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Domestic Violence Against Women In Balochistan: Forms, Factors, And Fight For Justice

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Abstract

Domestic violence against women is a worldwide problem. However, its prevalence is exceptionally high in less developed countries like Pakistan. This study examines numerous factors contributing to domestic violence across different parts of Balochistan. The study used a mixed methods approach, integrating qualitative and quantitative methods. The simple random sampling technique is used to choose 200 school teachers and educated housewives to collect their statistical insights into the issue. Similarly, to collect extensive qualitative data, a sample comprising women who experienced domestic abuse, policymakers, NGO representatives, and community members is selected using a purposive sampling technique. Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, including frequency distribution, percentage analysis, and binary logistic regression, are applied to analyze quantitative data collected through structured questionnaires. In addition, qualitative [1]data gathered from in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions is analyzed through thematic analysis. The findings of the study indicate that women in Balochistan experience several forms of domestic violence, including physical, sexual, psychological, and economic abuse. The findings also demonstrate that multiple socio-economic and cultural factors, including patriarchal norms, child marriage, women's economic dependency, Jirga system, and the misinterpretation of religious teachings to justify abusive behavior, significantly contribute to domestic violence against women. The study suggests several recommendations for eradicating domestic violence against women, including reforming Pakistan's legal and judicial system to enhance women's access to the criminal justice system, initiating awareness campaigns regarding violations of women's rights, and creating employment opportunities for women to reduce their financial dependence on men.

Introduction

Violence against women is one of the most pressing issues women face across the world. Violence against women is an umbrella term encompassing all physical, verbal, and sexual abuses. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines violence against women as "gender-

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based violence includes all coercive acts perpetrated against women of any age by their intimate partners". It has different forms, such as physical assaults, economic abuse, social isolation, forced sexual intercourse, and prostitution (Barech & Din, 2023).

In Pakistan, domestic violence against women is closely linked with patriarchal norms which dictate men's dominance over women. In Balochistan, these norms are entrenched in tribal customs, religious interpretation, and traditional justice systems such as Jirga, which make an environment where violence against women is considered a normal practice (Soomar & Soomar, 2022). The patriarchal values dictate that men are protectors and providers. At the same time, women are expected to perform their traditional gender roles within the households. Due to this gendered-based division of labor, women become economically dependent on men, increasing their vulnerability to domestic violence (Hadi, 2017).

The poor socioeconomic indicators in Balochistan, such as poverty, illiteracy, fewer job opportunities, and lack of access to legal services, provide women with few forums for support or escape. Tribal customs and laws that handle many issues in the absence of a formal legal system are often biased against women, and to maintain men's dominance, they usually provide rulings in favor of men in cases of domestic violence (Baloch et al., 2019). Sawara, a tribal practice in which women are given as compensation to settle tribal disputes, reinforces the commodification of women. These tribal justice systems provide few opportunities for women facing violence to seek justice. The most serious concern is that women are not allowed to seek justice through formal legal systems, as it is considered a violation of tribal codes and traditions.

Religious teachings are often interpreted to maintain domestic power dynamics. Cultural interpretation of religious teachings is used to justify male authority and women's submission, which leads to normalizing violence as a form of discipline within the household (Chowdhury, 2023). Islam is a religion that promotes the dignity and protection of women in all spheres of life, so cultural misinterpretation of religion contributes to the silence of the voice of domestic violence survivors.

The social stigmas surrounding domestic violence, such as fear of public shame, social exclusion, and loss of family support, also prove to be barriers to preventing this crime against women (Overstreet & Quinn, 2013). Most women in Balochistan do not seek legal or social assistance due to their lack of trust in formal systems (Tresi et al, 2016). Moreover, the victims of domestic violence are further isolated, and the cycle of violence continues since there are no strong social networks such as shelter houses, legal assistance, and counselling services available in the province (Overstreet & Quinn, 2013).

Pakistan's government has taken some legislative measures to prevent gender-based violence, including the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection Act, 2012). However, implementing these laws is very limited in Balochistan, mainly in rural areas where tribal governance is often stronger than legal frameworks.

