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Neha, Sabrina Mokarabbin

School of Business and Entrepreneurship, Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB)

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The Impact of AI-Generated Deepfake Social Media Content on Women in Bangladesh: A Qualitative Study

Sabrina Mokarabbin Neha [1], Sumnoon Ferdous[2], Afnan Yusuf [3]
[1]Department of Management Information Systems, Independent University Bangladesh, Dhaka, Bangladesh
[2]Department of Management Information Systems, Independent University Bangladesh, Dhaka, Bangladesh
[3]Department of General Management, Independent University Bangladesh, Dhaka, Bangladesh

[1]2210239@iub.edu.bd , [2] 2111209@iub.edu.bd, [3] afnan@iub.edu.bd
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Abstract— **Deepfake is a technology that uses artificial intelligence (AI) to create fake but realistic videos or images of people. Around the world, this technology has been used in harmful ways. While many discussions focus on deepfakes in politics or celebrity media, their use against everyday women, especially in countries like Bangladesh, gets far less attention. This study aims to explore how deepfake content shared on social media affects women in Bangladesh socially and emotionally. In a society where honor, reputation, and gender norms are strong, women targeted by deepfakes often face shame, fear, and isolation. This research will use three focus group discussions (FGDs) with women aged 18 to 45 from both cities and small towns. These women come from different jobs, educational backgrounds, and regions. The discussions have covered their understanding of deep-fakes, personal/community experiences, emotional impact, and how families, communities, and institutions will respond. We have found common issues such as mental stress, fear of using the internet, damage to reputation, and lack of trust in the legal system. As well as we have learned how some women find support through informal networks when formal systems fail. This study aims to raise awareness about how deepfakes are becoming a new form of online gender-based violence. The findings here can aid in shaping better laws, digital safety programs, and public education campaigns in Bangladesh. In the end, we call for teamwork between policymakers, technology experts, gender rights groups, and educators to make sure AI and digital tools are used responsibly and so that women are not left more vulnerable in a growing digital world.**
Keywords - ***Artificial Intelligence (AI), Deepfake Technology, FGD, Content, Social Media.***

I. INTRODUCTION

The term "deepfakes," which combines the terms "deep learning" and "fake," originated on Reddit in 2017 when AI replaced the faces of famous people in videos. Once limited to pornographic material, the technique raised ethical questions as the code was made public, allowing for the creation [10]. Digital media has changed due to the quick development of deep-fake technology and artificial intelligence (AI), which makes it possible to produce phony photos and movies that look incredibly genuine. Although these technologies present creative opportunities, they also carry serious concerns, especially for women. As time has gone by, it has become more challenging to tell what is real and what is not. Additionally, the public might not attempt to distinguish and instead place all the responsibility and humiliation on the victim depicted in the video if they are not properly informed about what generative AI is. Deepfakes can escalate the scale and danger of online fraud and disinformation when used for deception to threaten our cognitive security. Like threats to our physical security or cyber security, which aims to break into our physical infrastructure or cyber systems, threats to cognitive security target our perceptual system and decision-making process [8].The misuse of deepfakes has become a major threat to women's rights, safety, and dignity in Bangladesh, where social media use is common and digital literacy is still developing. Drawing from international research and placing it inside the sociocultural context of Bangladesh, this paper investigates the complex effects of AI-generated deepfake content on women in that country. It is near-impossible for casual consumers of images to authenticate digitally altered images without a keen understanding of how to "read" the digital image. As Photoshop did for photographic alteration, to have advances in artificial intelligence and computer graphics made seamless video alteration seem real to the untrained eye [11]. The colloquialism used to describe these videos are “deepfakes”: a portmanteau of deep learning AI and faked imagery [2].

Deepfake technology creates realistic looking but fake media by superimposing people's faces onto other bodies using AI algorithms. Malicious deepfakes, which are frequently used to produce non-consensual pornography, enable sextortion, and sustain cybercrime, have been found to disproportionately damage women. These actions objectify women, diminish their agency, and perpetuate gender

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inequality. Furthermore, because Bangladeshi society is quick to pass judgment, it makes women feel ashamed.

Additionally, research shows that deepfakes can result in significant psychological damage, such as anxiety, despair, and PTSD. Social isolation, harm to one's reputation, and career setbacks are common experiences for victims. The shame attached to sexualized information may make the effect even more pronounced in Bangladesh, where traditional social standards are prevalent. One troubling example of deepfakes is the superimposing of women's faces into pornographic videos. The implication here is a reification of women's bodies as a thing to be visually consumed, here circumventing consent. This use is confounding considering the very bodies used to perfect deepfakes were men [2]. The impact might be even more severe in Bangladesh, where traditional social standards are prevalent, because sexualized content is stigmatized [10]. One of the most common ways deepfakes have been used to harm women is through control. The use and easy accessibility of deepfakes allow for a disturbing form of power over women, perpetuating a culture of control and objectification. [2]. By manipulating images, perpetrators of deepfake pornographic content assert dominance and exert control over women's identities, bodies, and narratives without their consent. Through deepfakes the perpetrators can quite literally control women's bodies [2]. They distort public views, fuel victim blaming and strengthen gender stereotypes. Specifically, it investigates misinformation in quality news and media and its impact on public perception, victim blaming and discrimination against women [6].

