Considerations

Although based on secondary data, ethical considerations remain central. The study ensures accurate attribution, respects intellectual property, and anonymises sensitive references where required. It also avoids sensationalism, foregrounding dignity and agency in representing affected communities and recognising the policy sensitivity of environmental governance in Bangladesh, Nigeria, and Brazil.

6.8 Strengths and Limitations

The study's strength lies in its multi-scalar qualitative design, enabling integration of local experiences with national governance and global structures. Documentary triangulation enhances empirical robustness and theoretical integration. Limitations include reliance on secondary data, which may constrain depth of lived experience, and potential institutional bias in documentary sources. However, triangulation mitigates these concerns. While case selection limits statistical generalisability, it enhances theoretical transferability across contexts of environmental harm.

6.9 Rationale for Qualitative Approach

A qualitative, multi-scalar approach is appropriate for studying environmental crime due to its diffuse, structural, and cumulative nature (South, 2014; White, 2011). It enables analysis beyond isolated events, capturing governance, inequality, and planetary processes. This design supports theoretical innovation by linking empirical material to Anthropocene Criminology, planetary justice, and Southern epistemologies, reframing environmental policing as a form of planetary governance rather than discrete crime control.

7. Findings

The findings from this study reveal the complex dynamics of environmental harm, governance, and justice in the Global South. Through multi-scalar qualitative analysis, three case studies—Bangladesh’s southwestern coastal region, the Niger Delta in Nigeria, and the Brazilian Amazon—demonstrate how structural, ecological, and social vulnerabilities interact with state and corporate governance mechanisms to produce environmental injustice. Across all cases, the analysis underscores the relevance of Anthropocene Criminology, highlighting the necessity of reconceptualising policing and regulation as planetary governance practices.

7.1 Bangladesh: Salinity Intrusion and Structural Environmental Harm

In Bangladesh, the southwestern coastal districts of Khulna, Satkhira, and Bagerhat are increasingly affected by salinity intrusion. Analysis of government reports, NGO assessments, and scientific literature indicates that salinity intrusion has accelerated due to a combination of climate change-driven sea-level rise, river embankment breaches, and the expansion of shrimp aquaculture (Islam, 2008; Rahman and Rahman, 2017). Salinity levels in agricultural soils have risen significantly, reducing the productivity of staple crops such as rice and vegetables. Documentary evidence from the Bangladesh Department of Environment and the BCCSAP indicates that approximately 1.2 million hectares of farmland are at risk of salinisation, threatening the livelihoods of over 4 million people (Islam and Hasan, 2016).

The governance response in Bangladesh reveals structural gaps. Regulatory frameworks governing aquaculture and water management exist but are poorly enforced due to bureaucratic inefficiency, lack of resources, and political prioritisation of export-oriented industries (Chen and Mueller, 2018). NGO reports emphasise that affected communities often lack access to legal recourse or support for adaptation measures, reinforcing vulnerability. These findings illustrate the concept of structural environmental crime, where legal activities, such as shrimp cultivation, produce significant ecological and social harm, highlighting a disjunction between legality and justice (White, 2011).

Furthermore, qualitative data from secondary sources suggest that local populations employ adaptive strategies, including crop diversification, saline-tolerant rice varieties, and small-scale water management interventions. These practices reflect Southern epistemologies, emphasizing local agency and knowledge in the face of systemic vulnerability (Nellemann, 2016). However, the scale of governance failure limits the effectiveness of these adaptations, highlighting the need for planetary policing that integrates local knowledge with regulatory and international support mechanisms.

7.2 Niger Delta, Nigeria: Oil Pollution and Corporate-State Collusion

The Niger Delta exemplifies how environmental crime in the Global South is mediated by complex interactions between state actors, corporations, and local communities. Oil exploration and extraction in the region have produced chronic ecological harm, including contamination of soil, surface water, and groundwater (UNEP, 2011; Watts, 2008). The UNEP Ogoniland report documents widespread hydrocarbon pollution, revealing that concentrations of toxic compounds in soils exceed safety thresholds by several orders of magnitude, posing significant risks to human health and biodiversity (Obida et al., 2018).

Governance mechanisms in Nigeria demonstrate the entanglement of corporate interests with state regulatory frameworks. While environmental legislation exists, enforcement is inconsistent, and regulatory agencies often face political interference. Reports from civil society organisations and academic studies indicate that pipeline vandalism and illegal bunkering exacerbate pollution, yet companies are frequently absolved of liability due to legal loopholes or negotiated settlements (Lynch et al., 2017). This combination of corporate-state complicity and weak governance constitutes a form of structural environmental crime, producing long-term harm to both ecosystems and human communities.

Secondary data reveal profound social consequences. Fisheries and agriculture, the primary sources of livelihood for local populations, are disrupted by pollution, leading to food insecurity and economic marginalisation. Health outcomes are affected by chronic exposure to hydrocarbons, with elevated incidences of respiratory, dermatological, and gastrointestinal conditions documented in multiple peer-reviewed studies (Obida et al., 2018). The Niger Delta case illustrates the interplay of slow violence, structural inequality, and planetary injustice, highlighting the necessity of governance approaches that transcend local legal frameworks to incorporate global accountability and ethical responsibility (Nixon, 2011; Gardiner, 2011).

7.3 Brazilian Amazon: Deforestation and Transnational Drivers

The Brazilian Amazon provides insight into the complex interactions between local governance, global commodity markets, and Indigenous marginalisation. Satellite monitoring data indicate that deforestation rates have surged in recent years, driven by cattle ranching, soy cultivation, and illegal logging (Fearnside, 2017; Ferrante and Fearnside, 2019). While government policies and environmental agencies have historically reduced deforestation, recent political shifts and policy relaxations have weakened enforcement, reflecting the influence of political economy on environmental governance.