This study aims to investigate socioeconomic and cultural factors contributing to the prevalence and persistence of domestic violence in Balochistan. The study also explores how patterns of domestic violence are influenced by child marriage, drug addiction, women’s economic dependence, misinterpreting of religion, patriarchal norms, and tribal customs. The study further assesses the social stigmas that prevent women from seeking legal and social assistance. The study suggests some recommendations for policymakers, civil society, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to prevent domestic violence and protect and empower women in manners that respect the cultural and social realities of the region as well as the religious sentiments of the people.

Research Objectives

The objectives stated below governed the present study.

1. To analyze the different forms of domestic violence against women.
2. To investigate contributing factors of domestic violence against women.
3. To suggest recommendations to minimize the intensity of domestic violence against women.

Significance of the Study

This study is crucial in resolving the critical issue of domestic abuse against women in Balochistan and Pakistan. The importance of the study is multifaceted. It highlights the extent, patterns, and manifestations of abuse experienced by women in Balochistan by examining the various forms of domestic violence while simultaneously raising awareness among policymakers and the general public of the severity of this issue.

It becomes easy to resolve the issue when the underlying causes of the problem are identified. This study contributes to the prevention of domestic violence by exploring the socio-economic and cultural causes of the abuse faced by women. The research can assist policymakers in formulating policies and strengthening laws to safeguard the rights of women and prevent domestic violence. The study also addresses a gap in the academic literature concerning domestic violence in Balochistan, where there is a scarcity of research on this subject.

By proposing workable suggestions, the study can help governments, non-governmental organizations, and civil society develop targeted initiatives. It also motivates academics to carry out studies in related fields, such as the connection between economic, educational, and health status of women and domestic violence.

Literature review

The literature related to domestic violence against women can be divided into four categories: prevalence of domestic violence against women at the global level, prevalence of domestic violence against women in Pakistan, factors contributing to domestic violence against women, and impacts of domestic violence on women.

The Prevalence of Domestic violence against Women at the Global Level

Domestic violence against women is a global issue found in both developed and developing countries of the world. For an extended period, numerous cases of domestic violence, gender disparity, exploitation, and harassment have been documented in various social contexts worldwide, with a significant number of these cases being hidden (Violence Prevention Alliance, 2020). A report by WHO issued in 2015 shows that in 48 countries, ten to sixty-nine percent of women experienced physical assaults and emotional violence at the hands of their intimate partners during their lifetime. Duque (2003) found that domestic violence against women took the form of gang rape which was the main reason for women's deaths in Colombia. In England, every 1 out of 4 women reported that they experienced violence at the hands of their intimate partners (Feder, 2005). In India, uneducated women married to educated men experienced forced sex. In this case, women who were reluctant to coercive sexual intercourse were not provided with basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter. They were even forced to stay home and not participate in festivals. Consequently, women were ready to have sexual intercourse at any time in order to meet their basic needs (Koenig et. al., 2006).

In Egypt, thirty-four percent of women experienced physical, sexual, and psychological abuse at their homes. They were kept in isolation and were not allowed to attend any festivals (Sidibe, 2006). The prevalence of domestic violence in developed countries like Canada and the United States of America also indicates the universal presence of this issue. In Canada, seventeen percent of the total 8771 participants reported physical and psychological violence. In the United States of America, one-third of all women experienced physical assaults at home during their lifetime (Sardinha et, al., 2018).

The Prevalence of Domestic Violence against Women in Pakistan

Statistics on domestic violence in Pakistan are scarce (Zia, 2018). This is due to the stigma associated with reporting domestic violence and the insufficient access to resources necessary for filing complaints, including access to police, transportation, financial means, and legal recourse (NCHR, 2023). In Pakistan, domestic violence is considered a family matter and is expected never to be reported. Domestic violence against women is primarily defined as the abuse of a woman by her spouse. This abuse can take the form of beatings, burnings, and acid attacks (Naz & Malik, 2018). According to data on domestic violence from the Domestic Health Survey (2017–2018), FATA had the highest percentage of women who experienced domestic violence (56%), followed by Balochistan (48%) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (43%). Women were less likely to face violence in Sindh (15%), although information regarding Punjab, the most populous province in the country, is not included in the report.