The objective of this study

- To understand the lived experiences and perceptions of women in Bangladesh who have been targeted or are aware of AI generated deepfake social media content.
- To assess the social and cultural factors of in Bangladesh that exacerbate the harm of deepfake AI content on women.
- To investigate coping mechanisms, support systems, and institutional responses available to women when targeted with deepfake content.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study is designed as a qualitative research to understand the social, emotional and cultural implications of AI-generated deepfake content against Bangladeshi women. The qualitative methodology was selected for the reason that it provides a more detailed analysis of lived feelings, perceptions and coping strategies which cannot be entirely reported using the quantitative one. The secondary analysis will be complemented by Primary Data collection using Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) for local perspectives.

Data Sources

Two complementary datasets were employed:

Secondary Data –Some reports, case studies, journal articles and academic literature on deepfakes, gender- based violence (GBV), and digital harassment were reviewed to shape the understanding of the problem and see how much of research gaps that are applicable to Bangladesh.

Primary Sources of Data – Primary data were collected through 3 FGDs with women (18–45 years) of urban and semi-urban Bangladesh. This offered a representative range of voices, with participants from various educational, professional and socio-cultural backgrounds.

Sampling Strategy

We used purposive sampling methods to identify individuals who would be able to provide meaningful insights on "deepfakes" whether they encountered it, the community was aware of it, or had social exposure to it. A total of nine respondents (three for each FGD) participated. They were students, teachers, housewives, workers and social media users from different age groups and social backgrounds. This diversity was to enable us to get a sense of how deepfake content could affect Bangladeshi women in different ways.

Data Collection

FGDs were performed in a secure and confidential environment which made participants to be comfortable and free to express their feelings. Meetings were conducted face-to-face and lasted 20-30 minutes each, led by the researcher with a semi-structured guide. Key themes included:

1. Knowledge and perception of deepfakes.
2. Perspectives on its potential or definite effects on women's life.
3. Social, emotional, and psychological consequences.
4. Family and community responses.
5. Opinions about legal, institutional and technological interventions.

Participants were given signed consent forms prior to the study, and they were informed that their participation was voluntary and that their information would be used strictly for research purposes. Codes instead of real names were given to ensure confidentiality.

Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed, and then thematic analysis has done according to Braun and Clarke (2006). The transcripts were read several times to 'immerse' in the data, coded inductively to identify patterns or phenomena and to

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compare new data with the existing data. Codes were organized into themes such as emotional consequences, reputational damage, family / community response, and institutional failures. The themes were then discussed in the context of Bangladeshi sociocultural interpretation and compared with similar findings in the secondary literature.

Ethical Considerations

1. Respect for the subject matter meant adherence to stringent ethical procedures:
2. Anonymizing was applied to all participants' responses.
3. Psychological well-being was exhausted by moderating respectfully and providing participants with information on psychological and digital help.
4. All information was kept confidential and was used for academic purposes only.

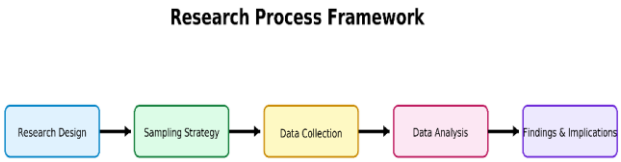

Fig-1: Research Process Frame work

III. RESULTS/FINDINGS

Results of the three FGDs indicate a multi-faceted effect of deepfake technology on Bangladeshi women. The findings are chased thematically, supplemented by participant quotations and tabulated participant profiles.

Group 1: Awareness and Reputation Threats

Person designation	code	age
Student	AEX1	23
Teacher, university	RTC3	41
Job holder, administration	GRR4	35

All three respondents were aware of deepfakes with different levels of understanding. The student (AEX1) described it as "AI technology that generates someone's identity in a very realistic manner, which makes it hard to distinguish between real and fake". RTC3, the teacher, stressed the moral and reputational stakes, cautioning that "women's lives could be ruined socially, personally, even in families." A woman's "value would be calculated by fake images, in conservative society," the administrator (GRR4) continued, further stating that deepfakes posed a direct threat to a woman's honor and marriage prospects.