Empirical evidence shows that deforestation has multiple ecological consequences, including greenhouse gas emissions, loss of biodiversity, and disruption of hydrological cycles. Indigenous communities are particularly affected, experiencing land encroachment, restricted access to resources, and socio-cultural marginalisation (Gibbs et al., 2015). This case demonstrates the transnational nature of environmental crime, as deforestation is driven not only by local actors but also by global commodity demands and financial incentives, linking local ecological harm to global systems of production and consumption.

Qualitative analysis of policy documents, Indigenous-led conservation reports, and international monitoring assessments underscores the inadequacy of conventional policing mechanisms in addressing these challenges. Enforcement gaps and legal ambiguity allow for both illegal and semi-legal deforestation activities to persist, reflecting the tension between state-sanctioned economic development and ecological sustainability. The Brazilian Amazon exemplifies how planetary justice considerations must guide environmental governance, incorporating Indigenous knowledge, intergenerational equity, and transboundary accountability (Schlosberg, 2007).

7.4 Cross-Case Themes: Structural Harm and Planetary Governance

Analysis across the three cases reveals several recurring patterns that illuminate the broader dynamics of environmental crime and governance in the Global South. First, environmental harm is structurally embedded. Activities that are technically legal, such as industrial shrimp aquaculture in Bangladesh or agribusiness in Brazil, produce cumulative ecological and social damage, demonstrating the limits of legality as a measure of justice (White, 2011). Second, vulnerability is socially differentiated. Marginalised populations smallholder farmers, fishers, and Indigenous communities bear disproportionate risks, reflecting historical and contemporary inequities (Chakrabarty, 2009). Third, governance mechanisms are frequently weak, fragmented, or complicit, creating conditions where environmental crime thrives. Regulatory gaps in Bangladesh and Nigeria, coupled with enforcement rollbacks in Brazil, illustrate this dynamic.

Transnational and planetary dimensions are central to these findings. Environmental harm in the Global South is not only a local or national problem but also a consequence of global economic and climatic systems. Shrimp exports, oil demand, and commodity-driven deforestation link local ecological degradation to broader global processes, reinforcing the need for multi-scalar governance approaches. Anthropocene Criminology provides a framework to interpret these patterns, emphasising the ethical, structural, and planetary dimensions of policing and governance (Gardiner, 2011; White, 2011).

7.5 Community Adaptation and Agency

Despite systemic vulnerabilities, evidence from the cases highlights community agency and adaptive strategies. In Bangladesh, farmers cultivate saline-tolerant crops and implement micro-embankments to mitigate salinity intrusion (Chen and Mueller, 2018). Niger Delta communities engage in local monitoring, advocacy, and collaboration with NGOs to demand corporate accountability (Lynch et al., 2017). In Brazil, Indigenous groups lead forest conservation initiatives, leveraging both traditional knowledge and satellite monitoring technologies to protect territories (Ferrante and Fearnside, 2019). These practices illustrate the decolonising epistemological dimension of Anthropocene Criminology, foregrounding Southern knowledge and localised governance as central to environmental justice.

However, a critical tension emerges regarding the limits of community adaptation. While local strategies demonstrate resilience and innovation, they may also risk shifting the burden of environmental governance onto affected communities rather than addressing the structural and transnational drivers of harm. In Bangladesh, saline-tolerant agriculture practises mitigate immediate livelihood risks but does not resolve upstream water governance issues or global market pressures driving aquaculture expansion. Similarly, participatory monitoring in the Niger Delta enhances accountability but cannot substitute for robust regulatory enforcement. This raises a key question within Anthropocene Criminology: whether adaptation strategies, in the absence of systemic reform, inadvertently normalise environmental injustice by requiring vulnerable populations to adjust to conditions produced by global political-economic systems.

7.6 Synthesis: Linking Empirical Findings to Theory

The empirical findings resonate strongly with the core tenets of Anthropocene Criminology. Structural environmental harm, multi-scalar governance failure, and transnational drivers exemplify the planetary scale of ecological crime. Vulnerability analysis underscores the postcolonial dimension, highlighting how historical inequalities shape exposure and adaptation capacity. The cases further demonstrate that environmental governance must integrate ethical considerations of planetary justice, balancing human, ecological, and intergenerational interests. Finally, community-driven adaptations provide practical examples of how Southern epistemologies can inform effective and just governance strategies.

In sum, the findings illuminate the interplay between ecological harm, governance dynamics, and justice, demonstrating that conventional policing paradigms are insufficient to address the complexities of the Anthropocene. The empirical evidence from Bangladesh, Nigeria, and Brazil reinforces the necessity

of a planetary approach to environmental governance, operationalised through multi-scalar interventions, ethical frameworks, and integration of local knowledge.

8. Discussion

The empirical findings from Bangladesh, the Niger Delta, and the Brazilian Amazon highlight the complex interplay of environmental harm, governance failure, and structural inequality in the Global South. This discussion situates these findings within the theoretical framework of Anthropocene Criminology, demonstrating how traditional understandings of policing, justice, and regulation are insufficient to address the challenges of the Anthropocene.

By engaging with green criminology, political ecology, postcolonial theory, and planetary justice, this section analyses the broader implications of the empirical results and articulates a planetary governance perspective.

8.1 Reconceptualising Policing in the Anthropocene

The findings reveal that conventional policing paradigms, which focus narrowly on enforcing human-centric legal codes, are inadequate for addressing environmental harm that is systemic, cumulative, and transnational. In Bangladesh, for example, the legal regulation of shrimp aquaculture does not prevent salinity intrusion or associated socio-economic harm (Islam, 2008; Chen and Mueller, 2018). Similarly, in Nigeria, regulatory enforcement of oil pollution is hindered by corporate-state complicity, legal loopholes, and insufficient oversight (Lynch et al., 2017). In the Brazilian Amazon, weak enforcement and political prioritisation of agribusiness allow deforestation to persist despite legal frameworks intended to protect Indigenous territories and ecosystems (Fearnside, 2017; Ferrante and Fearnside, 2019).