The Aurat Foundation, a non-governmental organization in Pakistan, reported that 778 women were killed in 2019, indicating a 20% rise in violence against women compared to 2018 (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2019). In 2012, thirty-five percent of women experienced physical violence at the hands of their husbands in Lahore and Sialkot (Zakar et.al., 2012). Madhani et al. (2017) found that ninety-eight percent of women faced verbal abuse, and eighty percent of women experienced physical violence at home. The study further revealed that both husbands and in-laws were involved in violence against women.

Faryal (2015) sated that 95% of women experienced verbal abuse during their lifetime. Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (PDHS) conducted in 2012-2013 showed that 93% of women of all ages experienced physical abuse or emotional violence at the hands of their life partners. The report further stated that 52% of women never sought any help or complained to anybody about the violence and disrespect they experienced.

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (2017) stated that the prevalence of sexual violence against women in the country was 65%. Moreover, 94% of women also reported physical violence that caused serious injuries and required emergency medical treatment. According to WHO (2020), domestic violence cases include a wide range of abusive behaviors, including but not limited to: severe physical abuse, self-immolation, murder, rape, and other forms of social isolation. Despite being the most common type of violence against women, domestic violence is the most hidden and frequently ignored.

Factors Contributing to Domestic Violence Against Women

Domestic violence against women is a multifaceted problem with multiple causes. Azamat (2015) found that family conflicts, male dominance in the decision-making process, choice preferences, and marital maladjustment are the most important causes of domestic violence against women in Pakistan. DAWN news (2017) reported that the low economic status of women, stereotypes and false beliefs, lack of awareness about women's rights issues, the patriarchal structure of society, and absence of legal support from the government are the main

factors contributing to physical, psychological, and sexual abuses against women in Pakistan society.

HRCP (2004) identified that early marriage and arranged marriage are responsible for domestic violence against women in the country. Aisha (2018) explored that economic dependence on marriage, family income, low literacy rate, and stigma related to divorce contribute to severe physical abuse against women.

Shehzadi (2015) found that the main factors responsible for different forms of domestic violence against women include complicated legal procedures, misinterpretations of religious teachings, misuse of the media, and cultural norms that promote males' intuitional dominance. Ali et. al. (2015) identified gender inequality as the leading cause of physical assault and sexual abuse against women in Pakistani society.

Impacts of Domestic Violence on Women

Every woman is different, and a variety of factors influence the overall impact of any violent act. There are numerous common effects of living in fear and experiencing violence, even though each woman experiences it differently. Domestic violence can have both immediate and long-term impacts on female survivors, affecting them in a variety of ways.

Various forms of physical harm, including cuts, broken bones, and more, can result from domestic abuse. These injuries could be life-threatening at times and require immediate medical attention. Additionally, domestic violence can lead to gynecological illnesses, sexually transmitted infections, and reproductive problems (Hess et al., 2012). Similarly, anxiety, depression, fear, and low self-esteem are among the mental health issues that survivors of domestic violence may experience (Affifi et al., 2012).

Domestic violence can also result in social isolation for women due to anxiety, tension, shame, substance abuse, physical injuries, and fear (UNO, 2019). Some researchers found that the continuous occurrences of domestic violence may impact the health of victims. They can experience various physical problems, including miscarriage, dizziness, vaginal bleeding, unwanted pregnancy, movement difficulties, weight loss, and sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV (García et at., 2005., Kapoor, 2000; Naved, 2013; Semahegn & Mengistie, 2015).

United Nations Development Fund for Women (1999) stated that domestic violence against women is the main cause of various physical, mental, and reproductive health issues in families. Physical and sexual abuse has adverse impacts on women. A report by the Health Issues in Less Developed Countries (HILDC) published in 2005 found that the most adverse effect of domestic violence is anxiety and stress, which leads women to suicide. The report further stated that the victims of domestic violence are prone to develop drug dependence, stress, and depression.

