



Multidimensional Analysis of Domestic and Gender-based Violence against Women in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Despite the implementation of numerous laws by Pakistan to address this issue, domestic violence continues to escalate daily. The objective of the study is to elucidate the reasons for domestic violence (DV) against women in Pakistan and its implications. The study examines a normative perspective of Pakistan's socio-political landscape, analyzing how institutional actors such as religion, bureaucracy, and the military interact with and are influenced by broader social currents.

Design/Methodology/Approach: This study uses qualitative research methodologies since forensic psychology is an area that needs both descriptive and analytical approaches to reach its goals. The study's analytical focus, exploratory character, and knowledge were all enhanced by using random sampling to obtain the data. Medical professionals, psychologists, and attorneys were among the female intellectual practitioners who filled out a pre-designed questionnaire for this study.

Findings: Domestic violence is a complex issue that is not receiving a lot of attention in Pakistan due to the fact that it primarily occurs within families. According to research, the percentage of violent acts that occur in close relationships in the country ranges from thirty to seventy-five percent. Many factors contribute to Pakistan's domestic violence crisis. The most important things are that women don't have many educational opportunities, that they want to be empowered, that there are many false ideas about Islam, that cultural beliefs are deeply rooted, that people are struggling financially, that girls are discouraged from having children, that infertile people are stigmatized, and that people are drinking and using drugs more. It is possible that numerous initiatives may collaborate to alleviate domestic violence in Pakistan, but this would need the establishment of a complex Integrated Framework that would examine all of these issues systematically.

Implications/Originality/Value: According to research, victims of domestic abuse have a fourfold higher risk of taking their own lives than non-victims. Additionally, they are more likely to suffer from anxiety, depression, or drug addiction. According to the survey, many Pakistani women suffer from domestic violence, and there are preventable causes for this. Further research is also needed in this area.

Keywords: Socio-cultural, Economic factors, Domestic Violence, Qualitative Research Method, Pakistan

Introduction

What we label "domestic violence" occurs when the abuser lives in close proximity to the



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victim. The term "abusive behavior" refers to a sequence of actions in which one partner manipulates or controls another close relative for their own benefit (Gender, n.d.). There are several facets to the problem of violence against women. In an effort to deduce what transpired, several theories have been put out. There are many negative effects on people's physical health, mental health, and emotional well-being, making it a major public health and social issue that requires significant attention. Since domestic violence occurs in people's homes and is considered a private matter, no one should investigate or become involved in such a situation in Pakistan. As a result of the cultural and religious traditions that are upheld in Pakistani culture, Pakistani women are forced to face prejudice and violence on a daily basis. At the time, it was believed that anywhere from 35 percent to 70 percent of women in Pakistan had been victims of domestic violence. Physical, mental, and emotional abuse are all forms of domestic violence. There are many different types of domestic violence. Some of the more well-known examples are honor killings, domestic violence, rape inside marriages, acid attacks, and burns inflicted by relatives. Society does not often consider domestic violence a crime unless it reaches a certain level, such as when a man drives a woman to death or plans an accident (Falak, 2022).

Domestic violence is recognized globally as a significant issue. This is a societal issue that remains largely unspoken yet poses significant challenges for any community. Domestic violence is perceived as an indication of imbalanced power dynamics between genders. This is a situation where males hold authority over females, and females are aware of their designated roles. This has been the primary factor hindering women's ability to attain power globally (Aziz, Rafique, Saleem, & Jamshed, 2024).

Nearly 35% of women have experienced some form of violence, positioning them as the most affected demographic worldwide (Organization, 2013). According to the United Nations, any kind of physical, psychological, or sexual abuse inflicted upon women is considered violence against women. Domestic and sexual abuse against women can disrupt their everyday life and even their private spheres (United Nations General Assembly, 1993). As previously said, domestic abuse has devastating impacts on women's physical, emotional, and total wellbeing. Sexual violence is also connected to domestic abuse since it can result in very hazardous illnesses including sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV infections in women. According to reports, women are injured in areas of their body where violent conduct occurs, such as bruises, cuts, and wounds, as well as having a variety of sexual disorders and memory loss (White, Bearne, Sweeney, & Mantovani, 2024).