These patterns support the theoretical proposition of Anthropocene Criminology that policing should be conceptualised as planetary governance, rather than mere law enforcement. Policing in this context encompasses monitoring, regulating, and preventing environmental harm across spatial and temporal scales, integrating local, national, and transnational dimensions. Traditional enforcement mechanisms are often reactive and human-centred, whereas planetary policing requires proactive and multi-scalar interventions that anticipate slow, diffuse harm and hold multiple actors accountable, including corporations and state institutions (Nixon, 2011; White, 2011).

Moreover, these cases illustrate that legality does not equate to justice. Activities sanctioned by law, such as shrimp farming in Bangladesh or agribusiness

expansion in Brazil, can generate profound ecological and social consequences. This underscores the need for ethical governance frameworks that reconcile legal permissibility with ecological and social justice, reflecting the normative dimension of Anthropocene Criminology (Gardiner, 2011).

8.2 Southern Epistemologies and Decolonising Environmental Knowledge

A critical insight from the empirical findings is the value of Southern epistemologies in addressing environmental harm. Communities in Bangladesh, the Niger Delta, and the Amazon deploy local knowledge and adaptation strategies to mitigate ecological risks. Farmers in Bangladesh cultivate saline-tolerant crops and manage micro-embankments to counteract salinity intrusion (Chen and Mueller, 2018). Niger Delta communities engage in participatory monitoring and advocacy to demand corporate accountability (Lynch et al., 2017). Indigenous communities in Brazil employ traditional land-use practices alongside satellite monitoring to protect forests (Ferrante and Fearnside, 2019).

These examples highlight the limitations of Northern-centric environmental governance models, which often marginalise local knowledge and experience. Postcolonial theory provides a critical lens for understanding how epistemic hierarchies shape environmental policy and enforcement, privileging global economic priorities over local needs and agency (Chakrabarty, 2009; Nelles, 2016). Anthropocene Criminology addresses this imbalance by centring Southern voices, recognising the ethical and practical value of local knowledge in designing sustainable and equitable environmental governance mechanisms.

The cases further illustrate how Southern epistemologies can inform planetary justice frameworks. By integrating local practices, ethical norms, and community priorities into governance mechanisms, environmental policing can move beyond procedural compliance to substantive justice. In Bangladesh, local adaptive strategies mitigate harm to livelihoods and ecosystems, demonstrating the potential for ethical governance that reconciles ecological integrity with human well-being (Rahman and Rahman, 2017). Similarly, Indigenous stewardship in Brazil exemplifies intergenerational and interspecies responsibility, core tenets of planetary justice (Schlosberg, 2007).

8.3 Structural Harm and Vulnerability

Across all three cases, structural inequalities amplify vulnerability to environmental harm. Marginalised populations smallholder farmers, fishers, and Indigenous communities experience disproportionate exposure to ecological risks. In Bangladesh, poorer households in the southwestern coast have limited resources to implement adaptation strategies, exacerbating socio-economic inequality (Islam and Hasan, 2016). In the Niger Delta, communities directly

affected by oil pollution often lack access to legal remedies or health care, reflecting historical marginalisation and ongoing structural disadvantage (Watts, 2008; Obida et al., 2018). In Brazil, Indigenous communities face encroachment, resource restriction, and socio-political exclusion, demonstrating how governance failures interact with historical inequities to produce ecological and social vulnerability (Ferrante and Fearnside, 2019).

These observations confirm key arguments in postcolonial theory and political ecology: environmental harm is not neutral but mediated by power, policy, and historical legacies. Regulatory mechanisms may exist on paper but fail to protect those most at risk due to institutional bias, political prioritisation of economic interests, or inadequate resources. Anthropocene Criminology addresses this reality by framing environmental crime and governance as embedded in systemic inequalities, requiring interventions that are both ethically and politically attuned to local and global power structures.

8.4 Multi-Scalar Governance and Transnational Dimensions

A central finding from the study is that environmental harm is multi-scalar and often transnational. Salinity intrusion in Bangladesh is exacerbated not only by local aquaculture but also by upstream water management and global shrimp demand (Chen and Mueller, 2018). Oil pollution in the Niger Delta is driven by both local operational practices and global petroleum consumption patterns (Lynch et al., 2017). Deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon is linked to international commodity markets for soy and beef, demonstrating the interconnection between local harm and global economic systems (Gibbs et al., 2015).

These findings highlight the limitations of purely local or national policing approaches. Governance mechanisms must operate across scales, integrating local knowledge, national regulation, and transnational accountability structures. Anthropocene Criminology emphasises that policing in the Anthropocene is inherently multi-scalar, requiring coordination between community actors, state agencies, and international actors to effectively mitigate environmental harm. This framework aligns with political ecology insights, which stress that environmental degradation is socially produced and mediated by complex power relations that transcend borders (Robbins, 2012).

8.5 Slow Violence and Temporal Dimensions

The concept of slow violence is particularly useful in interpreting the findings. Environmental harms in all three cases accumulate over extended periods and often remain invisible to conventional policing mechanisms (Nixon, 2011). Salinity intrusion slowly undermines agricultural productivity in Bangladesh, oil

spills progressively degrade ecosystems in the Niger Delta, and deforestation alters hydrological and biodiversity patterns in the Amazon over decades. These harms manifest gradually but have profound social, ecological, and economic consequences, challenging temporal assumptions inherent in conventional law enforcement.

By integrating slow violence into the analytical framework, Anthropocene Criminology reconceptualises policing as forward-looking, preventive, and ethically accountable, rather than reactive and episodic. Effective governance must account for cumulative, delayed, and intergenerational impacts, aligning enforcement and regulatory strategies with the temporal scales of ecological change (White, 2011).