Study Area

Balochistan, the largest province in terms of area, is the least developed region of the four provinces of Pakistan. The province comprises eight administrative divisions, and the Naseerabad division is one of them. The study is conducted in the five districts of Naseerabad: Sohbat Pur, Jaffarabad, Naseerabad, Kachhi, and Jhalmagsi. The majority of the population in the area depends on agriculture which is frequently devastated by monsoon floods. This leads to further deterioration of the economic conditions of the populace. The study area faces numerious issues, but the most important one is domestic violence against women. The area is characterized by a low literacy rate, high poverty and unemployment rate, tribalism, a

patriarchal family system, and child marriage. All these factors contribute to the vulnerability of women to domestic violence.

Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

The study used a mixed-methods approach that integrates both qualitative and quantitative methods to gain a holistic understanding of the issue. Three hundred female teachers, and educated house wives are selected using the random sampling technique to get their statistical insights regarding the prevalence, forms, and contributing factors of domestic violence using a structured questionnaire. On the other hand, for qualitative data collection, a sample of 20 women who have experienced domestic violence, ten policymakers, ten NGO representatives, and 30 community members are selected using a purposive sampling technique. Semi-structured interviews are conducted with women who experienced domestic violence to explore their narratives by getting the social and structural dimensions of the problem. Moreover, policymakers and NGO representatives are interviewed to ensure the inclusion of policy-level insights and expert perspectives. Similarly, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) are conducted in different parts of the study area to gain holistic views of community members regarding their awareness and attitude towards domestic violence and community-level support systems.

Quantitative data is analyzed using frequency distribution, percentage, and binary logistic regression analysis. Moreover, the thematic analysis is used to analyze qualitative data collected through interviews and focus group discussions.

Results

Table 1: Demographic Profile for the Respondents

Category	**Frequency**	**Percentage**	
School Teachers	150	40.54	
Housewives	150	40.54	
Women who experienced violence	20	5.40	
NGO representatives	10	2.70	
Policymakers	10	2.70	
Community members	30	8.10	
Total	**370**	**100%**	
Religion	**Category**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
	Islam	296	80%
	Non-Muslims	74	20%
	Total	**370**	**100%**
Marital status	Married	333	90%
	Unmarried	37	10%
	Total	**370**	**100%**
Level of Education	Matric	74	20%
	Intermediate	111	30%
	Graduate	185	50%
	Total	**370**	**100%**

Source: Field survey, 2024

The table displays the demographic characteristics of respondents who shared their statistical insights and lived experiences about the problem. One hundred and fifty (40.54%) school teachers and one hundred and fifty (40.54%) educated wives from diverse backgrounds participated in filling out the questionnaire. Additionally, 20 women (5.40%) who experienced

domestic abuse were interviewed to share their lived experiences. Similarly, the sample comprised 10 (2.70%) policymakers, 10 (2.70%) NGO representatives, and 30 (8.10%) community members to ensure representation from various sectors of society. The results reveal that 80% of respondents were Muslims, whereas 20% were non-Muslims. The marital status of respondents was also considered. Table 1 further shows that 90% of participants were married, whereas 10% were unmarried. The results indicate the educational attainment of the participants: 50% possessed graduate degrees, 20% had completed matriculation, and 30% achieved an intermediate level of education.

Table 2: Forms of domestic violence experienced by the women

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Physical violence	154	51%
Physical and Psychological violence	171	57%
Sexual abuse	48	16%
Physical and sexual abuse	66	22%
Financial abuse	135	45%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The results reveal that 51.33% of women experienced physical assault, while 57% reported experiencing both physical and psychological violence. Similarly, 16% of women reported they faced sexual abuse, while 22% reported experiencing both physical and sexual abuse. Moreover, 45% of women experienced financial abuse.