Also, the effects of domestic violence were spreading to families and neighborhoods. Kids who grow up in households where women are abused at home are in a very dangerous situation. These kids are thrown into bad situations that are bad for them, and they become scared and frightened as they grow up. These things also encourage other people to be abusive. Communities suffer additional expenditures as a result of domestic violence, which also makes things less stable. This kind of situation endangers the security, advancement, growth, and welfare of every individual in a society (Barrett et al., 2024).

These are issues with Pakistani society's sociocultural viewpoint, according to the popular press. However, there isn't much scientific backing for this topic in the area. Research indicates that domestic violence is a significant issue in other South Asian nations that share many of Pakistan's social and cultural characteristics (Rabbani & Qureshi, 2008). The number of victims of domestic violence in Pakistan has not been estimated in any published sources. The second study examined Pakistani obstetricians'



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knowledge of the frequency of domestic violence in their clinical settings as well as their opinions about the inclusion of screening procedures in routine prenatal care (Fikree, Jafarey, Korejo, Khan, & Durocher, 2004).

Significance of the Study

Academic, civic, and government studies all stand to benefit greatly from the findings of this investigation. It contributes to the advancement of academic knowledge, it directs the process of developing specialized therapies, it assists in the formulation of policy, and ultimately, it improves the general health of women. Every day, millions of people who are victims of violence against women are forced to manage the consequences of their experiences. Provide a comprehensive picture of what it's like for women who are mistreated at home based on their own experiences. Learning about domestic violence against women is critical because it impacts not just the individuals and bodies involved, but society as a whole. In order to create a safer and more equal society, it is important to identify the factors that contribute to domestic violence and take steps to address them. Understanding the cultural and societal context of domestic violence will aid in conducting future studies.

Research Methodology

Qualitative research can be utilized to analyze phenomena, as it both defines and interprets them. The reference list includes multiple primary and secondary sources relevant to the topic. Resources from various websites, journals, and publications have been beneficial in this context. The discussion was also given a more serious, analytical tone by means of a survey we conducted on a number of subjects. We polled women, philosophers, physicians, psychologists, and attorneys nationwide to get their opinions. The data and its accompanying information were straightforward. Numerous tables provide numerical data on the prevalence and impact of domestic violence in Pakistan. There is already a lot of information on this subject, and our study will contribute significantly to it.

Laws on domestic violence in Pakistan

There has to be immediate and appropriate legislation in Pakistan to address the serious problem of violence against women and other vulnerable segments of society. Pakistan has taken significant legislative action in recent years to address this societal issue. No one is to be discriminated against on the basis of their gender, according to Pakistan's constitution (The Constitution of Pakistan, n.d.). In 2007, the legislation addressing domestic violence went into effect. Women must not behave in a sexist manner, according to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which Pakistan has formally ratified. CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) constitutes a segment of the Act that mandates each nation to establish its own legal frameworks and regulations aimed at safeguarding women within their domestic environments. Pakistan has established a framework to legislate against domestic violence, aligning with the commitments outlined in CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, n.d.). It was only after signing an agreement with CEDAW that domestic violence legislation could be drafted, approved, and put into effect. This goal has been achieved by the gradual passage of anti-domestic-violence legislation by many provinces.



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The specifics of legislation are presented in the table below:

#	Legislation	Year
1	Sindh Province	2013
2	Baluchistan Province	2014
3	Punjab Province	2016
4	KPK Province	2016&2020
5	Capital Islamabad	2021

Domestic violence persists and worsens daily in Pakistan, despite the country's several anti-violence statutes. In 2007 and 2008, there were 1,173 reported incidents of violence, including domestic violence (Zarar, 2018). There were 373 allegations of domestic violence, according to the 2010 annual report of the Commission for Human Rights (Khan, Batool, Kalsoom, & Kazmi, 2020). An increase in domestic violence was seen in 2011. Of the 4,448 reported cases of violence against women, 366 involved domestic violence, according to the Aurat Foundation (Aurat Foundation, n.d.). In 2012, 4585 instances were registered, according to the Aurat Foundation (n.d.). As a result of having a daughter, fifty-six women were murdered in 2013. Domestic violence was documented in 389 instances (Harwis & Djalal, 2023).