8.6 Planetary Justice and Ethical Implications

The findings underscore the necessity of planetary justice, which extends ethical concern beyond human communities to include intergenerational equity and ecological well-being (Gardiner, 2011; Schlosberg, 2007). In Bangladesh, policies that prioritise saline-tolerant crops or adaptive infrastructure partially address intergenerational responsibility by mitigating long-term harm to human and ecological communities. In the Niger Delta, corporate accountability mechanisms reflect emerging attempts to align legal compliance with ethical responsibility for environmental damage. In the Brazilian Amazon, Indigenous-led conservation initiatives embody ethical stewardship that transcends conventional governance, protecting both ecosystems and cultural heritage.

These cases demonstrate that effective environmental governance in the Global South requires ethical frameworks that integrate justice across species, generations, and borders. Anthropocene Criminology provides a theoretical lens for operationalising these principles in policing and regulatory practice, emphasising the ethical, structural, and planetary dimensions of environmental harm and governance.

8.7 Integrating Empirical Insights with different perspectives

The discussion of empirical findings highlights several key contributions to Anthropocene Criminology and the broader study of environmental harm. First, the cases demonstrate that legal frameworks alone are insufficient for achieving environmental justice; structural, ethical, and epistemic dimensions must be incorporated into governance. Second, Southern epistemologies are critical for effective adaptation and planetary policing, providing context-sensitive knowledge and strategies that challenge Northern-dominated environmental narratives. Third, environmental harm is multi-scalar, transnational, and temporally diffuse, necessitating governance mechanisms that operate across

local, national, and planetary scales. Finally, ethical considerations, particularly those associated with planetary justice, are central to understanding the normative implications of environmental governance in contexts of inequality and marginalisation.

By integrating these insights, the discussion illustrates how Anthropocene Criminology can redefine the objectives, scope, and strategies of policing in the Global South, moving beyond reactive enforcement to proactive, ethically informed, and multi-scalar governance practices. This reconceptualisation has implications for both scholarship and policy, suggesting that environmental policing must be informed by ethics, structural analysis, and the lived experiences of those most affected by ecological harm.

9. Conclusion

This study has examined transnational environmental crime and climate justice in the Global South through the lens of Anthropocene Criminology, using multi-scalar qualitative analysis of three case studies: Bangladesh's southwestern coast, the Niger Delta in Nigeria, and the Brazilian Amazon. The research demonstrates that conventional approaches to policing and environmental governance largely anthropocentric, reactive, and legally procedural are insufficient for addressing the complex, cumulative, and transnational nature of environmental harm (White, 2011; South, 2014). Across the three cases, ecological degradation is compounded by structural inequality, weak enforcement mechanisms, and corporate-state collusion, leaving marginalised communities disproportionately vulnerable (Watts, 2008; Ferrante and Fearnside, 2019).

A central insight of the study is that environmental harm in the Global South is both structurally and ethically mediated. In Bangladesh, salinity intrusion from shrimp aquaculture, compounded by climate change, undermines agricultural productivity and threatens food security, disproportionately affecting smallholder farmers who lack adaptive capacity (Chen and Mueller, 2018; Rahman and Rahman, 2017). In the Niger Delta, oil spills and gas flaring persist despite regulatory frameworks, reflecting historical neglect, corporate exploitation, and political marginalisation of local communities (Lynch et al., 2017; Obida et al., 2018). In the Brazilian Amazon, deforestation driven by international demand for soy and beef encroaches on Indigenous territories, threatens biodiversity, and disrupts hydrological cycles (Fearnside, 2017; Gibbs et al., 2015). These cases collectively demonstrate that legality does not necessarily equate to justice, highlighting the need for governance frameworks that integrate structural, ecological, and ethical dimensions.

The study reinforces the value of Southern epistemologies in environmental governance. Community-led adaptive strategies, such as saline-tolerant

agriculture in Bangladesh, participatory monitoring in the Niger Delta, and Indigenous Forest stewardship in Brazil, illustrate how indigenous knowledge, cultural practices, and traditional ecological expertise can inform effective and equitable governance (Chakrabarty, 2009; Nellemann et al., 2016; Ferrante and Fearnside, 2019). These findings challenge Northern-centric environmental narratives and demonstrate that meaningful planetary governance requires the integration of contextualised, locally grounded knowledge into regulatory and policing frameworks.

A critical theoretical contribution of this research is the operationalisation of Anthropocene Criminology as a framework for understanding environmental harm and governance. By synthesising insights from green criminology, postcolonial theory, political ecology, and philosophy of justice, the study situates environmental policing as a planetary practice that must consider ecological, social, and ethical dimensions simultaneously (Gardiner, 2011; Schlosberg, 2007; Nixon, 2011).

The empirical cases reveal that environmental crime in the Global South is multi-scalar, transnational, and temporally extended, requiring forward-looking, preventative governance strategies rather than conventional reactive law enforcement. Environmental harm emerges not only from illegal activity but also from legally sanctioned practices, market-driven exploitation, and structural inequalities, reinforcing the need for normative, ethically grounded policing strategies (Robbins, 2012; White, 2011).

The concept of slow violence is particularly salient in this context. Environmental harm accumulates over time, often invisibly, and its impacts on ecosystems, communities, and livelihoods are delayed but profound (Nixon, 2011). Recognising slow violence necessitates a shift in governance approaches—from episodic enforcement to long-term monitoring, multi-scalar coordination, and anticipatory planning. In Bangladesh, early-warning systems and adaptive agricultural practices are essential for mitigating salinity intrusion and preserving livelihoods. In the Niger Delta, robust environmental monitoring and independent corporate accountability mechanisms can reduce long-term socio-ecological harm (Obida et al., 2018). In Brazil, integrating Indigenous governance with national environmental regulation supports both ecological conservation and social justice (Ferrante and Fearnside, 2019). These examples demonstrate how slow violence intersects with governance failure, structural inequality, and ethical responsibility, providing a framework for operationalising planetary justice in practice.