Factors Contributing to Domestic Violence against Women: Model Specification

Given the variations in participants' responses to domestic violence against women in their area, an appropriate multivariate regression analysis, which could help explore contributing factors of domestic violence against women, was deemed necessary. Therefore, a dependent variable, "domestic violence against women," was created by assigning "0" to no and "1" for otherwise. Keeping in view the categorical nature of the dependent variable, binary logistic regression was run to determine the factors responsible for domestic violence against women. The regression model hypothesized the dependent variable associated with independent variables X1, X2, X3,…….X8.

The model is specified as follows:

$$\text{logit}(E[Ey_i \backslash x_1, x_2, x_3, , , , , x_8]) = \text{In}\left[\frac{P_i}{1 - P_i}\right]$$

$$= B_0 + B_1X_{1i} + B_2X_{2i} + \cdots + B_kX_{ki}$$

Where Pi is an observed probability that determines each outcome such as K=1, 2….., and 8 and remains specific to the outcome at hand, but related to the exploratory variables.

Eight independent variables included in the regression model were, age of the respondents (X1), religion (X2), patriarchal norms (X3), child marriage (X4), women's economic dependence (X5), drug addiction (X6), Jirga system (X7), and misinterpretation of religious teachings (X8).

Results of the Binary Logistic Regression

Table 3: Model Summary

Step	-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
1	21.713[a]	.856	.949

Source: Field survey, 2024

Maximum likelihood estimates of the factors in the logistic regression model characterizing factors contributing to domestic violence against women are reflected in table 2. The -2 likelihood ratio (-2LL) for cox and shell R square and NegelKerek R square showed the variances of 65% and 94% respectively, indicating the significant influences of 8 variables included in the model.

Table 4: Hosmer and Lemeshow Test

Step	**Chi-square**	**Df**	**Sig.**
1	.832	8	.999

Source: Field survey, 2024

Moreover, Hosmer and Lemeshow test's p>0.05 which indicates that this model fit the data better than any other model.

Table 5: The Binary Logistic Regression Model

Variables	**B**	**S.E.**	**Wald**	**Sig.P**	**Exp (B)**
X1 Age of women	3.233	2.030	2.535	.111	.039
X2 Religion	1.203	2.664	3.904	.148	3.138
X3 Patriarchal norms	1.203	.480	6.268	.012	3.329
X4 Child marriage	1.001	.444	5.085	.024	2.722
X5 Women's economic dependence	1.415	.511	7.668	.006	4.117
X6 Drug addiction	1.426	.492	6.278	.012	3.144
X7 Jirga System	1.206	.481	6.274	.012	3.340
X8 Misinterpretation of religious teachings	.953	.465	4.198	.040	2.594
Constant	-5.136	29.022	6.008	.014	.000

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The results of the binary logistic regression analysis show that all variables except the age of the respondents (X1) and religion (X2) are significantly associated with domestic violence against women. Six out of the eight variables, "patriarchal norms" (X3), "child marriage" (X4), "women's economic dependence" (X5), "drug addiction" (X6), Jirga system" (X7), and "misinterpretation of religious teachings" (X8) positively influence domestic violence against women.

The results also show that the age of women and religion have no significant relationship with domestic violence, as women of all ages and religions faced violence at home. The results further revealed that patriarchal norms significantly affect domestic violence against women, increasing the likelihood of its occurring by 3 times (Ex (B)= 3.329, p = 0.012). Similarly, child marriage is also statistically significant with domestic violence, increasing the likelihood of its occurrence by 2.77 times ((Ex (B)= 2.722, p = 0.024). In addition, women's economic dependence substantially impacts domestic violence, increasing the likelihood of domestic violence over 4 times (Ex (B)= 4.117, p = 0.006).

Moreover, drug addiction is statistically significant with domestic violence against women, increasing the likelihood of its occurrence approximately 3 times (Ex (B)= 3.144, p = 0.012).

Likewise, the presence of the Jirga system also affects domestic violence against women, increasing the likelihood of domestic violence against women over 3 times (Ex (B)= 3.340, p = 0.012). Similarly, misinterpretation of religious teachings also impacts domestic violence, increasing the likelihood of its occurrence over 2.5 times (Ex (B)= 2.594, p = 0.040).