Summary: This team emphasized that there indeed, at least in some places awareness that deepfakes are a risk, though the main concern is a loss of honor in a society where women's worth is closely linked to family honor.

Group 2: The Emotional and Familial Aftermath

Person designation	code	age
Housewife	SKH8	48
Student	SMN2	25
Social media content creator	MMK5	22

This group highlighted the psychological harm of victimization. SKH8, the housewife, cautioned about "severe trauma, depression and even suicidal thoughts." The younger pupil (SMN2) repeated this, and referred to anxiety, low self-confidence and a constant fear about what was to come: "suicide and self-harm are common". On the other hand, the content creator (MMK5) narrated that family and community reactions were directed towards the woman "in the community, they often accuse the woman, they take away her freedom, and they ruin her shame".

All of them concurred family support is a mixed blessing sometimes helpful but more often unhelpful. SKH8 emphasized, "victim-blaming is still very high in Bangladesh," and MMK5 noted, "Friends can be more reliable support than families."

Summary: This group emphasized the emotional ruin deepfakes inflict and how victim-blaming within families and communities compounds the injury, though informal networks like friendships offer more impactful support.

Group 3: Digital Caution and Legal Distrust

Person designation	code	age
Student	SSH7	18
Teacher, School	NLA6	33
Job holder, ICT	AMS9	46

The third was focused on digital behavior and organizational reaction. The one school student (SSH7) had very little trust as he stated that "cybercrime units don't care – laws exist but they're never made use of". "When we refer to the anti-deepfakes framework, we should point out that frameworks do not have training models, they have nothing to do with cases that seriously violate the law," the teacher added (NLA6). ICT professional (AMS9) elaborated his coping strategy: "Deepfakes threaten people's willingness to share,

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and make them up private, even beginning to shun social media!"
Collectively, the let us that public trust within institutions is very, very low and the default protection mechanism for women is self-censorship online, not police.

Summary: They exemplified how formal institutions are failing and the prevalence of the practice of self-regulation by way of defensive digital practices as the only available and immediate (women's) asylum.

Cross-Cutting Themes

Overall, six key findings emerged as common themes across all FGDs:

- Control and Subjugation: Women are stripped and humiliated with the help of deepfakes, therefore affirming the patriarchal power.
- Cyber Abuse and Harassment: Sharing without consent online harassment and some stalking Follows publication of personal information online.
- Image-Based Sexual Abuse: Non-consensual pornography (NCP) and sextortion were featured as prevalent results.
- Psychological Disturbance: Trauma, anxiety and smelling the smell of suicide were frequent issues.
- Reputation and Career damage: The honor of women, marriage and career prospects, are tarnished.
- Legal and Institutional Gaps: Current cyber laws are inadequate and loosely implemented.

Participant Recommendations

When asked about solutions, participants across all groups suggested:

- Enacting clear and strict laws against deepfake production and dissemination.
- Ensuring faster law enforcement responses and specialized training.
- Holding technology companies accountable for monitoring and removing manipulated content.
- Promoting digital literacy campaigns to raise awareness and reduce victim-blaming.

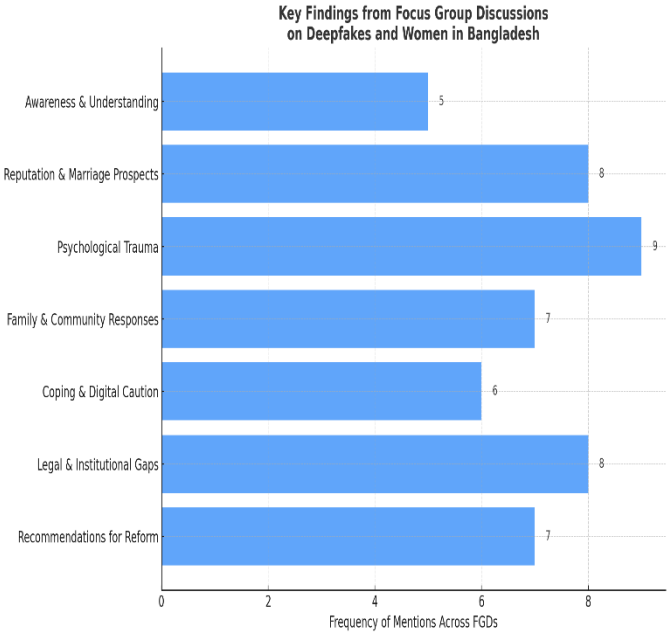

Fig-2: Key Findings from Focus Group Discussions on Deepfakes and Women in Bangladesh

The graph demonstrates how often themes were apparent at the three levels of focus group discussion. Psychological harm, reputation and marital prospects, and information and institutional voids were the most frequently emphasized concerns, illustrating the extreme personal and social risks women across ages face when victimized by deepfakes. Other prevalent themes were family and community reactions, many of which perpetuated victim-blaming, as well as coping mechanisms such as self-censorship, and limited ease of digital use. The findings also reflect participants' demands for legal reform and collective mobilization, revealing that women are not only victims but also agential, noting what needs to be done.