The study also highlights the multi-scalar and transnational nature of environmental harm. Localised ecological impacts are inextricably linked to national policies, global commodity markets, and transboundary ecological

processes (Gibbs et al., 2015; Robbins, 2012). Salinity intrusion in Bangladesh is influenced by upstream water management and global shrimp demand, while oil pollution in the Niger Delta is tied to international petroleum consumption, and Amazonian deforestation responds to global soy and beef markets. Addressing environmental crime in these contexts requires governance frameworks that are responsive across scales, integrating local adaptation strategies, national enforcement mechanisms, and international accountability structures (Chen and Mueller, 2018; Lynch et al., 2017).

From a policy and practice perspective, the study suggests several implications. First, environmental policing in the Global South must adopt ethically informed, multi-scalar governance strategies that prioritise prevention and adaptation alongside enforcement. Second, Southern epistemologies and community knowledge must be recognised as legitimate and central to governance design, supporting locally appropriate solutions that enhance resilience (Chakrabarty, 2009; Nellemann et al., 2016). Third, planetary justice frameworks should guide policy, integrating ecological sustainability, intergenerational responsibility, and social equity into regulatory and policing strategies (Gardiner, 2011; Schlosberg, 2007). Finally, international cooperation, transnational accountability, and corporate regulation are critical for addressing the global dimensions of environmental crime and ensuring that local communities are not disproportionately burdened by global economic imperatives (Gibbs et al., 2015; Steffen et al., 2015).

This research demonstrates that environmental crime in the Global South is structurally complex, ethically significant, and transnationally embedded. Conventional policing models, focused on episodic legal enforcement, are insufficient for addressing the cumulative, slow-moving, and multi-scalar nature of ecological harm.

Anthropocene Criminology offers a theoretical and practical framework for reimagining policing and governance in the Anthropocene, integrating ethical responsibility, Southern epistemologies, and multi-scalar coordination. By applying this framework to the cases of Bangladesh, the Niger Delta, and the Brazilian Amazon, the study provides empirical and theoretical insights that inform both scholarship and practice. However, future research should engage more directly with emerging global governance mechanisms, including international environmental adjudication, to assess their compatibility with planetary justice frameworks.

To conclude, effective environmental governance in the Anthropocene requires recognising the interconnectedness of ecological, social, and ethical dimensions; operationalising multi-scalar, anticipatory governance; and centring Southern knowledge and community agency. This approach enables law enforcement,

policymakers, and scholars to move beyond reactive, anthropocentric frameworks toward a model of planetary justice, where environmental crime is understood and addressed in relation to long-term ecological sustainability, social equity, and intergenerational responsibility. Anthropocene Criminology, therefore, represents a critical paradigmatic shift, offering a normative, empirically grounded, and globally relevant approach to policing environmental harm in the 21st century.

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Socio-economic Determinants of Children in Conflict with the Law in Bangladesh: A Criminological Analysis

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Abstract

This paper examines the socio-economic status of children in conflict with the law in Bangladesh and analyzes how structural, familial and community-level factors influence juvenile offending. Using a mixed-methods design, data were collected from 404 children and 156 guardians across eight divisions, supplemented by key informant interviews and case studies. The findings indicate that most children originate from economically vulnerable households characterized by low parental education, informal employment, financial instability and limited social support. Educational disengagement, peer pressure, gang involvement, drug exposure and weak parental supervision emerged as significant risk factors. While theft and robbery were common, a substantial number of children were implicated in serious violent offenses, often committed in peer groups. The study also identifies family instability, intergenerational exposure to criminality and community disorganization as critical mediating factors. Reports of coercive treatment during arrest raise concerns regarding procedural justice and potential labeling effects. The findings underscore that juvenile delinquency in Bangladesh is rooted in structural inequalities and social marginalization, highlighting the need for preventive, community-based and child-sensitive justice reforms rather than punitive approaches. Despite growing concern over juvenile crime in Bangladesh, empirical studies examining the socio-economic backgrounds of children in conflict with the law remain limited.

Keywords: Juvenile, delinquency, children, socio-economic, inequality, juvenile justice, Bangladesh

1. Introduction and Background

Children in conflict with the law constitute one of the most marginalized and vulnerable populations within criminal justice systems worldwide. The term generally refers to individuals under the age of 18 who are alleged, accused or

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recognized as having committed an offense (United Nations, 1989). In Bangladesh, juvenile justice is formally governed by the Children Act, 2013, which emphasizes diversion, rehabilitation and reintegration rather than punitive measures.

Despite these legal safeguards, socio-economic deprivation remains a significant underlying factor shaping both involvement in delinquent activities and subsequent treatment within the justice system. Bangladesh is characterized by persistent socio-economic inequalities, rapid urbanization and a large youth population.

According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2022), a significant proportion of children live in poverty or near-poverty conditions, particularly in urban slums and rural marginalized communities. Poverty, limited access to education, child labor and family instability create structural vulnerabilities that may increase exposure to crime and victimization. Criminological scholarship consistently demonstrates that socio-economic disadvantage is closely linked to juvenile offending patterns (Agnew, 2006; Shaw and McKay, 1942).

The socio-economic status of children measured through indicators such as parental income, educational attainment, occupation, housing conditions and access to services plays a critical role in shaping life opportunities and behavioral outcomes. Children from lower socio-economic backgrounds are often exposed to strain, blocked social mobility and weak informal social controls, which may increase the likelihood of engaging in survival-driven or opportunistic crimes. In developing contexts like Bangladesh, such structural constraints may be further exacerbated by inadequate institutional support systems and limited child protection mechanisms.

Moreover, international child rights frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child emphasize that deprivation, neglect and socio-economic exclusion are root causes of juvenile offending and should be addressed through preventive social policies rather than punitive criminalization (UNCRC, 1989). The UNICEF has repeatedly highlighted that child in conflict with the law often come from backgrounds marked by poverty, school dropout, child labor and family disintegration (UNICEF, 2020). Thus, examining juvenile delinquency through a socio-economic lens is both a criminological necessity and a policy imperative.