Discussion

Domestic violence against women in Pakistan is an endemic social issue both in the rural and urban areas and it is increasing at an alarming rate. In Pakistani society and culture, violence against woman is viewed as a family matter without any focus on its assessment, intervention and solutions. This is why, women have to bear abusive and disrespectful behavior and discrimination due to the misuse of cultural traditions, social values, and religious norms.

I) Forms of Domestic Violence against Women

Domestic violence against women has different forms that include physical violence, sexual abuse, psychological assault, economic control and emotional abuse.

Physical violence against women refers to the use of physical force against women. It includes slapping, kicking, biting, burning, and assault with a weapon. According to Noor (2004), more than two-thirds of Pakistani society consists of lower-class men, and the majority of those men use physical violence when they want to punish their spouses, children, sisters, and even mothers. No woman is safe from physical violence and psychological abuse when she stands up for what she believes in, resists the abuse that she suffers as a bondage victim, or defends the honor of her family.

Sexual abuse against women involves the violation of a woman's bodily integration. It refers to any sexual activity carried out without a partner's consent, including forcing a partner to have sex with others, engaging in sexual activity when the victim is not entirely conscious or is afraid to refuse, physically harming the partner during sex, and forcing a partner to have sex without protection or by interfering with birth control. In Pakistan, sexual violence was experienced by 6% of women between the ages of 15 and 49. Spousal physical, sexual, or emotional violence was experienced by 34% of ever-married women. Moreover, spousal sexual violence was experienced by five percent of women (Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey, 2017-2018).

War Against Rape (WAR), an NGO, also claims that domestic sexual assault affects at least one in ten women in Pakistan (WAR, 2004). Families in all communities try to conceal the abuse of female relatives. The social boycott of the victim's family is a result of public acknowledgment, as the abused female undermines the family's honor even though she did not choose to be abused. The community is aware that the female victim is no longer a virgin, which means that she will never be married to a respectable man (Noor, 2004).

Psychological violence is often characterized as demoralizing and using tactics such as constant supervision, or controlling what the victim does and who they talk to. Psychological violence also includes insulting behavior and threats of harm and isolation. According to Noor (2004), most Pakistani men are trained to psychologically torture women at home. Men are taught to treat women like objects after witnessing how their fathers treated their mothers and sisters. The men also recognize women's social and economic barriers, particularly in seeking justice through the legal system. As a result, males constantly put mental pressure on females to establish and uphold their dominance. The psychological pressures might range from persistent criticism of the woman's skills to displeasure about house chores to more severe issues like interfering in her personal and life choices.

Economic abuse involves making or attempting to make the victim financially dependent on the abuser, including preventing or forbidding an intimate partner from working or gaining education, controlling financial resources, withholding access to economic resources, and harassing partner at their workplace.

Not all forms of domestic violence are criminalized in Pakistan. The lack of a well-established legal system to address domestic violence against women restricts the interference of law enforcement agencies in cases involving physical and sexual violence. Consequently, many kinds of abuse, including physical and sexual abuse, are not recognized as violence—by the law or by victims in Pakistan.

Factors Contributing to Domestic Violence against Women.

Domestic violence against women is a multifaceted problem with multiple causes. Some critical contributing factors to domestic violence are discussed below;

1. Patriarchal Norms

The findings of the study reveal that patriarchal norms significantly contribute to domestic violence against women and increase its occurrence over 3 times. Men have complete control over women's lives and enjoy absolute authority within households in patriarchal societies. This control is justified by societal and cultural norms, which makes violence against women seem normalized. Men resort to aggressive behavior to regain control whenever they believe their authority may be challenged. Violence is viewed in patriarchal settings as a way to discipline women and settle disputes within households. Women are more vulnerable to various forms of abusive behaviors, including physical, sexual, and psychological abuse, as a result of the social and cultural acceptance of violence. News Desk (2023) stated that power is the main factor behind domestic violence in Pakistan. The attempt by one individual (a man) to control and dominate another (a woman) is ugly. By claiming that the victim is a subordinate rather than an equal, the abuser aims to establish their power and bring brutality to the table. Regretfully, it is a type of power abuse that has become so accepted in Pakistan that people are now comfortable with it.