Overall, the results show that deepfakes in Bangladesh is not only a technological threat, but it is a strong social and cultural problem as well. Participants across all three groups highlighted the extreme psychological trauma, vilification and victim-blaming that women experience, as well as their limited institutional support and flimsy legal protections. And while some women frustrate that by withdrawing and opting instead for informal, peer-to-peer networks, that choice is one of fear and limitation, not of power. Altogether, these findings suggest that deepfakes exclusively threaten an honor-bound, marriage-seeking, and group-identity-anchored concept of women in conservative societies, highlighting the pressing need for legal regulation, digitization of education, and cultural transformation to shield women from this emerging gender-based violence.

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IV. DISCUSSIONS

The implications of AI-based deepfakes extend beyond digital realm and real challenges for women in Bangladesh as the study shows. And from the shock and anger at what women in particular perceive as loss of control over their lives, it's clear that reputational damage, ability to find a spouse and prospects for work and participation in the world are at stake when personalized falsehood circulates, making clear how the damage of online abuse is amplified by patriarchal and conservative norms. These results illustrate that deepfakes are not just a challenge of technology, but rather a social and cultural predicament. The real world application of this is obvious: women are being violated in their private and public spaces and both law enforcement and institutional responses are inadequate. For policymakers, this emphasizes the immediate importance of passing specific laws on deepfakes, strengthening cybercrime units, and rolling out digital literacy campaigns not only to debunk fake information but also to reduce victim-blaming. For technology companies, the findings suggest the need for responsible AI governance, complete with systems that rapidly identify and remove manipulated content.

Theoretically, the research contributes to debates on digital gender-based violence (DGBV) and techno-feminism. It represents how deepfake tech is another tool of control and objectification, reiterating patriarchy online. While this reasoning ties psychological trauma and reputational damage to institutional deficiencies, as well as to general theories of gender inequality and media effects, we also advance this explanation with high quality academic findings in an emerging and innovative area of research that lies in the intersection between new technologies and long-standing vulnerabilities in society. It is a clear piece of circularity between the political and technical which illustrates yet again the need to approach deepfakes as a technical problem as well as a gendered socio-technical issue.

The findings also pave the way for future research. Future work can extend the present research by carrying out broader surveys to determine the extent of victimization, by research into cross-cultural comparisons in Bangladesh compared with other contexts in South Asia, as well as testing prevention strategies, e.g., awareness campaigns, peer-support systems, or AI tools for detection. The use of both qualitative and quantitative methods would enhance the evidence base and could inform evidence-based policy and educational frameworks.

Together, these institutional, social, and psychological findings serve to illustrate the multifaceted ways that deepfakes harm women on psychological, social, and institutional levels, and provide critical theoretical implications for digital gender-based violence. The real-world stakes and academic salience thus suggest we must mobilize collectively from governments, to tech companies, to the research community, to civil society organizations to ensure that deepfake technologies do not become another tool to silence and marginalize women

V. CONCLUSION

This research has demonstrated the serious nature of deepfakes created using artificial intelligence on the women of Bangladesh and how they have reached far beyond the digital realm, having effects in social, cultural and psychological aspects of our society. In focus-group discussions, it emerged that reports that have the potential to ruin reputation, cause emotional trauma alongside the potential for the victim to be blamed upon by family alone than force/d opposing strong institutional protections that put women at a disadvantage in a conservative society where honor and marriage prospects are highly valued.

These findings highlight that deepfakes are more than just a technical threat, but a gendered form of violence, used to police, shame and silence women. In reality, this translates into social marginalization and restricted opportunities for victims of such harassment, and in theory it confirms techno-feminist claims that new technologies do replicate patriarchal modes of power.

Using clear laws that explicitly address deepfake-enabled abuse, policymakers should provide support to cybercrime units, encourage counter-stigma campaigns and set up digital literacy programs to empower women. Technology firms also need to step up, to be more accountable and remove manipulated content more quickly. For academics, the research shifts attention to the importance of wider comparative and mixed-method research to increase the evidence base around deepfakes and GBV.

In the end, protecting women in the digital age will take the combined efforts of government, technology, academia, and society. Without such measures, deepfakes will continue to be a weapon of exploitation, censorship, and disparity which can only erode human rights and digital trust in Bangladesh and beyond.

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