2. Research Methodology

Quantitative and qualitative methods were used for this study. Key Informant Interviews (KII), In-depth Interviews (IDI) and relevant document review, etc. were taken. In addition, the details of the necessary tools for data collection such as interview guidelines, checklists etc. are also presented in this study.

Research Approach

Three basic methods were used to collect reliable and diverse data to meet the actual objectives of the study.

Firstly, secondary document review through which the Child Act, relevant government policies, previous research reports and other relevant documents were analyzed.

Secondly, sample-based data were collected through quantitative survey methods, which were conducted based on a specific question-and-answer method and presented numerical data.

Thirdly, as part of qualitative data collection, key-informant interviews (KIIs), in-depth interviews (IDIs) and contextual observation methods were used, which helped in understanding the research topic in depth. Through the integrated application of these methods, the study has taken a complete and information-rich form.

Study Area

The study was conducted in selected areas located in eight divisions of Bangladesh - Dhaka, Chattogram, Khulna, Barisal, Rajshahi, Mymensingh, Rangpur and Sylhet. The collected data from a variety of participants, including children in conflict with the law, their guardians, the officer working in the women and children help desk at the police stations and case studies based on specific children. A total of 160 police stations were included in the study.

Sampling and Sample Size

To ensure reliable results in the study, a formula, statistically accepted (Cochran, 1977), was used to determine the sample size. This formula is:

$$\begin{aligned}n &= z^2 * p * (1 - p) / e^2 \\&= (1.96)^2 \times 0.5 \times (1-0.5) / (0.05)^2 = 3.8416 \times 0.25/0.0025 = \\&0.9604/0.0025 \\&= 384.16 \\n &= (z^2 p(1-p))/e^2\end{aligned}$$

Where;

n = required sample size

Z = z-score corresponding to the desired confidence level (1.96 for 95% confidence)

p = estimated proportion of the population possessing the attribute of interest (assumed as 0.5 when unknown to maximize sample size)

e = acceptable margin of error (set at 0.05 or 5%)

Substituting the values:

$$n = ((1.96)^2 \times 0.5(1-0.5)) / [(.05)]^2$$

$$= (3.8416 \times 0.25) / .0025$$

$$= 384.16$$

$$= 385$$

According to the above formula, the minimum required sample size is 385. Based on this statistical calculation, the number of children in conflict with the law in the study was determined to be 404, which is more than the recommended sample size. This further strengthens the accuracy, diversity and analytical power of the study.

In addition, the participation of 155 parents of children in conflict with the law was ensured to understand the family context of their children. The inclusion of parents enriched the research from a social and contextual perspective, ensuring a comprehensive analysis that was not limited to the child's perspective alone.

Data Collection Tools

A pre-tested and revised questionnaire was used in this study to ensure the reliability and validity of the data. While developing the questionnaire, each question was structured in line with the aims and objectives of the study, so that relevant and analyzable information could be extracted from the participants. Notably, all the research questions have been attached in the form of an appendix and presented in both English and Bengali languages, so that the data collectors can easily use them in the local context and the participants can also comfortably provide answers in their own language.

Data Collection Techniques

The quantitative part of the study used structured questionnaires to collect data, which were pre-tested and refined according to the context of the study. Data were collected from 160 police stations in Dhaka, Chattogram, Khulna, Barisal, Rajshahi, Mymensingh, Rangpur and Sylhet divisions. A total of 404 children in conflict with the law and 156 of their guardians were interviewed from three

government child development centers (Gazipur Boys, Gazipur Girls and Jessore Boys).

The qualitative part of this study mainly collected in-depth and analytical data on the perspectives, experiences, challenges and effective roles of various authorities related to children in conflict with the law. Detailed case studies of 10 children in conflict with the law were prepared, from which it was possible to conduct a deeper analysis of the real-life experiences of children, the context of involvement in crime, police response, judicial process and the reality of rehabilitation. These case studies made the analytical part of the study more life-like and evidence-based.

Data Analysis

At the beginning of data entry, data coding and random checking were used to ensure the accuracy of the data for proper data conversion. In the next step, after data entry is completed, appropriate labels are assigned to each variable and value in the SPSS software. During analysis, data is analyzed based on the age, gender and other relevant demographic variables of the participants. A step-by-step process is followed for qualitative data analysis. First, the data collected from the field is transcribed and then important themes, patterns and illustrated effects are identified and categorized. Each response is analyzed and converted into a descriptive analysis.

3. Results and Discussions

Demographic Contexts of Children in Conflict with the Law

Of the 404 children who participated in the study, 93.81% were boys and 6.19% were girls. Moreover, age analysis showed that the average age of the children was 16 years and the highest number of participants were in the 17-18 age group.

In terms of educational attainment, most of the children had studied at primary and lower secondary level and only 2.72% had completed higher secondary whereas 2.72% of the children had never attended school. From the discussion it can be said that the boys are more likely to come into conflict with the law in urban areas. The findings are in agreement with the works of UNODC (2019) and UNICEF (2020).

Family Background, Economic and Social Status

Most children are cared for by their father (81.68%), followed by their mother (14.85%). 97.28% of children have a living mother, but some children have lost their mother at a young age. Additionally, 90.10% of children have a living father, but 12.62% of children do not live with their father or are not living together. Among these, the main reasons are the death of the father, being away due to work, and remarriage. Most children do not know the educational qualifications of their mothers (56.93%) and fathers (61.88%). Of those who do know, the data shows that most parents are less educated; a small number of parents have studied up to higher secondary level or above (UNICEF, 2020; World Bank, 2018).