In 2013, almost 800 women took their own lives as a result of violence at home. The number of incidents of domestic abuse against women increased from 279 in 2015 to 386 in 2016. In 2021, there were 52,370 violent occurrences, including cases of domestic violence, according to The News (news.com.pk, n.d.). When domestic violence occurs, what are the most common reasons? To discover out, we need to examine the ineffective policies that are meant to prevent it more thoroughly. Everyday women, men, and children are nevertheless often victims of violence. According to the UN, "Despite efforts by governments and international organizations, violence against women continued to be widespread in both developed and developing countries" (Ertürk & Purkayastha, 2012). The present situation underscores the importance of examining and addressing additional factors that contribute to domestic violence.

Causes of Domestic Violence

Both individuals and society at large suffer from violence. Because they are more likely to become victims, women are more impacted than other groups. In our culture, violence against women encompasses more than just the cruel actions of one individual. Additionally, it is based on social attitudes and beliefs that women are less significant than men. Random surveys and interviews provided the data. The following are some of the primary causes of domestic abuse against Pakistani women:

Poverty

Poverty and domestic abuse seem to go hand in hand. According to estimates, around a third of the people are poor. As a whole, low-income individuals experience greater cases of domestic violence. An angry man who is unable to support his family financially may turn to violence as a means of expressing his frustration. The mother then rants at the children, leaving the house in disarray. Women do not know their rights since they cannot afford to attend school. Many women who have been mistreated at home do not receive the necessary help.



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Low Literacy Rate

The Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (n.d.) indicates that the literacy rate in the country stands at 62.3%, suggesting that approximately 60 million individuals lack the ability to read or write. A person discontented with societal operations may resort to violence stemming from insufficient knowledge or education. Women suffer as a result of their insufficient awareness and understanding of their rights. It is imperative that they address the issue at hand. Women are undereducated and under informed. Particularly in rural areas, women in Pakistan are far less likely than males to be literate. Women struggle to identify and address domestic issues because they lack sufficient knowledge (M. Hussain, 2002). In other situations, women are unable to prevent domestic violence because they lack the skills necessary to resolve minor arguments and conflicts in a constructive manner.

Unemployment

Unemployment is a major cause of domestic violence nowadays, and it is also a social issue that causes males to feel hostile toward women. Inflation, unemployment, and violence toward spouses and children as a result of feelings of powerlessness have made it common for us to be unable to provide for a wife and children (Hussain & Howard, 2012).

Dowry

Another significant factor contributing to domestic violence in the Indian subcontinent is the practice of dowry. There are a lot of women who have to cope with emotional and physical violence, as well as listening to their mother-in-law and father-in-law make fun of them, since their husbands and mother-in-law are unable to pay the dowry. Sometimes they're burnt to death, and other times they're brutally pounded to death (Sadiq & Hill, 2005).

Inheritance Disputes

Another major issue in our society is the prohibition of women inheriting. As a result, women face several challenges, including violence, from their in-laws. The brother and other family members threaten to break off the marriage if the woman doesn't take a share of the estate, which the husband forces her to do. Since she took her father's possessions away from her, she has been subjected to both mental and physical abuse. In cases like these that reach the courtroom, the judicial system may employ delay tactics due to the numerous issues it faces. As a form of severe oppression, the government must intervene to ensure that women do not have to endure the long and painful process of obtaining their rights (Rehman & Qureshi, 2016).

Birth of Daughters

Unfortunately, Hinduism continues to have a strong effect on our society, therefore many Hindu traditions and beliefs remain common. One such practice is the blame-the-woman attitude regarding girls' births, which has been used to excuse violence against women, divorce, and, in certain cases, murder (Hussain & Howard, 2012).

System of male dominance

The patriarchal framework in Pakistan contributes significantly to the prevalence of domestic violence within traditional societies. The perception of women as mere possessions has diminished their significance within societal structures. In conventional



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societal structures, it is often perceived that a man possesses the entitlement to physically assault his spouse. In certain situations, particularly regarding the mother-in-law, women can inadvertently support patriarchy and domestic abuse. Numerous women are anticipated to manage household responsibilities and other essential tasks; however, if a woman fails to fulfill her mother-in-law's expectations, she may face repercussions through her son (Hussain & Howard, 2012).