2. Child Marriage

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) defines a child as any individual under the age of eighteen. In a tribal society such as Balochistan, child marriage substantially contributes to domestic violence and increases the risk of its occurrence by 2.7 times. This is because girls who marry at a young age may struggle to adjust to their marital relationship as a result of their emotional, social, and educational immaturity. They depend financially on their husband and in-laws because they lack social skills and appropriate education. Poverty is the primary factor driving child marriages, as families sell their daughters for money. Girls are particularly vulnerable to domestic violence at the hands of their husbands and in-laws in these types of marriages, as they are devalued.

According to Kidman (2017), child marriage is a form of gender-based violence that is legally recognized around the world. Both violate human rights. Child marriage exposes girls and women to a higher risk of sexual, physical, and psychological assault, as well as other negative consequences throughout their lives. Girls who marry before the age of 18 face a higher risk of violence from their husbands and in-laws. The more significant the age gap between girls and their husbands, the more likely they are to face domestic abuse.

3. Women's Economic Dependence

The results of this study reveal that women's economic dependence on men significantly contributes to domestic violence against women and raises the risk of occurrence of domestic violence approximately 4 times as this dependence supports the popular notion that "man is a bread earner and decision maker." Women's financial dependence results in an imbalance of power in family matters, where men enjoy complete authority in decision-making. The abusive partners take advantage of this imbalance to establish domination over women—fear of losing financial support and childcare forces women who face violent behavior to stay in abusive relationships.

Women who rely on men financially often tolerate violence in exchange for financial support. When women's financial dependence decreases due to economic empowerment, their risk of violence may decrease (Hidrobo and Fernald, 2013 & Anderberg and Rainer, 2011). In traditional Pakistani society, the male is considered the "bread earner", and the female is considered the "care provider". Consequently, most women are economically dependent on their male counterparts and lack employment opportunities. They cannot seek social assistance due to financial dependence (Sheikh, 2003).

4. Drug Addiction

The results of this study also show that women who live with family members who use drugs are three times more likely to experience violence because, in these households, violence against women is accepted as normal, and victims feel helpless to resist or seek legal help. Drug addiction impairs judgment and decreases self-control; it makes drug users more aggressive, which increases the risk of violence against women. Parisi (2024) found that the desire for power and control over another person is the root cause of all forms of domestic abuse. Domestic violence is strongly associated with substance usage and addiction. One is likely to lose control of their inhibitions when under the influence of drugs or alcohol. The likelihood of abusive behavior is significantly increased when under the influence of any substance. Drug usage is linked to about 80% of domestic violence crimes. Drug addiction changes a person's brain chemistry in such a way that they desire more and more of the drug, regardless of the potential adverse outcomes of their actions. Irrational, violent, or dominating behaviors in a relationship may emerge from this.

5. The Jirga System

The results of this study further indicate that the presence of the Jirga system increases the occurrence of domestic violence over 3 times as Jirga or tribal courts not only legitimize but also encourage domestic violence against women. Jirgas, which serve to rationalize domestic abuse, are the main reason for human rights violations in Pakistan. These illegal tribal courts exist throughout the country despite being declared unconstitutional by the superior courts. In a patriarchal setting, women's lives hold minimal value, and young girls are frequently sold into marriage to resolve conflicts.

Throughout Pakistan, despite provincial differences in the functions of jirgas, a consistent theme is the perpetuation of anti-women abuses under the cover of cultural traditions. Traditionally, jirgas prioritize conciliation and compensation (monetary or through women), whereas the death penalty is imposed for violations of honor. Brohi (2017) stated that the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) filed a petition in the court against the Haripur jirga of June 2011, where a middle-aged woman, Shehnaz Bibi, was taken out of her house and made to parade naked on the street as punishment for an alleged offence of her son. Likewise, Shazia was killed by her husband, Muhammad Saeed and others on suspicion of her alleged illegal relationship with her brother-in-law on an ex-parte jirga ruling at Bari Kot village in Swat.