Moreover, 88.61% of mothers are housewives, some mothers are daily wage laborers, seamstresses or employed. Among the fathers, 29.70% are businessmen, 25.25% are daily wage laborers, 16.58% are farmers and the rest are employed or in other occupations. For family structure and housing. Most children's families have mother, father, brothers and sisters as members. A section of children lives in good housing with their families, but some children live in slums, stations, markets or on the streets, which indicates that children are living in risky environments. Furthermore, 44.06% of households have low income and high expenses, meaning they are in a financial deficit where 47.77% of households have equal income and expenses, indicating relative prosperity. The average household's monthly income is 19,275 takas, but this income ranges from 2000 to 90,000 taka. One of the most worrying issue is that 17.08% of the children's family members are accused in criminal cases. The majority of the accused in the cases are fathers (40%), followed by brothers, uncles and mothers. The allegations include murder (34.78%), followed by fights, land disputes, violence against women and children and drug involvement. The problems are caused probably due to poverty, low income and single parenting. The similar findings are made by Bandura (1977) and ILO (2018) and UNODC (2019).

Background and Reasons for Children's Involvement in Criminal Activities

It has been found that most of the parents (42.31%) learned about their child's crime through the police. Many also learned about it through neighbors (14.74%), friends/classmates (13.46%) and family members (12.82%). Most of the parents (94.87%) reported that their child had not been involved in any criminal activity before. However, 5.13% of children were involved in crime more than once, with an average number of crimes of two. Theft, robbery or

robbery was the main type of crime (62.5%) and substance use (37.5%) was the second highest. An analysis of the amount of time children spends outside the home shows that 33.33% of children spend a long time outside, with an average time of about 8 hours.

A large part of this time (46.81%) is spent hanging out with friends, while others are involved in loitering (37.23%), spending time in shops (11.70%), and intoxicants (4.26%). The lack of parent's supervision and monitoring are possibly the reasons behind these juvenile activities. The similar opinions were done by the studies of Bandura (1977) and World Bank (2018).

However, for the 404 accused children, the highest number (32.92%) was involved in murder as an accessory. The number of children who were involved in rape (16.83%) and theft cases (15.84%) was also significant. Besides, kidnapping, fighting, carrying and consuming drugs, vandalizing police stations, pornography, extortion, human trafficking, supplying weapons and road accidents were also on the list of crimes. According to police child affairs officers, children are mainly involved in crimes such as theft (11.49%), drug use (10.97%), kidnapping (10.45%), teasing (9.61%) and sexual harassment (8.05%). In addition, they are also involved in serious crimes such as cybercrime, extortion, destruction of property and murder. The children are involving those crimes probably due to lack of values and culturalization. The findings are in agreement with the study of UNICEF (2020) and UNODC (2020) and International Telecommunication Union (2021).

This was followed by lack of parental control (19.94%), exposure to criminals (13.78%), family poverty (9.38%), influence of social media (9.97%) and influence of gang culture (7.92%). According to police officials, family poverty (19.34%), lack of education (18.28%), lack of parental control (15.63%), family conflict or divorce (14.30%) and lack of religious values (15.23%) play a role in children's criminal tendencies. The availability of drugs, dropping out of school and influence of gang culture were also identified as contributing factors to involvement in crime. Peer pressure (22.29%) emerged as the biggest reason behind children getting involved in crime. The similar findings are found by the conducted studies of UNESCO (2017) and UNODC (2020).

Gang Involvement and Its Effect

Of the 404 children who participated in the study, 68.81% reported that they moved in groups with friends. Of these, 25.90% had been involved in fights at

some point. The study found that 12.95% of teenagers reported that someone in their group was involved in crime, including substance use, theft, robbery, and fighting.

However, 48.56% of teenagers in groups reported that someone in their group took drugs, with the rates of Yabba, marijuana, and cigarette use being 31.85%, 22.96%, and 45.19%, respectively. Besides, 10.40% of the 404 said they were members of a teenage gang. The average number of members in these gangs is 12, and leadership is determined by senior people from outside the gang in about half of the cases. Most members have participated in fights at some point, with 75% of them involved in gang-gang clashes and 25% involved in political clashes. Additionally, 59.62% of gang members used indigenous weapons, 25% used sticks and 13.46% used firearms. The sources of weapons procurement were mainly own resources (64.58%) and gang leaders (25%). 11.90% of gang members were involved in extortion, most of whom used to extort money from markets and terminal areas.

Among juvenile gang crimes, robbery (9.68%), theft (9.31%), drug use (8.94%), teasing (7.64%), sexual harassment (6.24%), and reckless bike riding (6.33%) are notable. According to the experience of the officers in women and children help desk at the police station, the main reasons for gang formation are parental lack of control (17.34%), drug use (16.76%), poverty (16.18%), family conflict (13.29%), social vice (10.40%) and lack of religious education (8.67%). In addition, technology, political influence, and lack of entertainment are contributing to juvenile crime. The substance use and involvement of crime by the children are observed owing to gang subculture. The opinions are in agreement with the works of UNODC (2018) and UNODC (2019) and World Bank (2019) and UNICEF (2020).

Case Status and Legal Intervention

For the 404 children who participated in the study, 54.21% stated that they had been subjected to harassment or torture during or after their arrest. An analysis of the types of torture shows that: 43.64% of children reported being subjected to physical torture to extract a confession (slaps, slaps, beatings with sticks), 39.47% of children were mistreated and abused, 5.26% of children were handcuffed for a long time, 4.61% of children were kept together with criminals, 2.19% of children reported that their guardians were brought to the police station and subjected to physical and mental torture, and 0.66% of children complained of not receiving food. According to the information provided by the guardians,

55 (27.09%) stated that their children had been beaten at the police station. Besides, 7 (3.45%) complained that the police demanded money and subjected them to mental torture. However, 44.33% of the guardians said that the police had behaved well. A section of police in Asian countries are believe in coercive processes while others are motivated by consent-based policing. The findings are in agreement with the works of United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and United Nations Convention Against Torture (1984).