The effects of domestic violence on women

Psychiatrists and medical professionals agree that domestic violence is very harmful to women's mental and physical health (Al-Khater, Al-Maadeed, Ahmed, Sadiq, & Khan, 2020). A table outlining several significant physiological and psychological effects is presented below:

Physiological effects	Psychological effects
cuts, fractures, and organ damage	Anger
problems that come up during pregnancy	Anxiety
Spontaneous abortion	Fear
Chronic inflammatory disorders affecting the core	Feeling inferior and lacking
Pain in the center of the body	Avoidance of sexual activity
Headaches	Concerns related to food and hunger
long-lasting disabilities	Sadness and bad thoughts
Asthma	Illnesses caused by stress
Problems with the stomach	Disappointment
Smoking	
Suicide	
Murder	

How it affects family life

Family dynamics are negatively impacted by domestic violence against women. The family unit suffers when women are mistreated. Here are some regions that are primarily impacted:

Women's innate dislike of conflict is the source of their ongoing anxiety.

Women encounter challenges in fulfilling their professional responsibilities and obligations.

Ceasing the moral development of children and other family members.

Over time, children become more defiant.

Our marital dynamic shifted.

A greater number of divorces have resulted from this.

Conclusion

When the Pakistani government created the domestic violence law, it did so with good intentions, but it didn't function as intended, which made the domestic violence issue in the nation considerably worse. Domestic violence persists in Pakistan despite attempts to prevent it and the existence of legislation. And up to 70% of people experience this type of violence.

Pakistan's laws do not do enough to prevent or punish domestic abuse. Violence harms individuals and society as a whole. Women are disproportionately harmed because they are more likely to become victims.



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Cultural, social, economic, and legal factors also make them more vulnerable to injury. Because they failed to understand religious beliefs, social rules, and customs, people have also been cruel to women. Some men may try to rationalize their bad behavior by using their religious beliefs.

However, the truth is that no faith in the world condones the harming of others, particularly women. Women's rights are very important in Islam and should be protected. Because men control the finances and women are viewed as less significant in society, violence against them occurs. The roles that men and women play in society also tend to favor one over the other, which increases the likelihood of violence against women.

Violence against women in our culture is caused by more than just one person's poor behavior; it is also the result of beliefs and social attitudes that see women as less significant than men. Low income and a lack of education are also major issues. When a guy does not have enough money to provide for his family, he frequently becomes upset and beats them.

As the woman reacts to the children, the already chaotic environment of the house intensifies. In the absence of skills to effectively manage minor conflicts, women may find it challenging to safeguard themselves against domestic abuse. Traditional practices such as dowry and inheritance play a significant role in perpetuating domestic violence against women within our culture. Doctors and psychologists alike concur that domestic violence has a severe negative impact on women's emotional and physical well-being. These ladies are in very poor physical and emotional condition. For these reasons and beyond, women endure various manifestations of abuse, encompassing, but not confined to, physical, verbal, emotional, sexual, and additional forms. Inflicting physical harm through striking, kicking, or slapping a woman is detrimental to her well-being. In contrast to physical violence, emotional abuse inflicts deeper and more enduring harm. Studies show that victims of domestic abuse are four times more likely to attempt suicide, and they are also more prone to suffer from melancholy, stress, and drug addiction. According to the survey, there are several avoidable reasons why domestic violence against women is so common in Pakistan.

Suggestions

The information that was gathered for this post paints a comprehensive picture of how to put an end to domestic violence. On the basis of the findings, the government, concerned authorities, the general public, and researchers are being provided with some suggestions for how to put an end to domestic violence and improve the laws:

The government ought to take decisive action to address the issues of drug addiction, poverty, and the detrimental societal norms that impact women.

Women's education must improve, and the literacy rate must rise.

The Islamic perspective on family and its structure ought to be included into school curricula and Friday sermons by qualified scholars.

Each and every young man and woman need to have the opportunity to attend lessons and receive counseling prior to getting married.

The entire public, including women, should be well-informed on domestic violence laws. Following the rules about domestic abuse can help lower the number of cases of DV. The police force needs to be fixed by the government. One way to do this is to train the officers who are in charge of women's problems and hire more women for this position.



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