A research conducted in Balochistan by Shah, Ali & Mahmood (1994) found that if it is proved that the woman killed by declaring her kari in Jirga was, in fact, innocent, most of the accused get away with murder based on razinamas (agreements) presented to and accepted by the police. Under razinama, which takes the form of cash or girls in marriage to the aggrieved party, any person who has committed such a horrible act is also let free.

6. Misinterpretation of Islamic teachings

Misinterpretation of religious teachings substantially contributes to domestic abuse against women by increasing the risk of its occurrence over 2 times. Religions, particularly Islam, emphasize fairness and respect within family affairs. However, some persons use cultural interpretations of religious principles to justify violent behavior against women. Most individuals misinterpret the religious concept of man as a guardian of woman and a provider of financial support, interpreting it as a means to assert dominance, control, and even perpetrate violence, rather than providing care as instructed by Islamic teachings.

Tomisn (2020) stated that religion and spiritual beliefs have a substantial impact on the dynamics of domestic violence. Violence, especially against women, may be accepted as a sign of loyalty or submission due to some religious interpretations and teachings. Religious scriptures like the Bible and the Qur'an are frequently cited to support and legitimize gender-based violence, which is a common prevalence in Middle Eastern nations. According to Krob and Steffen (2015), a woman's decision to leave an abusive relationship may be made more difficult by the effect of her religious beliefs and practices, especially if marriage is seen as a sacred institution. The idea that God predetermines marriage might lead to feelings of guilt and make it difficult to get help or terminate the relationship.

CONCLUSION

Domestic violence against women is a rapidly increasing sensitive issue, an underreported crime often overlooked due to its occurrence behind closed doors. Women experience several forms of violence, including physical, sexual, psychological, and economic abuse. Domestic abuse against women is a complex issue influenced by various socio-economic and cultural factors, including patriarchal norms, women's financial dependence on men, child marriage, the Jirga system, drug addiction, and the cultural misinterpretation of religious teachings that reinforce patriarchal values and justify violence as a means of controlling and disciplining women. Governments must engage with communities and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to initiate awareness campaigns on the sensitivity of the issue. The media needs to play e a responsible role in depicting women as leaders and equal contributors to progress rather than as victims of violence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is imperative to identify the constraints within Pakistan's legal and judicial system that hinder women's access to justice. Upon identifying the flaws, it becomes easy to reform the system to enhance its efficacy in eliminating domestic violence against women. Legislation aimed at eradicating domestic violence against women is important; nonetheless, the procedures for lodging complaints and pursuing justice remain unfavorable for women. An effective media campaign is crucial to eliminate taboos and facilitate women's access to the criminal justice system.

Patriarchal norms are recognized as the primary cause of domestic violence against women. It is essential to comprehend the significance of gender equality across all aspects of life, especially in familial contexts. Reducing the hardships that women face in patriarchal

environments by granting them equal rights will facilitate the eradication of domestic abuse against women. The majority of campaigns addressing violence against women concentrate on educating women about their rights. While it is crucial to raise awareness among women, the most important goal is to inform males of the advantages of women's empowerment.

The media needs to play a more responsible role in raising awareness about women's rights and violence against women. Media should depict women as leaders, achievers, and vital contributors to progress and development rather than as a weak segment of society victimized by violence. Moreover, the government must increase opportunities for women to access quality education and technical skills to facilitate their chances for employment. It is also imperative to establish legislation that restricts the jurisdiction of Jirgas to tackle violence against women cases. It is also essential that abuses of women's rights, particularly domestic abuse, are addressed by state laws.

Drug addiction is the primary factor contributing to domestic violence against women. So the government must enhance legislation about the sale of all types of drugs and initiate programs to raise community awareness about the correlation between drug addiction and domestic violence. In addition, the state must establish and execute legislation against child marriage, ensuring that offenders receive severe penalties. Raising community knowledge regarding the detrimental effects of child marriage can be effective in minimizing domestic abuse that female children can experience post-marriage.

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