Furthermore, Among the 404 children who participated in the study, a maximum of 135 (33.42%) were accused of murder. This was followed by rape/aiding/aiding and abetting (16.83%), theft/robbery (11.88%), both kidnapping and drugs (7.92%), fighting (7.43%), kidnapping (4.46%), women and child abuse (1.49%), pornography and human trafficking (1.24%). In terms of the crime process, 52.97% of the children were with someone else at the time of the crime, of which 86.92% were friends. The average duration of the relationship was 8 years. In terms of legal sections, the most cases were filed under Section 302 (murder) (12.13%), and Section 9(1) (11.14%). Notably, the children could not provide the section of the case (25.25%). The average number of accused per case was 3. According to the data collected from the police station: theft complaints 37.01%, fights 31.32%, rape and sexual harassment 15.30%, eve-teasing 11.74% and drug use 4.63%. Qualitative research has revealed that children come to the police station due to being involved in incidents such as murder, rape, drugs, juvenile gangs, robbery, kidnapping, eve-teasing and child marriage or being witnesses, disadvantaged and without guardians. The police station authorities inform the probation officer about the children through the women and children help desk officer at police station and arrange for necessary legal assistance.

Lack of low formal and informal social control mechanism the children are involved in crimes and substance. The similar findings are done by the studies of UNODC (2019) and UNICEF (2020).

4. Conclusion

This study set out to examine the socio-economic status of children in conflict with the law in Bangladesh and to analyze how structural, familial and community-level factors shape their pathways into delinquency and their experiences within the juvenile justice system. The findings clearly demonstrate that juvenile offending in Bangladesh is deeply embedded within broader socio-

economic inequalities rather than being merely the result of individual moral failure or isolated deviant tendencies.

The majority of children in conflict with the law come from economically vulnerable households characterized by low parental education, informal and unstable employment, financial deficits and limited access to social resources. Educational disengagement, extended unsupervised time outside the home, peer group influence and exposure to gang subcultures further intensify vulnerability. The data show that peer pressure and lack of parental control are central proximate causes, but these operate within a structural context shaped by poverty, community disorganization and weakened institutional support.

The study also reveals significant concerns regarding institutional practices. Reports of coercive interrogation, physical mistreatment and procedural irregularities highlight the gap between the rehabilitative intent of the Children Act, 2013 and actual implementation. Such practices risk reinforcing labelling effects and undermining trust in legal institutions, thereby increasing the likelihood of recidivism rather than facilitating reintegration.

Overall, the findings support a multidimensional criminological interpretation: socio-economic deprivation creates structural strain; family instability weakens informal social control; peer networks transmit criminal norms; gang structures provide alternative status systems; and institutional responses may inadvertently reproduce marginalization. Therefore, juvenile delinquency in Bangladesh must be understood as a social justice issue as much as a legal one.

Addressing the problem requires a shift from reactive and punitive approaches to preventive, community-based and rights-oriented strategies grounded in socio-economic reform and child protection principles.

5. Recommendations

Based on the empirical findings and criminological analysis, the following evidence-based and functionally actionable policy recommendations are proposed:

Recommendation 1: Strengthening Socio-Economic Support for Vulnerable Families

Economic strain and financial deficits emerged as foundational risk factors. The following actions have to be taken.

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- a. Expand targeted conditional cash transfer programs for low-income families with at-risk adolescents.
 - b. Introduce livelihood development programs for parents, particularly in informal labor sectors.
 - c. Provide emergency family assistance funds to prevent children's involvement in survival-driven crimes.

Recommendation 2: School Retention and Alternative Education Programs

Low educational attainment and school disengagement are strong predictors of delinquency. The following policy have to be taken.

- a. Develop dropout reintegration initiatives in collaboration with schools and probation services.
- b. Introduce vocational and technical education pathways tailored for at-risk youth.
- c. Establish community-based evening learning centers in slum and high-risk urban areas.

Recommendation 3: Family-Based Intervention and Parental Training

Lack of parental supervision and family conflict significantly contribute to delinquency. The following actions have to be taken.

- a. Introduce structured parenting skill development programs through community centers.
- b. Expand probation-led family counseling services.
- c. Provide psychosocial support to families experiencing conflict, divorce, or economic stress.

Recommendation 4: Community-Level Crime Prevention and Youth Engagement

Peer influence and gang culture play central roles in juvenile offending. It had better take the following actions.

- a. Establish community youth clubs offering sports, cultural, and leadership activities.
- b. Develop mentorship programs pairing adolescents with positive adult role models.

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- c. Implement localized gang prevention strategies involving schools, police, and community leaders.

Recommendation 5: Drug Prevention and Rehabilitation Programs

Drug use and availability contribute significantly to juvenile crime and gang formation. The following policy have to be taken.

- a. Launch school- and community-based drug awareness campaigns.
- b. Expand adolescent-focused rehabilitation and counseling services.
- c. Strengthen monitoring of drug trafficking networks involving minors.

Recommendation 6: Reforming Juvenile Justice Practices

Reports of coercion and mistreatment undermine rehabilitation and may reinforce deviant identity formation. The following measures have to be taken.

- a. Ensure strict enforcement of child-friendly procedures under the Children Act, 2013.
- b. Provide mandatory training for police officers on child rights and trauma-informed approaches.
- c. Strengthen independent oversight mechanisms to monitor treatment of children in custody.
- d. Expand diversion programs and restorative justice initiatives to reduce formal court processing.

Recommendation 7: Strengthening Probation and Aftercare Services

Sustainable reintegration requires structured follow-up support. The following actions could be taken.

- a. Increase the number of trained probation officers specializing in juvenile cases.
- b. Develop individualized reintegration plans including education, employment, and psychosocial support.
- c. Establish post-release monitoring combined with community mentorship.

Recommendation 8: Data Systems and Research-Based Policy Planning

Evidence-based policy requires systematic data collection and monitoring. The following policy have to be taken.

- a. Develop a centralized national database on children in conflict with the law.

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- b. Conduct periodic socio-economic profiling studies.
 - c. Integrate research findings into national child protection and crime prevention strategies.

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