

# Gender Differences in the Frequency of Negative Intrusive Thoughts Among Bangladeshi Youth (Ages 15-25): A Quantitative Study

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**Abstract** —Over the past few years, the number of youngsters suffering from negative intrusive thoughts has increased significantly. In Bangladesh specifically, families often lack knowledge of this condition; as a result, parents are frequently unable to provide adequate support to their children. This study investigated whether Bangladeshi girls experience negative intrusive thoughts more frequently than boys between the ages of 15 and 17. Addressing this gap will provide essential baseline data to inform culturally appropriate mental health interventions in Bangladesh. Quantitative analysis was conducted, and data were collected via an online survey distributed on social media platforms such as Facebook, Messenger, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Discord. A total of 114 responses were collected, including 56 male and 58 female responses, with participants aged 15 to 25. The survey included the OCI-R questionnaire, a Likert-scale item, and demographic information. The data was analysed using the Independent Samples T-Test with IBM SPSS Statistics 22. The results conveyed that Bangladeshi girls aged 15-25 recorded a higher frequency of intrusive thoughts than Bangladeshi boys of the same age range. These results imply that a gender difference exists in the frequency of intrusive thoughts among the Bangladeshi youth.

**Index Terms**—1. Intrusive thoughts 2. Gender differences 3. Bangladeshi youth 4. Mental health 5. Adolescents 6. OCD symptoms

## I. INTRODUCTION

Intrusive thoughts are unwanted, unpleasant thoughts that can appear uninvitedly in individuals and conflict with that person's moral values and beliefs. Families in Bangladesh acquire limited knowledge about this condition. Discussing this topic is crucial as unawareness may cause several disruptions amongst the youngsters, such as increased distress, anxiety, and shame, impacting mental health and daily life. Researchers from all around the world have worked on this subject; however, most of the studies have reported a greater frequency of negative intrusive thoughts among females compared to males. Although global and Bangladeshi researchers have examined youth mental health, there is a lack of data on the frequency of negative intrusive thoughts by gender among Bangladeshi youth aged 15 to 25. A huge meta-analysis of 29 studies, of 80,879 participants, showed that during COVID-19, the prevalence estimates of clinically elevated child and adolescent depression and anxiety were 25.20. This study examines the following research question:

- What is the difference in the self-reported frequency of negative intrusive thoughts between Bangladeshi girls and boys aged 15-25?

## III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Intrusive thoughts are defined as thoughts, images, or ideas that arise independently of intention and are difficult to control [1],[2]. These thoughts occur in both the general and clinical populations, which range from easily overlooked to persistent and affect daily life [3],[4]. When intrusive thoughts become frequent, distressing, and are perceived as harmful, they may manifest as symptoms of several disorders, including obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), body dysmorphic disorder (BDD), and illness anxiety disorder (IAD) [2],[5],[6]. OCD refers to the obsessive intrusive thoughts, BDD refers to thoughts which are about defects in physical appearance, and IAD refers to images and thoughts about illnesses [5]. These thoughts persist more as maladaptive coping strategies are used, and how these thoughts are perceived [2-4],[5],[7]. The quality of life for these individuals decreases as these thoughts result in more anxiety, depression and stress [1],[3],[7]. The adolescent phase is a developing age, with brain development, hormonal changes and developing social responsibilities, and symptoms of OCD are often discovered during this phase[8],[9]. Social, academic and family pressure are often the factors that cause the arrival and persistence of these thoughts. Puberty and identity formation further increase the susceptibility to these thoughts [8],[9]. Around 4. The content of these negative intrusive thoughts among the genders varies; women have contamination and/or aggressive obsessions, and men have aggressive or sexually intrusive thoughts [18]. Men tend to have the symptoms earlier, whereas women experience these